

LIKIEP KAPIN IEP:
LAND, POWER, AND HISTORY ON A MARSHALLESE ATOLL

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Monica C. LaBriola

Dissertation Committee:
David Hanlon, Chairperson
Cristina Bacchilega
David Chappell
Suzanna Reiss
Geoffrey White

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For Zachary
I will love you forever and like you for always...



Naan in Kammolol: Acknowledgements

I am fortunate to have spent the past nine years at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa pursuing a Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies and a doctorate in History with an emphasis on the Pacific Islands region also known as Oceania. During this time I have faced an assortment of challenges and have often considered giving up the dream I have worked so long and hard to achieve; it was only with the emotional, intellectual, and financial support of various individuals, communities, and institutions that I have been able to persevere and make it to this point. For this, I cannot thank you all enough.

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Abstract

This history of Likiep Atoll in the northern Ratak region of the Marshall Islands explores the cultural, epistemological, and historical context of Paramount Chief Jortōkā's sale of Likiep to A. Capelle & Co. employee and partner José Anton deBrum of Portugal in 1877 and deBrum's transfer of ownership to his employer ten months later. The investigation applies an eclectic ethnographic approach to reveal historical and cultural dynamics not reflected in surviving documents but that likely played a key role in the momentous transaction. Factors considered include the physical condition of the land; chiefly rivalries and the prevalence of land sales and leases as an alliance building strategy; the pervasiveness of violence and epidemic disease; genealogies and genealogical connections; and the flexible application of indigenous philosophies to land use and tenure practices. Also featured are counternarratives employed following the sale by particular sectors of Likiep society as part of a strategy to maintain their place within the atoll's cultural, historical, and genealogical landscape by calling the sale into question and challenging the truth of history in the process.

The dissertation's focused methodology and use of diverse cultural and historical resources demonstrates the important contributions ethnography can make not just to local interpretations of history, but also to ongoing academic discussions of translocal themes such as colonialism and imperialism, islander agency, accommodation and resistance, Christian conversions, indigenous knowledge and epistemology, land and sovereignty, and the practice and construction of history itself. The narrative in turn challenges the effectiveness of sweeping regional histories that, while significant for the larger trends they elucidate, do not capture the multiplicity of situated events,

experiences, and interpretations that make Oceania so diverse for its many pasts, presents, and futures. Throughout, the project demonstrates that localized histories and historiographies are key to understanding the vast and expanding region of Oceania and to the ongoing dehegemonization of the discipline of Pacific History and Pacific studies more generally.

Table of Contents

<i>Naan in Kam̄molol</i> : Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	ix
Table of Figures	xiii
Abbreviations	xv
<i>Kajin Aelōñ Kein</i> : Marshallese Language Spelling and Pronunciation	xvi
Names and Naming: Likiep, Marshall Islands, and Beyond	xix
<i>Aelōñ Kein</i> , <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> , and <i>Ri-pālle</i> : Islands, Islanders, and Outsiders.....	xix
“Class” and Culture in <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> Society	xxi
Likiep and <i>Ri-Likiep</i> : Likiep and its People.....	xxiii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Islands of History	1
Colonizing Histories.....	6
Approaching Likiep.....	9
Indigenizing Histories and Historiographies	11
Currents of Pacific History	13
<i>Łooribeb</i> : Navigating Likiep’s Big and Little Currents	19
Weaving Histories	22
<i>Wāween Bwebwenato In</i> : Methods and Methodologies	30
<i>Wāween Bwebwenato In</i> : Project Outline	37
Contested Histories and Historians.....	42
Chapter 2. <i>Jepelpelin ke Ejukaan</i> : Rālik and Ratak.....	44
<i>Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto</i> : The Origins of this World	44
Accommodation and Resistance: A <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> Tradition.....	48
<i>Ripitwōdwōd</i> Arrivals.....	54
<i>Kōjerā</i> : Friendly Encounters and Alliances.....	58
<i>Ri-Aelōñ-Kein</i> Making History.....	63
<i>Ñijir To Mede Eo</i> : Kaibūke’s Mission on Epoon.....	65
Christian Conversions.....	72
Kaibūke’s Last Stand.....	79
Forging New Alliances.....	82
Chapter 3. <i>Jined ilo Kōbo, Jemād im Jemān ro Jet</i> : Land and Land Tenure	86
<i>Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto</i> : The Coming of <i>Eo</i> Tattoo.....	86
<i>Pejpetok</i> Arrivals.....	95
Some Fundamentals of <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> Land Tenure.....	104
<i>Wāto</i> : Land Parcels	106
<i>Jowi</i> : Matriclans	109
<i>Bwijen</i> , <i>Bwidej</i> , and <i>Bwij</i> : Land and Matrilineages.....	113
<i>Irooj</i> and <i>Kajoor</i> : Chiefs and Commoners	115
<i>Iroojlaplap</i> and <i>Alap</i> : Lineage Heads.....	118

The Advent of the Copra Industry in Rālik and Ratak.....	122
Strict Principles, Flexible Practices.....	124
Chapter 4. <i>Mejed Kapilōk Kōj</i> : Our Eyes Advise.....	128
<i>Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto</i> : Lōktañūr Brings the <i>Wōjḷā</i> Sail to the Outrigger.....	128
Structure and Agency in <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> Approaches to Land Tenure.....	138
Alternative Tenure: <i>Imōn Aje</i> , <i>In Ninnin</i> , and <i>Bwilōk</i>	144
“Planting” Islands with People: <i>Kaat-eḷap</i> , <i>Loiḷō</i> , and <i>Āneeḷ Aje</i>	151
<i>Tōṛḷok Bok</i> : Typhoons and Tidal Waves.....	160
Survival: Stories and Strategies.....	163
Heavenly Appeals: <i>Kōbbaal</i> , <i>Kabokkūk</i> , and <i>Jarin Lañ</i>	168
<i>Aelōñ in Tōṛḷañ</i> : El Niño Strikes Rālik and Ratak.....	172
<i>An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein</i> : These Islands Belong to the Women.....	176
Rak in Meto and Ratak Eañ: The Dawn of the Copra Age.....	178
Chapter 5. <i>Nimōto Ejāmin Lot</i> : Plantations and Purchases.....	181
<i>Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto</i> : Tōboḷāār and the Origins of the <i>Ni</i> Coconut.....	181
The Coconut: From Sustenance to Commodity.....	188
The Early Coconut Oil Trade: Whalers, Missionaries, and <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i>	193
<i>Kōmman Pinniep</i> : Making Coconut Oil.....	196
The <i>Belle</i> : Coconut Oil and Missionaries.....	200
Adolf Capelle and the Transformation of the Copra Trade.....	208
Adolf Capelle, Irooj Jeimata, and Sophia Limenwa on Epoon.....	213
José Anton deBrum on Epoon.....	217
<i>Kowainini</i> : Making Copra.....	224
“ <i>Eo Man in Wa ne Waam?</i> ” Jortōkā, Likmeto, and the Genesis of a Land Sale.....	227
Chapter 6. <i>Likiep Kapin Iep</i>	235
<i>Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto</i> : Ḷetao the Trickster Brings <i>Kijeeek</i> Fire to Likiep.....	235
Ḷetao Narratives, <i>Ri-pālle</i> Imperialism, and the Sale of Likiep Atoll.....	243
Dramatizing Imperialism.....	245
Historical Counternarratives: Ḷetao and Lō-lem.....	247
Ḷetao Makes History.....	252
Likiep Purchase.....	257
Disease and Land Sales in the Late Nineteenth Century.....	261
Charles Ingalls and the Sale of Likiep Atoll.....	267
Likiep “Planting” and Plantation.....	270
Dividing Ownership.....	276
Plantation.....	284
Contested Ownership, Contested Histories.....	291
Chapter 7. Conclusion: <i>El Jān Juron</i> : Uprooted Pillars.....	294
Appendices.....	312
Bibliography.....	350

Table of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Kajin Aelōñ Kein</i> Marshallese Language Alphabet and Pronunciation	xviii
Figure 2. Map of the Marshall Islands (Rālik and Ratak).....	3
Figure 3: Map of Likiep Atoll.....	4
Figure 4. Likiep Island from the air, 2007	5
Figure 5. Aunty Bonny deBrum performing a Likiep dance, Likiep 2007.....	11
Figure 6. Likmeto weaving a hat, Likiep 1921	25
Figure 7. Monica LaBriola and son Zachary deBrum, Likiep 2011	34
Figure 8. Joachim deBrum self portrait circa 1920.....	36
Figure 9. Leaves used for soothsaying and magic circa early twentieth century	55
Figure 10. Ratak island scene circa 1816.....	61
Figure 11. Arrival of the Morning Star, Epoon 1857	69
Figure 12. Sketch of Epoon Atoll by Reverend Edward T. Doane.....	71
Figure 13. <i>Ri-aelōñ-kein</i> fashion, Jebwad, Jālwōj Atoll circa late nineteenth century.....	77
Figure 14. Limelali and Likmeto preparing <i>bwiro</i> preserved breadfruit circa 1907	80
Figure 15. Two tattooed <i>irooj</i> chiefs circa late nineteenth century	94
Figure 16. Lōñjak wearing traditional attire, Likiep circa 1918.....	99
Figure 17. Island scene, Āne-jeļtak Island, Wōjjā Atoll, circa 1910	103
Figure 18. <i>Imōn Kijdik</i> , Mōjelañ Wāto, Āne-jeļtak Island, Wōjjā Atoll, circa 1920s	107
Figure 19. Canoe and fishing tripod, Roñlap Atoll.....	130
Figure 20. <i>Tipñōl</i> outrigger sailing canoe, location and date unknown.....	133
Figure 21. Iroojlaplap Murjel and his wife Liwain circa 1887	161
Figure 22. Post-typhoon Jebwad, Jālwōj, 1905	165
Figure 23. Highest point in Ralik and Ratak, Būļadek, Likiep Island, date unknown ...	167
Figure 24. Sketch of a <i>piden pā</i> cloud informed by Irooj Lejitnil	170
Figure 25. Sophia Limenwa and Adolf Capelle circa 1890s	178
Figure 26. <i>Ni kadu</i> short coconut tree variety, Likiep circa 1899.....	184
Figure 27. Limelali and New Year weaving coconut frond baskets circa 1917.....	187
Figure 28. Coconut taboo mast	208
Figure 29. Sophia Limenwa Capelle, Rupe Wāto, Epoon Atoll, circa 1910s.....	215
Figure 30. Map of Epoon Atoll.....	219
Figure 31. A. Capelle & Co. trading station, Jebwad, Jālwōj, date unknown	223
Figure 32. Drying copra the open sun circa, Likiep, date unknown.....	226
Figure 33. Likmeto deBrum, Epoon Atoll circa 1870s.....	232
Figure 34. Likiep owners and <i>irooj</i> , Likiep circa 1918	251
Figure 35. Jortōkā’s statement of sale of Likiep to Anton deBrum, August 14, 1877 ...	258
Figure 36. Charles Ingalls, Anton deBrum, and <i>ri-aelōñ-kein</i> associates, Likiep Atoll.	263
Figure 37. Map of Likiep Atoll Ownership (contemporary)	280

Figure 38. German map of Likiep coconut plantation, Likiep Island.....	280
Figure 39. Ownership of Likiep Island by <i>lain/wāto</i> land parcel	281
Figure 40. Likōmju deBrum and her children, Likiep circa 1904	283
Figure 41. Building the <i>Likiej</i> circa 1907	285
Figure 42. Charles Ingalls and Anton deBrum clearing Likiep Island circa 1879	287
Figure 43. “True Genealogy of Likiep”	288
Figure 44. Family of Aloa preparing to clear Piepe Island, Likiep Atoll circa 1907	290

Abbreviations

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
DHPG	Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee Inseln su Hamburg (German South Seas Trade and Plantation Company of Hamburg)
MED	<i>Marshallese-English Dictionary</i>
MOD	Marshallese-English Online Dictionary
NBTRMI	National Biodiversity Team of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

Kajin Aelōñ Kein: Marshallese Language Spelling and Pronunciation

Marshallese (*kajin maje!* or *kajin aelōñ kein*) is a complex language with distinctive sounds and unique pronunciations. Since the arrival of missionaries in 1857 and the first translation of the Bible into Marshallese shortly thereafter, Marshallese orthography has taken on a variety of forms, with spellings varying widely across historical and contemporary written texts. Likiep Atoll, for example, is often spelled Likieb, Legiep, and Legieb in German texts and Rikieppu To in documents from and about the Japanese colonial era.

Today, Marshallese has two spelling systems that people use in different contexts. The first was developed by missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century and has been used in various translations of the Bible, which remains probably the most widely read Marshallese language text accessible to many speakers and readers of Marshallese. Since this system is also used, albeit inconsistently, in Marshallese language newspapers, on signs, and in other popular media, many people prefer and continue to utilize this spelling system, which is sometimes referred to as the “old” spelling.

In the early 1970s, the Committee on Spelling Marshallese met to address inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the old system; the outcome was the development of a “new” spelling system as published in the *Marshallese-English Dictionary* (MED) compiled by Takaji Abo, Byron W. Bender, Alfred Capelle, and Tony deBrum.¹ This system offers the benefits of consistency and spellings that more closely represent Marshallese pronunciations including differentiations between the light and heavy l/l̥, m/m̥, and n/n̥.² Since several of these letters are difficult to reproduce in typed text, however, people often set aside the new spellings in favor of the old spellings despite the availability of the standardized orthography.

In 2009, Byron Bender and Steve Trussel developed the “Marshallese-English Online Dictionary” (MOD),³ a revised and updated digital version of the MED that has several advantages including search features, unified alphabetization, and a downloadable

¹ Abo et al., *Marshallese-English Dictionary*.

² Rudiak-Gould, “Practical Marshallese,” 6.

³ Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

Marshallese keyboard that allows users to type the letters \bar{A} and \bar{a} , \bar{L} and \bar{l} , \bar{M} and \bar{m} , \bar{N} and \bar{n} , \bar{O} and \bar{o} , \bar{U} and \bar{u} , several of which (e.g., the <m-cedilla>) could not be reproduced in type in their previous forms. Bender notes: “A dot has been substituted for a cedilla beneath letters ... because the cedilla is not yet available in Unicode for every letter needed. The recommendation of the original Committee on Spelling Marshallese was that some mark (not necessarily a cedilla) should be placed beneath heavy consonants to distinguish them from the light varieties, for example. Thus a dot can serve this purpose equally well.”⁴ Similarly, “a tilde is put above n and N [\tilde{n} and \tilde{N}], as the combination <n-macron> is not available as a single character in Unicode.”⁵

For the sake of consistency and with Bender and Trussel’s updated orthography in mind, I have elected to use the new Marshallese spellings as standardized by Abo, Bender, Capelle, and deBrum in the *Marshallese-English Dictionary* and revised by Trussel and Bender for the “Marshallese-English Online Dictionary.” When quoting sources, I generally reproduce Marshallese words, phrases, and names as they appear in the original text regardless of the spelling used, although I substitute dots for cedillas and the \tilde{n} for <n-macron> when those words include special characters. When appropriate, I substitute original spellings with bracketed new spellings.

As a quick overview of the Marshallese alphabet and Marshallese pronunciations, I have adapted Figure 1 from Maggie Peter’s “Marshallese Alphabet,” Peter Rudiak-Gould’s “Practical Marshallese,” Laurence Carucci’s “Typological Conventions for the Spelling of Marshallese Words,” and Byron Bender and Steve Trussel’s MOD.⁶

Excepting personal and place names, Marshallese words appear in italics throughout this manuscript; with the exception of frequently used terms, these words are followed by their English equivalents which, to ease flow, are generally not in parentheses. All this said, I take full responsibility for any orthographical or other errors in this manuscript.

⁴ Bender, “Special Characters for Producing Marshallese Text Available in New Unicode Fonts.”

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Peter, “Marshallese Alphabet”; Rudiak-Gould, “Practical Marshallese,” 7-8; Carucci, *Nuclear Nativity*, xvii.

Letter	Marshallese Word	English Meaning	English Sound approximation
A a	<i>An</i>	Its/his/hers	Like the ‘o’ in <u>co</u> t
Ā ā	<i>Āne</i>	Land	Like the ‘e’ in <u>pe</u> t
B b	<i>Bwin</i>	Smell	Like ‘p’ at the end of words and ‘b’ everywhere else
D d	<i>Di</i>	Bone	Like a Spanish unrolled ‘r’ or the light ‘t’ in <u>got</u> ta
E e	<i>Ek</i>	Fish	A cross between the ‘e’ in <u>pe</u> t and ‘i’ in <u>pi</u> t
I i	<i>Ij</i>	I am	Pronounced beat, bit, or yet depending on the word and placement
J j	<i>Jijet</i>	Sit	Pronounced s, sh, or ch at the beginning of words; like the second ‘g’ in <u>ga</u> rage everywhere else
K k	<i>Kiki</i>	Sleep	Like the ‘c’ in <u>co</u> t at the beginning of words; like the ‘g’ in <u>go</u> t when between two vowels
L l	<i>Lik</i>	Back/ocean side	Like the ‘l’ in <u>lu</u> ll, but <i>not</i> like the ‘ll’ in <u>lu</u> ll
Ḷ ḷ	<i>Ḷadik</i>	Boy	Like the ‘ll’ in <u>lu</u> ll, but <i>not</i> like the ‘l’ in <u>lu</u> ll
M m	<i>Mā</i>	Breadfruit	Like the ‘m’ in <u>im</u> precise
Ḻ ḻ	<i>Ḻōñā</i>	Eat	Like the ‘m’ in <u>ma</u> ture
N n	<i>Ni</i>	Coconut tree/ coconut juice	Like the ‘n’ sound in <u>kn</u> it
Ñ ñ	<i>Ñi</i>	Tooth	Like the ‘ng’ in <u>si</u> ng
Ḽ ḽ	<i>Ḽo</i>	Wave	Like the ‘n’ in <u>no</u> va
O o	<i>Ok</i>	Net	Like the ‘o’ in <u>to</u> ne
Ō ō	<i>Ōn</i>	Vitamin	Like the ‘u’ in <u>bu</u> ck or the ‘oo’ in <u>bo</u> ok, depending
Ū ū	<i>Ūj</i>	Horse	Like the ‘au’ sound in <u>ca</u> ught
P p	<i>Pidodo</i>	Easy	Like ‘p’ at the end of a word and ‘b’ everywhere else
R r	<i>Riab</i>	Lie	Like a Spanish trilled (rolled) ‘r’
T t	<i>Tipñōl</i>	Outrigger	Like ‘d’ when between two vowels; otherwise like ‘t’
U u	<i>Ukulele</i>	Ukulele	Like ‘u’ in <u>tu</u> ne, but with lips rounded
Ū ū	<i>Ūlūl</i>	Ax	Like ‘oo’ in <u>bo</u> ok
W w	<i>Wia</i>	Buy/shopping	Like English ‘w’

Figure 1. *Kajin Aelōñ Kein* Marshallese Language Alphabet and Pronunciation

Names and Naming: Likiep, Marshall Islands, and Beyond

Aelōñ Kein, Ri-aelōñ-kein, and Ri-pālle: Islands, Islanders, and Outsiders

There is some debate about who coined the name Marshall Islands and when it came into popular use. One contemporary scholar suggests that Captain Thomas Gilbert devised the name in 1788 in honor of his fellow Captain John Marshall after the two sailed through the islands en route to China.¹ An early twentieth century German ethnographer writes, in contrast, that Captains Gilbert and Marshall called the islands the Mulgraves and that Marshall Islands was suggested later by the Russian admiral and explorer Adam Johann von Krusenstern.² Either way, the name stuck and the now independent nation in the northern Pacific Ocean is commonly known in English as the Marshall Islands or the Republic of the Marshall Islands, its people Marshall Islanders, and its language Marshallese. The word Marshall has in turn been indigenized as *majel*; the result is that today the Marshallese name for the Marshall Islands is *Aelōñ* in *Majel* (often abbreviated as *Majel*), the people are *ri-majel*—with the prefix *ri-* meaning people of or people from—and the language is *kajin majel*.

By the mid- to late nineteenth century, the names Marshall Islands and Marshalls Group, together with several variations on the two, were in common use among foreign missionaries, traders, and colonial officials. The people of the islands, meanwhile, continued to use indigenous terms to refer to their islands, their language, and themselves; these included *aelōñ kein* and *aelōñ kein ad* meaning these islands and our islands,³ *Rālik* (“sunset”) and *Ratak* (“sunrise”) referring to the western and eastern

¹ Spennemann, “Traditional and Nineteenth Century Communication Patterns,” 37.

² Krämer, “*Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa*,” 2.

³ According to Walsh and Heine, the name *aelōñ kein* refers to the ocean currents (*ae*), the sky (*lañ*), and the plants of the land (*kein*) of *Rālik* and *Ratak*. Given the etymology of the word *aelōñ*, however, with *ae* meaning currents and *lōñ* (not *lañ*) meaning not sky but instead many, much, plenty, or abundant, it is more likely that the term refers to the vast ocean that surrounds the islands and atolls and connects *ri-aelōñ-kein* through its many currents and through the *ri-aelōñ-kein* tradition of navigation. Reminiscent of Epeli Hau‘ofa’s vision of Oceania as a sea of islands, this etymological attention to ocean currents demonstrates that *ri-aelōñ-kein* ancestors understood that the ocean was as much a part of their islands and their life in the islands as the land itself—so much so that they incorporated it into their name for their homeland to reflect its central role in their daily lives as well as in their cultural, spiritual, and epistemological beliefs and practices. Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 152; Bender and Trussel, “MOD”; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 24.

island chains, respectively,⁴ *kajin aelōñ kein* meaning the language of these islands, and *ri-aelōñ-kein*⁵ meaning the people of these islands.⁶ Given that the history I construct here focuses primarily on the second half of the nineteenth century and that pre-*majeļ* terms continue to be in use today if to a more limited extent, I have chosen to use the indigenous rather than introduced terminology as appropriate throughout most of the historical portions of this manuscript. I therefore varyingly refer to the islands as *aelōñ kein*⁷ and Rālik and Ratak, the people as *ri-aelōñ-kein* and ri-Rālik and ri-Ratak, and the language as *kajin aelōñ kein* or the language of these islands.

Since *ri-aelōñ-kein* identify strongly with their *lāmoran* heritage lands located on particular islands and atolls and therefore often distinguish themselves as such, I also identify the people of a given atoll or island more explicitly: for example, ri-Likiep, ri-Mile, or ri-Aur, to name just a few. I allow for some exceptions when discussing the emerging German colonial context of the late nineteenth century as well as more contemporary people and circumstances; in these cases, I sometimes refer to *Majeļ* or the Marshall Islands, *ri-majeļ* or Marshall Islanders, and *kajin majeļ* or Marshallese language as linguistically or contextually appropriate.

With regard to the larger cultural and geographic region in which Likiep Atoll and the Marshall Islands are located, I alternately refer to the Pacific Islands and Oceania—a term advocated by the late Epeli Hau‘ofa to reflect the region’s vastness and interconnectivity rather than its perceived smallness and isolation⁸—as linguistically and contextually appropriate. In broader historiographic discussions, I refer to the Oceanic subregion widely known as Micronesia, meanwhile keeping in mind that the term was

⁴ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 2.

⁵ The prefix *ri-* means person from or person who; I thereby use terms with this prefix such as ri-Likiep (person from Likiep) and *ri-aelōñ-kein* (person of these islands, in reference to Marshall Islanders) to refer to people from particular places or atolls.

⁶ Until the mid-twentieth century, it seems that *ri-aelōñ-kein* was the term most generally and commonly used by the people of the islands now known as the Marshall Islands, although people also identified themselves by their matrilineal name (e.g., ri-Mwejoo), their island chain (ri-Rālik and ri-Ratak), and, perhaps later, by their island(s) or atoll(s) of origin (e.g., ri-Likiep). Both Senfft and Mason note that *ri-aelōñ-kein* also called themselves *arnej aelōñin* (people from these islands). Senfft, “*Die Marshall-Insulaner*,” 1; Mason, “Economic Organization,” 2.

⁷ Since I am not *ri-aelōñ-kein*, I do not use the term *aelōñ kein ad*, which means our islands.

⁸ Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 153.

coined by Europeans, is generally not used by the indigenous people of the islands, and does not reflect Hau‘ofa’s vision of a vast, expanding, and interconnected oceanic world.⁹

Finally, I use *ri-pālle*, the widely used and accepted *ri-aelōñ-kein* term for foreigners, visitors, and other outsiders and in particular those of European or American descent, throughout this manuscript.¹⁰

“Class” and Culture in *Ri-aelōñ-kein* Society

Perhaps in an effort to draw parallels between western and *ri-aelōñ-kein* societies or to make *ri-aelōñ-kein* socio-cultural systems comprehensible to western audiences, western scholars have often referred to the various groups that make up *ri-aelōñ-kein* society—*irooj* chiefs and *kajoor* commoners (who have varyingly been called *ri-jerbal* workers since the late nineteenth century), for example—as classes.¹¹ As I briefly suggest here and explore more in depth throughout this manuscript, however, these groups are not classes in the western sense of the word and I therefore do not describe them as such. With this in mind and for the reasons described below, I have opted to use the more neutral although certainly not unproblematic terms set and subset as necessary and appropriate to identify and refer to *ri-aelōñ-kein* groups and ranks, both historic and

⁹ Jules Sébastien César Dumont d’Urville is generally credited with inventing the terms Polynesia (“many islands”), Melanesia (“dark islands”), and Micronesia (“tiny islands”) in a paper he presented to the Société de Géographie in 1832. While d’Urville introduced these terms in part as geographic designations, he also hoped they would give him an edge in contemporaneous discussions and theories on race and racial variation. He was so anxious to gain this edge and surpass others in his field, in fact, that he borrowed the terms from an unpublished paper by Domeny de Rienzi without giving the author due credit. Tcherkézoff, “A Long and Unfortunate Voyage,” 176-180.

¹⁰ Although the term *ri-pālle* has often been said to mean people with clothes, there is no linguistic evidence for this. In fact, the translation seems to be based on the erroneous assumption that the terms *pālle* and *balle* (covering, clothing, possessions) mean the same thing, when in fact the two words are phonetically and linguistically quite different. I suggest instead that the word *pālle* comes from the American trade ship *Belle* that was circulating around Rālik and Ratak in the mid-nineteenth century. Captained by Ichabod Handy, the ship was among earliest to establish regular trade relations with people in Rālik and Ratak starting sometime in the 1830s and was the first to bring ABCFM missionaries to the islands in 1855. With this in mind, the word *pālle* might represent an indigenized pronunciation of *Belle*, with *ri-pālle* originally meaning people of/from the (ship) *Belle*. This is pure conjecture on my part, however an interesting possibility nonetheless. Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 45.

¹¹ See, for example, Mason, “Economic Organization,” 38; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 74-75; Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 5; Rynkiewicz, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 62; Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 78; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10-12.

contemporary, which are in reality much more complex, diverse, and even at odds than class and subclass or even set and subset might suggest.¹²

The word class in western intellectual and economic parlance has historically had two different, although not altogether unrelated, meanings and applications. First, class has been used historically to categorize people in capitalist societies according to their level of economic wealth (e.g. upper, middle, and lower) or their relationship to the means of economic production (e.g., bourgeoisie and proletariat); second, it has been used in various intellectual traditions with roots in Marxist theory to describe particular social formations (e.g., the working class) whose members have common interests, similar views about how society should be organized, a shared consciousness of their position in that society, and a general sense of antagonism toward other classes and toward the socio-economic system as a whole.¹³

In contrast, *ri-aelōñ-kein* society has historically consisted of two overarching socio-cultural groups called *irooj* chiefs and *kajoor* commoners that are thought to have sacred origins. Together, these two groups own or hold land in a unique and culturally prescribed corporate group ownership arrangement in which the former has primary (“residual”) title to and interests in various *wāto* land parcels and the latter holds secondary (“provisional”) title to the same *wāto*.¹⁴ While this hierarchical system of land tenure and socio-cultural rank and status has ancient roots in mutual hostilities and competition over resources, the historical relationship between *irooj* and *kajoor* has been defined more by localized reciprocity, mutual obligation, and joint land tenure than by intragroup consciousness or intergroup conflict—although *irooj-kajoor* conflict certainly does occur and has occurred historically. The result is a socio-cultural system in which islands and genealogies and their presumed divine origins have a more central place in *ri-aelōñ-kein* identities and socio-cultural formations than economic relations, material wealth, or intergroup antagonism, although this has changed to a certain extent since the establishment of the copra industry in the mid-1800s. With these and other issues in mind

¹² Williams, *Keywords*, 60-69.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Oliver, *Oceania 2*: 977-978.

and for the sake of clarity and readability, I have chosen to avoid using the term class throughout this manuscript when referring to *ri-aelōñ-kein* socio-cultural groups.

I have also made choices about how I identify and discuss some of the groups and ranks that have historically made up *ri-aelōñ-kein* society in general and post-1877 Likiep society in particular. While these decisions have not been easy and at times might not be completely accurate or appropriate, I have deemed them necessary to maintain a certain level of consistency across the various themes, topics, and time periods covered by this manuscript.

Likiep and *Ri-Likiep*: Likiep and its People

Since the 1877 purchase agreement and 1878 transfer of title that reassigned ownership of Likiep Atoll to José Anton deBrum,¹⁵ Adolf Capelle,¹⁶ and Charles Ingalls¹⁷ and thereby nullified *irooj* sovereignty on Likiep Atoll, *irooj* there have been effectively replaced by the descendants of two of the original *ri-pālle* purchasers of the atoll and their *ri-aelōñ-kein* spouses who today make up the extended deBrum and Capelle families. While sometimes referred to as *irooj* chief or *iroojlaplap* paramount chief in legal documents and judicial rulings,¹⁸ the deBrums and Capelles are not considered true *irooj* within *ri-aelōñ-kein* society or culture. They are instead varyingly referred to as

¹⁵ José Anton deBrum of Germany is varyingly referred to in historical documents as José, Anton, and Antone. Although deBrum's descendants often call him José (perhaps to distinguish him from his son Anton, Jr.) and he is generally referred to as José in legal documents (see, for example, "Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll"), it appears that people mostly referred to him as Anton (see, for example, Unknown, "Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls].") With this in mind, I have chosen to refer to deBrum as Anton except when quoting an original text.

¹⁶ Georg Eduard Adolf Capelle of Germany went by the name Adolf. Spelled Adolph in various historical and narrative texts, I use the German spelling Adolf except when quoting an original text.

¹⁷ Together with Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum, Charles Ingalls was a partner in the firm A. Capelle & Co. from 1876 until his death in 1896. Ingalls owned a portion of Likiep Atoll until his wife sold his shares of the atoll to the Jaluit Gesellschaft (Jaluit Company) following her husband's death. (These shares were eventually recuperated and divided by Capelle and deBrum; see Chapter 6.) While Ingalls was at one time an "owner" of land on Likiep Atoll, he is seldom remembered or mentioned as such today as discussions of the 1877 sale and 1878 transfer tend to focus exclusively on Capelle and deBrum and their descendants. Thusly, while I do include Charles Ingalls wherever historically appropriate (see Chapter 6), he does not always appear in quoted material or reflections about Likiep's history and ownership.

¹⁸ See, for example, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, *Code of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*, 26.

owners (in both English and Marshallese),¹⁹ *apkaaj* (from the English half-caste and in reference to their mixed *ri-pālle* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* heritage), and *ri-pālle* (in reference to their lighter skin color, whether real or perceived, and their position as cultural anomalies or outsiders despite their legal ownership of the atoll) both on Likiep and within the broader context of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society. These and other terms serve as potent reminders of Likiep’s contentious and contested past and of the many forces—imperial, economic, political, racial, and otherwise—that dramatically transformed Likiep society from the late nineteenth century onward.

One of the significant outcomes of these changes has been that *kajoor*, whose designation means not just commoner but also force, strength, power, and might and therefore suggests a certain social and cultural relevance, have been essentially although not entirely renamed *ri-jerbal*, a term that means worker or people who work. While this designation underlines the significance of the plantation economy and the role of the *kajoor* in that economy on the one hand, it also ostensibly delegitimizes inherent *kajoor* rights to land and power, meanwhile relegating *kajoor* to a subservient position that is not altogether appropriate in a *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural context. Nevertheless, the term *ri-jerbal* has been in common use among *ri-aelōñ-kein* since the early plantation days and remains so today and even more so than *kajoor*, although the latter term is also still used.

Since the establishment of the plantation economy on Likiep in the early 1880s, *ri-jerbal* workers there have also been varyingly referred to as *kōñakō* and *ri-kilmeej*. *Kōñakō* is from the Hawaiian *kanaka* meaning person or laborer and was frequently used during the mid- to late nineteenth century to refer to “native laborers in Pacific trade pidgin”²⁰ on trade ships and in various locales around Oceania. The term seems to have migrated to Likiep Atoll with the two *ri-pālle* purchasers turned plantation owners who had spent time in Hawai‘i and on the Pacific trade and whaling circuit before arriving in southern Rālik in the mid-nineteenth century. *Ri-kilmeej*, on the other hand, means black skinned person and is generally considered a derogatory designation that refers to the sometimes darker skin color of Likiep *ri-jerbal* who, until more recently, generally did

¹⁹ Although the English word “owner” has been incorporated into the Marshallese language (*owner*) as a designation for the deBrum and Capelle descendant-owners of Likiep Atoll, I use owner as an English word to avoid confusion and awkward phrasing.

²⁰ Chappell, *Double Ghosts*, xiii-xiv.

not intermarry with Likiep owners who have often been referred to as *ri-pālle* in reference to their mixed *ri-aelōñ-kein/ri-pālle* heritage and their sometimes lighter skin color.

At the same time, however, these terms give the false impression that post-1877 Likiep society was much more racially or culturally segregated than it actually was by suggesting that all owners were *ri-pālle* and all *ri-jerbal* were *ri-aelōñ-kein* or *ri-kilmeej*, when in fact it was much more complicated than that with the two groups intermingling and intermarrying from the very beginning and to a much greater degree as time went on. In fact, aside from the original purchasers and their former partner Charles Ingalls, succeeding owners (with perhaps a few exceptions) have been *ri-aelōñ-kein* in the sense that they have been the children of *ri-aelōñ-kein* mothers—which, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, is of no small consequence. As a result, a debate has raged over the past hundred or so years over who really owns Likiep Atoll; this debate has been much more about how land tenure and so called ownership are defined and legitimized in Rālik and Ratak than about skin color or part European ancestry, although the latter has certainly also been a factor in many respects.

The terms are also problematic because they imply that the owner-descendants of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum have remained in control of Likiep and the means of production there since the atoll's sale, meanwhile overshadowing the fact that owners and *ri-jerbal* alike were subject to three successive colonial administrations from 1885 to 1986 (Germany from 1885 to 1914; Japan from 1914 to 1944; and the United States from 1944 to 1986). They also conceal the important reality that, despite deBrum's purchase of Likiep in 1877 and transfer of ownership to A. Capelle & Co. in 1878, Capelle and deBrum's owner-descendants have not been permitted to own Likiep outright or exclusive of Likiep *ri-jerbal* since the early twentieth century. In fact, Likiep *ri-jerbal* have been able to successfully argue that the kind of western-style fee simple ownership structure perhaps envisioned by Capelle, deBrum, and Ingalls in the original purchase and transfer agreements is not valid or relevant in a *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural and epistemological context and have managed to maintain their culturally sanctioned birthright to also hold rights to land on Likiep Atoll in the process.

All this being said and in an effort to avoid more racialized terms such as *kōṇakō*, *ri-kilmeej*, and *ri-pālle* in discussions about ri-Likiep, I have opted to use the terms owner and *ri-gerbal* when referring to the two overarching groups that make up Likiep society today even as I use *irooj* and *kajoor* in broader discussions about pre-1877 Likiep society and *ri-aelōñ-kein* history and society more generally.

These and other linguistic choices are by no means unproblematic; the terms owner and *ri-gerbal*, for example, carry with them the assumption that certain families own land where others do not or that one group works and the other does not, when in fact it is far more complicated than that. Nevertheless, the terms I have chosen are widely used and generally accepted among the people of Likiep Atoll and the Marshall Islands and reflect the reality that a two set socio-cultural system does still exist there much as it does across the Marshall Islands despite years of cross set intermarriage.

As this manuscript demonstrates, identifying *ri-aelōñ-kein* by their *lāmoran*²¹ heritage land is similarly complicated; this is especially true when it comes to Likiep since many people including the so called original or indigenous people of Likiep and the *ri-aelōñ-kein* owner-descendants of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum claim various pieces of land on the atoll as their own. Given that *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture generally allows for multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting claims to land, however, I have chosen to refer to all Likiep claimants—owners and *kajoor/ri-gerbal* alike—as ri-Likiep, meanwhile recognizing that this choice is not without problems given Likiep’s complex history.

As with spellings, direct quotations remain unchanged regardless of the terms used, with the possible exception of diacritical marks as outlined in the previous section, *Kajin Aelōñ Kein: Marshallese Language Spelling and Pronunciation*.

²¹ A. Kabua indicates that *lāmoran* refers to land inherited on the father’s side while *kapijukunen* refers to land inherited on the mother’s side. He also notes that *kapijukunen* is “the bwij’s [matrilineage’s] domicile or origin customarily” whereas *lāmoran* “is a homeland where the bwij have lived and grown up from generation to generation along an extended period of time under their patrilineal heritage.” See Chapter 3 for more on these and other terms relating to land, landownership, and inheritance. A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 8, 16-17.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Islands of History

This manuscript represents a preliminary history of the presumed sale of Likiep Atoll in the northern Ratak (eastern) chain of the Marshall Islands. Throughout, I engage in an initial exploration of the historical and cultural circumstances that may have contributed to the sale of the atoll in 1877 by Iroojlaplap¹ Jortōkā² to resident *ri-pālle* foreign trader José Anton deBrum in exchange for “merchandise consisting of cloth, hardware, cannon, muskets, ammunition, tobacco, etc., etc., to the value of twelve hundred and fifty dollars”³ and deBrum’s subsequent transfer of ownership to the partners of A. Capelle & Co. in 1878.⁴ To do this, I look beyond the text of various Likiep land deeds and other written agreements and consider the dynamics that likely affected Jortōkā’s decision but are not captured by or reflected in surviving documents. Specifically, I consider the physical condition of the land; chiefly rivalries and competition over copra profits and proceeds; the prevalence of land sales and leases as an alliance building strategy among *irooj* chiefs from the late 1850s through the mid-1880s; the pervasiveness of violence, blackbirding, and epidemic disease; genealogical connections linking Jortōkā and Anton deBrum through marriage; and the flexible application of *ri-aelōñ-kein* philosophies authorizing *irooj* to incorporate *ri-pālle* into their notions and practices of land use and tenure at that time. I also highlight some of the counterhistories that call the validity and veracity of Jortōkā’s sale of Likiep Atoll into question and consider the important role the counternarratives have played not only in efforts by *kajoor* commoners to retain a place for themselves within Likiep’s cultural, historical, and genealogical landscape but also in challenging the truth of history on the atoll for over a century.

While the overarching goals and objectives of this manuscript are many, I aim in particular to privilege diverse *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-Likiep* identities and understandings of

¹ I varyingly use Iroojlaplap and Irooj as titles when referring to paramount chiefs including Jortōkā, Kabua, and others.

² The spelling of Jortōkā’s name varies widely in historical texts; variations include Jortaka, Jortake, Jurrtaka, Jurrtaka, etc. I have chosen to spell his name using the new spelling as standardized in the MED.

³ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

⁴ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

and approaches to the past; to construct a history whose structure and organization is reflective of and reflects on what Marshall Sahlins calls the culturally ordered⁵ nature of Likiep's past and present; to highlight the active engagement of *ri-aelōñ-kein* in colonial encounters, engagements, and activities in their islands; to disrupt notions of the Marshall Islands and Likiep Atoll as culturally or historically homogenous or static entities; and to contribute to what David Gegeo and others have referred to as the ongoing dehegemonization⁶ of Pacific studies and, in this case, the discipline of Pacific history.

Historian David Hanlon asserts that the “importance of . . . islands in terms of what they can teach us . . . is in inverse proportion to their size.”⁷ This is certainly true for Likiep Atoll and the thousands of other islands and atolls that make up the geographic region known as Micronesia in the northern Pacific Ocean where the physical surface area of the majority of islands is no more than one square mile and is in many cases much less. Similarly, the populations of the region's seven contemporary political entities—the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Republic of Kiribati, and the Republic of Nauru—are physically and geographically small relative to most of the world's other nations and territories. The population of the Marshall Islands, for example, is only about 65,000 and is distributed across many of the country's five isolated islands and twenty-nine atolls spanning more than 750,000 square miles of ocean. The country's total land area of just seventy square miles is divided across more than 1,500 tiny islets, many of which have only a handful of residents. Among these, Likiep Atoll has a land area of just under four square miles and a population of only about 400 people.⁸ These are tiny islands indeed.

And yet as Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa has so aptly stated, the islands and populations of the region he calls Oceania are not small at all; rather, they are part of a much larger oceanic world in which boundaries, movements, and even cultures and

⁵ Sahlins, *Islands of History*, vii.

⁶ Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, “How We Know,” 1.

⁷ Hanlon, “Micronesia: Writing and Rewriting the Histories of a Nonentity,” 4.

⁸ The 2011 Republic of the Marshall Islands census lists the population of Likiep Atoll as 401 people. Republic of the Marshall Islands, “The RMI 2011 Census of Population and Housing,” 7.

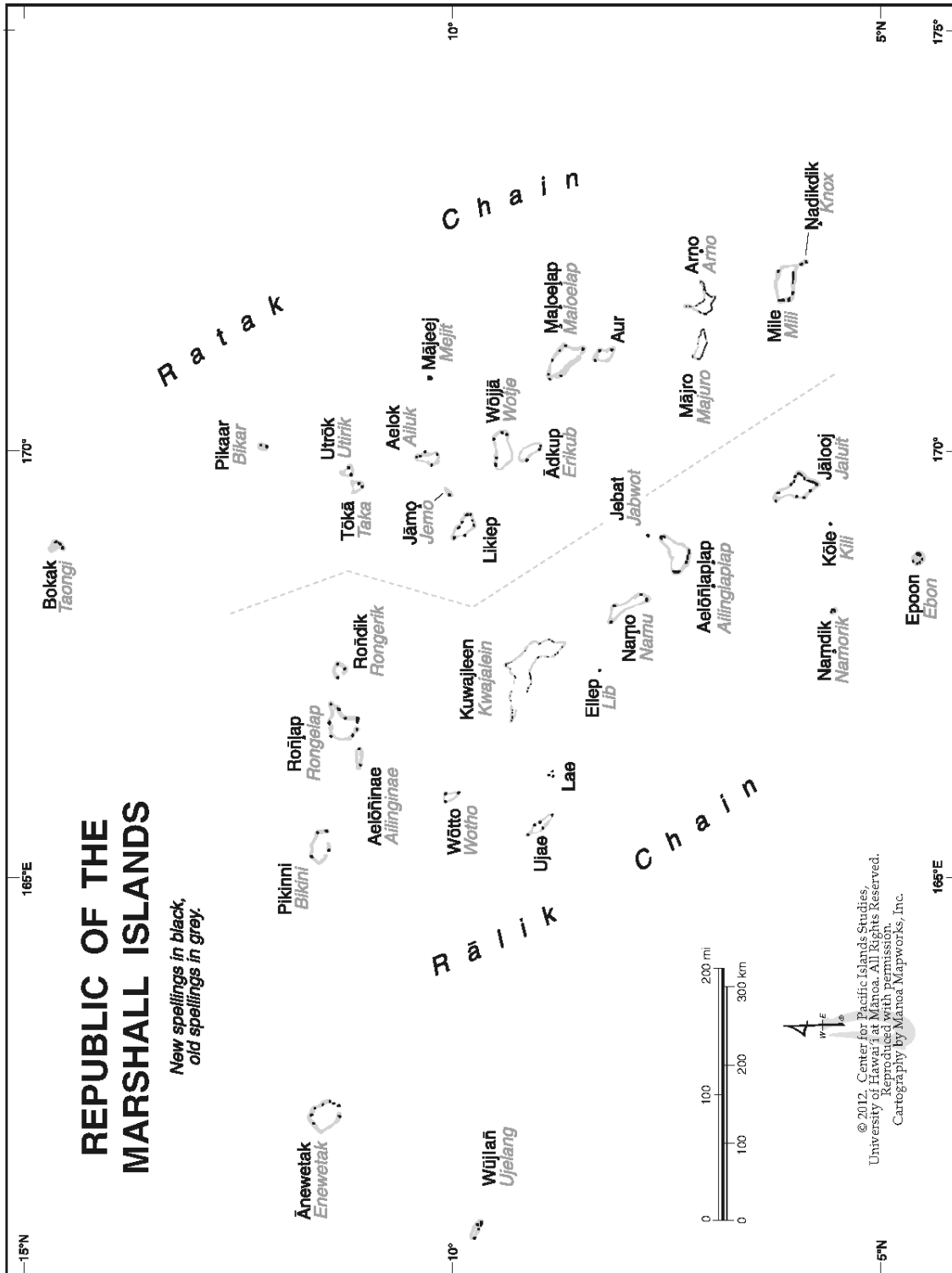


Figure 2. Map of the Marshall Islands (Rālik and Ratak)
Source: Center for Pacific Islands Studies



Figure 4. Likiep Island from the air, 2007
Photograph by Monica LaBriola

identities are “constantly negotiated and even contested.”⁹ Meanwhile, despite their physical size relative to much larger continents, the islands are home to some of the world’s oldest cultures, boast rich and complex histories that span thousands of years and many more miles of ocean, and have been at the crossroads of world history for hundreds if not thousands of years. In fact, it has only been since the arrival of geographically larger continental powers that the islands of the Pacific have been classified as politically, economically, and historically small, bounded, and insignificant, when in reality they make up a sea of islands that is vast and expanding and whose many peoples, cultures, histories, and historiographies have much to contribute to contemporary understandings of and approaches to the past, present, and future—with those of Likiep Atoll being no exception.

This project demonstrates that histories on and of a place as apparently small as Likiep Atoll have much to contribute not just to local understandings of the past, but also to ongoing discussions about broader translocal themes—colonialism and imperialism, islander agency, accommodation and resistance, Christian missionization and conversion, indigenous knowledge and epistemology, land and sovereignty, and the practice and construction of history itself—and their various encounters with and impacts on Pacific Islander communities over the past several centuries. My localized, ethnographic

⁹ Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 154-155.

approach challenges broad regional histories¹⁰ of Micronesia and the Pacific Islands that, while significant for the larger trends and themes they elucidate, do not capture the multiplicity of situated events, experiences, and interpretations that make Oceania so diverse for its many pasts, presents, and futures—and which are key to understanding histories of and in Oceania more generally.

Colonizing Histories

Despite Oceania's long histories and rich cultures and traditions, hegemonic powers in Europe, Asia, and the Americas have pointed to the perceived isolation and relative smallness of the islands and their populations as justifications for exploiting them economically, controlling them politically, and in some cases writing them off all together over the past 600 years. The United States' use of Bikini and Eniwetok atolls in the Marshall Islands to conduct sixty-seven atmospheric nuclear tests from June 30, 1946 to August 18, 1958 is one of the most egregious examples.¹¹ The atolls' so called remoteness and distance from any major American population center were considered grounds for conducting the tests and displacing and even irradiating their inhabitants with little regard for potential long term effects, which in the most extreme cases have included widespread illness and permanent displacement. Eleven years after the detonation of the final nuclear test in Eniwetok, President Nixon's then Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger dismissed arguments against the United States' right to eminent domain in Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and the Marshall Islands, which at the time made up the U.S. administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, with this infamous quote: "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?"¹² Indeed, for the United States in the mid-twentieth century, these and other Micronesian islands and societies were not only small and remote, they were wholly inconsequential.

The United States' use of the Marshall Islands for nuclear testing and Kissinger's statement a decade later sums up the United States' attitude and approach to its territories

¹⁰ See, for example, Armitage and Bashford, eds. (forthcoming 2013), Hezel (1983, 1995, and 2013), Iglar (2013), and Matsuda (2012).

¹¹ Republic of the Marshall Islands, "U.S. Nuclear Testing Program in the Marshall Islands."

¹² Quoted in McHenry, *Micronesia, Trust Betrayed*, 98.

in the Micronesian islands since the end of World War II and encapsulates colonialism in the region since Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan first bumped into Guam in 1521. Since Magellan's arrival, seven colonial powers including Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States have had their hand in administering and exploiting various islands and areas throughout the region. In the majority of cases, the economic, political, social, and cultural aspirations, desires, and objectives of these world powers have overshadowed and overpowered those of the islands' indigenous peoples, with the purchase of Likiep Atoll in 1877 by *ri-pālle* trader Anton deBrum and the subsequent German administration of the Marshall Islands from 1885 to 1914 being just two examples of this larger phenomenon. Indeed, much like the activities of Japan and the United States in the Marshall Islands over the past century, the purchase of Likiep and Germany's subsequent administration of the islands were steered primarily by *ri-pālle* economic and political motives—the acquisition of land and personal property for the establishment of copra plantations and the expansion of the German colonial empire—rather than out of concern for long term security or welfare of the islands' indigenous people or institutions.¹³ Too often, the outcome has been the displacement and dispossession of Marshall Islanders from their *lāmoran* heritage lands and from the cultural and epistemological foundations that have made those land parcels, islands, and atolls theirs for centuries.

Much the same can be said of the practice of history in Oceania in general and in the islands of Micronesia more specifically over the past several hundred years, which has too often been overwritten and overridden by European, Japanese, American, and other non-indigenous *ri-pālle* authors of and approaches to remembering, recording, and narrating the past. Although islanders across the region have chronicled, preserved, and passed down their histories for thousands of years via oral and other traditions including stories, legends, genealogies, chants, songs, dances, tattoos, traditional medicine, special events, and many others, written documents and other records produced by European, Asian, and American explorers, traders, missionaries, beachcombers, and colonial

¹³ W. Smith, "The Ideology of German Colonialism," 641-642.

officials have generally dominated the *ri-pālle* historical record in hegemonic fashion since the mid-sixteenth century.

For Pacific scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith of Aotearoa New Zealand and Manulani Aluli Meyer of Hawai‘i, imperialism and colonialism are not just about foreign political and economic hegemony in the islands, but are also “the specific formations through which the West [has come] to ‘see’, to ‘name’ and to ‘know’ indigenous communities”¹⁴ and to thereby subjugate Pacific islanders epistemologically and intellectually by defining what about their cultures and histories is worthy of investigation and the means and media through which these should be narrated and represented.¹⁵ As a result, written histories and other works of scholarship produced from the physical and intellectual edges¹⁶ of the Pacific are often dominated by imperial imaginations and imaginings rather than by the perspectives or visions of indigenous people and communities.¹⁷ A more recent counterhegemonic trend has led Pacific Islander scholars such as David Gegeo, Subramani, Vilsoni Hereniko, and others to point to western intellectual traditions and their historic claims to universalism as barriers to understanding Pacific pasts and contemporary Oceania—and, in turn, to the intellectual empowerment of indigenous Pacific peoples.¹⁸

Smith, Gegeo, and others maintain that such illustrations rarely incorporate indigenous forms or sources of knowledge or recognize indigenous epistemologies as legitimate frameworks for remembering and representing the past; instead, they frequently rely on outsider interpretations and frames of reference to construct histories of Oceanic places and peoples. As a result, few of the documents, accounts, narratives, or works of art found in the world’s great libraries and museums provide island based or islander centered interpretations of how indigenous ancestors of contemporary Pacific islanders might have imagined their worlds, interpreted their experiences, or framed their decisions—or how their descendants remember those events and experiences today.

¹⁴ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 63.

¹⁵ Meyer, “Our Own Liberation,” 125.

¹⁶ T. Teaiwa, “L(o)sing the Edge,” 343-344.

¹⁷ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 24.

¹⁸ Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, “How We Know,” 55-57; Subramani, “Emerging Epistemologies,” 1-2; Hereniko, “Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism,” 78-79.

Instead, they depict Pacific islands and islanders from perspectives that have been imported or imposed on the islands from the outside. The result is that while many such recorded histories are certainly about Oceanic places and peoples, they are seldom epistemologically of the region and just as rarely target Pacific islanders as their primary audience. Much the same can be said of contemporary regional approaches to Pacific history whose broad strokes and “connecting narratives”¹⁹ frequently overshadow local manifestations of, involvements in, adaptations to, and interpretations of events and experiences such as colonialism and imperialism and the dispossession of land and sovereignty. This investigation begins to uncover what makes Likiep Atoll unique in this regard even as it speaks to some of the regional trends and happenings that have connected Pacific islands and people across time and oceans for many centuries.

Approaching Likiep

While important traces²⁰ of and clues to Likiep Atoll’s past are located in books, journal articles, ethnographies, regional histories, captains logs, missionary accounts, travel narratives, legal proceedings, photographs, and other documents in libraries, museums, and archives in the Marshall Islands, Pohnpei,²¹ Guam, Honolulu, New South Wales, and even Stanford, California, many of the atoll’s multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting histories persist deep within its landscapes and seascapes, unique cultural expressions and articulations, power structures and struggles, and many narratives and counternarratives, none of which is wholly located in any book, journal article, or historical essay. While relatively absent from the western historical record, Likiep’s many histories live on in the hearts, minds, and stories of *ri-Likiep* and other *ri-aelōñ-kein* who continue to experience, express, and debate them in their everyday lives and through their own unique historiographic traditions on Likiep, on Mājro and Ebjā (the Marshall Islands’ two urban centers), and across the United States in places such as Honolulu, Hawai‘i and Springdale, Arkansas where many *ri-Likiep* reside today after decades of migration away from their *lāmoran* heritage lands following the institution of

¹⁹ Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*, 8.

²⁰ Winduo, “Unwriting Oceania,” 600.

²¹ The Micronesian Seminar has relocated to Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia.

the Compact of Free Association between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States in 1986.²²

Likiep's histories are significant not just for what they reveal about the atoll's past and its role in world history, but also because they continue to be deeply relevant and in many cases contentious and contested in the present. Because these histories speak to important contemporary issues such as land tenure, structures of authority, culture, and epistemology, they carry with them a great deal of political, economic, and emotional consequence for everyone who considers Likiep Atoll home. What's more, they have the potential to speak to events and experiences beyond Likiep Atoll and the Marshall Islands in places such as Nauru and Banaba, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, Hawai'i and New Zealand, and beyond where indigenous communities have varying and sometimes simultaneously engaged with, accommodated, been victimized by, and resisted foreign imperial powers over issues of land and sovereignty for centuries.

On Likiep as in the rest of the Marshall Islands and much of Oceania, these histories and traditions continue to take on a variety of predominantly oral forms such as *bwebwenato* stories, *inoñ* legends and myths, *jabōnkōnnaan* proverbs and wise sayings, *kadkad* genealogies, *eb* dances, and *al* songs, that are vastly and fundamentally different from western style written histories in format, content, and approach. And yet despite these and other differences, oral traditions are nevertheless fully developed histories in their own right and composed by oral historians who, not unlike western historians, sift through "the debris of the past" in an effort to determine what about that past is important and worth preserving.²³ These histories are constructed and perpetuated within locally specific epistemologies that assign a privileged ontological status to certain historical truths—stories of first arrivals and the supernatural origins of land and chiefly authority, for example—that are significant both for what they say about the past and for what they reveal about contemporary cultural and social truths including land tenure patterns, power relations, and cultural values.²⁴ These traditions reveal a great deal not only about people

²² Title I Section IV of the amended Compact of Free Association between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States (2003) continues visa-free immigration and employment status to citizens of the RMI as granted in the original 1986 Compact. "Compact of Free Association, as Amended," IV-6-9.

²³ Spear, "Oral Traditions," 136.

²⁴ Poyer, "Defining History across Cultures," 88.



Figure 5. Aunty Bonny deBrum performing a Likiep dance, Likiep 2007
Photograph by Monica LaBriola, Likiep

and events of the past, but also about the culturally and geographically specific epistemological lenses through which they have been produced, disseminated, interpreted, and understood and are therefore important both in terms of the historical facts they encompass and for what they reveal about *ri-aelōñ-kein* beliefs about and approaches to their own histories, cultures, and identities.

Indigenizing Histories and Historiographies

Since the publication of Epeli Hau‘ofa’s seminal 1993 essay “Our Sea of Islands,” many Pacific Islander scholars including Teresia Teaiwa, Katerina Teaiwa, Vicente Diaz, J. Kehaulani Kauanui, David Gegeo, Subramani, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Vilsoni Hereniko, Pat Hohepa, Keith Camacho, Anne Hattori, and others have sought to reconceptualize and re-write Oceania’s many histories in ways that challenge not just political and economic colonialism but also the academic and epistemological imperialism that have driven the production of external knowledge about Oceanic places for centuries. More recently, this movement has led these and other scholars to explore and incorporate western intellectual theories and approaches including those of Marx, Gramsci, Bourdieu, Hall, Spivak, and others in an effort to articulate issues of power, culture, and identity in their own communities. Many have found, however, that while valuable in certain

respects, contemporary cultural studies approaches often remain far removed from the region and, as a result, serve to further alienate the very people they claim to represent.

David Gegeo, Teresia Teaiwa, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and others suggest that, in order to begin to shatter these barriers, Pacific scholars, intellectuals, and artists must actively work to formulate approaches that both recognize and contribute to the production of counternarratives and the dehegemonization of western discourses and knowledge production.²⁵ These approaches should reflect local knowledge about, understandings of, and approaches to the past and be steeped in indigenous cultures and epistemologies that take into account indigenous theories about the nature and limits of knowledge; relevant and appropriate sources of knowledge and frameworks for knowing; and the culturally specific ethics of who can seek out particular kinds of knowledge, who can be a knower, and what kinds of information can be known and is worth knowing and preserving.²⁶ In the process, they suggest, Pacific historians must seek out ways to incorporate and reflect indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing into their renderings of the past in an effort to dehegemonize our sources of knowledge, frames of reference, research methodologies, and narrational strategies and approaches.

These scholars together with James Clifford, Houston Wood, and others stress that such approaches can only be useful for Pacific studies if they are rooted in Pacific places and genealogies, are adapted in ways that make them relevant to the region, and are adjusted to allow room for multiple tensions and oppositions that might not fit into western frameworks and that in turn emphasize indigenous cultures, epistemologies, and ways of knowing.²⁷ They also suggest that the dehegemonization of knowledge in and about Oceania can only begin if Pacific scholars rely first and foremost on indigenous epistemologies, interpretations, and experiences and bring in western and other outside theories and frameworks only when they support indigenous re-articulations and help “empower native people as they struggle to transform social injustices and inequalities”²⁸ both within the academy and in their everyday lives. This project is my own initial

²⁵ Subramani, “Emerging Epistemologies,” 1.

²⁶ Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, “How We Know,” 1-2; Meyer, “Our Own Liberation,” 125.

²⁷ Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” 469-470; Diaz and Kauanui, “Native Pacific Cultural Studies,” 318-325; T. Teaiwa, “L(o)osing the Edge,” 352; Wood, “Cultural Studies for Oceania,” 340-343.

²⁸ Hereniko, “Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism,” 88.

attempt to incorporate *ri-aelōñ-kein* knowledge and epistemologies in the construction of a history of Likiep Atoll that privileges indigenous experiences and interpretations even as it recognizes and comes to terms with their diversity, complexity, and occasional ambiguity.

Currents of Pacific History

As I have searched for a methodological framework and approach to help me construct this preliminary written history of the sale of Likiep Atoll, I have remained committed to writing a history that is culturally informed, theoretically relevant and “on the edge,”²⁹ and reflects Likiep’s many entanglements, complexities, and counternarratives even as it remains recognizable and accessible to the people who remember, practice, and perform this history every day. With this in mind, I have purposefully limited my use of western theory and cultural studies approaches and jargon and attempted instead to follow the lead of contemporary Pacific scholars from across disciplines who emphasize the need in Pacific studies to privilege islander cultures, contexts, identities, experiences, and epistemologies.

Within the field of Pacific history, this important trend has been developing since the mid-1950s when James W. Davidson inspired a historiographic shift away from colonists and colonial powers and toward islands and islanders.³⁰ Indeed, Davidson viewed the practice of Pacific history through the mid-1950s as a history of western expansion, hegemony, and empire that spoke little to islander experiences or perspectives. In this way, he encouraged contemporaneous and future scholars of Oceania to shift their focus away from empires and toward the islands themselves in an effort to understand more about islander experiences and responses to colonialism and imperialism in their homes.

Davidson argued that, to do this, Pacific historians should revisit, reread, and, even more importantly, look beyond the archives to indigenous cultural and historical forms and expressions including oral traditions and records written in indigenous

²⁹ T. Teaiwa, “L(o)osing the Edge,” 343.

³⁰ Davidson, “The Study of Pacific History”; Davidson, “Problems of Pacific History,” 14.

languages by and for the people of the islands.³¹ By considering island centered knowledges and sources of knowledge, he proposed, western historians might begin to appreciate and, to the extent possible, understand and re-present indigenous perceptions of and experiences with imperialism in Oceania or how individuals and communities within the region have received, interpreted, utilized, transformed, and in many cases rejected colonial institutions and conventions over the past several hundred years.³² Davidson hoped that this would in turn lead to deeper and more complex understandings and interpretations of the people, cultures, and histories of Oceania both past and present.

Over the past half century, Davidson's work has had profound and far-reaching effects on the discipline of Pacific history. Most immediately, he inspired a generation of historians including Henry Maude and Dorothy Shineberg, among others, who not only produced pioneering works of scholarship that continue to influence, challenge, and transform the practice of history in the region but have also influenced and inspired subsequent generations of Pacific scholars. Perhaps most notable among these was Greg Denning, an Australian historian of the Pacific who made great strides with his seminal *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774-1880* and other work rereading and reinterpreting archives in an effort to cross history's cultural and epistemological beach in order to highlight indigenous cultures, experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of events to often construed according to outsider perspectives and frameworks.³³ Denning's approach further influenced and inspired others in the field including Nicolas Thomas, Klaus Neumann, David Hanlon, David Chappell, Pat Hohepa, Vicente Diaz, Lin Poyer, and Anne Hattori, to name just a few, whose work over the past several decades has brought islander experiences, perspectives, interpretations, epistemologies, and historiographies to the forefront of Pacific Islands history and histories.

These and other Pacific scholars have begun implementing interdisciplinary methods to challenge both fatalistic approaches and postmodernist assumptions about the incommensurability of cultures; in the process, they have looked to the work of

³¹ Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 10.

³³ Denning, *Islands and Beaches*. Also see Denning, *The Bounty*; Denning, "History 'in' the Pacific"; Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language*; Denning, *The Death of William Gooch*; and Denning, *Beach Crossings*.

anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists, ethnobotanists, folklorists, artists, and, perhaps most importantly, indigenous historians and cultural practitioners, to produce interdisciplinary, culturally informed works that re-present the past with islander perspectives, interpretations, cultures, and epistemologies in mind. These authors strive to depict islanders as active producers of their own histories rather than as the mere passive victims of the arrivals, discoveries, desires, institutions, and interpretations of outsiders; they also seek to present culture and cultural knowledge not as static or fixed but rather as flexible, adaptable, and historically ordered³⁴—and as essential to any construction of islander pasts.

Proponents and practitioners of the dehegemonization of Pacific history in particular and Pacific studies more generally can be found in a variety of locations and disciplines across and outside the region, and those focusing on Micronesian places and histories are no exception. Within the larger Oceanic historiographic context, Klaus Neumann is just one example of a Pacific historian who has attempted to turn hegemonical history on its head by challenging the assumption that the “conventional historical narrative [is] the obvious and most authentic way of representing the past,” and in particular the pasts of predominantly oral societies.³⁵ To this end, Neumann insists that any history of an oral culture must incorporate oral traditions, not so much to prove the past or confirm written accounts, but rather to reflect and represent the beliefs, values, and histories that the bearers of these traditions hold as true. To this end, Neumann maintains that oral traditions are “true constructions of the past, no matter if they [are] factually correct reconstructions” and asserts that “oral tradition is history” whose power lies not so much in its capacity to prove the past as in its potential to “interrupt the homogeneous [and hegemonic] narrational rendering of the past” with indigenous knowledge, interpretations, histories, and truths.³⁶

Acknowledging that “a history is . . . an individual’s articulation of the past” and that it is thereby impossible to construct an objective or even factual rendering of past events, Neumann juxtaposes various oral accounts, enactments, memories, photographs,

³⁴ Sahlins, *Islands of History*, vii.

³⁵ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 121-122.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

and glosses in an effort to present multiple truths and interpretations.³⁷ To do this, he borrows filmmaker Alexander Kluge's technique of montage to construct a set of intersecting and overlapping histories³⁸ and positions himself more as an editor of histories than an author of history per se. In this way, Neumann attempts to blast open traditionally monolithic western reconstructions of history and notions of authorship by replacing the historical epic with eclecticism and overlapping points of contact.³⁹ With this approach, Neumann embraces his own and others' subjectivities and the possibility that, in addition to facts, so called "untruth" also makes history by becoming real in the present.⁴⁰ In the process, he recognizes that, like all histories—oral, written, and otherwise—the stories he constructs are not authoritative renderings of past events, but rather assemblages of stories that might help "move toward the truth of things" with respect to contemporary understandings of and approaches to the past.⁴¹

Within the subfield of Micronesian history, David Hanlon's history of Pohnpei also promotes the dehegemonization of history and historiography by including and privileging indigenous cultures, experiences, interpretations, forms of knowledge, and methods of historical practice. Influenced in particular by Greg Denning and anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, whose theories about and approaches to the symbiotic relationship between culture and history have gone a long way in challenging notions of culture as historically static and history as culturally neutral, Hanlon's *Upon a Stone Altar: A History of the Island of Pohnpei to 1890* constructs a general history of the island that highlights indigenous perspectives through re-readings of archival accounts written by outsiders and by weaving together Pohnpei oral traditions, anthropological studies, written histories, and the author's own personal experiences and observations on the island.⁴²

Much like Klaus Neumann, Hanlon maintains that oral traditions are indispensable to the construction of any history of an oral culture such as Pohnpei

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 122.

³⁹ Ibid., 42-49.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Hanlon, *Upon a Stone Altar*.

because they remain “the principal form of historical expression” even today and continue to reflect the past as it is remembered and understood by Pohnpeians.⁴³ Indeed, Hanlon’s reliance on oral history is just one component of an approach that privileges Pohnpeian experiences, identities, epistemologies, and historiographies and demonstrates how the history of a place as small as Pohnpei speaks to larger themes of Pacific and world history including cross cultural encounters, migrations, trade and exchange, religious conversion, and imperialism and colonialism and how scholars might begin to address and consider these themes from indigenous perspectives and using indigenous methods and historiographies.

Together, contemporary theories about the much needed dehegemonization of knowledge in and about the Pacific region and the seminal work of Pacific historians such as Denning, Neumann, Hanlon, and many others have helped inspire a generation of indigenous historians working to re-present histories of the region called Micronesia from indigenous perspectives and through indigenous epistemological frameworks. As a result, the past two decades have seen a proliferation of historical studies focused on Micronesian places and peoples, many of which have been compiled by indigenous authors and privilege indigenous approaches to (hi)storytelling. Vicente Diaz, Keith Camacho, and Anne Hattori, for example, have produced works that challenge assumptions about cultural loss and persistence, Chamorro identities, and indigenous survival and resistance on Guam.⁴⁴ Joakim Peter promotes a theory of islander movement and migration based in local Chuukese epistemology rather than on colonial constructions or boundaries.⁴⁵ Lin Poyer uses oral traditions to construct a history of survival and identity formation on Sapwuahfik atoll in Pohnpei⁴⁶ and co-authored together with Suzanne Falgout and Laurence Marshall Carucci two volumes that weave together oral histories and archival research to construct comparative accounts of local Micronesian experiences and memories of World War II.⁴⁷ Julianne Walsh uses ethnography to consider how Marshallese chiefs and commoners have historically

⁴³ Ibid., xvii-xviii.

⁴⁴ Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary*; Hattori, *Colonial Dis-Ease*; Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration*.

⁴⁵ Peter, “Chuukese Travelers and Horizon.”

⁴⁶ Poyer, *The Ngatik Massacre*.

⁴⁷ Falgout et al., *Memories of War*; Poyer et al., *The Typhoon of War*.

incorporated and indigenized “foreign discourses and resources” into local, “culturally informed models and practices of authority.”⁴⁸ Greg Dvorak challenges assumptions about gender identity and identity formation in the Marshall Islands⁴⁹ and Katerina Teaiwa uses cultural knowledge and personal accounts and experiences to dehegemonize the role of the scholar and the production of knowledge surrounding Banaban history and Banaba’s past.⁵⁰ The work of these and other authors and editors of history have made important contributions to furthering the dehegemonization of knowledge in and about the region known as Micronesia and Oceania more generally.

In these and other ways, Pacific scholars and historians have both inspired and begun to heed the calls of indigenous and other intellectuals in and around the region to produce academic works that approach and represent Oceania from within. Insisting that “as long as Pacific studies continues to achieve its critical edge from the edges of the Pacific, its contributions to knowledge production will remain largely impotent, irrelevant, and unwelcome in the face to face realities of the islands,”⁵¹ these scholars promote a brand of scholarship that is not just islander-oriented but whose foundation and purpose reflect and privilege Oceanic cultures, epistemologies, and ways of knowing, meanwhile incorporating and adapting non-indigenous theoretical approaches, methodologies, and forms of knowledge when appropriate. David Gegeo refers to this process as dehegemonization, an important component of the ongoing process of decolonization in the islands that necessarily involves indigenous Pacific Islanders asserting and reasserting “the validity of their own ways of knowing and being.”⁵² I seek to draw from and build on these approaches to construct a history of the sale of Likiep Atoll that not only incorporates multiple Likiep experiences and interpretations of the sale but also reflects the larger cultural, epistemological, and historical context in which the sale took place.

⁴⁸ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” xi.

⁴⁹ Dvorak, “The Martial Islands.”

⁵⁰ K. Teaiwa, “*Tirawata Irouia*.”

⁵¹ T. Teaiwa, “L(o)osing the Edge,” 352.

⁵² Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, “How We Know,” 55.

Looribeb: Navigating Likiep's Big and Little Currents

Despite the many important changes that have transformed Pacific scholarship in general and Pacific history more specifically over the past half century, Vilsoni Hereniko and others suggest that there nevertheless remain important and essential differences that separate history as an academic discipline from history as it is practiced in many places across Oceania.⁵³ Using his home island of Rotuma as an example, Hereniko finds that where academic histories emphasize chronologies, major themes and events, and external realities, Rotuman histories and historiographies—and, he implies, those in other Pacific places—focus on people and genealogies, land and place, cultural values and expectations, and the emotional truths and experiences of everyday life.⁵⁴ Where western style histories idolize facts and the search for objective truth, Pacific islander histories leave space for multiple versions and interpretations of the past that are transmitted through a variety of historiographic channels and approaches including oral accounts such as myths and legends, humorous tales, speeches, and gossip; songs, dances, and theatrical performances; proverbs and sayings; genealogies of chiefly families; and personal stories, memories, and dreams.⁵⁵

While central to the lives and cultures of Pacific islanders—*ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-Likiep* included—Hereniko maintains that academic historical scholarship continues to overlook and overwrite indigenous histories and historiographies both in content and approach.⁵⁶ For Hereniko, the next step in the dehegemonization of Pacific history is to move beyond the necessary and important inclusion of indigenous people, experiences, cultures, and perspectives in academic scholarship toward a fundamental transformation in the practice and construction of history itself. In addition to the discipline's focus and content, this transformation must also involve a fundamental shift in how history is practiced, by whom, and for what reasons. With this in mind, Hereniko proposes that any research conducted in or about Pacific Islander communities must have the empowerment of those communities as its ultimate or overarching goal. Otherwise, he maintains,

⁵³ Hereniko, "Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism," 79-85.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

scholarship in Oceania remains a mere agent of the political and intellectual exploitation of islander communities and knowledges by outsiders.⁵⁷

The gap Hereniko describes in many ways also divides Likiep histories as they have been recounted and represented in various although relatively few sites of academic scholarship and those that continue to be practiced, performed, experienced, remembered, preserved, and contested every day through Likiep's landscapes and seascapes, unique cultural expressions and articulations, power structures and struggles, and multiple narratives and counternarratives. Because these histories and the historiographies through which they are produced are often fundamentally different from those constructed through western academic approaches, it is impossible to fully capture or reflect here histories of Likiep as they have been understood and enacted by the people of that place.

The kind of complete historiographic transformation proposed by Hereniko and others is out of the reach of this particular author and manuscript or of any other work of western academic scholarship. I nevertheless try to *looribeb*⁵⁸ ride these larger historiographic currents across the Pacific and into Likiep's vast epistemological lagoon in an effort to construct a history that privileges and empowers *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-Likiep* histories and epistemologies. I do this by remaining anchored in Likiep—the people, the land, the culture, the experiences, the narratives and counternarratives—even as I acknowledge that this effort involves multiple and often conflicting and contradictory experiences and interpretations that together encompass Likiep's many intersecting histories and cross currents. With this in mind, I have made every effort to construct an ethnographically rich, epistemologically appropriate, and theoretically accessible rendering of Likiep's mid- to late nineteenth century past, meanwhile accepting that this text about Likiep written in English by a *ri-pālle* female student of history remains inevitably and fundamentally different from any indigenous history of Likiep Atoll or the Marshall Islands more generally.

To do this, I draw from and remain in conversation with emerging methodologies and approaches within the fields of Pacific studies and Pacific history as I consider histories in and of Likiep Atoll. Methodologically, I look in particular to the work of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁸ *Looribeb* means to follow a large wave entering a lagoon.

Klaus Neumann and David Hanlon for their use of and approaches to oral traditions and other forms of indigenous historical knowledge; to Julianne Walsh for her focus on *ri-aelōñ-kein* agency in encounters with *ri-pālle* over the past several hundred years⁵⁹; to Greg Dening and Marshall Sahlins for their insistence on the importance of culture and ethnography to historical inquiry, the recognition of the historian's and history's unavoidable entanglement with the culture within which history is produced, and history as a particular and culturally specific way of knowing and producing knowledge⁶⁰; to Katerina Teaiwa⁶¹ and Klaus Neumann for their application of Kluge's montage approach; and to David Gegeo, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Vilsoni Hereniko, Teresia Teaiwa, Subramani, and others who insist on the central importance of indigenous epistemologies to the dehegemonization of knowledge in any work of Pacific scholarship. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith, I also remain dedicated to working collaboratively⁶² with *ri-Likiep* and other *ri-aelōñ-kein* as I continue to learn (in)⁶³ *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture in an effort to construct histories that not only privilege their knowledge and culture but also promote the validity of their multiple perspectives, experiences, and interpretations.

This manuscript is thus informed by ethnographic approaches to the study of history and the assumption that any cross cultural study of the past should not only have as its foundation an intimate familiarity with the indigenous cultures, languages, identities, values, knowledges, and epistemologies of a particular place, but should also include and privilege those knowledge forms to the extent possible. This approach reflects Marshall Sahlins' assertion that "history is culturally ordered, differently so in different societies, according to meaningful schemes of things"⁶⁴ and supports my belief that to understand *Likiep's* history in the emerging colonial context of the mid- to late nineteenth century is to understand its various and sometimes conflicting narratives, identities, experiences, and cultural and historical expressions as well as the many ways

⁵⁹ Walsh, "Imagining the Marshalls."

⁶⁰ Dening, "Reflection: History as a Symbol Science," 109.

⁶¹ K. Teaiwa, "Visualizing *Te Kainga*, Dancing *Te Kainga*."

⁶² Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, xii.

⁶³ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 48.

⁶⁴ Sahlins, *Islands of History*, vii.

these are both embedded in and diverge from those of the Marshall Islands more generally.

Much as Pacific scholars have adapted methods and scholarship to changing political and ideological circumstances over the years, cultural and historical practices on Likiep have also undergone considerable transformation and revision since the mid-nineteenth century. While it may be true, for example, that histories on Likiep are most often preserved and transmitted orally and through other non-written means, ri-Likiep have also adapted their historiographies to include a variety of non-indigenous sources including legal documents, letters, maps, photographs, newspaper articles, books, and many others. Therefore, while this written English manuscript may be fundamentally different from a *ri-aelōñ-kein* rendering of Likiep pasts in many respects, it also acknowledges and reflects the fact that *ri-aelōñ-kein* historiographies are flexible and able to adapt to and incorporate changing sources of knowledge and approaches to the construction and preservation of history. Future editions of this manuscript will likely enter the historiographic repertoire of many ri-Likiep who seek to preserve, perpetuate, comprehend, and in some cases contest their many pasts in the present. This is just one more reason why this study of Likiep pasts must remain sensitive to multiple and in many cases divergent ri-Likiep perspectives even as it promotes the political, economic, ideological, and epistemological empowerment of ri-Likiep and *ri-aelōñ-kein* across Rālik and Ratak.

Weaving Histories

As I note in the previous section, the cultural and historical context for Irooj!ap!ap Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll in 1877 is the primary subject of this manuscript. And yet the sale of Likiep did not take place in isolation; indeed, Likiep Atoll was and remains part of the much larger cultural and historical world of Rālik and Ratak where knowledge, ideas, and news and stories of events flow as freely as the ocean currents as *ri-aelōñ-kein* travel from island to island to access resources, connect with family members and loved ones, spread the gospel, and attend school and for countless other reasons.

Across Rālik and Ratak, these stories are transmitted, received, and preserved not only through particular means which, prior to the introduction of writing by American and Hawaiian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century were primarily oral but gradually incorporated written accounts and correspondence as *ri-aelōñ-kein* adopted writing, but also through a cultural and epistemological lens that ascribes causes, meanings, and potential outcomes to events, occurrences, and cross cultural interactions. As a result, *ri-aelōñ-kein* often understand, interpret, and experience events much differently than their *ri-pālle* counterparts; many of these differences are reflected in the stories *ri-aelōñ-kein* recount about the past and the significance they assign to particular histories and events. It should not be surprising, then, that *ri-aelōñ-kein* renderings of history are often much different than those found in various *ri-pālle* written accounts which, to be sure, are also filtered through the cultural and epistemological lenses of their authors. In fact, these typically oral accounts tend to be categorized by westerners not as histories at all, but rather as myths and legends that are thought to have little to say about the past as it might have really happened. And yet as Klaus Neumann points out, while indigenous accounts and interpretations may be different, they are no less “true” than those found in the western dominated written historical record,⁶⁵ if only because they reflect the multiple and sometimes conflicting beliefs, interpretations, experiences, epistemologies, and historiographies of the very people they represent.

It would be irresponsible and even impossible to construct a history of Likiep Atoll without taking into consideration the important elements of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology that might have influenced *ri-aelōñ-kein* activities and played a role in affecting outcomes on Likiep in the mid- to late nineteenth century as well as the stories that *ri-aelōñ-kein* have told and continue to tell about those events, keeping in mind that the many versions of these stories do not necessarily come together to form a harmonious historical narrative. In the case of Likiep, there are several interpretations of what might have transpired between Iroojlaplap Jortōkā and Anton deBrum in 1877; indeed, while some say deBrum purchased all of Likiep Atoll from Jortōkā, others say Jortōkā gave

⁶⁵ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 44.

deBrum and his wife Likmeto, the chief's close relative (some say daughter⁶⁶), one *wāto* land parcel on the atoll's main island to use for their business. While the goal of this manuscript is not to prove which one of these versions actually happened, I do maintain that these and other narratives and counternarratives are true constructions that are in and of themselves important elements of the atoll's history and thus deserve a place in this and any other rendering of that history.

Throughout this manuscript, I use the metaphor of weaving and the *ri-aelōñ-kein* proverb *Likiep kapin iep* ("Likiep is the bottom/base of the basket") to represent my approach of incorporating *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions, elements of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology, the larger historical context of Rālik and Ratak and world history, and re-readings of archival materials to construct a history of the sale of Likiep Atoll that is heterogeneous and in many respects conflicting and contradictory and yet nevertheless retains Likiep as its primary focus and base. In the Marshall Islands, weaving is a popular pastime and, more recently, a revival movement⁶⁷ and important source of income for many *ri-aelōñ-kein* women who create *iep* baskets, *jaki* mats, and other *amimōño* handicrafts for sale in today's cash economy as well as for personal use and as gifts and contributions for special family or community events. In fact, *ri-aelōñ-kein amimōño* handicrafts have been lauded as among the most beautiful and elaborate in all of Micronesia and *ri-amimōño* crafters and *ri-āj* weavers among the most highly skilled. Within *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society, *ri-āj* are regarded as highly knowledgeable and their skill as worth preserving; indeed, they are more than just artisans—they are vessels

⁶⁶ Rather than using terms to designate specific relationships (e.g., mother, aunt, cousin, etc.), *ri-aelōñ-kein* have traditionally applied "a single term to a large group of relatives at a certain generational level." All relatives in the same generation are thereby considered siblings (*jei-* and *jati-*); those a generation younger are children (*nāji-*); those two or more generations younger are grandchildren (*jibwi-*); etc. It is not uncommon, therefore, for a woman to refer to her sister's children as her own children or for a child to refer to his parents' siblings as his mother and father. This might explain why some sources indicate that Likmeto was Jortōkā's daughter while others say she was his niece or a close relative. Given how different *ri-aelōñ-kein* familial appellations are from their English counterparts, it is hard to know which of these is the correct designation, or if they all are. (Anton deBrum's great-granddaughter Teresa deBrum indicates that although Anton's wife was not actually Jortōkā's daughter, she would be called his daughter according to customary *ri-aelōñ-kein* terminology.) Mason, "Economic Organization," 20-21; Teresa deBrum, interviews by Monica LaBriola, 20-22 July 2011.

⁶⁷ For more on the recent revival of *jaki-ed* fine mat weaving see Taafaki, "About the Artists: The *Jaki-Ed* Collective," vi-xi.

of many important *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural values, skills, and knowledges, both traditional and contemporary.

To practice their art, *ri-āj* utilize a variety of diverse techniques and materials that bring the traditional and the modern as well as the foreign and indigenous together to create beautiful, sturdy products that meet and reflect contemporary needs, styles, and tastes. Today, materials include local resources such as pandanus and coconut *iden* strips or fibers and shells as well as imported dyes, yarns, and, more recently, black magnetic tape from old VHS and cassette tapes. They also use a variety of techniques, some of which have been practiced for centuries while others have been adapted from western or other non-indigenous practices and styles, to construct these beautiful and versatile



Figure 6. Likmeto weaving a hat, Likiep 1921
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image F-250)⁶⁸

⁶⁸ According to notes in the Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection database, the woman pictured is Likmeto, wife of Toreja of Mile Atoll (i.e., not Anton deBrum's first wife Likmeto) weaving a hat at

objects. In these and other ways, *ri-āj* continually adapt their craft to changing needs, styles, and resources and in the process create items that are reflective of a culture and society in which the traditional and the modern and the indigenous and the foreign not only coexist but are also in conversation with each other in everyday life, in the arts, and within the realm of cultural and historical discourse.

In addition to the materials they use, contemporary *ri-āj* continually modify how they practice their craft, incorporating and adopting new materials, techniques, and approaches as necessary and appropriate for changing needs and circumstances. In the process, they construct baskets and other handicrafts from multiple *iden* strands and a variety of fibers that they bring together in particular patterns, shapes, and forms and to serve proposed or designated functions which include anything from a *ṁōṁar* fishing basket to a wine or cigarette tote. And while any given finished *iep* basket might resemble a complete and unified whole with a particular purpose, its various elements nevertheless remain distinct and recognizable, its functionality flexible, its contents variable, and its meaning negotiable. At the same time, no *ri-aelōñ-kein* basket is hermetically sealed; each has holes, gaps, and openings that allow air to flow in and out, meanwhile leaving space for future alterations and for the incorporation of additional elements. Each *iep* in turn serves as a model for other *ri-āj* as they construct their own projects by incorporating or rejecting the styles, skills, techniques, materials and approaches of those before them and introducing their own creative ideas and elements to construct new products that both resemble and differ from previous versions.

Similar to a *ri-āj* weaver of *iep* baskets, I have assembled this history by bringing together various *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* sources, stories, people, materials, approaches, and strands of knowledge—together with my limited understanding of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology and my own creative approach—that can and do make valuable and necessary contributions to representing and re-presenting an important period in Likiep’s past. To the extent possible, I incorporate and privilege *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives and interpretations as well as *ri-aelōñ-kein* historical forms and expressions of knowledge such as oral traditions, genealogies, and proverbs through which

Joachim deBrum’s house on Likiep. Likmeto’s husband Toreja is said to be the son of Ronglai. “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” F-250.

contemporary ri-Likiep continue to remember, relive, and reproduce their pasts in the present.

As I do this I keep in mind that, just as many contemporary *ri-āj* do not rely solely on *ri-aelōñ-kein* materials to construct their crafts, *ri-aelōñ-kein* and ri-Likiep understandings of the past are generally not informed by or perpetuated exclusively through so-called traditional *ri-aelōñ-kein* ways of knowing. Indeed, history on and about Likiep is no longer only recited, chanted, sung, danced, or tattooed; it is also debated in the editorial section of the *Marshall Islands Journal*; presented as physical evidence before the high court of the Republic of the Marshall Islands; circulated through photographs and status updates on Facebook; preserved in genealogical databases and websites; and kept locked in peoples' briefcases, antique chests, file cabinets, and safe deposit boxes on Likiep, Ebjā, and Mājro as well as in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in Springdale, Arkansas, and beyond. While some might decry these transformations as a loss or degradation of culture on Likiep, I suggest they are indications of how Likiep historiographies have become irreversibly entangled as indigenous epistemologies and interpretations have mingled and mixed with western assumptions, frameworks, theories, and methodologies. Just as western historians and other scholars have borrowed from Pacific cultures and epistemologies to construct more culturally relevant works of scholarship, so have *ri-aelōñ-kein* actively incorporated foreign influences and elements into their own historiography in an effort to preserve and perpetuate their versions and interpretations of history.

Much like contemporary *ri-āj* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* historians, I have also relied on various non-indigenous resources to construct this history of Likiep and to identify traces of Likiep's past that may not be otherwise available. These sources include anthropological and historical studies, written histories, personal letters and journals, deeds of sale, legal documents, court records and proceedings, an online dictionary, newspaper articles, recorded genealogies, and photographs which I have interwoven throughout the manuscript and to strengthen my argument, clarify the histories I present, and reflect the fact that, on Likiep as elsewhere in the Marshall Islands and throughout

Oceania, the indigenous and the foreign have coexisted and been mutually—although certainly not evenly or innocuously—informative for generations.

With this approach, I propose that my position and role as an historian is more attuned to that of a *ri-āj* than of an author per se. Much like the art of *āj* weaving, history is a craft practiced by a historian who brings together various strands, resources, elements, and forms of knowledge to tell a particular story in a particular form and format and for a particular purpose. I see my role not as an author of history—indeed, I did not participate in, experience, witness, or effect any of the events I recount here—but rather as a weaver of one version of history whose goal is to bring together some of the various and diverse *iden* strands that might take us closer to the truth of Likiep’s complex and contested past. Like a *iep* basket, no history is airtight or without flaws; rather, all histories are contested and contestable and this history is no exception. With this in mind, I suggest that the history I construct here is not the definitive history of the sale of Likiep Atoll, but rather an assemblage of stories that might help “move toward the truth of things” vis-à-vis this and other strands of Likiep’s past.⁶⁹

In consideration of the proverb *Likiep kapin iep*, which has been translated to mean that Likiep is or forms the *kapin* bottom or base of a metaphorical *iep* basket,⁷⁰ I take the weaving metaphor one step further by suggesting that, while the history I construct here does not begin or end on Likiep or rely exclusively on ri-Likiep interpretations of or approaches to the past, Likiep and ri-Likiep are nevertheless its foundation, base, and center.⁷¹ This history therefore draws first and foremost from *ri-aelōñ-kein* accounts, experiences, interpretations, and historiographies even as it incorporates histories and accounts written and interpreted by *ri-pālle*.

The *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions I use to introduce the following five chapters most clearly illustrate this approach as each chapter begins with a narrative based not on western archival sources but instead on previously recorded versions of *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral

⁶⁹ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 119.

⁷⁰ Although I have asked a number of people for a deeper interpretation or explanation of this proverb, most seem unsure or unwilling to guess at its origins or meaning.

⁷¹ Bender, *Spoken Marshallese*, 311-312.

traditions.⁷² The intent of these narratives is to introduce particular historical events and epistemological themes from a *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspective and in a style and format more conversant with a *ri-aelōñ-kein* approach to history than traditional western academic narratives. Following Klaus Neumann, I also use these introductory narratives to interrupt the “homogenous narrational rendering of the past”⁷³ typically found in academic histories and to highlight the importance of privileging *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives and approaches in any history of their place.

I nevertheless remain aware that this manuscript written by a white American woman in English for a primarily American academic audience and as a requirement for a doctoral degree at an American institution of higher learning little resembles a *ri-aelōñ-kein* history or approach to (hi)storytelling. Indeed, *ri-aelōñ-kein* continue to rely primarily on oral communication in *kajin aelōñ kein*, the language of the islands, to recount and preserve stories about people and events of the past. *Ri-bwebwenato* storyteller-historians who are well known and respected in their communities for their skills in narration and their knowledge of the past generally relay these stories. Clearly, while I do make an effort to include *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions and other sources of knowledge in the pages that follow, I nevertheless recognized that the story I construct here is a very different kind of history—not just in content but also in form, language, approach, intent, and authorship—from those often recounted among *ri-aelōñ-kein*.

I also fully understand that this manuscript represents my own articulation of the past, even as I incorporate and privilege *ri-aelōñ-kein* experiences and interpretations. Even the *ri-aelōñ-kein* traditions I present at the beginning of each chapter represent my own interpretations of various versions of oral traditions that have been previously recorded or written down and often in English by *ri-pālle* anthropologists, linguistics, and colonial officials. Some of these stories have undergone so many translations and transformations—from oral to written, from Marshallese to English, and now from stand alone, localized stories to components of a larger historical narrative about the sale of

⁷² This approach echoes the format of my MA thesis in which I alternate standard scholarly chapters and fictionalized narrative interludes. It also inadvertently echoes Robert Barclay’s approach in *Meḷal*, a work of fiction that highlights Marshallese oral traditions in alternating sections. Barclay, *Meḷal*; LaBriola, “*Iien Ippān Doon* (This Time Together).”

⁷³ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 240.

Likiep Atoll—that they in some cases might be unrecognizable to *ri-bwebwenato* or to *ri-aelōñ-kein* more generally.

It could be argued that I have assembled different versions of these stories into what resembles a master narrative adapted and adjusted to fit the goals and objectives of this manuscript. And while this is certainly true in certain respects, it is also the case that *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions are flexible and subject to the interpretation of *ri-bwebwenato* who draw from various accounts they have heard or seen performed to construct their own version of a story to serve a particular purpose for a particular audience and within particular context. What’s more, *ri-bwebwenato* often use these stories as teaching tools to convey important *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural values, beliefs, and lessons to their audiences. Since my primary goals in presenting these narratives are to privilege *ri-aelōñ-kein* ways of knowing, to convey important elements of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, and to construct a cultural and epistemological context that might help explain important elements of Likiep’s history from a *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspective, I feel that it is not altogether inappropriate for me to adapt these stories to meet these goals, much as a *ri-bwebwenato* would do at any (hi)storytelling session. With this in mind, my approach emulates not only those of contemporary *ri-āj* weavers, but also those of *ri-bwebwenato* storyteller-historians who interweave indigenous and foreign elements to construct narratives that are practical, useful, and meaningful for their listeners. This approach in turn represents one component of my preliminary effort to privilege *ri-aelōñ-kein* knowledge and epistemology in the histories I construct—an approach I hope to further cultivate through forthcoming scholarly endeavors.

Wāween Bwebwenato In: Methods and Methodologies

To the extent possible, the research methods and sources I have used to construct this ethnographically and contextually rich history of Likiep Atoll from the mid- to late nineteenth century have been influenced and informed by *ri-aelōñ-kein* ways of knowing and remembering the past and by my own limited knowledge of and experience with *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society. This means that, whenever possible, I have relied on a combination of *ri-aelōñ-kein* sources of history and culture (written, oral, and otherwise),

ri-pālle accounts and interpretations of *ri-aelōñ-kein* history and culture, and a familiarity with *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, language, and society that has allowed me to translate various Marshallese language sources and re-read and re-interpret historical and anthropological sources written by *ri-pālle* and from *ri-pālle* perspectives and frames of reference. While I recognize that I am not *ri-aelōñ-kein*, this approach has allowed me to begin to explore Likiep histories with *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives, experiences, and interpretations in mind, meanwhile recognizing that these are multiple, diverse, conflicting, and often contentious.

My own process of learning (in) *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture has been a crucial component of my effort to construct a culturally informed history of mid- to late nineteenth century Likiep Atoll. This has been an ongoing journey that I began almost twelve years ago when I first went to Ebjā Island in Kuwajleen Atoll in the Marshall Islands as a volunteer and later as a contract teacher. Over the course of three years on Ebjā, I had the privilege and pleasure of gaining preliminary and intensive exposure to *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, society, and epistemology and began a rigorous study of Marshallese language. Over the course of three years on Ebjā, I also had the opportunity to become friends with a great number of ri-Likiep, many of who had migrated to Ebjā either on their own or with their families since the mid-twentieth century in search of employment, education, and healthcare, or just to be with family members already living on Ebjā.⁷⁴ Since many ri-Likiep are Catholic and I was on Ebjā as a teacher at the Catholic high school and as a member of the Queen of Peach Parish Catholic community, many of the friends I made on Ebjā were also ri-Likiep; hence, it was on Ebjā that I was first exposed not just to *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and language but also to Likiep histories and ri-Likiep personal accounts, reflections, and oral traditions.

It was also during this time that I visited Likiep Atoll for the first time and began to appreciate my friends' deeply rooted affection for their *lāmoran* heritage land and got a first-hand introduction to Likiep's contentious and contested past. I later grew even

⁷⁴ Although owned according to *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom, Ebjā developed into a labor camp or bedroom community for *ri-aelōñ-kein* employees of the American operated missile range on nearby Kuwajleen Island beginning in the 1950s. As a result, people from all over the Marshall Islands have resided on Ebjā since that time. Richard, *United States Naval Administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands* 1: 556; Tobin, "Ebeye Village," 3.

more interested in Likiep histories when I came to know photographer Sue Rosoff, who was working at the time on a project to digitize the Joachim deBrum photograph collection on Kuwajleen, and when I became intimately acquainted with and entangled in the deBrum and Capelle legacies by marrying into the extensive deBrum family soon thereafter. It was when I finally had the opportunity to return to Likiep for a second time in 2007 that I decided to focus on Likiep histories for my dissertation research. And while this goal was complicated by my divorce in 2009, I have managed to maintain ties to the deBrum family and other ri-Likiep through my own personal relationships as well as through my son who is a descendant of both the deBrum and Capelle families. These ties are strengthened by my own sustained interest in and respect for Likiep histories and *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, history, and epistemology more generally.

While at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, I have continued to learn (in) *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture by building on the knowledge of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, history, and epistemology that I first gained over the course of three years on Ebjā and subsequent trips to the Marshall Islands. I have done this through a continued and faithful study of language, culture, and history first as a Master of Arts student in Pacific Islands Studies and subsequently as a History PhD student and candidate. And while my Marshallese language skills remain limited—far too limited, for example, to compose a work of history entirely in Marshallese—I have made a sincere effort to incorporate elements of Marshallese language throughout this manuscript as appropriate with the hope that this history will be more accessible, recognizable, and enjoyable for *ri-aelōñ-kein* readers. Ideally, a translation of a subsequent or final draft of this manuscript will allow this history to come more fully into conversation with those histories and traditions that currently make up the historiographic landscape of Likiep and the Marshall Islands more generally.

In addition to keeping up my study of Marshallese language, I have also continued to build on my knowledge and understanding of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture through an in depth study of historical narratives written by *ri-pālle* members of early foreign expeditions including Otto von Kotzebue, Adelbert von Chamisso, Louis Choris, and others, as well as more recent anthropological texts such as the work of Jack Tobin,

Leonard Mason, Alexander Spoehr, Nancy Pollock, and Julianne Walsh, to name just a few. While it is true that these texts are written by *ri-pālle* and hence tend to describe elements of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture through a *ri-pālle* epistemological lens, they have nevertheless been useful as I have sought to understand key components of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology that I was not able to discern or fully comprehend during my limited stay on Ebjā. I understand and accept that, as a *ri-pālle*, it is impossible for me to ever come to a full understanding of *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives or experiences and that this history of the sale of Likiep Atoll and its mid-nineteenth cultural and historical context represents my own interpretation of how and why things might have come to pass on Likiep and beyond.

My first opportunity to apply these efforts was in 2005 as I conducted oral interviews for my Master of Arts thesis in Pacific Islands Studies entitled “*Ien Ippān Doon: Celebrating Survival in an ‘Atypical Marshallese Community,’*” to which I applied an interdisciplinary and intertextual approach to challenge fatalistic assumptions about culture and cultural loss on Ebjā in an effort to re-present the island as a place where physical and cultural survival and persistence are celebrated daily. The thesis was part of my own initial venture into the realm of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology in an effort to represent Ebjā from various *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives. My experience constructing an MA thesis about Ebjā encouraged me to remain committed to finding ways to respectfully re-present *ri-aelōñ-kein* people, experiences, and perspectives in my academic writing. I have since drawn from and expanded on elements of the approach I employed in my MA thesis to construct this history of Likiep Atoll that focuses primarily on *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the past.

Since *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and historiography remain primarily oral even today, I have looked wherever possible to non-written sources of history and knowledge that reflect *ri-aelōñ-kein* values, ways of knowing, and interpretations. These include oral traditions and accounts, personal stories and memories, proverbs, genealogies, music and dance, photographs, and other cultural knowledge that I encountered and recorded during the three years I spent in the Marshall Islands from 2001 to 2004, during my MA fieldwork in 2005, during my PhD fieldwork in 2011, during my archival research at



Figure 7. Monica LaBriola and son Zachary deBrum, Likiep 2011
Photograph by Emilia deBrum Morita, Likiep

UH Mānoa, and throughout the multiple interactions I have had with *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-* Likiep friends and family in Honolulu, Hawai‘i over the past nine years.

In addition to the stories and accounts I have recorded firsthand in these and other contexts, I have also looked to previously recorded versions of oral traditions, chants, proverbs, and songs found in collections assembled by *ri-pālle* including August Erdland, William Davenport, Jack Tobin, Daniel Kelin II, Jane Downing et al., Donna Stone et al., Gerald Knight, Phillip McArthur, Gene Ashby, and many others. While these histories and traditions are problematic in many respects—they have, for example, been recorded, translated, and converted across the edges of language, culture, and historiography—I utilize them because, much like other sources constructed or translated by *ri-pālle*, they contain traces of *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives and experiences and important insights into *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, epistemology, and ways of knowing and constructing the past that are crucial elements of this effort to re-present Likiep histories.⁷⁵ In the process, I have also relied on written sources located in archives and personal collections in the Marshall Islands, Hawai‘i, and the continental United States. These documents include personal letters and journals, deeds of sale, legal documents, court proceedings, newspaper articles, recorded genealogies, photographs, and a variety of other primary and secondary source documents written by *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* alike.

Of particular significance has been the extensive photograph collection of

⁷⁵ McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 31.

Joachim deBrum, eldest son of Anton deBrum and his first wife Likmeto, which consists of more than 2,600 images captured by Joachim from the late 1880s through the 1930s. Joachim developed these images onto glass plates; the plates were subsequently preserved by members of Joachim's family and, from 2000 to 2004, digitized by Sue Rosoff and the deBrum Photograph Digitization project through the support of "U.S. Environmental and Strategic Missile Defense Command (SMDC) funding, advocacy on the part of U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) Environmental and Host Nations personnel, an Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) grant, the enthusiasm of Kwajalein volunteers ... Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Office (HPO) support, and [the] commitment [of] the deBrum family."⁷⁶ I have been fortunate to have access to these images through the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Hamilton Library Pacific Collection and a copy of the database provided to me by Sue Rosoff. The images have been essential throughout the research and writing process not just as illustrations for this manuscript but, more importantly, as visual guides that have helped me imaginatively cross various cultural, epistemological, and chronological beaches and to in turn more accurately imagine and describe the physical and cultural landscape of Likiep and surrounding atolls from the late eighteenth to early twentieth century.

I have kept in mind while exploring these photographs that Joachim deBrum was himself an ethnographer of sorts who sought to document the many cultural and other changes that were taking place during his lifetime. Consequently, Joachim sometimes staged photographs of people wearing traditional dress or participating in activities that were no longer common on Likiep or surrounding islands and atolls. Taken out of context, these photographs suggest a much different reality than Joachim and others were experiencing on Likiep on a day to day basis from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century; with this in mind, I in some cases use the photographs to illustrate particular themes rather than specific events and to enrich my own understanding of Likiep's past and present in the process.

Others of Joachim's photos, meanwhile, document the many changes taking place on Likiep and across Rālik and Ratak from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth

⁷⁶ Lindborg and Lindborg, "The Joachim deBrum Photograph Digitization Project," 1.

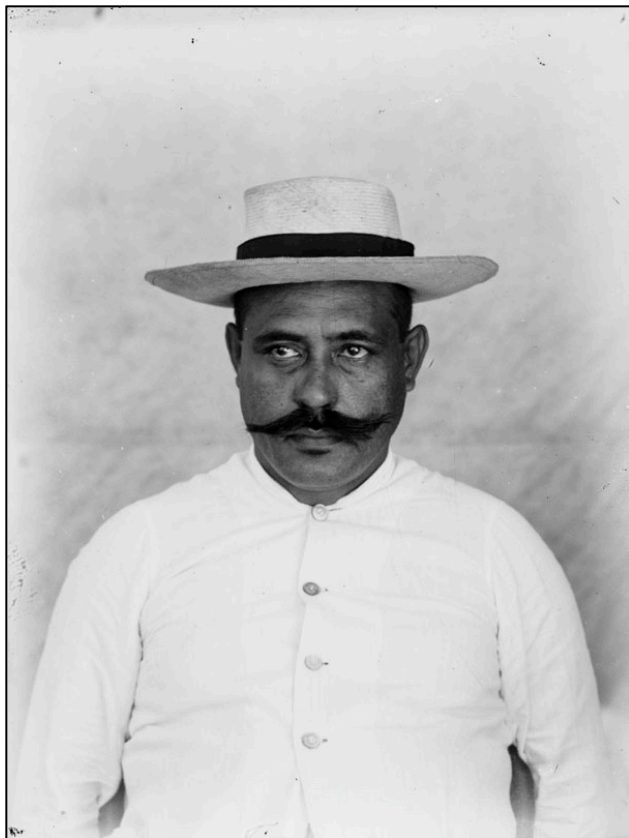


Figure 8. Joachim deBrum self portrait circa 1920
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image B-109)

century. Among these were the conversion of land from sites of subsistence agriculture into copra plantations, shifts in *ri-aelōñ-kein* boat building practices and techniques, the expansion of Christian missions and schools, the emergence of an elite owner class on Likiep, and many others. With this in mind, I use a selection of Joachim's photographs to illustrate these and other changes and events as appropriate. In both cases, my use of Joachim's photographs rather than images produced by *ri-pälle* follows my overall approach of relying on *ri-aelōñ-kein* knowledge, sources, and perspectives as available and appropriate.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ I am still working on getting permission to publish these photographs in a published version of this manuscript. The matter is a rather complicated being that it is not all together clear who has the authority to grant such permission and that authority may have shifted with the death of Joachim deBrum's youngest child two years ago. It could be that Teresa deBrum, who is currently Joachim's eldest living descendent (she is the daughter of Joachim's daughter Ellen), has the authority to grant this permission. With this in mind, I might have to wait until my next trip to the Marshall Islands to discuss the matter with her again.

When using and interpreting documents written by *ri-pālle* and other cultural outsiders—whether oral traditions, written histories, anthropological investigations, or otherwise—I make a sincere and conscious effort wherever possible to apply the knowledge of *ri-aelōñ-kein* language, culture, and epistemology I have gained over the past twelve years to re-read these sources for traces of *ri-aelōñ-kein* experiences, perspectives, and interpretations and to thereby construct a history that is both sensitive to and reflective of *ri-aelōñ-kein* visions and representations of the past. Together, these methodologies support my construction of an ethnographic history of the sale of Likiep Atoll that reflects and respects local experiences and interpretations of some of the events and occurrences that make the atoll’s history unique.

Wāween Bwebwenato In: Project Outline

The remainder of this manuscript is divided into five chapters that weave together various strands of the larger cultural, epistemological, and historical context that may have contributed to Iroojlaplap Jortōkā’s decision to sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum. Each chapter begins with a re-telling of a *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral tradition; these are intended to not only interrupt the traditional academic rendering of history with narratives more in line with *ri-aelōñ-kein* renderings of their past, but also to begin to explore those features of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology that are essential to understanding Jortōkā’s decision to sell Likiep as well as the various counternarratives and contestations that have arisen in response.

To launch this exploration of the cultural and historical world of mid-nineteenth century Rālik and Ratak, I begin Chapter 2 with a re-telling of a *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral tradition that emphasizes *ri-aelōñ-kein* ideas and stories about their origins and those of their islands and culture. I then consider how key components of that culture along with *ri-aelōñ-kein* perspectives about their many encounters with *ri-pālle* beginning in the mid-sixteenth century might have influenced future *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters with *ri-pālle* and, more specifically, those that took place in the mid-nineteenth century. I look in particular at how earlier encounters may have effected decisions by Epoon Atoll *irooj*

chiefs to actively welcome Adolf Capelle ashore in 1861⁷⁸ and again in 1863 and to later offer him and his future partner Anton deBrum land on various islands and atolls throughout Rālik and Ratak, as well as Irooj Jortōkā’s decision to sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum more than a decade later. In the process, I highlight the vitality and calculation underlying *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters with *ri-pālle* from the early sixteenth to mid-nineteenth century and suggest that this history of active engagement and alliance building served as a model for *irooj*—Jortōkā included—who began selling and leasing their land to *ri-pālle* in the early 1860s.

I go on in Chapters 3 and 4 to explore some of the key features of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural and epistemological world in which Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum (and, later, their partner Charles Ingalls) found themselves at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century with a particular emphasis on *ri-aelōñ-kein* structures of authority, land tenure, and inheritance. I begin Chapter 3 with a story about the origins of *eḡ* tattoo and a consideration of what the story reveals about the divine origins of essential *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural traditions and institutions including the *wāto* land parcel, the *jowi* matriclan, the *bwij* matrilineage, and the *irooj/kajoor* chiefly/commoner system of land tenure and social authority. I use the remainder of Chapter 3 to provide a succinct overview of these cultural systems in order to offer some insight into the many complexities Capelle and deBrum encountered as they began to seek out land for use as coconut plantations and trading stations in the early 1860s. In this sea of islands where land was regarded as a sacred legacy passed down by the ancestors across generations

⁷⁸ There has been some confusion about when and how Adolf Capelle actually arrived to Epoon, with various sources marking his initial arrival on the ship *Pfeil* out of Honolulu in 1859 or 1861 or aboard the *Maria* in 1863 (see, for example, Mason 1947; Bryan 1965a; Hezel 1979, 1983, and 1995; and Walsh and Heine 2012). As I demonstrate and explain more in depth in Chapter 5, however, it appears that Capelle did not arrive on Epoon aboard the *Pfeil* in 1859, but rather sometime in mid-1861 aboard the *Wailua* and again in 1863 aboard the *Maria* following a brief return to Honolulu. He then remained on Epoon only after his employer Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst recalled his associate Herman Caplan who had been managing the firm’s outpost there from March 1862 to January 1863. The *Pfeil*, operated by Captain Danelsburg and possibly owned by Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst, does appear to have stopped on Epoon in 1859, which suggests that the firm had some knowledge of the atoll and its potential as a trading outpost prior to sending Caplan and Capelle there in 1861. Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692-693; Mason, “Economic Organization,” 127; Maude, “The Coconut Oil Trade of the Gilbert Islands,” 422; Ward, *American Activities in the Central Pacific*, 244; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 123; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210-211; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 46; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 164, 170.

rather than a commodity to be bought and sold, acquiring and transforming land into productive and profitable plantations would perhaps be more difficult than the traders had anticipated.

And yet it would not be impossible. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure and structures of authority and inheritance prior to the formalization of German imperialism in 1885 were much more flexible in practice than they were in principle. The basis for this flexibility is located in important *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions such as the story of the legendary *lerooj* female chief Lōktañūr who overrides the traditional order of chiefly succession, bypassing her oldest sons and granting the title of *iroojlaplap* paramount chief to her youngest son Jebro as a reward for his respect, loyalty, and service. I suggest that Lōktañūr's active reinterpretation of traditional rules of age-based matrilineal succession of chiefly titles serves as an epistemological foundation for the *ri-aelōñ-kein* philosophy of *mejed kapilōk kōj*, which has traditionally authorized lineage heads to actively alter the rules of land and title succession in response to the real or perceived needs and circumstances of their constituents and the larger society.

After outlining the various circumstances under which such alterations were traditionally made, I propose that beginning in the early 1860s, *irooj* began to incorporate *ri-pālle* traders into their *mejed kapilōk kōj* strategies in the hopes of gaining a level of security and well being that was seriously lacking following a series of major typhoons and tidal waves that had recently devastated islands and atolls all across Rālik and Ratak. While these alliances began on Epoon Atoll in southern Rālik, they quickly spread across Rālik and into Ratak as various *irooj* learned of the potential political and economic advantages of selling or leasing land to *ri-pālle* traders. By 1877, this interpretation of *mejed kapilōk kōj* had reached Iroojlaplap Jortōkā in northern Ratak who, after much debate and consideration, decided to sell Likiep Atoll to Adolf Capelle's partner Anton deBrum. Likiep's continued desolation following two devastating storms earlier in the century together with Jortōkā's desire to reap the economic and political benefits of bringing a major copra operation to northern Ratak and his genealogical connection to Anton deBrum through deBrum's wife Likmeto were key to the chief's decision.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I continue to explore the cultural and historical factors that contributed to Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll, with a particular emphasis in Chapter 5 on the emerging plantation economy of the mid-nineteenth century and increasing competition among *ri-pālle* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* to gain an economic edge within this field. In the process, I propose that Jortōkā may have regarded an alliance with Anton deBrum as a way to secure a position for himself and northern Ratak more generally within an emerging economy increasingly dominated by his competitors in southern Rālik and to in turn defend his realm from the encroachments of *ri-pālle* traders who were relying increasingly on disingenuous and sometimes violent means to extract surpluses from the land and, in some cases, the people themselves.

In Chapter 6, I consider the possibility that Jortōkā's decision was further motivated by the increasing prevalence of epidemic diseases such as typhoid fever and syphilis in Rālik and Ratak—which were having devastating effects on *ri-aelōñ-kein* families and lineages throughout the islands—and in turn by Anton deBrum's association with a trained physician who had been working to alleviate the symptoms of the diseases since his arrival to Arņo Atoll in 1876. Throughout, I suggest that Anton deBrum's marriage to Jortōkā's relative Likmeto was the ultimate deciding factor in the chief's strategic decision since it made the sale not only historically appropriate but culturally and epistemologically viable. The sale would not only allow Jortōkā to secure northern Ratak land and lineages at a time when the well being and survival of *ri-aelōñ-kein* were being seriously undermined, but also to retain the atoll within his own genealogy through his relative Likmeto and her son Joachim. In the process, I suggest that Jortōkā did not regard the sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum as a dispossession of his land or sovereignty, but rather as a way to strengthen his authority and preserve Likiep Atoll as an important and strategic part of his realm in northern Ratak.

And yet despite Jortōkā's caution and calculation, this is not what happened. Instead and as I also demonstrate in Chapters 5 and 6, soon after Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum, the *ri-pālle* resold his new possession to his employer A. Capelle & Co. as part of what may have been a prearranged strategy to obtain land for their growing copra business within an increasingly competitive field and at a time when other

ri-pālle were resorting to violent and other surreptitious tactics to do the same. As a result, rather than remaining under deBrum's authority as likely intended by Jortōkā, ownership of Likiep Atoll was divided among the three A. Capelle & Co. partners, two of whom would eventually bequeath their holdings to their fourteen combined heirs. Of these, only Joachim deBrum—Anton deBrum's eldest son with his first wife Likmeto—was part of Irooj Jortōkā's extended genealogy; the others, meanwhile, were the *kajoor* children of Adolf Capelle and his wife Limenwa of Epoon Atoll and Anton deBrum and his second wife Likōmju of Mājej Island. In the process, the *kajoor* heirs essentially joined Likmeto's descendants in supplanting the *irooj* of northern Ratak on Likiep Atoll; in the process, they contributed to the transformation of a cultural and epistemological system based on presumptions of the divine origins and character of land, landownership, and socio-cultural authority, prestige, and influence. Meanwhile, Likiep's expanding plantation economy and the newly instituted German imperial administration effectively severed the cultural and genealogical ties of Likiep *kajoor* to their land and seemingly eliminated the possibility that they would retain or regain their culturally sanctioned rights to Likiep Atoll under the new ownership structure.

And yet, as I demonstrate in Chapter 6, this reversal has not gone uncontested; rather, it has been challenged and debated over the past century through a variety of legal, economic, and narrative means. Of the strategies employed, the most longstanding and perhaps most effective has been the perpetuation of counternarratives that deny that the sale of Likiep Atoll took place at all. Among these are an oral tradition that recounts the story of Letao the trickster bringing fire to Likiep and a counternarrative that suggests that, rather than selling Likiep Atoll in its entirety, Jortōkā gave deBrum and his wife Likmeto one *wāto* land parcel on Likiep Island for their family's residential and commercial use. These counternarratives have been effective, I suggest, not only because they call into question the very truth of history, but also because they serve as a constant reminder of the presence on Likiep Atoll of genealogies that long predate the arrival of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle and land tenure structures that are as persistent as the legal documents and family trees so often used to prove and confirm what has come to be regarded as the true ownership of Likiep Atoll by the deBrum and Capelle families.

Contested Histories and Historians

Although the issue has been highly contentious since at least 1926 and probably longer, my goal here is not to determine or prove whether Anton deBrum actually purchased Likiep Atoll in 1877 or legitimately divided ownership among the partners of A. Capelle & Co. ten months later. Nor is it my intent to take sides with Likiep owners or *ri-jerbal*—although I am fully aware that my use of particular terms, my inclusion of various legal documents as appendices at the end of this manuscript, and my decision to highlight highly contested counterhistories in Chapter 6 might lead various segments of the Likiep community to believe I already have.

As I indicated in the *Acknowledgements*, the topic of Likiep histories has not been an easy one for me to explore. To be sure, I spent five years as a member of the deBrum family and my son is and forever will be a deBrum/Capelle, and I have long recognized that this position and my many continued friendships with members of the deBrum family in particular might lead me to have particular biases and preconceptions in these matters, which in some respects might be unavoidable. Some might argue, on the other hand, that my contentious divorce from a member of the deBrum family has led me to construct a history that paints Likiep owners and the deBrum family in particular in a less than positive light, which is certainly not at all my intent.

I strive to be a conscientious historian and recognize that, in this case, to be so necessitates an exploration of some of Likiep Atoll's most contentious and contested issues: disputes over land, struggles over power, and contests over who has the authority to narrate history and through what means. In the process, I cannot overlook the multiple voices, accounts, and interpretations that are found in oral accounts and written testimonies as well as in various anthropological surveys, historical studies, and legal documents and proceedings—even, and perhaps especially, when these conflict or directly contradict one another. I cannot ignore the fact, for example, that some people say Anton deBrum purchased Likiep while others contend he did not, or that some say Anton willed fifty percent of all copra proceeds to *ri-jerbal* in perpetuity while others suggest this story was fabricated by Anton's oldest son Joachim in a complicated effort to promote discontent among Likiep *ri-jerbal*. Indeed, the mere fact that these conflicting

versions have become true⁷⁹ for various segments of ri-Likiep society over the years means they are in and of themselves important components of the atoll's history. The point is not always whether or not these events actually happened, but that they have coexisted at various times as part of Likiep's contested historical discourse.

All this being said, I take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript even as I recognize that the history I have constructed may not be what some of my friends had in mind when they agreed to talk to me about Likiep histories. I hope that we will remain friends nonetheless.

⁷⁹ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 119.

Chapter 2. *Jepelpelin ke Ejukaan*: Rālik and Ratak

“*Jepelpelin* refers to the vast ocean distances separating the islands while at the same time recognizing the unified, self-confident spirit of the people. The fact that these islands are spread over an ocean area of more than one-half million square miles [*sic*] and yet have only one language, one custom, one tradition attests to the strength of family and clan ties. *Ejukaan* refers to a stand of coconut trees that are tall, firm, strong, unified, and thoughtful of each other symbolizing the people of these islands. The link to this unity was the islanders’ ability to sail and navigate great ocean distances that enable travel between the farthest islands.”¹

Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto: The Origins of this World

Long ago, *etto im etto*,² Łowa appeared from the spirit world.³ While some say he came down from the heavens, others believe he emerged from the sea where he lived in swamps among giant underwater reefs. After he appeared, he called forth the great reefs with his voice: “Mmmmm... Let the reefs emerge!” and reefs appeared from below the

¹ The explanation continues: “This proverb was chosen for the motto of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.” Stone et al., *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majel*, 66. (It is important to note that the various proverbs and explanations in the aforementioned *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majel* (1999) were originally obtained from Gerald Knight who produced a series of “First Covers” for RMI stamps that included images on cards representing proverbs. Julianne Walsh, email message to author, 24 June 2013.)

² *Etto im etto* means long ago and is sometimes used to introduce *bwebwenatoon etto* or stories from long ago, which are also referred to as myths or legends in English. Kelin II et al., *Marshall Islands Legends and Stories*, xv.

³ I have adapted the story I tell here from various and sometimes conflicting versions of recorded *ri-aelōñ-kein* origin stories found in Barclay (2002), Bryan (1972), Capelle (1977), Davenport (1953), R. deBrum (2002a), Dixon (1964), Erdland (1914), Jam (2002b), Jeik (2003b), Jowej (2002b), L. Kabua (2002a), Knappe (1888), Krämer and Nevermann (1938), Lamān and Jekkein (2002), Leach (1956), Łokrap (1949c, 2002), Luomala (195-, 1950), Mason (1947, 1986), McArthur (1995, 2004, 2008), Milne (1999), Pollock (1976), Shorett (1970), Stone et al. (1999), and Tobin (2002). I have used these sometimes competing versions to construct a sort of master narrative that represents one compiled version of the story of the creation of the earth, sky, sea, and islands of Rālik and Ratak; how the islands came to be inhabited; and how the *ri-aelōñ-kein* clan system and hierarchical structure came into being. It is important to note that this origin story stems from the Rālik islands, and while the story does not originate on Likiep, I have included it nonetheless as a way of introducing key *ri-aelōñ-kein* beliefs about the sacred origins of their islands, clans, and genealogies. Although a traditional Likiep Atoll or Ratak origin story might be much different than the one I present here and would certainly trace the origins of Ratak clans and genealogies more closely than those of Rālik, I was not able to locate such a story and therefore have not included it here. While it could be argued that my inclusion of this Rālik story does not belong in a history of Likiep Atoll, I feel it is appropriate because it provides an introduction to *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology and introduces important components of the cultural and epistemological context Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum encountered when they arrived to Epoon in southern Rālik in the mid-nineteenth century; indeed, the two remained in southern Rālik for almost twenty years before moving to Likiep following their purchase of the atoll in 1877. These and other stories were thus likely an important part of a cultural repertoire that allowed the two men to develop solid relationships with key people in southern Rālik that eventually facilitated their venture into the islands and atolls of northern Ratak and purchase of Likiep Atoll and others.

surface of the sea. “Mmmmm... Let the reefs have sand!” and sand formed tiny islands scattered across the reefs just above the surface of the water. “Mmmmm... Let plants sprout and grow!” and shoots came up through the sandy surface of the newly created islands. “Mmmmm... Let there be birds!” and winged creatures appeared and took flight.

Finally ʔowa exclaimed: “Mmmmm... Let there be human beings!” and four great stone *joor* pillars appeared. These human posts stood and then fell, and as they did they created the sky: ʔajibwināmōṅ the sky to the north, ʔōrōk the sky to the south, ʔōkōmraan the sky to the east, and Iroojrilik the sky to the west. ʔowa gave these four the task of looking after the sea and the islands and all the living things he had created. ʔajibwināmōṅ of the north would be concerned with all matters concerning death; ʔōkōmraan of the east would oversee sunrise and sunset, day and night; and ʔōrōk of the south would control the winds.

For Iroojrilik, ʔowa had reserved a special charge: he would go to the island of Ep in the west and from there direct the creation, proliferation, and dispersal of all living things including plants, animals, and other human beings. After considering the importance of this task, ʔowa named Iroojrilik king of all creation.⁴

Before ʔowa returned to the spirit world, two beings emerged from a bloody tumor on his leg; they were Lejmaan,⁵ a woman whose name means “large stone,” and her brother Wüllep to whom ʔowa gave the task of arranging all the islands in the vast ocean⁶ (although some might not agree that it was Wüllep who did this).⁷ Wüllep put the islands into a large basket *kilōk* or *iepān maal*⁸ and set out to position them as ʔowa had instructed. Starting in the western waters around the islands now known as Chuuk, he gradually travelled east emptying his basket along the way. After placing the islands to

⁴ Loien, “The First Coconut Palm,” 232-233; Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 11; Leach, *The Beginning: Creation Myths around the World*, 185-186; Stone et al., *Inoñ in Majol*, 3-4.

⁵ Some say Wüllep’s sister was Limdunānij. Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 233.

⁶ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen der Marshall-Insulaner*,” 3.

⁷ Davenport, “*Marshallese Folklore Types*,” 222.

⁸ A *iep* is a basket and a *iepān maal* is a large basket. Other words for basket include a *kilōk* large basket or strong working basket plaited by men out of coconut leaflets and a *kōle* basket for bearing tribute to a chief. Davenport notes that Kōle Island (formerly spelled Kili) gets its name from *kilōk*. According to his recorded version of the story, the man placed Jālwōj and Epoon and then threw the basket into the sea; soon thereafter, the basket became Kōle Island. Perhaps with the old spelling of Kōle (Kili) in mind, Davenport speculates that the island was named after the *kilōk* basket. Given the MOD definition, however, the island is more likely named for the *kōle* basket referenced above.

the west, he continued eastward where he began arranging the remaining islands in two almost parallel chains: Rālik (meaning sunset) to the west and Ratak (meaning sunrise) to the east. While in Rālik, he grouped almost 1,000 islands into rings or atolls encircling calm lagoon waters with just a few stragglers remaining solitary islands—one of these being Kōle Island in southern Rālik, so named for the basket Wūllep cast into the sea after placing Rālik’s southernmost atolls at Namdik, Jālwōj,⁹ and Epoon (the other single islands are Elleb and Jebat in Rālik and Mājej and Jemō in Ratak).¹⁰

It is said by some that, in throwing the basket into the sea at Kōle, Wūllep’s task of arranging the islands was complete,¹¹ and yet these accounts leave out the atolls and islands of Ratak to the east. Some believe Wūllep’s son ʔetao,¹² a well known trickster, was angry with his father and so took the basket, which still contained a great many islands, and flew with it through the air. But after such a long journey, a hole had formed in the bottom of the basket and the remaining islands and atolls began to fall out as ʔetao soared above the eastern waters.¹³ One of the atolls called Mile is said to have been fished up later by Lañinperan, a *ri-bwe* invisible person¹⁴ after ʔetao overturned it and it sank to the bottom of the sea.¹⁵

Once the islands of Rālik and Ratak were arranged, ʔowa returned to the spirit world and Iroojrilik (the so named king of all creation) took on the important task of overseeing the proliferation of life in the sea and on land. After calling forth all the plants and animals, Iroojrilik sent two women (some say they were his daughters, others, his sisters) eastward in a canoe from the land of Ep.¹⁶ Much like Iroojrilik, the women were pillars of hard basalt rock found only in the western islands and not in Rālik or Ratak; one was Liwātuonmour and the other was Lidepdepju. The sisters first made landfall at Ero Island in Kuwajleen Atoll; from there, Liwātuonmour travelled south to Naṃo and

⁹ Jālwōj is the MOD spelling for the atoll that is conventionally spelled Jaluit (Jālooj is another possible spelling). For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to use the MOD spelling.

¹⁰ Davenport, “Marshallese Folklore Types,” 222.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See Chapter 6 for more on ʔetao.

¹³ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 2-3.

¹⁴ Tobin defines *ri-bwe* as invisible people, however the term is also connected linguistically to *bwe* or *bubu* divination and might therefore also be connected to *ri-bubu* soothsayers. Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 315.

¹⁵ ʔowej, “The Chant of Mile,” 315.

¹⁶ ʔokrap, “Rālik History,” 330; Jeik, “Tobolar, Coconut Boy,” 146.

Lidepdepju went east to Aur in Ratak.¹⁷ On Naṃo, Liwātuonmour gave birth to a daughter she named Irooj; as the daughter of Iroojrilik’s own daughter, Irooj became the mother of the most highly ranked and powerful Irooj or Iroja¹⁸ chiefly *jowi* matriclean in the Rālik islands¹⁹—and, some say, of all the matricleans of Rālik.²⁰ Meanwhile, a third sister, Lijileijet, arrived from the west and joined Liwātuonmour on Naṃo.²¹ Lijileijet gave birth to a son called Jemāluut²²; together, Jemāluut and the children of Irooj were the first *ri-aelōñ-kein* or real people of Rālik and Ratak—real people descended directly from the gods. Some believe their births mark the passing of legend into history.²³ Meanwhile, many other kinds of people came into being in the islands and began to live alongside the real humans; among these were *noonniep* fairies who walked on land and sometimes revealed themselves to *ri-aelōñ-kein*, *riikijet* people who lived in the water, *rimmenanuwe* people who were very small and similar to the *menehune* of Hawai‘i, and *ripitwōdwōd* giants²⁴ who walked on water and sometimes brought great harm to *ri-aelōñ-kein*.²⁵ It was around this time that these and other people found a very real place in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and history.

On Naṃo, a bitter contest over whose descendants would rule the islands soon caused Liwātuonmour to drive Lijileijet into the ocean. There Lijileijet did not die, but rather lived on beneath the sea; some say she became a giant jellyfish,²⁶ while others say her spirit lives on in the thick mist that rises from the surf crashing on the reef off Naṃo Island, a daily reminder of Lijileijet’s fallen legacy. Despite his mother’s banishment from Naṃo, Jemāluut continued to struggle with Irooj’s children for control of the Rālik islands; after a long series of battles, Irooj’s descendants defeated Jemāluut once and for all. And while Jemāluut’s descendants lived on, their status in Rālik would never again be

¹⁷ R. deBrum, “The Origin of the *Irooj* (Chiefs) of the Marshall Islands,” 51.

¹⁸ While some sources name this *jowi* matriclean Irooj, others call it Iroja or Eroja. Abo et al., *Marshallese-English Dictionary*, 322; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 38.

¹⁹ Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 90.

²⁰ Lamān and Jekkein, “The Story of Liwātuonmour and Lidepdepju,” 54.

²¹ Lokrap, “The Iroj of Ralik”; Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 87-88.

²² Some stories name Jemāluut as Wüllepp’s son and Letao’s brother. Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 139. Also see Chapter 6.

²³ Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession in the Ralik Chain,” 6.

²⁴ *Ripitwōdwōd* was at one time also the name for *ri-pālle* barquentine sailing vessels. Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

²⁵ Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 21.

²⁶ Lokrap, “Rālik History,” 330.

equal to that of the successors of the Iroja *jowi* matriline whose founding ancestor, Liwātuonmour, lives on today as a stone pillar off the lagoon shores of Naṃo Island and whose descendants have gone on to become the rulers of Rālik²⁷ and, at various points in history, all of Rālik and Ratak.

To the east in Ratak, Liwātuonmour's sister Lidepdepju started a matriline of her own on Aur Atoll and went on to become the mother of the *irooj* of Ratak. Others say, however, that the chiefs of Ratak-eañ—the northern region of Ratak that includes Maļoelap, Ādkup, Aur, Wōjjā, Aelok, Mājeļ, Utrōk, and Likiep—are also descendants of Liwātuonmour through Irooj's great-granddaughter Limijwa,²⁸ although details of this are far from clear. What is known is that a stone pillar similar to Liwātuonmour also remains on Tōbaal Island in Aur Atoll; this rock is said to be Lidepdepju, who remains a significant figure in some Ratak traditions and genealogies despite being carried out to sea and covered with sand by a typhoon over one hundred years ago. Some say that when she was still on Tōbaal, Lidepdepju's power superseded that of even the highest chiefs of Ratak and the rules and taboos surrounding chiefs were therefore relaxed in her presence.²⁹ And so it was with Liwātuonmour on Naṃo, who was respected by the people as a chief and venerated like a god, even after she was cast into the lagoon by an American missionary early in the twentieth century.³⁰

Accommodation and Resistance: A *Ri-aelōñ-kein* Tradition

For centuries, the descendants of Liwātuonmour, Lijileijet, and Lidepdepju have inhabited the islands and atolls of Rālik and Ratak. Commonly known as ri-Majeļ or Marshall Islanders today, these descendants have long called themselves ri-Rālik and ri-Ratak and *ri-aelōñ-kein*, and their islands—known today as Aelōñ in Majeļ or the

²⁷ Lamān and Jekkein, "The Story of Liwātuonmour and Lidepdepju," 54.

²⁸ Krämer and Nevermann, "Ralik-Ratak," 195-196.

²⁹ Nancy Pollock notes: "The significance of the rock [at Naṃo] appears to have been extensive throughout Marshallese legendary history. The missionary, Dr. Rife, was presumably struck by the idolatrous nature of the rock and felt that the continued presence of such a hallowed object would be detrimental to the Marshallese acceptance of Christianity, and had it thrown into the sea. He thus recognized the power of this rock in Marshallese thinking, but did not realize that the power would persist even if its representation was cast into the sea." Pollock, "The Origin of Clans on Namu," 95. Also see R. deBrum, "The Origin of the *Irooj* (Chiefs) of the Marshall Islands and Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 51.

³⁰ R. deBrum, "The Origin of the *Irooj* (Chiefs) of the Marshall Islands," 51; L. Kabua, "Liwātuonmour," 53.

Marshall Islands—*aelōñ kein* and *aelōñ kein ad*. According to *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions, these islands, together with *ri-aelōñ-kein* genealogies, matrilineal clans, and customs, were brought forth by the gods and granted to their ancestors through magical and sacred means. Thus, for *ri-aelōñ-kein*, the land they inhabit is much more than just a place to live or a piece of property; indeed, it is also a sacred legacy passed down by their ancestors across generations. It is their *lāmoran*, their *kapijukunen*,³¹ their heritage of land. It is also the basis and foundation of an entire culture and way of life that has been built on and around the land and various types, categories, and levels of land use and tenure over hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

As I explain in Chapter 1, the overarching goal of this manuscript is to engage in an initial exploration of histories in and of one group of these sacred islands—Likiep Atoll in northern Ratak—with an emphasis on the historical, cultural, and epistemological context that contributed to the sale of the atoll in 1877, along with the narrative and other tactics *ri-aelōñ-kein* have used to resist, contest, and in some cases accommodate these alterations for more than a century. I devote the following chapters to exploring this context, placing particular emphasis on historic *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters with and resistance to *ri-pālle*, which seem to have culminated with Irooj Kaibūke and Irooj Jeimata welcoming *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders to Epoon in the late 1850s and early 1860s, and some of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* beliefs about and approaches to land and land tenure that allowed chiefs to begin offering *ri-pālle* land first as gifts and later for purchase. In the process, I consider various economic, political, cultural, epidemiological, and geographic factors including chiefly genealogies and rivalries, mid-nineteenth century environmental circumstances, the spread of epidemic disease, and the value and condition of the land which seem to have come together almost twenty years after Capelle’s initial arrival on Epoon to effect Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā’s decision to sell an atoll

³¹ A. Kabua notes that *lāmoran* is a general term that “connotes a homeland where the *bwij* have lived and grown up from generation to generation along an extended period of time” as indicated in some *jowi* names (e.g., Raarño/Arño, Ri-Kuwajleen/Kuwajleen, and Raur/Aur). *Kapijukunen*, in contrast, refers to the specific, physical “domicile or origin” of the *bwij*. *Lāmoran*, then, sometimes refers to land to which a *bwij* has interests and yet which is not currently inhabited by the *bwij*. A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 8.

that, despite its relatively large size, Jortōkā quite possibly regarded as a nonessential portion of his overall land holdings in northern Ratak.

I also suggest that Jortōkā’s decision was not as unique as its outcomes suggest today; rather, it was part of an historic and enduring *ri-aelōñ-kein* strategy of using *ri-pālle* alliances as necessary and appropriate to enhance their economic, political, and cultural capital—an approach that, beginning with Kaibūke in 1857 and Jeimata in 1864 or possibly as early as 1861,³² may have shifted to incorporate *ri-pālle* access to *ri-aelōñ-kein* lands by gift, lease, or sale. This strategy quickly spread across Rālik and Ratak and eventually reached northern Ratak in 1869 when Irooj Jortōkā sold a *wāto* land parcel in his home atoll of Maļoeļap to Anton deBrum. Perhaps not coincidentally, the sale took place the same year deBrum fathered a child with Jortōkā’s close relative Likmeto. At the same time, the *wāto* in question was on an island called Oļōt,³³ a name that means “land of no value”³⁴ and suggests that Jortōkā did not consider the sale to be of great consequence to him or any others who might have held use rights to the island. Just eight years later, Jortōkā made the pivotal decision to sell his holdings on Likiep Atoll, which he similarly declared were of no use to him, apparently due to the atoll’s physical state at the time.³⁵

In this chapter, I suggest that the eventual sale of Likiep and the skirmishes over land, power, and history that followed did not begin in northern Ratak in 1877 but rather almost twenty years earlier and several hundred miles to the southwest on the Rālik atoll

³² In his writings of 1861, Samuel Damon notes that, by that time, the manufacture of coconut oil had already commenced on Epoon where “Messrs. Stapenhorst and Hoffschlaeger of Honolulu” had “recently purchased land and erected the necessary buildings.” Although Spennemann indicates that the first *ri-pālle* purchase of land took place at Juroj Island, Epoon Atoll between Irooj Jeimata and Adolf Capelle, Damon’s statement suggests that the first such sale actually took place earlier, with Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst employees Adolf Capelle and Herman Caplan acquiring land on behalf of their employer (and possibly without their employer’s knowledge or consent; see Chapter 5) soon after their initial arrival on Epoon sometime in mid-1861 following their departure from Honolulu aboard the *Wailua* in January of that year. Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34; Hawai’i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692; Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7.

³³ Spennemann lists Lebeigien Wāto (also Lebogian) as being located on Wollet island (also Ollot). While I am fairly certain that Wollet/Ollot is Oļōt Island according to the MOD, the specific *wāto* is much harder to identify according to its new spelling, although my best guess is that it is Bok-eñ Wāto with the common locative particle *lo* (also *lo*) added as a prefix. Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 16; Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

³⁴ Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

³⁵ “Irooj!ap!ap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep.”

of Epoon. Through the initial support of several Rālik *irooj* chiefs seeking to augment their own social and economic capital,³⁶ Epoon in the early 1860s was quickly becoming an economic and cultural hub for American, Hawaiian, European, and other *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders. After years of violent encounters between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* all around Rālik and Ratak and on Epoon in particular, a small group of missionaries managed to garner the support of several influential *irooj* through a combination of maneuvers, negotiations, and local circumstances that convinced Irooj Kaibūke, a descendant of the legendary Liwātuonmour,³⁷ to welcome American and Hawaiian representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM or Boston Mission) to Epoon in 1857 and, significantly, to offer them a *wāto* land parcel as a gift for their mission. This initial gift of land, I suggest, was set in motion by a historical and cultural context that made the transfer both possible and desirable for Irooj Kaibūke. Twenty years later, this context—which had by then allowed the chiefs of southern Rālik to accumulate more wealth and prestige for their involvement in the copra industry—would also play an important role in Iroojlaplap Jortōkā’s decision to sell Likiep Atoll.

Kaibūke’s gift to the Boston missionaries, which was the first recorded transfer of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land to *ri-pālle*, seems to have triggered a torrent of land sales and leases to *ri-pālle* traders and thus represents a watershed in *ri-aelōñ-kein* relations with outsiders. Among the early traders who would soon purchase land was the German Adolf Capelle who arrived to Epoon just a little over three years after Kaibūke’s pivotal gift to set up a copra trading station on behalf of his then employer, the Honolulu based firm

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu acknowledges various kinds of capital (economic, political, cultural, etc.) and places particular emphasis on the importance of social capital, which he defines as the “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.” I suggest here that, at various points in history, *irooj* across Rālik and Ratak including Irooj Jortōkā have sought to augment their social capital by expanding their political and genealogical networks to include *ri-pālle* in the hope that these associations would grant them access to the various affiliated networks and, in turn, their accompanying economic, material, and other resources. For more on notions of capital, see Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

³⁷ Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession,” 18.

Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst.³⁸ Within three years of his initial arrival, Capelle had defected from his employer and started his own copra trading business—aptly called A. Capelle & Co.—and taken on Anton deBrum of Portugal as his partner. The two men’s activities for the firm soon involved negotiations and agreements with various *irooj* that resulted in A. Capelle & Co.’s acquisition of land parcels and entire islands and atolls throughout Rālik and Ratak.³⁹

While Adolf Capelle, Anton deBrum, and other *ri-pālle* had a lot to gain through these kinds of land acquisitions—political and social allies, economic profits, and a more assured (although certainly not guaranteed) physical permanence in the islands—I suggest that such transfers generally only occurred when the *irooj* involved regarded the sale or lease as a way to bolster their own economic, political, or cultural capital in some way and when the *ri-pālle* seeking out land made an effort to honor local customs and culture. Such was the case in the late 1850s when Irooj Kaibūke of Epoon used a gift of land to align himself with *ri-pālle* missionaries and thereby gain political and economic capital, and again in 1877 when Irooj Jortōkā of northern Ratak used a transfer of land to A. Capelle & Co. through Capelle’s partner Anton deBrum to secure what he hoped would be a similarly beneficial alliance.

These sales were therefore not *ri-pālle* land grabs per se, but were instead the outcomes of negotiations in which each side took its needs and aspirations—economic, political, cultural, and otherwise—into careful consideration. It was only later that various *ri-aelōñ-kein* stakeholders began to call into question the activities of the *ri-pālle* in their islands and, in some cases, the validity or permissibility of the land transfers themselves. This generally occurred once the *irooj* who had made the sales and *kajoor* who were living on the land came to see that they had lost more than they had gained through the sales. In the case of the Boston missionaries in the late 1850s and the sale of Likiep twenty years later, the sanctity of culture and local customs served as the rallying point for resistance and opposition to these sales as well as for disputes over land and land tenure more generally, much as they still do today.

³⁸ Varyingly referred to as Stapenhorst & Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst & Hoffschläger. See, for example, Marshall and Marshall, “Holy and Unholy Spirits,” 138; Barrie Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, 27.

³⁹ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 4, 6-7, 9, 12-13, 15-17, 19, 21.

I suggest in this and subsequent chapters that while various Rālik and Ratak atolls, islands, and *wāto* have been nominally governed and at times even possessed or owned by foreign individuals, colonial powers, economic institutions, and cultural authorities since the mid-nineteenth century in particular, *ri-aelōñ-kein* have found a multitude of ways to resist and contest these ownerships and the actors involved in the transfers. As a result, *ri-aelōñ-kein* have managed to retain control over some of the most vital components of their culture including their land and land rights, their structures of ownership and authority, their cultural values, and their historiographic practices well into the present. This has even been the case to a certain degree in the northern Ratak atoll of Likiep which, given its purchase in 1877 and continued ownership by the descendants of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum, could be said to represent one of the most prolonged examples of land alienation in the colonial history of the Marshall Islands.

While the story I construct here focuses primarily on cultural and historical context of Irooj Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll, it also speaks to the effects of foreign imperialism on the physical, social, political, economic, and cultural landscape of the Marshall Islands more generally, as well as the many diverse and creative narrative and other tactics *ri-aelōñ-kein* have employed over hundreds of years to resist these encroachments. With this in mind, I begin this history of Likiep Atoll not on Likiep but rather with the initial arrival of Adolf Capelle to Epoon aboard the trade ship *Wailua* sometime in mid-1861. It is here that I begin to explore the socio-political and ethno-historical context of Rālik and Ratak in an effort to more fully illustrate the social and cultural significance of the changes Capelle and other *ri-pālle* incited within this context, as well as the ways *ri-aelōñ-kein* have accommodated and resisted these encroachments over the years. As I show here, these efforts are part of a long history and robust tradition of *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounter with and resistance to foreign domination and control that eventually played out on Likiep as *ri-gerbal* workers began to assert their rights to land, copra proceeds, fair working conditions, social status, and the truth of their culture and historical experiences in the early twentieth century.

Ripitwōdwōd Arrivals

Sometime in mid-1861, Jeimata—a relative of Irooj Kaibūke, a descendant of the legendary Liwātuonmour and her daughter Irooj and prominent *irooj* in parts of southern Rālik—spotted a German trade schooner on the horizon off Epoon Island in the atoll of the same name. On seeing the giant *ripitwōdwōd*,⁴⁰ Jeimata consulted a *ri-bubu* oracle to determine if the ship’s crew should be permitted to come ashore.⁴¹

The *ri-bubu*, whose aura and powers were surrounded and protected by various *mo* taboos, quickly assembled the people of Epoon, who by custom had to avoid approaching or touching him, to begin the ceremony. After cleansing himself in the ocean, the *ri-bubu* called out a customary *mo* incantation that forbade women from moving during the ceremony: “*Enṃman etōtōt kōrā!* Women must remain still!” He then took out the young leaf of a coconut tree he had cooked after harvesting it from a sacred place on the island and tore the leaf into short strips. He tied three of the pieces together and made several tight knots across its length, meanwhile chanting: “*Dschojak, e-e- tuak-o-o-tu-a-a-k kinin tu-a-aak watje-biin kata-bitebit djen kilin be-ke-in nedji.* Dschojak,⁴²

⁴⁰ According to *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions, *ripitwōdwōd* are giants who walk on the sea; they do not talk to people and are thought to harm people. At some point, this designation was transferred to the massive *ri-pālle* ships that began to appear regularly in Rālik and Ratak waters in the mid-sixteenth century, perhaps as a result of their size and the violent encounters that *ri-aelōñ-kein* came to anticipate on their arrival. Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 21; Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

⁴¹ It is quite possible that Capelle’s initial arrival to Epoon in 1861 and subsequent arrival in 1863 have been conflated in the historical record and that Jeimata’s legendary welcome of Capelle as his “friend” actually occurred on Capelle’s second arrival aboard the *Maria* in 1863. Assuming that Jeimata already knew Capelle on his second arrival, the chief’s greeting to Capelle as his friend in 1863 would have had a much simpler explanation—i.e., the two men knew each other and were already, in fact, friends. That it was Irooj Jeimata rather than Irooj Kaibūke who greeted Capelle might also be more readily explained in 1863, since by that time Kaibūke was probably either very sick or had already died of typhoid fever, which was raging through the islands at that time. Considering that most stories of Jeimata’s welcome suggest the chief consulted a *ri-bubu* oracle on Capelle’s arrival (which he presumably would not have needed to do in 1863), that Jeimata welcomed Capelle along with Capelle’s associate (presumably Herman Caplan, who did not arrive with Capelle the second time because he had remained on Epoon on Capelle’s departure in November 1862), and that Kabua, not Jeimata, succeeded Kaibūke on the chief’s death (and it would therefore be equally necessary to explain Jeimata’s greeting in 1863), I propose that Jeimata’s famous welcome occurred upon Capelle’s initial arrival in 1861 rather than on his subsequent arrival in 1863. I am aware that this decision is somewhat arbitrary and therefore remains open to debate and further investigation and I remain committed to revising this portion of the story I have constructed as additional evidence becomes available. Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692-693; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 143.

⁴² The meaning of “*dschojak*” (German spelling) is unclear, although it could mean something like “for a good outcome” since it is also listed as the name of one of the possible favorable outcomes of the *bubu* ceremony. See Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 271-272.

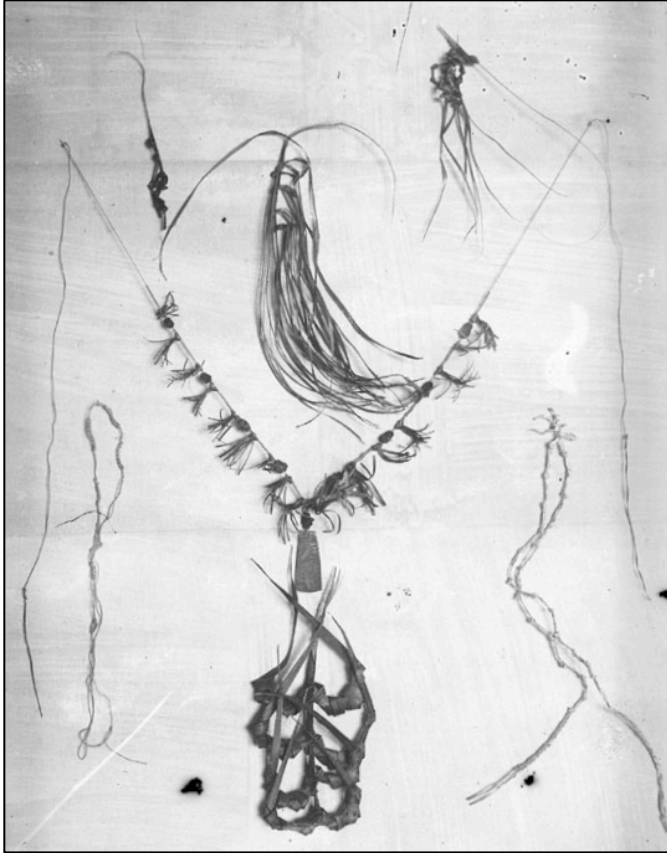


Figure 9. Leaves used for soothsaying and magic circa early twentieth century
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image F-236)

wade in water, step into the water with your feet, oil yourself, oil your skin, this is the rule for a good outcome.”⁴³ After the *ri-bubu* finished the chant, he pulled the strip briskly across his left shoulder to tighten the knots and asked: “Do we allow these strangers to come on the island?” Then he cracked the strip to fold it in half and counted the knots on each side of the fold.⁴⁴ Four knots on each side would have been the best outcome whereas three successive positive readings with a variety of possible combinations would have led the *ri-bubu* to instruct Irooj Jeimata to welcome the ship and its crew.⁴⁵ The readings on this occasion must have been favorable because Jeimata soon told the crew of the *Pfeil* to disembark and come ashore. Among those who crossed

⁴³ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 23; Krämer and Nevermann, “*Ralik-Ratak*,” 271-272. Marshallese spellings are as they appear in Knappe.

⁴⁴ For a more detailed description of *bubu* (in Marshallese) see J. deBrum, “*Notebook of Joachim deBrum*.”

⁴⁵ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 23-24.

the beach that day were twenty-two year old⁴⁶ Adolf Capelle and his associate Herman Caplan; it is said that Irooj Jeimata welcomed young Capelle that day saying, “You are my friend,”⁴⁷ a gesture that may have signified Jeimata’s awareness of the potential political, economic, and social benefits of adopting the *ri-pālle* into his genealogy of associates, friends, and kin.⁴⁸

The *Wailua* was not the first such ship to make an appearance in these waters or to be the subject of *bubu* on the part of *ri-aelōñ-kein*; in fact, American, European, and other trade vessels, whaling ships, war craft, and missionary packets had been exploring Rālik and Ratak since Alonso de Salazar, commander of the Spanish ship *Santa Maria de la Victoria*, first sighted Bokaak Atoll in northern Ratak in 1526 as part of an expedition intended to claim the Moluccas or Spice Islands to the west for Spain.⁴⁹ Since then, scores of *ri-pālle* ships had dropped anchor in the waters surrounding the islands of Rālik and Ratak, with a great number of *ri-pālle* landings resulting in violent and sometimes deadly encounters that in turn lent Rālik and Ratak a reputation as one of the most dreaded and dangerous areas of Micronesia.⁵⁰ Among these were the 1824 massacre of the American mutineers of the whaleship *Globe* at Mile;⁵¹ the seizure of several crew members of the whaleship *Elizabeth* on Epoon in 1833; the 1835 attack on the whaleship *Awashonks* at Pikinni; an outbreak of violence aboard the *Naiad* off Epoon in 1846; the murder of two *ri-pālle* passengers of the *William Melville* at Kuwajleen in 1850; and the plunder of an unnamed schooner at Namdik in 1851 to name just a few. Consequently, the people of Rālik and Ratak were so feared that, on sighting an island or atoll in that

⁴⁶ Adolf Capelle was born on May 8, 1838. Williamson and Stone, “Anthropological Survey of Likiep Atoll,” 11.

⁴⁷ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 25. Also see Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 272 and Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession,” 19. In early accounts, foreigners were sometimes greeted with the expression “*Aidara!*” which was said to mean friend or good, however this expression does not seem to be used currently; today, “*Iokwe!*” would be a more likely greeting. Von Kotzebue, *A New Voyage Round the World* 1, 302.

⁴⁸ In *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, ritualized friendship effectively extends kinship ties to members of other lineages and even foreigners, usually with the goal of securing loyalty and access to resources across genealogies. The use of sibling terms between *jerā* friends demonstrates the strength of the bonds in these relationships as well as their significance in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society. Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 48-49; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 215-216.

⁴⁹ Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 113; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 12-13.

⁵⁰ Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 32; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 197.

⁵¹ Lay and Hussey, *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board the Whaleship Globe*, 22-42.

region, *ri-pālle* ship captains sometimes refused to land and instead turned their boats back to sea, even when they were in dire need of food and other provisions.⁵²

And yet these and other violent attacks by the people of Rālik and Ratak on the crews of foreign ships were often not unprovoked; indeed, while *bubu* likely played a role as the first line of defense in many cases, the social devastation brought about by foreign guns, blackbirding, and sexual violence led many *ri-aelōñ-kein* to react violently to *ri-pālle* arriving on their shores, and in particular those who insisted on crossing the beach when they were not welcomed through local custom. To this, an early missionary on Epoon later remarked that “in nine cases out of ten, [the violence enacted by *ri-aelōñ-kein* was] in revenge for previous wrongs done to them, or it [was] in self defense [*sic*].”⁵³ The famed 1824 massacre at Mile in southern Ratak, for example, was not a random act of violence on the part of ri-Mile but was rather a response to the *ri-pālle* mutineers’ “brutal treatment of the females they [had taken] for wives”⁵⁴ and murder of several ri-Mile men.⁵⁵ Enraged, members of the Mile community destroyed the mutineers’ boat and killed all but two of them with spears and stones.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, on Epoon in southern Rālik, Jeimata’s cousin Kaibūke had earned a reputation among *ri-pālle* as a violent, arbitrary, and cruel despot after carrying through his father’s vow of revenge following a skirmish with a *ri-pālle* crew member that resulted in the death of Kaibūke’s older brother and a wound to Kaibūke’s arm.⁵⁷

Although the feared Irooj Kaibūke did not rise to a position of power until the 1840s, his father’s vendetta and his own influence in southern Rālik and Epoon Atoll in particular seem to have provoked a disproportionate number of deadly encounters in the southern atoll from the mid-1820s through the mid-1850s. The result was that, from the early to mid-nineteenth century, Epoon was one of the most dreaded places not just in Rālik and Ratak but also in all of Micronesia.⁵⁸ Among the incidents on Epoon were

⁵² Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 117-121. Also see Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 197-200.

⁵³ Edward T. Doane quoted in Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 69.

⁵⁴ Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 35.

⁵⁵ Lay and Hussey, *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board the Whaleship Globe*, 37-40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-44.

⁵⁷ “Former Intercourse of Foreigners with the Marshall Islanders,” 52-53; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 200.

⁵⁸ Lokrap and Lobar, “Rālik History,” 329.

Kaibūke's taking of a New Zealand ship in 1825;⁵⁹ the seizure of two crew members from the Australian whaleship *Elizabeth* by a group of ri-Epoon in 1833; a menacing warning to the crew of the trading bark *Pallas* not to come ashore by a group of ri-Epoon warriors armed with clubs and spears in 1835; a fatal clash in 1845 between ri-Epoon and crew members of the British trading brig *Naiad* that left several ri-Epoon dead and four of the crew seriously wounded; a deadly attack on the crew of the *William Neilson* of Honolulu in 1846; the killing of a crew member of the whaleship *Lion* who had been put ashore on Epoon and the retaliatory shooting deaths of more than seventy ri-Epoon by the *Lion*'s crew in 1851; and the 1852 burning of the schooner *Glencoe* and the murder of its crew who had reportedly been luring women and girls to the boat with the intent of kidnapping them and selling them abroad.⁶⁰

Given this history of more than twenty-five years of violent encounters between ri-Epoon and the *ri-pālle* who landed there, it is perhaps surprising that ship captains continued to enter the atoll's waters at all much less allow their crews to disembark and go ashore. And yet the drive for whaling and trade profits—and, increasingly, the search for missing crew members—led many *ri-pālle* captains to continue to enter these waters even as a great many *ri-aelōñ-kein* on Epoon and beyond made it clear they were not welcome on their beaches. It was perhaps this bellicose attitude and aggressive approach that led many *ri-aelōñ-kein* to liken *ri-pālle* and their massive ships to the much feared *ripitwōdwōd* giants that haunted their seas and frightened even the most seasoned *ri-bwebwenato* storytellers and that in the end led many *ri-aelōñ-kein* to resort to any means necessary to keep the ferocious *ripitwōdwōd* at bay.

Kōjerā: Friendly Encounters and Alliances

Not all encounters between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* during these years were so heated, however, and by the mid-nineteenth century hundreds of foreign explorers, scientists, whalers, and traders had been heartily welcomed ashore by *ri-aelōñ-kein* all across Rālik and Ratak. *Ri-pālle* who were particularly well received were those who, in

⁵⁹ Kaibūke's name apparently originates from this incident, which led him to adopt the Māori word for ship (*kaipuke*) as his name. Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 28; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 117; Ward, *American Activities in the Central Pacific* 4: 436; "Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary."

⁶⁰ Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 117-122.

addition, perhaps, to receiving a favorable *bubu* on their arrival, acknowledged and observed important local customs such as reciprocity and *kautiej irooj* or honoring and deferring to chiefs, conducted themselves appropriately and respectfully (especially with young women and girls), made an effort to learn the local language, and, following local custom, had something of value they were willing to share generously on their arrival and throughout their sojourn. As early as the mid-sixteenth century, in fact, Spanish explorers went ashore at Ānewetak, Pikinni, Kuwajleen, and Mājej where they offered gifts and trade goods that *ri-aelōñ-kein* gladly received in exchange for water and, in some cases, enormous quantities of food.⁶¹ When Alvaro de Saavedra and the crew of the ship *Florida* went ashore in northern Rālik in 1529, their offerings were reciprocated with 2,000 coconuts—a very generous gift indeed.⁶² Cleary, *ri-pālle* who shared enthusiastically and respectfully were not considered or treated as *ripitwōdwōd* and were instead provided for and afforded the opportunity to give generously in return.

By the late eighteenth century, British captains had joined the Spanish in the region and were regularly transporting goods and people across the Pacific on their way to China, Australia, and New Zealand and on occasion sited islands or made stops in Rālik and Ratak along the way. In 1788, two British vessels, the *Scarborough* captained by John Marshall and the *Charlotte* by Thomas Gilbert, were en route to China after unloading a group of British prisoners at the newly established penal colony at Botany Bay (now Sydney). In an effort to avoid the perilous uncharted waters between Australia and China, the two ships made a long detour through Rālik and Ratak.⁶³ Along the way they stopped at Mile—site of the famed *Globe* mutiny and massacre almost forty years later—where they hoped to replenish their diminishing food supply and ward off the scurvy that was beginning to plague the crew. There they were met off shore by four small canoes steered by ri-Mile, several of whom ventured aboard the *Charlotte* after Captain Gilbert presented them with iron nails and other gifts and items for trade. Even after a loose sail accidentally flung several men overboard, ri-Mile continued to trade with Captain Gilbert and his crew exchanging mats, shells, and fruit for highly desired

⁶¹ Ibid., 113-114.

⁶² Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 33.

⁶³ Spennemann, *The First Descriptions of the Southern Marshalls*, 6-7.

nails, fishhooks, and other pieces of iron. They even invited Captain Gilbert ashore, a telling gesture likely based in part on a favorable *bubu* and reinforced by the captain's generous exchange of goods. The offer was appreciated but declined due to the long journey that still lay ahead.⁶⁴

Nonviolent encounters continued to occur on the beaches and lagoons of Rālik and Ratak in the early to mid-nineteenth century, even as violence intensified on Epoon, Mile, and beyond. Several such engagements took place in 1817 and again in 1824 between members of the Russian Romanzov Exploring Expedition led by Captain Otto von Kotzebue and the people of various atolls in Ratak including Utrōk, Mājej, Wōjjā, and Maļoelap⁶⁵ where exchanges of trade goods, gifts, and names signaled a desire by *ri-aelōñ-kein* for pleasant and productive relations.⁶⁶ Similar to those described previously, these encounters seem to have been facilitated by a level of caution, respect, and generosity on the part of Captain von Kotzebue and his crew that may have been absent from encounters that ended in violence—and were likely also supported by favorable *bubu* on shore.

On Mājej, a nonviolent encounter transpired after the *Rurik* crew gained the trust of an armed and outwardly guarded fleet of ri-Mājej by approaching slowly and then immediately displaying large quantities of iron, which members of the fleet gladly accepted in exchange for water, fresh fruit, shell wreaths, mats, and other local goods, as well as an invitation to disembark and come ashore.⁶⁷ Having gained the trust of *ri-aelōñ-kein* at Mājej, Captain von Kotzebue sailed on to Wōjjā where he used a similar method to demonstrate that he and his crew intended no harm: a cautious and peaceful approach quickly followed by a generous display of highly valued gifts and items of trade including iron and glass. These actions earned the captain the confidence of several Wōjjā chiefs including one called Rarik who boarded the *Rurik* as others threw fruit and gifts to the crew and invited them ashore.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., 53-57.

⁶⁵ Von Chamisso notes that, on Maļoelap, “the sailor who handed out the iron was in especially high esteem with the natives, and he was flattered by all.” Von Chamisso, *A Voyage around the World with the Romanzov Exploring Expedition*, 149.

⁶⁶ Von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery into the South Sea and Beering's Straits* 3: 165.

⁶⁷ Von Chamisso, *A Voyage around the World*, 130-131.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 134-138.



Figure 10. Ratak island scene circa 1816
 Source: Louis Choris, *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde*, 1822

Once on land, Captain von Kotzebue kept a tight rein on his crew and punished them openly when they acted inappropriately. On one occasion, he publicly chastised a sailor for chopping down a rare and treasured breadfruit sapling. Upon seeing the look of astonishment and anger on the faces of several *ri-Wōjjā* observing the scene from a close distance, the captain “angrily upbraided the sailor, who had to give up his ax and retired from the scene.”⁶⁹ The captain’s actions appeased the *ri-aelōñ-kein* observers who quickly went after the sailor to console him.⁷⁰

Perhaps even more significantly, Captain von Kotzebue never allowed any of *Wōjjā*’s young women or girls to board the *Rurik*, which seems to have earned him and his crew an even deeper level of respect and trust among their new *ri-aelōñ-kein* friends.⁷¹ And while it is true that the various encounters between the *Rurik* crew and the people of Ratak were not without serious gaffes and were in many ways tainted by the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery* 3, 165. One exception was an old woman who voluntarily boarded the ship at *Wōjjā* and sat herself down to dine with the captain and his friends Labugar and Rarick. The woman did not actually eat, but rather saved all the food she received, perhaps to later share with members of her family. Ibid. 2: 82-83.

self-serving motivations and chauvinistic attitudes of the *Rurik* crew,⁷² the outcome of von Kotzebue's comparatively cautious and respectful approach to crossing the beach was a series of extended encounters that concluded in exchanges of gifts, friendship, and knowledge rather than hostilities or gunfire.

Ri-aelōñ-kein quickly discovered that the significance of these more friendly encounters and exchanges oftentimes lay beyond the purely material value of the goods they afforded; indeed, relations with *ri-pālle* also provided opportunities for *ri-aelōñ-kein* to enhance their political and cultural capital within their own communities and sometimes in relation to their adversaries on other islands or atolls. And while *irooj* chiefs were usually the primary protagonists in these exchanges, *kajoor* commoners and *alap* lineage heads also recognized their potential value and on occasion initiated their own relationships with *ri-pālle* on their shores.

In fact, just before departing Aur Atoll in northern Ratak in 1817, Captain von Kotzebue and the crew of the *Rurik* received an unexpected request from a group of *irooj* who had come aboard to barter for iron and present the captain with gifts of *mokwan* sun dried pandanus pulp and coconuts for the journey. Having completed the exchanges, the *irooj* ushered the captain to his cabin where they asked him to join their military expedition against the people of neighboring Mājro whose recent attack on Aur had cost the life of a man.⁷³ According to the captain, the *irooj* were outwardly dejected when he declined their request; to appease their disappointment, he offered instead “some lances and grappling hooks” for them to use in battle at which they “roared for joy” and immediately launched into a song and demonstration of how they would use the weapons to defeat their enemies.⁷⁴

When von Kotzebue returned to Ratak in 1824 on a second expedition aboard the ship *Predpriatie*, he received a similar request on Wōjjā where he had spent several weeks during his first expedition and made the acquaintance of a great many people. Following a joyful reunion, von Kotzebue's friend Lagediak, who was apparently a *kajoor* commoner and not an *irooj*, boarded the *Predpriatie*. After taking careful

⁷² See, for example, von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery* 2: 73-74, 78, 81-82.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 127-132.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

measurements and expressing his awe at the new ship's grandeur, Lagediak implored the captain to use his vast resources and influence to help wage war on the fearsome chief Lamari at Aur.⁷⁵ Shortly after the departure of the *Rurik* in 1817, Lagediak recounted, Lamari had pillaged the island taking with him all the tools, pieces of iron, plants, and animals left behind by the expedition, along with a highly valued copper plate bearing the name *Rurik* and the date of its first arrival at Wōjjā.⁷⁶ Lagediak proposed that, after vanquishing Lamari, they would go on to conquer Mājro; in return for his assistance, von Kotzebue would become the master of all of Ratak.⁷⁷

While this plan may have been little more than a pipedream on Lagediak's part, it certainly demonstrates the power and influence that he and others hoped to gain through their association with *ri-pālle* and access to foreign resources and influence. The frequency of these kinds of encounters between *ri-pālle* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* from all sectors of society only increased as *ri-aelōñ-kein* discovered the potential benefits of developing relationships with these new arrivals who had what seemed to be limitless access to material wealth and resources.

Ri-Aelōñ-Kein Making History

Encounters between the *Rurik* and *Predpriatie* crews and the people of Mājej, Aur, and Wōjjā—together with the many other encounters that took place on the shores of Rālik and Ratak leading up to the mid-nineteenth century—were significant events in the lives of *ri-aelōñ-kein*, whose ancestors had been living in these islands and navigating their waters for centuries. Whereas some meetings begot disaster and even death, others afforded new materials, goods, acquaintances, opportunities, and ideas about the world beyond the horizon, and with them new stories to tell. Indeed, the incorporation of *ri-pālle* into these stories suggests that they were making a strong impression and having a lasting impact on *ri-aelōñ-kein* communities around Rālik and Ratak.

When the *Rurik* landed at Wōjjā for a second time in 1817 on its return trip to Europe, for example, the crew discovered that it had found its way into the history of that

⁷⁵ Von Kotzebue, *A New Voyage Round the World*, 314-315.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 307-310.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 314-315.

place as ri-Wōjjā performed songs they had composed about the *Rurik*'s first landing; these songs evoked the ship's size and magnificence, the quantity of iron on board, the clothes the *ri-pālle* had worn, and even a few words of Russian and the names of all the crew the ri-Wōjjā had managed to learn and remember.⁷⁸ In fact, on their return to Wōd-meej Island in Wōjjā Atoll, writer and naturalist Adelbert von Chamisso noted that the women and girls of the island sang for the crew the many songs that had been composed in their absence to preserve the memory of their names.⁷⁹

When Captain von Kotzebue returned to Wōjjā in 1824, his crew was again entertained by a series of *eb* dances that, much like those the captain had witnessed in 1817, described the ship, its crew and commander, and the vast quantities of iron on board. According to the captain, ri-Ratak used these kinds of poetic representations to preserve their traditions, to learn the history of their islands and “communicate it in turn to succeeding generations,”⁸⁰ and to entertain one another on festive occasions that might include the launch or conclusion of a canoe voyage, a birth or death, rain or drought, the completion of a new canoe or house, a successful fishing expedition, or just a beautiful moonlit night.⁸¹ They also used them to describe their encounters with *ri-pālle* who were beginning to make regular appearances in their lagoons and on their shores.

Given that *ri-aelōñ-kein* were also highly mobile during this time and travelled regularly between islands in large *tipñōl* canoes to trade resources, gather crops, attend celebrations, and even engage in warfare on neighboring islands, these kinds of representations spread rapidly from atoll to atoll. Missionary George Pierson noted on his first voyage through the Rālik islands in 1855 that *ri-aelōñ-kein* traveled “frequently from island to island making long voyages, often of 150 miles, in ... companies of a dozen or twenty or even a hundred canoes” and that there was regular interisland and interatoll communication as a result.⁸² It is quite possible that stories, songs, dances, and other traditions representing important information, details, and lessons about their various encounters and experiences were also circulating around Rālik and Ratak by the mid-

⁷⁸ Choris, “*Voyage Pittoresque autour du Monde*,” 8-9.

⁷⁹ Von Chamisso, *A Voyage around the World*, 197, 269.

⁸⁰ Von Kotzebue, *A New Voyage Round the World*, 311.

⁸¹ Kurze, “*Mikronesien und die Mission daselbst*,” 14.

⁸² Pierson, “*Journal of Dr Pierson, on His Voyage from the Sandwich Islands*,” 255-257.

nineteenth century. Reverend Luther H. Gulick, a missionary with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) stationed on Epoon for seven months from 1859 to 1860, later attested to this when he recalled meeting a man from Ratak who recounted the story of the *Rurik* and hearing songs performed by people in Rālik that included the name of that ship's captain.⁸³

In 1887, an official in what was by that time the German administered Marshall Islands remarked that even the smallest and, in his opinion, most insignificant details of encounters with *ri-pālle* could be found in song melodies and lyrics including one song he had heard performed: “The foreign captain is very fond of drinking coconut milk and gives tobacco for it.”⁸⁴ Surely, similar songs, dances, and stories of rape, terrorism, and murder were also making their way around the islands. Together, these tales would have contributed to the formation of multifaceted, complex, and sometimes conflicting images and understandings of the *ri-pālle* who were periodically arriving on the shores of Rālik and Ratak, the outcome of which was an equally mixed array of *ri-aelōñ-kein* responses, experiences, and encounters.

Ñijir To Mede Eo: Kaibūke's Mission on Epoon

By the mid-nineteenth century, even Irooj Kaibūke, the infamous “sworn foe of whites and instigator of many of the past attacks on [foreign] ships,”⁸⁵ was privy to these complex and sometimes contradictory representations of encounters between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* in the recent and more distant past. Not only had he likely heard many such stories, but he had also had his fair share of personal experiences with *ri-pālle*—not all of them violent—and was by then well aware of the resources *ri-pālle* had to offer and of the many ways *ri-aelōñ-kein* could benefit and profit by engaging with them.

By the mid-1850s, Kaibūke was in regular contact with Captain Ichabod Handy, a whaler and trader from Fairhaven, Massachusetts⁸⁶ who had been making regular stops in Rālik and Ratak and the nearby Gilbert Islands (known today as Kiribati) for some

⁸³ Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 35.

⁸⁴ Kurze, “*Mikronesien und die Mission daselbst*,” 14.

⁸⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 201.

⁸⁶ Maude, “The Coconut Oil Trade of the Gilbert Islands,” 404.

seventeen years⁸⁷ to trade for coconut oil⁸⁸ and had managed to establish good relations with the people of Rālik and Ratak including Kaibūke himself.⁸⁹ In 1855, George Pierson, an ABCFM missionary from Illinois⁹⁰ on his way to Kosrae via Honolulu to help build up the newly established Protestant mission there, learned that Captain Handy was well acquainted with the people of Rālik and Ratak, had lived in the islands for several months, and even knew a bit of their language.⁹¹ As the captain was keen on the idea of introducing missionaries to the islands of eastern Micronesia, he offered Reverend Pierson and his wife Nancy, together with the Hawaiian missionary J.W. Kanoa and his wife Kaholo,⁹² passage to Kosrae aboard his bark *Belle* if they agreed to pass through the Gilbert and Marshall Islands along the way.

Excited at the possibility of expanding the mission that had already been established further to the west and in urgent need of passage to Kosrae, Pierson accepted Handy's offer. By the time they arrived in the Rālik islands on August 17, the captain had convinced Pierson that expanding the mission there would require a promise of protection from Irooj Kaibūke, who was residing at Aelōñlāplāp Atoll at the time.⁹³ With this in mind, Captain Handy took Pierson to Aelōñlāplāp and then to Mile Atoll where they met Kaibūke and his sister⁹⁴ Nemira.⁹⁵ After being formally introduced by Captain Handy to Pierson and his mission, Kaibūke and several other chiefs were persuaded "to desist from their bloody policy, which had hitherto governed them in their intercourse with

⁸⁷ From 1849, Captain Handy conducted similar activities in the Gilbert Islands, where he also "learnt to speak Gilbertese and maintained excellent personal relations with the islanders." *Ibid.*, 404-415.

⁸⁸ George Pierson quoted in Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 20.

⁸⁹ George Pierson quoted in Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 255-256.

⁹⁰ Garrett, *To Live among the Stars*, 145.

⁹¹ George Pierson quoted in Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 20.

⁹² *Ibid.*; Garrett, *To Live among the Stars*, 145. Calvinist missionaries with the Boston based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) arrived in Hawai'i in 1820 and quickly began to transform Hawaiian spiritual beliefs as well as economic, political, and social structures and institutions. Hawaiian teachers trained at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut and the Lahainaluna Seminary on Maui soon began to work with American teachers and pastors to take the work abroad to Pohnpei, Kosrae, the Marshall Islands, and the Marquesas. Morris, "Hawaiian Missionaries Abroad," 22, 44, 75-76.

⁹³ Hezel and Berg, eds., *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 257.

⁹⁴ Some sources indicate that Nemira was Kaibūke's niece. Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 20; Gulick, "Lectures on Micronesia," 43.

⁹⁵ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 135. Nemira is referred to as Nemaira in Damon (1861), Nemair in Bingham (1866), Nemairh in Gulick (1944), and Nemaira in Ward (1967).

foreigners.”⁹⁶ Kaibūke sealed his pledge and friendship by exchanging names with the missionary and offering to send Nemira to accompany him and arrange for an appropriate reception on Epoon, which Pierson deemed an ideal spot for the mission for its lush fertility and Kaibūke’s influence there.⁹⁷ Soon thereafter, Nemira, her husband, and five attendants “took passage on board the *Belle* and cruised about for several days.”⁹⁸ During the cruise, Nemira developed a close relationship with Mrs. Pierson, which, together with Kaibūke’s faith in Captain Handy, undoubtedly contributed to her brother Kaibūke’s “desire to have missionaries located among” his people as well as his promise of protection to Pierson and the others.⁹⁹ Kaibūke’s pledge probably also came in part out of his recognition that these missionaries—much like their friend Captain Handy—could play an important role in facilitating his access to foreign wealth and resources and thereby augment his authority among his own people and his status in relation to other *irooj*.¹⁰⁰ In response, Kaibūke incorporated Pierson into his genealogy by accepting his friendship and taking the missionary’s name as his own.¹⁰¹

Although Pierson initially refused Kaibūke’s offer and instead continued on to Kosrae, this would not be the missionary’s last opportunity to forge an alliance with the *irooj*; in fact, a turn of events just two years later would give Kaibūke even more reason to welcome Pierson and the other missionaries to his islands. In April 1856, a fleet of Rālik islanders went adrift during a voyage and landed on Kosrae where Pierson had been living and building a mission since October of the previous year. Over the course of several months, Pierson became acquainted with the group of ri-Rālik and they with him—so intimately, in fact, that they invited him to travel with them back to Rālik and establish his residence and a mission there. While confident that Kaibūke’s earlier promise of protection would help him get established on Epoon, Pierson was less enthusiastic about the prospect of travelling 350 miles to the east in what he perceived to

⁹⁶ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 22.

⁹⁷ Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 19; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 201.

⁹⁸ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 21.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Hohepa explains that missionaries also played an important role in augmenting the power of certain Māori chiefs and tribes over others in Aotearoa New Zealand in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Hohepa, “My Musket, My Missionary, and My Mana,” 197-200.

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 2, footnote 48 for more on ritualized friendship.

be “frail barks, fastened together, not with iron, but with cocoa-nut cord, and using mats for sails” and assured his new friends that he would make his way to Rālik when a “safer conveyance” became available.¹⁰² Pierson was able to make good on his promise just a year later when, in September 1857, it was decided at the first meeting of the Micronesian Mission on Pohnpei that he and his wife together with Reverend Edward T. Doane and the Hawaiian missionary Kanaka‘ole and their wives would launch a mission to Rālik and Ratak with headquarters on Epoon.¹⁰³

Pierson, Doane, Kanaka‘ole, and the others arrived on Epoon on November 9, 1857 aboard the ABCFM vessel *Morning Star* and were quickly surrounded by a fleet of seventeen canoes. Despite the pledge Pierson had secured from Kaibūke two years earlier, the crew and passengers were nervous that they might suffer the same fate as so many other foreign ships that had arrived to that island as recently as 1852. In an effort to demonstrate that he had some familiarity with the people of Rālik and their language and culture, Pierson quickly called out a greeting in the language of the islands to the canoe closest to their ship: “*Iokwe kom!* Hello everyone!” The helmsman of the lead canoe immediately recognized the reverend and “exclaimed, repeatedly, and with great joy, ‘*Doketur!* (Doctor) *Doketur!* *Mitchinari!* (missionary) *Mitchinari!*’ All in the canoe [then] became highly excited, laughing most joyously.”¹⁰⁴ The news that Pierson was on board spread “like wildfire” among the fleet; several ri-Epoon soon boarded the ship and were pleased to learn that Pierson would return to Epoon after transporting several other missionaries to the nearby Gilbert Islands.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the story of Pierson’s friendly relations with the Epoon fleet on Kosrae the previous year and Kaibūke’s pledge of protection were well known among ri-Epoon and carried with them the message that Pierson and his associates were welcome there.¹⁰⁶

Pierson’s initial encounter with Irooj Kaibūke and his assistance to the Epoon fleet while they were stranded on Kosrae soon paid off. On their return to Epoon from the Gilbert Islands, Pierson, Doane, and the others were again enthusiastically received by

¹⁰² Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 19.

¹⁰³ Sam, “A New Dawn,” 25.

¹⁰⁴ Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 43.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 66.

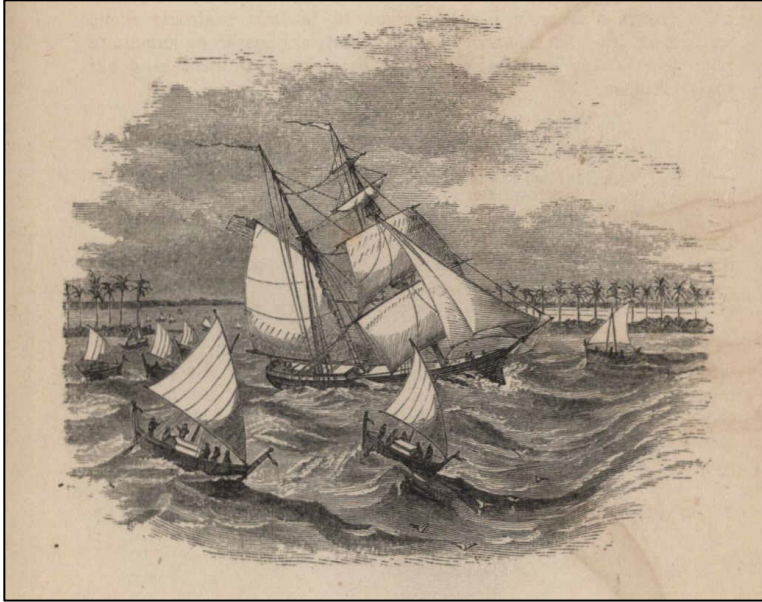


Figure 11. Arrival of the Morning Star, Epoon 1857
 Source: Hiram Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 1866

ri-Epoon who approached the canoes chanting “*Ñijir to mede eo*”¹⁰⁷ and by Irooj Kaibūke himself who boarded the *Morning Star* to personally welcome and reassure the missionaries that his promise of protection still held and that their lives and property would be safe on Epoon.¹⁰⁸ Kaibūke again sealed his pledge, this time by calling Pierson his “son” and by declaring that “any injury done to [the missionary] would be regarded as done to himself.”¹⁰⁹ To further demonstrate his commitment, the chief asked the missionaries to choose a piece of land that he would bequeath to them for their residence and mission. Just two days later the missionaries selected an area called Rupe on the northwest point of the atoll’s main island, a historic event that represented the first transfer of land by a *ri-aelōñ-kein* to a *ri-pālle*.¹¹⁰

As the missionaries prepared to expand the mission around and beyond Epoon, Kaibūke lent further support by sending out landing parties as the missionaries prepared

¹⁰⁷ While the exact translation of *Ñijir to mede eo* is not clear at this time (*ñijir* means to chant, *to* means to disembark, and *mede* might be *medde* meaning the reef in the lagoon just under the surface), the chant was repeated by Kaibūke’s people as they welcomed the missionaries and symbolically pulled on the rope tied to the ship. Today, the chant is repeated “to memorialize the initial coming of Christianity to the Marshall Islands. It also symbolizes energized and loyal friendship.” Stone et al., *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majeļ*, 22; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 138.

¹⁰⁸ Sam, “A New Dawn,” 27; Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 44.

¹⁰⁹ Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 44.

¹¹⁰ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7; Sam, “A New Dawn,” 27-28, 63.

to visit other islands for the first time: “[Kaibūke] sent canoes before them to warn the natives to treat them well; so they were greeted everywhere as ‘the friends of [Kaibūke].’ On one occasion after going away for some little time, [Kaibūke] returned accompanied by twenty proas [canoes] from nearly all the islands, filled with [*ri-aelōñ-kein*] curious to see the missionaries.”¹¹¹ In this way, Kaibūke and his people helped the missionaries acquire friends, allies, and followers by spreading news of their activities and later the gospel to nearby atolls during their frequent interisland voyages,¹¹² much as they circulated their own stories and histories during these trips through various oral and other performative traditions.

And yet Irooj Kaibūke was not a mere pawn of the missionaries; rather, his own objectives and aspirations played an important role in his decision to welcome them and facilitate their ventures. Indeed, soon after their arrival to Epoon in December 1857, the missionaries learned that the atoll had been devastated by a typhoon and food shortage just a few months earlier, leading a huge portion of the its population—nearly 800 people in forty canoes—to leave for the northern islands in pursuit of food and other resources.¹¹³ At the time, this was not an unusual practice; given the “marginal nature of land” and the destructive potential of typhoons and tsunamis on the atoll environment, *irooj* controlled a “complex web of rights over land, people and natural resources, spread over more than one atoll” to allow them and their people to migrate and access vital resources as necessary.¹¹⁴ On this occasion, several hundred people including Kaibūke himself had remained on Epoon, perhaps to rebuild homes and replenish food supplies.

Since Kaibūke had by then heard stories about and witnessed the material and other resources that *ri-pālle* sometimes had to offer, it is quite possible that the *irooj* regarded the arrival of the missionaries as an opportunity to accelerate the atoll’s post-typhoon recovery; in fact, given the Epoon fleet’s relationship with the missionaries on Kosrae, Kaibūke might have been looking for divine providence in this regard. On another occasion, Kaibūke demonstrated that he intended to take full advantage of the material wealth the missionaries brought with them when, after offering *ni* drinking

¹¹¹ Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 70.

¹¹² Sam, “A New Dawn,” 26; Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 39.

¹¹³ Gulick, “Lectures on Micronesia,” 41.

¹¹⁴ Spennemann, “Traditional and Nineteenth Century Communication Patterns,” 43.

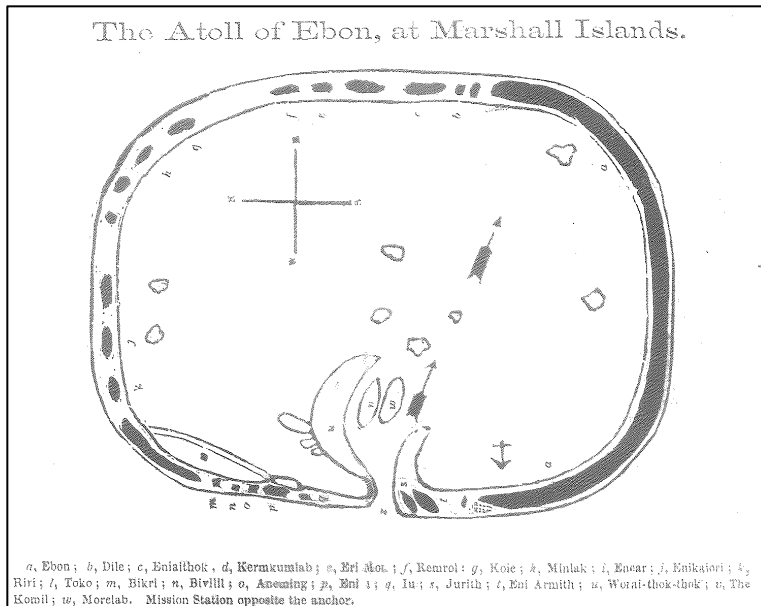


Figure 12. Sketch of Epoon Atoll by Reverend Edward T. Doane
Source: *The Friend*, 1861

coconuts to several missionaries who arrived at his home, he “very politely intimated that a fish hook apiece would be acceptable” in exchange.¹¹⁵ Indeed, while Pierson and Doane had plans for how the *irooj* could help them and their mission, Kaibūke had his own ideas about how the presence of the mission could benefit him, and in turn used the missionaries to access material wealth, to gain local allies and allegiances, and to forge a new reputation and identity for himself among *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* alike. The once feared chief was now the friend and “chiefly patron” of the American missionaries on Epoon.¹¹⁶

The news of Irooj Kaibūke’s gift of strategic association with the prominent and influential *ri-pālle* spread quickly around Rālik and Ratak and soon motivated other *irooj* to form alliances of their own by encouraging missionaries to establish churches and schools on their islands. After years of requests by ri-Mile who had joined the church on Epoon, for example, Irooj Rime invited the Hawaiian missionary Simeon Kahelemauna and his wife Mary Kaaialii¹¹⁷ to open a church and school on Mile’s main island in 1870. Although Rime was not interested in converting, he “helped [the missionaries] get food,

¹¹⁵ Ward, *American Activities in the Central Pacific* 4: 437.

¹¹⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 201-202.

¹¹⁷ Spellings for these and other Hawaiian names follow those in the text cited.

attended church and encouraged the people to attend the mission school.”¹¹⁸ In the meantime, other *irooj* including Jeimata of Epoon—and, much later, Jortōkā of northern Ratak—began extending similar invitations to *ri-pālle* traders in an effort to develop relationships they hoped would be even more advantageous, especially in terms of the material wealth the traders had to share in exchange for land and other local resources.

Christian Conversions

As with all religious missions, spiritual and religious conversion were the primary goals of the early ABCFM mission in southern Rālik; to this, Reverend Doane once wrote that “to enter in among a people, lost, depraved, exposed to endless ruin, and tell them of the way of life, of the blessed Saviour, of the riches of his dying love—this is all and the only work I ask for in this life.”¹¹⁹ Before their arrival to Epoon in 1857, Doane and Pierson considered Rālik and Ratak a particularly promising field for the achievement of these goals because the islands were, in their estimation, “unspoiled territory” since no foreign trader or beachcomber—the so called “white riffraff that usually contaminated islands well before their arrival”—had yet taken up permanent residence or made a major impact there.¹²⁰ The only challenges, it seemed, were the prevailing *ri-aelōñ-kein* religious systems, which the missionaries felt they had the ability and divine influence to dismantle and overcome.

On the arrival of the missionaries to southern Rālik, *ri-aelōñ-kein* had a rich spiritual tradition that not only lent meaning and significance to their everyday lives and activities but also formed the very basis of their culture and epistemology. Sometimes described as spiritualist¹²¹ or animist,¹²² pre-Christian *ri-aelōñ-kein* religion featured supernatural beings—*anij* spirits that were dangerous and harmful to humans and *ekjab* spiritual beings that took on human forms and were thought to sometimes inhabit natural objects—who lived on and around the islands and interacted with *ri-aelōñ-kein* in both benevolent and malevolent fashion. Spirits such as *anijmar*, *ṇoonniep*, *riikijet*,

¹¹⁸ Jeanette Little, “...And Wife,” 213.

¹¹⁹ Edward T. Doane quoted in Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 44.

¹²⁰ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 201.

¹²¹ Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 13.

¹²² Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 6.

rimmenanuwe, and *ripitwōdwōd* together with various heroic ancestors who were also thought to possess supernatural powers and abilities figured prominently in *ri-aelōñ-kein* beliefs and oral traditions.

These and other nonhumans have often been the subjects or targets of *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural practices such as *bubu* divination, *roro* chants, *anijnij* magic, *wūno* medicine, *kōbbaal* weather forecasting, and *eḡ* tattoo, each of which was conducted or performed by a person with specialized knowledge and skills.¹²³ *Ri-aelōñ-kein* spiritual life also involved ritualized pandanus and breadfruit celebrations, tattoo ceremonies, food offerings, the observance of *mḡ* taboos,¹²⁴ and a firm belief in the sacred origins of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land and *jowi* clans and the divinely sanctioned authority of *irooj* chiefs. With no designated priests or sites of worship,¹²⁵ these and other beliefs and their accompanying traditions were integrated into people's daily lives and into oral traditions that served to validate and perpetuate *ri-aelōñ-kein* philosophies about themselves and the world around them.

And yet despite this rich tradition, the early missionaries regarded their newest would be converts as heathens¹²⁶ and their religious beliefs as mere superstitions that had to be disproved, discarded, and overcome. With this belief in mind, the missionaries knew that Christian conversion would necessitate much more than a shift in *ri-aelōñ-kein* religious views; it would also require a fundamental transformation of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology. Indeed, given the extent to which *ri-aelōñ-kein* religious beliefs and practices were integrated into *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society, the missionaries' work in southern Rālik involved more than just spiritual conversion; indeed, it also carried with it an implicit and in many cases highly explicit message of social and cultural transformation. To this end and not unlike their London Missionary Society (LMS) brethren to the south in Sāmoa, ABCFM missionaries in southern Rālik sought to impose a "completely new way of life" that would reflect the manners and taste

¹²³ Ibid., 7-8.

¹²⁴ Johnny, "The Concepts of God among the People of Marshall Islands," 9-13. For more on traditional *ri-aelōñ-kein* religion see Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 230-266.

¹²⁵ Johnny, "The Concepts of God among the People of Marshall Islands," 6-7.

¹²⁶ Bingham, *Story of the Morning Star*, 13.

of American middle class society.¹²⁷ Thus, along with the message of the gospels, the missionaries preached and modeled what they considered to be the merits of “civilized” society and strongly encouraged their followers—who, perhaps not coincidentally, remained few in number throughout the mission’s first several years on Epoon—to discard the culturally prescribed habits, customs, activities, and ways of life they deemed heathenistic.

The missionaries began this work on their very first day on Epoon before they had even disembarked the *Morning Star* or stepped foot on the island with a lesson about the Sabbath—which, until then, had been just another day that had no special significance in the lives of ri-Epoon. Pierson writes of his and his associates’ efforts in this regard: “We told them Saturday evening that the next day was a sacred day, and we did not want any one [*sic*] to come on board. Not a canoe came alongside till sunset, and then they came to ask if Sunday was ended. We said ‘No,’ and they returned to the shore.”¹²⁸ Soon, regular Sunday services began at the mission station at Rupe and *ri-aelōñ-kein* converts who would begin to attend services regularly in the thatched meetinghouse that had been constructed under the missionaries’ direction were required to refrain from working on that day.¹²⁹

Not long after their arrival, the missionaries also began to require ri-Epoon male converts to cut their hair, which by local custom was worn long and tied up in the shape of a cone high on the back of the head,¹³⁰ and insisted that they begin wearing it short and cropped. To this end, a German observer remarked just thirty years after the mission was first established: “One can immediately tell the Christian natives from the still heathen population by the presence of the hair tower; the latter still wears its hair according to the ancient custom bound in a high tuft while the Christians may be recognized from the short cut hair.”¹³¹ The missionaries also regarded *ri-aelōñ-kein* clothes as incompatible with a truly Christian lifestyle and urged their followers to adopt a *ri-pälle* mode of dress.

¹²⁷ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, 273.

¹²⁸ George Pierson quoted in Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 67.

¹²⁹ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 202-205; Sam, “A New Dawn,” 42-43.

¹³⁰ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 9.

¹³¹ Kurze, “*Mikronesien und die Mission daselbst*,” 7.

Through the encouragement of the Protestant wives in particular,¹³² long cotton dresses that covered women from neck to toe began to replace the traditional *nieded* mats woven from pandanus leaves that *ri-aelōñ-kein* women wore only around their waists, while newly converted Christian men were soon wearing trousers and shirts in place of their traditional *in* skirts made from the fibers of the local *kōño* tree.¹³³

Other *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural practices including tattoo ceremonies, dances, coupling practices, food preparation, medicinal techniques, and magic also came under the scrutiny of the missionaries who felt that *ri-aelōñ-kein* religious conversion could only take place if these and other local traditions were similarly transformed or abolished. Even the standard local greeting—the *mejenma* or embrace by touching noses—was soon replaced with the more austere and less intimate handshake that remains the common greeting throughout the Marshall Islands even today.¹³⁴

Experience on Pohnpei and Kosrae had showed the missionaries that the written word could be a great aid in “spreading the truth, and thus breaking up [the] native customs and evil habits”¹³⁵ they sought to change as part of what has been called their “civilizing” mission,¹³⁶ with this in mind, the missionaries quickly established a printing press on Epoon and, with the guidance of their Hawaiian associates, transliterated the local language into a written system based on the Hawaiian alphabet and soon began translating portions of the Bible into *kajin aelōñ kein*.¹³⁷ By the missionaries’ accounts, written literacy was quickly embraced by many ri-Epoon, with evidence of their enthusiasm found not just in their physical presence in newly established church classrooms but also in their writing in the sand along the beaches, in songs and recitations that began to incorporate bible verses and messages, and in their eagerness to read new materials fresh off the printing press.¹³⁸ To this Doane reported that young ri-Epoon were so eager to learn to read that they “milled around the press during a run, grabbing for the broadsheets as they were cranked out and reading them through before the ink was

¹³² Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 22.

¹³³ Finsch, “*Ethnologische*,” 85-86; Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 18.

¹³⁴ Finsch, “*Ethnologische*,” 23.

¹³⁵ Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 68.

¹³⁶ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, 271-276.

¹³⁷ Johnny, “The Concepts of God among the People of Marshall Islands,” 37.

¹³⁸ Doane quoted in Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 265.

dry.”¹³⁹ Mission schools on Epoon also promoted literacy among ri-Epoon who were enthusiastic to learn to read and write in their own language; the result was that by 1861 there were a total of three schools on the atoll, with one on the main island and two others on neighboring islands.¹⁴⁰

While it is true that many *ri-aelōñ-kein* soon began to adopt the missionaries’ beliefs, practices, customs, and taboos, and a good number even began to attend church services on Sundays, the much hoped for religious and cultural conversion in southern Rālik and beyond was never fully complete, nor did it take place solely on the missionaries’ terms. While *ri-aelōñ-kein* agreed to observe the missionary ban on tattoo on Epoon, for example, they did not abandon the practice altogether and instead began traveling to Jālwōj Atoll to participate in the important ceremony that was not only religious in nature but was also regarded as a “most precious ‘inheritance’ handed down by the ancestors.”¹⁴¹ As they were making preparations to leave for Jālwōj, a prominent *irooj* informed the missionaries: “[Epoon] belongs to Jehovah, since missionaries live on it, and if He forbids our tattooing ceremonies, we will go to another island, where there are no missionaries and which has not yet been given to Jehovah; there we will worship the gods of these islands, and we will tattoo.”¹⁴²

Similarly, while *ri-pālle* clothing became popular among *ri-aelōñ-kein* fairly quickly—perhaps because it was relatively light weight and easy to make compared to thick, labor intensive woven mats and *kōño* fiber skirts—*ri-aelōñ-kein* lent their own local touches to the new garbs, probably much to the chagrin of the missionaries and their wives. A German priest and ethnographer later noted that, although men had slowly become accustomed to trousers, light shirts, and jackets, they always wore “either one sleeve or one leg of the trousers, or both, rolled up.”¹⁴³ Women, on the other hand, many of whom had adopted the “Calico Christian”¹⁴⁴ Mother Hubbard uniform aptly named *wau* after their most immediate place of origin on O‘ahu,¹⁴⁵ continued to wear traditional

¹³⁹ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 208.

¹⁴⁰ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 30; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 207.

¹⁴¹ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 18.

¹⁴² Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 73.

¹⁴³ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 20.

¹⁴⁴ Finsch, “*Kriegsführung auf den Marshall-Inseln*,” 2.

¹⁴⁵ Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”



Figure 13. *Ri-aelōñ-kein* fashion, Jebwad, Jālŵōj Atoll circa late nineteenth century
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-50)¹⁴⁶

woven *nieded* mats or sections thereof underneath their calico dresses.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, in the Ratak islands, some men were seen wearing “women’s petticoats over ... bathing mat[s],”¹⁴⁸ a combination the missionary wives surely had not anticipated when they first introduced western style clothing into southern Rālik.

In addition to tattoo, clothing, and other traditional practices, *ri-aelōñ-kein* also maintained knowledge of their local dance traditions even after many had been banned by the missionaries for what they regarded to be their salacious and heathenistic qualities and continued to practice them in private despite the missionaries’ strong disapproval. When the German ethnographer Augustin Krämer later visited Jālŵōj Atoll which was by

¹⁴⁶ Jebwad is the MOD spelling for the island in Jālŵōj Atoll that has conventionally been spelled Jabor (another possible spelling is Jōbwad). For the sake of consistency, I have opted to use the MOD spelling.

¹⁴⁷ Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 79.

¹⁴⁸ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 20.

then the administrative center of the German administered Marshall Islands and asked two local German officials to arrange a *ri-aelōñ-kein* dance performance, he was informed that neither the German officials nor any other *ri-pālle* who had been living on the atoll for several years had ever witnessed such a performance, as these had long since been forbidden by the American missionaries.¹⁴⁹ Upon further encouragement, however, one of the officials arranged a performance by a group of *ri-Mile* who were visiting *Jālwōj* at the time with their chief *Loeak*.

Much to *Krämer*'s delight, the initial presentation was a great success and had the effect of sparking a "dancing fury"¹⁵⁰ among *ri-aelōñ-kein* who gathered three days later for a second round. This time, *Krämer* asked *Irooj Loeak* if he could observe a "traditional" *eb* dance since the song lyrics, dance moves, and costumes up to that point had all been adapted to missionary tastes and expectations. To this, *Loeak* responded "with a cunning smile that this was only possible in secret."¹⁵¹ Three days later, the *irooj* gathered the performers for an "intimate" gathering in the dining hall to which the general public was not admitted. It was only there that *Krämer* was permitted to watch several female dancers perform traditional dances after removing their long white dresses to reveal the *nieded* mats they were wearing underneath. For days after these arranged performances, *ri-aelōñ-kein* carried on the "dance fury" through sporadic private performances out of site of the *ri-pālle* on the island.¹⁵² This was likely not the first time such surreptitious performances had taken place in southern *Rālik*, although most such performances surely took place out of the purview of *ri-pālle* missionaries and their recent converts and newly ordained pastors.

Following the arrival of the missionaries to *Epoon* and their expansion to other atolls in *Rālik* and *Ratak*, *ri-aelōñ-kein* gradually began to join the church, attend mission schools, and even convert to Christianity. Indeed, after just over a year of missionization on *Mile Atoll*, more than 200 people out of a population of 1,400 were in regular attendance at Sunday services.¹⁵³ And yet the continued prevalence of many traditional

¹⁴⁹ Finsch, "Kriegsführung," 2; *Krämer*, "Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa," 25.

¹⁵⁰ *Krämer*, "Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa," 27.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 24-28.

¹⁵³ *Little*, "...And Wife," 214.

(i.e., pre-Christian) beliefs, traditions, and practices in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society throughout this period and even into the present suggests that the complete religious, spiritual, and cultural transformation envisioned by Pierson, Doane, and their associates on their arrival to southern Rālik was never fully realized. Instead, *ri-aelōñ-kein* managed to adapt and convert Christianity into something that met their daily and spiritual needs and remained attuned to those elements of culture that *ri-aelōñ-kein* have been unwilling to abandon or dismiss.

Kaibūke's Last Stand

Within a year of the arrival of the missionaries, Irooj Kaibūke, the one time friend and patron of the Christian mission on Epoon, had come to understand that the mission's activities were threatening not just *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and cultural practices but also traditional social relations on Epoon including his own chiefly authority. As an *irooj*, Kaibūke likely found particularly threatening those activities that socially elevated *kajoor* commoners, with the primary threat coming from the mission school where *kajoor* were learning to read and write. Fearing that this would lead to a loss in his status and influence and thereby the collapse of traditional social relations, Kaibūke began to discourage *kajoor* from attending the school and participating in other mission activities including church services. Once, when he and several other Epoon chiefs left for one of their regular trips to Jālwōj Atoll, Kaibūke warned people not to let church activities interfere with their regular social obligations such as harvesting *mā* breadfruit and threatened that anyone who did not produce the assigned quota of *bwiro* preserved breadfruit¹⁵⁴ would be made into *bwiro* as a punishment.¹⁵⁵ In a similar act of protest, Kaibūke began to recall the *kajoor* he had given over to the missionaries as servants: “He

¹⁵⁴ According to *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions, breadfruit preservation is an essential activity with divine origins sanctioned by the female ancestor Jineer ilo Kōbo. The process of making preserved breadfruit *bwiro* thus remained important to *ri-aelōñ-kein* during this period not only for subsistence reasons but also as an essential cultural and spiritual activity. What *ri-pālle* might have regarded as tyrannical threats by Kaibūke may have actually represented a sincere desire on the part of the *irooj* to uphold tradition in face of what he regarded as undue *ri-pālle* influence. Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 17-20.

¹⁵⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 208.



Figure 14. Limelali and Likmeto preparing *bwiro* preserved breadfruit circa 1907
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-607)¹⁵⁶

gave [the missionaries] servants and then, because [the servants] were better fed and clothed than he, made them leave.”¹⁵⁷

Kaibūke had come to see that his initial efforts to welcome the missionaries and offer them land—gestures he thought would enhance his social, economic, and political capital—were backfiring; in fact, rather than augmenting his influence and access to resources, the missionaries were undermining his authority and even obstructing his access to culturally prescribed tributes and allegiances. Other Epoon chiefs concurred and, following the death of Kaibūke in 1863,¹⁵⁸ began to protest openly by continuing to worship their own deities, refusing to attend church services, intimidating *kajoor* converts

¹⁵⁶ The women in this picture are making *bwiro* preserved breadfruit. The process begins by putting peeled and sliced breadfruit into baskets or nets made from *kokwal* sennit which are then placed in the lagoon to allow the breadfruit to soak in sea water. After one day of soaking, the nets are removed and the water is squeezed out. The softened breadfruit is then placed underground for three days during which time the fermentation process begins. The breadfruit in this photo has already been in the ground for three days; the women are washing and kneading it before putting it in the ground again for several more days. The result is *bwiro* preserved breadfruit, a highly prized food that is stored for consumption when breadfruit is not in season or during times of famine. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.” (Note that deBrum states in a separate interview that the women pictured are preparing *iu*, which is the spongy meat of the sprouted coconut. He identifies them as Limelali and Likmeto wife of Toreja of Mile Atoll.)

¹⁵⁷ Bliss, *Micronesia, Fifty Years in the Island World*, 74-75.

¹⁵⁸ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 6.

and burning down their houses, and threatening to revitalize tattoo and other banned practices. It has even been said that Kaibūke continued to make his objections known after his death by appearing to the people of Epoon as an *anij* spirit being. To this, a German administrator on Jālwōj later observed that no *ri-aelōñ-kein* could be talked out of the belief that Kaibūke had been “seen again after his death, either floating through the air or travelling on the waters.”¹⁵⁹

Whether or not Kaibūke actually came back to Epoon as a spirit after his death is impossible to know. What matters is people’s firm belief in the appearance which, together with the protests of those chiefs who were still living, likely played a role in convincing people to keep their distance from the mission for many years to come. While some stayed away all together, others continued to attend services even while keeping their traditional beliefs and customs dear. In the coming years, *ri-aelōñ-kein* would replicate this cautious and partial acceptance of various *ri-pālle* “missions”—religious, economic, political, and otherwise—even as they accepted and adopted many *ri-pālle* practices; as a result, *ri-aelōñ-kein* acquiescence to *ri-pālle* influence was often superficial at most. Indeed, this would similarly be the case on Likiep Atoll some twenty years later when more than thirty *alap* lineage heads signed off on the sale of the atoll in what appears on paper to be a indiscriminate acceptance of the sale but in reality may have represented something all together different.

To be sure, *ri-aelōñ-kein* found a host of creative ways to resist the wholesale conversion sought by the missionaries and were especially adamant when it came to those practices and beliefs that formed the very foundation of their cultural beliefs or threatened to destabilize *ri-aelōñ-kein* power relations and structures of authority. The result was that by 1863—five full years after ABCFM missionaries had first established a permanent presence on Epoon—only ten *ri-aelōñ-kein* had been baptized in the church.¹⁶⁰ The missionaries’ progress on Epoon was slow indeed.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Also see Grundemann, “*Die Evengelische Mission*,” 1.

¹⁶⁰ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 208-209.

Forging New Alliances

When the trade ship *Wailua* appeared on the Epoon horizon in mid-1861, *irooj* relations with *ri-pālle* and Hawaiian missionaries on Epoon had already turned oppositional as *irooj* recognized they were not benefiting from the missionaries' presence and activities as much as they had originally hoped. And while it has been suggested that the arrival of the first copra traders "probably passed unnoticed by everyone except the dismayed local missionaries"¹⁶¹ who generally despised *ri-pālle* traders for their heathenistic activities and contaminating influences, it is much more likely that *ri-aelōñ-kein*, who were clearly and keenly aware of the happenings on their islands and certainly not oblivious to the comings and goings of *ri-pālle* over the years, saw the arrival of the *Wailua* as an opportunity to forge more advantageous alliances than they had found with the missionaries and to seek out the new arrivals' support in their struggles against the church.

Since the missionaries had by then surely revealed their great contempt for *ri-pālle* traders through their sermons and daily discussions with their newest converts on Epoon, it is quite possible that the decision to welcome the crew of the *Wailua* to disembark and come ashore actually represented yet another act of protest against the mission, which was for some *ri-aelōñ-kein* the real source of contamination in their islands. All that was needed to initiate such an alliance was the support of the local *irooj* and a favorable *bubu* oracle—a practice that, together with tattoo and so many other *ri-aelōñ-kein* rituals, the missionaries surely abhorred. Perhaps with this in mind, Irooj Jeimata, who along with Kaibūke was also highly influential on Epoon and, some say, had also played an important role in welcoming the missionaries three years earlier,¹⁶² called a *ri-bubu* and the people of Epoon together to determine the ship's fate. Within hours, the crew and passengers of the *Wailua* had disembarked and become the newest group of *ri-pālle* to cross the beach on Epoon.

Adolf Capelle and his associate Herman Caplan and the traders who soon followed were on a mission of their own, the goal of which was not to convert souls or cultural practices but rather to establish trading stations and transform the islands of Rālik

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 211.

¹⁶² Lokrap, "The Irooj of Ralik."

and Ratak into profitable copra plantations.¹⁶³ Much like the religious missionaries who had arrived just three years prior, however, these new arrivals would need to achieve and sustain the support of local *irooj* if they wished to maintain any hope of success in the islands, and the favorable *bubu* that first morning was certainly a step in the right direction in that respect. Much like the *ri-pälle* who had established positive relations with *ri-aelōñ-kein* in the past, Capelle and his eventual partner Anton deBrum soon gained additional *ri-aelōñ-kein* support by befriending *irooj* and offering them material resources in exchange for land and by demonstrating a certain level of respect for *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and customs, and, most significantly, by marrying *ri-aelōñ-kein* women and thereby inserting themselves into the genealogies of southern Rālik and northern Ratak. In these and other ways, Capelle (and later deBrum) earned the designation of “friend” bestowed upon him on his arrival as Jeimata and other *irooj* looked to the traders for new opportunities to enhance their economic, social, political, and cultural capital—opportunities that had not come as easily through relations with the missionaries as *ri-aelōñ-kein* had perhaps anticipated.

The traders’ efforts and strategies paid off when, in 1863 or 1864,¹⁶⁴ Irooj Jeimata sold approximately three-fourths of Juroj Island just west of Epoon Atoll’s main island to Adolf Capelle in exchange for an unknown quantity of goods or cash—a deal that immediately proved more profitable for Jeimata than Kaibūke’s gift to the ABCFM missionaries five years earlier.¹⁶⁵ In the twenty years that followed, chiefs around Rālik and Ratak made similar deals by selling land to Capelle in exchange for highly prized trade goods and cash. The result was that, by 1881, Capelle’s copra trading firm A. Capelle & Co. owned parcels of land on Epoon, Jālwōj, and Namrik atolls in Rālik and Arņo, Mājro, and Maļoeļap atolls in Ratak, as well as all of Kōle Island and Wūjlañ Atoll in Rālik and Pikaar and Likiep atolls in Ratak.¹⁶⁶ Although at the time these deals seemed to benefit *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pälle* alike, *ri-aelōñ-kein* would come to realize that they

¹⁶³ Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692-693.

¹⁶⁴ Sources indicate that the purchase at Juroj occurred in either 1863 or 1864. Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7.

¹⁶⁵ It is unclear whether Capelle had previously purchased or leased other land on behalf of Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst as reported in Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34.

¹⁶⁶ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 4, 6-7, 9, 12-13, 15-17, 19, 21.

had lost more than they had gained by selling their land to *ri-pālle*; on Likiep Atoll, *ri-gerbal* workers and *aḷap* lineage heads would respond by constructing a counternarrative that denied the veracity and legality of the sale and by turning to various *ri-pālle* colonial administrations for help in regaining some of their losses.

Following the bankruptcy of A. Capelle & Co. in 1883 and Capelle's sale of the majority of its assets (Likiep excluded) to the German firm Deutsche Handels-und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südsee Inseln zu Hamburg (German South Seas Trade and Plantation Company of Hamburg or DHPG), Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum moved their families and what remained of their business to Likiep Atoll's main island¹⁶⁷ which, together with several other islands in the atoll, was soon transformed into one of Ratak's most active and productive copra plantations, trading stations, and maritime hubs. Notably, deBrum's wife Likmeto was a close relative of Iroojḷapḷap Jortōkā, who had sold Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. with deBrum as a liaison, perhaps with the intent of keeping the atoll and the wealth it would produce within his family and thus within his sphere of influence. Indeed, deBrum's oldest son Joachim had traditional rights to Likiep that were implicitly designated by Jortōkā through the sale. This would later prove important amid growing protests by *ri-gerbal* workers over plantation working conditions, copra proceeds, land tenure, and the validity of the land purchase itself.

While it may be the case that, unlike the Protestant missionaries who preceded them, Capelle, deBrum, and other early *ri-pālle* traders did not arrive to Epoon with the explicit goal of transforming local culture or society, the advent of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak and the subsequent German administration of the Marshall Islands initiated profound modifications to some of the most important tenets of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture including land use and land tenure, social hierarchies and structures of authority, and historiographic practices, with Likiep Atoll being perhaps the most extreme example.

In order to comprehend these transformations, however, it is first necessary to understand some of the key elements of the cultural and epistemological world in which Capelle, deBrum, and various other *ri-pālle* traders found themselves in the mid-

¹⁶⁷ Some sources indicate that Anton deBrum and his family moved to Likiep in 1874, three years before deBrum's presumed purchase of the atoll from Jortōkā in 1877. Sue Rosoff, email message to author, 12 December 2012.

nineteenth century, as these would influence and shape their activities and enterprises across Rālik and Ratak for many years to come. Perhaps most significant were *ri-aelōñ-kein* beliefs about the divine origins not just of their islands but also of the various cultural systems—from the *eø* tattoo to the *jowi* matriclan, the *bwij* matrilineage, and the *wāto* land parcel—that establish and confirm how and by whom land is held, stewarded, and passed to subsequent generations. When Adolf Capelle first stepped foot on Epoon in 1861, he had no idea just how complex these systems were. The following two chapters explore the fundamental features of these systems as well as the inherent flexibility that would soon allow Jortōkā and other *irooj* to incorporate Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum into their structures of ownership, inheritance, and authority.

Chapter 3. *Jined ilo Kōbo, Jemād im Jemān ro Jet*: Land and Land Tenure

“Our mother (our only mother) forever; our father, the father of others.’ La Bedbedin (Knight 1980) offers the best meaning of this proverb [*jined ilo kōbo, jemād im jemān ro jet*]: ‘...we follow our mother and like Jebrō do as she say, ’cause land of our mother belong to us. Land of our father belong to his sister and their sister and their children. In our custom ... daughter inherit land and pass it on to her daughter. Son may work on land of his mother, but his children will inherit land of his wife. That is why we say we follow our mother. And if she die it is best to go to her sister or brother. They will look after us. [*sic*]”¹

Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto: The Coming of *Eo* Tattoo

Long ago, *etto im etto*,² after ̄owa had called forth the reefs and islands, lifted and secured the sky into place, and appointed Iroojrilik to generate countless species of plants and animals together with human and spirit beings, he paused to behold all that had been created.³ As he looked, he was awestruck by the majesty of the sky, the sparkling magnificence of the ocean, the colorful splendor of vast expanses of submerged coral, and the striking beauty of the rings of tiny islands that sat atop the reefs on the water like *marmar* shells⁴ or *ut* flower wreathes strewn across the turquoise blue surface of the sea.

But on closer inspection, ̄owa was shocked to discover that in contrast to the beautiful islands, reefs, ocean, and sky he had brought forth with his words, the living things placed upon the islands and beneath the sea by Iroojrilik were remarkably plain and ordinary and boasted no individual features or special markings to distinguish them one from the other. Indeed, as ̄owa soared through the sky he found that for all the species of birds Iroojrilik had created and given wings to fly, it was impossible to tell any

¹ Stone et al., *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majel*, 24.

² The expression *mamōj in lan* “is related to the tattoo traditions that were a very important part of Marshall Islands culture in times past. Mamoj is the word for the dye used and Mamoj in lan [is] made from the sap of the [*pedol*] vine, which was known as the very best dye. It is said that traditionally, the tattoo was a person’s most important possession because it was the only one taken to the grave.” Ibid., 36.

³ I have adapted the story I tell here from various and sometimes conflicting versions of recorded *ri-aelōñ-kein* stories about the origin of tattooing found in Davenport (1953), Downing et al. (1992a), Flood et al. (2002), Jam (2002b), Jeik (2002a), L. Kabua (2002), Kelin II (2003), Krämer (1906), Krämer and Nevermann (1938), Leach (1956), Lokrap (1949c), Mason (1986), McArthur (1995), Milne (1999), Shorett (1970), Stone et al. (1999), and Tobin (2002). I have also relied on von Chamisso (1986), Choris (1822), Krämer (1906), and Spennemann (2009) for ethnographic descriptions.

⁴ The necklace analogy is adapted from Perry, “The House that Joachim Built,” 23; Trail, “The deBrum Mansion,” 8.

of them apart. The same was true as he dove beneath the surface of the ocean where the fish swimming among the coral and in the azure depths all looked exactly the same. And as he walked around one of his many coral islands Łowa noticed that, although Iroojrilik had produced countless varieties of critters and insects, he was unable to identify any of them. Similarly, every person Łowa met along the island's main path and on the lagoon shores looked just like the one he had encountered moments before and to the extent that he could not differentiate men from women, parents from children, students from teachers, or chiefs from commoners.

Even more troubling was Łowa's observation that this pervasive similitude made it such that birds and fish seemed to think they were passing their own shadow when they circled or passed each other in the sky and beneath the sea. Meanwhile, his human children did not recognize one another and, much to Łowa's dismay, thought nothing of him and had forgotten that it was he who had created the islands on which they lived. Angry and distraught, Łowa sat down on the lagoon shore to contemplate his discovery and to come up with a solution. As he did, he looked at the sand under his feet and hands only to find that even the tiniest seashell he examined looked exactly like all the rest.

Just then, a chant whispered by with a soft breeze: "Paint the fish, color the birds, create special drawings on the lizard, the rat. Design well the lines."⁵ And with this Łowa knew just what to do. With the words of the chant on his lips, he soared back up to the heavens where he quickly appointed two young men to bring beauty, clarity, and certainty to the world below and to remind his people of his greatness and generosity. The men were Łewoj and Łaneej, two of Łowa's own offspring⁶ who lived with Łowa in the sky (some say they were *irooj* chiefs⁷). As the two were also superb artists, Łowa was confident that they could restore order and beauty to the world. And so he called the men forward and presented them with their important task: to take their art to the islands and

⁵ Jeik, "Eo, the Drawing of the Lines," 150-151.

⁶ Some versions of this story suggest that Łewoj and Łaneej were the sons not of Łowa but rather of Wüllep, the being who emerged from a bloody tumor on Łowa's leg and to whom Łowa gave the task of arranging all the islands in the sea. Others suggest that they were instead the sons of Wüllep's sister. See Chapters 2 and 6 for more on Wüllep, Łewoj, and Łaneej. Krämer and Nevermann, "Ralik-Ratak," 234. Also see McArthur, "The Social Life of Narrative," 278-292 and Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 138-141.

⁷ L. Kabua, "The Origin of Tattooing," 49.

ocean below and to color and design each living being so that no two would look the same. ʘowa was sure that this newest gift would bring happiness, beauty, and order to the people and to all the other creatures of the world and that they would in turn remember, celebrate, and honor the one who had given them so much.

Excited about their task, ʘewoj and ʘaneej leaped from their home in the sky and made their way down to the island where ʘowa had instructed them to start drawing lines and adding colors and patterns to all the birds, fish, and human and other beings. Several *ri-aelōñ-kein* saw the two men descend from the sky and land at Jimwin-ne Wāto on the northern end of Buoj Island close to the south pass of Aelōñlaplap Atoll in central Rālik; the two landed square on their heels and the holes that formed on their touchdown are still visible at Jimwin-ne (which means heel) today.⁸

Immediately after their dramatic arrival, ʘewoj and ʘaneej stepped out of the holes where they had landed, brushed themselves off, and got to work on their important assignment. After some discussion, they agreed that, to start their work, they would first need dyes and tools. And so they began by telling the people of Buoj to search the island for something they could use to make *maṃōj* dyes, inks, and paints of various colors including black, green, white, yellow, blue, and red (although some say ʘewoj and ʘaneej brought the *maṃōj* with them⁹).

The people complied and returned several hours later to Jimwin-ne with as much *bweo* coconut husk fiber and as many *inpel* coconut sheathes as they could locate. Pleased with what the people had found, ʘewoj and ʘaneej instructed them to burn the *bweo* and *inpel* and to save as much of the ash as they could. The artists explained that they would mix the ash with water¹⁰ to make *maṃōj* ink which they would in turn use to

⁸ According to Krämer, Ādkup and Aur atolls later became the tattooing centers of Ratak, where tattoo was somewhat different than in Rālik. Since I do not have access to oral traditions about tattooing in Ratak, I am using Rālik versions to demonstrate and exemplify the importance and meaning of both tattoo and socio-cultural status and ranks (i.e., *irooj* and *kajoor*) as divinely inscribed in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology more generally. Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 252; McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 285-286.

⁹ L. Kabua, “The Origin of Tattooing,” 49.

¹⁰ There were apparently a variety of ways to make *maṃōj* ink for tattoos. While some used the burned soot of *bweo* fibers mixed with water, others mixed water with the soot of *inpel* coconut sheathes. Still others mixed in the sap of the aerial roots of the pandanus tree and other plants such as *pedo!* indigenous beach spurge. After the arrival of *ri-pālle*, *ri-aelōñ-kein* developed a preference for black lantern soot (also called

decorate all the living things on Buoj and beyond. As the people performed this second task, ̄owa looked down and was content to see and smell the smoke that was floating into the air from dozens of fires burning around the island.

Once the *ri-aelōñ-kein* had burned enough *inpel* and *bweo* to meet the artists' needs, ̄ewoj and ̄aneej instructed the people to search the island for anything they could use to make the tools they needed to perform their art: containers to mix and hold the dyes, brushes for outlining patterns, and chisels and mallets for imbuing their beautiful designs onto all the creatures of the air, sea, and land. And so the people again dispersed and returned several hours later with a variety of materials including hollowed out coconut shells of various sizes, long frigate bird tail feathers, albatross and frigate bird wing bones, sticks and pieces of bamboo, the center ribs of coconut fronds, and more coconut fibers.

Again satisfied with what the *ri-aelōñ-kein* had collected, ̄ewoj and ̄aneej explained that they would use the coconut shells as *ar in eo*¹¹ cups to hold the dyes, the tail feathers as *jeje* brushes to outline their patterns, the bones and sticks as *ñi* chisels and *jub* mallets to inscribe their art into permanence, and the *bweo* coconut fibers as fans to cool and dry their subjects' skin during their special new tradition. Much to the artists' surprise, the people also presented them with a few unexpected items including woven *iep* baskets and *jaki* mats of various sizes. After much consideration, ̄ewoj and ̄aneej decided to use the *iep* to hold and carry their tools, the smallest *bunnenimij* mats to cover their subjects' faces as they performed their art, and the larger *jibur en kōrā* mats to cover and protect their newly inscribed skin from dirt and contamination.¹²

maṃōj) for mixing tattoo ink. Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 103; Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 300; NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 143.

¹¹ Most of the tattoo terminology I use in this section comes from Spennemann's *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands* (2009); for the most part, Spennemann's terms are taken from early twentieth century German sources (e.g., Krämer, Erdland, Finsch, Hershheim, etc.). This combined with the fact that many of these terms may have gone out of general use with the decline of the tattoo tradition in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society following the arrival of the missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century means that they do not appear in the MOD. Rather than leaving the terms out all together, I have retained Spennemann's terminology and spellings for many of the Marshallese words that appear in this section. For more see Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 5.

¹² Description adapted from Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 102-105.

But before ʔewoj and ʔaneej could start giving the people of Buoj what they called *eφ* tattoos, they would first use their paints and tools to color the birds and the fish and all the other creatures of the islands ʔowa had created. And so ʔewoj began to call forth the fish one by one: “*Itok juon*. Come one.” With this, the first fish came and ʔaneej colored it and called it a *kupañ* convict tang and released it into the sea. Then ʔewoj called forward a second fish and ʔaneej painted it and called it a *bwebwe* blue fin tuna and released it into the sea. ʔewoj then called a third fish, which again ʔaneej painted; this one he called a *mao* parrotfish before releasing it back into the sea. After this, ʔewoj called forth all the remaining fish, which ʔaneej in turn colored, named, and sent back to their ocean home. As they worked, the two artists prayed and chanted quietly to themselves: “Paint the fish, color the birds, create special drawings on the lizard, the rat. Design well the lines.”¹³ Meanwhile, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* watched, listened, and learned so they could also one day practice the art of *eφ*.

Then, when ʔewoj and ʔaneej were done painting all the fish with zigzags and jagged lines, they called all the birds in the sky and creatures on the island to come to them so they could color them one by one so that each would have a unique appearance. When the artists’ task was complete, the people were amazed to see birds adorned with colorful feathers and beaks and other animals with tails, unique markings, and rough skin or fuzzy fur. Even the smallest *!oñ* fly had its own special designs and every tiny shell on the beach was different from the next. ʔowa looked down from the sky and was pleased by the rainbow of brilliant and shimmering colors he saw flying through the sky, swimming in and out of coral reefs, and scurrying through the island’s dense underbrush.¹⁴

On seeing that ʔewoj and ʔaneej had completed their initial task of painting all the fish, birds, and other creatures of the world below, ʔowa told the artists to begin work on the *ri-aelōñ-kein* who, in his estimation, still looked remarkably plain and dull. And so, following ʔowa’s directive, ʔewoj and ʔaneej turned to the people and told them they were also to receive special *eφ* tattoos that would echo the splendor of the world around

¹³ Jeik, “*Eφ*, the Drawing of the Lines,” 151.

¹⁴ Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 11-12; Jeik, “*Eφ*, the Drawing of the Lines,” 151.

them and make them more beautiful now and in their old age (since, according to Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej, the *eɔ* would also disguise their wrinkles). The *eɔ* colors would be limited to the strikingly dark blues and blacks the *ri-eɔ* tattoo artists had first imparted on the *jekad* black noddy and various other darkly colored sea birds. *Eɔ* patterns, meanwhile, would follow the designs the *ri-eɔ* had inscribed on the *ōō* lionfish and the *jorur* regal angelfish and mimic other motifs found in nature including shark teeth, turtle shells, crabs, and seashells and cones; they would also reflect the various wave patterns Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej had observed on the surface of the ocean from their home in the sky, many of which *ri-aelōñ-kein* had already learned to weave into their *jaki* fine mats. These and other patterns would reflect both the beauty and the importance of the natural and oceanic world in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and everyday life.¹⁵

Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej went on to explain that the *eɔ* designs were important and desirable not just for their attractiveness but also and even more importantly because they would help the people know one another, their *jowi* matrilineal affiliations, and their ranks and positions in society. First, the *eɔ* designs would distinguish men from women because men would be tattooed primarily on their chests and backs and women would be adorned mainly on their arms and shoulders. Secondly, modified *eɔ* would mark and identify the various *jowi* matrilineals and thereby serve as a symbol of clan identity and pride. Finally and perhaps most significantly, *irooj* chiefs would have special *eɔ* to set them apart from ordinary *ri-aelōñ-kein*: *irooj* would have exclusive rights to *eɔ* on their faces and necks, for example, while designs on the fingers and on the backs of the hands would be reserved for their wives and *lerooj* female chiefs. The boldness and permanence of the *eɔ* patterns and motifs and their positions on the skin would in turn both reflect and signify the prominence and perpetuity of status and rank in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society and culture; indeed, along with their rank, their *eɔ* would be the only thing *ri-aelōñ-kein* would carry with them to the next world.¹⁶

¹⁵ Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 30-32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 132-137. Also see L. Kabua, "The Origin of Tattooing," 149-150 and Jeik, "Eɔ, the Drawing of the Lines," 152.

On hearing ʔewoj and ʔaneej’s intense descriptions and explanations, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* were delighted that their beauty would soon parallel that of the fish, birds, and other animals that inhabited the world around them and that their new markings would serve as outward symbols of their rank and identity. In fact, their excitement was so great that word of the artists’ plans to inscribe the bodies of all *ri-aelōñ-kein* with lines, patterns, and symbols spread across Aelōñʔapʔap Atoll and throughout Rālik and Ratak. Before long, the news reached the people of Pikinni Atoll in northern Rālik and a large *walap* outrigger canoe set out to witness the magnificent spectacle. (ʔowa and another named ʔōmʔal had only recently sent the outrigger to Naṃ Island in Pikinni Atoll.¹⁷) And yet despite the enthusiasm of the *ri*-Pikinni to reach their destination, the canoe’s voyage to Aelōñʔapʔap was slow and treacherous because it did not yet have a sail and the people had to rely on *ek* fish swimming at the surface of the water along the length of both sides of the canoe to propel it through the powerful ocean currents.

During its voyage to Aelōñʔapʔap, the Pikinni canoe sailed dangerously close to Wōtto Atoll where there lived an *ekjab* spirit ghost—so close that the *ekjab* became angry and killed all the *ek* fish that were guiding it. (Today *ri-aelōñ-kein* canoes have a small curve called an *ek* along the length of both sides.) From that point, the men had to paddle the canoe the rest of the way to their destination at Buoj; by the time they arrived they were so tired from paddling that they could no longer bail water and the canoe sank. The men were so determined to see the great *ri-eḡ* and to get *eḡ* tattoos of their own, however, that they left their canoe behind and swam the rest of the way to the shores of Buoj despite their immense fatigue.¹⁸ As the *ri*-Pikinni made their way into the lagoon through the pass between Buoj and Pikaajʔā islands they noticed a line of coral heads; they later found out that these rocks were actually people who had arrived late to the first tattoo ceremony and were transformed into demons as a result. Since the demons were said to drink blood from people’s tattoo wounds, *ri-aelōñ-kein* were required to vigilantly recite

¹⁷ Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 21.

¹⁸ ʔokrap’s version states that the Pikinni canoe was carrying all the creatures of Pikinni to Buoj to be tattooed and that the crab caused the canoe to sink by pretending to bail and secretly biting the canoe lashings. Flood et al., “Why Rat and Octopus Don’t Get Along,” 177; ʔokrap, “Stories of ʔowa, the Creator.”

prayers and incantations before and throughout any tattoo ceremony to keep the evil spirits at bay.¹⁹

When the ri-Pikinni finally arrived at Buoj they were amazed at what they saw; indeed, what appeared to be the island's entire population was gathered around a large *em* building made of pandanus *aj* thatch with a large roof and open sides located on the island's lagoon side. (It is said by some that Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej brought the *iṃōn eṃṃ* tattoo house with them when they leaped down to Buoj from their home in the sky.²⁰) Nearby there was a *lokatok* offering site consisting of two large stones covered with dozens of *mā* breadfruit, *mokwan* preserved pandanus, and *jaki* fine mats of various sizes. At that moment, Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej emerged from the house and immediately began reciting a short prayer during which all the *ri-aelōñ-kein* remained completely silent. After finishing the prayer, Ƙewoj and Ƙaneej instructed everyone to join them in a *roro* chant as the two performed a dance around the house and the surrounding coconut trees. As they danced, the *ri-eṃ* announced that all the women present should gather *kimej* coconut fronds and dance along with them and that the men were prohibited from even glancing at the women as they performed this important component of the *eṃ* ceremony.

Following the dance, Ƙewoj led a man from the crowd into the house and told him to be seated next to his partner Ƙaneej who was by then sitting on a *jaki* mat laid out across the middle of the floor. The rest of the men accompanied Ƙewoj and the man into the house and sat down according to Ƙewoj's instructions, with *irooj* chiefs closest to the lagoon, *bwidak* (people born of a chiefly father and commoner mother) closest to the ocean, and the *kajoor* commoners in the middle. Meanwhile, Ƙewoj declared it *mṃ* taboo for women to witness the drawing of the lines on any man's body and ordered women to remain outside throughout this and future ceremonies. (The reverse would also be true, they said: men would be prohibited from seeing women being tattooed as well.²¹) And yet despite this *mṃ*, Ƙewoj gave the women an important role to play: following his instructions, they sat together in groups under the nearby coconut trees beating their *aje*

¹⁹ L. Kabua, "The Origin of Tattooing," 49.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 176 n. 298.



Figure 15. Two tattooed *irooj* chiefs circa late nineteenth century
 Source: Franz Hensheim, *Südsee-Erinnerungen* (1883)

drums until *Ḷewoj* ordered silence so his partner could begin drawing the lines. At that moment, the women stopped drumming and began to sing quietly so they would not disturb *Ḷaneej*'s careful concentration as he traced various animal and weaving motifs on a section of his subject's skin. The *ri-eḶ* drew only as much as he would have time to inscribe that day; the rest he left for the next days or even weeks depending on the man's rank and the corresponding magnitude and location of his tattoos.

Once *Ḷaneej* had finished drawing the lines and motifs, he covered the man's face with a small *bunnenimij* woven mat so the others would not see his tears or grimaces once the actual tattooing began. Then *Ḷaneej* dipped the tip of a *ñi* tattooing adze into the *ḿamōj* dye, applied the adze to the man's outlined skin, and proceeded to go over the motifs with quick sharp taps to the adze with his mallet. As soon as the tapping began, the women outside dramatically increased their volume by singing, beating their drums, and slapping their thighs as loudly and raucously as they could, all in an effort to veil any cries that might escape the lips of the man inside the house. By nightfall, the women's efforts had paid off: the first section of the *eḶ* was complete and not a single groan or whimper had emerged from under the mat covering the man's face.

At this time, the *ri-eo* showed the people how to make *kajala* fans out of coconut fibers to cool and dry the man's skin as it healed, how to cleanse and soothe newly tattooed areas with *pinneep* coconut oil, and how to reduce the chance of swelling, redness, and infection by covering the tattooed skin with *nen*²² leaves and *jibur en kōrā* mats. The *ri-eo* also warned the people about the dangers of contamination and showed them how to treat infections with a homeopathic solution made from *bweo* coconut husks. Meanwhile, they ordered the newly tattooed man to remain indoors until his tattoos were completely healed and the scabs had fallen off.

Before turning in for the night, ̄Lewoj and ̄Lanej asked the men inside the house who were not attending to the man's fresh tattoos to follow them outside where they were soon joined by all the women. It was then that the *ri-eo* declared to all those present that, much like their ranks and *jowi* affiliations, the *eo* tattoo was an imperishable and divine blessing that should be respected and venerated as nothing less than a gift from the gods.²³ Indeed, in addition to being sanctioned by ̄Lowa, each *eo* motif was to serve as an important outward reminder, reflection, and confirmation of a person's place, position, and role in society—which, the *ri-eo* reminded the people, were also sacred legacies to be passed down matrilineally through the generations via the *bwijen* umbilical cord of mothers. Every *ri-aelōñ-kein* would thereby maintain ties to the gods and to their legendary ancestors through their *bwij* matrilineage; these ties would in turn be embodied in the *bwidej* lands held by each *bwij* and reiterated by the specific *eo* tattoo designs donned by individuals of various ranks and statuses that were inextricably linked to their age, gender, and, most significantly, to their *jowi* matriclan and *bwij* matrilineage affiliations that in turn determined their status as *irooj* and *kajoor*.

Pejpetok Arrivals

When Adolf Capelle first arrived off the lagoon shores of Epoon Island in mid-1861, he could not have been prepared for the geographic, cultural, and epistemological world he was about to encounter. First, on entering the Epoon lagoon, the *ri-pālle* was

²² *Morinda citrifolia*, sometimes called *noni* in English (from the Hawaiian).

²³ Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 129.

barraged with a host of sights and sensations that were much different than anything he had encountered growing up in his native Germany, although not altogether unfamiliar given that he had spent many months living and working on another Pacific island in what was then the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.²⁴ And yet Capelle’s sojourn in Hawai‘i could not have equipped him for his first encounter with Epoon Atoll, which he realized on the *Wailua*’s initial approach and passage through the channel was nothing like the large volcanic island of O‘ahu approximately 2,000 miles to the northeast.²⁵

Unlike their closest Polynesian neighbor, Capelle soon discovered, the islands of Rālik and Ratak are grouped together into twenty-nine atolls scattered across 750,000 square miles of ocean with just five single islands distributed throughout and dry land making up less than one one-hundredth of a percent of the total area.²⁶ All together there are more than twelve hundred islands,²⁷ the vast majority of which are so small that, forty years prior to Capelle’s arrival to Epoon, another European included them in the larger region he dubbed Micronesia or “tiny islands.”²⁸ Capelle soon learned that, as one of Rālik and Ratak’s twenty-nine atolls, Epoon is made up of no less than twenty of these small islands with a total land area of just over two square miles encircling a lagoon of approximately forty square miles. These are tiny islands, indeed, and the physical contrast for Capelle between Hawai‘i and his soon to be island home must have been astonishing.

Epoon’s stifling heat and humidity were certainly also shocking after Capelle’s extended sojourn in the more temperate Hawaiian Islands more than 2,000 miles to the

²⁴ Adolf Capelle apparently kept extensive diaries of ethnographic and other observations throughout his travels and residence in Rālik, Ratak, and beyond. Captain Winkler of the German Navy, who was briefly stationed on Jālwōj in 1896, made the acquaintance of Capelle and Anton deBrum’s oldest son Joachim who provided him with notes from the diaries on traditional *meto* navigation and sea charts (commonly referred to as stick charts in English). Micronesian Area Research Center representatives made an attempt to locate the diaries in 1971 during a trip to Likiep and Ebjā Island (Kuwejleen Atoll) to microfilm the Joachim deBrum Papers. They learned, however, that the earlier diaries were lost to a typhoon in 1905. Winkler, “On Sea Charts Formerly Used in the Marshall Islands,” 490; McGrath, “The Joachim deBrum Papers,” 181.

²⁵ Since accounts of Capelle and Caplan’s arrival on Epoon are sparse in details, I have used various ethnographic sources to enhance my description of their initial arrival and encounter with Jeimata.

²⁶ NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 8.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Tcherkézoff, “A Long and Unfortunate Voyage,” 176-180.

northeast with temperatures hovering around eighty degrees Fahrenheit and humidity levels remaining fairly steady at approximately eighty to ninety percent year round. At the same time, Capelle would have quickly realized that frequent rain showers and northeasterly *joklā* trade winds mitigated the area's intense heat and humidity²⁹ and enhanced Epoon's potential for agricultural expansion and copra production, the very activities the *ri-pālle* had come to pursue. The vast expanses of as many as ten varieties of coconut palms that defined much of Epoon's landscape—one of the most fertile in all of Rālik and Ratak—surely augmented Capelle's optimism.³⁰

As Capelle and his associate and co-worker Herman Caplan prepared to disembark the *Wailua* that day in mid-1861 and step foot on solid ground for the first time in many weeks, they spotted a cluster of *tipñōl* outrigger sailing canoes approaching the ship. Each canoe carried several men, most of whom had their long dark hair tied into *bujek* knots positioned high on the tops of their heads and wore woven *kaḷ* mats fastened at the waist, each with a wide belt hanging just below the knees like an apron.³¹ Many also wore shell armbands and necklaces, had distended earlobes of varying lengths held open with wide rolled up pandanus leaves, and were tattooed extensively on their chests and backs.³² Some of the men were carrying sticks of varying lengths outfitted with sharks' teeth and iron barbs,³³ while others held out green and brown coconuts, pandanus fruit, taro,³⁴ and various packages wrapped in leaves and bound with sennit (Capelle later learned that these were *bwiro* preserved breadfruit and *mokwan* preserved pandanus). Together, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* men looked prepared either for battle or for a customary welcome ceremony; Capelle and the others aboard the *Wailua* were hesitant to find out which the men had in mind.

²⁹ Steinbach, "Zum Klima der Marshall-Inseln," 2.

³⁰ Doane, "Remarks Upon the Atoll of Ebon," 82.

³¹ Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 16-17, 24; Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 18-19.

³² Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 24, 53, 68.

³³ Von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery* 3: 171.

³⁴ Taro grew abundantly in the southern atolls, however it was scarce in the northern atolls where arrowroot (harvested primarily for its fine white flour) was much more prevalent. Following the introduction of wheat flour and rice, however, the two crops, which are both very labor intensive, gradually fell out of production and are scarcely harvested or used today. Wendler, "Zur Feuer: Und Nahrungsbereitung Der Marshall-Insulaner," 4.

Capelle and Caplan noticed that one of the canoes was carrying a passenger whose clothes and tattoos immediately revealed that he was different from the others in some way. Rather than the apron style *kal*, for example, this man was wearing a full “grass” *in skirt*³⁵ covered in front with a mat and protruding upward at the back and a flat woven *kañūr* belt around his waist uniquely adorned with shell plates and beads.³⁶ He also had more elaborate *eō* tattoos than the other men; in fact, his tattoos were so extensive that they covered not just his chest and back but also his upper shoulders, his neck, and even his face. At first glance, the man’s tattoos and clothing appeared to make a complete ensemble as they covered almost every part of his body not otherwise outfitted with mats or other articles.³⁷ Capelle’s experience in Hawai‘i led him to assume that this was a chief and he would soon find out that his assumption was correct.

As the canoes arrived alongside the *Wailua*, the fully tattooed man began to speak and it quickly became apparent that he was of higher status than the others and hence the distinctiveness of his clothing and tattoos. Although the schooner’s Captain L.V. Lass³⁸ and his crew and passengers could understand little if any of what he said, the man made himself understood through gestures and by sprinkling his speech with a few words of English that he had picked up through previous contact with foreigners and through more extended relations with the American missionaries who had been living on Epoon as the guests of Irooj Kaibūke for the past several months. Captain Lass quickly introduced himself and his crew and informed the man of their friendly intentions. He then brought forward Adolf Capelle and Herman Caplan and told the intricately tattooed man that the two men wished to disembark to investigate the possibility of establishing a copra trading station on Epoon on behalf of their employer Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst.³⁹ Since Capelle had quite possibly already entertained thoughts of establishing permanent residence in the islands, he was eager to make contact and establish friendly relations

³⁵ “Grass” skirt is really a misnomer, since *in* skirts are not made from grass but rather from thin strips of pandanus leaves.

³⁶ Spennemann, *Tattooing in the Marshall Islands*, 16, 24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17, 53.

³⁸ Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 692-693.



Figure 16. Lōñjak wearing traditional attire, Likiep circa 1918
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-838)⁴⁰

with the chief who, if his experience in Hawai‘i had taught him anything, would be crucial to his endeavors in the islands.

As Capelle and Caplan went forward, they learned that the fully tattooed man was Jeimata, an *irooj* for Epoon and several surrounding atolls in Rālik. Having introduced himself and his status, Jeimata pointed Capelle and Caplan toward the shoreline where a large group of men, women, and children was assembled along the beach. In front of the

⁴⁰ According to Joachim deBrum’s son Leonard, Lōñjak worked for the *ri-pālle* on Likiep making copra, feeding chickens, etc. Although Lōñjak’s expression is quite serious in this picture, deBrum notes that Lōñjak was a funny man who liked to joke around and make children laugh. He was apparently even joking around while he was posing for this picture, which photographer Joachim deBrum took in an effort to document *ri-aelōñ-kein* traditional dress that was no longer being worn on a daily basis at that time. Joachim’s photo collection includes many other such photographs of staged traditional dress, several of which depict women in traditional *nieded* skirts. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

crowd, another man was standing knee deep in the lagoon waving and holding up what appeared to be a long coconut leaf with a series of knots along its length. Pointing in the man's direction, Jeimata said a few more words that neither Capelle nor his associate understood; he then turned his full attention to Capelle and, with four simple words, revealed his own intentions in sailing out to meet the *Wailua* off the shores of Epoon: "You are my friend,"⁴¹ Jeimata said, and with that the chief offered Capelle his hand in missionary fashion and suggested that the two exchange names.

Upon witnessing these symbolic gestures between their chief and the *ri-pālle*, the other *ri-aelōñ-kein* aboard the canoes laid down their weapons and began to climb aboard the schooner carrying with them bundles of produce and prepared foods. Once on board, the men began to exchange their offerings with the crew for the usual pieces of iron together with the more sophisticated items of trade *ri-aelōñ-kein* had begun to expect including iron tools and weapons, tobacco, and imported foodstuffs such as rice, ship biscuits, and coffee.⁴²

Over the course of these initial exchanges, Capelle probably made it clear to Jeimata that he and Caplan intended to disembark the *Wailua* and join the *irooj* on Epoon. With Kaibūke away on one of his many expeditions,⁴³ Jeimata—armed with a *bubu* oracle in Capelle's favor and a level of authority and prestige among ri-Epoon that were quite possibly greater than those of Kaibūke⁴⁴ himself—took it upon himself to welcome his new friends ashore. It would not be long before the American and Hawaiian missionaries at Rupe on the main island of Epoon learned of the arrival of these traders

⁴¹ Knappe, "Religiose Anschauungen," 23-24; Mason, "Land Rights and Title Succession," 19.

⁴² Finsch, "Ethnologische," 47; Senfft, "Die Marshall-Insulaner," 2.

⁴³ Kaibūke is said to have been away from Epoon from September 1857 to March 1860, for example, on an expedition to the northern islands. Pollock, "The Origin of Clans on Namu," 92; Gulick, "Lectures on Micronesia," 41.

⁴⁴ According to one oral tradition, "Jaimata [*sic*] lived in the southern islands, making his home mostly at Ebon. When the missionary ship *Morning Star* came to Ebon in 1857, it was Jaimata who prevented the others from killing the missionaries. His authority was so great he was able to overrule the others. The people listened to him. He gave the missionaries the property at Rube [*sic*] which is still the mission compound . . . Later Jaimata also gave kindly assistance to the leaders who came to the islands." This is the only recorded history I have found that points to Jeimata rather than Kaibūke as the one who welcomed the missionaries and gave them land at Rupe. It is not clear if the storyteller confused Jeimata and Kaibūke or intended to underscore the fact that Jeimata was the leading authority on Epoon and was thereby able to sway the entire population of the island, including Kaibūke himself, to welcome the missionaries and give them land. Lokrap, "The Iroj of Ralik."

from Honolulu and their plans to establish a coconut oil extraction plant and trading station and right there on the atoll.⁴⁵ Nor would it be long before Capelle learned that, despite the fairly strict and stringent land tenure structure in Rālik and Ratak, the missionaries had managed to acquire a parcel of land at Rupe from Kaibūke for their mission. This revelation gave the new *pejpetok*⁴⁶ immigrant Capelle hope that he too could acquire land—or at the very least the right to use land—on behalf of his Honolulu based employer and perhaps one day for himself. By some accounts, Capelle was able to do just that within a few short months of his arrival by securing at least one piece of land for his employer along with permission to erect the buildings necessary to produce one hundred gallons of coconut oil over sixteen months.⁴⁷

Following these initial introductions, greetings, and customary exchanges, the Epoon *irooj* indicated that the time had come for Capelle and Caplan to disembark the schooner and make the journey to shore via his masterfully constructed single hulled *tipñōl* outrigger canoe. Pleased at the invitation, the two men complied and soon found themselves aboard one of the most magnificent and technologically sophisticated watercrafts they had encountered to date.⁴⁸ Once they were settled on board, the wind filled the canoes' sail and the crew and their *ri-pālle* passengers (who were equally amazed at the craft's swiftness on the water) were on their way to Epoon Island.

After so many weeks at sea, it was a relief for Capelle and Caplan to at last step foot on solid ground on the lagoon side beaches of Epoon. On their initial landing, the *ri-pālle* visitors were immediately surrounded by some of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* they had seen waving to them along the shoreline. Following a brief consultation with Jeimata, the *ri-bubu* soothsayer was the first to greet the visitors with a handshake; on seeing that the *ri-pālle* had met the approval of the *irooj* and the *ri-bubu*, other members of the crowd soon approached to shake their hands and present them with necklaces and head wreaths and

⁴⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210-211.

⁴⁶ *Pejpetok* is the Marshallese term for an immigrant or drifter and is also an idiom or proverb that means “pandanus seed carried in by the sea” and refers to a “stranger with no land rights.” A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 24.

⁴⁷ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34; Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692-693.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5 for a more detailed description of the features of *ri-aelōñ-kein* canoes.

flowers from their own ears. Having been exposed to Hawaiian and English speaking missionaries for the past many months, several in the crowd offered a few words of greeting to the visitors in English and Hawaiian including “Hello, how do you do?” and “*Aloha*”; others, meanwhile, immediately began to teach the *ri-pālle* a few words in their own language—the most important being “*Iokwe*” which means hello, good-bye, and love—and were delighted when the visitors repeated the words back to them in their thick foreign accents.

Once the crowd had dispersed and the initial excitement and barrage of greetings and handshakes had subsided, Irooj Jeimata indicated that Capelle and Caplan should follow him to his house where they could get acquainted over a freshly prepared meal and get ready for the welcome festivities that would take place later that evening and over the next few days. As they made their way to Jeimata’s compound, the *ri-pālle* noticed an overpowering smell of ripening pandanus and burning coconut husk kindling; *ri-aelōñ-kein* calling out greetings to them from inside their low lying homes and open air cookhouses; children of all ages playing and chewing on keys of *bōb* pandanus in outdoor yard areas neatly strewn with *lā* coral gravel; plants of all shapes and sizes—some familiar and some not—including coconut trees, pandanus trees, breadfruit trees (which at that time of year bore no fruit), and flowers such as the beautiful and fragrant *kieb* lily and the indigenous *utilomar* flowering shrub.⁴⁹

Along the way, the *ri-pālle* also discovered that the *bukun ni* coconut groves they had spotted from the ship indeed covered much of the island’s inner acreage. Many of the trees were heavy with fruit and towered as high as one hundred feet tall. Other shorter varieties—the fruits of which were more accessible for everyday use than those of their taller cousins—were located closer to people’s living areas. Several of these trees were heavy with ripening fruit and had one or more coconut fronds wrapped around their trunks, which were perhaps a claim to ownership or a sign that the ripening fruit had been reserved for harvesting by a particular family.⁵⁰ Capelle and Caplan also noticed that

⁴⁹ *Utilomar* (*Guettarda speciosa*) is sometimes called beach gardenia. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 154.

⁵⁰ Von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery* 3: 163.

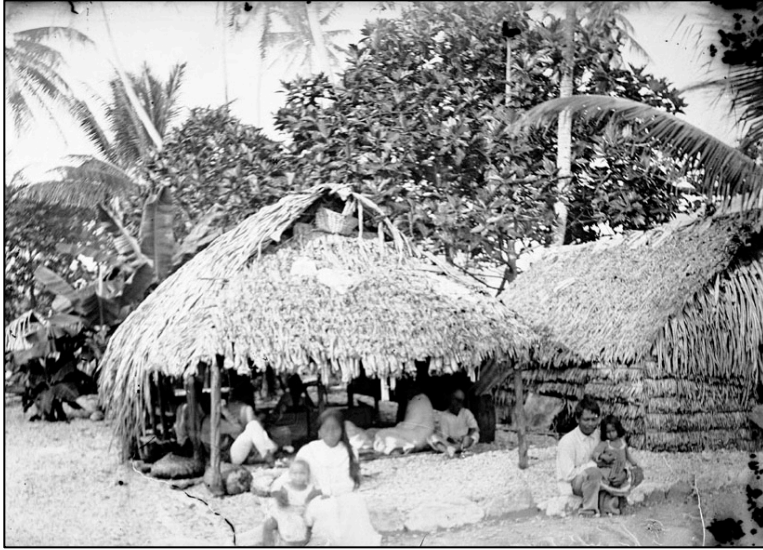


Figure 17. Island scene, Āne-jeltak Island, Wōjjā Atoll, circa 1910
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image C-58)

much of the island seemed to be covered with a layer of soil made primarily of decaying plant matter, which they soon learned was characteristic of the more fertile southernmost atolls. Since coral atolls were generally known for their poor soil and harsh agricultural conditions, Capelle and the others were particularly pleased by this discovery.

On their arrival to Jeimata's compound, the *irooj* and his guests were greeted with a hearty meal of *ek* fish, *barulep* coconut crab, cooked *iaraj* taro, fresh *bōb* pandanus, and *bwiro* preserved breadfruit, which they washed down with the water of fresh green *ni* coconuts. During the meal, Capelle and Caplan divulged to Jeimata some of the details of their plans to establish a copra plantation and coconut oil processing plant on the atoll and the amount of land and resources they would initially require for the endeavor. The visitors in turn got their first glimpse into the history of Epoon in particular and Rālik and Ratak more generally, as well as some of the most fundamental components of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture including land tenure and inheritance and the two set *irooj-kajoor* chief-commoner social structure and hierarchy. It was not long before the two discovered that *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture delineates not just structures of power and authority as embodied in the dress and tattoos of their new friend, but also how land across Rālik and Ratak is owned and by whom and that these would have a major bearing on their employer's (and later Capelle's) prospects for a profitable agriculturally based business on Epoon and

beyond. In fact, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure system was so complex and its rules so strict that it would be almost three years before Capelle found a way to acquire a piece of land of his own. And in this he likely had the help of his by then wife Sophia Limenwa, who as a ri-Epoon and the daughter of Dauno, the first Christian convert,⁵¹ may have served as Capelle's first point of entry into the complex world of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure beliefs and practices.

Some Fundamentals of *Ri-aelōñ-kein* Land Tenure

Characterized by “limited land area, poor soils, low topography, few endemic species of flora or fauna, and great susceptibility to damage from storms or drought,”⁵² the small and low lying islands and atolls of Rālik and Ratak are extremely fragile and vulnerable ecosystems. The atolls vary in size from Kuwajleen, with a total land area of 6.33 square miles surrounding a lagoon of 839.30 square miles, to Naḿdik, which has 1.07 square miles of land encircling a 3.25 square mile lagoon.⁵³ Likiep Atoll in northern Ratak consists of approximately sixty-five islets with a total land area of just under four square miles surrounding a 163.71 square mile lagoon.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the islands' low elevation accentuates their vulnerability: with an average height above sea level of only seven feet, the highest natural point in all of Rālik and Ratak is a sand hill on Likiep Atoll that measures thirty-seven feet at most.⁵⁵

Over the centuries, *ri-aelōñ-kein* have adopted and incorporated various cultural attributes, practices, and strategies to make life in this sea of tiny islands⁵⁶ possible and sustainable. Among these are expertise in fishing and the exploitation of marine resources, horticultural methods and techniques adapted to the coral atoll ecosystem,

⁵¹ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 138, 167.

⁵² Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 1.

⁵³ NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 9.

⁵⁴ Marshall Islands Visitors Authority, “Likiep Atoll Map.”

⁵⁵ Although Schnee does not explain how the sand hill on Likiep came into existence, oral traditions suggest that it was created by one of several typhoons or tidal waves that struck the atoll in the 1840s, in 1854, and in 1899. Steinbach's reference to the sand hill in an 1896 essay rules out the 1899 storm, however, and the hill therefore likely formed as a result of one of the mid-nineteenth century events. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 9; Schnee, “*Zur Geologie des Jaluit Atoll*,” 32; Steinbach, “The Marshall Islands,” 296; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

⁵⁶ Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 152.

highly developed navigational knowledge and canoe building skills and technologies, consistent mobility⁵⁷ and adaptability, and a hierarchical social structure based in mutual obligation and reciprocity both within families and between *irooj* chiefs and *kajoor* commoners. They also include a belief system that values genealogy and land above all else⁵⁸ and a land tenure and inheritance structure that is strict in principle but flexible enough in practice⁵⁹ to ensure that every *ri-aelōñ-kein* has the right to live on and reap the fruits of at least one piece of land no matter his or her status or position in society.⁶⁰ At the heart of these principles and practices are the *wāto* land parcel, the *jowi* matriline, and the *bwij* matrilineage which in most cases determine, demarcate, authorize, and perpetuate individual and familial entitlements to particular pieces of land on particular islands in particular atolls. Together they also delineate and embody the social rank, status, and obligations of every member of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society.

In order to begin to understand *ri-aelōñ-kein* concepts of land and land tenure, it is necessary to set aside western notions of property, individual ownership, and class in an effort to understand the *ri-aelōñ-kein* system in its own right. This is precisely what Adolf Capelle and his future partner Anton deBrum had to do during their first months and years in southern Rālik as they sought ways to acquire land within a social and cultural context where two or more *bwij* matrilineages did not own land per se but instead held varying interests⁶¹ in assorted pieces of land on one or more islands considered to be sacred legacies rather than commodities to be bought and sold.⁶² Although this land tenure system has been altered significantly since the German imperial government took control of the islands in the mid-1880s,⁶³ it was still largely intact (and yet also always-already in flux) when Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum arrived on Epoon in the mid-nineteenth century and would become one of the major contributing factors and challenges to the success of their entrepreneurial efforts on Epoon and later Likiep as

⁵⁷ Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 22-23.

⁵⁸ Tobin, "Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 2-3.

⁵⁹ K. Stege, "*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*," 13-14.

⁶⁰ A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 1.

⁶¹ Dunlap, "Marshall Property Law," 501.

⁶² Tobin, "Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 4.

⁶³ Mason, "Economic Organization," 88.

they deployed their wives' genealogical connections, the political and economic aspirations of various chiefs, the islands' devastation by typhoons and tidal waves from the 1840s to the 1860s, and the flexibility inherent in *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure system to facilitate and even legitimize land purchases on Epoon in 1864 and Likiep in 1877 as well as on a surprising number of islands and atolls in between.

Wāto: Land Parcels

Not long after their arrival to Epoon in southern Rālik, Adolf Capelle and later Anton deBrum discovered that, at its most basic level, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure and management system serves to facilitate daily life in the vulnerable ecosystem of Rālik and Ratak. Over time, the *wāto* land parcel has played a central role in this system by defining and structuring not just how land is owned but also where people live and the resources that are available to them for their daily subsistence needs and in anticipation of extenuating circumstances. Indeed, as the building block of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure system and the foundation of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society, the *wāto* has characterized islands and daily life across Rālik and Ratak for centuries.⁶⁴

Although *wāto* range in size, they are generally between one and nine acres and are on average just less than four acres.⁶⁵ In most cases, the land parcels run across islands from lagoon to ocean⁶⁶ and ideally give residents access to “all or most of the resources available in an atoll setting,”⁶⁷ not unlike Hawaiian *ahupua`a*, which generally run from the mountains to the ocean. Wild *kieb* lilies,⁶⁸ red leafed shrubs, stone slabs, breadfruit trees, and slashes at the base of coconut trees at approximately shoulder height have traditionally marked *wāto* boundaries.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, each clearly demarcated *wāto*

⁶⁴ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10; Tobin, “Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 3.

⁶⁵ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 105.

⁶⁶ Exceptions include Mājro (Laura) Island, where land parcels in the Eoļap and Lo-pat districts are so long and wide that they have been divided into several lots, and Namrik, which has “property lines that bisect the island.” K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 161.

⁶⁷ Rynkiewicz, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 59. Also see K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10.

⁶⁸ There are several varieties of *kieb* false spider lilies, some of which are indigenous (i.e., prehistorically introduced) and some of which have been introduced more recently. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 134-135.

⁶⁹ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 86; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 161; Tobin, “Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 8-9; Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 105.

has its own name, history, and genealogy,⁷⁰ all of which are intimately linked to the identities of those who hold, utilize, and reside on the land.⁷¹

In the mid-nineteenth century, the ideal *wāto* provided its residents with the materials needed to build dwellings and other structures—hard wood for posts, pandanus leaves for thatch roofs, and coral rocks for gravel, to name just a few—as well as easy access to the resources necessary for their daily subsistence and in times of scarcity. Among these were the abundant variety of marine life found just off the lagoon and ocean shores and a much more limited variety of fowl, “a sheltered living area of pandanus and palm along the lagoon side beach, the breadfruit trees and taro that grow only in the protected interior, and finally the hardier shrubs, some with medicinal properties, exposed to the salty spray of surf along the ocean side.”⁷² Other edible plant resources including *bōb* pandanus, *ni* coconut, *maq̄mōk* arrowroot, and *keeprañ* banana (also called *pinana*) were also widely available, however given the islands’ salty air and poor soil quality, even this limited number of species struggled to thrive in some areas.



Figure 18. *Imōn Kijdik*, Mōjeļañ Wāto, Āne-jeļtak Island, Wōjjā Atoll, circa 1920s
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image B-67)⁷³

⁷⁰ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 105; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 161.

⁷¹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 122.

⁷² Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 59. Also see K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10.

⁷³ The notes for this photograph name the island as “Emejeltak,” which I have interpreted to be Āne-jeļtak Island. “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” B-67, B-67 card.

Breadfruit and taro, for example, were far less abundant in the northern atolls where the average annual rainfall was well below that of the southern atolls⁷⁴ and struggled to grow on islands that were too small to maintain an underground freshwater lens.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, seasonal breadfruit and pandanus crops only produced fruit at certain times of year.

Over the centuries, *ri-aelōñ-kein* adapted the *wāto* system to meet their daily needs and to help them prepare for unexpected (yet highly anticipated) disasters. One approach was to inhabit only those *wāto* that offered protection from prevailing winds and salt spray and had relatively fertile soil as a result⁷⁶ and to leave the less desirable *wāto* for other uses. Another approach was to build homes and other structures on the lagoon side of an island and *wāto*, which, as *ri-aelōñ-kein* well knew, was much less vulnerable to heavy winds and storms and the possibility of king tides or tidal waves than the ocean side.⁷⁷ The lagoon side was also more desirable because it generally had better soil than the ocean side, which was often “covered with stones and overgrown with salt-water bushes and other brush of no value.”⁷⁸ For this reason, *ri-aelōñ-kein* tended to build their homes and other structures approximately fifty yards from the lagoon shore. Within these spaces, households were generally clustered together, each being situated in an open area covered with *lā* coral gravel, which served to provide drainage during heavy rains.⁷⁹ The dwellings themselves had open sides with adjustable flaps and sleeping quarters located on elevated interior platforms, which, in addition to providing some privacy, protected sleeping residents from nighttime showers and heavy winds⁸⁰ and from

⁷⁴ Whereas rainfall in the southern atolls can be as high as 160 inches per year, many northern atolls receive as little as twenty-five inches of rain each year, on average. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 9.

⁷⁵ “Between the rains, freshwater is naturally stored under the larger of the islands in what are called Ghyben-Herzberg lenses. An island needs to be at least 3½ acres in size in order to maintain such a water lens ... Many important food crops, such as breadfruit and taro, cannot survive without a subterranean source of freshwater [*sic*].” Ibid.

⁷⁶ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 105.

⁷⁷ Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 150.

⁷⁸ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 34.

⁷⁹ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 9.

⁸⁰ Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 146-150. For a more detailed description of *ri-aelōñ-kein* houses and structures see Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 31.

the rats that lived in abundance on many of the islands⁸¹ (hence the name of the sleeping platform: *em kijdik* or *iṃōn kijdik* or rat house⁸²).

While physically small, the *wāto*'s significance in *ri-aelōñ-kein* daily life and epistemology has long been enormous. This is evidenced by the *wāto*'s linguistic prominence in several *ri-aelōñ-kein* creation stories including those that recount the beginnings of this world and the origins of the coconut.⁸³ These and other important stories feature Liwātounmour, an ancestor whose name means “female life-giving land parcel.”⁸⁴ Indeed, Liwātounmour is one of Rālik and Ratak's most legendary figures not just because she was one of two sisters originally sent by Iroojrilik to populate the islands, but also because she gave birth to Irooj, the legendary mother of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* hierarchies and inheritance systems that determine how and why land is owned and by whom, and (some say) to Tōboļāār, the first coconut, whose progeny has for centuries remained one of the most essential resources in all of Rālik and Ratak and has in turn made life in the islands possible (see Chapter 5). The female life giving land parcel Liwātounmour is thus important because she generated the physical fruits and the social and cultural systems that have made life in this fragile ecosystem sustainable for her descendants and those of her sisters. She also serves as an epistemological symbol for the *wāto* itself, a unit that is significant not only because it is the primary source of sustenance, the basic landholding unit, and the basis for *ri-aelōñ-kein* class and status, but also because it is the epistemological medium that connects *ri-aelōñ-kein* to their legendary beginnings even today.

Jowi: Matriclans

Throughout Rālik and Ratak, *wāto* are intimately linked to *ri-aelōñ-kein* genealogies as *bwij* matrilineages descended from various and hierarchically ranked *jowi* matriclans jointly hold and maintain land parcels in a culturally prescribed group tenure

⁸¹ Finsch, “*Ethnologische*,” 6-7.

⁸² Also called an *iṃōn bwi* or smoke house in Ratak. Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 146; “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” B-67 and B-67 card.

⁸³ These origin stories are featured at the start of Chapters 2 and 5, respectively.

⁸⁴ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 119.

arrangement unique to the islands.⁸⁵ At its most basic level, this means that, in general, at least two *bwij*—one of *irooj* chiefly status and one of *kajoor* commoner status—hold various and differing rights to and interests in any given *wāto* land parcel. These rights and interests have been passed down matrilineally through *bwij*—and, in turn, through their associated *jowi*—over many generations.

A *jowi* matriclan is a large and prevalent identity and social unit made up of several *bwij* whose members are linked through a *jowi* name inherited matrilineally from a common female ancestor and through the assumption that all *jowi* members are related even if they cannot trace their exact genealogical connections.⁸⁶ Traditionally this has meant that members of the same *jowi* are forbidden from marrying even when they belong to different *bwij* and their genealogical connections are far removed or unknown, with the goal being to prevent the “mental and character deterioration” that is thought to occur as a result of endogamous (i.e., intra-*jowi*) unions.⁸⁷ *Rilikin doon* cross cousins, on the other hand—a woman’s daughter and her brother’s son, for example—have traditionally been allowed to marry because they belong to two different *jowi*, with the daughter inheriting her *jowi* from her mother and her cross cousin inheriting his *jowi* from his mother.⁸⁸ In past times, children were often even encouraged to marry their cross cousins—especially when such unions had the potential to result in strengthened or double claims to particular *wāto* land parcels—however this practice is not as common today.⁸⁹

The earliest *jowi* came into being as the result of disputes or contests over land and coastal and marine resources or out of demographic necessity as families grew large and certain lines departed islands or atolls to seek land elsewhere.⁹⁰ While the participants in these original contests started off as members of the same *jowi*, affiliations

⁸⁵ Rynkiewicz, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 61.

⁸⁶ This assumption carries with it rules against intra-clan marriage and obligations to intra-clan hospitality. The rules and obligations are much more lax today, however, as the *jowi* matriclan continues to lose its prominence in contemporary culture and society. Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 84; Walsh, “*Jowi Ko in Majol*,” 18.

⁸⁷ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 7.

⁸⁸ Rynkiewicz, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 53; Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 114.

⁸⁹ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 114.

⁹⁰ Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 96.

were divided as the contest losers either remained on the land and took on a junior social rank or moved to other *wāto* where they founded new and independent *jowi* and *bwij* sublineages, became the primary owners of their new territory, and further cemented their group distinctiveness through subsequent contests over land and authority.⁹¹

The original *jowi* fission is thought to have taken place on Namu between the descendants of Liwātuonmour and her sister Lijileijet, with the outcome being the formation of the Irooj and Jemāluut lines whose descendants engaged in a series of wars and power struggles for generations (see Chapter 2). This and subsequent contests resulted in a hierarchy in which certain *jowi* and their *bwij* sublineages were more prominent and highly ranked than others⁹² and yet nevertheless recognized that they shared fundamental genealogical connections with and thereby generally maintained an overall sense of compassion and responsibility for the well being of the members of the other groups. Thus in many cases the higher ranking *jowi* permitted the lower ranking *jowi* to either remain on their land or to seek out residence on neighboring *wāto* or nearby islands.⁹³

In the western Rālik islands, the Irooj line gained a particularly elevated status, probably as the result of its supremacy in warfare and its genealogical connections to the legendary Liwātuonmour who, in addition to her divine origins and connections to the *ekjab* spirits, was considered the most powerful of the renowned sisters following her banishment of Lijileijet into the sea (see Chapter 2).⁹⁴ Across Rālik and Ratak, other powerful lines including Ijjirik, Errūbra, Ri-Mwejoor, and Raarņo also emerged as the result of victories in warfare, claims to supreme divine connections, and other means and circumstances.⁹⁵ As a result, these and other original *jowi* were conferred a higher social

⁹¹ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 7-8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹³ I have presented here a somewhat idealized scenario in an effort to explain disputes that may have led to *jowi* and *bwij* divisions and subsequent agreements between *irooj* and *kajoor* to share land many centuries ago. To be sure, things did not always happen this peacefully, and there are accounts of *irooj* who were much more difficult and even tyrannical. In general, however, a system developed in which *kajoor* own land jointly and generally cannot be removed from their land without just cause, despite the ultimate authority of *irooj*.

⁹⁴ Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 89.

⁹⁵ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 96; A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 7-8.

status and primary title⁹⁶ to the *wāto* land parcels they were able to claim and at some point adopted *irooj*—following the name of Liwātuonmour’s daughter Irooj—as a generalized title or marker to differentiate them from the members of the lower ranked *jowi*. The result was the formation of a two set socio-cultural system of *irooj* chiefs and *kajoor* commoners in which the former retained primary (residual) title to or interests in particular *wāto* land parcels and the latter took on secondary (provisional) title to the same *wāto* in a sort of joint corporate arrangement.⁹⁷

Although various outsiders have asserted that this two set system of land tenure and social ranking is feudalistic,⁹⁸ with *irooj* lineages owning land and *kajoor* lineages working the land and remaining subject to the *irooj*, the system actually bears little resemblance to western ownership practices or class divisions and should therefore not be approached through western definitions, frameworks, or assumptions.⁹⁹ Instead, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* system of land tenure and social ranking can only be understood on *ri-aelōñ-kein* terms and through a *ri-aelōñ-kein* epistemological framework that takes into account *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and history and *ri-aelōñ-kein* knowledge about the spiritual and genealogical origins of *bwij in irooj* and *bwij in kajoor*.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, because presumed genealogical connections to the land have played a major role in land tenure practices in Rālik and Ratak for centuries, their significance cannot be overlooked. Meanwhile, what is important is not whether these connections and their associated stories and traditions are real or based in facts (i.e., whether Liwātuonmour and Lidepdeju actually came from the west and went on to generate the original *jowi* and *bwij* in Rālik and Ratak,

⁹⁶ Oliver, *Oceania* 2: 977-978.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Spoehr, *Majuro*, 93; Tobin, “Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 5; Mason, “Economic Organization,” 86-88; Lynch, “Traditional Leadership in the Constitution of the Marshall Islands,” 1; Finsch, “*Ethnologische*,” 19; Yanaihara, *Pacific Islands under Japanese Mandate*, 170. Others, meanwhile, have compared the system to slavery: Senfft, “*Die Marshall-Insulaner*,” 16-17. My point here is that the systems are not comparable because the *ri-aelōñ-kein* system is based on assumptions about divine origins and divinely sanctioned roles for both *irooj* and *kajoor*.

⁹⁹ Dunlap, “Marshall Property Law,” 501.

¹⁰⁰ *Bwij-in-Irooj* (note that here Irooj is spelled with a capital “I”) is the name of a particular *bwij* thought to be the descendants of the legendary Liwātuonmour’s daughter Irooj. I am using the term *bwij in irooj* (with a lower-case “i”) to refer to *bwij* that belong to the *irooj* set more generally (i.e., in contrast to *bwij in kajoor* or those *bwij* that belong to the *kajoor* set). Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession,” 7; Hage, “Marshallese Royal Marriages,” 399.

respectively), but rather the place they hold in *ri-aelōñ-kein* epistemology and the part they have played in forging a set of cultural beliefs and practices that sanctify land-genealogy connections above all else.

Bwijen, Bwidej, and Bwij: Land and Matrilineages

For *ri-aelōñ-kein*, matrilineal descent and inheritance of land and social position through *jowi* matrilineages and *bwij* matrilineages according to *bwij* and generational seniority and birth order defines “relationships between atolls, islands, plots of land and their people”¹⁰¹ and is therefore one of the most fundamental components of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology. Simply defined, a *bwij* matrilineage is a line or branch of a much larger *jowi* matrilineage¹⁰² bound together through known relationships rather than by a shared name or presumed connections.¹⁰³ Each *bwij* is descended from a common female ancestor “to whom an actual genealogical relation can be traced”¹⁰⁴ and who is assumed to be a descendent of the original female founder of a much larger *jowi*.¹⁰⁵ Generally speaking, the rank and authority of a *bwij* stems from its connections to one of the original and most powerful *jowi* (i.e., those with connections to Liwātuonmour in Rālik and, presumably, Lidepdepju in Ratak)¹⁰⁶ together with its own generational position in relation to other associated *bwij*. *Bwij in irooj* are hence more highly ranked than *bwij in kajoor* and, within each of these two categories, generationally older *bwij erūtto* (with *rūtto* meaning older) are more highly ranked than younger *bwij edik* (*dik* means “small” or “young”).¹⁰⁷

Much like the historic conflicts that resulted in the formation of distinct *jowi*, many *bwij* owe their discreteness to schisms between more contemporary female ancestors and their sisters or other close female relatives over personal or land disputes, demographic concerns, or any number of other social, economic, or political

¹⁰¹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 122.

¹⁰² Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 106.

¹⁰³ Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 42-43.

¹⁰⁴ Spoehr, *Majuro*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ DeBrum and Rutz, “Political Succession and Intra-Group Organization in Laura Village,” 12.

¹⁰⁶ Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 93.

¹⁰⁷ DeBrum and Rutz, “Political Succession and Intra-Group Organization,” 13.

circumstances.¹⁰⁸ Historically, these might have included extreme weather events such as typhoons, tidal waves, or droughts that divided *bwij* into distinct and independent lines by forcing members to seek out land on neighboring *wāto*, islands, or atolls. More often, *bwij* split into two or more sublineages following the death of an apical ancestor, with the older *bwij erūtto* sublineages taking on a senior position in relation to the younger *bwij edik* sublineages and any intermediate or middle *bwij io!ap* sublineages.¹⁰⁹

The word *bwij* derives from and is related to *bwijen* meaning navel or umbilical cord and *bwidej* which is the life giving, sustaining land a child inherits from his or her mother, an etymological connection that reveals and reinforces the fundamental relationship in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture between mothers, life, sustenance, lineages, and land.¹¹⁰ In general, the *bwij* matrilineage serves as the avenue through which rights to *lāmoran* and *kapijukunen* heritage lands historically claimed by particular *jowi* matriclans are determined, possessed, and passed down to succeeding generations.¹¹¹ Unlike *jowi*, *bwij* are localized rather than spread across islands and atolls¹¹²; in general, *ri-aelōñ-kein* hold that *bwidej* lands do not belong to *bwij* but rather that *bwij* belong to their *bwidej* much as children belong to their mothers.¹¹³

Wāto land parcels are held—or, perhaps more appropriately, upheld—by *bwij* rather than by individuals; because *ri-aelōñ-kein* children are born into their mother’s *bwij*, they are also born with rights and obligations to those *wāto* held by their mother’s *bwij*. Simply put, this means that, together with their *bwij* affiliation, children also inherit land and land rights from their mothers. Because these rights have been passed down from divine and legendary ancestors across generations of *bwij* through the *bwijen* of mothers, these rights are considered sacred and inalienable “unless otherwise prevented by an act of the head of the *bwij* for reason of serious offense committed against the head, or against the *bwij* generally.”¹¹⁴ The *bwij*-land connection is so strong, in fact, that even

¹⁰⁸ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 106; A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 20-21.

¹⁰⁹ DeBrum and Rutz, “Political Succession and Intra-Group Organization,” 13-14.

¹¹⁰ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 11.

¹¹¹ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 1.

¹¹² Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 106.

¹¹³ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 122.

¹¹⁴ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 1.

secondary or temporary land rights inherited through *bōtōktōk* patrilineal lines (a father's children living on his land rather than that of their mother, for example)¹¹⁵ or acquired through other exceptional arrangements such as adoption¹¹⁶ generally return to the *bwij* after two or so generations,¹¹⁷ with the assumption being that all holders of secondary rights will have land regardless because they can always or eventually return to the *wāto* of their *bwij*.

Irooj and Kajoor: Chiefs and Commoners

Since *ri-aelōñ-kein* inherit their *bwij* and *jowi* affiliations from their mothers and since all *bwij* and *jowi* are differentially ranked with some being *irooj* and others being *kajoor*, all *ri-aelōñ-kein* also inherit their social position from their mothers. Put simply, this means that the children of *lerooj* (i.e., female *irooj*) automatically belong to a *bwij in irooj* and are thus *irooj* and the children of *kajoor* women automatically belong to a *bwij in kajoor* and are thereby *kajoor*. This being said, social rank and position are not always so straightforward or clear cut; indeed, despite the historic divisions between *irooj* and *kajoor* in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society, it is not at all uncommon for *irooj* and *kajoor* to intermarry and have children together. As a result, the *irooj* set includes various subcategories that distinguish and rank people according to their actual genealogical connections to one or more *bwij in irooj*.

Within these subrankings, everyone with at least one *irooj* or *lerooj* grandparent is considered to belong to the *irooj* set or, in some cases, to a sort of intermediate category called *bwidak* (in general terms, *bwidak* refers to the children of an *irooj* father and a *kajoor* mother). While generally not considered full *irooj*, *bwidak* nevertheless occupy a higher status than *kajoor*. Given the importance of the *bwij* in determining rank and status in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society, *irooj* and *bwidak* with direct matrilineal connections to one or more *bwij in irooj* are also automatically positioned more highly than those whose connections are farther removed.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁶ Tobin, "Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 21-22.

¹¹⁷ McArthur, "The Social Life of Narrative," 115.

¹¹⁸ A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 5-6.

As the offspring of two *irooj* parents (i.e., a *lerooj* female chief and an *irooj* male chief), *irooj bweo*¹¹⁹ or “two-shouldered”¹²⁰ *irooj* enjoy the highest status of all because they belong to their mother’s *bwij in irooj* and are also directly connected to the *bwij in irooj* of their father. The children of *lerooj* mothers and *kajoor* or *bwidak* fathers, meanwhile, are called *irooj* (males) and *lerooj* (females). These *irooj* are second to *irooj bweo* because they are directly connected to only one royal *bwij* through their mother.¹²¹ And yet because the connection is through the mother and thereby grants them membership to an *irooj in bwij*, these *irooj* are considered *irooj* all the same and are thus charged with “the highest authority in the administration” of their domain.¹²² Below these *irooj* are the children of *irooj* fathers and *kajoor* mothers known as *bwidak* (male) and *libwidak* (female), also called *irooj-iddik* “small” chiefs in Ratak. Finally, below *bwidak* are *bwidak irooj/lerooj* (children of an *irooj* and a *libwidak*), *bwidak/libwidak in ikmouj* (children of a *bwidak* and a *libwidak*), and *bwidak/libwidak in rakrak* (children of a *bwidak/libwidak* and a *kajoor*).¹²³

The historic and divine origins of the *bwij in irooj* are generally well known or at least assumed in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society. Intimately and inextricably linked to land, land tenure, and beliefs about the sacred genealogies and divinely sanctioned power and authority of certain *bwij* and *jowi*,¹²⁴ these origins have bestowed on members of the *bwij in irooj* “unquestionable regality, leadership, and the ultimate authority in the administration of the land” under their domain.¹²⁵

While it may be true that *irooj* authority is supreme in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society, this does not mean the lower ranked *kajoor* are mere passive “subjects”¹²⁶ to be controlled and manipulated by powerful *irooj* at will. In fact, both groups play important roles in

¹¹⁹ The contemporary spelling of *bweo* is unclear and does not seem to be available in the MOD. The word is spelled *bweo* in Walsh and *pwieo* in A. Kabua. Ibid., 6; Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 125.

¹²⁰ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 125.

¹²¹ The child of a *lerooj* and a *bwidak* would also have indirect connections to a second *bwij in irooj* through the paternal grandmother but would not belong to or have land rights in that *bwij*.

¹²² A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 6.

¹²³ Spellings from A. Kabua (1992); new spellings unavailable in the MOD. Ibid., 5-6. Also see Yanaihara, *Pacific Islands under Japanese Mandate*, 163-164.

¹²⁴ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 19. Also see K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 10.

¹²⁵ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 5. Also see Oliver, *Oceania 2*: 977-978.

¹²⁶ Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession,” 5.

society, with *kajoor* support for and allegiance to *irooj* being an essential component of *irooj* hegemony.

The position of *kajoor* in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society is reflected in the word *kajoor* itself, which means power and strength¹²⁷ and whose root is *joor* meaning pillar, column, pole, or post. This name reflects a much more significant, active, and even powerful role for these *bwij* in *kajoor* that may also have divine connections to and origins in *ri-aelōñ-kein* legendary beginnings. Indeed, just as Lōwa's heaven post men (i.e., his *joor* pillars) held up the sky and thereby made life in the islands possible early on, so do *kajoor* sustain *ri-aelōñ-kein* life, culture, and society by augmenting *irooj* resources and upholding *irooj* authority through loyalty and service, by serving as the stewards and guardians of those lands held in joint ownership, and, perhaps most significantly, by attending to the daily subsistence needs of *irooj* and *kajoor* alike. In exchange for continued land rights and other *irooj* protections and resources, *kajoor* clear and maintain the land, catch fish and prepare *bwiro* preserved breadfruit and other foods, build homes and cook houses, build canoes, and risk their lives to accompany their *irooj* in battle. In these and other ways, the role of the *kajoor* in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society and culture is important if not indispensable, and it is for this reason that, as it has often been suggested, *irooj* are only as strong as the loyalty and allegiance of their *kajoor* affiliates.¹²⁸

Ri-aelōñ-kein oral traditions demonstrate that, while the *bwij* in *irooj* have managed to gain supremacy and primary land rights over generations through genealogical claims, warfare, and other means, their rights to and interests in the land are no more permanent or inherent than those of the *kajoor*. In fact, as these traditions make clear, all *jowi* and *bwij*—*irooj* and *kajoor* alike—are descendants of the original sisters sent by Iroojrilik from the land of Ep to populate the islands of Rālik and Ratak so many generations ago. It was as a result of the violent contests that took place between the two sisters Liwātuonmour and Lijileijet and their descendants in Rālik and likely also among the descendants of Lidepdepju to the east in Ratak that the first presumed *irooj* and

¹²⁷ Tobin, "Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 5. Also see Mason, "Land Rights and Title Succession," 5; Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 81; Walsh, "Imagining the Marshalls," 125-126; and K. Stege, "*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*," 11.

¹²⁸ Mason, "Land Rights and Title Succession," 5.

kajoor lines emerged. This suggests that, while the divine status of *irooj* may be of particular import in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society, *kajoor* have divine origins as well and in turn share with their *irooj* cousins and associates inherent and inalienable rights to their *lāmoran* and *kapijukunen* heritage lands. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, these presumed birthrights have been a major factor allowing Likiep *kajoor* (known more commonly as *ri-gerbal* workers since the early twentieth century) to resist efforts by the descendants of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum to assert outright and complete fee simple ownership of Likiep Atoll and to in some cases retain or regain their claims to particular *wāto* or *lain*¹²⁹ on the atoll over the past century.

Iroojlaplap and *Alap*: Lineage Heads

In addition to the abovementioned subcategories and rankings based on bloodlines and connections to *bwij*, every member of every *bwij*, both *irooj* and *kajoor*, is accorded a status within the *bwij* that is based on generation and birth order, with the oldest living member of the oldest surviving generation of each *bwij* holding a position of leadership both within the *bwij* and in the larger society. The generalized term for this position is *aļap* (with *ļap* meaning big, great, or large), which in its most common application means lineage head. Among *kajoor*, the lineage head retains this title and is called *aļap* or *aļap-in-bwij*¹³⁰; among *irooj*, the general term *aļap* becomes *iroojļapļap*, a title that is conferred only on the lineage head of the reigning *bwij erūtto* or senior *bwij* in a given domain. The genealogy of each *aļap* (*irooj* and *kajoor*) in turn determines who lives on or holds primary and secondary rights to particular *wāto*.

Aļap and *iroojļapļap* retain their titles until their death, at which time the title and any corresponding authority are passed through the *bwij* to the next oldest sibling. In cases where no younger sibling remains, the title passes to the oldest child of the oldest female in the *aļap*'s generation. While the *aļap* title may in some cases pass from a mother to her oldest daughter (thereby remaining within the *bwij*), the title does not generally pass from a father to his son because the son does not belong to his father's

¹²⁹ Bender and Trussel, "MOD."

¹³⁰ DeBrum and Rutz, "Political Succession and Intra-Group Organization," 16.

bwij (although that same son could, in theory, acquire an *aḷap* title within his mother's *bwij*).¹³¹ And while it is not uncommon for women to assume the role and responsibilities of *aḷap* today, it is not altogether clear whether, historically, it was acceptable for women to take on *aḷap* duties or if they were expected to appoint a brother to act on their behalf. It is certain, however, that whenever the person in line to inherit the position is “too old, feeble or otherwise incompetent,” it is customary for the title to go to the person who is next in the line of succession.¹³² This is just one of many possible applications of the *mejed kapilōk kōj* philosophy, which allows room for practical flexibility in response to real circumstances in what is otherwise a fairly strict system of descent and inheritance, and which I discuss more in depth in Chapter 4 in relation to the sale of Likiep Atoll and other islands around Rālik and Ratak in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Due to the dominant position of the *bwij in irooj in ri-aelōñ-kein* society, the *iroojḷapḷap* serves as both the lineage head for his or her *bwij* and as the supreme authority for the *wāto* under his or her domain. Primary title to these *wāto* is thereby held by the *iroojḷapḷap* (together with members of his or her *bwij*) who may in turn choose to reside on any one or more of these *wāto* or assign them in whole or in part to affiliated *bwij in irooj* (i.e., *bwij edik*) or *bwij in kajoor* as he or she sees fit. In general, it is the responsibility of the *iroojḷapḷap* to ensure that all those living on the various *wāto* under his or her domain have adequate access to food, water, medicine, building materials, transportation, and any other resources needed to survive. In return, *kajoor* are expected to maintain the land, provide food and other resources to the *iroojḷapḷap* regularly and in the form of *ekkan* tribute, and to lend *irooj* their faithful support in economic and political endeavors, which in the past included warfare and today involves political campaigns and ballot boxes.¹³³

While various *iroojḷapḷap* have historically depended on the presumed supreme status of their *bwij* together with warfare and other means to expand their landholdings and authority across Rālik and Ratak, no *iroojḷapḷap* has managed to take full control of

¹³¹ Spoehr, *Majuro*, 157.

¹³² Ibid.; Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 17-18.

¹³³ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 123-124.

all the islands in either chain at any time in recorded history.¹³⁴ Instead, the tendency has been for several *iroojlaplap* to control various jurisdictions at any one time, with the Rālik islands being divided among the descendants of the Ijjirik, Errūbra, and Irooj *jowi* matrilineal clans and the Ratak islands among the descendants of the Raarṇo and Ri-Mwejoor *jowi*.¹³⁵ While these holdings are sometimes spread across any number of non-adjacent *wāto* on several islands, in many cases they encompass entire atolls. *Bwij in kajoor* holdings, meanwhile, may also be spread across several non-adjacent *wāto*, with various *bwij* members or sub-*bwij* residing on one or more of their holdings—depending, in many cases, on environmental conditions, the quality of the land, or the discretion or whim of the *iroojlaplap*. In either case, each *wāto* is generally held jointly by a *bwij in irooj* and a *bwij in kajoor* through a relationship that is ideally although certainly not always reciprocal in practice.¹³⁶

Much as *bwij in irooj* leadership is embodied in the supreme *iroojlaplap*, each *bwij in kajoor* has an *aḷap* lineage head whose primary role is to act as a leader for the *bwij* and as a *bwij* representative in any relations with the ruling *bwij in irooj* and *iroojlaplap* for *wāto* held by the *bwij*. In general, the *aḷap* does this not through direct contact with the *iroojlaplap*, but rather through an intermediary designated by the *iroojlaplap* who is most often an *irooj-iddik* (Ratak) or a *bwidak* (Rālik). Whereas *iroojlaplap* have ultimate authority over the various *wāto* within their domain, *aḷap* are responsible for ensuring that their *wāto* are well maintained and remain as productive as possible and appropriate. Historically, it has also been the *aḷap*'s responsibility “to place, remove and assign workers [i.e., *kajoor*] on the land and [look] after their well-being,”¹³⁷ to “exercise immediate authority over the members of the lineage,” and to ensure that the

¹³⁴ Pollock suggests: “Being a member of a clan closely connected to Liwatoinmour, that is, one of the original seven [clans], appears to have given higher social status than membership in clans derived from fissioned [*sic*] units or from an immigrating woman. This link to the founding ancestor is an important feature of Marshallese identity and is symbolized by the clan name. Achievements in war helped to maintain this status, but could not create it without the all-important link to the founding ancestor.” Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 93.

¹³⁵ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 7-8.

¹³⁶ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 5; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 11.

¹³⁷ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 4.

irooj are supported through “a steady flow of food tribute.”¹³⁸ This role has changed significantly, although not completely, since the advent of the copra industry in the mid-nineteenth century.

While it is true that the *aḷap* takes on an important leadership role within his or her *bwij* and in relation to the affiliated *bwij in irooj*, the only real difference between an *aḷap* and the other members of the *bwij* is that the *aḷap* is the oldest living member of the oldest surviving generation of that *bwij*. In fact, every member of every *kajoor in bwij* has the potential to one day become an *aḷap*.¹³⁹ This is much different from the *iroojḷapḷap* title and status, which is based not only on generation age and birth order but also on the status and prominence of the *bwij* itself, and which is thereby not accessible to every member of the *irooj* set.¹⁴⁰ This explains why, even though *iroojḷapḷap* and *aḷap* are both the heads of their respective *bwij* and thereby share similar duties, responsibilities, and obligations, the *iroojḷapḷap* holds ultimate decision-making authority in all matters concerning *bwidej* lands. It also helps explain why, despite the power *aḷap* hold, no one *aḷap* is more powerful than another as a result of genealogy—there are no “two-shouldered” *aḷap*, for example—and all *aḷap* remain *kajoor* through and through.

As a result of their continued status as *kajoor* despite their position as lineage heads, *aḷap* are not free agents and thus cannot simply direct their *kajoor* lineage members at will, particularly when it comes to matters of *bwij* land and land rights. Indeed, just as *iroojḷapḷap* rely on the support of lower chiefs, *aḷap*, and *kajoor* to recognize and uphold their status and authority, so too must *aḷap* take the opinions of their *bwij* into account before enacting any important decision related to *bwij* lands. In this way, it is customary for an *aḷap* to involve his or her *bwij* in any issues or negotiations that might have an impact on the land or on the *bwij* itself.

In a dispute with a neighboring *bwij* over *wāto* boundaries, for example, an *aḷap* should ideally consult with the other members of his or her *bwij* before coming to any sort of decision or agreement. In the process, it would not be unusual for *bwij* members to

¹³⁸ Spoehr, *Majuro*, 205.

¹³⁹ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 17.

¹⁴⁰ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 7.

“display a lively interest in the dispute”¹⁴¹ and to actively engage in any discussions rather than passively accept the opinions or directives of the *aḷap*. After all, interests in and rights to *bwij* lands do not belong to the *aḷap* alone but rather to the *bwij* as a whole—a reality that is made manifest as *bwij* members regularly refer to any land in which their *bwij* has an interest as “my land.”¹⁴² Despite the *aḷap*’s role as a leader within the *bwij*, he or she does not have the cultural authority to make decisions exclusive of the *bwij*, to “give away any of the lineage land rights[, or to] give away the right of *ri-jerbal* or worker [i.e., a *kajoor*] on a lineage land lot without consulting and obtaining the agreement of [the] lineage” first.¹⁴³ To be sure, the *aḷap* is not an exclusive owner of *bwidej* lands but rather a representative of *bwij* opinions, concerns, and interests; in this way, *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom discourages *aḷap* from pursuing any action related to *bwidej* lands without first obtaining the consent of the *bwij*. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, however, *aḷap* and *irooḷapḷap* have historically been able to diverge from these requirements under particular circumstances and may very well have done so as they considered consenting to the sale of Likiep Atoll in 1877.

The Advent of the Copra Industry in Rālik and Ratak

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the value and meaning of land began to take on a new significance for the people of Rālik and Ratak as a different breed of *ri-pālle* entrepreneurs began to arrive on their shores. Inspired by initial ventures in the production and trade of coconut oil in Rālik and Ratak by Captain Ichabod Handy and others from the late 1830s to the mid-1850s and the burgeoning success of the industry in Sāmoa to the southeast¹⁴⁴—together with the dwindling availability and profitability of tortoise shell and *bêche-de-mer*,¹⁴⁵ which traders and whaling captains en route to Asia

¹⁴¹ Spoehr, *Majuro*, 166.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

¹⁴⁴ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210-212.

¹⁴⁵ *Bêche-de-mer* is trepang or sea cucumber and was commonly sought by traders crossing the Pacific on their way to Asia for sale or trade in China. Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 280; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211.

had sought as trade items in the islands for over a century¹⁴⁶—these fledgling entrepreneurs arrived from Hawai‘i and the United States and as far away as Europe and parts of Asia with a vision of radically expanding coconut oil and later copra production for export across Rālik and Ratak and throughout the region known as Micronesia. Unlike the itinerant explorers and whalers who had come before them, these new arrivals were prepared to establish permanent residence in the islands as necessary; in the process, they hoped to transform the island landscape and revolutionize local cultivation practices to make their financial dreams a reality.

Just three years after *ri-aelōñ-kein* caught their first glimpse of the *Morning Star* on the Epoon horizon and welcomed Reverend George Pierson and his associates ashore and offered them a piece of land for their mission at Rupe Wāto, Adolf Capelle was the first of the resident-traders to arrive to southern Rālik. Within a matter of just a few short years of his arrival, Capelle’s success in the trade of coconut oil and then copra in Rālik and Ratak and across Micronesia would earn him a name as the “father of the copra industry” in the region; for this reason, Capelle’s arrival on Epoon with a charge from his employer Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst of Honolulu has been marked as the advent of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak.¹⁴⁷

At the same time, Capelle’s arrival signified an important turning point as *ri-aelōñ-kein* decided for a variety of complex spiritual, cultural, political, and economic reasons to welcome the *ri-pālle* and his associate Herman Caplan and probably others ashore, to allow them to establish businesses and long term residence in their islands, and to lease and sell them land for the exploitation of coconut oil and profits. Indeed, the success of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak was a product not only of *ri-pālle* industry, but also of *ri-aelōñ-kein* willingness to permit *ri-pālle* traders to remain in their

¹⁴⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 46.

¹⁴⁷ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210-211; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 46. It has been reported that Capelle was the first to teach *ri-aelōñ-kein* how to make copra. This seems improbable, however, given the fact that *ri-aelōñ-kein* had been using coconut oil for centuries in medicines and in their cooking and that Captain Ichabod Handy had been trading with *ri-aelōñ-kein* for coconut oil from the 1840s, although it is certainly possible that Capelle brought with him new methods for drying copra and extracting coconut oil. Finsch, “*Ethnologische*,” 11; Williamson and Stone, “Anthropological Survey of Likiep Atoll,” 12.

islands and to eventually provide them with land for coconut oil and copra production and other enterprises.

Given the abundance of coconut in Rālik and Ratak and the flourishing commercial value of coconut oil on the European and American markets beginning in the 1840s when demand started to rapidly increase as new techniques allowed for its use in the manufacture of candles and soap,¹⁴⁸ the trade in coconut oil appeared to be an ideal enterprise for Capelle and other traders to pursue. And with few, if any, *ri-pālle* competitors already established there—indeed, by 1861 the missionaries were the only ones to have taken up permanent residence—the islands of Rālik and Ratak seemed like an excellent place to start.

Soon after their arrival, however, Capelle and the others learned that their success in the trade depended on much more than their own ambitions or the abundance of coconut trees and seeds in the islands; in fact, *ri-aelōñ-kein* willingness to grant them access to land and to incorporate them into their genealogies and ownership structures would be an important factor in the traders' early success, as would the traders' ability to navigate and adapt to the *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural and epistemological world in which they had found themselves.

Strict Principles, Flexible Practices

When it came to acquiring land in Rālik and Ratak, the traders quickly discovered that *ri-aelōñ-kein* principles and beliefs about land and land tenure restricted outside access to a certain degree—buying and selling land, for example, were unknown,¹⁴⁹ as was exclusive ownership of land by an individual. Instead, most *wāto* land parcels were owned or held by the members of at least two *bwij* matrilineages—one *irooj* and one *kajoor*—each of which had varying types and degrees of rights and obligations to and interests in the land itself and in relation to other *bwij*-owners. These lands, together with associated hereditary social positions and titles, were inherited matrilineally through *bwij* rather than bought and sold.

¹⁴⁸ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211.

¹⁴⁹ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 172.

While these and other cultural factors had the potential to complicate *ri-pālle* hopes of acquiring land and establishing coconut plantations in the islands, the traders quickly learned that, although *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure systems and matrilineal inheritance patterns were highly structured in principle—with strict rules, for example, about inheritance through the senior lineage and multiple levels and categories of stewardship, use, and title—they were much more flexible in practice¹⁵⁰ and thereby more closely resembled a set of guidelines than strict rules. In fact, *ri-aelōñ-kein* lineage heads from both the *irooj* and *kajoor* sets had the authority to diverge from the general pattern under particular circumstances which had historically included strategic land distributions to junior lineages to prevent wars, land allotments as rewards for service to an *irooj* or *aļap*, and land gifts by a father to his children, to name just a few.¹⁵¹ In this way, the traders discovered, the system that appeared firm or even fixed on the surface actually left plenty of room for maneuvering and manipulation by lineage heads.

The power of *iroojļapļap* and *aļap* to stray from the general rule of matrilineal succession through senior lineages stemmed from the fundamental *ri-aelōñ-kein* philosophy of *mejed kapilōk kōj*, which literally means “our eyes advise us”¹⁵² and describes “the traditional authority of a lineage head ... to tweak the rules of succession based on the perceived needs of the group at the time.”¹⁵³ This “flexible application of strict principles in practice allowed [*ri-aelōñ-kein*] to adapt their strict land tenure system to the changing needs of the society”¹⁵⁴ and gave *irooj* and *aļap* the ability and authority to actively and strategically alter culture and cultural practices in an effort to adapt to sometimes unanticipated historical needs and circumstances—and, in many cases, to maintain the support and allegiance of *kajoor*. In most cases, *irooj* and *aļap* made these kinds of adjustments in anticipation of wars between feuding lineages vying for power and land, as payments for extraordinary service or allegiance, or in response to

¹⁵⁰ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 13; Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 100-103.

¹⁵¹ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 8-14; Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 66, 76; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 166-169.

¹⁵² Although K. Stege translates *mejed kapilōk kōj* as “eyes that guide us,” “our eyes advise us” seems to be a more accurate translation. K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 12.

¹⁵³ Ibid.; Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 26-47.

¹⁵⁴ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

environmental disasters such as typhoons and tidal waves¹⁵⁵ and relocated families and sometimes entire lineages around their domain when necessary in response.

I demonstrated in Chapter 2 that the decision by Irooj Kaibūke of Epoon to grant land to American and Hawaiian missionaries soon after their arrival in 1857 was not arbitrary; instead, the chief offered the land in exchange for an alliance he thought would benefit the people of Epoon and enhance his own material wealth and social and cultural capital in relation to *kajoor* and other *irooj*. In this way, Kaibūke may have been the first *irooj* to incorporate *ri-pālle* into his much larger *mejed kapilōk kōj* strategy as it related to land and land distribution. I also showed previously, however, that while Kaibūke profited from the missionaries' presence in southern Rālik to a certain degree, his decision to allow them to establish a permanent station on Epoon brought with it various unintended consequences, not the least of which was the denigration of Kaibūke's own chiefly authority vis-à-vis the missionaries which became apparent only after the mission was firmly established. This unexpected reversal enraged Kaibūke so deeply that he began to resist the missionaries' activities—and, tradition has it, continued to do so even after he was long dead and in the grave.

I suggest in Chapter 4 that, with the arrival of copra traders to the islands beginning in 1861, land sales and leases became a key component of *irooj* efforts to forge similar alliances and for similar reasons, and the *mejed kapilōk kōj* philosophy made this possible and even acceptable despite a seemingly strict land tenure and inheritance structure. I demonstrate subsequently that, much like Irooj Kaibūke's decision to give land to the missionaries in the late 1850s, Irooj Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum carried with it a host of unintended consequences that would not be realized until well after deBrum and his business partners had put forward a series of legal agreements and documents that made it possible for them and their descendants to retain ownership of the atoll indefinitely.

While Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā's sale of Likiep Atoll is just one example a much larger context of *irooj* land management and decision making in the 1860s and 1870s, the

¹⁵⁵ A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 8-14; Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 66, 76; Spoehr, *Majuro*, 166-169.

transfer of Likiep is perhaps the most historically consequential land transaction of this period; indeed, the atoll is one of the few areas that remained in *ri-pālle* hands after Germany took over Rālik and Ratak in 1885 and began to rule the area through its Jaluit Gesellschaft¹⁵⁶ proxy in 1887 and has remained under the ownership of their descendants ever since. Thus, while Jortōkā’s sale of Likiep may have been a manifestation of his own *mejed kapilōk kōj* strategy, the transaction had a host of outcomes that he likely never anticipated. It is the possible reasons and the cultural, geographic, economic, and political context for this particular sale, together with some of its many perhaps unintended consequences, which I explore throughout the remainder of this manuscript.

Having provided a basic overview of some of the most fundamental tenets of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* system of land tenure and inheritance in Chapter 3—an epistemological foundation that will be important as I explore the broader cultural and historical context surrounding the sale of Likiep Atoll—I begin Chapter 4 with yet another well known *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral tradition: the story of Jebro and his mother Lōktañūr and how the sail first came to the outrigger canoe. While this story has been celebrated for the lessons it conveys “about appropriate social conduct, the flow of power through maternal lines, and the institution of chiefs and commoners,”¹⁵⁷ I suggest that it also carries an important message about *mejed kapilōk kōj* and the flexibility inherent in *ri-aelōñ-kein* succession and inheritance—and, in turn, land and land tenure. Indeed, just as this flexibility allowed Lōktañūr to consider her sons’ actions and attitudes in her decision about the succession of her chiefly title, so would it give Jeimata, Jortōkā, and other *irooj* room to let their eyes advise them as they considered leasing and selling land to *ri-pālle* traders from the mid-1860s to the mid-1880s in light of various political, economic, ecological, epidemiological, genealogical, and other circumstances and would ultimately empower Irooj Jortōkā to make the decision to sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum in the latter part of the 1870s.

¹⁵⁶ Jaluit Gesellschaft is the German name for Jaluit Company. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to use the company’s German name except when quoting an original text.

¹⁵⁷ McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 45.

Chapter 4. *Mejed Kapilōk Kōj*: Our Eyes Advise

“*Mejed kapilōk kōj* ... [describes] the traditional authority of a lineage head—commoner or chief—to tweak the rules of succession based on the perceived needs of the group at the time.”¹

Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto: Lōktañūr Brings the *Wōjā* Sail to the Outrigger

Long ago, *etto im etto*,² not long after ʔowa and his heaven post men secured the sky and all the islands into place, after ʔowa and ʔōmtal sent the outrigger canoe so *ri-aelōñ-kein* could travel around their sea of islands, and after ʔewoj and ʔaneej brought *eō* tattoo to the people so they might know each other and their ranks in society, a woman called Lōktañūr came down from her home in the sky to visit her sons,³ who at the time lived on Wōja Island in Aelōñlaplap Atoll. It is said by some that Lōktañūr had eleven sons in all—Tūmur, Mājlep, ʔōbōl, Jāpe, ʔōmejdikdik, Jitata, ʔak, Jeljelimkouj, ʔōkañebar, ʔāātbwiinbar, and Jebro, with Tūmur being the eldest and Jebro the youngest—and that she was the highest and most powerful *lerooj* female chief in all of Rālik and Ratak.⁴ That Lōktañūr was a *lerooj* meant her sons were also chiefs and one of them would inherit her claim to the highest ranking title and one day become *iroojlaplap* paramount chief over all the land in their domain; traditionally, the title would go first to Tūmur, the eldest, who would be *iroojlaplap* until his death, and subsequently to his brothers in descending order of their birth.

Since the boys had generally followed *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom and remained obedient and loyal to their mother, Lōktañūr was surprised when she arrived on Wōja to find her sons bickering over who would ascend to the supreme title and become leader of

¹ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 12.

² I have adapted this narrative from various and sometimes conflicting versions and interpretations of *ri-aelōñ-kein* stories about how the sail came to the outrigger canoe: Carucci (1980), Downing et al. (1992b and 1992c), Erdland (1914), Genz (2008), Grey (1951), Jam (2002a), M. Kabua (2004), Krämer and Nevermann (1938), Labedbedin (1999), ʔokrap (1949a), Mason (1986), McArthur (1995), Miller (2010), Mitchell (1973), Matauto (2002), Tobin (2002), and Walsh (2003).

³ While some say Lōktañūr had eleven sons, others say she had ten or twelve or as few as five. I have followed Jam who names eleven sons in total even though some stories name additional sons (Ar and Dram-kobban). Jam, “About a Woman Named Lōktañūr,” 56; ʔokrap, “How Sails First Came on the Outrigger”; Downing et al., “How the Sail Came to the Outrigger,” 21. Also see Miller, “*Wa Kuk Wa Jimor*,” 62.

⁴ Laurence Carucci quoted in McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 56.

all the people. Their arguing was so deafening (with the eldest son Tūmur's voice being perhaps the loudest) that the brothers scarcely heard their mother call them together to discuss the matter further. On finally hearing her request over their bellows and shouts, the brothers assembled on the lagoon shore close to their mother's house where Lōktañūr pronounced that the title would be decided by a canoe race that would begin at the spot where they were standing on Wōja Island and finish across the lagoon at Jeh Island. The winner of the race, she declared, would become *iroojlaplap* and would in turn command her loyalty and respect as well as those of his brothers and all other *ri-aelōñ-kein*, *irooj* and *kajoor* alike.

With this, Tūmur, Mājlep, Lōbōl, and the others began to work diligently and carefully on their *wa* outrigger canoes, each in the hope that his would take him to Jeh faster than the others. Since canoes at that time did not yet have sails, each brother also carved a new set of paddles to help him propel and navigate his way across the lagoon with as much speed as possible. When the day of the race finally arrived, the brothers lined up their *wa* canoes along the lagoon shore close to their mother's house according to their ages, with Tūmur, the eldest, having a slight advantage in position and Jebro, the youngest, having the last and least favorable starting position of all. Tensions mounted as the brothers waited for their mother to arrive; in the meantime, each checked and rechecked every last detail and lashing on his canoe.

When Lōktañūr finally arrived at the launch site, the brothers were surprised to see that she was carrying a large, cumbersome bundle made of woven pandanus leaf mats. Refusing to put the bundle down, Lōktañūr walked with it slung over her shoulder to the spot where her oldest son Tūmur had his canoe. Explaining that she needed to get the large package across the lagoon to Jeh as soon as possible, Lōktañūr asked Tūmur if she could ride along with him. The look of irritation and frustration on Tūmur's face was unmistakable as he replied: "Mother, your bundles are far too heavy and will slow me down as I make my way to Jeh. Ask my younger brother Mājlep if he can take you." And so Lōktañūr walked down the beach a distance to the place where Mājlep had his canoe and asked if he might take her to Jeh. Much like his older brother, Mājlep expressed



b) Boot am Strand mit Fischerstandgerüst, Roñlap Atoll

Phot. Krämer

Source: Digital Micronesia: Marshalls⁵

concern over the size of Lōktañūr’s cargo and asked if she could please ask his younger brother ʔōbōl to take her to Jeh. “I need to be able to paddle as fast as possible if I am to win the race, and the package you are carrying will slow me down,” pleaded ʔōbōl. “Can you please ask Jāpe, ʔōmejdikdik, Jitata, or ʔak to take you?”

Visibly exasperated by the weight of her bundle and her sons’ refutations, Lōktañūr made her way down the line asking her middle sons if they could transport her to Jeh, with each son declining and telling her to ask his younger brother. Finally, Lōktañūr reached her four youngest sons, and while her hope that any of her seemingly obedient children would accept her request and allow her to ride along to Jeh was dwindling, she approached Jeljelimkouj and asked if she might ride with him. “No, Mother,” he said, “I am sorry, but your cargo will weigh down my canoe and make it impossible for me to win the race. Please ask my younger brothers; perhaps ʔōkañebar or ʔāātbwiinbar will take you.” Much to Lōktañūr’s dismay, however, ʔōkañebar and ʔāātbwiinbar both refused as well.

⁵ This photograph originally appeared in Krämer and Nevermann (1938). Many of the photographs that appear in that and other late nineteenth and early twentieth century *ri-pälle* publications on the Marshall Islands are thought to have been the work of Joachim deBrum, although deBrum is generally not credited for the images. Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak”; “Digital Micronesia: Marshalls.”

And so it was that Lōktañūr's only hope of getting her heavy bundle across the lagoon to Jeh came to rest with her youngest son Jebro, whose boat was not only situated farthest from the starting line but was also distinctly less sturdy than those of all his older brothers. Nevertheless, Lōktañūr approached Jebro, who was busily performing some last minute preparations for the race, and asked, "Jebro, my youngest son, will you please carry me and this heavy parcel across the lagoon to Jeh? I need to get there quickly and it seems there is no other way." Jebro knew that taking his mother and her large bundle in his canoe would slow him down considerably and lose him the race as a result. "Never mind the race," Lōktañūr told him. "As the youngest of so many sons, you can never be high chief anyway."

Jebro looked around and saw his older brothers preparing to depart. He sensed a strong wind blowing from the east and knew that this would make the journey even more difficult. And yet despite his apprehension and disappointment (which showed visibly on his face), Jebro conceded and agreed to take his mother and her large package across the lagoon in his canoe. "My mother is right," Jebro thought to himself. "I will never be chief anyway."

And so Jebro took his mother's large bundle and began loading it onto the narrow canoe, which was balanced and kept upright by a *kubaak* outrigger attached to a ten foot long *ere* platform made from lashed poles and sticks. On the other side of the canoe was another, much shorter, *petak* platform that extended out opposite the *ere*. Since the narrow canoe could not hold much, Jebro put his mother's bundle on the *petak*. "Place these along the hull and along the *ere*," Lōktañūr told Jebro, pointing to a nearby pile of rocks. Despite knowing that the weight of the rocks would slow the canoe down even more, Jebro gathered the rocks and arranged them as his mother had instructed, for he also knew that, without a counterweight, her large bundle would quickly capsize his boat.

By the time Jebro finished loading his mother's gear, his brothers had launched their boats into the lagoon and were well on their way to Jeh. Visibly distraught and practically in tears, Jebro asked his mother to board the canoe so they could finally be on their way. "Wait," Lōktañūr told her son. "First you must see the gift I have for you." By

then, a large crowd had gathered along the shore to watch the canoes launch; with the other brothers gone, everyone's attention turned to Jebro and Lōktañūr.

Surrendering any hope of winning the race, Jebro stepped back from the canoe and watched as his mother signaled to several men in the crowd to come and help. "Come, Jebro," Lōktañūr said. "Come and see what I have for you." And so Jebro again approached the boat where he helped the others untie the pandanus bundle to reveal what appeared to be a *jaki* mat, three long poles, and a roll of *kokwaļ* sennit. "See, Jebro," Lōktañūr said. "You will not lose the race after all." Confused, Jebro looked out at the horizon where his brothers were now barely visible and then back again to his mother's strange gift.

"What is it?" he asked. "It is a *wōjļā* sail," she replied. "We will use the *kokwaļ* to lash the three sided *jaki* to two of the poles and then use the third pole as the *kiju* mast to hoist up the sail and hold it in place. You will see, my dear Jebro. Once the sail is up your canoe will fly across the water with such speed that you will surpass your brothers in no time. You will win the race after all!"

Jebro could hardly believe his mother's words. But, not wanting to delay a minute longer, he put his questions aside and began assembling the *wōjļā* with the help of Lōktañūr's direction and the efforts of a few other men. Once the sail was complete, Jebro and the others launched the canoe into the water and Jebro joined his mother on board. There, Lōktañūr handed Jebro a steering oar and began to hoist up the sail until it clicked into the masthead. This left the sail flapping until Lōktañūr pulled it taut with a rope. Meanwhile, a strong wind blowing in from the southeast made it difficult for Jebro to steer and began to propel the boat in the wrong direction back to Wōja. With this, Lōktañūr showed Jebro how to release the sail and swing the sail boom around from one end of the canoe to the other and *diak* tack from left to right against the wind:⁶ "Pull in the line of the sail to tack,"⁷ she told him. This maneuver was possible because Lōktañūr had fitted *jirukli* cleats and a *dipāākāk* boom socket at each end of the canoe; these allowed the sail to pivot and be secured at either end of the canoe. Jebro realized that his

⁶ Downing et al., "How the Sail Came to the Outrigger," 18.

⁷ Jam, "About a Woman Named Lōktañūr," 57.



Figure 20. *Tipñōl* outrigger sailing canoe, location and date unknown
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image F-185)

mother had come up with an ingenious way to change the boat's course without turning it around completely. And with that, Jebro and Lōktañūr were headed east to Jeh.

Having learned to adjust and tack the sail with some ease, Jebro was delighted to find that, just as his mother had predicted, his newly fashioned *tipñōl*⁸ canoe sailed across the water with such alacrity that he needed an oar only for steering and not for paddling. The boat was so fast, in fact, that, before Jebro knew it, his brothers' canoes began to appear one by one on the horizon. Thanks to Lōktañūr's *wōjlā* sail and sailing techniques, the space separating Jebro's canoe from theirs was growing narrower by the minute.

Before long, Jebro and Lōktañūr had passed all Jebro's brothers except one. When Tūmur, the oldest, spotted the sail on Jebro's canoe and realized that his youngest brother

⁸ A *tipñōl* is a fairly large canoe with an outrigger and a sail.

was gaining on him, he grew very angry. Tūmur immediately started yelling and demanding that Jebro trade canoes with him: “Give me that canoe at once!” he shouted. Jebro looked at his mother for instruction on what to do. “Very well, then, give him the canoe,” she said. Jebro’s faced filled with surprise and disappointment but he conceded nevertheless and prepared to hand over the canoe. Before they disembarked, however, Lōktañūr said quietly to Jebro, “Give him the canoe, but take the *jirukli* cleats and *dipāākāk* boom socket from one end of the canoe so he will not be able to tack the sail.”

As he followed his mother’s instructions, Jebro’s disappointment quickly waned, for he knew exactly what the missing parts would mean for Tūmur and his canoe. And so it was that Lōktañūr’s oldest son Tūmur ended up with Jebro’s *tipñōl* canoe and Lōktañūr and Jebro wound up back in a boat with no sail.

At first, Tūmur sailed swiftly through the water and gained a sizeable lead ahead of his mother and youngest brother. But then, with the cleats and boom socket missing from one end, Tūmur was unable to tack and could not navigate the boat toward his destination at Jeh. In fact, since the boat would only go in one direction, Tūmur started drifting westward back toward where the race had begun. When he arrived at Wōja he carved a new boom socket and cleats and started back to Jeh with the sail fully in tact. Meanwhile, Lōktañūr and Jebro paddled Tūmur’s canoe as fast as they could until they caught a wave that took them all the way to Jeh.

When Lōktañūr and Jebro arrived to Jeh, Lōktañūr told her son to hide his oldest brother’s canoe so the others would not see it on their arrival. They then quickly made their way to the ocean side of the island where they found a small pool of water close to the shore. There, Lōktañūr bathed her youngest son, covered him with perfumed oil, and made for him a special *in* skirt from the fibers of a *lō* hibiscus tree,⁹ a *marmar* shell necklace, and an *utpāj* flower wreath for his head. When Jebro was ready Lōktañūr told him, “You won the race because you were humble and obedient and willing to put your own desires aside to help and honor me. You have truly earned the title of *iroojlaplap*

⁹ *In* skirts were also made from the fibers of the local *kōno* tree (*Cordia subcordata* or sea trumpet). Some stories indicate that Jebro’s skirt was made from the local *atat* vine (*Triumfetta procumbens*; English equivalent unknown). NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 145, 151.

and for this I give you the chiefly name Jeļeilōñ.”¹⁰ Lōktañūr then told Jebro to remain inside a small house they had constructed nearby until his brothers arrived. As always, Jebro did as his mother instructed.

When Tūmur got to Jeh several days later, there were no footprints on the island’s lagoon side beaches and his canoe was nowhere to be found; indeed, he saw no evidence that any of his brothers had made it to the island before him. With this, Tūmur grew ecstatic for he was sure he had won the race and hence the *irooļlaplap* title. When his other brothers arrived a short time later, Tūmur stood proudly upon the outrigger of his canoe and declared: “I alone am chief, for no one [else] has reached the island. For there are no footprints of people, just white sand crabs.”¹¹

Just then, Lōktañūr and Jebro appeared on the lagoon shore. On seeing Jebro in his chiefly *in* skirt and other adornments, Tūmur and the brothers knew immediately that Jebro had won the race and been named *irooļlaplap* by their mother. Deeply ashamed, Tūmur turned his back to Jebro and, facing south, shouted in the language of that time: “*Reje Tūmur im leto, ñōñati. Mājlep buñ. ... Load up. Tūmur takes it to the west, a big wind. Mājlep has come down.*” And with this, the wind picked up suddenly and the waves began to swell and pound the island like a typhoon. Concerned for his people, Jebro responded (also using many old words): “*Jebro ededle rear. Ekōmanman aejet. Eeokwe armej. ... Jebro has come to the east. He calms the ocean. He loves the people.*”¹² And with that, the wind subsided and the seas calmed and the island was peaceful and safe again.

All the while, Tūmur was growing more and more angry and jealous. And so he announced to his brothers that any among them who loved and respected him should remain with him, while those who loved and respected Jebro should go with Jebro. On hearing this, Mājlep, Lōbōl, and Jāpe decided to remain loyal to their oldest brother Tūmur. Meanwhile, Jeljelimkouj, Lōkañebar, and Lāātbiinbar chose to go with Jebro

¹⁰ Tobin notes that Jebro is called Jeļeilōñ in Ratak, however many stories (and the MOD) indicate that Jebro’s mother bestowed the name on him when he became chief. Other names for Jebro include Jetakdik and Dāpeej (his name as an old man). Significantly, Jebro and Jeļeilōñ are also the Marshallese names for the constellation Pleiades. Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 58; Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

¹¹ Jam, “About a Woman Named Lōktañūr,” 57.

¹² Ibid.

while ʔōmejdikdik, Jitata, and ʔak—who loved both their brothers and did not know how or whom to choose—remained in the middle and did not go with either one. All the other people on the island, meanwhile, recognized Jebro as the rightful chief, for he alone had all the qualities of a true *irooj*: he was the son of Lōktañūr, who is said by some to have been the most powerful *lerooj* female chief in all of Rālik and Ratak; he demonstrated considerable *jouj* kindness and *pokake* obedience to his mother even when doing so did not appear to benefit him; he had supernatural abilities that he exercised to calm the winds and the seas; and he confronted and stood up to his oldest brother in an effort to protect the people. For this, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* welcomed and accepted Jebro as their leader even though he was the youngest of all of Lōktañūr’s sons. Indeed, without this final component—the support of the *kajoor* commoners—Jebro’s leadership would not have been possible at all.¹³

Many years later when it was time for Jebro and his brothers to leave the island world, they joined their mother Lōktañūr in her home in the sky. Once there, they positioned themselves just as they had lived on earth after their loyalties were divided by the race to Jeh. This meant that Tūmur kept his back to Jebro not to look at him again; it also meant that Jebro and Tūmur were never close to each other in the sky (in fact, they would never be in the visible sky together at the same time). Three of the brothers Mājlep, ʔōbōl, and Jāpe continued to stay close to Tūmur; Jeljelimkouj, ʔōkañebar, and ʔāātbiinbar remained with Jebro; and ʔōmejdikdik, Jitata, and ʔak stayed between the others. Lōktañūr, meanwhile, chose to stay close to her son the *iroojlaplap*, just as he had been loyal to her throughout their time in the islands.

¹³ Julianne Walsh sites four qualities of the ideal *irooj*: *jouj* kindness, which carries with it assumptions about generosity and providing for the needs of others; specialized knowledge and spiritual access that allow *irooj* to act as intermediaries between people and the gods; bloodlines that indicate particular positions within particular genealogies (e.g., *bwij* families and *jowi* clans) and rights to land parcels, islands, and atolls; the ability to lead; and the support of *kajoor* commoners. Although the title of *iroojlaplap* would traditionally go to the oldest son of the highest ranking *lerooj* female chief (and then pass to her sons in order from the oldest son to the youngest), Lōktañūr decides in the story that only her youngest son possesses all these qualities and thereby has what it takes to be *iroojlaplap* paramount chief. Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 116-127.

And so it remains today: whenever Tūmur¹⁴ is present in the eastern sky, Jebro is nowhere to be found. Tūmur's presence brings with it strong easterly winds, hazy rainless skies, and seas too rough for sailing or fishing. While there, Tūmur gradually makes his way across the sky to the west and it is not until he finally disappears that Jebro rises in the east. When Jebro¹⁵ finally appears, he brings nourishing rain and windless skies, much as he did that fateful day on Jeh when he became *iroojlaplap* and his oldest brother Tūmur turned away, never to face Jebro again. With Jebro present in the sky above, the sea grows calm, conditions are again good for fishing and sailing, and *mā* breadfruit and *bōb* pandanus are abundant. These are times of peace and plenty.

Soon after Jebro and his brothers first joined Lōktañūr in the sky, the people of Rālik and Ratak began to hold festivals¹⁶ to celebrate Jebro's rising, for they knew that when he appeared in the eastern sky he would calm Tūmur's rage and bring with him abundance and good times. In anticipation of Jebro's arrival, the people watched the morning sky closely; they learned to know that Jebro is on his way up when there are two stars called Jurōn-Jebro¹⁷ just above the cloud line. Once Jebro appears, his mother Lōktañūr¹⁸ and his two daughters¹⁹ can always be found nearby. Together, they are the points of Lōktañūr's sail, which continues to help her son make his important journey, but now from east to west in regular intervals across the vastness of the sky. These and many other stars have guided hundreds if not thousands of *ri-meto* navigators through

¹⁴ Tūmur is also the Marshallese name for the star called Antares in English. Antares is the brightest star in the constellation Scorpius. Wa en an Tūmur (literally Tūmur's Canoe) is the Marshallese name for the Big Dipper, which is part of the constellation Ursa Major. Erdland, "*Die Marshall Insulaner*," 64; Matauto, "The Story of Lōktañūr," 62.

¹⁵ Jebro is also the Marshallese name for the star cluster called Pleiades or Seven Sisters in English, which is part of the constellation Taurus. Erdland, "*Die Marshall Insulaner*," 65.

¹⁶ These celebrations are known as *mama* or gatherings "of people to celebrate the onset of breadfruit season in summer by making offerings to Jebro, [who is also] the god of breadfruit." Bender and Trussel, "MOD." Also see Erdland, "*Die Marshall Insulaner*," 242-245.

¹⁷ In his English translation of Labeledbedin's "Loktanur," Gerald Knight calls these two stars "Posts of Jebro" but gives no Marshallese equivalent (the entire text is presented in translated English). I have therefore used the names of another set of stars, Jurōn-Liṃanṃan or Posts of Polaris made up of two pairs of stars that point to Polaris (the North Star), to infer that the Marshallese name for Posts of Jebro is Jurōn-Jebro (with *jurōn* meaning "posts of"). Labeledbedin, "Loktanur," 6.

¹⁸ Lōktañūr is also the Marshallese name for the star or star system Capella in the constellation Auriga. Erdland, "*Die Marshall Insulaner*," 65.

¹⁹ Ledik-raṇ-nājin-Jebro meaning Jebro's daughters is also the Marshallese name for two stars, possibly in the Taurus constellation. These two are said to be running away from Loojlaplap, the star called Aldebaran in English. Aldebaran is also in the Taurus constellation. Ibid.; Bender and Trussel, "MOD."

countless voyages across their sea of islands over hundreds of years. They have also reminded *ri-aelōñ-kein* of Jebro’s loyalty and good deeds and of Lōktañūr’s power to change the line of chiefly succession and the distribution of land both as a reward for meritorious actions and to meet the needs of the larger society. In this case, Lōktañūr did both: she rewarded Jebro’s allegiance and served her people by deposing her older sons who proved they did not have the qualities of a true *irooj*.

Structure and Agency in *Ri-aelōñ-kein* Approaches to Land Tenure

The story of Lōktañūr and her sons has been an important navigational tool and mnemonic device for countless *ri-aelōñ-kein* seafarers and others over the centuries. It has also served to impart to successive generations of listeners crucial *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural values through the archetypal character Jebro who, despite his position as Lōktañūr’s youngest son, represents an ideal leader and *irooj*²⁰ and embodies many of the core values of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology. Among these are the centrality of the *bwij* matriline in determining social rank and chiefly succession, the importance of *kautiej jined* or honoring and respecting mothers, loyalty and allegiance to *irooj* and lineage heads, *jouj* kindness, and the ability and willingness to *kōjparok* care for people and *ajej* share food, to name just a few.²¹ These and other values are key themes in the Lōktañūr/Jebro narrative and play a central role in Jebro attaining the rank of *iroojlaplap* after transporting his mother in his canoe across the Aelōñlaplap lagoon.

As I explained in depth in Chapter 3 and as the story of Lōktañūr and her sons demonstrates, genealogy is the most important factor in determining chiefly succession in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society, with chiefly status being reserved for those who belong to one of several *bwij in irooj* and the *iroojlaplap* title being further reserved for the oldest living member of the oldest generation of the *bwij erūtto* or senior *bwij* within a given domain. This rubric is such an important feature of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology, in fact, that it has traditionally been common (albeit sometimes implicit) knowledge among *ri-aelōñ-kein*—and certainly among *irooj* all across Rālik and Ratak.

²⁰ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 116.

²¹ McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 111-143.

Indeed, just as Jebro knows at the beginning of the story that his position as the youngest of Lōktañūr's eleven sons has left him with virtually no chance of becoming *iroojlaplap* (the likelihood is so small, in fact, that Jebro assumes he has no chance at all), most *irooj* grow up with a keen understanding of the status of their *bwij*, the position of their sub-*bwij* within the larger *bwij*, and their own individual position relative to their brothers and sisters, as well as the corresponding likelihood that they will ascend to the position of *iroojlaplap* in their lifetime.

What is interesting about the Lōktañūr/Jebro narrative is the idea that, despite rules for chiefly succession that favor older children over younger children, Jebro surpasses his older brothers and assumes the *iroojlaplap* title despite his position as the youngest of Lōktañūr's sons. Jebro does this unwittingly through a display of qualities his *lerooj* mother deems crucial to the success of any *iroojlaplap* within the social, political, and geographic context of Rālik and Ratak and necessary for the welfare and security of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society in general. Among the virtues Jebro displays are kindness, selflessness, generosity, reciprocity, honoring mothers, respecting lineage heads, and many others, all of which are essential *ri-aelōñ-kein* values. In this way, the Lōktañūr/Jebro narrative serves to not only convey these values to *ri-aelōñ-kein* audiences, but also to remind *irooj* and others that, while crucial, genealogy and birth order alone do not determine chiefly succession or inheritance; indeed, true *irooj* must also embody and perpetuate *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture in their everyday lives and as they pursue positions of leadership and authority within the larger society.

Another interesting component of the Lōktañūr/Jebro narrative is the idea that Lōktañūr does not blindly follow the rules of chiefly succession by mechanically allowing her eldest son Tūmur to assume the position of *iroojlaplap*. Instead, she creates a situation in which all her sons must prove themselves worthy of the title by racing their canoes across the Aelōñlaplap lagoon. Much to her sons' surprise, however, the real test is not the canoe race itself but rather their response to their mother's request to transport her across the lagoon during the race with her heavy load in tow. With the older boys so focused on the race and on winning the *iroojlaplap* title by getting across the lagoon before all their brothers, only Lōktañūr's youngest son Jebro is willing to take this

chance. Lōktañūr quickly rewards Jebro’s selflessness and service with a *wōjlā* sail for his canoe and knowledge of how to use it to his advantage. In the end, she also rewards him with the *iroojlaplap* title, which he earns not by being the fastest but by setting aside his own aspirations in order to be of service to another person who, importantly, also happens to be a *lerooj* female chief, a lineage head, and his own mother.

Significantly, the narrative culminates with Lōktañūr purposefully defying the typically age based matrilineal succession of titles by giving her youngest son Jebro the opportunity to become *iroojlaplap*. With this in mind, I suggest that the Lōktañūr/Jebro story plays an important epistemological role in authorizing lineage heads—*iroojlaplap* and *alap* alike—to exercise agency and flexibility in their decisions about the succession of titles and, in turn, land use and land tenure.²²

Equally important to the story’s finale is the fact that, while bold, Lōktañūr’s decision is neither arbitrary nor incommensurate with *ri-aelōñ-kein* core values. Instead, it is based on her careful observations of and first hand experiences with her sons’ personalities and choices as well as her own knowledge of the leadership and other needs of the community and larger society. In the end, this knowledge and experience contribute to Lōktañūr’s conclusion that only Jebro has what it takes to be a true leader of the people and that the qualities and characteristics he displays offset the general *ri-aelōñ-kein* principle of birth order. The story thus demonstrates that, while permissible and sometimes necessary under certain circumstances, modifications to *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural practices—and in particular to the succession and inheritance of titles and land—should nevertheless adhere to fundamental *ri-aelōñ-kein* values and remain epistemologically recognizable within a *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural framework.

In this way, the Lōktañūr/Jebro narrative communicates two important and interconnected messages about *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology that, while seemingly contradictory, actually promote and even encourage a balance between the

²² Although the succession of chiefly titles is the primary focus of the story of Jebro and Lōktañūr, I suggest that because chiefly titles are so closely linked to land tenure and inheritance, the story also contains an important although perhaps implicit message about the possibility of chiefly discretion in decisions about land tenure and succession. Since I have been unable to locate an equally important or popular story that delivers a comparable message about land tenure specifically, I have chosen to use this story to demonstrate chiefs’ overall authority to actively adjust cultural principals in practice.

structure of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and the agency of individual *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Indeed, even as it advises that *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and values are among the most essential features of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society and should therefore be closely adhered to—so essential, in fact, that Lōktañūr’s older sons’ blatant disregard for these values costs them the *iroojlaplap* title—the story also implies that *ri-aelōñ-kein* agents have the power to actively adjust important customs in order to meet particular needs and in response to real situations and circumstances. While the structure of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture is strong, the story suggests, it also allows room for flexible applications and interpretations by key members of the various *bwij* matrilineages and for *ri-aelōñ-kein* of all ranks and statuses to potentially use active service to improve their lots in land and geography.

In this way, the story of Lōktañūr and her sons lends epistemological and even divine credence to the important *ri-aelōñ-kein* principle of *mejed kapilōk kōj*, which literally means “our eyes advise us” and authorizes lineage heads to use their discretion as necessary and appropriate to alter or “tweak the rules of succession” based on real circumstances and personalities and the express or “perceived needs of the group” or larger society at any given time.²³ At the same time, it shows lesser and non-ranking members of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society that it is possible to overcome what appear to be fixed social positions and lots in life. Indeed, the story reveals, while *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology do hold fairly strict rules and patterns for the succession of ranks and titles, the application of matrilineal and age based succession and inheritance are not always as straightforward as the overview in Chapter 3 might imply.

Given the close relationship between socio-cultural status and land in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society, I propose that the Lōktañūr/Jebrō narrative and the *mejed kapilōk kōj* principle also authorize *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* to exercise discretion in their decisions about land use and land tenure and to stray from the general rule of matrilineal inheritance through the *bwij* as necessary and appropriate. As a result, while “the majority of [Rālik and Ratak] land holdings ... belong to the category of ancestral land holdings of the maternal lineage,”²⁴ various other categories and methods of assigning

²³ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 12.

²⁴ Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 26.

and acquiring land have developed and been in common practice over the centuries. In many cases, these alternative categories and customs—many of which were practiced more regularly through the mid-nineteenth century than they are today²⁵—have not been based in genealogy but have instead represented responses to special circumstances and, more often, to people’s active service or loyalty to an *iroojlaplap* or *aalap*.²⁶

In the process, these exceptions have provided *irooj* and *kajoor* with opportunities to earn and acquire land and titles in a system that otherwise observes strict matrilineal inheritance and succession. They have also made it possible for lineage heads to reward the activities and accomplishments of *irooj* and *kajoor* and, ideally, to actively modify the distribution of land to meet communal needs at any given time much as Lōktañūr did when she rewarded Jebrō with the *iroojlaplap* title so many years ago. Neither the *mejed kapilōk kōj* philosophy nor the Lōktañūr/Jebrō narrative that grants it cultural authority seems to suggest that the flexible application of land or title succession should lend itself to haphazard judgments on the part of *iroojlaplap* and other lineage heads. Instead, Lōktañūr serves as a model of the importance of exercising caution and deliberation in important decisions concerning land, power, culture, and other matters. In this way, even as the story lends agency to individual *ri-aelōñ-kein*, it also insists that *iroojlaplap* and *aalap* hold the needs and interests of the larger group as their first priority in decisions about the redistribution of land and titles and holds Lōktañūr as an ideal type in this regard.

As I demonstrate in the following pages, this authority on the part of *iroojlaplap* and *aalap* to set aside particular land parcels and even islands for use as rewards and as reserves for special situations and emergencies—which was much more fluid on the arrival of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum to Epoon than it would be once fixed in place by the German colonial administration through the registration of land titles, the cessation of warfare, and other means²⁷—was highly significant in the mid- to late nineteenth century as *ri-pālle* traders sought land for coconut plantations and as lineage heads

²⁵ Ibid., 27.

²⁶ Ibid., 26-27; Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 64-66; A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 8-11; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 12-13.

²⁷ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 123.

pursued alliances that had the potential to bolster their cultural, political, and economic capital and improve the lives of their constituents. I suggest, in turn, that the encounters and exchanges that resulted were made possible not because *ri-aelōñ-kein* adopted *ri-pālle* understandings of or approaches to landownership outright as might be inferred from the various land deeds signed during that period,²⁸ but rather because they actively incorporated the traders into their own interpretations and applications of *mejed kapilōk kōj*. In the process, many lineage heads looked at least in part to culturally sanctioned and epistemologically appropriate categories and practices of land allocation such as *imōn aje*, *kaat-eļap*,²⁹ *loiiō*,³⁰ and *āneeñ aje*³¹ to help validate their sales and leases of land to *ri-pālle* as they searched for economic opportunities and physical and environmental security for the themselves and their *irooj* and *kajoor* constituents.

With this in mind, I propose that the sale of Likiep Atoll in 1877 was not a decision Iroojļapļap Jortōkā of northern Ratak approached or made lightly or easily. Instead, it involved a host of considerations including the heretofore dominance of the atolls and *irooj* of southern Rālik in the copra industry, the region’s recent history of devastating typhoons and tidal waves and the condition of the land itself, the marriage of Anton deBrum to one of the chief’s close relatives, and a variety of other factors specific to the historical context in which the sale took place. In the end, I suggest, the decision to sell Likiep was made possible by Jortōkā’s culturally sanctioned authority to work within the structure of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology to override matrilineal inheritance as necessary by uprooting and removing people from the land and enacting a *kaat-eļap* or “replanting” of sorts with new *bwij* matrilineages he thought had the capacity and resources to make the atoll—and, he hoped, the rest of his domain in Ratak Eañ³²—more

²⁸ “Iroojļapļap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

²⁹ Spelling as in Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

³⁰ Spelling as in Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 42.

³¹ Spelling adapted from A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10.

³² Spennemann identifies four regions of Rālik and Ratak: Eañ in Meto (“northern sea”), which is made up of the northern atolls of Rālik from Pikinni in the north to the northern half of Aelōñļapļap in the south; Rak in Meto (“southern sea”), made up of the southern atolls of Rālik from the southern half of Aelōñļapļap in the north to Epoon in the south; Ratak Eañ (“northern Ratak”), made up of the northern atolls of Ratak from Pikaar in the north to Aur in the south; and Ratak Rak (“southern Ratak”), made up of the atolls of southern Ratak from Mājro and Arņo in the north to Nadikdik in the south. Spennemann, “Traditional and Nineteenth Century Communication Patterns,” 37.

productive, profitable, and prosperous. In the case of Likiep and Jortōkā's other holdings, the potential benefits of these plantings seemed to only be strengthened by the fact that the *ri-pālle* purchasing the land had been adopted so to speak into the *bwij* of his wife and child, who were also related to Jortōkā. Jortōkā likely hoped that his *kaat-eḷap* on Likiep would have the benefit of bringing with it not only invaluable *ri-pālle* resources and alliances, but also important *ri-aelōñ-kein* genealogical connections that would allow Likiep Atoll to remain fundamentally and integrally part of northern Ratak.

While the various outcomes of the sale of Likiep Atoll make Iroojḷapḷap Jortōkā's decision to sell seem in many respects indiscriminate at best—with people being displaced and others losing their traditional rights and claims to the land—I suggest that the decision was based on the chief's cautious and careful consideration of how replanting Likiep with people and coconuts could benefit his *bwij* and the other *bwij* within his domain. In the process, Jortōkā became one of many Rālik and Ratak chiefs who, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing into the present, have made astute and conscientious decisions about which land parcels, islands, and atolls to offer for sale or lease to various *ri-pālle* and other outsiders and on what terms. Unfortunately for some, the outcomes of these well advised decisions have involved displacements and dispossessions that have not always been as beneficial or advantageous to the larger community as the *iroojḷapḷap* of atolls such as Likiep, Pikinni,³³ and Kuwajleen³⁴ might have originally assumed or hoped.

Alternative Tenure: *Iḿōn Aje*, *In Ninnin*, and *Bwilok*

Over the centuries, *iroojḷapḷap* and *aḷap* have employed a variety of tactics and approaches to adapt and adjust the allocation of land and land rights within their domains in response to the actions and circumstances of individuals and, at times, entire *bwij*. Individual *irooj* and *kajoor*, meanwhile, have found ways to navigate and negotiate the practical flexibility of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure and inheritance through active service to

³³ For more on the Pikinni displacement see Kiste, *Kili Island* and Barker, *Bravo for the Marshallese*.

³⁴ For more on Kuwajleen displacements see Johnson, *Collision Course at Kwajalein*; Hanlon, "Dumping on Ebeye"; Barclay, *Meḷal*; Dvorak, "Seeds from Afar, Flowers from the Reef."

their *iroojlaplap* or *aļap* and at times through the calculated neglect of land and traditional responsibilities.

In the sections and chapters that follow, I suggest that, while written proclamations and deeds of sale concerning the sale of Likiep Atoll indicate that *ri-pālle* perspectives on and approaches to land and landownership dominated the negotiations leading up to the sale and even the sale itself,³⁵ *ri-aelōñ-kein* epistemology and *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* uses of specific methods to diverge from the general rules of matrilineality likely also played an essential role. What’s more, approximately fifty years after the sale, the *ri-aelōñ-kein* tradition of opposition to outsiders (see Chapter 2) and *kajoor* resistance to *irooj* in the form of counternarratives and other tactics also played an important part in *ri-gerbal* resistance against Likiep owners, although by that time *ri-gerbal* goals were more about reinstating and retaining traditional rights and the fair distribution of copra proceeds than about finding alternate leadership or islands of residence.³⁶

Historically, *iroojlaplap* departures from the general rules of matrilineal succession took on various forms, which included but were not limited to: *imōn aje* or *bwidej in aje* land rewards for extraordinary service to an *iroojlaplap* or to the larger community; reassignments of land and residence in response to natural disasters such as typhoons and tidal waves; *bwilok* “breaks” in matrilineal succession as punishments for serious offenses; and even warfare between rival *irooj* that sometimes resulted in land grabs, reassignments, or concessions.³⁷ And while *aļap* could also circumvent the general rules of succession under certain circumstances including the disappearance or “extinction” of a *bwij* matriline known as *bwij eļot*,³⁸ these divergences generally

³⁵ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep”; “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”; “Agreement between Likiep ‘Natives’ and ‘Owners’ (1880)”; “Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll.”

³⁶ “Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum”; “Power of Attorney: Adolf Capelle Heirs”; “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-gerbal*”; “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1947)”; “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft).”

³⁷ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 32; Dunlap, “Marshall Property Law,” 504; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

³⁸ Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 72-74; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

required the consent and approval of the *irooj!ap!ap*.³⁹ Indeed, as with most other important matters and decisions in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society, *irooj!ap!ap* had ultimate authority and “the greatest leeway” when it came to the distribution of land rights and titles,⁴⁰ although it was nevertheless “considered an abuse of *Irooj* power to sell or give away land independent of the other landholders.”⁴¹

Before the institution of the German imperial administration of Rālik and Ratak in the late nineteenth century, land gifts known as *imōn aje* were among the most common departures from the general rule of matrilineal succession in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society. Traditionally granted by an *irooj!ap!ap* or *alap* to an *irooj* or *kajoor* as a reward for loyalty or excellent service, an *imōn aje* gift has generally been defined as:

land given to a person who performs personal services for the chief, such as nursing, bringing food, running other errands, making medicine, and the like. The chief may give food, mats, coconut sennet [*sic*] and rope, etc., instead of land. These are known as *mweien kalotlot* (goods for nursing) or *mweien tiriamo* (goods of sorrow) and are given by the chief only, to anyone, irrespective of his position [*sic*]. The chief may give land to a commoner, either *alab* or worker; no one else may do so.⁴²

Depending on what kind of gift the *imōn aje* represented and other factors including the discretion of the *irooj!ap!ap*, property rights for the land in question could go either to the recipient’s *bwij* matrilineage or to his or her children, although it was customary for the rights to eventually become the heritage of a *bwij*, “whether immediately if assigned to the awardee’s matrilineage or in the succeeding generations of the awardee’s female descendants.”⁴³ As a result, *imōn aje* gifts were generally considered to belong not to individual awardees but rather to their *bwij*⁴⁴ and were therefore not altogether different from typical *lāmoran* heritage lands. Thus, while *imōn aje* gifts were awarded to individuals based on singular deeds or acts of service, they were much more than awards

³⁹ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10; Dunlap, “Marshall Property Law,” 503; Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 75.

⁴⁰ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

⁴¹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 173.

⁴² Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 30.

⁴³ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

⁴⁴ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 35.

to those individuals alone; indeed, they also represented redistributions or reassignments of land by an *iroojlaplap* from one *bwij* to another. In this way, *imōn aje* also functioned as a means for *bwij* to use the skills or talents of individual members to actively acquire land outside the directives of the traditional pattern of matrilineal inheritance, with recipients acting more as representatives of their *bwij* and catalysts for shifts in tenure than distinct awardees or owners of the awarded land.

Traditionally, several types of *imōn aje* were available to different *ri-aelōñ-kein* constituents for various exploits or accomplishments. While these and other awards were fairly common before the mid-nineteenth century, many went out of practice with the cessation of warfare by the German imperial administration, the decline of long distance outrigger canoe voyaging and the advent of European style shipbuilding and navigation in the islands, and the transformation of other customs and their associated titles and positions with the expansion of the copra industry and German imperialism across Rālik and Ratak, together with the fixing in place of land holdings that occurred as a result.⁴⁵ In fact, many of these awards remain so rare that they are scarcely remembered by *ri-aelōñ-kein* today.⁴⁶

Included among the various types of *imōn aje* available to *ri-aelōñ-kein* through the mid- to late nineteenth century were two awards that went exclusively to male *ri-Ratak* who served as *ri-jutak-loto* and *ri-jutak-lomalal*⁴⁷ bodyguards and personal attendants for *Ratak irooj* and their wives.

In the old days, in Radak, two men remained with the wife of the chief at all times in the capacity of watchmen or body guards [*sic*]. One remained outside at all times—escorted the chief’s wife, brought food to her, or guarded the chief in times of danger. These functionaries were called [*ri*] *jutak lomlal* (“man who stands by the chief’s room”). These men received *imōn aje* [*sic*] land for their services. They were related to the chief on the paternal side; they were last in succession and hence least likely to try to kill the chief to gain his position and therefore the most trustworthy. ... The person who acts as personal attendant for

⁴⁵ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 123.

⁴⁶ Pollock, “Landholding on Namu Atoll,” 108.

⁴⁷ New spellings not available; spellings adapted from Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 30-31.

the chief[, meanwhile,] is known as the [*ri jutak loto* ... [and land] was always given for these services.⁴⁸

The two most distinguished *imōn aje* gifts given out by *iroojlaplap*, meanwhile, were *morijinkot* (Rālik)⁴⁹ or *made* (Ratak)⁵⁰ and *kwōdaelem*.⁵¹ Like the *ri-jutak-loto* and *ri-jutak-lomalal* awards, these also went exclusively to men,⁵² with the former being awarded in recognition for a man's valor and bravery in warfare⁵³ and the latter going to a man in "recognition of [his] perseverance in bailing the flagship outrigger canoe of the [*iroojlaplap*]."⁵⁴

While many such awards went expressly to men in appreciation for their deeds and services, others went to both men and women, while others went to women exclusively. Among those that went to men and women were *mōnkoḷotlot*, or awards of land granted to *ri-aelōñ-kein* who gave themselves over to the care of a dying lineage head⁵⁵—*iroojlaplap* or *alap*—and *menuwora* or *tolemour*,⁵⁶ which went to *ri-wūno* traditional healers who provided exceptional medicinal services and *wūno* medicine to an *iroojlaplap* or *alap*.⁵⁷ A *waienbwe* or *jowaienbwe*,⁵⁸ meanwhile, was a special award given by an *irooj* to a *ri-bubu* soothsayer (with *bwe* meaning "the result of a divination") who was also a member of the chief's Nitijeḷā-Kewa-Jeḷā⁵⁹ court of advisors, which

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ New spelling not available; spelling as in Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 34. Also see Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 66.

⁵⁰ Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 34; Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 66.

⁵¹ Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 39-40; A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 9; Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 66.

⁵² According to Tobin, *ri-jutak-loto* and *ri-jutak-lomalal* were "institutionalized in Radak only and were the hereditary prerogatives of certain lineages." Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 31-32.

⁵³ Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 34-38.

⁵⁴ A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 9; Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 39-40.

⁵⁵ A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 9; Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 32-33.

⁵⁶ New spelling not available; spelling as in A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 9.

⁵⁷ Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 32-33.

⁵⁸ Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 38-39; A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 9; Rynkiewich, "Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese," 66.

⁵⁹ Reigning *iroojlaplap* customarily had groups of ranking and knowledgeable associates, many of whom were *bwidak* (those born of a *kajoor* mother and an *irooj* father), who advised them on matters of governance and other issues that affected the common good. These groups were called Nitijeḷā-Kewa-Jeḷā,

served to advise the chief on various matters including “the appropriate time for going to war, building a new house, going fishing, sailing, etc.”⁶⁰ While *ri-bubu* were often rewarded with “food, mats and other goods” for successful prophecies and advice, they only received *waienbwe* land as a reward for successful prophecies concerning war and warfare, and this just once in their lifetime for all prophecies “past, present, and future.”⁶¹

Awards that went exclusively to women included *limen ninnin* (literally “drink from the breast”),⁶² which were awarded to *kajoor* women who nursed (i.e., breastfed) an *irooj* baby, and *imōn ato* or *imōn tutu*,⁶³ which represented a reward “for nursing and tutoring an [*irooj*] child” and for performing other services for a chief including traditional *kapitpit* massage with coconut oil, a highly coveted and lucrative position that gave the nurse-tutor and her *bwij* access not only to land but also to food and other resources.

Traditionally, *aḷap* lineage heads from the various *bwij* in *kajoor* were also able to diverge from the matrilineal system of succession and inheritance under a variety of circumstances.⁶⁴ Perhaps the most common among these was the passage of land rights in *ninnin*, which literally means “to nurse from the breast,”⁶⁵ by an *aḷap* to his children through the male *bōtōktōk* paternal bloodline, which, as I showed in Chapter 3, does not generally occur in a matrilineal system of succession. Traditionally, this kind of departure most often occurred when an *aḷap* was the only adult member of his or her *bwij* matrilineage with no one remaining to inherit the land. In these cases, the *aḷap* could pass the land to his children through the paternal line; not unlike *morijinkot* and other *imōn aje*

which has been translated literally as “Pit-of-Knowledge-Deserves-Knowledgeable” and which I interpret to mean something like “the council equals knowledge.” Along with *ri-bubu*, members of the Nitijelā-Kewa-Jelā were likely rewarded for their service and loyalty with land and other resources. Spelling of Nitijelā-Kewa-Jelā adapted from A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 25.

⁶⁰ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 38.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

⁶³ Although A. Kabua describes a *monato* (i.e., *imōn ato*) as “a land award given for nursing and tutoring an *irooj* child, and a female award only,” Tobin says an *imōn ato* or *imōn tutu* can go to “either a man or a woman and his or her lineage.” A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 9; Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 33.

⁶⁴ Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 76.

⁶⁵ K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

gifts described above, however, it was customary for this land to also return to a “*bwij* matrilineal line of succession after one generation.”⁶⁶

Alap controlled other types of alternate land transactions as well, many of which closely resembled those arranged by *iroojlaplap* and some of which were distinct. The primary difference was that, whereas *iroojlaplap* had the authority to rearrange and redistribute *irooj* and *kajoor* holdings, *alap* could only manipulate *kajoor* rights and holdings and generally needed the permission of the *iroojlaplap* and the *bwij* to do so.⁶⁷ *Alap* could use *imōn aje*, for example, to bypass matrilineal succession and assign *alap* rights to people who had served them or remained loyal. More specifically, they could use *mōnkoḷotlot* awards to pass *alap* rights on to those who had nursed them in times of sickness. Under certain circumstances, *alap* also had the authority to designate *alap* rights to an adopted child (*kōkkaajiriri*), to a spouse (*kitri*), or to anyone else they for whom they had a great deal of affection and who would be likely to remember the *alap* fondly while caring for the land in question (*jolōt* or remembrance).⁶⁸ In most cases, both *iroojlaplap* and *alap* required the consent of all other landholders—*irooj* and *kajoor* alike—for any of these modifications to occur.⁶⁹

In situations that made it such that an *alap* could no longer take care of the land and either lacked a sufficient number of *kajoor* to help or faced *kajoor* who were for one reason or another reluctant or unwilling to do so, the *alap* could revoke *alap* and *kajoor* rights and reassign them to the *iroojlaplap* or to an *irooj-iddik* or *bwidak* lesser chief. This kind of revocation was called a *kamatmat*,⁷⁰ which means something like “land to fully return” or land fully lost.⁷¹ *Iroojlaplap* could also take this kind of dramatic action, with “negligence of land and customary responsibilities” being penalized with a *bwilok* (literally “break” or “fracture”) divestiture of land rights and privileges.⁷² In these and other punishable cases, an *iroojlaplap* or *alap* could remove people from the land,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10.

⁶⁸ Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 76.

⁶⁹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 173.

⁷⁰ New spelling not available; spelling as in Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 76.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 14-16; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

renounce any responsibility for their future well being or needs for land, and reassign the land and any associated rights to a new group related or not.⁷³

When a *bwilok* occurred, “another chief, hearing of the expulsion, might invite the dispossessed persons to his domain and settle them on his land, thus gaining more manpower [*sic*] for warfare and [the] exploitation of the natural resources of his holdings.”⁷⁴ With this in mind and considering that *kajoor* were probably sometimes dissatisfied with their lots of land and with their *irooj* associates, it is quite possible that such refusals to work represented a form of protest on the part of *kajoor* who wanted to relocate or realign themselves with an *iroojlaplap* they regarded as more resourceful or better able to take care of their needs. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, the *iroojlaplap*, *alap*, *kajoor*, and *ri-jerbal* of Likiep may have used similar tactics in the mid- to late nineteenth century and again in the early to mid-twentieth century to first facilitate and even validate the sale of the atoll and to later demand that traditional *kajoor* rights be honored in spite of the sale.

“Planting” Islands with People: *Kaat-elap*, *Loiiō*, and *Āneen Aje*

In addition to the more specified *imōn aje*, *in ninnin*, and *bwilok* categories described thus far which, with the exception of *in ninnin*, mostly recompensed or punished individuals and, in turn, their *bwij*, for explicit accomplishments or failures in relation to the land or a particular *irooj*, *iroojlaplap* also had the authority to grant overgrown and uninhabited lands to those who agreed to improve them or, in some cases, to remove people from their land simply to meet the needs of another group. *Imōn aje* allotments that fell into these categories included *kaat-elap*,⁷⁵ *loiiō*,⁷⁶ and *āneen aje*,⁷⁷ as well as *bwidej in aje* gifts used for the relocation and resettlement of one or more *bwij*

⁷³ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 40-41; Yanaihara, *Pacific Islands under Japanese Mandate*, 171-172.

⁷⁴ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 41.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-41; A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10; Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 66.

⁷⁶ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 42-43.

⁷⁷ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10.

after a natural disaster.⁷⁸ Whereas at least one of these categories included provisions for assigning land to those who agreed to clear and develop it, another authorized chiefs to allocate land to outsiders and yet another gave chiefs the authority to remove people from the land if they were not maintaining or developing it according to the chief's expectations.

With this in mind and considering the broad flexibility accorded to *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* in their decisions about the succession of land and titles by the *mejed kapilōk kōj* principle more generally, I suggest that these categories, together with the *kamatmat* provision authorizing lineage heads and *iroojlaplap* in particular to remove people from the land when it was not being maintained to their standards, may have also served to sanction and even justify *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* decisions to begin selling and leasing land to *ri-pālle* in the early to mid-1860s. The flexibility accorded by these categories, which authorized chiefs to not only remove *bwij* from the land but also to allocate land to outsiders, likely played an important epistemological role in facilitating and even validating Iroojlaplap Jortōkā's decision to sell and remove people from Likiep Atoll in 1877,⁷⁹ as well as in inducing numerous *aļap* to enter into a tenancy arrangement with the atoll's new owners two and a half years later.⁸⁰

Among these more general categories of land distribution, *kaat-eļap* was the most common and may have played an important role in *ri-aelōñ-kein* decisions to sell and lease land during this period.⁸¹ Etymologically, the term "*kaat-eļap*" is said to have "derived from *katleb* (large planting)," and was often used to describe an *irooj* "planting" people on land or "planting [an] island with people."⁸² While the expression was at times used to describe some of the more particular redistributions outlined above including *morjinkot* rewards for bravery in battle or *bwilōk* expulsions, in practice *kaat-eļap* did not always involve rewards or punishments. Instead, *kaat-eļap* gave chiefs the authority to move "people off the land merely to provide land for others ([and] not to punish

⁷⁸ Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 32.

⁷⁹ "Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum."

⁸⁰ "Agreement between Likiep 'Natives' and 'Owners' (1880)"; "Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll."

⁸¹ New spelling not available; spelling as in A. Kabua, "Customary Titles and Inherent Rights," 10.

⁸² Tobin, "Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands," 40.

transgressors)”; in these cases, the chief would in turn “find land for the people whom he had dispossessed.”⁸³

When such a situation arose compelling an *irooj* to “plant” a *wāto* or island with a new group, it was common for the chief to strategically appropriate “land from a lineage that had more land than [it] needed or used” rather than from one with little land or no place else to go, thereby making it relatively easy for the chief to attain the consent of the *bwij* and, in turn, to get the *bwij* moved and resettled.⁸⁴ If circumstances were such that an *irooj* had to uproot a *bwij* with no other holdings, in contrast, it was customary for the *irooj* to give the *bwij* the option of either staying on the land and working for the incoming *alap* or being moved to a new *wāto* of the chief’s choosing.⁸⁵ Either way, it was important that everyone had land to meet their residential and subsistence needs and, with the exception of situations involving severe punishment or retribution, it was ultimately the chief’s duty and responsibility to make sure these needs were met on all sides.

It appears that one such modification took place following a devastating typhoon and resulting flooding that destroyed much of Likiep Atoll’s land and food resources in the 1840s and killed as many as 300 people.⁸⁶ In response, the reigning *iroojlaplap*⁸⁷ moved the few remaining survivors who were more than likely *kajoor*⁸⁸ to Wōjjā, Maļoeļap, Mile, and other atolls⁸⁹ under his domain where he rearranged land rights to make it possible for the surviving ri-Likiep to reside in those areas. With that, the *irooj* used the powers vested in him combined with the *ri-aelōñ-kein* philosophy that no person should go without land or a means of subsistence⁹⁰ to redistribute land and people across his domain. In the process, he not only ensured that those who had lost access to their

⁸³ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 34-35.

⁸⁶ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99; Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 102.

⁸⁷ The *iroojlaplap* of Likiep Atoll and much of Ratak in 1840 was probably Lamari or his direct successor, although this is not altogether clear. Mason, “Economic Organization,” 90.

⁸⁸ In the mid-nineteenth century, the capital of northern Ratak shifted among Aur, Wōjjā, and Maļoeļap atolls, which suggests that these were the most important atolls in that region as far as *irooj* were concerned. It is therefore unlikely that there was a permanent *irooj* presence on Likiep; instead, the atoll was probably inhabited by *kajoor* and received occasional visits from *irooj* who traveled around the islands in their domain via canoe for a variety of reasons. Ibid., 91.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 99.

⁹⁰ Tobin, *Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands*, 2.

land on Likiep were guaranteed a place to live, food to eat, and land to steward, but also demonstrated that he was kind, generous, and compassionate, and thus retained the backing and allegiance of *kajoor* so crucial to his tenure of the title of *irooj!ap!ap*.⁹¹

To be sure, *kaat-e!ap* “plantings” were far less complicated when the land in question was uninhabited either due to a natural disaster such as a typhoon or tidal wave or because it had never before been used or settled. It has been said that one such planting took place in 1835 on Epoon “where all ... the people had been killed by a typhoon,”⁹² although it is not altogether clear exactly where on the atoll this particular “planting” took place. Soon thereafter, the *irooj* Laukuk “brought people from other parts of southern Rālik to replant the ravaged islands in Ebon [Epoon]. They settled there and claimed use rights to the land as [*kaat-e!ap*],” a move that not only “relieved population pressure in the islands to the north” but also restored Epoon, which had been the most fertile land in all of Rālik, to its former level of productivity. With this action, Laukuk performed “his duty to his people as chief of Erroja clan in caring for their needs in a time of adversity.”⁹³ Given that a typhoon had destroyed parts of Epoon in early 1857, it is possible that Rupe Wāto (the land parcel given to American and Hawaiian missionaries by Irooj Kaibūke⁹⁴) or Juroj Island (three-quarters of which Irooj Jeimata sold to Adolf Capelle in 1863 or 1864) fell into this category, with *irooj* using the transfers to not only forge alliances with *ri-pālle* but also to tap into *ri-pālle* resources to redevelop devastated areas. It is surely no coincidence, for example, that, although the missionaries soon began referring to their new home at Rupe Wāto as “Ruby Point,” the *ri-aelōñ-kein* name Rupe actually derives from the word *rup* which means “broken”⁹⁵; indeed, this designation alone may offer some insight into why Kaibūke made the transfer to begin with.

Epoon was not alone in its ruin during this period; in fact, land parcels and entire islands all across Rālik and Ratak were devastated by a series of typhoons and tidal

⁹¹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 116-126.

⁹² Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 41.

⁹³ Mason, “Land Rights and Title Succession,” 17.

⁹⁴ While some sources indicate that Kaibūke gave Rupe to the missionaries soon after their arrival in 1857, others suggest that he gave it to them in 1859. This point requires further research. Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7; Sam, “A New Dawn,” 27-28, 63.

⁹⁵ Carl Heine in Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 137.

waves that swept through the area starting in about 1840 and continued well into the early twentieth century. In fact, two such storms struck Likiep Atoll in the 1840s and again in 1854 with such force that much of its population was either killed outright or forced to flee to other atolls in search of food and resources. By 1877, Likiep apparently remained scarcely inhabited⁹⁶ and so “overgrown with brush” that Jortōkā proclaimed the atoll to be of “no use” to him.⁹⁷ With this in mind, it is quite possible that the chief regarded the sale of Likiep as a sort of *kaat-eḷap* replanting with both people and coconuts, which were by 1877 a highly valuable export commodity and a source of power and profits for chiefs all across Rālik and Ratak.

Meanwhile, the *kaat-eḷap* may have also represented a *kamatmat* punishment of those *aḷap* and *ri-gerbal* who were living on Likiep but had not been able to improve the land or make it fertile enough to support a larger population more than twenty years after the last major storm had struck the atoll. When islands were uninhabited not as the result of a storm but rather because they had never before been cleared, cultivated, or settled, *kajoor* were authorized to approach an *irooḷapḷap* and request a type of *iḿōn aje* land gift known as *loiiō* in exchange for their labor. Unlike *kaat-eḷap*, *loiiō* was:

land that had never been used before because of heavy underbrush. There were many of these areas in the old days. There is not *loiiō* land today. If a commoner wanted land, he asked the chief for permission to clear a parcel of *loiiō* land and to gain rights to it. If the individual cleared the land by himself, he could leave it to his designated heir.

If his lineage cleared the land, the lineage inherited the land. The chief might do the clearing with his own workers and in this case he would keep the land as his personal land.

However, if a *kajoor* received *loiiō* land and did not clear it as promised, the chief could confiscate the land and reassign it to another:

⁹⁶ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99.

⁹⁷ In an undated letter to the people of Likiep, Irooḷapḷap Jortōkā declares: “*Na mokta ejelok tokjen ene ko iba kin an ejelok weni kab ekanuij marmar ene ko. [Na mokta ejjeḷok tokjān āne ko ippa kōn an ejjeḷok waini kab ekanooj marmar āne ko. I previously had no use for these islands because they have no copra and are overgrown with brush.]*” “Irooḷapḷap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep.”

A gift of *loiiō* by a chief may mean that the land may have been allocated to a commoner but not kept clear of underbrush or tended by him. The chief cleared the land and the commoner “lost” his rights in it in punishment for not carrying out duties and obligations.⁹⁸

Loiiō lands that were inhabited but not being tended to as originally promised could thus be confiscated by the chief and reassigned to another individual and his or her *bwij*.

Loiiō lands were significant, therefore, because they not only gave *kajoor* opportunities to access new or potentially better land, but also because they afforded *irooj* the labor resources necessary to make previously unused or under-cultivated land more valuable and productive, much to the benefit of the receiving *bwij*, the *irooj*, and the community at large. And while no official mention of *loiiō* is made in the historical record, it is quite possible that a somewhat adapted version of this land allocation strategy also played into Jortōkā’s and others’ decisions to sell and lease land to *ri-pālle* traders who were promising to clear islands of underbrush, plant them with coconut seeds, and make them productive and profitable for *ri-pālle* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* alike.⁹⁹ Indeed, with the main coconut oil and copra trading stations being located first on Epoon beginning in 1861 and later relocating to Jālwōj Atoll, one of Epoon’s closest neighbors in southern Rālik, in 1873,¹⁰⁰ and with Rālik chiefs such as Kaibūke’s successor Kabua being the primary beneficiaries of the copra industry both in terms of power and profits as a result,¹⁰¹ there is little doubt that various Ratak chiefs including Jortōkā were seeking out ways to get in on the trade, both for their own benefit and that of their constituents. Given the continued strength and importance of the principles and traditions governing land and land tenure at the dawn of the copra industry, Jortōkā and others surely looked to their own customs and philosophies for guidance on how to do so.

*Āneñ aje*¹⁰² was yet another category that sanctioned *irooj* to assign land for general or nonspecific reasons and usually to an *irooj* “of another dominion,” sometimes

⁹⁸ Tobin, “Part I: Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands,” 43.

⁹⁹ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 213.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

¹⁰¹ Walsh, “Imagining the Marshalls,” 176.

¹⁰² Spelling adapted from A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 10.

following a war, or to “alien interest[s]”¹⁰³ that may have included *ri-pālle* or other outsiders. *Irooj* likely relied on the *āneen aje* approach many generations ago, for example, when i-Kiribati—people from Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands) known as ri-Pit in Marshallese—arrived to what was probably Epoon where they acquired land and eventually formed their own *jowi* matriclan, which is called *ri-pit* even today.¹⁰⁴ With this in mind, is reasonable to presume that certain *irooj* including Jortōkā also called on *āneen aje* to facilitate and even justify land sales and leases to *ri-pālle* beginning in the mid-nineteenth century through 1888 when the German imperial government outlawed all sales of unclaimed¹⁰⁵ locally owned¹⁰⁶ land to any outsider “other than the Jaluit Company [i.e., Jaluit Gesellschaft],”¹⁰⁷ which had by then taken on the administration of Germany’s new protectorate in the Marshall Islands.¹⁰⁸ And while *ri-pālle* traders and German companies including DHPG and later the Jaluit Gesellschaft surely regarded these transactions as outright acquisitions of real property, I suggest that *ri-aelōñ-kein* viewed them instead as enlargements of a land tenure system that was always-already adaptable to new and changing circumstances, and yet remained one of the most fundamental and steadfast components of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology even as *irooj* began to offer *ri-pālle* what was oftentimes not their best land for purchase or lease.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I suggest that this always-already flexible system of land tenure and allocation together with Rālik and Ratak’s then-recent history of intermittent and yet widespread typhoon and tidal wave devastation played an important role in initiating land transactions between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* traders in the early to mid-1860s, up to and including the sale of Likiep Atoll in 1877. Indeed, many of the islands and atolls affected by such storms including parts of Epoon and all of Likiep and Wūjlañ¹⁰⁹ would be among those gifted, sold, or leased even as *irooj* declined

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 96-98.

¹⁰⁵ Riebow, “*Die deutsche Kolonialgesetzgebung*,” 1.

¹⁰⁶ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 2.

¹⁰⁷ Riebow, “*Die deutsche Kolonialgesetzgebung*,” 1.

¹⁰⁸ Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 48. Also see Deutsches Reich, “Agreement between the Jaluit-Gesellschaft and the Reich 1888.”

¹⁰⁹ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7-8, 12, 20; Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 169.

to part with more fertile and prosperous areas, with Jortōkā’s refusal to sell Wōjjā Atoll to Anton deBrum because it was “one of the richest in that area”¹¹⁰ being just one example. (Unfortunately for Adolf Capelle, a typhoon struck and destroyed Kōle Island one year after his company purchased the island in 1874.¹¹¹)

Considering how overwhelmingly destructive these storms were to the fragile and low lying atoll ecosystem of Rālik and Ratak, land sales to *ri-pālle* may have started off as part of a larger *ri-aelōñ-kein* strategy to harness *ri-pālle* resources in an effort to bolster their efforts to redevelop islands rendered virtually uninhabitable by recent weather events, to secure food supplies and agricultural sources, and to build up infrastructure to hedge against future storms. At the same time, *irooj* likely hoped that the alliances formed as a result of their efforts to “replant” their land with *ri-pālle* traders, coconuts, and copra trading stations would further enhance their own economic and socio-political capital among their constituents and in relation to other *irooj*. And while it is true that the power and hegemony of the German imperial administration of the Marshall Islands meant that these plantings would in many cases become legally binding transfers of the ownership of land to *ri-pālle* and *ri-pālle* firms,¹¹² this is in no way an indication that the *irooj* who facilitated the transfers intended or foresaw them as such.

In fact, that Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum both had *ri-aelōñ-kein* wives and children may be an indication that the *irooj* who sold them land—beginning with Jeimata’s sale of three-quarters of Juroj Island in Epoon Atoll to Capelle in 1863 or 1864¹¹³ and concluding with Irooj Murjel’s sale of Jekar *wāto*, Tōrwa Island, Maļoelap

¹¹⁰ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99.

¹¹¹ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 12; Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 169.

¹¹² Together with their then partner Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum registered their ownership of Likiep Atoll before the Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands on May 17, 1887 as required by “an order ... that all foreign landholders in the Marshalls register their titles and prove their claims by proper documentary evidence.” The registration confirmed the partners’ joint ownership of five islands in the atoll (Likiep, Lō-to, Mūkil, Piepi, and Āne-armeļ) and their divided individual ownership of the remaining islands. Joint and individual ownership would be reassigned after Ingalls’ death in the early 1890s. Mason, “Economic Organization,” 88, 100. Also see “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

¹¹³ Capelle may have also previously purchased Epoon land on behalf of his employer, Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst, although the details of this are not clear. Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34.

Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. in 1881¹¹⁴—did not perceive the transfers as outright forfeitures of ownership to outsiders. Instead, they may have regarded the transactions as variations on the *mejed kapilōk kōj* philosophy, which in most cases sanctioned *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* to distribute land to individuals with the understanding that it would revert to the ownership of a *bwij* after a generation¹¹⁵ or maybe two, and would in turn be subject to future *iṃōn aje* appropriations as necessary and appropriate.

In this way, it is reasonable to assume that Jortōkā expected ownership of Likiep Atoll to revert to a *bwij* one or two generations after his *kaat-eļap* replanting, with the *bwij* in question being the *ri-aelōñ-kein* children and descendants of Anton deBrum and his first wife Likmeto. Jortōkā may not have anticipated, however, that deBrum’s resale of Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. in 1878 would mean that the children of Adolf and Limenwa Capelle and Anton deBrum and his second wife Likōmju would also become Likiep owners or that subsequent generations of the growing deBrum and Capelle families would be able to use documents procured and validated by the German imperial administration to authenticate legal ownership of Likiep Atoll into perpetuity.¹¹⁶ Nor could he have predicted that, almost fifty years after the sale, *aļap* and *kajoor* would also turn to outsiders—this time Japanese and later American colonial officials—to have their so called traditional rights to Likiep lands and to the copra proceeds that were by then part and parcel to land ownership protected under colonial and *ri-aelōñ-kein* customary law.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 15.

¹¹⁵ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 16; K. Stege, “*An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein*,” 14.

¹¹⁶ Oscar deBrum, grandson of Anton deBrum and formerly a prominent *ri-aelōñ-kein* member of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Marshall Islands district administration and later of the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, once cited “deBrum” when asked his *jowi* clan name. While perhaps a simple mistake or misunderstanding on his part, it is interesting to consider whether, in earlier times, deBrum and Capelle would have developed into clan names, much like *ri-pit* (clan name of people with ancestors from Kiribati, with *ri-Pit* meaning people from Kiribati in Marshallese) and *ri-Mejiko* (clan whose founder came from Mexico). Julianne Walsh, email message to author, 20 November 2012; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 485; Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 98.

¹¹⁷ “Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum”; “Power of Attorney: Adolf Capelle Heirs”; “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-gerbal*”; “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1947)”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1951)”; “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft).”

Təqorlək Bok: Typhoons and Tidal Waves

From the early to mid-1860s through the early 1880s, *iroojləplap* across Rālik and Ratak sold, leased, and in some cases gifted land parcels, islands, and atolls to *ri-pālle* traders including Adolf Capelle and Hermann Severin of Germany, Anton deBrum of Portugal, Basilio Terranova (“George Brown”) of Italy, Thomas Farrell of New Zealand, and others, as well as to several trading firms including A. Capelle & Co., Hershheim & Company of Germany, the Pacific Islands Company, Ltd. of London, and A. Crawford and Co. of Honolulu, to name just a few.¹¹⁸ Among the earliest transfers were Irooj Kaibūke’s gift of Rupe Wāto in Epoon Atoll to American missionaries, Irooj Jeimata’s sale of three-quarters of Juroj Island in Epoon Atoll to Adolf Capelle in 1863 or 1864, Irooj Rime’s sale of Tōke-wa Island in Maļoelap Atoll to Captain Ben Pease in 1866, Irooj Jortōkā’s sale of a parcel of land on Oļōt Island in Maļoelap to Anton deBrum and A. Capelle & Co. in 1869, Irooj Lekman’s sale of a parcel of land on Ine Island in Arņo Atoll to Basilio Terranova in 1872, and Irooj Kabua’s sale of several *wāto* on Jōbwad Island in Jālwōj Atoll to A. Capelle and Co. in 1873.¹¹⁹ Irooj Jortōkā’s sale of Likiep Atoll to his relative’s husband Anton deBrum and deBrum’s subsequent transfer of the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. would follow just a few years later.

While the reasons for the sales were varied and complex and likely shifted as the copra industry and German imperialism transformed *irooj* relations and the economic and political landscape of Rālik and Ratak, I suggest that the typhoons and tidal waves that swept through the islands destroying land and communities beginning in the 1840s (and possibly earlier) played a role in initiating the transfers and were a specific consideration in Jortōkā’s decision to enlarge his interpretation of *kaat-eļap*, *loiiō*, and *kamatmat* to authenticate his sale of Likiep to Anton deBrum. Given the importance of genealogy and the *bwij* to *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and concepts of land tenure, these decisions were enhanced in some cases by the traders’ connections to a *ri-aelōñ-kein bwij* through

¹¹⁸ The land parcel on Ine Island is said to have been Lejalik Wāto (new spelling unavailable). The *wāto* on Jōbwad sold by Irooj Kabua to A. Capelle and Co. were Lakutajk (Lə-kūtaak), Kwo-ai-en (Wa-eñ?), Badto (Patto), and Lojekar (Lo-jekar). Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 3-21.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-7, 16-17.



Figure 21. Iroojlaplap Murjel and his wife Liwain circa 1887
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-713)¹²⁰

marriage or children or both, and seem to have been an important component of Jortōkā's decision to sell typhoon ravaged Likiep Atoll to his relative's husband.

As I have already explained to a limited extent in previous sections and chapters, the threat of typhoons and tidal waves played a major role in the development of *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural systems including the organization and layout of *wāto*, home

¹²⁰ Murjel followed Jortōkā as *iroojlaplap* of seven Ratak atolls: Aur, Ādkup, Maļoelap, Aelok, Utrōk, Wōjjā, and Tōkā. Following Murjel came (in order of succession): Irooj Labareo, Irooj Joshua, Irooj Tomeing, Irooj Lañmoj, Lerooj Limōjwa, Lerooj Libareo, Irooj Murjel (who took his name from his predecessor). Had Likiep not been sold, it would have likely remained under the domain of Murjel and his successors. Murjel was also one of many chiefs who sold land to *ri-pālle* traders and firms from 1864 to the mid-1880s; the holdings he sold include Jekar Wāto, Tōrwa Island, and Maļoelap Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. in 1881 and another *wāto* (Kidjur; new spelling not available) on the same island to Hensheim & Co. in 1884. L. deBrum, "I Still Remember"; "Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection," J-713; Spennemann, "Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands," 15-16.

construction techniques and living arrangements, and the authority of *irooj* to relocate people and modify land tenure arrangements as necessary. As I demonstrate below, these efforts also included practical survival strategies such as food preparation and storage techniques and various religious and spiritual practices that were intended to minimize the effects of storms or ward them off all together. And yet despite these and other complex and overlapping approaches, the frequency and severity of typhoons and tidal waves in the mid-nineteenth century were devastating, with the earliest recorded typhoon killing hundreds on Likiep and surrounding atolls in the 1840s and another wiping out almost the entire population of Roñlap and Roñdik in northern Rālik in 1850.¹²¹ In 1854, a second major typhoon struck Likiep, leaving the atoll with only three survivors and probably causing similar destruction on Mājej and nearby areas including Aelok Atoll and Jemo Island.¹²² Then, just months before the *Morning Star* delivered the first American and Hawaiian Christian missionaries to Rālik and Ratak, another major typhoon destroyed much of Epoon Atoll leading to a major food shortage, strategic homicides,¹²³ widespread starvation, and a mass migration to neighboring Jālwōj Atoll soon thereafter.¹²⁴

Just as oral traditions about encounters with *ri-pālle* had been making their way around the islands aboard outrigger canoes for centuries (see Chapter 2), so too were accounts of the destruction, displacement, and death caused by typhoons and tidal waves in circulation all across Rālik and Ratak. Given how devastating these and other storms were to various communities during the two or more decades leading up to the initial arrival of *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders to southern Rālik, it is possible that when Reverends Pierson and Doane and their associates arrived to Epoon in December of 1857, *ri-aelōñ-kein* who had either experienced the storms first hand or had heard oral accounts of the storms had already started calling their own survival strategies and approaches into

¹²¹ Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 102.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Erdland recounts a story told to him by Benjamin, who died in 1904, about a tidal wave that struck Epoon when he was a boy. According to the story, “a certain Labuñbuñ was said to have killed hundreds of starving adults on that occasion and to have thrown their bodies into waterholes. After some time when [Benjamin] and several friends returned to Ebon from Jaluit Atoll, an unbearable cadaverous odor met them.” Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 14.

¹²⁴ Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 102.

question. Then, when the missionaries arrived to Epoon carrying with them promises of salvation and deliverance, those who had begun to doubt their own techniques looked to the missionaries' novel teachings, beliefs, and practices with the hope of augmenting or even replacing their own efforts to defend against future storms.

And yet when another round of typhoons struck Wūjlañ and Epoon atolls in 1864 causing widespread death and destruction, many started to question the effectiveness of Christian prayers and conversions as well. It was at this point, I suggest, that many *ri-aelōñ-kein* began turn to the *ri-pālle* traders, who had started arriving on their shores not long after the missionaries in search of coconut plantations and profits, for security and salvation. Among the first to capitalize on this *ri-aelōñ-kein* quest for security were Adolf Capelle and his partner Anton deBrum, who between 1864 and the early 1880s managed to acquire land in Arņo, Epoon, Jālwōj, Kōle, Likiep, Mājro, Maļoelap, Mile, Namdik, Pikaar, and Wūjlañ atolls from no less than eleven *iroojlaplap*¹²⁵ including Jeimata, Kaibūke, Nelu, Jortōkā, and Murjel, and this in exchange for some of the physical, economic, and political resources they hoped would make their islands more abundant, prosperous, and secure.

Survival: Stories and Strategies

“Tropical storms and cyclones (‘typhoons’ in Micronesia [*lañ* in Marshallese]) are [perhaps] *the* most frightening natural phenomenon, especially [for those who] happen to live on a coral atoll where the maximum elevation is rarely more than six feet above sea-level [*sic*]. The wave set-up associated with such events can be thirty to forty feet and more, [and are] on occasion compounded by tidal fluctuations”¹²⁶ that can be equally devastating.

While less frequent historically than in other parts of Micronesia and Oceania,¹²⁷ typhoons and tidal waves in Rālik and Ratak have had massive and devastating effects. Indeed, the low elevation and small size of these coral islets, together with their paucity

¹²⁵ Ibid., 4-20.

¹²⁶ Ibid., v. Emphasis in the original.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 101.

in indigenous agricultural and other food resources, has made it such that *lañ* typhoons and the tidal waves that sometimes accompany them and on occasion occur independently have been enormously destructive to local populations and environments across Rālik and Ratak. This seems to have been particularly true in the mid- to late nineteenth century when a series of typhoons was raging erratically through the islands, and this just when *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders began arriving in the islands bearing vast material resources, claiming access to the powers of the heavens and of foreign companies and governments, and with dreams of acquiring land to establish and expand what they hoped would grow into permanent religious and economic missions.

In pre- and early colonial times, when *ri-aelōñ-kein* relied exclusively on local building materials and local food supplies and resources were relatively unstable, the destructive power of these storms was even more extreme than it is today. Records indicate, for example, that on top of killing dozens and in some cases hundreds of people, several typhoons that raged through Rālik and Ratak during the early to mid-nineteenth century also stripped coconut, breadfruit, and pandanus trees of their fruit, decimated food stores, turned fresh water lenses brackish, washed away relatively fertile topsoil and increased the salinity of the soils¹²⁸ that remained, and destroyed dwellings and sailing vessels all across affected areas. As a result, people died not just as a result of the storms' initial force, but also because the storms rendered affected islands virtually uninhabitable. And when outrigger canoes also fell victim to vicious winds, rain, and waves, survivors were left with no means to call for help or seek refuge on neighboring atolls. The result was that, in the days and weeks that followed a severe typhoon or tidal wave, many more people perished due to festering injuries or from lack of sufficient food and fresh water. In these cases and often as a last resort, people looked to their *iroojlaplap* to relocate them and to offer the kind of *iṃōn aje* or *bwidej in aje* land gift discussed in the previous section to help them get reestablished in an unaffected area, and meanwhile hoping their luck would fare better as they began preparations for future events.

Over the centuries, the devastating outcomes of these extreme weather events have made their way into *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions including *jabōnkōnnaan* proverbs,

¹²⁸ Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 299 n.9.



Figure 22. Post-typhoon Jebwad, Jālwōj, 1905
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-11)

bwebwenato stories, and many others. The proverb *tōr!ok bok*, for example—which literally means “wash away the sand”—has been used to describe and prepare people for “the devastation sometimes wrought upon the islands if struck head-on [*sic*] by a typhoon. In such a case the wave surge [had] the capability of sweeping an islet down to its ultimate foundation—the reef.”¹²⁹ One story recounts a huge typhoon and tidal wave that destroyed Wūjlañ Atoll and killed most of its inhabitants: “A huge wave, higher than a tall coconut tree, covered all of the islands in the atoll and carried away a great deal of land. Out of the large population, only those few people who had climbed to the tops of the trees were saved.”¹³⁰ Yet another story tells of a typhoon that obliterated the majority of the population of Rālik and Ratak leaving only twenty or thirty survivors on Kuwajleen and two or three on Lae. This particular typhoon was so powerful that, in addition to killing vast numbers of people, it also wiped out all the *rimmenanuwe* elves, *noonniep* fairies, and *rijek* bearded spirits living on the islands at the time.¹³¹

Another story describes the horrors that occurred on Likiep after a tidal wave inundated the atoll in 1854 and killed all but three of the people living there:

¹²⁹ Stone et al., *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majeļ*, 40.

¹³⁰ Ernej et al., “Early History of the People of Wūjlañ Atoll,” 336.

¹³¹ Jam, “The Big Typhoon That Devastated the Marshall Islands,” 321.

Around 1854 a tidal wave destroyed Likiep Atoll. Only three islanders saved themselves and eked out a miserable existence on fish, grass, and bast.¹³² Five men who were driven ashore from Mejit [Māje] were simply slain, since, as one of the survivors [explained] blandly: “There was not enough food for so many.” When cultivation began [twenty years later] in the islands of Likiep and Jebo [Jemō], the soil was covered with well-preserved skeletons, and when the still uncultivated islands [were] cleared, many others [were likely] found, showing how many lives were lost in this one tidal wave.”¹³³

A small hill located in the middle of Likiep Island—which, according to oral tradition, was formed either by this storm or one of similar magnitude—was and remains a persistent physical reminder of the power of a typhoon to transform the landscape as well as the lives of families and entire communities (see Figure 23).¹³⁴

In response to these and other events and their accompanying stories and landmarks—knowledge of which circulated around Rālik and Ratak as *ri-bwebwenato* storytellers transmitted them across oceans and generations—*ri-aelōñ-kein* developed epistemological and practical systems to protect themselves and their land and other resources. At a practical level, this meant that, over time, *ri-aelōñ-kein* adapted their construction techniques, residential patterns, food preparation and storage practices, and land tenure and management systems, together with many other aspects of their daily lives, to allow them to not only subsist from day to day, but also to remain as prepared as possible for these kinds of devastating storms.

I have already discussed some of the construction methods, residential patterns, and land management practices *ri-aelōñ-kein* adopted to help mitigate the hazards of

¹³² Bast is a plant fiber taken from the inner bark of certain plants.

¹³³ I have found no evidence that more skeletons were actually uncovered when the other islands were being cleared. Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 14.

¹³⁴ Leonard deBrum and others indicate that this hill was formed during a typhoon that struck in 1905. According to most reports, however, the 1905 typhoon that inflicted major damage on Jālwōj, Mājro, Arno, Mile, and Ṇadikdik was felt to a much lesser degree on Aur, Maļoelap, Epoon, Aelōñlaplap, and Wūjlañ and did not have much effect on Likiep. An August 25, 1905 letter to Joachim deBrum from Adolf Capelle confirms this: “We here in Legieb felt a little of it, but thank God have been spared greater destruction. In Julel [on the eastern end of Likiep Island], Aikini & Lukenwor the sea broke at several places in the land, but the damages are not very great.” Steinbach mentions the sand hill in an essay published in 1896; it is more likely, then, that the hill was formed during one of the major typhoons that struck Likiep Atoll in the mid-nineteenth (1840s or 1854) or perhaps during an earlier undocumented event. Steinbach, “The Marshall Islands,” 296; “Adolf Capelle to Joachim deBrum, 25 August 1905”; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”



Figure 23. Highest point in Ralik and Ratak, Būladek, Likiep Island, date unknown
 Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-169)¹³⁵

living in such a vulnerable atoll environment. With this in mind, I will only mention here that, along with these and other survival strategies, *ri-aelōñ-kein* also developed elaborate food preparation methods, storage techniques, and trading practices that not only allowed them to subsist on a daily basis and during agricultural off seasons, but also helped them stay prepared for the extreme weather events they knew had the potential to limit supplies of food, water, and other essential resources. And because agricultural resources and fresh water were so scarce in the low lying coral atolls of Rālik and Ratak and became markedly more scant after a typhoon or tidal wave felled trees or inundated freshwater lenses with salt water, these preparations required a great deal of creativity, effort, time, and resourcefulness, and hence became important components of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and daily life.

One example of these preparations was the preservation of breadfruit as *bwiro* and pandanus as *mokwan*¹³⁶ for consumption during the off season, in times of scarcity due to drought or storm damage, and during long sea voyages that required navigators and

¹³⁵ Leonard deBrum suggests that the boy in the photograph is his uncle however does not state his name. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

¹³⁶ *Mokwan* is called *jāānkun* in the Rālik chain. *Mokwan* was traditionally prepared on Aelok, Likiep, and Mājei in Ratak while *jāānkun* was produced on Ujae, Lae, and Wōtto in Rālik. Heine deBrum, “*Mokwan ak Jāānkun*,” 41.

passengers to rely on the same foods they might eat during a famine on land. In addition, *ri-aelōñ-kein* who had ample access to particular food resources prepared them for trade with those living on islands where they were less abundant. People in the southern atolls, for example, traded *bwiro* preserved breadfruit for *mokwan* preserved pandanus and *makmōk* arrowroot, arrowroot starch, and other resources that were much easier to come by on the northern atolls. These foods were then stored for consumption during times of need—remarkably, *mokwan* preserved pandanus properly wrapped in airtight *maañ* pandanus leaves and tied with *kokwal* sennit could be kept for many years¹³⁷ and were essential for survival following a typhoon or tidal wave that took trees as well as people as victims. Indeed, these and other locally appropriate approaches to food preparation and storage were a crucial component of what amounted to a highly complex and involved survival strategy that allowed *ri-aelōñ-kein* to subsist in the low lying atoll ecosystem of Rālik and Ratak and, when they were lucky, to survive even the most destructive storms.

Heavenly Appeals: *Kōbbaal*, *Kabokkūk*, and *Jarin Lañ*

Despite their efforts, *ri-aelōñ-kein* knew that these and other real world tactics were not enough to prepare them for the most violent storms or from tidal waves large enough to wash over entire islets. For this reason, they also looked to the heavens for guidance and assistance in their search for security and stability in their precarious island home. In addition to tracking the movements and behavior of birds and other animals, which were believed to be a reliable source about oncoming storms,¹³⁸ *ri-aelōñ-kein* developed a complex system of weather forecasting that involved knowledge of the stars and the phases of the moon and possible connections between their position in the sky and impending storms and winds.¹³⁹ It was thought, for example, that when certain stars were on the eastern horizon they obstructed the east and prevented eastern winds from sweeping in over the sea; a full moon, meanwhile, was said to bring good weather,

¹³⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁸ Knappe, “*Religiose Anschauungen*,” 9-12. Various methods were used to predict the weather. Among these were tracking the behavior of certain birds, fish, trees, and plants. *Micronesian Reporter*, “Signs and the Weather,” 19.

¹³⁹ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 50.

whereas a new moon brought black clouds.¹⁴⁰ The system also included specialized knowledge of the tides, wind patterns, and cloud formations, all of which were used to read and understand the weather for the purposes of navigation and to predict and prepare for inclement weather on land. “In those days, every sign, every clue, every change of cloud or color was taken into account.”¹⁴¹

Highly skilled *ri-kōbbaal* forecasters were trained to read cloud formations and were particularly apt in predicting the weather. *Ri-kōbbaal* knew, for example, that a *jinaroñ*¹⁴²—a steel blue cloud that has been described as tapering to a point at the bottom so it looks like it is falling from the sky—would bring rain and wind that lasted for a day to be followed by calm skies. A *piden pā* cloud,¹⁴³ meanwhile, was thought to resemble an upright hand with a wrist at its base and was known to herald typhoons (see Figure 24), and a well trained *ri-kōbbaal* knew that if this cloud’s “wrist” was on the horizon, a typhoon was several days away. If, however, the cloud was resting on a “base,” the typhoon was much closer and would “rage furiously.”¹⁴⁴ This kind of knowledge was used by *ri-meto* navigators to determine when it was safe to set out for a voyage across the sea and by *iroojlaplap* and *alap* on land to determine what actions might be necessary in the coming days or hours to prepare people for a storm’s destructive potential, or to try to keep a storm completely at bay when at all possible.

In times of calm, *ri-aelōñ-kein* also made regular appeals to the gods to protect them from storms, tidal waves, and other extreme events. One such request took place during the *kabokkūk*¹⁴⁵ pandanus celebration, whose primary purpose was to ward off famine and tidal waves and to ask the gods for plentiful quantities of rain, fish, and birds.¹⁴⁶ When, however, the readings of a *ri-kōbbaal* cloud reader or a *ri-katu* weather

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴¹ Anton deBrum’s eldest son Joachim was well known for his skill in predicting the weather. In fact, he “made his own weather deductions, and preserved them in a thin notebook in a beautifully legible handscript [*sic*].” *Micronesian Reporter*, “Signs and the Weather,” 19.

¹⁴² Erdland notes that the *jinaroñ* is named for the hind fin of the *aroñ* fish or African pompano (*Hynnys cubensis*), which has a fin that, when baked, falls easily from the body. Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 53.

¹⁴³ The Marshallese word for the palm of the hand is *lopiden pā*.

¹⁴⁴ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 53.

¹⁴⁵ Spelling as in Erdland (1914); new spelling not available. Ibid., 237.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 245.

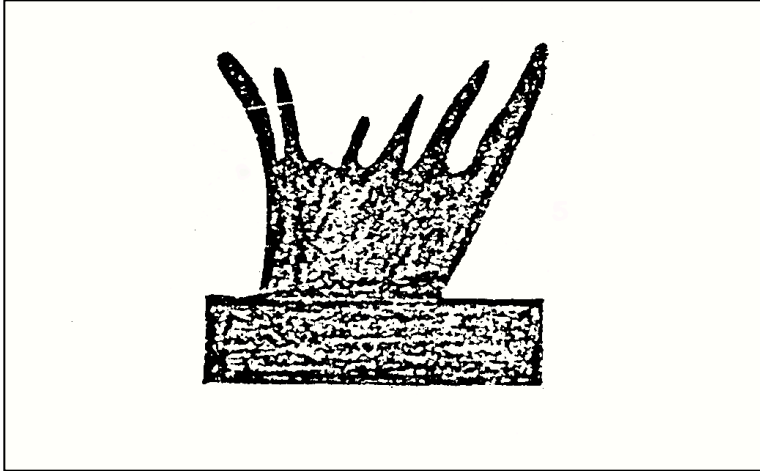


Figure 24. Sketch of a *piden pā* cloud informed by Irooj Lejitnil
Source: August Erdland, *The Marshall Islanders*, 1914¹⁴⁷

forecaster anticipated a typhoon or a tidal wave despite these regular entreaties, more urgent and intensive measures were required. In these cases, *iroojlaplap* called on yet another category of advisors to try to steer the predicted storm or wave off course.

Together, these *ri-anijnjij* sorcerers, *ri-joubwe* magicians, and *ri-bubu* soothsayers used their specialized knowledge of prayers, chants, magic, and divination to pacify those ancestors in the heavens who were thought to cause big waves and king tides. Among these waves were Wüllep’s niece Lōnomeme,¹⁴⁸ whose name literally means “wave and sea foam woman,” and her four daughters: Lipokbar (literally “she who seeks the bare reef” or a tidal wave that washes away stone debris and leaves the reef red), Libejāje¹⁴⁹ (literally “she who carries under her arm” or a wave that uproots the bushes by the force of the water and carries them off with her), Wutameme¹⁵⁰ (or she who brings a tidal wave unexpectedly when only a strong rain was expected), and Lōtoṛkūbwe (literally “she who washes away the filth lying on the shore”).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 52.

¹⁴⁸ Spelling as in the MOD; spelled Linomeme in Erdland (1914). It is said that Lōnomeme was the daughter of Wüllep’s sister Lejmaan. Ibid., 237.

¹⁴⁹ According to Erdland’s translation, this name comes from *abjāje* which means to carry something tucked under one’s arm, however I have not been able to confirm that this is actually where the name comes from. Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Spelling as in Erdland; new spelling unknown, although it could be something like Wōtmeme with *wōt* meaning rain. Ibid., 237.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

The *jarin lañ*¹⁵² magic against the tidal wave commenced as soon as extreme weather was predicted. Erdland describes the ceremony in this way:

At the first signs of an imminent storm six *wut* poles are planted in the ground not far from the shore, about six feet apart and forming an oblong hexagon; at a height of three feet they are fastened together with a cord, except the side facing the sea, which serves as the entrance to this magic fence (*wor en lañ*). In six places the poles are peeled in rings, and at the top they are fitted with tips of young palm fronds (*jebakut*), the ribs of which stand upright, while the green loosened on both sides hang like a tail. The cord between the individual poles is interwoven in the middle. At each of the two sides of this tassel-like tie, three connected fibers hang down. In front of the entrance of the magic fence, a canoe paddle stands in the ground, around the middle of which, on both sides, there are three knotted leaves.

As soon as the tidal wave rolls up, the sorcerer starts conjuring in the presence of the frightened crowd. He stands inside the fence, holding the canoe paddle in his hand as though he were about to attack with a lance and facing the wave, on whose surface *Linomeme* had been seen. Highly excited with his eyes wide open, he steps forward three times and, using the same tracks, backward three times. When stepping forward, he speaks the conjuring formula, and, to be sure, in such an excited and energetic tone that one might become fearful and uneasy; when moving back, on the other hand, he utters *hi*¹⁵³ several times, with an ironic, smiling expression.¹⁵⁴

Whether or not these or other incantations ever helped prevent or ward off tidal waves or storms is difficult if not impossible to determine. It is clear, however, that by the time *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders began arriving to the islands in the late 1850s with the hopes of establishing the first Christian mission and copra trading station in the islands, typhoons and tidal waves had been wreaking havoc around Rālik and Ratak periodically since at least the mid-1840s, with hundreds, if not thousands, of *ri-aelōñ-kein* losing their homes and even their lives.

Given the extreme vulnerability of the Rālik and Ratak atoll ecosystem—where living conditions were tenuous, food and other resources were often limited, and the

¹⁵² Erdland spells this as *jāran lan* which, given the macron over the first a in *jāran*, is somewhat confusing. My first instinct is to assume that this is *jarin lañ*, which would mean something like “a prayer to the heavens” or “a prayer to the sky,” but I do not know for sure if this guess is correct. *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁵³ This is likely an interjection of some sort, however given that the word is a translation of a translation (Marshallese to German to English), it is difficult to determine what it means.

¹⁵⁴ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 246-247.

possibility of typhoons and tidal waves continually lurked on the horizon¹⁵⁵—it should not be surprising that *ri-pālle* access to resources unlike anything most *ri-aelōñ-kein* had ever known convinced more than one *iroojlaplap* to welcome them ashore and to eventually offer them land in exchange for whatever sources of physical, economic, and social security they had to offer. Indeed, these were unusually difficult times as *ri-aelōñ-kein* all across Rālik and Ratak watched their homes collapse and loved ones perish before their eyes; it is therefore quite possible that many among them were open to the idea of adopting *ri-pālle* into their extensive physical and spiritual toolkit of pre- and post-typhoon measures, strategies, and solutions.

Aelōñ in Toorlañ: El Niño Strikes Rālik and Ratak

By the time *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders began to arrive to southern Rālik in the late-1850s, an unusual streak¹⁵⁶ of typhoons likely caused by El Niño oscillations¹⁵⁷ had been raging through the islands periodically for at least fifteen years, with major storms causing widespread destruction and death on Likiep in the mid-1840s, Roñlap and Roñdik in 1850, Likiep, Mājej, Aelok, and Jemo in 1854, and Epoon in the early part of 1857. Another round of typhoons would strike Epoon and Wūjlañ in 1864, and several big storms would make landfall in the decade that followed, with Wūjlañ being hit in 1870, Aelōñlaplap in 1874, and Jālwōj, Namdik, Kōle, and Kuwajleen in 1875. Similar storms would also affect communities from Wūjlañ in the northwest to Mile in the southeast throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and would continue to have an impact across Rālik and Ratak well into the next century.¹⁵⁸

By the late-1850s, centuries of experience had showed *ri-aelōñ-kein* that they had much to gain from encounters with *ri-pālle* in terms of provisions, tools, textiles, and

¹⁵⁵ Spennemann, “Traditional and Nineteenth Century Communication Patterns,” 43.

¹⁵⁶ Writing in the early twentieth century, Erdland observes: “Violent storms appear at intervals of from 20 to 25 years, usually accompanied by tidal waves. Such tidal waves easily flood the islands, which are barely more than one or two meters above sea level, destroy the vegetation, and even sweep away the loose sandy soil down to the bare coral rocks.” Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 14.

¹⁵⁷ Spennemann notes that although the Marshall Islands are generally too far to the east to experience major typhoons, their likelihood increases by 2.6 fold during El Niño years. Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 101-107.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

other supplies, as well as socio-political capital and authority among their constituents. With this in mind and given how destructive typhoons and tidal waves had been to communities leading up to the initial arrival of the *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders—leaving *aelōñ in tōrḷañ* or storm damaged islands¹⁵⁹ in their wake all across the two island chains—it is perhaps not surprising that Irooj Kaibūke welcomed the American missionaries and their God so enthusiastically in 1857 or that, just over three years later, Irooj Jeimata greeted Capelle aboard the *Wailua* without reservation as his “friend.” Indeed, by the time Capelle arrived to Epoon in mid-1861—not long after a major typhoon had apparently destroyed huge numbers of coconut and breadfruit trees and forced almost two-thirds of Epoon’s population to flee to Jālwōj Atoll with Irooj Kaibūke to escape the food shortage that occurred as a result¹⁶⁰—Jeimata likely regarded the trader’s potential access to material resources as more critical than ever.

Nor should it be surprising, then, that when Adolf Capelle and his associates revealed their plans to establish in the islands an industry that had the potential to provide *ri-aelōñ-kein* with sturdy building materials and a stable food supply and to clear out and put to use some of the lands that had been rendered uninhabitable and uncultivable¹⁶¹ by storms and waves, *iroojlaplap* on Epoon and beyond began to incorporate the newcomers into their extensive compendium of strategies to prepare for, recover from, and even ward off these horrific events. *Iroojlaplap* did this at least in part, I suggest, by offering land in exchange for access to resources they hoped would make life on their vulnerable islands more safe and secure.

With all this in mind, I suggest that the impact of typhoons and tidal waves and their aftermath in Rālik and Ratak played an important initial role in inducing *iroojlaplap* to sell and lease land to *ri-pālle* traders beginning in the mid-1860s; in the process, *irooj*

¹⁵⁹ Poyer et al., *The Typhoon of War*, 330.

¹⁶⁰ Although Kaibūke apparently returned to Epoon in 1860, it is likely that much of the atoll was still either in ruins or being rehabilitated in 1861. Pollock, “The Origin of Clans on Namu,” 92; Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 169.

¹⁶¹ In some areas, typhoons and tidal waves flooded taro beds with salt water; the soil became so salty as a result that coconut trees were essentially the only crop that would grow in those areas. It is possible that beginning in the mid-1860s, chiefs readily allowed these lands to become “extensions of coconut plantations,” much as the Jaluit Gesellschaft did following storms in 1905 and 1908. Browning, “Traders in the Marshalls,” 38.

applied the principal of *mejed kapilōk kōj* to their interactions with *ri-pālle* by exchanging land for resources and alliances. Not unlike the exchanges of goods that had taken place earlier in the century at Mile, Aur, Wōjjā, Epoon, and beyond, together with Kaibūke’s gift to the missionaries at Rupe Wāto, the string of land sales and leases that began with Irooj Jeimata’s sale of three-quarters of Juroj Island to Adolf Capelle were thus guided and influenced at least in part by *ri-aelōñ-kein* concepts of land and land tenure that gave *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* the flexibility and authority to address the needs and aspirations of the larger society through strategic transfers and reassignments of land and land rights. In this way, I suggest, many of the land sales that took place from the early 1860s through the mid-1880s were initially and at least in part the outcome of chiefs’ duty and obligation to adapt to changing circumstances in their islands by actively modifying *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture in action. As the copra industry expanded during this period and as Rālik *irooj* including Kabua and Loek began to profit and gain favor with *ri-pālle* traders and the incoming German imperial administration, *irooj* competition for economic resources and social and political capital would also take on an increasingly important role in the sales.¹⁶²

The first such exchange of land for resources may have taken place at Rupe Wāto, Epoon Atoll between Irooj Kaibūke and American missionaries, not long after the 1857 typhoon had destroyed much of the atoll and caused a series of horrifying events as “a certain Labuñbuñ ... killed hundreds of starving adults on that occasion and [threw] their bodies into waterholes.”¹⁶³ In this case, Kaibūke’s hope that the missionaries’ God could help prevent such events from occurring in the future might have played a role in the exchange. When another series of storms destroyed much of Epoon together with Wūjlañ Atoll in northern Rālik five years later,¹⁶⁴ however, *ri-aelōñ-kein* may have started to suspect that the Christian prayers and conversions introduced by *ri-pālle* and Hawaiian missionaries just a few years earlier were not having the effects they had expected. These doubts—together with other resentments Kaibūke and others had developed toward the

¹⁶² Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 190-192.

¹⁶³ Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 14.

¹⁶⁴ Spennemann, *Typhoons in Micronesia*, 104, 169.

missionaries and their work in the islands (see Chapter 2)—may have initially inspired Jeimata and other *irooj* to turn to the traders with the hope that access to their material and economic resources could protect them in ways that the missionaries’ God had thus far been unable to do. It was perhaps with this in mind, then, that Jeimata sold three-quarters of Juroj Island to Adolf Capelle in 1863 or 1864.

As they considered using land to gain access to *ri-pālle* resources and alliances, *iroojlaplap* likely sought out the advice of their Nitijeļā-Kewa-Jeļā advisors¹⁶⁵ and the approval of *aļap* lineage heads to expand their interpretations of various *iṃōn aje* land allotments including *kaat-eļap* and *āneen aje* in order to validate the exchange of portions of their holdings for what they may have understood to be a fair combination of material goods, alliances, and socio-cultural and political capital. In the process, I suggest, *iroojlaplap* did not give out land arbitrarily but instead tried to make informed and strategic decisions about which land to sell or lease and to whom.

Irooj Jortōkā of northern Ratak seems to have been particularly shrewd in this regard, and in several cases sold not his best lands but rather those that were uninhabited or considered undesirable, worthless, or of no use to him. Jortōkā’s sale of Oļōt Island (which means “land of no value”) in Maļoelap Atoll in 1869 to Anton deBrum and A. Capelle & Co. may have represented one such attempt. The chief’s offer to sell Ādkup Atoll to deBrum instead of Wōjjā Atoll eight years later may have been part of a similar strategy; indeed, whereas Wōjjā was considered by Jortōkā to be one of the richest atolls in the area,¹⁶⁶ Ādkup had only sixteen tiny islets, a total land area of only 0.59 square miles,¹⁶⁷ and a very narrow pass,¹⁶⁸ and was generally considered uninhabitable by *ri-aelōñ-kein*. When deBrum countered Jortōkā’s offer of Ādkup with Likiep, Jortōkā initially refused,¹⁶⁹ perhaps because there were a few people living on the atoll at the time¹⁷⁰ who would potentially face displacement by such an agreement. In the end, however, Jortōkā agreed to sell the atoll on the grounds that it was of no use to him

¹⁶⁵ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 25.

¹⁶⁶ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99.

¹⁶⁷ RMI, “Individual Atoll Information: Ratak Chain: Erikub Atoll.”

¹⁶⁸ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 172.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Juda, “Land Problem: Likiep.”

because it was completely overgrown with brush as the result of having been devastated by two typhoon/wave events and being so sparsely inhabited ever since.¹⁷¹

An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein: These Islands Belong to the Women

Irooj maneuvering and strategizing also meant that more than a few *wāto* and islands ended up in the hands of *ri-pālle* who were either married to or in relationships with *ri-aelōñ-kein* women and had *ri-aelōñ-kein* children as a result, with Adolf Capelle being the forerunner in this category and Anton deBrum following suit not long after. Indeed, by the time Capelle made his first land purchase from Irooj Jeimata in 1863 or 1864, he had already married prominent *ri-Epoon* Sophia Limenwa¹⁷² and had thereby been integrated into the genealogical fabric of Epoon and southern Rālik through marriage. Given the importance of women and the *bwij* matriline to *ri-aelōñ-kein* concepts of land and land succession and tenure, this relationship probably facilitated Capelle's efforts to acquire land for his growing copra business on Epoon and beyond. Perhaps not coincidentally, another marriage facilitated Capelle's eventual acquisition of Likiep Atoll thirteen years later with the help of his friend and partner Anton deBrum who, like Capelle, had married a *ri-aelōñ-kein* woman with genealogical ties to the land through her relative Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā. In fact, it has often been said that it was Anton's *ri-Māloelap*¹⁷³ wife Likmeto who made the purchase possible at all; deBrum's grandson Raymond recalls:

My grandmother, Likmeto, went to Jurrtaka and asked him for land. Finally Jurrtaka said, "You and Anton can go to Likiep and see what you think about that atoll." Anton took his wife and they looked at Likiep. A typhoon had swept over it some years before, and now the land was full of underbrush. To clear it would

¹⁷¹ *Micronesian Reporter*, "Likiep Is Chosen," 5. Also see "Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā to the People of Likiep."

¹⁷² Jordon Ikirtok suggests that Limenwa was a *kajoor* on Epoon under Irooj Litkōwa. Given that many *kajoor* had multiple landholdings across islands and atolls, it is possible that she also held *kajoor* rights to *wāto* land parcels within Irooj Jeimata's domain. Ikirtok, "A Perspective on the Likiep Problem," 7.

¹⁷³ While some sources say Likmeto was from Aur, others say she was from Māloelap. Given that *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *irooj* in particular often have land holdings on more than one atoll, it is quite possible that both are correct. "Joachim deBrum Certificate of Birth and Baptism"; Mason, "Economic Organization," 99; Ikirtok, "A Perspective on the Likiep Problem," 7.

be a big undertaking—but the atoll had a good harbor and sufficient land and Anton was satisfied.¹⁷⁴

Raymond’s brother Leonard recounts a similar version of the story:

Anton set out with his wife Likmeto and their seven-year-old son Joachim toward Maļoeļap to his father-in-law, Irooj Jortōkā, hoping to find a plantation site among Jortōkā’s Rālik land holdings. When approached with this request, Jortōkā first suggested an island in Ādkup Atoll. DeBrum knew this place, and thought its pass ([*to*]) was too narrow. He asked Jortōkā to consider Likiep, but Jortōkā refused. DeBrum tried to negotiate but eventually decided to return to his boat.

Seeing her husband back on board the boat, Likmeto took her son and went to her father’s house. As she entered, Jortōkā’s first words to her were, “Eeo man in wa ne waam?” [Literally: “Where is your stern pointing; where is your destination?”] She responded by saying that, since he had decided that she marry deBrum, then her destination and that of her son were with deBrum. Hearing these words, Jortōkā permitted them to go to [Lḡ-lem], the northern curve in Likiep, and make their life there.¹⁷⁵

As Jortōkā and others considered how to use their land to forge alliances with *ri-pālle* that would benefit them materially, socially, and politically, it is possible that they regarded sales to *ri-pālle* traders with genealogical ties to the islands through their wives as relatively safe or even benign. In fact, they might not have regarded these transfers as sales at all, but rather as *kaat-eļap* plantings that would allow them to use their new *ri-pālle* relatives and friends to redevelop lands devastated by typhoons and tidal waves and to make them profitable for the various *bwij* within their domain. From this perspective, Irooj Jortōkā and others did not intentionally dispose of their land holdings; instead, they used a modified form of traditional redistribution to retain the land within their genealogies and in the custody of one or more *bwij* matrilineages. It could be argued, then, that Jortōkā did not alienate Likiep but rather reassigned it according to *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom in order to achieve particular economic, social, and political goals much as *irooj* had done for centuries before him. What Jortōkā and other *irooj* may not have understood at the time, however, was that although the *ri-pālle* traders had married

¹⁷⁴ *Micronesian Reporter*, “Likiep Is Chosen,” 5.

¹⁷⁵ Leonard deBrum, interview by Mark Stege, 2001.



Figure 25. Sophia Limenwa and Adolf Capelle circa 1890s
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-827)

ri-aelōñ-kein women, they had nevertheless retained their own ideas about land and landownership, which would soon be codified into law and enforced by the administration of the German Imperial Protectorate.

Rak in Meto and Ratak Eañ: The Dawn of the Copra Age

As *ri-aelōñ-kein* gained more prolonged experience with *ri-pālle* missionaries, traders, and later German colonial administrators throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, it became clear that none among them had the power to prevent the dreaded typhoons and tidal waves that had been plaguing the islands for decades or longer. They could, however, offer a myriad of economic and physical resources to facilitate life in this fragile and arduous atoll ecosystem where food was often scarce and resources were scant. Among these were basic necessities such as food, clothing, tools and building materials, and novel medical treatments, as well as new modes of inter-atoll transportation, luxury items such as alcohol, tobacco, and in some cases guns and ammunition,¹⁷⁶ and opportunities to attend one of the many schools that were cropping up around the islands.

¹⁷⁶ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

Irooj across the two island chains quickly realized that these and other resources, opportunities, and alliances had the potential enhance their economic, social, and political capital among their constituents and in relation to other *irooj*, even as they helped make life in their vulnerable islands more stable and secure. Thus, while typhoon damage and genealogy were clearly important in many cases and in the sale of Likiep in particular, they were not chiefs' only considerations as they considered selling or leasing land to Capelle, deBrum, and other *ri-pālle* beginning in the early 1860s. In fact, the sale of Likiep Atoll was likely the outcome of a combination of factors that included Jortōkā's desire to enhance his social, political, and economic capital both within his own northern Ratak realm and in Rālik and Ratak more generally.

By the time Jortōkā sold Likiep in 1877, Epooon and Jālwōj atolls in the Rak in Meto region of southern Rālik had dominated the copra industry in the two island chains for almost twenty years, and the chiefs in those areas—namely Kabua, Loeak, Litōkwa, Nelu, and Lakajimi—had profited as a result. In the meantime, A. Capelle & Co. had purchased all of Kōle Island from Kabua, Loeak, Nelu, and Lakajimi with the intent of establishing a copra plantation there, and traders from the firms Henderson & McFarlane, Hershheim & Company, and others had started making inroads to the south in Mājro Atoll.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, by the mid-1870s, copra was a booming industry in Rālik and Ratak, and it should be no surprise that Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā of Ratak Eañ wanted to share in some of the wealth and status that had until then been enjoyed almost exclusively by the Rak in Meto chiefs.

With this in mind, I go on in Chapter 5 to explore the growth of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak in the mid-nineteenth century and its relationship to Irooj Jortōkā's ultimate decision to sell Likiep Atoll. I do this after considering the importance and versatility of the coconut within *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology through the story of Tōboļāār, the first ancestor-coconut, whose descendants provided abundant physical and spiritual nourishment to *ri-aelōñ-kein* for hundreds if not thousands of years, and well before the arrival and establishment of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak just over a century ago. The role and significance of the coconut exemplified by the story of

¹⁷⁷ Spennemann, "Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands," 13-14.

Tōboļāār began to change in the mid-nineteenth century, however, as whalers, missionaries, and coconut oil and copra traders emphasized the coconut's primacy as a plantation crop and export commodity. This shift would soon reflect similar transformations in land and proprietorship on Likiep Atoll as western legal documents and concepts of ownership supplanted long standing *ri-aelōñ-kein* approaches to land tenure and stewardship.

Chapter 5. *Nimōto Ejāmin Lot*: Plantations and Purchases

Nimōto ejāmin lot or the “‘coconut never stops producing’ ... refers to the fact that once a coconut tree comes to fruit, it will provide continuous good fortune to all.”¹

Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto: Tōboļāār and the Origins of the *Ni* Coconut

Long ago, *etto im etto*,² when the sky was still dark and the islands had no trees and very little food—and just before a series of bitter feuds divided the descendants of Iroojrilik (Łowa’s so-named king of all creation) into *jowi* matrilineal clans and spread them out across the islands of Rālik and Ratak—Iroojrilik’s daughter Liwātuonmour,³ who had not yet given birth to her daughter Irooj or moved north to Naṃo Atoll, bore a son on Liki-ļe-eo Wāto on Wōja Island, Aelōñļapļap Atoll in central Rālik.⁴ This son was no ordinary child, however, and was quite different from Liwātuonmour’s oldest son Łakaṃ and her other children, for unlike the others the child was not a boy at all but a ripe brown coconut. (Those who do not believe this should look at one end of a husked coconut to find the baby’s face with two eyes, a nose, and a mouth.)

Since *ri-aelōñ-kein* had never seen a coconut before that time, no one including Liwātuonmour quite knew what to do with the odd little being. And so, in their great shock and surprise over this mysterious birth, many people including Liwātuonmour’s older sons demanded that she kill the strange and apparently useless thing or cast it into

¹ Stone et al., *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majel*, 60.

² I have compiled and adapted this story from various and sometimes conflicting versions of *ri-aelōñ-kein* stories about the origins of the coconut found in Downing et al. (1992f, 1992g, 1992h), Jam (2002b), Jeik (2003b), Loien (1914), Lokrap (1949a), *Micronesian Reporter* (1964), and Taafaki et al. (2006).

³ While many stories suggest that Liwātuonmour was Iroojrilik’s daughter, others indicate that she was his sister. Jeik, “Tobolar, Coconut Boy,” 146.

⁴ Some versions indicate that Tōboļāār’s mother was not Liwātuonmour but was rather Iroojrilik’s sister Limōkade. Others suggest that Tōboļāār’s mother was Jineer ilo Kōbo, a female ancestor who brought forth the tides and the currents and taught *ri-aelōñ-kein* ancestors some of their most treasured values including the importance of working together rather than separating from each other and preserving food rather than wasting it. Others indicate that Tōboļāār’s birth took place on Epoon rather than Aelōñļapļap, which might explain why Epoon is the most lush and fertile atoll in Rālik and Ratak. Downing et al., “Tobolar, the First Coconut,” 43; Downing et al., “Origin of the Coconut Tree,” 56; Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 22.

the sea. But Liwātuonmour refused, for despite his strange appearance she loved her new son, whom she nurtured and named Tōboļāār.⁵

In the days and weeks that followed, Liwātuonmour grew more attached to Tōboļāār; meanwhile, her older sons became jealous as they watched their mother carry the boy around, sing to him, and even nurse him with her own milk (anyone who does not believe this should look inside a coconut to find its round core filled with milk). Liwātuonmour tried to make her older sons understand that this child was their brother, but instead they ridiculed her for loving Tōboļāār and neglecting them. In fact, the boys became so jealous that when Liwātuonmour refused to get rid of the child they threatened to kill him. And so, out of fear for her son's life, Liwātuonmour wove a small case out of *koba* bamboo to protect him. (As *koba* does not grow in Rālik or Ratak, it must have drifted there or arrived in canoes from the west.) By then, Tōboļāār had learned to talk and told his mother not to listen to his brothers, for he would grow to be very useful and important, if only she would bury him in the sand.

At first, Liwātuonmour doubted her son's words and could not bear the thought of burying him alive, but Tōboļāār assured his mother that he would not die under the sand; instead, he would live and grow to produce hundreds or even thousands of children and grandchildren that would feed *ri-aelōñ-kein* and have many other valuable uses. And so, to protect her son and with a profound sense of curiosity over what he might grow to become, Liwātuonmour put Tōboļāār in the small *koba* case and went in the dark of night to the far end of the island where she buried him under the sand. To protect Tōboļāār further, she did not tell her older sons what she had done with him but instead visited him secretly and continued to nurture him with her songs and stories.

Within a few days, Liwātuonmour noticed a change in young Tōboļāār: in the spot where she had buried the brown coconut, a small green *mejeneor* sprout that was about one or two inches tall had poked through the sand. Wondering if this was what Tōboļāār was to become, Liwātuonmour took hold of a small piece of the sprout and tried

⁵ *Tōboļāār* is also the Marshallese name for a young coconut seed that is just beginning to sprout. According to some versions of the story, Łakaṃ, not Tōboļāār, was the coconut boy. Jam, "The Beginning of this World," 12.

to eat it, but it was not good. She went home and returned several days later to find that the tiny green *mejeneor* had grown into a one-foot tall *epeijojo* sprout with fronds fanning out like the fins of a flying fish (*jojo* means flying fish). Again she wondered if this was what Tōboļāār was to become and cut off a piece of the sprout and tried to eat it, but still it was not good. Three days later Liwātuonmour returned to find that the *epeijojo* had quickly grown into a six foot tall *denkiaie* sprout; she could not believe how tall Tōboļāār had become and grew very curious about what he would finally be and how he might be used. While deep in thought about her son's eventual fate, Liwātuonmour again broke off a piece of the sprout and tried to eat it, and again it was not good.

Several days later, Liwātuonmour returned and was excited to see how Tōboļāār had changed; this time, the *denkiaie* had developed tiny *utak* coconut buds all around the base of the fronds. Afraid that she might break the delicate new growths, she decided to go home without touching them; when she returned a few days later, the *utak* had opened to reveal dozens of small *kwaļini* coconut seeds. On seeing the *kwaļini*, Liwātuonmour reflected deeply on what he had told her before she had buried him in the sand and was amazed at what her son had become so far. Not wanting to disturb the *kwaļini* that appeared to be growing so well, however, she decided not to visit Tōboļāār again for a month; she was sure that by then his true purpose would be revealed.

Although she missed Tōboļāār dearly, Liwātuonmour managed to stay away for an entire month and was overjoyed when she at last returned to the spot where she had buried him so many weeks before. There she saw a strong healthy *ni* coconut tree with many green *ni* coconuts⁶ hanging from the base of long fronds sheathed with *inpel* fine cloth. She also noticed several ripe brown *waini* coconuts scattered on the ground beneath the tree's branches and was surprised to find that they looked just like her beloved Tōboļāār; indeed, one sprouting *iu* coconut already had a tiny green *mejeneor* poking through a crack on its topside. As she held the brown *waini* in her hands and examined the *iu* more closely, Liwātuonmour understood what Tōboļāār had told her about his fate. Thinking about her youngest son's words, she husked one of the ripe coconuts, cracked it open, and discovered that the inside was lined with a firm white meaty fruit that she

⁶ *Ni* means both coconut and coconut tree.



Figure 26. *Ni kadu* short coconut tree variety, Likiep circa 1899
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-75)

tasted and found to be very good indeed. She then picked the largest green coconut she could find hanging on the tree, husked it, popped open one of its eyes (which gave her a good squirt right in the face!), and took a sip of its milky water, which she also found to be very sweet and delicious. It was then that Liwātuonmour understood that Tōboļāār's fruit at its various stages of growth would allow *ri-aelōñ-kein* to subsist on the islands of Rālik and Ratak, which had until then been so sparse that they were frequently plagued by hunger and even famine and starvation.

As Liwātuonmour drank Tōboļāār's *ni* and ate his *waini* and *iu*, she examined her son's new form closely and pondered all the ways he might be of use to her and the others, just as Tōboļāār had predicted. Together with the *ni* water and *waini* meat, she thought, *ri-aelōñ-kein* could also eat the soft sweet *mede* she had found inside the green

coconut and the spongy *iu* at the center of the sprouted coconuts. Liwātuonmour guessed that the base of the fronds could be tapped for their sap, which could likely also be consumed or used for cooking. What's more, the trunk could be built into houses and other structures and its *kimej* fronds woven into *iep* baskets, the hard *lat* shells of the *waini* could be saved as cups and containers, the *inpel* cloth could be used to make fires or as a sieve, and the tough *bweo* husks could be kindling or woven into *kokwa!* sennit after being soaked in saltwater. As she thought of these and many other uses for Tōboļāār's descendants, Liwātuonmour grew happy, for she realized that the simple tree her son had become would be one of the keys to *ri-aelōñ-kein* survival on the tiny and relatively infertile islands of Rālik and Ratak.

As Liwātuonmour contemplated more uses for the *ni* and its fruits, her oldest son ʔakam and his brothers—who had been stealthily spying on their mother over the past few months as she watched Tōboļāār grow from a ripe brown coconut into a tree—appeared from behind a shrub. The boys were surprised to find their mother drinking *ni*, feasting on *waini*, *iu*, and *mede*, and sitting on a mat newly woven from *kimej* green coconut fronds, and were even more amazed to see a tall tree with enormous fronds proudly shading her from the harsh sun. They asked where the tree had come from and how she had acquired all the gifts that surrounded her, and in response she recounted the story of planting Tōboļāār in the sand and watching him grow from a ripe coconut into the tallest tree on the island. ʔakam and the others quickly understood that their youngest brother had immense value for the many resources he had revealed to their mother and, while they had despised him since his birth, their hatred for Tōboļāār was soon replaced by immeasurable admiration for his many fine gifts.

ʔakam told his mother that they should inform Iroojrilik, who at that time was living far to the west on the island of Ep, about Tōboļāār's many wonderful gifts as they could also be of great value to him. Liwātuonmour agreed and declared that ʔakam and his brothers would sail to Ep in an outrigger canoe (at the time, canoes were only carved from driftwood since there were not yet any breadfruit trees on the islands) to give Iroojrilik the news and to share Tōboļāār's fruit with him. In preparation for the trip, ʔakam and his brothers husked dozens of coconuts, which they used to fill several large

baskets Liwātuonmour had woven from fresh green *kimej* coconut fronds. As they husked, the boys tossed the *bweo* husks into the sea; these were soon carried west by the current to Iroojrilik's home on Ep. When Iroojrilik saw the husks wash ashore at Ep, he examined them and found that they had strong fibers he could use to make strong twine and rope. Since the husks had already been soaking in the sea for many days, Iroojrilik was able to strip the fibers from inside the husk and immediately began shaping them into twine by rolling them back and forth on his thigh. Soon thereafter, ʔakam and his brothers arrived in their canoe and presented Iroojrilik with the baskets of fresh green *ni* and brown *waini* coconuts they had prepared for him on Wōja. They demonstrated how to plant the *waini* in the sand and explained that the large seeds would grow into trees that would produce more nuts and husks as well as many other useful resources. Then they showed Iroojrilik how to open the *ni* and the *waini* and drink the water and eat the different kinds of meaty fruit found inside. Iroojrilik was happy indeed for, like Liwātuonmour, he understood that Tōboʔāār's gift would be the key to the survival of *ri-aelōñ-kein* on the islands to the east and beyond.

As Iroojrilik, ʔakam, and the other boys enjoyed their delicious feast of *ni*, *waini*, and *iu*, Iroojrilik continued to roll the coconut husk fibers and considered how he might use the *kokwaʔ* sennit that was growing longer with every twist. Deep in thought, he looked up and noticed that the sky ʔowa had created with ʔajibwināmōñ to the north, ʔōrōk to the south, ʔōkōmraan to the east, and he himself to the west was sagging heavily at the center as it often did. (It sometimes hung so low that it touched the heads of the tallest men and prevented the wind from blowing, thus making it hard to breathe). With that, Iroojrilik had an idea and asked the boys to tie the ropes he had made into a net, which they immediately began to do.

Once they had finished, Iroojrilik used a magical incantation to transform the boys into *keār*⁷ birds: "Oh, *keār*, white, fast sea birds, take up the net, take up the net, catch the sky and lift it high!"⁸ With that, the *keār* each took a corner of the enormous net in his beak and flew together first to ʔōkōmraan's corner in the east where they lifted the

⁷ *Keār* are crested terns (*Thalasseus bergii*).

⁸ Downing et al., "Tobolar's Brother Lokam," 53.



Figure 27. Limelali and New Year weaving coconut frond baskets circa 1917
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image B-222)

sky and fastened it in place with one of the net's four corners. Next they flew to ʔajibwināmōŋ's corner in the north where they again pushed up the sky and used the net to secure it in place. Then the birds made their way to ʔōrōk's corner in the south and Iroojrilik's corner in the north and again rigged up the sky with the net in both places. Finally, they flew to the center of the sky—which was by then sagging so low that it was almost touching the ground at Ep—and lifted the great blue immensity high above the sea and the islands and used the net to secure it in place in the shape of a hemisphere. Henceforth, the high arching sky would allow the wind to blow across the islands from all directions bringing with it the sea currents necessary to navigate the vast ocean and the rains needed to sustain *ri-aelōñ-kein* and the flora and fauna that were slowly beginning to populate the islands to the east. The newly secured arch shaped sky would also provide enough space for the future descendants of Liwātuonmour's youngest son to grow tall and reproduce, just as Tōboļāār had predicted.

Then, once the sky had been secured in place, the *keār* birds flew back down to Ep where Iroojrilik used another magical incantation to return them to their human form. Soon thereafter, the boys left Iroojrilik—who by then had several *ni* trees growing at various stages all around the island thanks to the newly cleared sky and resulting fresh

breezy air which had already brought forth bounteous rain showers—and sailed back to Aelōñlaplap where they were joyfully received by Liwātuonmour and the people of Wōja. On their arrival, ʔakam and his brothers noticed that the sky over Wōja was high and clear and that the island had been transformed as people learned to use Tōboļāār’s fruits in what seemed to be countless ways, all of which were nothing less than ingenious.

What’s more, *ri-aelōñ-kein* had discovered through their experience with Tōboļāār how to plant some of the other objects that sometimes washed ashore—and it was such that *mā* breadfruit, *bōb* pandanus, *makmōk* arrowroot, and *iaraj* taro had begun to sprout up around the island and were already being put to a great many uses by *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Indeed, Tōboļāār brought to his mother’s people not just the gift of his own fruits and resources, but also the knowledge needed to cultivate Rālik and Ratak into fertile islands capable of sustaining the descendants of his human brothers and sisters for many generations to come. It is such that the coconut became one of the greatest gifts to *ri-aelōñ-kein*—one that, like the people themselves, is a descendant of the gods and thus occupies an important place in *ri-aelōñ-kein* lives and beliefs and the genealogies of Rālik and Ratak.

The Coconut: From Sustenance to Commodity

Long before the arrival of Adolf Capelle, Anton deBrum, and other *ri-pālle* copra traders to Rālik and Ratak in the mid-nineteenth century, the *ni* coconut tree and its fruits and multitudinous products were essential features of *ri-aelōñ-kein* economic, cultural, and subsistence practices, and probably even sustained the first *ri-aelōñ-kein* migrants to the islands from the south or west two or more thousand years ago.⁹ In fact, one theory about the early settlement of the islands suggests that the original inhabitants arrived aboard outrigger canoes carrying with them crops that would be indispensable to their survival on these small low-lying atolls; these likely included *ni* coconut, *mā* breadfruit, *bōb* pandanus, *makmōk* arrowroot, and *iaraj* giant taro, and possibly others that had

⁹ Precise dates for the arrival of the first people to Rālik and Ratak are unknown, however it is thought that the earliest settlers arrived approximately two thousand years ago carrying various plant species, which suggests intentional voyages of settlement. Kirch, *On the Road of the Winds*, 174-175; NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 13.

thrived elsewhere but were unable to grow in the harsh atoll climate of Rālik and Ratak. Other theories propose that the seeds of one or more of these crops—along with others including the *kālōklōk* sour plum, the *kūkōñ* Samoan almond, the *kōño* sea trumpet, and the *kōjbar* (no English equivalent)¹⁰—were carried to Rālik and Ratak by ocean currents or in birds’ beaks or droppings and may have thereby predated the earliest human arrivals.¹¹

Many *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions, meanwhile, indicate that these and other plants are indigenous to Rālik and Ratak in the sense that they were carried to the islands from the heavens by divine ancestors or created and in some cases born by *ri-aelōñ-kein* ancestresses whose love, devotion, and attentive nurturing transformed seemingly useless seeds into bountiful trees whose fruits have made life in Rālik and Ratak possible for centuries. In the process, these stories not only point to the plants’ value and significance in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology and to *ri-aelōñ-kein* survival in the islands over thousands of years, but also effectively weave the plants into the genealogical fabric of *bwidej* land and *bwij* matrilineal clans and thereby claim and define them as fundamentally and uniquely of Rālik and Ratak.

Among the many oral traditions that recount the origins of coconut, pandanus, arrowroot, taro, and bananas are several *bwebwenato* stories that suggest that these important plants and their fruits were born of a female mother or grew out of the buried body of a deceased relative. One story relays, for example, that the first *keeprañ* banana sprouted from a man named Jorukwōd, a *ri-joubwe* magician on Arņo Atoll who, before his death, instructed his daughters not to destroy anything that might grow out of the spot where they would bury him. Soon after his death, Jorukwōd’s daughters were hardly surprised to find a small sapling springing up from the spot where they had buried their father, for he had told them it would be so. Following their father’s instructions, the girls cared for the plant, which eventually grew into a banana tree that produced many fruit and saplings. The girls called the tree *jorukwōd* after their father, and that species

¹⁰ *Kālōklōk* is *Ximenia americana*, *kūkōñ* is *Terminalia catappa*, *kōño* is *Cordia subcordata*, and *kōjbar* is *Ochrosia oppositifolia*. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 19, 148, 151.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

continues to grow in abundance in the very place the first banana is said to have sprung up on Ȫōñar Island, Arņo Atoll as well as in many other places around Rālik and Ratak.¹²

According to another story, two brothers brought *iaraj* taro to the islands from heaven. On their arrival to Naņo Island in the atoll of the same name, the brothers encountered Liwātuonmour, daughter of Iroojrilik and mother of Irooj, and presented her with a basket of taro corms. Perhaps foreseeing that the plant would grow more abundantly on the islands and atolls to the south, which received more rain, and on larger islands with more stable freshwater lenses, Liwātuonmour rejected the gift. With that, the brothers carried the basket to the southeast to Ratak to the relatively larger island of Mājro (also known as Laura) and planted the corms in the center of the island, where wet conditions and the availability of fresh water allowed the plants' descendants to thrive for many centuries.¹³

Of the stories that speak to the origins of various staple crops in Rālik and Ratak, those evoking the genesis of the *ni* coconut are the most elaborate and well known among *ri-aelōñ-kein*. At least one story suggests that the first coconut arrived to Rālik and Ratak via ocean currents and that the man who found it learned through a dream that he should plant it in the ground. Then, with the help of his mother, the man discovered the many gifts the coconut had to offer including food, drink, and even medicine, which the two made by cooking the sap of the fully grown coconut tree into a syrup. The syrup was so potent, the story goes, that it cured the man's leprosy,¹⁴ and people came from far and wide to witness the miracle. On their arrival, the man told visitors that in addition to its nurturing, sustaining, and healing qualities, the coconut also had the power to generate new soil and even islands. Not long before, he recounted, the very island on which they were standing had been just a sandbar with no trees or other plants. Once he had planted the coconut, however, the sandbar became an island where he and his mother could truly

¹² Laukōn, "Origin of the Banana Plant on Arņo Atoll," 81.

¹³ Downing et al., "Origin of Taro," 60.

¹⁴ While it is possible that the story of the cured leper was a more recent addition to this story of origins with the presumed introduction of leprosy to Rālik and Ratak by *ri-pālle* (although Erdland suggests that leprosy actually predated the arrival of *ri-pālle*), there is no doubt that the coconut, together with many other plants found throughout Rālik and Ratak, has played an important role in *ri-aelōñ-kein* traditional medicinal practices for centuries. Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 10; Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 83.

live.¹⁵ The people looked around and were amazed at what they saw and at the life building and sustaining power of the small brown coconut.

In many respects, this story is reminiscent of the story of Liwātuonmour and Tōboļāār recounted above, with the major difference being the coconut's origins, since the latter points to its arrival via the sea and the former to its appearance as a strange baby that was born, planted, and nurtured by Liwātuonmour on Wōja Island. Despite these differences, both stories reveal the centrality of the coconut to *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology by locating it within the genealogies of Rālik and Ratak both in terms of *bwidej* land and *bwij* matrilineages. In the story of the leper, for example, the coconut plays an important and active role in converting uninhabitable sandbars into fertile and productive *bwidej* land and thereby providing *ri-aelōñ-kein* with many of the resources they need to live and subsist. In the story of Tōboļāār and Liwātuonmour, the coconut plays similarly active role in transforming the islands into inhabitable spaces by providing the material for the sennit Iroojrilik and the others need to lift and hold the sky in place. In the process, they create enough space in the sky for the winds and currents to carry necessary fresh air to the islands along with enough precipitation to make them fertile and abundant.

Significantly, some versions of the story identify Tōboļāār as the son of Liwātuonmour, a woman whose name means life giving land parcel and who is the mother of Irooj and in turn the founder of one of the most prominent chiefly matrilineages in all of Rālik and Ratak (see Chapter 1). Indeed, the idea that this renowned member of the first and, some say, most elevated *bwij in irooj* chiefly matrilineage¹⁶ gave birth to the first coconut reflects not just the tremendous value *ri-aelōñ-kein* place on the resource but also a certainty that it holds an important position as a fundamental and indispensable component of Rālik and Ratak genealogies both in terms of the land and families, which are inextricably linked through the *wāto* land parcel (see Chapter 3).

In addition to narrating the coconut's place in *ri-aelōñ-kein* genealogies and its role in making the islands of Rālik and Ratak inhabitable by people, both versions of the

¹⁵ Lamān, "Coconut Drifting onto the Sandbar," 83-84.

¹⁶ As I have already indicated, not all versions identify Liwātuonmour as Tōboļāār's mother.

coconut origin story outline several of the plant's many virtues and applications including its uses in *ri-aelōñ-kein* food and beverage preparation and as building materials, kindling, adornments,¹⁷ weaving supplies, compost, medicine,¹⁸ massage, magic,¹⁹ and many others. Together, the stories suggest that, more than any other species of flora, the coconut has played a unique and essential role in making life in the islands possible by providing *ri-aelōñ-kein* with many of the provisions necessary to survive and subsist in such a sparse and fragile ecosystem and with limited resources. Meanwhile, the stories' detail and prevalence in *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural and epistemological traditions point to the tremendous value *ri-aelōñ-kein* place on the coconut as well as their keen recognition of its central role in their survival, both past and present.

While it might be argued that these and other stories about the origins of the coconut became more prominent in the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of coconut oil and later copra traders to the islands and the eventual transformation of *ri-aelōñ-kein* landscapes, subsistence patterns, and approaches to work and daily life with the development of copra into Rālik and Ratak's leading export commodity, it is striking that—with the exception of the implied use of *pinneep* coconut oil in certain *wūno* medicines and in *pitpit* massage²⁰—none of the stories mentions coconut oil or copra as one of the coconut's many and lasting gifts to *ri-aelōñ-kein*. This suggests that while the coconut's economic value has become increasingly important over the past century and a half with the transformation of Tōboļāār's descendants into a commodity to be planted, harvested, and prepared for export and sale on the international market, and the accompanying transformation of subsistence lands into coconut plantations, its role and significance in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology are much more profound than its

¹⁷ In a 1828 account of his time spent on Mile Atoll four years earlier following the mutiny on the whaleship *Globe*, William Lay mentions that a chief named Luttuon oiled his head and body with coconut oil before sending him out to meet the approaching ship *Dolphin* on what the chief thought would be his behalf. *Ri-aelōñ-kein* had not, however, started producing coconut oil for trade with *ri-pālle* by this time. Lay and Hussey, *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board the Whaleship Globe*, 64.

¹⁸ For more on the coconut's many uses in *ri-aelōñ-kein* traditional medicine see Taafaki et al., *Traditional Medicine of the Marshall Islands*.

¹⁹ See Chapter 2 for a description of coconut leaf use in magic and soothsaying.

²⁰ Erdland notes that in the early twentieth century, certain forms of *pitpit* massage were performed with coconut oil and various herbal juices. Erdland quoted in Taafaki et al., *Traditional Medicine of the Marshall Islands*, 31.

world market price per pound might suggest. Indeed, the coconut has had an essential place in the lives of *ri-aelōñ-kein* for centuries, nourishing not just their physical landscapes and bodies but also their spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices. If nothing else, then, these stories reveal that the *ni* coconut has been central to *ri-aelōñ-kein* survival, subsistence, and ecology for thousands of years—so important, in fact, that it has earned a pivotal place in the genealogical fabric of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, history, and epistemology.

The Early Coconut Oil Trade: Whalers, Missionaries, and *Ri-aelōñ-kein*

While the coconut remains an important and prominent feature of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and daily life even today, its place and function in Rālik and Ratak underwent a profound transformation beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century when *ri-aelōñ-kein* started producing *pinneep* coconut oil and later *waini* copra in much larger quantities than their subsistence lifestyle had ever required, and increasingly for export to foreign markets rather than for their own personal consumption. The shift began in approximately 1838 when Captain Ichabod Handy of Fairhaven, Massachusetts began making regular stops at one or more atolls in Rālik and Ratak where he traded provisions, tools, and luxury items such as tobacco²¹ for barrels of coconut oil produced by *ri-aelōñ-kein* in anticipation of his visits. Captain Handy initiated this trade in an effort to supplement his whaling earnings in the region,²² and while it is unclear exactly when his exchanges with *ri-aelōñ-kein* began or how they proceeded, he seems to have engaged in the trade for approximately seventeen years in places such as Mile, Aelōñlaplap, Namdik, and possibly others²³ where he frequently spent weeks and even months at a time in the

²¹ In the Gilbert Islands, Captain Handy traded seventeen and a half cents worth or approximately one and a half pounds of tobacco for a three and a half gallon bucket of oil that he could in turn sell for three dollars and fifty cents. The captain presumably operated a similar trade in Rālik and Ratak. Maude, “The Coconut Oil Trade of the Gilbert Islands,” 404.

²² Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210.

²³ Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 120-122.

islands, learned to speak the local language,²⁴ and possibly left agents to oversee the production of oil in his absence.²⁵

When Captain Handy began trading for coconut oil in the late 1830s, *ri-aelōñ-kein* were not novices at the production or use of *pinneep*, which their ancestors had been extracting “from coconut meat for use in cooking and as [a lotion]”²⁶ for centuries. Nor were they passive accomplices in this initial stage of the trade in their islands; when it came to encounters and exchanges with *ri-pālle*, rather, *ri-aelōñ-kein* were highly selective in terms of who they were willing to deal with, for what purposes, and on what terms. In fact, when Captain Handy first arrived in Rālik and Ratak, no fewer than six violent encounters had occurred between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and various objectionable *ri-pālle* in the previous decade alone.²⁷ As a result of making it menacingly clear that not all *ri-pālle* were welcome on their shores, *ri-aelōñ-kein* came to be considered and feared among *ri-pālle* sea captains as some of the most violent people in all of Micronesia (see Chapter 2).

And yet despite these and other hostile encounters over the years, *ri-aelōñ-kein* also understood that there was much to be gained from exchanges with *ri-pālle* who demonstrated an appropriate level of respect and propriety in their dealings with *ri-aelōñ-kein*. In this way, *ri-aelōñ-kein* willingness to trade with Captain Handy and to permit him to remain in the islands for extended periods—and this at a time when ri-Epoon, ri-Jālwōj, ri-Namdik, and ri-Mile were participating in violent and often deadly conflicts with other *ri-pālle* who entered their lagoon waters and crossed their beaches²⁸—suggests that the captain must have approached his encounters with the people of Rālik and Ratak with a level of caution and respect that few since Captain Kotzebue had been able to achieve.

²⁴ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 20.

²⁵ “A man known only as Dan was reported to have come to Ebon sometime before 1857 and lived there for some time while supervising the pressing of cooking oil. He was said to have introduced domestic fowl to the island.” It is possible that Captain Handy sent Dan to Epoon in 1855 with Kaibūke’s sister Nemira to oversee the early stages of coconut oil on the atoll. Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls.”

²⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211.

²⁷ Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 117. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of some of these encounters.

²⁸ No less than six violent encounters had ensued between *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* in the decade prior to Captain Handy’s first visit to Rālik and Ratak in 1838. *Ibid.*, 117-118. Also see Chapter 2.

The participation of *ri-aelōñ-kein* in the production and trade of coconut oil during this period also suggests that they regarded their exchanges with Captain Handy as a means to gaining regular (or at least periodic²⁹) contact with the outside world and routine access to the *ri-pālle* provisions and goods they had come to know and enjoy through intermittent engagement with *ri-pālle* over hundreds of years. Indeed, after centuries of encounters with outsiders, *ri-pālle* resources were not new to *ri-aelōñ-kein*, who had in fact long enjoyed the fruits of intermittent trade with foreigners—or, in some cases, the spoils of their victories in the conflicts that had plagued *ri-pālle* relations with *ri-aelōñ-kein* for many years. Throughout this long history of encounter and engagement, however, the ecological limits of the atoll ecosystem meant that *ri-aelōñ-kein* had a limited array of resources to offer *ri-pālle* in exchange for the foreign supplies they carried on their ships. As a result, when the *ri-pālle* whalers who occasionally arrived on the shores of Rālik and Ratak to rest or acquire provisions began to express an interest in trading for coconut oil, many *ri-aelōñ-kein* were eager to add *pinneep* to the short catalog of goods they had to offer in return.

To be sure, Captain Handy's engagement with *ri-aelōñ-kein* seems to mark the first time a *ri-pālle* sea captain offered *ri-aelōñ-kein* somewhat regular access to the trade goods they had come to appreciate, and this in exchange for a product they had been manufacturing for their own use for many centuries. In the course of their dealings with Captain Handy, *ri-aelōñ-kein* quickly came to recognize that their *pinneep* coconut oil was the key to securing those resources, and that the knives, grating implements, cloth, pots, vats, wooden barrels, and other tools and supplies Captain Handy may have supplied to make the coconut oil production and storage process more efficient could be of great use to them in their daily affairs. And so beginning in late 1830s, *ri-aelōñ-kein* in parts of Rālik and Ratak responded to the captain's request for *pinneep* by extracting coconut oil in quantities that far surpassed anything they had produced for their own personal or communal use. In this way, *ri-aelōñ-kein* became active, although certainly

²⁹ According to Maude, Captain Handy was a part-time trader in the Gilbert Islands; this was likely also the case in Rālik and Ratak. He transported coconut oil from the islands to Honolulu and Sydney. Maude, "The Coconut Oil Trade of the Gilbert Islands," 407.

also cautious, participants in the burgeoning trade of coconut oil in their islands. At last, *ri-aelōñ-kein* had something of value that might guarantee more regular access to valued *ri-pālle* goods, resources, and alliances.

Kōmman Pinniep: Making Coconut Oil

In the earliest years of trading with Captain Handy and others,³⁰ *ri-aelōñ-kein* did not produce *waini* copra meat for export as they would come to do in later years and continue to do today. Instead, they made *pinneep* coconut oil using much the same process they had employed for hundreds if not thousands of years to produce oil for their personal beautification and adornment and for use in cooking and medical treatments. As the demand for coconut oil by Captain Handy and others gradually increased, however, *ri-aelōñ-kein* methods began to shift somewhat as *irooj*³¹ instructed *kajoor* to produce the oil in quantities large enough to allow them to engage in advantageous trade with the captain during subsequent stopovers, and possibly even encouraged them to use alternate and more efficient methods introduced by *ri-pālle*. With the arrival of Adolf Capelle in the early 1860s and the introduction of copra drying by Theodor Weber in Sāmoa in 1868,³² these revised methods gave way to the production and export of dried *waini* copra rather than the oil itself—a process that required fewer resources and was far less labor intensive at the local level.

Sometime after Captain Handy began trading with *ri-aelōñ-kein* in 1838, *irooj* who aspired to conduct trade with the captain undoubtedly began directing *aḷap* lineage

³⁰ Hezel and Berg suggest that Captain Handy was not alone in his pursuit of coconut oil in Rālik and Ratak and that “as early as 1850, a few [other] whaleships [*sic*] [had begun] making regular layovers at islands to collect copra and process the oil, which [they] brought to market and sold with their whale oil.” Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 281.

³¹ Although there is little mention of how the trade in coconut oil was conducted before the late 1850s, it can be assumed that *irooj* oversaw the early production of the oil in the islands with the help of *aḷap* lineage heads and *irooj-iddik* sub-chiefs in Ratak. *Irooj* were the main points of contact with *ri-pālle* visitors in most cases, were the primary owners of their land and thereby had final authority in terms of what activities were conducted on the land, and orchestrated similar projects for the production and storage of preserved breadfruit and preserved pandanus for *ri-aelōñ-kein* consumption during the off season and in times of scarcity (see Chapter 2). Since the *aḷap* and Ratak *irooj-iddik* served as intermediaries between *irooj* and *kajoor*, it can be assumed that these members of society also oversaw the day-to-day operations of the early production of coconut oil, much as they would later come to do in the production of copra.

³² Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 212; Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire*, 23.

heads (and *irooj-iddik* in Ratak) to oversee the daily operations of the manufacture of coconut oil, which *irooj* collected for direct exchange with the captain. This role was not altogether new for many *aḷap*, as they often served as supervisors in the manufacture and storage of *bwiro* preserved breadfruit and *mokwaṅ* preserved pandanus for *ri-aelōñ-kein* consumption during the off season and in times of scarcity, as well as for other projects such as clearing and maintaining *wāto* holdings and ensuring a steady food supply for their *irooj* and lineage members.³³ The major difference now was that the successful supervision and implementation of the production of *pinneep* coconut oil by various *aḷap* was directly linked to their access to foreign goods for their own use and that of their *bwij*. Indeed, the transformation of *aḷap* from lineage heads into land and plantation managers was underway.

Much as overseeing large scale projects was under the cultural purview of the *aḷap*, *kajoor* were expected to implement such projects—and in particular those that involved producing food, maintaining the land, or preparing supplies and trade items for large interisland voyaging expeditions—at the request of their *irooj* and *aḷap*. And yet while *kajoor* had been manufacturing *pinneep* coconut oil for hundreds or even thousands of years, it seems that, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, they had not been expected to produce it in such large quantities or for export to lands beyond their horizon. Little did these *kajoor* or their *aḷap* and *irooj* counterparts know that their active and seemingly innocuous participation in the transformation of their primary subsistence crop into a commodity for export—work that, on the surface, was not all that different from so many other projects *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and society required them to undertake—would transform not just their social designation, but also the value of *kajoor* commoners to *ri-aelōñ-kein* society as their social function became inextricably linked to the *jerbal* work of producing coconut oil and later copra for export. This shift would in turn affect *ri-aelōñ-kein* society as a whole as *ri-pālle* traders and later colonial officials transformed

³³ This and subsequent sections on coconut oil and copra production are preliminary and require additional research. Other than the short descriptions available in the MOD and a very brief interview with Seline Lokot, I have been unable to locate any ethnographic descriptions of the production process. Since time restrictions have prohibited me from conducting additional fieldwork or interviews, I have left this section open for revisions and further elaboration in a future project. Bender and Trussel, “MOD”; Seline Lokot, interview by Konou Smith, 29 January 2013.

islands into coconut plantations and designated *irooj* as landowners (and as “kings” in some cases³⁴), *alap* as land managers, and *kajoor* as *ri-gerbal* plantation workers.

Nevertheless, the early production of *pinneep* coconut oil began as *alap* lineage heads followed the dictates of their *irooj* and instructed their *kajoor* lineage members to prepare, produce, and store a sufficient quantity of coconut oil for the *irooj* to present for trade with Captain Handy on his next visit. Then, having received the directive, *kajoor* lineage members distributed among themselves the various tasks involved in making *pinneep*. The first assignment required a few people to *pinju* gather ripe fallen *waini* coconuts from their *wāto* land parcels around the lagoon. (Given their resiliency, coconut trees can be found growing almost anywhere on a given island although tend to be concentrated in the center or on the lagoon side due to harsh, salty ocean side conditions.)

After gathering as many *waini* coconuts as they could carry, the *ri-pinju* gatherers transported them to a central location where *riddeb* huskers used sharpened *doon* husking sticks to *dedeb* husk the coconuts and remove all the exterior *bweo* husks and *kwōd* fibers. Next, after setting the husks and fibers aside for other uses, the *riddeb* split open the *waini* with rocks or with knives acquired from Captain Handy or from other *ri-pālle* and let the interior liquid spill out onto the ground. The *riddeb* then handed the husked coconut to a *ri-raanke* who, using a sharp *raanke* grater fastened to the front of a low stool, grated the mature coconut meat into heaping mounds. (Although *raanke* grater blades were traditionally fashioned out various kinds of hard shell including those of *kapwor* giant clams, it is possible that *ri-aelōñ-kein* obtained iron graters and supplies from Captain Handy or other itinerant visitors to make this process easier and more efficient.)

After shredding a sufficient and yet still manageable quantity of *waini*, the *ri-raanke* spread the coconut out on *jaki* mats where it was left in the sun to dry for one or two days; during that time, the moisture from the *waini* began to evaporate and the oils

³⁴ The German language version of the “Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire (1885)” designates Irooj Kabua as *König* (“King”) and the other chiefs as *Häuptlinge* (“chiefs”). The Marshallese version of the treaty does not differentiate Kabua in this way and instead refers to all the named chiefs as “*irooj*.” Deutsches Reich, “Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire.”

started to loosen. Then, having settled in the sun for a couple of days, the *waini* coconut was transferred into large containers or pots, which *ri-aelōñ-kein* may have also acquired from Captain Handy specifically for that purpose or through prior encounters and exchanges, where *ri-pinneep* skilled in making coconut oil mixed it with water and worked it for several minutes by squeezing and kneading it with their hands until the shreds began to release their creamy white juices. After secreting as much of the milky liquid as they could, the *ri-pinneep* swathed handfuls of the soggy shredded *waini* with pieces of *jouneak* coconut cloth, which they twisted and squeezed to strain the coconut milk and separate it from the *waini* shavings. The *ri-pinneep* then set the strained *waini* aside to be used later to enrich the soil or as feed for pigs and chickens.

After sieving and removing any lingering bits of *waini* from the creamy liquid, the *ri-pinneep* set the milk out in the sun for several days until the coconut oil began to separate from the curdling milk. Then, when the creamy curdles had solidified, the *ri-pinneep* again used pieces of *jouneak* coconut cloth to strain the oil and separate out the hardened bits. This process of sunning and straining was repeated several times until the *ri-pinneep* were left with a clear filtered *pinneep* coconut oil, which they emptied into wooden barrels provided by Captain Handy for his convenience and theirs.

It is likely that at some point and perhaps on the advice of Captain Handy, *ri-aelōñ-kein* shifted their *pinneep* production methods slightly and began boiling the coconut and water mixture rather than leaving it in the sun. Indeed, boiling would have proved faster and more efficient, allowing *ri-pinneep* to make larger quantities of oil in shorter periods and with significantly less work and attention. (This method would not have been possible without iron pots and other supplies necessary for the boiling process, likely provided by Captain Handy in exchange for larger quantities of oil produced.) Following this method, the *ri-pinneep* transferred the strained coconut milk to a large iron pot and allowed it to boil over a low flame. This modified method not only accelerated the evaporation process, but also allowed the curdled cream to separate from the oil more quickly and to cook into small hard chunks that were relatively easy to remove from the oil. Not unlike the sun-cook method, however, this step also had to be repeated several times until all the water, cream, and hard bits were removed and only the smooth, clear

pinneep oil remained. The oil was then stored in wooden barrels until Captain Handy's next stopover, when *irooj* traded it directly for provisions, tools, and other wares.

Ideally and following the *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom of sharing and distribution, *irooj* passed along a portion of their trade earnings to the supervising *aļap*, who in turn allocated a measure of their returns to their *bwij* lineage members. (At some point during these early years of producing coconut oil for trade, *aļap* may have started compensating only those *kajoor* who participated directly in the *pinneep* preparation, production, and storage process, however this is unclear.) Meanwhile, Captain Handy transported the oil back to Honolulu where he sold it for manufacture in soap and candles, the process for which had been developed sometime in the previous decade.³⁵ Little did Handy or his *ri-aelōñ-kein* associates know that these early barrels of coconut oil effectively launched an industry that would become the “backbone of the island economy”³⁶ in Rālik and Ratak for many decades and in some places remains so even today.

The Belle: Coconut Oil and Missionaries

In 1855, after almost twenty years of trading with *ri-aelōñ-kein* for coconut oil, American whaling captain Ichabod Handy transported Reverend George Pierson and his wife Nancy and the Hawaiian missionary J.W. Kanoa and his wife Kaholo from Honolulu to Kosrae aboard the bark *Belle*. Along the way, they made at least one stop in Rālik and Ratak, probably at Aelōñļapļap Atoll, where the captain picked up several barrels of coconut oil³⁷ in exchange for goods and other provisions. In the process, Reverend Pierson and his associates became directly acquainted for the first time not just with Irooj Kaibūke and other *ri-aelōñ-kein*, but also with the trade of coconut oil that Captain Handy had been exploiting for approximately seventeen years³⁸ to supplement his whaling earnings in the Pacific.³⁹ They also learned that *ri-aelōñ-kein*, who were among the most feared of all Micronesian peoples by scores of *ri-pālle* sea captains,

³⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211; Lal and Fortune, *The Pacific Islands*, 213.

³⁶ Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 46.

³⁷ Bryan, “Traders, Whalers and Missionaries,” 28.

³⁸ George Pierson quoted in Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 256; Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 20; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 122.

³⁹ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 210.

whalers, and traders, were eager to acquire foreign goods and resources that were not available in the islands except through trade with outsiders. What's more, some among them including the much feared Irooj Kaibūke and his sister Nemira were keen to have missionaries establish a more permanent presence there and even went so far as to invite the missionaries to stay on, with Kaibūke promising a pledge of protection to Pierson and the others if they did.⁴⁰

Although Reverend Pierson and the others may not have fully understood *ri-aelōñ-kein* motivations for inviting them to establish a mission in their islands (see Chapter 2), Irooj Kaibūke's enthusiasm and Captain Handy's achievements likely led the missionaries to anticipate how they might eventually expand the Kosrae mission to Rālik and Ratak. In the process, Captain Handy may have inspired and even advised the missionaries to take up the manufacture and trade of coconut oil in the islands, for such an enterprise would not only provide the mission with a source of necessary income, but would also make the mission and the missionary presence more lucrative for *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Indeed, after seventeen years of trading in the islands, Captain Handy understood better than anyone that *ri-pālle* trade goods were the best lubricant for easier relations with *ri-aelōñ-kein*, many of whom were likely pleased that they now had something of value to offer *ri-pālle* in exchange for foreign goods.

What's more, by the time Reverend Pierson and his team arrived to Epoon Atoll to establish a mission station there after two years on Kosrae, the Pacific whaling industry—which had largely failed to reap profits in Rālik and Ratak where right and sperm whales were scarce or nonexistent and *ri-aelōñ-kein* struggled to permit brash and sometimes violent *ri-pālle* to enter their lagoon waters or to cross their beaches⁴¹—was in decline,⁴² and Captain Handy's stops in Rālik and Ratak were becoming less frequent.⁴³ Indeed, as kerosene came to replace whale oil as an illuminant following the discovery of

⁴⁰ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 22.

⁴¹ Bryan, "Traders, Whalers and Missionaries," 16.

⁴² Yanaihara, *Pacific Islands under Japanese Mandate*, 12.

⁴³ Damon reports that Captain Handy's 1855 voyage through Rālik and Ratak was his last in that area. Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 22.

petroleum in Pennsylvania in 1859,⁴⁴ as global whale stocks were decimated by overhunting, and as whalers responded by shifting south to Antarctica where new methods and technologies made previously unattainable humpback, blue, and grey whales the industry's new target,⁴⁵ whaler visits to Rālik and Ratak and the central Pacific more generally grew fewer and farther between, and would practically cease all together by 1870.⁴⁶ Knowing that his recurrent voyages through Rālik and Ratak would soon end and that no one else had yet taken up the trade of coconut oil in the islands, it is possible that Captain Handy's objective in anchoring at Aelōñlaplap Atoll before reaching Kosrae in 1855 was not just to open up the possibility of establishing a mission there, but also to demonstrate how coconut oil might facilitate the missionaries' eventual entrée into Rālik and Ratak. Meanwhile, the trip allowed Captain Handy the opportunity to show friend and ally Irooj Kaibūke that his American and Hawaiian associates were not only trustworthy, but would also have something of value—both spiritual and economic—to offer *ri-aelōñ-kein* if they were welcomed in the islands.

Just two years after their initial voyage through Rālik and Ratak aboard the *Belle*, the missionaries' initial success at the Kosrae mission and their friendly encounters with Irooj Kaibūke in 1855 and with a group of *ri-aelōñ-kein* drifters who landed on Kosrae in 1856 led them back to southern Rālik, where they were quickly welcomed and permitted to establish their second Micronesian mission. It was there that Captain Handy's relationship with Irooj Kaibūke and advice to Reverend Pierson began to pay off both for the mission and for *ri-aelōñ-kein* as the missionaries turned to trading coconut oil as a means of raising necessary income. On Epoon, these activities extended the work many *ri-aelōñ-kein* had been performing for several months at the request of Kaibūke who, in 1855, initiated the trade there by sending his sister Nemira to convince "the people of that island to make oil for Captain Handy,"⁴⁷ which they likely did out of duty and obligation

⁴⁴ Giddens, *Pennsylvania Petroleum*, 203.

⁴⁵ Lal and Fortune, *The Pacific Islands*, 210.

⁴⁶ Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 128-140.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

to their *irooj*, but also with a keen awareness that in doing so they would have the opportunity to enhance their own economic capital through trade.⁴⁸

In many respects, the production and trade of coconut oil on Epoon and neighboring islands under the missionaries proceeded much as it had under Captain Handy: *kajoor* prepared and manufactured the oil at the behest of their *irooj* and under the direction of *aḷap* supervisors, *irooj* negotiated directly with the missionaries to acquire goods in exchange for the oil produced, and missionaries shipped the oil in barrels “on the *Morning Star* for sale in foreign ports”⁴⁹ and used the income to support their work in Micronesia. In the process, the early missionaries played a significant transitional role in promoting the trade of coconut oil as a viable economic pursuit in the islands by making their missions in southern Rālik “sites not only of education and worship but also for the production and sale of”⁵⁰ coconut oil and later copra.

At the same time, the manufacture and trade of coconut oil took on a new quality during this period as American and Hawaiian missionaries established a permanent presence in the islands and became more involved in the daily affairs of *ri-aelōñ-kein* than Captain Handy ever had. Rather than simply bartering with *ri-aelōñ-kein* for coconut oil in exchange for the goods *ri-aelōñ-kein* had come to expect during their years of trade with the captain, for example, the missionaries began to require newly converted *ri-aelōñ-kein* to produce quotas of oil in exchange for trade items the missionaries deemed fit, appropriate, and even necessary for consumption by Christian converts and *ri-aelōñ-kein* in generally. These included cloth for the clothing *ri-aelōñ-kein* Christian converts were required to wear in place of their woven *ed* skirts and *kaḷ* aprons and almost certainly excluded tobacco, the use of which was forbidden among Christians.⁵¹ To be sure, the missionaries’ message of conversion was preached and disseminated not just

⁴⁸ It is also possible that *ri-aelōñ-kein* on Epoon produced coconut oil under the direction of a man named Dan and other agents who possibly went to Epoon with Nemira in 1855 on Handy’s behest. Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls.”

⁴⁹ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 155.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ According to Walsh and Heine, “clothing could be bartered for coconut oil, and, since the missionaries demanded that the islanders clothe themselves, the exchange of cloth for coconut oil provided extra income for the mission. In addition to coconut oil, converts contributed locally made goods to the missions.” Ibid., 155-156.

from the church pulpit on Sundays, but also through their daily interactions, encounters, and economic transactions with *ri-aelōñ-kein*.

Meanwhile, missionaries directed *ri-aelōñ-kein* converts to begin making semi-annual contributions to the mission of a gallon or more of coconut oil, while the residents of *wāto* land parcels hosting a mission station or church were expected to pay monthly taxes in coconut oil called *allōñ iju*.⁵² The missionaries consolidated and stored these offerings in barrels left over from Captain Handy's days until it could be shipped to Honolulu aboard the *Morning Star* on one of its annual or sometimes more frequent visits. There, the oil was sold for cash and transferred directly to the ABCFM to supplement the budgets of missions in Rālik and Ratak and beyond.⁵³ In the process, the manufacture and trade of coconut oil among newly converted *ri-aelōñ-kein* and potential converts became less about the trade of actual goods and more about the many conversions the missionaries expected their new *ri-aelōñ-kein* brethren to undergo—spiritual, cultural, political, economic—and *ri-aelōñ-kein* willingness to at least nominally adopt missionary inspired religious and socio-cultural practices and beliefs in an effort to gain favor with and access to the missionaries' various sources of spiritual and material sustenance.

As missionaries began accepting gills, pints, and quarts of coconut oil⁵⁴ directly from *kajoor* producers in exchange for trade items and, in many cases, religious and educational enrichment, *irooj* sensed that *kajoor* producers had found a source of empowerment outside the realm or authority of their *irooj*. Indeed, missionary willingness to accept coconut oil in much smaller quantities than Captain Handy had been able to do—and directly from their *kajoor* brethren at that—meant that many *ri-pinneep* returned to producing the oil in smaller quantities and exclusive of *irooj* directives or interference. These *ri-pinneep* delivered their oil directly to the missionaries in exchange for cloth, provisions, educational opportunities, and membership in a church that seemed less interested in their status or standing as *kajoor* and more so in their

⁵² Ibid.; Bender and Trussel, “MOD.”

⁵³ Carl Heine quoted in Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 155-156.

⁵⁴ Carl Heine quoted in *ibid.*, 156.

willingness to adopt church customs and beliefs, which some indeed began to do. In fact, tradition has it that the first ri-Epoon to convert to Christianity was a *kajoor* woman named Dauno of Mwin-kūbwe Wāto, whose oldest daughter Sophia Limenwa would just a few years later create a lasting tie between her family and the coconut oil industry by marrying copra trader Adolf Capelle.⁵⁵

With more than a few *kajoor* following Dauno along the path of religious conversion and pecuniary collaboration with the missionaries during this period, it should not be surprising that Irooj Jeimata, sensing his and others' diminished status and role in the coconut oil trade as well as the missionaries' intensifying influence among his people and especially when there were material goods to be had in return, actively welcomed Adolf Capelle and his associate Herman Caplan to Epoon in 1861. To be sure, Caplan and Capelle's promise of renewed trade and profits and material affluence was just the opportunity Jeimata and his *irooj* counterparts needed to wrestle the coconut oil trade and in turn their cultural, political, and economic authority back from the missionaries and their *kajoor* disciples. In the process, Jeimata and other *irooj* likely saw the alliances resulting from the expansion of trade as a means to rehabilitate some of the *wāto* and islands that had been devastated in recent storms (see Chapter 4) and to restore *irooj* to their central position in the manufacture and trade of coconut oil in Rālik and Ratak. For while Capelle would eventually play a central role in subverting *irooj* authority on Likiep Atoll in northern Ratak, his early willingness to recognize chiefs as primary landowners and to reestablish them as key brokers in the manufacture and trade of coconut oil and later copra seemed to confirm that Irooj Jeimata and his *ri-bubu* soothsayer had been spot-on in identifying and welcoming Capelle to Epoon as a friend in 1861.

And yet, while it may be that Jeimata's early association with Capelle played an important role in repositioning *irooj* as the primary *ri-aelōñ-kein* beneficiaries of the coconut oil and copra trade for many years to come, the connections forged by this relationship—political, genealogical, financial—also facilitated Capelle's early domination of the copra trade in Rālik and Ratak as well as his later displacement of Irooj Jortōkā from Likiep Atoll through various economic, political, and cultural mechanisms.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 138, 167.

What's more, this and other early partnerships between *irooj* and *ri-pālle* whalers, missionaries, and traders may have also inspired Jeimata's successors and their counterparts—from Kabua, Loeak, Lakajimi, Launa, Nelu in southern Rālik to Murijel and Lebaia in northern Ratak—to regard partnerships with German copra firms and, subsequently, harbor and trade agreements and treaties of friendship⁵⁶ with the German Imperial Government as opportunities to augment their own economic, political, and socio-economic capital through formal relations with *ri-pālle* traders and imperial governments.

What these and other *irooj* may not have fully understood on assenting to these agreements, however, was that, even as their alliances with *ri-pālle* enriched them financially, elevated them culturally and politically, and in many cases accelerated the improvement and development of their land and other resources, they would also help pave the way for Germany's annexation of the Marshall Islands in 1885⁵⁷ and more than a century of imperial rule in Rālik and Ratak by three successive foreign powers. What's more, the early willingness of Jeimata, Kaibūke, and others to lease and sell land to Capelle and his competitors for conversion into coconut plantations and copra trading stations may have set a precedent for more than a century of *ri-aelōñ-kein* alienation from their land on Likiep Atoll and all across Rālik and Ratak as Capelle and later DHPG, the German Imperial Government, the Japanese mandate, the United States Navy, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the United States Army declared various segments of land and their fruits *mō* taboo⁵⁸ to the descendants of Łowa's legendary daughters Liwātuonmour, Lidepdepju, and Lijileijet.

In the early plantation days, coconut fronds attached to tall rods or old coconut trunks were used to delineate these *mō* lands and coconut trees and to indicate that certain *bwidej* lands now belonged to *ri-pālle*, either temporarily through leases or more permanently through purchase agreements. The meanings and expectations behind these

⁵⁶ Deutsches Reich, "Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire."

⁵⁷ Bryan, "The Marshall Islands as a German Colony," 19-20; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 45-47.

⁵⁸ Although *mō* traditionally referred to land reserved for *irooj*, as *ri-pālle* traders and foreign colonial powers began to acquire Rālik and Ratak lands, *irooj* and others were gradually excluded from their land by foreign restrictions and concepts of *mō*.

external markers were reinforced by oral traditions such as the “coconut taboo song,” which one early twentieth century *ri-pālle* visitor to Likiep described in this way:

“[The *ri-aelōñ-kein*] sang several songs, of which the song of *Kokostabu*, of *āmó ni* [*emō ni* or coconut taboo], met with special approval. How the howling at the frequent overpowering repetition of *āmó* penetrated into the night. If you observed the trembling faces and the distorted faces in the dim torchlight, at the wild singing and drum beating, your flesh nearly began to creep. The word *āmó*, which had attracted already the attention of the poet Chamisso, who also had been in Likieb, perhaps even at the same spot, has the same meaning as the known South Sea word *tabú*. The song announced that the palm-tree became *tabú* for the population, by means of a coco-nut frond, attached to a rod, which means that no nuts may be taken, in order to preserve them for the copra production.”⁵⁹

Beginning in 1885, these *mō* markers and oral traditions were further corroborated by roads, signs, legal documents, and maps that designated and documented *ri-pālle* and German imperial tenure and in some cases “ownership” of particular *wāto* and islands. Before long, these and other emblems of German imperialism would be replaced by those of the imperial Japanese civilian and military administrations and in turn by those of the United States naval administration and the U.S. administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Today, similar signs continue to limit *ri-aelōñ-kein* access to parts of Kuwajleen Atoll in central Rālik where the United States leases several islands from various *irooj* for the operation of the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site. Meanwhile, other more ominous signs—including nuclear craters on Ānewetak and Pikinni atolls and the Runit Dome⁶⁰ on Ānewetak—serve as permanent reminders that the various dispossessions that occurred on Likiep Atoll and other areas from the mid- to late nineteenth century were the first of many displacements that would affect the lives of *ri-aelōñ-kein* all across Rālik and Ratak in the century and a half following Kaibūke’s initial gift to Reverend Pierson and Jeimata’s first land sale to Capelle in the early 1860s.

⁵⁹ Krämer, “*Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa*,” 41.

⁶⁰ Between June 30, 1946 and August 18, 1958, the United States military conducted sixty-seven nuclear tests on Ānewetak and Pikinni atolls in northern Rālik. Between 1977 and 1980, the military filled the thirty-foot deep, 350-foot wide crater created by the May 5, 1958 “Cactus” test on Runit Island with more than 111,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and debris from the two atolls, which was then covered with a dome made up of 358 eighteen-inch thick concrete panels. Republic of the Marshall Islands, “U.S. Nuclear Testing Program in the Marshall Islands”; Barker, *Bravo for the Marshallese*, 33-49.

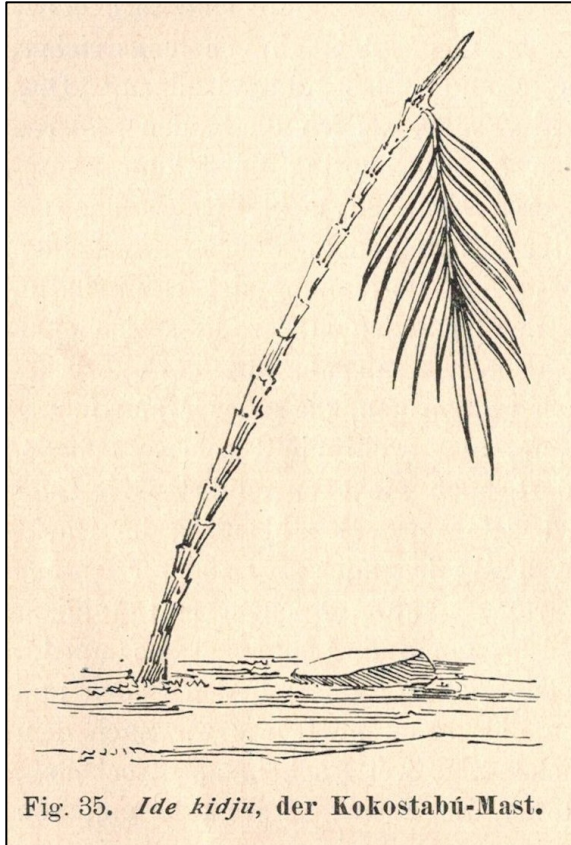


Figure 28. Coconut taboo mast

Source: Augustin Krämer, *Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa* (1906)

Adolf Capelle and the Transformation of the Copra Trade

Although the coconut oil and copra trade in Rālik and Ratak got off to a relatively slow and small start from the late 1830s to the mid-1850s under Captain Handy and Reverend Pierson, as the demand for coconut oil for manufacture in soap and candles increased in foreign markets and as Reverend Pierson and others declared southern Rālik safe for foreigners,⁶¹ enthusiastic capitalists from Hawai‘i, the United States, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia began to venture west and north in search of local allies and associates who might be prepared to contribute to the expansion of a promising new

⁶¹ In the twelve months that followed Pierson and his associates' arrival to Epoon, no less than nine foreign ships including several missionary packets and at least one German trade ship landed on the atoll that had previously been one of the most feared in all of Rālik and Rālik. Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 122-123.

enterprise.⁶² Following in the footsteps of Captain Handy and Reverend Pierson, many of these new arrivals soon found their fortune in the common coconut,⁶³ which grew in abundance all across the Pacific, both on lush high islands such as Sāmoa and on more ecologically inhospitable low lying atolls including what had come to be known by outsiders as the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), the Ellice Islands (Tuvalu), and the Marshall Islands (Rālik and Ratak) to name just a few.

Among the first to arrive to southern Rālik were Adolf Capelle and his associate Herman Caplan, who landed on Epoon in mid-1861⁶⁴ with the charge of their employer Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst of Honolulu to gather “as much information as possible in regard to the trade” of coconut oil and to explore the option of initiating the trade in some of the southern islands and atolls of Rālik and Ratak or in the Kings Mill Islands region of the Gilbert Islands.⁶⁵ In January 1861, Capelle, who was a clerk with Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst, and Caplan, who was a cooper (i.e., a barrel-maker), departed Honolulu aboard the *Wailua*, a whaling and trading brig owned by their employer and captained by L.V. Lass. Under agreement with owners Edward Hoffschlaeger and Florens Stapenhorst, Capelle and Caplan, along with Captain Lass and other employees who may have also participated in the expedition,⁶⁶ were charged with identifying a site suitable for the production and trade of coconut oil. After identifying such a location, Captain Lass was to leave Capelle and Caplan behind for a short time while he continued cruising and hunting whales with the rest of his crew. The captain was then to retrieve the clerk and the cooper before returning to Honolulu with a clear vision of where Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst might pursue the coconut oil trade in the islands.⁶⁷ Perhaps with prior

⁶² Ibid., 122-138; Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 281; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 217.

⁶³ Hezel and Berg, *Micronesia, Winds of Change*, 280; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 211.

⁶⁴ As a result of the availability of the court document “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” this account of Capelle’s arrival and early establishment on Epoon with his associate Herman Caplan diverges significantly from those available in most of the literature on this period (e.g., Mason 1947, *Micronesian Reporter* 1959, Ikirtok n.d., Hezel 1983, Hezel 1995, Williamson and Stone 2001, Walsh and Heine 2012). Adolf Capelle’s name is spelled “Capella” throughout the document. Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst.”

⁶⁵ Ibid., 692.

⁶⁶ There were apparently two coopers aboard the *Wailua*. Ibid., 693.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 692-693.

knowledge of Captain Handy's success and the ABCFM missionaries' presence on Epoon, together with a successful encounter between ri-Epoon and the crew of Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst's *Pfeil* in early 1859,⁶⁸ Captain Lass took Capelle and Caplan to Epoon in southern Rālik where they were greeted enthusiastically just off shore by Irooj Jeimata and his associates and then by a group of Jeimata's associates just across the beach (see Chapter 2).

Following their arrival to Epoon in early 1861, Captain Lass, Capelle, and Caplan must have met with almost immediate success since, after just a few short months, they had established a business under their employer's name, "purchased land and erected the necessary buildings" for the enterprise, and were estimating that they would collect approximately one hundred barrels of oil in the first year alone with tobacco as their "principal article of barter" with their *ri-aelōñ-kein* producer-associates.⁶⁹ The enterprise was so productive in the months that followed, it seems, that on March 27, 1862, Capelle drew up a contract between Captain Lass and Herman Caplan in which Caplan agreed to remain on Epoon for a period of one year to continue the trade in exchange for a wage of sixty dollars per month to be credited to him every six months with interest.

Then, after leaving Caplan alone on Epoon to continue their heretofore-successful initiative, Capelle embarked once again on the *Wailua* to survey additional sites where the trade might meet with similar success. Perhaps because their mission was even more fruitful than their employers had anticipated—with Jeimata welcoming Capelle as his friend, permitting Capelle and Caplan to acquire land and erect structures on the atoll, and directing ri-Epoon to increase their level of coconut oil production beyond the requirements of the missionaries—the three decided to deviate from their original fact-finding mission and to delve directly into production and trade. And so it was that, with Caplan on Epoon and Capelle eager to identify additional locales for the trade, Captain Lass did not return the *Wailua* or his fellow employees to Honolulu in May of 1862 as his contract with Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst required.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ward, *American Activities in the Central Pacific 2*: 244; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 123.

⁶⁹ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34.

⁷⁰ Hawai'i Supreme Court, "H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst," 692-693.

When the *Wailua* did not return to Honolulu in May as expected, Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst asked Captain Gelett of the *Morning Star*, which was scheduled to depart Honolulu that June, to stop off at Epoon to pick up their employees together with any oil they might have collected and any remaining trade merchandise. Three months before the *Morning Star* returned to port in November, however, Captain Lass and Adolf Capelle arrived safely to Honolulu aboard the *Wailua* where they informed their employers of their success on Epoon and their decision to leave Caplan on the island to continue the trade until their next landing. Much to the surprise of Capelle and the captain, however, rather than being pleased by their success, Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst were furious that their employees had strayed from the premises of the original contract and that Captain Lass had taken it upon himself to enter into a new contract with Caplan without their authorization. Lass and Capelle discovered, in turn, that their employers had commissioned Captain Gelett to escort Herman Caplan back to Honolulu aboard the *Morning Star* at the captain's earliest convenience.

Just three months later, however, in November 1862, the *Morning Star* returned to Honolulu without Herman Caplan or his cargo on board. Captain Gelett explained that, while he had indeed found Caplan on Epoon, he had been forced to leave the cooper and his product behind because "his [ship's] tackle was not strong enough" to carry so many barrels of coconut oil.⁷¹ On hearing the news, Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst chartered the brig *Maria* captained by J.T. Blodgett to sail to Epoon with Capelle aboard to retrieve Caplan, the oil, and any of their company's remaining trade merchandise. However, after arriving safely on Epoon on January 27, 1863 and spending a week loading Caplan and his cargo, Captain Blodgett's February 4 departure ended with his running the *Maria* aground on the Epoon reef.⁷² Although the ship was destroyed, the captain and crew managed to save themselves, the cooper, and 2,879 gallons of oil (approximately sixty-eight barrels assuming there were forty-two gallons to a barrel as was the standard at that time).⁷³ Following the disaster, Captain Blodgett, Herman Caplan, and the other crew

⁷¹ Ibid., 693.

⁷² Ibid.; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 124.

⁷³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Barrel (Measurement)."

remained on Epoon until the *Morning Star* made another stop at the island soon thereafter and escorted them and their cargo safely back to Honolulu.

Not long after his return to Honolulu in April 1863, Caplan learned—much as Capelle had a few months earlier—that rather than being pleased at their employees’ success on Epoon, Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst regarded Caplan’s contract with Captain Lass to establish and operate a coconut oil processing plant on the island from March 27, 1862 and March 27, 1863 as a breach of his contract with them.⁷⁴ They were so angry, in fact, that they initiated court proceedings against the rogue employee (and probably against Captain Lass as well) in the Hawai‘i Supreme Court in an attempt to recover any wages or merchandise Caplan had accumulated under the terms of his ill-advised contract with the captain.⁷⁵

Adolf Capelle, meanwhile, who, following his arrival to Honolulu aboard the *Maria* in September 1862 had likely come to anticipate his employers’ actions against Captain Lass, Herman Caplan, and himself (Capelle had, after all, “under orders from the captain” drawn up the illicit contract between the captain and the cooper on Epoon despite, according to him, advising the captain against it⁷⁶), remained on Epoon rather than returning to Honolulu with Caplan and Captain Blodgett as his employers almost certainly intended. To be sure, by the time Capelle returned to Epoon aboard the *Maria* in January 1863, he and Herman Caplan had been successfully engaged in the production and trade of coconut oil for almost two years. And yet between Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst’s outrage at their activities on Epoon and now the financial devastation caused to the company by the loss of the *Maria*, Capelle was probably more than certain that his employers would not be eager to establish a coconut oil operation on the island at any point in the near future.

⁷⁴ Hawai‘i Supreme Court, “H. Caplan v. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst,” 692.

⁷⁵ For details, see *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 693.

Adolf Capelle, Irooj Jeimata, and Sophia Limenwa on Epoon

With several months of experience on the ground on Epoon and several more sailing around the region with Captain Lass making stops at other Rālik and Ratak islands and maybe even to the west at Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Chuuk, Capelle had gained first-hand experience trading and interacting with ri-Epoon and other islanders. In the process, he had formed important alliances with Irooj Jeimata and others and had gained an initial understanding of some of the needs and aspirations of the people of Rālik and Ratak and surrounding areas, as well as of the region's potential in terms of coconut oil production and profits. Indeed, over the course of their sojourn in Rālik and Ratak, Herman Caplan and Captain Lass realized that the region had more economic potential than even Edward Hoffschlaeger and Florens Stapenhorst had anticipated. This revelation might help explain why the cooper, the captain, and Capelle decided to diverge from the terms of their original contract, leaving Caplan on Epoon with the goal of producing as much coconut oil as he could for what would have been twelve months had his employers not eventually disapproved.

Given their initial success on Epoon following what they likely considered a noble and entrepreneurial effort to get their employers' business up and running, Capelle and Captain Lass were surely shocked and surprised that, on delivering the news of their success on their return to Honolulu in September 1862, Messrs. Hoffschlaeger and Stapenhorst did not applaud but rather condemned their employees' actions and industry. With this in mind and with the knowledge that he would lose his job and be taken to court after delivering Caplan and his cargo to Honolulu—and that his employers' financial fate was hanging in the balance following the loss of the *Maria* even as coconuts and coconut oil profits were ripe for the picking all over Rālik and Ratak—Capelle made a bold and fateful decision. Rather than returning to Honolulu with his heretofore-associate Herman Caplan and their cargo, Adolf Capelle watched from the lagoon shore as the *Morning Star* pulled up anchor and sailed away toward the pass. Then, through the support of his friend Jeimata and other *irooj* in the form of labor and land, the help of his future business partner Anton deBrum of Portugal, and the advent of new and more efficient coconut oil and later copra production methods, Adolf Capelle established his own firm

and would come to dominate the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak for the next two decades.⁷⁷

Along with Capelle's vision of economic success in southern Rālik and desire to avoid the legal and economic repercussions of his dealings with Herman Caplan and Captain Lass during his employment with Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst, other factors likely played an important role in Adolf Capelle's decision to remain on Epoon from 1863. First and perhaps foremost, and as I have already outlined extensively in previous chapters, Capelle appears to have had a strong relationship with Irooj Jeimata from the time of his first arrival on Epoon in 1861 when he was greeted by the *irooj* as a friend. Whatever the chief's reasons for welcoming Capelle so enthusiastically that day—the favorable *bubu* prophecy he begot, Jeimata's hope that the *ri-pālle* could help rehabilitate land destroyed by recent typhoons, the chief's desire to use his association with the new arrival as economic and socio-political leverage against the increasingly influential missionaries, or some combination of these and other factors—Irooj Jeimata clearly wanted Capelle and his associate Herman Caplan to establish themselves and a profitable copra business on his land in southern Rālik.

After welcoming the *ri-pālle* as his friend, Jeimata contributed further to Capelle's initial success by offering him and his associate Caplan the use of his land for their coconut oil enterprise⁷⁸ and by garnering enough *kajoor* laborers to help the men with their construction and production efforts. This early alliance probably played an important role not only in Capelle's early economic success on Epoon, but also in demonstrating to Jeimata's *irooj* counterparts around Rālik and Ratak that the *ri-pālle* was worthy of their trust and association. With Jeimata's endorsement and his initial sale of three-quarters of Juroj Island to Capelle sometime in 1863 or 1864, Capelle was soon able to begin surveying and acquiring land beyond Epoon, from Namdik and Kōle in southern Rālik to Pikaar and Likiep in northern Ratak and beyond.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 216.

⁷⁸ Damon, *Morning Star Papers*, 34.

⁷⁹ By the early 1870s, Capelle had acquired land all across Rālik and Ratak and had started setting up trading stations on Kosrae and Pohnpei to the west. Spennemann, "Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands"; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 216, 304.



Figure 29. Sophia Limenwa Capelle, Rupe Wāto, Epoon Atoll, circa 1910s
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image H-34)⁸⁰

Given that Capelle’s first son, Wilhelm Eduard Capelle, was born on Epoon in 1865, it is reasonable to assume that, by 1863, Adolf was already acquainted with the women who would soon become his wife, and that his emotions thereby also played an important role in his decision to remain on Epoon for the long term. Whether it was in 1863 or soon thereafter, Sophia Limenwa quickly became an important part of Adolf Capelle’s personal, public, and entrepreneurial life on Epoon; in fact, within six years of Adolf’s decision to set up permanent residence in southern Rālik Limenwa had already born at least four of their six children.⁸¹ And while Limenwa was not from an *irooj* family, she nevertheless had *kajoor* land rights and privileges on at least one Epoon *wāto* and probably others, which Capelle may have found appealing during his initial search for land for trading stations and plantations.

⁸⁰ According to Leonard deBrum, this photograph was taken at Rupe Wāto during the construction of the Protestant church in the background. The identities of the two women pictured with Limenwa Capelle (far right) are unknown; the man’s name is Mattu. L. deBrum indicates that the people in the photograph were Christians all their lives from when they were small children until they died. “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” H-34; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

⁸¹ Adolf and Limenwa’s children were Wilhelm Eduard (“Eduard”), Adolf Jr., Elija (or Elisa), Christian Wilhelm (“William”), Frederick (“Freddie”), and Godfrey. *Marshall Islands Journal*, “*Korkan Likiep Eo Emol*,” 17.

Considering how Adolf and Limenwa's marriage would have benefited all parties involved—giving Capelle opportunities to acquire land and socio-cultural standing among *ri-aelōñ-kein* and Limenwa and possibly Irooj Jeimata more ready access to Capelle's wealth, resources, and ties to the outside world and the social, cultural, and political capital those would have afforded them—it could be argued that Adolf and Limenwa's marriage was part of a larger mutual strategy to forge and strengthen an alliance that would bring wealth and economic privilege to Capelle and the people of Epoon, even as it enhanced Jeimata's political and socio-cultural status among his constituents and other *irooj* as well as Capelle's standing in Epoon society and in Rālik and Ratak more generally. Whether or not her access to land was a factor in Capelle's union with the young woman—indeed, it is nearly impossible to make these kinds of assumptions or judgments when it comes to matters of the heart—there is no denying that Limenwa served as an important nexus linking Capelle to Epoon *bwidej* lands and *bwij* matrilineages and as a cultural broker and key source of knowledge and information about land, power, history, and culture that would have been essential for Capelle's relations with *irooj*, *aḷap*, and *kajoor*. Indeed, as Jeimata's friend, Limenwa's husband, and the father of several *ri-aelōñ-kein* children, Adolf Capelle was almost guaranteed success in southern Rālik. This success later augmented by a similar alliance linking Capelle's business partner Anton deBrum to the genealogies and power structures of northern Ratak through his wife Likmeto.

Tradition has it that, in addition to her genealogy, cultural knowledge, and connections to the land, Limenwa was also a member of what was the first *ri-aelōñ-kein* family to convert to Christianity. This association likely gave Limenwa and her family some standing and even sway among the missionaries who, throughout the earliest years of Capelle's enterprise in southern Rālik, were the trader's primary source of competition both in terms of copra proceeds and socio-cultural status and influence among *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Adolf's marriage to Limenwa and resulting genealogical connections to her *bwij* matrilineage and *bwidej* land also likely elevated his status among newly converted *ri-*

aelōñ-kein who would have regarded Capelle not just as an honorary *ri-aelōñ-kein*,⁸² but also as a follower of their newly adopted faith and way of life. Within just a few years of establishing himself on Epoon, Capelle was not only a successful copra trader, husband, and father, but also a prominent member of Limenwa’s church and an itinerant preacher who “took the pulpit on occasion to preach to [*ri-aelōñ-kein*] of the rewards of an industrious and pious life.”⁸³ Indeed, Capelle’s position in the Epoon church likely served to augment the status and cultural legitimacy already accorded to him by his marriage to Limenwa and his friendship with Jeimata and in turn contributed to his early economic success on Epoon and later on Jālwōj and Likiep.

José Anton deBrum on Epoon

Not long after Adolf Capelle began to settle in to his new life on Epoon, another European joined the *ri-pālle* in his life-long pursuit of economic and familial prosperity in Rālik and Ratak. Unlike Adolf Capelle who was born in Hanover, Germany, Anton deBrum had origins on the small island of Pico⁸⁴ in the Azores of Portugal⁸⁵ where he was born in 1837, just one year before his future friend and business partner.⁸⁶ And yet despite these differences in their origins, Capelle and deBrum had much in common; indeed, both landed in Hawai‘i after leaving their European homes to seek their fortunes

⁸² Today, it is not uncommon for a Marshall Islander to refer to an outsider married to a Marshall Islander as “ri-Majeļ” (“*Kwe ri-Majeļ kiiō*” or “You are a Marshall Islander now”). In some cases, *ri-Majeļ* might refer to the outsider using the name of the home island or atoll of his or her partner or spouse. A *ri-pālle* married to a person from Likiep, for example, would be called *ri-Likiep*, where an outsider partnered with someone living on Epjā Island in Kuwajleen Atoll would become a *ri-Epjā* or a *leddik/laddik in Epjā* or a “girl/boy of/from Epjā.” Given how common this tendency is today, it is quite possible that, following his partnership or marriage to Sophia Limenwa, *ri-aelōñ-kein* began to refer to Adolf Capelle as a *ri-aelōñ-kein* or *ri-Epoon*.

⁸³ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 214.

⁸⁴ American whalers started appearing in the waters of the Azores in 1730 and continued until 1921. Their primary goal was to find cheap labor, usually in the form of Azorean teenage boys who were eager to flee to the United States and often with the goal of avoiding military service. Anton deBrum was thirteen years old when the American whaling industry peaked in 1850, and while it has not been confirmed, he quite possibly got his start in the whaling industry by boarding one of these ships and eventually ending up on a whaling boat that landed him on Epoon Atoll in southern Rālik. Given that deBrum was himself an Atlantic islander—indeed, the Azores are made up of nine relatively small islands of which Pico is one—it should perhaps not be surprising that he decided to make his life in the small island world of Rālik and Ratak. Santos, “Azorean and New England Whaling and Fishing,” 51-58.

⁸⁵ *Micronesian Reporter*, “Anton De Brum,” 6.

⁸⁶ Williamson and Stone, “Anthropological Survey of Likiep Atoll,” 11.

abroad (tradition has it that deBrum went to Hawai‘i after “running away” from home in Portugal⁸⁷) and both subsequently left Hawai‘i aboard vessels whose course ultimately took them to their future home on Epoon. These and other commonalities led to a friendship and partnership that transformed both men’s lives along with the economic, social, political, and physical landscape of various atolls and islands in Rālik and Ratak for many years to come, with Likiep Atoll being the primary and longest standing example.

After joining forces as friends and business partners following deBrum’s arrival to Epoon in 1864, Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum made the decision to remain and to in turn spend the rest of their lives in the islands of Rālik and Ratak, which were by that time increasingly and more commonly known as the Marshall Islands. Like Capelle, deBrum went on to marry a *ri-aelōñ-kein* woman with origins not on Epoon but rather on Aur and Maļoeļap in northern Ratak. To be sure, much as Capelle’s marriage to Limenwa served to facilitate his relationship with Jeimata and other *irooj* as he worked to establish his business and acquire land for the purpose, deBrum’s marriage to Likmeto ultimately played a key role in Capelle and deBrum’s acquisition of Likiep Atoll—which, after nearly a decade of financial growth on Epoon and another on Jālwōj, became their home and headquarters until their deaths in 1901 (deBrum) and 1905 (Capelle)⁸⁸ and remains in the possession of their multitudinous descendants even today.

Although accounts of his initial landing on Epoon are conflicting and in some cases fantastical,⁸⁹ it appears that Anton deBrum arrived aboard the *Morning Star* sometime in 1864, prior to which he had worked as a harpooner on an American whaleship⁹⁰ out of Honolulu. It is said that it was during his harpooning voyages in the Pacific Ocean that deBrum first “encountered some of the romantic, beautiful Pacific

⁸⁷ This account corroborates the possibility that deBrum fled Pico on an American whaling ship to avoid military service. *Micronesian Reporter*, “Anton De Brum,” 6; Santos, “Azorean and New England Whaling and Fishing,” 51-58.

⁸⁸ Williamson and Stone, “Anthropological Survey of Likiep Atoll,” 16-17.

⁸⁹ While some accounts indicate that deBrum arrived on the *Morning Star*, others suggest he landed via whaleship. One story recounts that deBrum was swallowed by a whale during one of his whaling expeditions and later emerged from the whale’s stomach with no hair remaining on his body. Leonard deBrum quoted in Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 166.

⁹⁰ *Micronesian Reporter*, “Anton De Brum,” 6.

Whatever the circumstances of deBrum's relocation to Epoon, it appears that, soon after his arrival in 1864, deBrum joined Adolf Capelle's newly established independent trading firm A. Capelle & Co., taking on a lead role working with *ri-aelōñ-kein* to plant coconut trees on Juroj and other islands or *wāto* where his partner had acquired land either through lease, purchase, or some other arrangement. According to one story, Wūjlañ Atoll was sold after Irooj Marko "was made drunk by the German traders. After he had reached the point of intoxication, he was asked if he wanted to sell the atoll. When he replied in the affirmative: 'Go ahead and take it,' the Germans gave him the following articles in exchange for the atoll: a picture book, a gun, an axe, two dogs, a big knife, a box of tobacco, a whetstone, nineteen yards of red cloth, and some needles and thread."⁹⁴ Although the story does not clarify who the German traders were, records indicate that A. Capelle & Co. purchased Wūjlañ Atoll from two chiefs (Imolak and Jibkino) in 1880 and established a coconut plantation there.⁹⁵ While the names of the chiefs in the story and in the records clearly do not match and there is no indication that Adolf Capelle was one of the traders who tricked Marko into selling the atoll, the story suggests that land deals were not always negotiated fairly during this period, with those made by Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum quite possibly being no exception.

Meanwhile, deBrum used his background in boatbuilding and seafaring to begin "the construction of small sailing craft for interisland service,"⁹⁶ a skill that developed into a large-scale enterprise⁹⁷ that not only facilitated A. Capelle & Co.'s growth, but also provided deBrum and Capelle leverage among *irooj* who were willing to give land in exchange for one of deBrum's finely crafted sailing vessels.⁹⁸ In this way, while deBrum

⁹⁴ Ernej et al., "Early History of the People of Wūjlañ Atoll," 336.

⁹⁵ Spennemann, "Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands," 21.

⁹⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 213.

⁹⁷ It is not clear if Anton deBrum started the boat building business as indicated by Hezel (1983) and Walsh and Heine (2012) or if two of deBrum's sons started the enterprise years later on Likiep Atoll after learning the trade from an American captain as indicated in a 1905 article in the *San Juan Islander*. *The San Juan Islander*, "Ships Built by Savages"; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 213; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 167.

⁹⁸ Anton's son Joachim eventually took over the boatbuilding enterprise on Likiep Atoll and was able to acquire *irooj-iddik* land rights on Jāple Island in Mājro Atoll in exchange for a vessel he built for Irooj Jebrik Lukokwerak of Mājro. The Jāple land is still owned by Joachim's descendants today. Juda, "Land Problem: Likiep."

did not possess any business skills to speak of—in fact, unlike Capelle who was highly versed in the English language,⁹⁹ deBrum was unable to read or write in any language¹⁰⁰—his specialized skillset allowed him to become an invaluable asset to Capelle’s firm nonetheless and to help build A. Capelle & Co. into the “chief business enterprise in the islands” after just five years.¹⁰¹

In order to grow their enterprise and compete with other traders who had also started making their way to Rālik and Ratak in search of fortune, Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum promoted an approach to land, farming, and cultivation that were much different than anything *ri-aelōñ-kein* had previously known. Unlike Captain Ichabod Handy and the American missionaries who relied on *ri-aelōñ-kein* to produce coconut oil according to their own methods and using their existing stock of trees, Capelle envisioned a network of plantations through which he and a team could supervise and regulate the cultivation and harvest of coconuts and use the yield to produce the oil he hoped would bring in enough revenue to make his new company a success. Given that coconut trees require approximately eight years to bear fruit,¹⁰² Capelle and deBrum had their work cut out for them: they needed to quickly plant as many seeds as possible on as much land as they could access and rely in the meantime on trees that were already bearing fruit. This

⁹⁹ Anton deBrum’s son Joachim kept a vast collection of correspondence from his many friends and acquaintances around the world. The collection includes an array of letters addressed to Joachim from Adolf Capelle, most of which are composed in eloquent English by an elegant hand. Together with his keen business acumen, Capelle’s mastery of writing indicates that he likely came from a middle or upper class family and received some schooling. His mastery of the English language, meanwhile, suggests that, although he was born in Germany, Capelle likely spent a good deal of time in the United States and Hawai‘i before taking up employment with Hoffschlaeger & Stapenhorst. This might also explain why, despite his German ancestry, Capelle took on the role of United States Consular Agent beginning in 1882 or 1883, invited the American Captain I.V. Melander to raise the American flag on Likiep in 1884, and seems to have been little involved in the German annexation of the Marshall Islands in 1885. *Saturday Press*, “News by the Missionary Packet”; *Micronesian Reporter*, “Heartbroken: Stars and Stripes over Likiep,” 1.

¹⁰⁰ Unlike Capelle, deBrum did not possess skills in reading or writing “and could not read a sextant or even write his own name,” which is confirmed by the fact that he signed important documents with a mark rather than a signature. (See, for example, “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”) Nevertheless it is said that, while deBrum could neither read nor write, he had “an amazing memory” and could “remember incidents and facts with astonishing accuracy.” This skill was apparently so remarkable that an expression later evolved on Likiep Atoll: *Ij Anton* “means ‘I recall distinctly’ or ‘I remember as well as if I were Anton.’” *Micronesian Reporter*, “Ij Anton,” 29.

¹⁰¹ “Edward T.J. Milne Letter to Her British Majesty’s Counsel, Shanghai, China,” 2.

¹⁰² Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire*, 23.

venture would require much more than simply planting coconut seeds; indeed, it would necessitate a wholesale transformation of the local coconut and of the land itself—two primary sources of *ri-aelōñ-kein* sustenance and survival and important features of Rālik and Ratak histories, genealogies, and religious beliefs—into commodities whose significance would come to be defined by their value in trade and cash. It would also require modifications to the very structures of power and authority, livelihoods, and identities that had defined and directed *ri-aelōñ-kein* cultural beliefs and everyday practices for centuries.

As Capelle and deBrum built up the business and began to seek out land for their plantations, *ri-aelōñ-kein* surely began to suspect that the *ri-pālle* saw land and coconuts as commodities whose economic and use values superseded any cultural or spiritual import or the genealogical connections accorded them by *ri-aelōñ-kein*. What’s more, as Capelle, deBrum, and other *ri-pālle* started to use markers, signs, songs,¹⁰³ and land deeds to demonstrate that particular piece of land and their fruits had become *mō* taboo or off limits to those who were not directly involved in the work of the plantation, *ri-aelōñ-kein* may have also started to understand that *ri-pālle* saw the land they acquired as their own property and believed that with enough money, resources, trickery, or force, any individual or private entity could acquire and own land outright. Significantly, these ideas clashed directly with *ri-aelōñ-kein* epistemological foundations which held that land, coconuts, and other natural resources were sacred legacies generated by the gods for their ancestors to ensure that the physical needs of all members of society were met. They also contrasted with the multi-level system of corporate land tenure, management, and inheritance that afforded multiple groups of people varying yet overlapping interests in virtually every piece of land in Rālik and Ratak.

And yet, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure systems and practices were traditionally flexible and always-already changing as *iroojlaplap* and *aļap* tweaked and adjusted land and succession to meet contemporary needs and in response to

¹⁰³ See, for example, “Agreement between Likiep ‘Natives’ and ‘Owners’ (1880),” which prohibited the *kajoor* of Likiep from “trespassing at any time on any plantation which may be made or laid out” by deBrum and Capelle, who had by that time acquired Likiep through purchase. Also see Figure 28 (“Coconut Taboo Mast”).



Figure 31. A. Capelle & Co. trading station, Jebwad, Jālwōj, date unknown
Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-185)

genealogical factors, meteorological conditions, the extraordinary accomplishments of an individual, or other unusual circumstances. At the same time, *ri-aelōñ-kein* had long been willing to adapt their work and cultivation practices to meet the requirements of *ri-pālle* and other foreigners arriving on their shores as long as their efforts were recompensed and seen to benefit the larger community in some way. Indeed, as early as 1529, *ri-aelōñ-kein* shifted their normal course of activities on one occasion to gather 2,000 coconuts for Alvaro de Saavedra and the crew of the ship *Florida* in northern Rālik with the understanding that they would receive beads, iron, tools, and other valued items in return for their efforts and resources.

Three hundred years later, *ri-aelōñ-kein* all across Rālik and Ratak similarly increased their production of coconut oil to acquire goods through trade with Captain Handy, to access trade goods, education, socio-cultural status, and religious salvation through the missionaries, and in exchange for economic resources and in some cases strategic socio-political and cultural and genealogical alliances with *ri-pālle* merchants and traders. As a steady stream of new traders began to make their way to the Marshall Islands beginning in the late-1860s, Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum were able to capitalize on this history of encounter and engagement—and on their newly acquired positions within the genealogies of southern Rālik and northern Ratak—to begin

acquiring land, planting coconut trees, and making and exporting the new product known as copra not just on Epoon Atoll, but also in the farthest reaches of Rālik and Ratak. Meanwhile, as *ri-aelōñ-kein* came face to face with the horrors brought about by traders such as Bully Hayes and Captain Ben Pease, they turned to their *ri-pālle* friend Adolf Capelle and his new partner Anton deBrum for protection and support, which they were able to secure in exchange for land on more than one occasion.

Kowainini: Making Copra

When Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum arrived to Epoon Atoll via Honolulu in the early 1860s, they were not the first *ri-pālle* traders to reach the Pacific Islands in search of plantation land and profits, nor would they be the last. In fact, the two may have drawn inspiration in their adventures to southern Rālik not only from Captain Handy and the American and Hawaiian missionaries stationed on Epoon, but also from the initial success of the German trading firm Godeffroy & Sohn, which had by 1857 “built a warehouse and a dwelling-house in Apia [in Sāmoa]” and by 1864 established “a substantial trade in the Pacific—exchanging cotton and cloth and a variety of manufactured products for coconut oil and mother-of-pearl shells.”¹⁰⁴ Godeffroy & Sohn’s early success accelerated rapidly following the arrival of company agent and Hamburg consul Theodor Weber soon after his predecessor supercargo August Unshelm disappeared at sea in 1864, as Weber managed to dramatically expand Godeffroy’s plantations in Sāmoa and extended trade operations all across the Pacific.

One of Weber’s most significant contributions to the coconut oil trade came about in 1868 when he replaced oil with dried copra as his employer’s primary export commodity. He did this by demonstrating that well-dried coconut meat “could be shipped to European ports without spoilage” and that local manufacturers could in turn do away with the labor intensive and time consuming steps of cooking, pressing, and barreling the oil for shipment to overseas ports.¹⁰⁵ This meant that, in the islands, production would be focused on gathering, husking, and drying rather than on cooking, straining, and

¹⁰⁴ Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 212.

barreling. And while production methods would vary across the regions, the basic process involved sun drying or smoking husked and halved mature coconuts, extracting the meat from the hard exterior shell and cutting the halves into smaller segments, and, finally, leaving the pieces out in the sun or in a smoke house for several more days to allow all the moisture to evaporate. The dry oily coconut cake was then bagged and transported abroad where it was processed and manufactured into oil, candles, and lotions and the leftover caked meat sold for animal food or fertilizer.¹⁰⁶

Within a few years, Capelle and deBrum expanded their enterprise on Epoon by borrowing Weber's methods¹⁰⁷ and requiring *kajoor* laborers—or “*ri-jerbal*” workers, as those involved in plantation work were by then beginning to be called¹⁰⁸—to gradually¹⁰⁹ switch from producing *pinneep* coconut oil to making *waini* copra. While Capelle managed the accounts and continued negotiating with *irooj* for land and alliances, deBrum worked either through *aḷap* or, depending on the land and work arrangements negotiated with the *irooj*, directly with *ri-jerbal* to teach *ri-aelōñ-kein* plantation workers this new method of drying coconuts for export. Since making copra required far less time and fewer resources than were necessary for the production of coconut oil, the new method allowed *ri-jerbal* to be much more productive, thereby increasing Capelle's profits and leaving plenty of time to clear and plant newly acquired *wāto* and islands for A. Capelle & Co.'s growing plantation network.

In addition to contributing to Capelle and deBrum's success in transforming *ri-aelōñ-kein* land and landscapes into profits in the 1860s and 1870s, the introduction of

¹⁰⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 212.

¹⁰⁷ It is not clear exactly how or when Capelle learned of Weber's method of copra production or if the two men ever came in direct contact. Historical records indicate, however, that a considerable number of whaling, trading, and missionary vessels made stops on Epoon during this period. Given that these ships generally made multiple stops at various ports of call around the Pacific, it is possible that word of Weber's method made its way to Epoon via one of these ships. While it is also possible that Capelle traveled to Sāmoa and learned of the method first hand, it is more likely that he learned of the methods as Godeffroy & Sohn began sending agents to various Pacific islands including the Marshall Islands where the company had five trading stations by 1873. Firth, “German Firms in the Western Pacific Islands,” 12; Hezel, *Foreign Ships in Micronesia*, 128.

¹⁰⁸ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 31, 199.

¹⁰⁹ It appears that the transition to copra production did not occur immediately or all at once. One story suggests, in fact, that coconut oil was still being produced in large quantities on Arno Atoll as late as 1876 or 1877 (see Chapter 6 for more). Unknown, “Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls].”



Figure 32. Drying copra the open sun circa, Likiep, date unknown
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image F-60)

copra production by J.C. Godeffroy & Sohn sparked a dramatic influx of *ri-pālle* traders and firms into the Pacific from Europe, Hawai‘i, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and beyond. Among these were Robertson & Hensheim¹¹⁰ and F&W Hennings of Germany,¹¹¹ Crawford & Co. of Honolulu, Henderson & MacFarlane of Auckland, Burns Philp of Sydney, and Lever Brothers of England,¹¹² who, not unlike Capelle and deBrum, were seeking to augment their profits through overseas expansion. More than a few of these firms made their way to the Marshall Islands and, as they did, forced Adolf Capelle to find ways to enlarge his enterprise in order to remain competitive and retain a healthy profit margin within the region he likely regarded as his economic territory.

Before long, the increasing presence of foreign firms and their agents led Capelle to enter into an exclusive partnership with his rival and biggest competitor Godeffroy & Sohn, which had expanded its operations into the Marshall Islands beginning in 1865¹¹³

¹¹⁰ The firms Robertson & Hensheim is sometimes referred to as Hensheim & Co.

¹¹¹ The firm F&W Hennings was established in Fiji in the late 1850s by Godeffroy & Sohn agent Frederic Hennings, who went into partnership with his two brothers, William and Gustave. Lal and Fortune, *The Pacific Islands*, 218.

¹¹² Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 212; Lal and Fortune, *The Pacific Islands*, 215-219.

¹¹³ Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire*, 24.

by setting up trading stations and sending steamers to the southern atolls to collect coconut oil and later copra.¹¹⁴ The agreement required Capelle to sell all the copra and oil he collected directly to Godeffroy in exchange for regular income and transport for his product. And while the arrangement surely restricted Capelle's independence to a certain extent, it also gave him access to the resources "he needed to deal with the stiffer competition ... he now faced in the Marshalls."¹¹⁵ These resources not only allowed Capelle to expand his coconut oil and copra operations across six atolls,¹¹⁶ but also provided him and his associates with a network of protection that was increasingly necessary as rogue traders such as Ben Pease and Bully Hayes began to force their way into the area in search of products and people to steal and sell.

"Eo Man in Wa ne Waam?" Jortōkā, Likmeto, and the Genesis of a Land Sale

Just a year before Theodor Weber introduced his revolutionary approach to producing and exporting copra in place of coconut oil, another breed of trader started engaging in the Marshall Islands, with American Captain Ben Pease being perhaps the most egregious and despicable of them all. Unlike Adolf Capelle, Anton deBrum, and some others who made a point of building alliances with *ri-aelōñ-kein* and exercising a certain level of respect for *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and structures of authority (even if it was part of a strategy to advance their own agenda), Captain Pease had no intention of spending his life in the Marshall Islands or integrating into *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, society, or genealogies. Instead, he was interested solely in money and was willing to use any means necessary to make a profit, and was particularly eager to do so if it was at the expense of his principal rival Adolf Capelle. In 1868, Pease went so far as to plunder Capelle's trading stations and to bribe a local *irooj* into murdering Capelle following the wreck of the *Clara D. Robbins* at Mājro Atoll (Capelle was aboard), however his plan was thwarted when another more powerful *irooj* ally interceded on Capelle's behalf.¹¹⁷ Along with the threat of heavy armory Pease was said to carry aboard the ships he

¹¹⁴ Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 46.

¹¹⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 216.

¹¹⁶ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 167.

¹¹⁷ "Edward T.J. Milne Letter to Her British Majesty's Counsel, Shanghai, China," 2.

captained,¹¹⁸ this was just one of many incidents and circumstances that likely played a role in Capelle seeking the partnership, support, and protection his resource-wealthy rival J.C. Godeffroy & Sohn.

Adolf Capelle was not the only person in Rālik and Ratak seeking refuge from Ben Pease since, in addition to beating his crew members and mistreating and swindling his agents out of their wages,¹¹⁹ Pease made it a regular practice to terrorize, kidnap, and murder *ri-aelōñ-kein* during his uninvited exploits around the Marshall Islands and across the Pacific. To this, Edward T. Milne, a Scotsman who A. Capelle & Co. would bring on board in 1873, reports that, in 1868, Pease landed on Epoon only to inform Milne, Capelle, and the others that he was “going to sweep the islands, and that [they] would soon hear of ‘dead niggers,’”¹²⁰ for Pease and his crew had made plans to terrorize any *ri-aelōñ-kein* they encountered at Aur or Maļoelap atolls in northern Ratak as revenge for a series of incidents that had taken place there a few months earlier.

On a previous voyage through the Marshall Islands, Pease landed an agent on Aur and another on neighboring Maļoelap (often called Kapen at that time after the atoll’s main island) without consulting Iroojlaplap Jortōkā,¹²¹ the paramount chief of the northern Ratak region that includes Aur, Maļoelap, and Likiep atolls as well as Mājej Island. The two agents, Dick Hamilton and John Hughes, proceeded to behave so poorly, with one using “his revolver as the means of getting a house built and his wants supplied,”¹²² that the people of Aur and Maļoelap—who were already incensed that the *ri-pālle* had landed on their islands without permission—resorted to feeding them poisonous fish in hopes of either killing them or at the very least debilitating them and preventing them from committing any other atrocities. In the meantime, knowing that the traders were weak and could not guard their stations, another *irooj* took the opportunity to ransack both for any goods they could carry.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 230.

¹²⁰ “Edward T.J. Milne Letter to Her British Majesty’s Counsel, Shanghai, China,” 3.

¹²¹ Since Jortōkā was *iroojlaplap* of northern Ratak during this period, it can be inferred that he is the “King” Milne mentions in his letter to Her British Majesty’s Counsel. Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 3.

Perhaps anticipating that the men's captain would seek revenge for his agents' fate, Jortōkā responded by attempting to kill the chief and driving him from the area. Much to his people's surprise, Jortōkā then took the *ri-pālle* under his protection, shared with them "what little food they had on the island" since they "appeared to be half-starved," and even "adopted" one of them (probably Hamilton, who was much younger¹²³) as his son.¹²⁴ Despite Jortōkā's efforts to help and appease Hamilton and Hughes, however, Pease returned to northern Ratak aboard the *Waterlily* to seek revenge for the loss of his merchandise and the treatment of his men.

On the *Waterlily*'s entry into the Aur lagoon sometime in late 1868, a group of *ri-aelōñ-kein* in a canoe approached the vessel. Unaware of Pease's reputation for cruelty, the men ventured a "good morning" to the captain and his crew. Rather than a polite "good morning" in return, however, the mate, a man called Bowen, gave a callous "I'll 'good morning' you" and shot the man in the head with a revolver, killing him instantly.¹²⁵ On seeing what had happened, the other men in the canoe jumped quickly overboard; rather than escaping, however, they were "pursued by Pease's whaleboat, and cruelly shot and hacked to pieces in the water."¹²⁶ One of Pease's men went on to fire on a nearby fishing canoe with two men on board. After several unsuccessful rounds, Pease grabbed the gun and fired nine shots, killing one *ri-aelōñ-kein* and wounding the other. Seeing that the second man was still alive, Pease directed one of his crew to approach the canoe and cut off the man's head. The captain and his crew then disembarked at one of the islands on the lagoon, only to find that all the remaining *ri-aelōñ-kein* had fled. The ruthless captain had no intention of admitting defeat, however, and in a final cold-blooded move "blew up and burnt all the large canoes and houses [he and his crew] met with" on the island.¹²⁷

The inconsistent and even contradictory responses by the people of Aur and Māloelap to the brutalities enacted by Ben Pease and his men from 1867 to 1868—which

¹²³ Sixty-year-old John Hughes was the chief officer on Ben Pease's *Blossom*. Williamson and Stone, "Anthropological Survey of Aur Atoll," 12.

¹²⁴ "Edward T.J. Milne Letter to Her British Majesty's Counsel, Shanghai, China," 3.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

ranged from members of both communities poisoning Pease’s agents with fish to Jortōkā adopting one of the men as his son—might be explained at least in part by events that occurred on Aur prior to the arrival of Dick Hamilton and John Hughes to northern Ratak. According to Edward Milne, just one year before Pease left his men at Aur and Maļoeļap, a slaving vessel stopped at Aur and abducted a large number of *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Among those captured was the daughter of the same “King”—presumably Iroojlaplap Jortōkā—who would just one year later treat Hamilton and Hughes with a level of kindness that, considering the horrifying events of the previous year, was quite remarkable.

While it might seem inexplicable or even unlikely that Jortōkā would display such benevolence so soon after the abduction of his daughter by another group of *ri-pālle*, it is possible that Jortōkā regarded an alliance with Hamilton and Hughes, which in this case included the symbolic incorporation of one of the men into his genealogy through ritualized adoption, as a potential source of protection not only from their captain but also from future *ri-pālle* pillaging. Little did Jortōkā know, however, that his efforts to align with the men were too little too late and that Captain Pease would return to Aur just a few months later to seek revenge for the damage that ri-Aur and ri-Maļoeļap had already inflicted on his men and his trading stations—with no regard, of course, for the fact that he had never been invited to establish a station there in the first place or that his men had been nasty and disrespectful during their stay. When Jortōkā realized on Pease’s arrival to Aur several months later that his attempted alliance with Hamilton and Hughes would do little to save him, the chief fled with his people to Epoon—the domain of his deceased friend and ally Irooj Kaibūke¹²⁸—to seek the assistance and protection of Kaibūke’s supporters and successors who would have included Irooj Kabua¹²⁹ and Irooj Jeimata.

It was during this time that Jortōkā’s relative Likmeto (Figure 33),¹³⁰ who may have in fact been sent by the *irooj* to Epoon immediately following the kidnapping of his

¹²⁸ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 166-167.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹³⁰ As I have mentioned previously, there is some debate as to whether Likmeto was Jortōkā’s daughter or if she was a niece or other close blood relative. Whatever the relation, Jortōkā clearly recognized that he and his family were vulnerable and for this reason fled to Epoon seeking refuge and protection.

daughter at Aur in 1866,¹³¹ became acquainted with and married Adolf Capelle's partner Anton deBrum.¹³² It has been said, in fact, that Jortōkā encouraged Likmeto to marry deBrum,¹³³ probably as part of a larger strategy to protect her and the rest of his *bwij* from the likes of Ben Pease and the other slavers, raiders, and pirates who were making their way around Rālik and Ratak during that period. Jortōkā may have also seen the union as an opportunity to build an alliance with the *ri-pālle* and his German partner that that he hoped would carry some of the wealth and resources of the burgeoning copra industry to his realm in northern Ratak.

On arriving to Epoon in late 1868, Jortōkā found that he had made the right decision; indeed, after four years on Epoon, deBrum was a well-established partner in Adolf Capelle's firm and had earned the trust and friendship of Capelle's *ri-aelōñ-kein* allies as a result. He was also the soon-to-be father of Likmeto's son Joachim deBrum, who was born just a few months later on February 25, 1869. Between his marriage to Likmeto and the birth of Joachim, Anton had been incorporated into Jortōkā's genealogy and the larger genealogies of northern Ratak much as Adolf Capelle had inserted himself into those of Epoon and southern Rālik. In the short term, these alliances would greatly benefit *irooj* and communities in these areas as Capelle and deBrum brought financial and material resources, employment opportunities, land rehabilitation and development, and strategic protection to their allies, friends, and *bwij* members. They would also contribute to the temporary success and growth of A. Capelle & Co. across Rālik and Ratak and into Kosrae and Pohnpei to the west, until the company went bankrupt in 1883¹³⁴ due to increasing competition from rival firms, which forced Capelle to sell the majority of his assets¹³⁵ to DHPG, which had also absorbed Capelle's rival J.C. Godeffroy & Sohn just four years earlier.

¹³¹ Likmeto and Anton deBrum's son Joachim was born on February 25, 1869, which suggests that Likmeto arrived to Epoon prior to Jortōkā's exile in late 1868. "Joachim deBrum Certificate of Birth and Baptism."

¹³² Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 167.

¹³³ Leonard deBrum, interview by Mark Stege, 2001.

¹³⁴ "A. Capelle & Co. Statement of Surrender of all Property (except Likiep)."

¹³⁵ In 1883, "Capelle & Co sold its stations on Kosrae, Ponape [Pohnpei], and seven islands in the Marshalls for seven thousand dollars and retrenched to its plantation on Likiep and the few other small holdings that it retained." It is not clear where these other possessions were located. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 304.

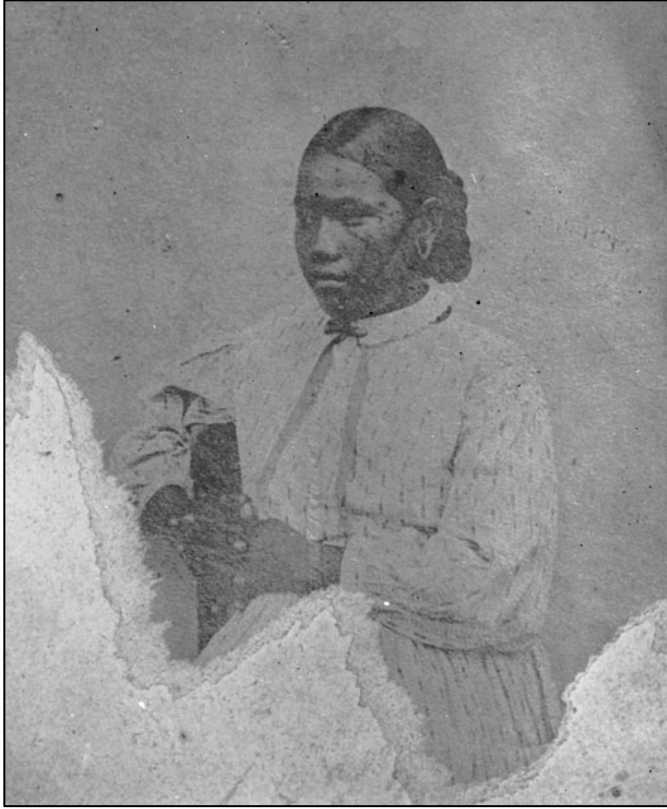


Figure 33. Likmeto deBrum, Epoon Atoll circa 1870s
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection; photo by Jan Kubary (Image B-266)

Not long after Jortōkā and deBrum’s alliance was secured by the birth of Joachim deBrum, the two men traveled to northern Ratak on an expedition that surely benefited the *ri-pālle* and the *irooj* equally, with Jortōkā wanting to return his people safely to their home on Aur and deBrum seeking land for the expansion of A. Capelle & Co. and his new family. Quite understandably, Jortōkā was probably more than uneasy at the thought of finding Ben Pease or one of his men on Aur or Maļoeļap on his return, and would have therefore welcomed the opportunity to go back as part of a convoy that included deBrum and his associates and any protections they and their larger network could offer.¹³⁶ Anton deBrum, meanwhile, surely hoped and even presumed that his new position in Jortōkā and Likmeto’s extended genealogy would give him access to land and other resources

¹³⁶ Considering that Anton deBrum provided Jortōkā with guns in 1877 and that Adolf Capelle traded in guns until at least the mid-1880s, it is quite possible that deBrum already had access to guns by 1869 and that Jortōkā found this appealing as they risked encountering Pease on their return to Aur. Ibid., 297. Also see “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

that would benefit him and his partner financially. Sure enough, Jortōkā offered deBrum and A. Capelle & Co. a parcel of land on Oļōt Island in Maļoeļap Atoll soon after their safe arrival to Aur—perhaps out of thanks or in the hopes that the land would further strengthen their alliance, entice deBrum to move his family to northern Ratak, and in turn serve as a shield against the less desirable and trustworthy *ri-pālle* who continued to lurk around the islands. Indeed, much as deBrum and Capelle’s *emō ni* coconut taboo masts and other signs alerted *ri-aelōñ-kein* and others that certain areas belonged to them, deBrum’s presence in northern Ratak would warn other *ri-pālle* that the region belonged to him, if only symbolically, and was therefore off limits to others and especially to Ben Pease and his associates.

Eight years later, Jortōkā strengthened his alliance even further by transferring all of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum in a deal that made deBrum the sole owner of all of Jortōkā’s holdings on Likiep. What Jortōkā may not have understood at the time, however, was that, for deBrum, the 1877 sale was not as much about building alliances or a network of support as it was about securing a place for A. Capelle & Co. in an increasingly competitive field of copra production and sales. Nor did Jortōkā foresee, that, within a few short months, his *ri-pālle* relative would transfer ownership of Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co., which had by that time taken on a third associate by the name of Charles Ingalls and formed a partnership with Crawford & Co. of San Francisco known as H.L. Tiernan Venture.¹³⁷ Nor could the chief have foreknown that, in 1887, A. Capelle & Co. would turn to another group of *ri-pālle* pirates, raiders, and slavers—these disguised as administrators for the German Imperial Protectorate—to authenticate its outright “ownership” of every parcel of land on Likiep Atoll.¹³⁸

While it may never be clear or certain if Capelle and his partners intended to sequester Likiep or to protect and isolate it from exploitation by their new imperial overlords, it is clear that, in doing so, they transformed Likiep Atoll ownership structures for generations to come. At the same time, they contributed to the transformation of a

¹³⁷ “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

¹³⁸ Ibid.

land tenure system that had for many centuries been inherently and necessarily flexible and adaptable into one based on relatively fixed notions, rules, and channels of ownership and inheritance. In the following chapter, I explore how this transformation took place on Likiep, as well as some of the narrative and other tactics many ri-Likiep have adopted as part of a larger strategy to ensure that the transformation remains partial and incomplete.

Chapter 6. *Likiep Kapin Iep*

Juon Bwebwenatoon Etto: Țetao the Trickster Brings *Kijeek* Fire to Likiep

Long ago, *etto im etto*,¹ a war broke out in the sky between three powerful *irooj*: Wŭllep and his cousins the great *ri-eo* tattoo kings Țewoj and Țaneej.² The feud culminated in a penetrating stare-down, which led the three to eye each other mistrustfully for three straight days and nights. In fact, the staring went on for so long and was so intense that one of Wŭllep’s retinas tore.

With his vision severely impaired, Wŭllep stumbled and fell from the sky dome that had been propped up by Țowa’s heaven-post-men and touched down on Imroj Island just north of Jebwad in Jālwōj Atoll in southern Rālik. Wŭllep’s cry was so loud when he landed that he woke up Iroojrilik (the so named king of all creation and father of legendary sisters Liwātuonmour, Lidepdepju, and Lijileijet) who was staying on Imroj at the time. Iroojrilik quickly went to Wŭllep who told him what had happened in the sky between himself and Țewoj and Țaneej. Concerned for Țowa’s son, Iroojrilik took Wŭllep into a small hut made of pandanus *aj* thatch where he nursed him back to health over three long months.

Sometime during Wŭllep’s convalescence in the hut, an enormous boil formed on his outer thigh. After several days the boil burst and a huge amount of fluid came gushing out. Much to Wŭllep’s surprise two little boys also emerged from the open wound just as Wŭllep and his sister had sprung from a cut on Țowa’s leg many moons before.³ Wŭllep looked carefully at the boys and decided that the one who had come out first would be

¹ Much like the stories presented in previous chapters, I have compiled and adapted this narrative from various and in several cases conflicting versions of *ri-aelōñ-kein* stories about the birth of Țetao and his arrival on Likiep with his brother Jemāluut: Ashby (1989), Carucci (1989), R. deBrum (2002b), Elbon (2003), Erdland (1914), Grey (1999), Hanlon (1998), Jajōñ (2003), Jam (2002b), Jōwej (2002a), Juda (2002), Kelin II (2003), Knappe (1888), Krämer and Nevermann (1938), Laukōn (2002b), Loien (1914), McArthur (1995, 2008), Spennemann (“Țetao Gave Fire to the People”), Shorett (1970), Tobin (2002), and Unknown (2002).

² According to some versions of this and other stories, Wŭllep and Țewoj and Țaneej emerged at different times from a tumor on Țowa’s leg and were therefore brothers. Other versions make Wŭllep the uncle of Țewoj and Țaneej, who were not the sons of Țowa but rather of Țowa’s daughter Limdunanij. Still others describe Țewoj and Țaneej as Wŭllep’s own sons. Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 233-237.

³ Some versions state that the boys emerged from an opening that formed in Wŭllep’s head as the result of an enormous tree growing there. One indicates that Țetao was the son of Wŭllep’s sister Lijman. Davenport, “*Marshallese Folklore Types*,” 230.

called Jemāluut, meaning rainbow, and the younger one would be ʔetao, a name that refers to one who is sly, swindles, and outwits.⁴

As the two boys grew up, each developed a personality so unlike his brother's that it seemed impossible that the two were related at all. Whereas Jemāluut was serious and always tried to do things properly and according to the rules, ʔetao was a naughty and disobedient trickster who was continuously looking for ways to fool people and to subvert authority, and especially the ascribed authority of his chiefly father and brother. In fact, some people believe it was ʔetao who created the islands of Ratak to the east after angrily taking over the task assigned by ʔowa to ʔetao's father by snatching Wūllep's basket and flying east where he allowed the remaining islands to spill out of a hole that had formed at the basket's base.⁵ (Likiep Atoll, whose name means "bottom of the basket," may have been the last to fall.) With that reckless act, ʔetao showed that he could acquire the power of an *irooj* not by earning it as his cousin Jebrø had done at Aelōñlaplap, but rather by grabbing onto it even when it was not his to take and when he had done nothing to demonstrate that he was worthy of the title or responsibilities that it entailed.

On a later occasion, ʔetao played another trick by *rawūt* urinating on a species of *iaraj* taro known as *wōt*. In doing so, he made the *wōt* so bitter that it was scarcely edible and could therefore only be eaten in times of scarcity or famine.⁶ With that trick, ʔetao

⁴ It is not clear if this is the same Jemāluut whose mother was Lijileijet and who was defeated in a bitter feud by his cousins and descendants of Irooj, daughter of the legendary Liwātuonmour (see Chapter 2). Indeed, on the surface, both the origin and fate of the two Jemāluuts appear to be much different: whereas the former was the son of Lijileijet and relegated to a lesser (i.e., commoner) status following the feud with the descendants of Irooj, the latter emerged from a boil on Wūllep's leg and eventually went on to become a high chief in Mājro Atoll. It could be that after being defeated by Irooj's descendants and banished from Naṃo, Jemāluut or his descendants traveled east to Ratak, established themselves as a new chiefly line on Mājro and eventually made their way into Ratak origin stories as chiefs rather than as the defeated victims of the Naṃo battles. McArthur recounts a much different story about the origins of ʔetao and Jemāluut who, according to some, were the only human offspring of a woman named Limejokded, who, after giving birth to all the creatures that would torment humankind (flies, mosquitos, centipedes, etc.), gave birth to Jemāluut and ʔetao. Whereas Jemāluut went on to become the "legitimate high chief" of Mājro, ʔetao was endowed by his mother with the power of deception and subsequently became the "subversive, creative trickster." McArthur, "Ambivalent Fantasies," 269.

⁵ Knappe, "*Religiose Anschauungen*," 2-3. Also see Chapter 2.

⁶ Laukōn, "Why *Wōt* Is Bitter," 309.

gained little more than a good laugh—and laugh he did when he saw the look on people’s faces when they tasted the bitter *wōt* for the first time.

In yet another feat, ʔetao tricked an *irooj* into trading his canoe for one ʔetao had built out of *kōñe*,⁷ a very heavy wood indigenous to Rālik and Ratak. After the exchange was complete, ʔetao sailed away quickly in the chief’s canoe before he realized what ʔetao had done; meanwhile, the *irooj* launched the *kōñe* boat only to have it sink to the bottom of the sea from its own weight.⁸

On one occasion, ʔetao went so far as to trick his brother Jemāluut by convincing him to shape-shift into a whale so ʔetao could win a race to meet up with their grandmother Lijebake the turtle⁹ at Pikaar in northern Ratak. Although Jemāluut was sure that, as a whale, he would easily outswim his brother (who had instead transformed himself into a turtle), ʔetao knew the rocks and reef around Pikaar would prevent Jemāluut-the-whale from winning the race. When ʔetao-the-turtle arrived to Pikaar, Lijebake bestowed him with magical powers as a reward for arriving first, and perhaps for being a turtle like her. The magic was so potent that it allowed ʔetao to disappear or become or create anything he desired.¹⁰ And so it was that ʔetao began to use wit and trickery to acquire special powers that surpassed those of many *irooj* including his brother Jemāluut and his cousin Jebro, high chiefs of Ratak and Rālik. In fact, he soon found that the real power of his magic lay not in the pranks he could pull (although those were fun, too!), but rather in the messages they could convey and, even more significantly, in their potential to subvert and undercut the cultural norms, assumptions, and beliefs that made the power and authority of *irooj* real and of consequence for the people of Rālik and Ratak.¹¹

After a short time on Pikaar, ʔetao and Jemāluut—indeed, toward the end of the race, Jemāluut had realized his mistake, shape-shifted back into himself, and managed to

⁷ *Kōñe* (*Pemphis acidula*) is a native plant of the Marshall Islands with no known English equivalent. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 147.

⁸ Jam, “The Beginning of this World,” 22.

⁹ According to some versions, Lijebake is ʔetao’s mother; in others, she is his aunt. Krämer and Nevermann, “Ralik-Ratak,” 253; Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 139.

¹⁰ Elbon, “ʔetao,” 29-31.

¹¹ McArthur, “The Social Life of Narrative,” 369-370; McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies,” 271.

swim the rest of the way to shore—continued on their journey through the islands of Ratak. This time they were not swimming, however, but were instead traveling on a *tipñōl* canoe given to them by Lijebake and fully equipped with a *wōjlā* sail, knowledge of which had by then left Aelōñlaplap Atoll and made its way all across Rālik and Ratak. The first group of islands they spotted along their journey was Utrōk; feeling hungry and thirsty, ʔetao used his new powers on the approach to ensure that there were plenty of *mā* breadfruit, *bōb* pandanus, and *ni* coconuts waiting for them on their arrival.

After a few days of feasting on Utrōk, ʔetao and Jemāluut boarded their *tipñōl* and were again on their way. Soon enough, the two brothers spotted Likiep Atoll on the horizon. “When we reach those islands,” ʔetao said with confidence, “we will drink our fill.” And with that ʔetao was sure that the islands they were fast approaching would be teeming with fresh water, *ni* drinking coconuts, and whatever else the people of the atoll could offer them to drink. But somehow ʔetao’s powers were not strong enough to reach those islands (or he did not get the incantation quite right) since, much to the trickster’s dismay, there was no water awaiting them when he and his brother arrived on shore.

Surprised and angry at their poor reception on Likiep, ʔetao approached several men who were *kōbwābwe* pole fishing along the shore and asked to borrow a *bwā* pole since he and his brother were hungry after the long journey from Utrōk and had no fishing gear. Much to ʔetao’s surprise and dismay, one of the men responded: “Go away! Get your own *bwā* and your own fish!” Jemāluut urged ʔetao that they should be on their way, but ʔetao was furious and could only think about how to react. As far as he could tell, these were common fishermen and he would not let them get away with such refusals and inhospitality.

“Fine, then,” ʔetao said curtly. “You keep your fishing pole. But you will see what happens the next time a fish bites on your line.” In the meantime, ʔetao asked several of the man’s friends if he could borrow one of their poles, but they all refused. With that, ʔetao mumbled an incantation to himself—and so it was that when a fish bit on their lines just a few minutes later, the men found that their feet had become implanted in the ground. Although Jemāluut was growing angry with his brother, ʔetao just laughed and watched as the men turned into *kōñe* trees (the same heavy tree ʔetao had used to

trick the chief into trading canoes within him many moons before). “Just stand on those rocks and keep fishing then!” ʔetao mused, knowing that *kōñe* trees grow in shallow water among rocks but certainly cannot catch fish. ʔetao left the men like that until he remembered how hungry he was; then, tired of harassing them, he released the men from the *kōñe* spell and continued down the beach with his brother in search of something to eat.

After walking a short way along the lagoon shore, ʔetao and Jemāluut came across a few young boys who were also fishing but were not having much luck. ʔetao asked the youngest among them if he could use his pole and, much to the trickster’s delight, the boy quickly agreed. ʔetao took the pole, threw in the line, and began to catch fish one after another. After an hour or two of fishing, ʔetao was able to fill up several baskets with his catch.

Although he had sharp pangs of hunger in his stomach, ʔetao was also in the mood to have some fun. After considering what to do, he told the boy and his friends to go out and gather some *bweo* coconut husks and a few dry pieces of *ala!* wood so he could build a *kijeeek* fire and *kōmat* cook the fish. But since the people of Rālik and Ratak did not yet have fire and ate all their food raw, the boys were confused by ʔetao’s request. “What is a ‘fire’?” they asked. “And what is ‘cooked’?” “Bring me the *bweo* and the *ala!* and I will show you,” ʔetao responded. And so off the boys went to find the supplies ʔetao had requested.

When the boys returned with the husks and the wood, ʔetao was very pleased. “I am going to show you something new and exciting,” he said. And with that he began to rub two pieces of wood together briskly until a thin stream of *baat* smoke floated slowly up into the air. “Now bring me some of the fibers from inside the *bweo* husks,” he ordered. Excited and interested to find out what would come of ʔetao’s strange activity, the boys picked up several of the husks, extracted the fibers, and placed them on the ground within ʔetao’s reach. ʔetao quickly grabbed a small handful of the fibers and placed them loosely around the section of the piece of wood that was smoking, thus transforming what had been a thin pillar into a small cloud of smoke. ʔetao told the boys

to gather around him so they could see what was about to happen; as they approached, ̇etao picked up the pace and rubbed the sticks with increasing speed and determination.

Suddenly, a small orange flame appeared amidst the husks and smoke and the boys looked at ̇etao in disbelief. “What is it?” they asked at once. “It is *kijeek* fire,” ̇etao replied. “But that is not all,” he went on to say. “Bring me a few of those *ek* fish and some *mā* breadfruit and I will show you how amazing this *kijeek* really is and what it can do. I will also need some fresh green breadfruit and *kino*¹² leaves and some *kimej* coconut fronds.” Excited to see what ̇etao would do next, the boys immediately ran off to find the things he had requested.

When the boys returned, ̇etao asked for their help preparing an *um* underground oven, and since they did not yet know what an *um* was they listened closely and carefully to ̇etao’s instructions and watched his every move. First, ̇etao told two of the boys to dig a wide, shallow hole in the sandy coral dirt. He told the others to go down to the ocean side beach to collect stones for the oven, making it clear that they should only bring heavy *dekā lo!* stones and not soft *pukor* coral rocks (̇etao knew the coral would not withstand the oven’s heat). On their return, ̇etao had the boys pile the rocks in the middle of the hole; then, once the pile was in place, he carefully transferred the small bundle of burning coconut husks to the center. Next, ̇etao told the boys to add more coconut husks to the fire; on doing so, they saw the fire grow until giant orange flames were leaping from the rocks in all directions. Frightened by the fire’s heat and strange noises, the boys stood timidly behind ̇etao to see what he would do next. As he brought the flames under control, ̇etao told the boys to be patient as he allowed the *kijeek* to heat the rocks through. “Wait just a while longer,” he said, “and you will be truly amazed.”

Once the rocks were hot, ̇etao used long sticks to spread them out into a single even layer across the bottom of the hole and then covered them with the breadfruit and leaves. Next, he placed several breadfruits at the center of the leaves, encircled them with the fish, and covered all the food with another overlapping layer of leaves—this time

¹² *Kino* is the Marshallese name for the polypodia fern (*Polypodium scolopendria*) and is often used in *um* underground oven cooking to give certain foods a distinct flavor. NBTRMI, *The Marshall Islands: Living Atolls Amidst the Living Sea*, 127.

both breadfruit and *kino* leaves—which he arranged so no dirt or sand would get in. Finally, he added another layer of hot rocks on top of the leaves and instructed several boys to evenly cover them with the coral sand they had dug out of the original hole. When the *um* was complete, ʔetao sat back and with a sly grin on his lips and a twinkle in his eye said, “Now we must wait.”

Several hours later a very hungry ʔetao told the boys it was time to open the *um* and to finally experience how wonderful his gift to them truly was. With this, the boys carefully cleared the sand and peeled away the layer of leaves covering the breadfruit and fish. On opening the *um*, the boys were surprised to find that the food inside was steaming hot and brown and shriveled in appearance and size. Unsure what to do next, they looked to ʔetao who instructed them to remove the food and to distribute it evenly in the *enrā* baskets they had been weaving out of *kimej* coconut fronds while they were waiting for the food to cook. When the boys were done, ʔetao told them to sit down on the *jeinae* mat they had also woven out of *kimej* so they could taste the food they had prepared together.

As the boys began to eat, the look of surprise and delight on each of their faces was unmistakable. ʔetao turned first to the young boy who had lent him his fishing pole and asked, “So, how does it taste? *Ennō ke?* Is it delicious?” The boy looked up at ʔetao with wide eyes and exclaimed, “*Aaet, elukkuun ennō!* Yes, it is very delicious!” ʔetao smiled and asked the boy, “So which one is better? Food prepared as you have always eaten it or the food I have cooked for you using the *kijeeek* fire?” “This cooked food is much better!” the boy replied. The other boys agreed enthusiastically and continued to feast on the scrumptious cooked fish and breadfruit until the only things remaining in their *enrā* baskets were fish bones and breadfruit skins.

When ʔetao was finally done eating, he turned again to the young boy and said (looking very serious), “You helped me and so now I am going to help you. You will be the first one to take the *kijeeek* fire home to your family. You will show them what it can do and you will be the hero of your family and of all of Likiep!” The boy looked very happy and could hardly wait to get ahold of the fire and rush it home to his parents. “*Komṃool tata!*” he answered enthusiastically. “Thank you very much!”

Letao told the boy to bring him one of the empty baskets they had used to carry the fish in from shore. The boy complied and watched as Letao lined the basket with dried coconut fronds, which he topped with some of the hot coals from the fire he had used to heat the stones for the *um*. Finally, Letao handed the basket to the boy and told him to hurry home to show it to his parents.

The boy was thrilled and ran home as fast as his feet would take him, only to find that no one was there. Anxious to show Letao's gift to his parents, the boy placed the basket inside the house and went out to find them. Minutes later, however, he returned with his parents to find the entire structure up in flames! The small fire had burned through the basket and destroyed the boy's house and was spreading to the surrounding houses as well. "Why did Letao trick me?" the boy asked himself as he ran back to where Letao was still sitting with the other boys. "Why didn't he tell me of the fire's strength and determination to spread and grow?" As soon as he spotted Letao, the boy asked him the same question: "Why did you trick me?" "What are you talking about?" Letao asked the boy. "My house is on fire!" the boy responded. "I did just what you said and took the basket back to my house so I could show the *kijeeek* fire to my parents. I left it there while I went to find them, and when we returned the whole house was on fire! What are we going to do now that our house has burned down?" Clearly exasperated, the boy was growing more frantic with every word he spoke.

Letao told the boy to calm down. "Go back to your parents," he said, "and you will see that all is well. The house is not burned. It is still standing." And with that, the boy ran back to his house and found that it was just as Letao had said.

Moments later the boy turned to see Letao and his brother standing behind him. "See, everything is fine," Letao told the boy. "The house is still standing and no one is hurt. And, more importantly, you now know what *kijeeek* fire is, what it can do, and how to use it to meet your needs." With that, Letao and Jemāluut returned to the beach, boarded their boat, and continued on to Tōrwa Island to the southeast in Maļoeļap Atoll.

From that time forward, the people of Likieep had *kijeeek* fire and knew how to use it to cook their food. They also learned how to keep the flames contained so they would not destroy their homes, their land, or their lives. Since that time, they have preserved this

knowledge in stories like this one, which continues to circulate on Likiep and around the Marshall Islands even today, carrying with it important lessons and warnings about the benefits and risks of welcoming strangers to the islands—and, even more importantly, about the persistence of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture, values, and ways of life even when they appear on the surface to be up in flames.

Ļetao Narratives, *Ri-pālle* Imperialism, and the Sale of Likiep Atoll

Of the characters that appear regularly in contemporary *ri-aelōñ-kein bwebwenato* stories and other oral traditions, the trickster Ļetao is among the best known, the most recurrent, and certainly the most entertaining.¹³ In fact, Ļetao and his comedic feats and challenges to *ri-aelōñ-kein* structures of cultural and social authority are familiar to *ri-aelōñ-kein* young and old who have learned, preserved, and perpetuated these narratives for generations and to the extent that they now form “the core of the modern Marshallese storytelling repertoire.”¹⁴

While analyses and interpretations of Ļetao narratives tend to focus on what they reveal about *ri-aelōñ-kein* engagements with and perceptions of contemporary American imperialism,¹⁵ the story of Ļetao on Likiep seems to offer insight into *ri-aelōñ-kein* experiences with, perceptions of, and resistance to cross-cultural encounter and *ri-pālle* imperialism in the late nineteenth century, as well as the conflicts and disputes that have arisen on Likiep Atoll regarding the validity of the exchange that took place between Iroojlaplap Jortōkā and Anton deBrum in 1877. With this in mind, I use the following pages to suggest that the narrative of Ļetao bringing fire to Likiep reflects the presumption held by more than a few ri-Likiep that the sale never took place at all and in turn embodies a much larger counternarrative and struggle by members of the Likiep community to resist the transformations that have taken place on Likiep as a result of the sale through various narrative, economic, and political tactics that are part of a centuries

¹³ McArthur, “Narrating to the Center of Power in the Marshall Islands,” 265.

¹⁴ McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies,” 268.

¹⁵ See, for example, Carucci, “The Source of the Force in Marshallese Cosmology” and McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies.”

long tradition of *ri-aelōñ-kein* opposition and resistance to the encroachments of *ri-pālle* and *ri-pālle* imperialism in their islands (see Chapter 2).

Following this discussion, I continue my exploration of the presumed sale of Likiep Atoll, with an emphasis on how the rapid spread of epidemic diseases such as typhoid fever and syphilis and their impact on the resiliency of the various *irooj* lines and of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* population more generally may have influenced Irooj Jortōkā's decision to transfer ownership of the atoll to Anton deBrum. In the process, I consider the possibility that, although Irooj Jortōkā's decision to sell seems to have been substantiated by this and other key factors considered in previous chapters—the value of the land itself, the recent context of blackbirding in northern Ratak, the increasing prosperity of southern Rālik *irooj*, the larger context of land sales throughout Rālik and Ratak, and Anton deBrum's association with Adolf Capelle and marriage to Likmeto, to name just a few—Jortōkā may not have recognized that the sale would effect the long term alienation of his successors from their position and status as *irooj* of Likiep Atoll. Indeed, as I have already suggested, Jortōkā likely regarded the sale of Likiep to the husband of his close relative not as a complete alienation of *irooj* and others from the land, but rather as a way to secure northern Ratak by further incorporating Anton deBrum into his genealogy through a culturally-sanctioned *kaat-eļap* replanting of a portion of his holdings with deBrum's *ri-aelōñ-kein* family.¹⁶

To be sure, Jortōkā could not have predicted that, just ten months after the original purchase agreement, Anton deBrum would resell Likiep to A. Capelle & Co.¹⁷ through a transaction that essentially divided ownership of the atoll among the firm's three business partners.¹⁸ Similarly, Jortōkā could not have anticipated that, soon after Likmeto's death on July 20, 1889,¹⁹ deBrum would marry a *kajoor* woman from Mājej or that their *kajoor* descendants and those of Adolf and Limenwa Capelle would join Likmeto's son Joachim in inheriting what had become their fathers' rights to Likiep

¹⁶ See Chapter 4 for more on *kaat-eļap*, *loiiō*, *āneen aje*, and *kamatmat* land transfers and their possible epistemological role in Jortōkā's decision.

¹⁷ "José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co."

¹⁸ "Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties."

¹⁹ Date taken from Likmeto deBrum's headstone, Aikne Island, Likiep Atoll.

Atoll. Nor could Jortōkā have known that this inheritance pattern would be legitimated by an 1887 declaration by the Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands,²⁰ by future negotiations and transactions between A. Capelle & Co. and the Jaluit Gesellschaft following the death of Charles Ingalls,²¹ and by further adjudications by subsequent Japanese²² and American²³ administrations of the Marshall Islands throughout the twentieth century. These misperceptions and half truths on the part of Irooj Jortōkā and Anton deBrum and his business partners are dramatized, I suggest, through the story of ̄etao on Likiep, which reveals the destructive outcomes that foreign knowledge and power have had on the lives and traditions of the people of Likiep and *ri-aelōñ-kein* more generally even as it reminds audiences that the so-called truth of history may not always be what it seems.

Dramatizing Imperialism

American folklorist Phillip McArthur suggests that ̄etao narratives such as the one recounted above are an essential medium for the “playful dramatization” of ambivalent and often conflicting *ri-aelōñ-kein* attitudes toward and experiences with imperialism in the Marshall Islands over the past seventy years.²⁴ Indeed, unlike his chiefly brother Jemāluut and cousin Jebro,²⁵ who together embody some of the most important features of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and earn their status and authority through genealogy and reverence for *ri-aelōñ-kein* values and traditions, ̄etao—perhaps not unlike the American naval and civilian administrations that were established in the Marshall Islands after World War II—continually gains his power through nontraditional methods that subvert the very *ri-aelōñ-kein* socio-cultural structures that Jebro and Jemāluut exemplify and represent. ̄etao does this on various occasions by forcibly taking over his father’s position as creator of islands, ruining an important *ri-aelōñ-kein*

²⁰ “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

²¹ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 100.

²² “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep.”

²³ “Civil Action No. 49.”

²⁴ McArthur, “Narrating to the Center of Power in the Marshall Islands,” 89.

²⁵ McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies,” 271.

food crop, and deceiving an *irooj* by giving him a boat made out of heavy *kōñe* wood, as well as through countless other often comedic antics not explored here.²⁶ On these and other occasions, ̄etao is a shifty and ambiguous character who attains authority not by upholding *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and traditions but rather by blurring distinctions between truth and lies, kindness and malice, friends and enemies. In the process, ̄etao becomes the antithesis of Jebrō, the ideal *ri-aelōñ-kein* chief (see Chapter 4), and of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture more generally.

While the Marshall Islands has a history of colonialism that long predates the establishment of formal structures of American authority following World War II, McArthur suggests that contemporary ̄etao stories function as explorations of and commentaries on American imperialism in particular,²⁷ from the naval administration in the mid-1940s and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands administered by the United States from 1947 to 1986 to the current Compact of Free Association arrangement between the governments of the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the continuing presence of the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site in Kuwajleen Atoll. Indeed, within this contemporary context of American imperialism in the Marshall Islands, ̄etao’s ambiguity “makes it possible for him to become a metaphor for” Americans²⁸—who, not unlike ̄etao, have been known by *ri-aelōñ-kein* to have ulterior motives in their supposedly supportive encounters and exchanges in the islands²⁹—by differentiating and even separating him from traditional *ri-aelōñ-kein* structures and sources of authority such as the *irooj* system.

In many accounts, ̄etao flees the Marshall Islands for the United States where he is captured in a bottle and only able “secure his release if he agrees to help the government with its experiments on planes, rockets, bombs, and spacecraft.”³⁰ As a result, the ambiguous ̄etao becomes not only a metaphor for American imperialism but

²⁶ For more on ̄etao and other *ri-aelōñ-kein* narratives, see McArthur, “Narrating to the Center of Power in the Marshall Islands” and McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies.”

²⁷ McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies,” 271-272.

²⁸ McArthur, “Narrating to the Center of Power in the Marshall Islands,” 91-92.

²⁹ The most devastating examples of American lies and deception revolve around American nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958. For more, see Barker, *Bravo for the Marshallese*.

³⁰ Carucci, “The Source of the Force in Marshallese Cosmology,” 91.

also a local source of foreign military and imperial power in the Marshall Islands, which his character in turn indigenizes and makes comprehensible as a local narrative of power, deception, and subversion.³¹

Historical Counternarratives: ̣etao and ̣o-lem

While it may be that contemporary ̣etao narratives reveal much about *ri-aelōñ-kein* perceptions of and engagements with American imperialism in recent decades, I suggest that, when considered historically, these stories offer insight into *ri-aelōñ-kein* experiences with and uncertainties about *ri-pālle* imperialism more generally over the past several hundred years. More specifically, the narrative of ̣etao bringing fire to Likiep helps illuminate various *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters with and memories of the complex and often chaotic late nineteenth century context in which the transfer of ownership of Likiep Atoll is said to have taken place, as well as the many tensions and divergences that have led to the construction of opposing interpretations of the events surrounding the sale. In this way, rather than exploring themes of more recent American imperialism in the Marshall Islands, the story of ̣etao on Likiep challenges the dominant narrative of land tenure on Likiep Atoll from the late nineteenth century onward and, in turn, the legitimacy of the atoll's unique land ownership structure into the present. In the process, the story "playfully dramatizes"³² the uncertainties and suspicions held by many

³¹ For McArthur, ̣etao's position as a metaphor for American military and imperial power is further confirmed by the idea that, following a long sojourn in the United States, ̣etao does not return to the Marshall Islands with the missionaries in 1857, with German traders and colonialists in the late nineteenth century, or with the Japanese in 1914, but returns instead with the Americans beginning in the 1940s and only after helping the Americans construct the very nuclear bomb that would destroy lives in the Marshall Islands for many generations to come. (In Barclay's retelling, ̣etao arrives on an incoming intercontinental ballistic missile launched from the west coast of California to be intercepted by an anti-ballistic missile launched from Meik Island in Kuwajleen Atoll.) The trickster's legendary return and alleged role as an indigenous source of American power in the islands is seen as further evidence that ̣etao narratives are an important medium through which *ri-aelōñ-kein* explore, explain, and comprehend American imperial power in their islands. Ibid., 92; McArthur, "Ambivalent Fantasies," 265-277; Barclay, *Mejal*, 291-293.

³² McArthur, "Narrating to the Center of Power in the Marshall Islands," 89. Also see Hanlon, "Dumping on Ebeye," 215-216.

ri-aelōñ-kein about cross-cultural encounter and exchange and the truth of history more generally.³³

Significantly, questions about the role and activities of *ri-pālle* on Likiep Atoll over the past century have centered not on American imperialism, but rather on the purchase of the atoll by Anton deBrum from Iroojlaplap Jortōkā and the subsequent division of ownership of the atoll among the three partners of A. Capelle & Co. Indeed, while many ri-Likiep have regarded the original sale as valid and legitimate, others have maintained³⁴ that the circumstances surrounding the purchase and its aftermath involved a range of deceptions and falsehoods that not only made the transaction possible but have also allowed the deBrum and Capelle families to retain ownership of Likiep ever since.³⁵ According to one counternarrative, Irooj Jortōkā did not actually sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum but rather gave Anton and his wife Likmeto one *wāto* land parcel known as Lō-lem on Likiep’s main island³⁶ as a wedding gift, meanwhile explicitly instructing them not to use any other *wāto* or island on the atoll. And yet despite the chief’s instructions, the account goes, deBrum went on to inform his business partners that he had purchased the entire atoll and that it was his to exploit and use as he wished.³⁷ According to this version of the sale, deBrum and the others soon began to clear land around the atoll for coconut plantations; then, after just a few years, the men moved their families to Likiep and cunningly turned to the Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands to validate their “ownership” of every parcel of land on every island surrounding Likiep Atoll’s 164-square-mile lagoon.³⁸

³³ McArthur further suggests that Letao’s introduction of fire—the “quintessential mark of culture”—makes him a culture hero by displaying his “mediating role between the categories of nature and culture” and his “ability to transform the raw into the cooked.” McArthur, “Ambivalent Fantasies,” 270.

³⁴ For example, Morris Tommy, interviews by Monica LaBriola, 26 August 2011 and 13 April 2012.

³⁵ See, for example, “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft)” and Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7.

³⁶ Although most of these stories suggest that Jortōkā only gave Anton and Likmeto Lō-lem Wāto as a wedding present and specifically told them not to use any other *wāto* or islands in the atoll, others propose that he gave them the entire main island of Likiep. Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7; Juda, “Land Problem: Likiep”; Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10-11.

³⁷ Morris Tommy, interviews by Monica LaBriola, 26 August 2011 and 13 April 2012.

³⁸ “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

The altered system of tenure that resulted from the alleged sale in turn effected the displacement or dispossession of many Likiep *ri-jerbal* workers (i.e., *kajoor*) and brought about a variety of social, cultural, political, and economic transformations that differentiate the atoll from the rest of Rālik and Ratak in terms of land tenure and structures of authority, with the major differences being the absence of the *irooj* system, the legal ownership of Likiep Atoll by the deBrum and Capelle families, and the relative marginalization of Likiep *ri-jerbal* into the present. With all this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that stories about ʔetao using trickery and deceit to bring a gift as powerful and transformative as fire to Rālik and Ratak take place on Likiep, where similarly ambiguous outsiders with connections to *ri-aelōñ-kein* families through marriage and paternity managed to acquire and retain ownership of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land and to in turn transform Likiep culture and society for generations to come under what many have considered uncertain and even questionable circumstances.

In the story of ʔetao on Likiep, these ambiguities and presumptions of dishonesty seem to be embodied in ʔetao himself, who, following previous attempts to subvert the chiefly authority of his father and brother, uses duplicitous means to make his way to Likiep and to gain access to the atoll's abundant resources. After using a young boy's pole to catch fish and directing the boy and his friends to gather breadfruit and other supplies, ʔetao further reveals his spuriousness when he presents the boy with the gift of fire, a novel and transformative technology that he has carried with him from another world, and yet fails to disclose the fire's destructive power or warn the boy about its many dangers. As a result, the boy burns down his own house before he has the chance to share the gift with his family. And while ʔetao uses magic to return the boy's home to its original state, the story nevertheless implies that lives, customs, and culture are transformed indefinitely as the people of Likiep adopt ʔetao's gift of fire into their everyday lives.

While it is tempting in some respects to liken the events and characters in the story of ʔetao on Likiep directly to Anton deBrum's purchase of Likiep Atoll from Irooj Jortōkā, with ʔetao representing Anton deBrum, the fire symbolizing the goods deBrum provided in exchange for the land and the many other material and economic gifts and

resources Jortōkā may have hoped the sale would bring to northern Ratak, and ʻĀetao’s trickery reflecting the possibility that deBrum and Capelle surreptitiously prearranged deBrum’s resale of the land to Capelle and failed to disclose deBrum’s resale of the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. ten months later (or that, as many ri-Likiep and others have presumed, Jortōkā did not sell Likiep Atoll to deBrum at all), it seems that to make such a direct comparison would be historically imprudent and genealogically insensitive at best. Indeed, Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle and their wives Likmeto, Likōmju, and Limenwa are revered by many ri-Likiep as the founding ancestors of two prominent *ri-aelōñ-kein* genealogies, and to decry their actions or intentions would do little more than fuel the flames of ʻĀetao’s legendary fire.

What’s more, in the absence of wholly original documents or testimonies verifying the actual course of events leading up to the sale of Likiep or peoples’ assumptions or intentions therein—indeed, even the deed of sale and various statements by Irooj Jortōkā listed in the Appendices at the end of this manuscript are copies of copies of presumed originals³⁹—it is difficult to reconstruct the events and decisions surrounding the sale with any real precision or to determine the intentions or assumptions behind peoples’ actions or decisions beyond a reasonable doubt. This together with the fact that Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle (and Charles Ingalls) were relatively upstanding members of their families and communities⁴⁰ make me hesitant to suggest that the *ri-pālle* or their partner Charles Ingalls tricked Irooj Jortōkā into selling Likiep Atoll or later lied about the circumstances under which the transfer took place for reasons that

³⁹ “Adolf Capelle Authorization for José deBrum to Purchase Land”; “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep”; “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”; “Agreement between Likiep ‘Natives’ and ‘Owners’ (1880)”; “Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll”; “A. Capelle & Co. Statement of Surrender of all Property (except Likiep)”; “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

⁴⁰ In an 1877 statement, Jortōkā refers to Anton deBrum as “gracious and true.” Several years later in the late 1890s, German ethnographer Augustin Krämer observed that Anton deBrum was “an old, experienced man” who “was respected as an old chief by the natives.” Not long after, Captain Winkler of the German navy noted that Adolf Capelle was considered an “old gentleman.” Charles Ingalls, meanwhile, was apparently such a “gentleman” that he could not bring himself to shoot the notorious Bully Hayes when he had the chance. Krämer, *Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa*,” 38; Winkler, “On Sea Charts Formerly Used in the Marshall Islands,” 490; *Micronesian Reporter*, “The Revolver that Didn’t Kill Bully Hayes,” 1. See Chapter 5 for more on Capelle’s prominence in Epoon society in particular.



Figure 34. Likiep owners and *irooj*, Likiep circa 1918
 Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image H-15)⁴¹

were solely in their own self interest⁴² even though the prevalence of conflicting statements and evidence across the various deeds and agreements surrounding the sale and subsequent consolidation of ownership certainly makes this possibility difficult to deny.

Perhaps even more significantly, it has been suggested that the subtext for the Letao narrative—that is, the possibility that Jortōkā did not sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum and instead gave Lō-lem *wāto* to Anton and Likmeto as a wedding gift for their personal residence and use⁴³—was strategically contrived by Joachim deBrum, Anton’s

⁴¹ This picture was taken on Likiep close to Joachim deBrum’s “big” house (known today as the Joachim deBrum House); in an interview, Leonard deBrum refers to the people in the picture as “all the family” and “our *irooj*.” Standing in the back row (left to right): Albert Capelle, Orlando Capelle, Irooj Lañmoj, Irooj Laibooj, Irooj Tomeing, and Raymond deBrum. Sitting on chairs (from left to right): Ellen deBrum, Adlina deBrum, Litor (wife of Irooj Labareo), Irooj Labareo (with hat), female chief Lerooj Limijwa, Lijoan deBrum (Joachim deBrum’s wife), and Joachim deBrum. Sitting on the ground in front (from left to right): Stella deBrum, Lerooj Libareo, Bernard deBrum, and Ernest deBrum. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

⁴² As I demonstrate later in this chapter, while deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls may have taken liberties with the purchase agreement and divided ownership of Likiep Atoll in a manner unintended by Jortōkā, it is reasonable to presume that they did this as part of a larger strategy to keep Likiep from being claimed by the Jaluit Gesellschaft, which became Germany’s administering body in the Marshall Islands in 1887 and gained the right to take possession of unoccupied land in 1888. “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep”; Firth, “German Firms in the Western Pacific Islands,” 24.

⁴³ Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7; Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10-11.

only son with his first wife and Jortōkā’s relative Likmeto. According to some accounts, Joachim fabricated the story as part of a larger plan to deny his younger half siblings (Anton’s children with his second wife Likōmju) and the children of Adolf and Limenwa Capelle rights to land and copra proceeds by aligning himself with Jortōkā’s *irooj* successors including Labareo, Lañmoj, and others who had hopes of reclaiming Likiep Atoll as part of their northern Ratak domain in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴ Indeed, as Likmeto deBrum’s only son and as the husband of Lijoan, a relative⁴⁵ of Irooj Labareo (see Figure 34), Joachim was in a privileged position to inherit the rights and title of *irooj-iddik* or sub-chief on Likiep in the event that ownership of the atoll was taken away from the deBrums and Capelles and returned to the successors of Irooj Jortōkā.⁴⁶ In an effort to gain allegiance and support in this endeavor, Joachim apparently spread the story among Likiep *ri-jerbal* workers and may have even played a key role in “fomenting the copra-making strike of 1926” by *ri-jerbal* against the deBrum and Capelle owners that ended with *ri-jerbal* making considerable gains in terms of economic and land security through an arbitration led by Japanese colonial official Takasaka Seiichi.⁴⁷ With this in mind, it is perhaps more accurate and appropriate to suggest that the story of ʔetao on Likiep functions as a playful dramatization not of actual people or events but of the ʔolem counternarrative that has been perpetuated as one interpretation of what might have transpired between Irooj Jortōkā, Anton deBrum, Adolf Capelle, and Charles Ingalls in August of 1877 and in the months and years that followed.

ʔetao Makes History

No matter their origins or intended purpose, counternarratives of the transfer of ownership of Likiep Atoll—of which the story of ʔetao on Likiep is just one⁴⁸—have

⁴⁴ Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10-11.

⁴⁵ Although Leonard deBrum refers Lijoan as Labareo’s daughter, Leonard’s older brother Raymond indicates that she was Labareo’s relative. In fact, Labareo was married to Lijoan’s aunt and Lijoan was the daughter of Irooj Jitiam of Mājro. See Chapter 2 for more on the flexible use of relational terminology in *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture. Ibid.; R. deBrum, interview by Jack A. Tobin; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

⁴⁶ Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10-11; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

⁴⁷ “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-jerbal*.”

⁴⁸ Ironically, the narrative of ʔetao on Likiep could be said to represent Joachim deBrum’s plot against his siblings and associates as much as it does his father’s purchase of Likiep Atoll several decades earlier.

persisted and become true⁴⁹ among many ri-Likiep and northern Ratak *irooj* and continue to serve as a discursive challenge to Likiep’s dominant historical narrative and to the legitimacy of economic and political structures of authority on Likiep Atoll into the present. As a result, while many ri-Likiep maintain that a legitimate transaction of land and merchandise took place between Anton deBrum and Irooj Jortōkā, conflicting interpretations of what kind of exchange it really was (i.e., a sale or a gift), of Jortōkā’s intentions in the exchange, and of the engagements of deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls and their descendants in the years immediately following the original transaction have plagued political and social relations on Likiep Atoll for more than a century.⁵⁰ In the process, ri-Likiep who see themselves as having been dispossessed or disenfranchised by the sale and by the politics and economics of land tenure and copra production since the late nineteenth century have turned to the uncertainties of history and the presumed fundamentals of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure and inheritance⁵¹ to not only promote the possibility that the sale of Likiep never occurred but also to confirm their culturally sanctioned role and place as owners of land and as legitimate members of Likiep culture and society.

Although many ri-Likiep dismiss such counternarratives as foolish, irrational, and, not surprisingly given the story’s alleged origins with Joachim deBrum, complete distortions of what actually happened in northern Ratak in the late 1870s—when asked about these kinds of dissenting views about the ownership of Likiep Atoll, for example, Anton deBrum’s great-granddaughter Teresa deBrum (who is also Adolf Capelle’s great-

⁴⁹ Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was*, 44.

⁵⁰ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99-101; Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10-11; Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7; Reimers, “*Kajitokin Kijien Likiep: Iroj in Ta?*,” 12. Also see “Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum”; “Power of Attorney: Adolf Capelle Heirs”; “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-gerbal*”; “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1947)”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1951)”; and “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft).”

⁵¹ It has been argued, for example, that while Jortōkā may have intended Likiep to go to his relative and Anton deBrum’s wife Likmeto, because Likmeto was from Maļoeļap and not Likiep she did not actually have any culturally valid claim to Likiep land. This claim seems to overlook the cultural practice of *kaat-eļap* and others which historically sanctioned *irooj* to “replant” islands with particular *bwij* as necessary and appropriate (see Chapter 4). Since landownership has been more or less fixed under successive *ri-pālle* colonial administrations since the late nineteenth century, this practice seems to be practiced much less frequently today and thereby may not be fully understood in contemporary society. Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7.

granddaughter) responded, “What for? We bought it!” and immediately produced copies of many of the documents listed in the Appendices to verify and even prove the legitimacy of the sale⁵²—I propose that these opposing viewpoints are an important part of Likiep’s history not only for what they reveal about the many truths that make up Likiep’s past and present, but also for what they suggest about *ri-aelōñ-kein* anxieties and uncertainties about the broader late nineteenth century context in which the sale of Likiep Atoll and other exchanges and transactions between *ri-pālle* and *ri-aelōñ-kein* took place and about the dangers and misunderstandings inherent in cross-cultural encounters and exchanges more generally.

While it may be the case that Joachim deBrum constructed and perpetuated the story of L̥-lem *wāto* for his own political and economic gain in the early part of the twentieth century, it is also true that more than a few ri-Likiep have accepted and propagated the counternarrative in spite of the availability of legal documents that suggest that the sale took place⁵³ and traditional knowledge that indicates that Irooj Jortōkā was culturally sanctioned to make such a transaction. With this in mind, it seems that the active and willing acceptance and propagation of the L̥-lem story—and, in turn, the story of L̥tao on Likiep—not only confirms a desire on the part of many ri-Likiep to regain a more traditional system of land tenure in their atoll, but also reveals a persistent unease and mistrust of the actions and motivations of *ri-pālle* both in and beyond Likiep

⁵² Teresa deBrum, interviews by Monica LaBriola, 20-22 July 2011.

⁵³ Morris Tommy suggests that there are surviving documents that prove that Jortōkā did not actually sell Likiep Atoll to deBrum, however I have not yet seen evidence of any documents other than those reproduced in the Appendices. This being said, it is possible that the documents Tommy has referred to are the same ones used by the deBrum and Capelle families to prove their ownership of Likiep Atoll but interpreted differently. These same documents suggest, for example, that although Jortōkā did transfer ownership of Likiep Atoll on August 14, 1877, he did not intend for that ownership to be transferred to A. Capelle & Co. ten months later or to be subsequently divided among deBrum and his two business partners in the years that followed. With this in mind, it could be argued that Jortōkā did not, in fact, sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum, Adolf Capelle, and Charles Ingalls; rather, he transferred it solely and explicitly to Anton deBrum who in turn divested himself of full ownership in a way never intended by Jortōkā. Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7; Morris Tommy, interviews by Monica LaBriola, 26 August 2011 and 13 April 2012; Juda, “Land Problem: Likiep.” Also see “Adolf Capelle Authorization for José deBrum to Purchase Land”; “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep”; “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”; “Agreement between Likiep ‘Natives’ and ‘Owners’ (1880),” “Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll”; “A. Capelle & Co. Statement of Surrender of all Property (except Likiep)”; and “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

Atoll over the past few centuries. More specifically, this inclination by some to adopt the Lō-lem counternarrative as truth may point to lingering questions and anxieties about the contentious historical context of the late 1870s—a particularly chaotic and traumatic time when *ri-pālle* gun violence, blackbirding, and introduced diseases were wreaking havoc on *ri-aelōñ-kein* families and communities all over Rālik and Ratak—and how particular events and circumstances may have contributed to Irooj Jortōkā’s decision to sell such a large portion of his land.

As I have already suggested, it was within this late 1870s context of devastation, destruction, and death that many *irooj* chose to follow the example of the late Irooj Kaibūke and Irooj Jeimata of southern Rālik by relying on the principal of *mejed kapilōk kōj* to let their “eyes advise” them and to align with *ri-pālle* they thought to be trustworthy and capable of staving off the chaos that was ruining the lives of so many. Understandably, Iroojlaplap Jortōkā aligned himself with Anton deBrum, a *ri-pālle* who had already been incorporated into his genealogy through marriage and who had strong ties to other *ri-pālle* who were not only resource wealthy but also well respected among *ri-aelōñ-kein*.

And yet despite what might have been a historically appropriate and culturally sanctioned decision on the part of Irooj Jortōkā to further incorporate Anton deBrum and, in turn, his associates into his realm of power and authority by re-planting Likiep Atoll with deBrum’s *ri-aelōñ-kein* family, centuries of lies, deceit, and violence inflicted by *ri-pālle* explorers, traders, and imperialists in Rālik and Ratak meant that *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters and exchanges with *ri-pālle* were often cast over by shadows of suspicion, doubt, and disbelief. In the years immediately following the sale of Likiep, these doubts were strengthened as deBrum and his *ri-pālle* business partners divided and perhaps even distorted ownership of Likiep Atoll in a way likely not expected or intended by Jortōkā, and have become further entrenched as historical distance, cultural change, and the politics and economics of copra production under successive colonial administrations have blurred the historical realities of the emerging colonial context of the late nineteenth century. These doubts have been reinforced, meanwhile, by centuries of misdeeds by *ri-pālle* that have been persevered and perpetuated in oral traditions and written documents

and serve as compelling reminders that even the most respected and beloved friends and family members are not immune to the exploits of their time or to the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that often result from the most well intentioned cross-cultural encounters and exchanges.

In the pages that follow, I continue my exploration of the cultural and historical context of the presumed sale of Likiep Atoll by Irooj Jortōkā, with a particular emphasis on how the destructive effects of some of the introduced diseases that were circulating around Ratak and Ratak in the 1870s may have advanced Jortōkā's decision to sell Likiep even as they contributed to increased suspicion and doubt among many *ri-aelōñ-kein* in their relations with *ri-pālle*. I also consider the possibility that the chaos and confusion of this period, together with surging *ri-pālle* power and authority in Rālik and Ratak, contributed to what may have been a host of cross-cultural miscommunications and misunderstandings of which the transfer of ownership of Likiep Atoll is just one example. Indeed, while historical and ethnographic evidence suggest that Irooj Jortōkā likely agreed to transfer Likiep Atoll to deBrum, it is unlikely that the *irooj* understood that the emerging colonial context that had in part effected his decision would also transform *ri-aelōñ-kein* landownership, overwrite the flexibility once inherent in *ri-aelōñ-kein* tenure, residence, inheritance, and succession with legal deeds that verified and fixed ownership indefinitely, and compromise his and other chiefs' sovereignty in Rālik and Ratak for many generations to come.

Nor is it clear if Jortōkā or his *irooj* and *aḷap* associates understood that, although deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls had much to offer northern Ratak in terms of economic, political, and even epidemiological resources, the three *ri-pālle* were nevertheless operating in an economic field that required aggressive competition and, increasingly, guaranteed access to land for plantations. As a result, the partners of A. Capelle & Co. may not have been immune to relying on subversion and half truths to secure access to the resources they needed to ensure the continued success of their business and to keep other *ri-pālle* enterprises and individuals from encroaching on their landholdings and exploiting their families on Likiep Atoll and beyond.

Likiep Purchase

It is said that, on August 14, 1877, two worlds came together on *Maļoeļap* Atoll as *Irooļapļap* Jortōkā and José Anton deBrum met to sign a document that sealed the fate of Likiep Atoll and its people for many generations (see Figure 35). Written in Jortōkā’s voice although surely not by his hand—indeed, neither Jortōkā nor Anton deBrum had any written literacy skills to speak of⁵⁴—surviving copies of the document⁵⁵ point to Jortōkā’s ostensible agreement to transfer all “estates,” “rights,” “titles,” and “interests” in and to Likiep Atoll, including those held by him or any other *ri-aelōñ-kein* whether *irooj* or *kajoor*, to Anton deBrum and “his heirs and assigns forever absolutely free from all claims [e]ncumbrances and demands whatsoever.”⁵⁶ Surviving document copies suggest that, in exchange for the land, Jortōkā received “merchandise consisting of cloth, hardware, cannon, muskets, ammunition, tobacco, etc., etc., to the value of twelve hundred and fifty dollars”⁵⁷ and that he signed the agreement with “his mark” as confirmation of the stated contract between himself and deBrum.⁵⁸

Accompanying Jortōkā that day were Lalik and Letouton, two men whose identities are uncertain but who were likely *irooj-iddik* or *aļap* of Likiep Atoll and may have been present to attest to their support of Jortōkā’s decision or to tap into their share of the goods the chief was to receive in exchange for the land. Also present as interpreters and witnesses were two *ri-pālle* traders by the names of H.L. (Otto) Löser and J.T. Elson,⁵⁹ Isaac Madison of Australia,⁶⁰ and Charles Henry Hallett Ingalls of Boston,

⁵⁴ This is demonstrated by the fact that both men signed multiple documents with their “mark” rather than a signature. “*Irooļapļap* Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

⁵⁵ Both Marshallese and English language copies of the document remain. “Deeds of Sale and Certificates, Relating to the Ownership of Likiep and Other Islands in the Marshall Islands Group, 1887-1905.”

⁵⁶ “*Irooļapļap* Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* See Appendix B for the full text.

⁵⁹ Hezel suggests that Löser and Elson were living on *Maļoeļap* at the time, however this is not certain. Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls.”

⁶⁰ While Isaac (“Ike”) Madison’s (also spelled Maddison) origins are not altogether clear, it appears that he migrated to Rālik and Ratak from Australia as early as 1864. He went on to marry a *ri-aelōñ-kein* woman named Annie; together they had one son Michael (“Mike”). *Ibid.* Maddison, “Isaac “Ike” Maddison, Came to Marshall Islands Early 1800s”; Maddison, “Re: Maddison Born Australia, Migrated from Europe.”

No. 253

I, Jortokā, Chief of Likiep
 and other islands of the Marshall
 Archipelago, on behalf of myself
 and all other persons having or
 claiming to have any right, title
 or interest in all that group
 of islands lying in latitude 9° 51' 30"
 north, longitude 169° 13' 30" east and
 known among my people as Likiep
 and named by Capt. H. G. Seward, Count
 Heiden Island, the northwest point
 of said island being in latitude
 10° 3' 40" north, longitude 169° 6' and
 the southeast point in 9° 47' longitude
 169° 21' East.

In consideration of merchandise
 consisting of Cloths, Hardware, Cannon
 Ammunition, Tobacco
 etc etc. to the value of two thousand
and fifty dollars paid to me
 this fourteenth day of August
One thousand Eight hundred and seventy
seven by José de Brum, the receipt
 whereof is hereby acknowledged
 I do hereby bargain, sell, release
 convey, assign and assign to the
 said José de Brum all and singular
 the before mentioned group of
 islands, to hold unto the said José
 de Brum, his heirs and assigns
 forever, absolutely, free from
 all claims, incumbrances and demands

Figure 35. Jortōkā’s statement of sale of Likiep to Anton deBrum, August 14, 1877
 Source: Cecil B. Gill Collection (partial translation and copy)⁶¹

Massachusetts.⁶² According to the text of the agreement, Madison and deBrum interpreted the contents of the document to Irooj Jortōkā before he signed it⁶³; Löser, Elson, and Ingalls, meanwhile, served alongside Lalik and Letouton—who, along with Jortōkā, may have agreed to the sale without fully understanding the implications of the agreement or deBrum’s intentions therein—as witnesses to the historic event.⁶⁴

⁶¹ “Irooj!ap!ap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.” See Appendix B for full text.

⁶² “Charles Henry Ingalls (1840-1896).”

⁶³ Although it is not stated, Ingalls and the others must have also read the document to deBrum who did not read.

⁶⁴ “Irooj!ap!ap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

The agreement at Maļoelap was evidently preceded by several weeks and possibly months of searching by Irooj Jortōkā and Anton deBrum for a group of islands that each man found acceptable and appropriate for his own needs and ambitions. Among the atolls considered were Wōjjā, a fertile group of islands to the southeast of Likiep, and Ādkup, a much smaller group of uninhabited islands just west of Wōjjā that had long served as a bird and turtle sanctuary and continues in that capacity today. After coming to a standstill over these two options—with Jortōkā unwilling to part with Wōjjā, one of northern Ratak’s most fertile atolls, and deBrum declaring Ādkup too small for his purposes—deBrum proposed Likiep Atoll, which at the time had few residents and remained overgrown following a series of recent typhoons and tidal waves but, unlike Ādkup, had a pass large enough to allow large ships into the lagoon (see Chapter 4).

Although he initially refused, Jortōkā agreed to sell Likiep following an impassioned plea by his relative and deBrum’s wife Likmeto, who reminded the old chief of his pronouncement several years earlier that she should marry deBrum⁶⁵ and, presumably, of the many complex genealogical, economic, political, and security factors underlying that decision (see Chapter 5). Having presumably already decided to sell a portion of his property to deBrum (as evidenced by their prior negotiations over Wōjjā and Ādkup), it was by then a matter of Jortōkā determining which of his holdings he was willing to part with in order to secure deBrum’s presence in northern Ratak, and his emotional exchange with Likmeto apparently sealed the deal.

Anton deBrum’s decision to purchase Likiep Atoll, meanwhile, was facilitated not only by Likmeto’s intervention, but also by an agreement deBrum made with his employer, business partner, and principle owner of A. Capelle & Co. just one week prior to the sale authorizing him to purchase land on his own accord. In a statement dated August 7, 1877, Capelle granted deBrum the “right and privilege to buy and bargain for, on his own account and risk all lands, islands or parcels of land he [wished] to purchase” and confirmed that nothing in the business agreement binding Capelle, deBrum, and their third partner Charles Ingalls should prohibit deBrum from making such an acquisition.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Leonard deBrum, interview by Mark Stege, 2001.

⁶⁶ “Adolf Capelle Authorization for José deBrum to Purchase Land.”

It was presumably with this document in hand—which, considering deBrum’s alleged presence in northern Ratak for several weeks or months prior to the purchase date, may have been delivered by Charles Ingalls from A. Capelle & Co.’s then headquarters in Jālwōj Atoll in southern Rālik—that deBrum presented Irooj Jortōkā with highly valued trade items and assurances of prosperity and security for the people of northern Ratak in exchange for sole ownership of Likiep Atoll several hundred miles to the northwest. As perhaps intended, the document likely confirmed for Irooj Jortōkā and his *irooj* and *aḷap* associates that Anton deBrum was negotiating the purchase independent of his affiliation with A. Capelle & Co. and that the *ri-pālle* would be the sole owner of Likiep Atoll—an impression that was corroborated by Likmeto’s involvement in the negotiations.

Despite Adolf Capelle’s documented assurances that Anton deBrum’s purchase of Likiep Atoll was on “his own account and risk,” the presence of Charles Ingalls as a witness at the August 14 transfer and, much more significantly, deBrum’s resale of the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. ten months later in exchange for two-thirds of its original value,⁶⁷ suggest that deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls may have regarded deBrum’s “independent” acquisition of Likiep Atoll as a way for the company to acquire rights to land that would have otherwise been inaccessible. Indeed, even as Capelle’s August 7 statement authorized deBrum to purchase land freely, the August 14 purchase agreement between Jortōkā and Anton deBrum contained no language preventing deBrum from independently selling the land at a future date.⁶⁸ With this in mind, it is quite possible that deBrum used his position as a member of Jortōkā’s extended family to acquire land that he would knowingly transfer to his employer in the months that followed.

Whatever the long term objectives of the partners of A. Capelle & Co. in the purchase of Likiep Atoll by Anton deBrum, a confluence of ecological, political, economic, safety, genealogical, and other factors and concerns seem to have contributed to Jortōkā’s active agreement to a transaction that he considered cautious, wise, and necessary given the political, economic, ecological, and epidemiological circumstances of that time. Among these considerations was the rapid spread of various introduced

⁶⁷ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

⁶⁸ “Iroojḷapḷap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

diseases such as typhoid fever and syphilis that were imposing devastating and seemingly unavoidable consequences on families and *bwij* across Rālik and Ratak. With this in mind, it is quite possible that Irooj Jortōkā regarded Anton deBrum’s affiliation with trained physician Charles Ingalls and Ingalls’ presence at Maļoeļap not as a threat to the integrity of his sale of Likiep, but rather as an asset that would further benefit the people of northern Ratak. This being said, while Ingalls’ presence at the signing could be understood as a foreshadowing of the events to come, Jortōkā likely regarded it as further evidence that he was making the best possible decision for his people at a particularly devastating time in the history of northern Ratak and of Rālik and Ratak more generally.

Disease and Land Sales in the Late Nineteenth Century

While little is known about most of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* and *ri-pālle* accompanying Anton deBrum on Maļoeļap on August 14, 1877, the American Charles Ingalls had fast become a prominent figure in Rālik and Ratak following his arrival to Arņo Atoll just a year earlier and his partnership with A. Capelle & Co. soon thereafter.⁶⁹ Ingalls may have already been so well-known, in fact, that—together with Anton deBrum’s marriage to Likmeto, Jortōkā’s desire to rehabilitate his land holdings and to ensure the safety and security of his people in northern Ratak, and the growing importance of the copra industry in Rālik and Ratak—the American’s presence on that fateful day in August contributed at least in part to Jortōkā’s decision to sign over a portion of his land holdings to Anton deBrum. And yet little did Jortōkā know that within just a few years, Charles Ingalls would enter into an agreement with deBrum and Adolf Capelle granting him ownership of one-third of Likiep Atoll until his death thirteen years after the original transfer of ownership.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, deBrum’s association with a *ri-pālle* medical doctor who had proven himself capable of alleviating the symptoms of diseases such as syphilis may have played an important role in convincing Jortōkā that selling Likiep to

⁶⁹ Ingalls replaced Edward J. Milne, a Scotsman who had worked for A. Capelle & Co. as a supercargo and accountant before passing away sometime in 1877. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 215.

⁷⁰ “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

deBrum was in the best interest not just of his family and *bwij* but also of northern Ratak more generally.

Charles Ingalls first arrived to the Marshall Islands via Apia, Sāmoa, where an unknown set of circumstances and vicissitudes had left him destitute. In 1876 he met notorious pirate and captain of the brig *Leonara* Bully Hayes,⁷¹ who happened to be on the lookout for a doctor to travel with him to Arņo Atoll in southern Ratak to treat Irooj Lekman for what he believed to be a “large syphilitic sore on his ankle” in exchange for one hundred barrels of oil.⁷² On learning that Ingalls was a trained physician, Hayes set out to convince the desperate American to venture with him to Arņo. Ingalls, who was so hard up at the time that his clothes “hung together by mere threads,” was easily convinced by Hayes’ offer of fifty barrels of oil for his services and joined the captain for the journey to southern Ratak.⁷³ Once on Arņo, Ingalls nursed Lekman’s wound despite being of the opinion that the sores may have progressed beyond full treatment.

Perhaps hoping to make a fresh start in life and probably recognizing that Bully Hayes was little more than a scoundrel and a crook with a dishonorable reputation among islanders and foreigners alike,⁷⁴ Charles Ingalls soon made the decision to remain in the Marshall Islands and said his farewells to Hayes and his crew.⁷⁵ Not long after, Ingalls became acquainted with Adolf Capelle,⁷⁶ who had relocated his growing business from

⁷¹ Bully Hayes was an American from Cleveland, Ohio who first arrived in Micronesia from Sāmoa with fellow pirate and swindler Ben Pease (see Chapter 5) and went on to take over Pease’s stations. “At Mile, he robbed a rival trader, abducted the irooj and his daughter, and threatened to flog the irooj.” Hayes continued much in this way until he was “killed in 1877 by a Dutchman.” (There is also a “Marshallese version of the death of Bully Hayes,” which indicates that the cook aboard the *Lotus* pushed Hayes overboard somewhere between Jālwōj Atoll and Kile Island.) *Micronesian Reporter*, “The Cook and the Pirate or the Death of Bully Hayes,” 6; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 175.

⁷² Before travelling to Sāmoa, Hayes told Irooj Lekman that he would find a doctor to treat him in exchange for one hundred barrels of oil. Hayes went on to offer Ingalls half the barrels in exchange for accompanying him to Arņo to treat the chief. Unknown, “Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls].”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Ingalls clearly recognized this; indeed, he is rumored to have attempted to shoot Hayes not long after with “a handsome pearl-handled revolver which a friend in America had sent him for the express purpose of doing away with” the notorious pirate. *Micronesian Reporter*, “The Revolver that Didn’t Kill Bully Hayes,” 1; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 175.

⁷⁵ Not long after delivering Ingalls to Irooj Lekman on Arņo, Hayes went on to swindle an A. Capelle & Co. agent on a neighboring atoll out of all the barrels of coconut oil the agent had collected. Unknown, “Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls].”

⁷⁶ It is not clear how Capelle and Ingalls initially became acquainted, however given the few number of *ri-palle* in the islands at that time and the frequency of travel around the atolls by missionaries and traders,

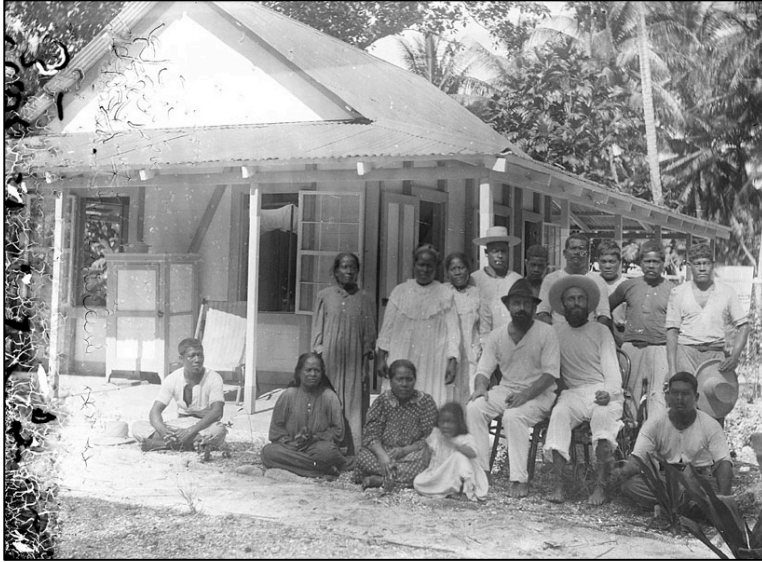


Figure 36. Charles Ingalls, Anton deBrum, and *ri-aelōñ-kein* associates, Likiep Atoll
 Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-631)⁷⁷

Epoon to nearby Jālwōj Atoll following the powerful and influential Irooj Kabua’s move to Jālwōj in 1873.⁷⁸ Now, just a year after joining Capelle’s firm, Ingalls was a key witness to, and possibly even a strategic actor in, a deal that would ensure Likiep Atoll and northern Ratak an important place in the burgeoning copra industry and assure the future success of A. Capelle & Co. in an increasingly competitive field. Indeed, although Charles Ingalls had only been in Rālik and Ratak for a few short months at the time of Anton deBrum’s historic deal with Irooj Jortōkā, it is quite possible that the doctor’s work with ailing Irooj Lekman⁷⁹ in Arņo Atoll⁸⁰ to the south was one of the many

Ingalls may have heard about Capelle from an A. Capelle & Co. or other trader on Arņo and made his way to Capelle’s new headquarters on Jālwōj soon thereafter. It is also possible that Anton deBrum, who seems to have been in charge of planting and overseeing some of the A. Capelle & Co. trading stations, arrived to Arņo and took Ingalls with him back to Jālwōj. Ibid.

⁷⁷ An unknown source has identified the two *ri-pālle* in the photo as Charles Ingalls (seated left) and Anton deBrum (seated right). The *ri-aelōñ-kein* pictured are not identified. “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” J-631 and J-631-card.

⁷⁸ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 215-216.

⁷⁹ Spelled Lakman in the original; also spelled Leikman and Lekeman in various sources. I have chosen to use the spelling found in Rynkiewich (1972). Unknown, “Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls]”; Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 4; Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 88-90.

⁸⁰ For more on Irooj Lekman, see Rynkiewich, “Land Tenure among Arno Marshallese,” 88-90.

complex factors that convinced the chief to sign over ownership of Likiep to deBrum on that August day.

While it has been reported that syphilis did not reach Rālik and Ratak until the late 1880s,⁸¹ oral testimony has traced its arrival to mid-century (1845 or 1850) when a group of *ri- Jālwōj* was shipwrecked on Kosrae⁸² only to return to Epoon several months later infected with syphilis.⁸³ The earlier presence of the disease is corroborated by Ingalls' encounter with Irooj Lekman at Arņo which suggests that syphilis and other introduced illnesses had already set in by the late 1870s.⁸⁴ As revealed by Irooj Lekman's festering ankle wound, syphilis was a ghastly disease that was already destroying the bodies and lives of individuals, families, and entire communities throughout Rālik and Ratak by the mid-1870s. Syphilis was so virulent, in fact, that, by the mid-1890s, an estimated fifty percent⁸⁵ or more⁸⁶ of the *ri-aelōñ-kein* population had contracted the disease, which was being passed not only between partners but also from mothers to their babies, many of who "lived only for a short time."⁸⁷ One observer described the horrors of the disease among *ri-aelōñ-kein* in this way:

Those organs which are most often infected by syphilis are the skin and bones with their joints. It is not rare to encounter persons in whose faces syphilis has wrought its ravages; such people show extensive scars, distortion of the lips, [inversion] of the eyelids and entire destruction of the nose. After the face the lower legs are most frequently visited by the destructive influences of the disease.

⁸¹ Several stories suggest that syphilis took hold in Rālik and Ratak after a group of *ri-aelōñ-kein* drifted to Kosrae, which had been a provisioning place for whalers for many years, and returned home infected with the disease. While Erdland places the story in the late 1880s, others suggest that a similar event took place sometime in the 1840s or 1850s. Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 12; Steinbach, "Bericht uber die Gesundheits Verhältnisse," 4.

⁸² Syphilis and other venereal diseases probably reached Kosrae via the American whaling ships that "called at the eastern Carolines before the middle of the last century to 'winter' there and to take on fresh provisions, water, and firewood." Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 12.

⁸³ Steinbach suggests that this incident took place in 1845 or 1850. He further speculates that syphilis was "also directly carried into the Marshalls by ships' crews." Steinbach, "Bericht uber die Gesundheits Verhältnisse," 6-7.

⁸⁴ By the early 1890s, several other diseases were prominent and having severe and sometimes fatal outcomes among *ri-aelōñ-kein*. These included, but were not limited to, chicken pox, typhus, tuberculosis, influenza, and dysentery. Ibid., 1-6.

⁸⁵ Steinbach, "The Marshall Islands," 297.

⁸⁶ Ibid.; Schwabe, "Bericht uber die Gesundheitsverhältnisse," 4.

⁸⁷ Erdland, "Die Marshall Insulaner," 12.

Swellings which cover the entire front surface, from the knee to the foot, are frequent. . . . Equally terrible are the limb deformations which are brought about through syphilis: hyperextension of the limbs, with flexions [that] are accompanied by pronation and supination, bringing about the most complicated positions of the hands and feet. . . . Infections of the larynx are frequent. . . . Cases involving the eyes included inflammation of the iris and the cornea; these often appeared for treatment. Once an almost complete case of deafness due to syphilis was encountered. . . . One patient who had been in my care for some time because of syphilis appeared to suffer from epileptic attacks.⁸⁸

Given syphilis's extremely contagious nature, all sectors of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society—men and women, adults and children, *irooj* and *kajoor*—were likely falling victim to these devastating symptoms by the late 1870s. Many who avoided the ravages of syphilis, meanwhile, yielded to other diseases including chicken pox, typhus, tuberculosis, influenza, and dysentery.⁸⁹ In fact, Irooj Kaibūke, a friend to Adolf Capelle and ally of Irooj Jortōkā,⁹⁰ lost his life in 1863 to typhoid fever, which was just one of the many other diseases that were “raging through the islands” at that time.⁹¹ And despite the wide reach of these and other introduced illnesses which by the 1870s were infecting and taking the lives of *irooj* and *kajoor* alike, venereal diseases such as syphilis seem to have been particularly destructive among *irooj*, who by custom observed relatively liberal sexual practices and often had more than one partner⁹² and may have in turn inadvertently affected the rapid spread of the previously unknown disease simply by engaging in customs that had long been part of their culture. The result was that “many high chiefs and their wives succumbed to the disease” early on.⁹³

Together with the overwhelming sadness these illnesses caused within families and *bwij*, *irooj* deaths often resulted in power vacuums and disputes over the succession of chiefly authority. The likelihood of conflict increased, in turn, when no strong or apparent heir to the *iroojlaplap* title survived, thus leaving the field open for rival *irooj* or

⁸⁸ Schwabe, “*Bericht über die Gesundheitsverhältnisse*,” 5-6.

⁸⁹ Steinbach, “*Bericht über die Gesundheits Verhältnisse*,” 1-6.

⁹⁰ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 166-167.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹² While perhaps more prevalent among *irooj*, this practice seems to have been widespread in pre-missionary *ri-aelōñ-kein* society. Senfft, “*Die Marshall-Insulaner*,” 8; Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 99.

⁹³ Steinbach, “*Bericht über die Gesundheits Verhältnisse*,” 7.

even *bwidak*⁹⁴ to take control of land and structures of authority.⁹⁵ Perhaps the most well known such dispute occurred following Kaibūke’s death to typhoid fever in 1863, which sparked decades of warfare, arguments, and court battles over land and titles between potential heirs and cousins Loeak and Kabua. The quarrel came to a head for the first time on Epoon in September 1876, just eleven months before Jortōkā finalized the sale of Likiep Atoll, as Kabua and Loeak⁹⁶ prepared to go to battle after Kabua claimed one of Loeak’s islands as his own.⁹⁷ And while the conflict between Kabua and Loeak would not play out on the battlefield for another four years,⁹⁸ it is quite possible that news of the rivalry—which was sparked by the death of Kaibūke and his niece Amine,⁹⁹ who, had she lived, might have passed the *iroojlaplap* title to a son—was becoming a source of anxiety among Ratak *irooj* as they watched the fallout of introduced diseases claim the lives of their *irooj* associates and rivals as well as cherished members of their own *bwij* matrilineages.¹⁰⁰

As rates of infection and death from syphilis and other devastating diseases increased throughout the 1870s—and as *ri-aelōñ-kein* across Rālik and Ratak struggled to

⁹⁴ *Bwidak* are the children of *irooj* fathers and *kajoor* mothers and are therefore not considered true *irooj* because they belong to the *bwij* in *kajoor* of their mother (see Chapter 3). For more, see Mason, “Economic Organization,” 33-39.

⁹⁵ It has been suggested that the deaths of *irooj* from syphilis and other diseases may have played a role in what has been called the “extinction” of the *bwij-in-irooj* bloodline in Rālik as *irooj* and *lerooj* in that area grew ill and died and perhaps became infertile in some cases before having children. Lokrap notes, for example, that the Rālik *irooj* bloodline ceased following the death of Kaibūke’s sister Libokean’s only daughter Amine who died without any children. While the cause of Amine’s death is not known, it is quite possible that she succumbed to one of the introduced diseases raging through the islands at that time.

Lokrap, “The Iroj of Ralik, Marshall Islands”; Steinbach, “*Bericht uber die Gesundheits Verhältnisse*,” 7.

⁹⁶ Accounts of this pre-battle on Epoon are not consistent, with some (e.g., Young 1875-1877, Hezel 1983, Walsh and Heine 2012) indicating that the dispute was between Kabua and Loeak and others (e.g., Lokrap 1949b) suggesting that it was between Kabua and Litōkwa. Either way, these and other disputes over land and power in southern Rālik following the death of Kaibūke may have fueled Jortōkā’s decision to secure an alliance with deBrum and his partners Capelle and Ingalls several months later.

⁹⁷ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 202. Additional research needed.

⁹⁸ Although custom held the elder Loeak as the rightful heir to Kaibūke’s title, Kabua was more popular among *kajoor* and enjoyed the support of *ri-pālle* traders who bolstered his position by designating him as “king” of Rālik. Indeed, it was not unusual for chiefly rivals to rely on factors beyond genealogy to bolster their social status and position. Mason, “Economic Organization,” 23-24; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 191, 202-205.

⁹⁹ Lokrap, “The Iroj of Ralik.”

¹⁰⁰ In 1893, Steinbach reported that Mājro, Epoon, and Jālwōj atolls were the most seriously affected by syphilis, which occurred much less frequently in the northern islands where *ri-aelōñ-kein* encountered *ri-pālle* much less frequently. Nevertheless, Steinbach indicates that all the islands and atolls of Rālik and Ratak were affected to some degree. Steinbach, “*Bericht uber die Gesundheits Verhältnisse*,” 6.

keep themselves and their family members safe, healthy, and alive as they realized that their local *wūno* medicines were no barrier against the threat of infection¹⁰¹—it is possible that *irooj* began to recognize the potentially destructive outcomes these illnesses could have for the future and viability of their own chiefly lines of succession. In fact, the death of Kaibūke and his niece Amine was probably just one of many examples of *irooj* and their children and heirs succumbing to these illnesses and other circumstances with no clear successor in place.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the decades long contest between Kabua and Loeak over Kaibūke’s land, title, and authority in southern Rālik, which was already well underway when Irooj Jortōkā and Anton deBrum met at Maļoeļap in 1877, was surely well known among *irooj* all over Rālik and Ratak, who would have been keenly interested in finding strategies to ensure that their own *bwij* and landholdings would not meet a similar fate.

Charles Ingalls and the Sale of Likiep Atoll

Given how quickly and easily information flowed between islands and atolls during this period,¹⁰³ it is quite possible that Jortōkā was familiar with the story of Ingalls’ arrival to Arņo with medicine¹⁰⁴ and other supplies and the medical knowledge to at least attempt to treat Irooj Lekman’s syphilitic symptoms together with other stories about the doctor’s efforts to treat ailing *ri-aelōñ-kein* around the islands. As a result, Jortōkā probably recognized that Charles Ingalls’ formal association with Anton deBrum’s employer A. Capelle & Co.—a firm that engaged and traded regularly with ships from Sāmoa, Hawai‘i, Australia, New Zealand, and beyond—had the potential to ensure continual or at least periodic access to the medical supplies necessary to treat some of the many diseases and symptoms that had thus far proven immune to local *wūno*

¹⁰¹ According to Erdland, *ri-aelōñ-kein* “were helpless against syphilis. Its evil consequences soon became manifest. Wounds festered and limbs rotted away. Babies lived for only a short time, and adults slowly wasted away, a curse against the Whites on their lips.” Erdland, “*Die Marshall Insulaner*,” 12.

¹⁰² There is no evidence that Amine suffered from any of these illnesses. Given how attentive *irooj* are to matters of title succession and landownership, however, her death was probably sudden and unexpected and came well before she had an opportunity to bear any children of her own, thereby leaving no female descents to carry her *bwij* on to the next generation. (See Chapter 2 for more on *bwij* succession.)

¹⁰³ For more see Spennemann, “Traditional and Nineteenth Century Communication Patterns.”

¹⁰⁴ Unknown, “Hayes & the Sick Chief & Dr. In[galls].”

medicines. With syphilis and other *ri-pālle* diseases raging through the islands compromising not only the lives of individual *ri-aelōñ-kein* but also the integrity, succession, and authority of various *bwij in irooj*, it is perhaps not surprising that Jortōkā, who had already lost a daughter to slavers and was surely aware of the possibility of losing other members of his immediate and extended family to one of these wretched illnesses, regarded deBrum's affiliation with the American physician Charles Ingalls as yet another reason to further integrate the *ri-pālle* into his genealogy by re-planting Likiep Atoll with deBrum and his wife Likmeto's family and *bwij*. In light of this evolving health crisis, Jortōkā would have recognized that Charles Ingalls had much to offer *ri-aelōñ-kein*, and may have in turn regarded Anton and Likmeto's ownership of Likiep as a way to guarantee the doctor a regular place in the social and epidemiological landscape of northern Ratak for many years to come. Together with deBrum's extended association with Jortōkā through Likmeto and Jortōkā's desire to make northern Ratak more competitive within Rālik and Ratak's growing copra trade, Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle's association with Charles Ingalls may help explain, in part, Jortōkā's decision to sell.

The American doctor Charles Ingalls' presence at the signing of the land agreement between Jortōkā and deBrum was just one of many complex and interwoven factors that contributed to what was likely a difficult decision on the part of the chief, and one that he did not approach lightly or easily or make solely in exchange for the physical and financial resources listed in the purchase agreement. Rather, Jortōkā's active decision to sell Likiep Atoll involved a host of considerations including the area's recent history of devastating typhoons and tidal waves and the condition of the land itself, the heretofore dominance of the atolls and *irooj* of southern Rālik in the copra industry, decades of terrorism and blackbirding by the likes of Ben Pease, Bully Hayes, and others, and Anton deBrum's marriage to his close relative.

Jortōkā's decision came about, meanwhile, at a time when *irooj* and other lineage heads all across Rālik and Ratak were actively conjoining these and other local historical circumstances with their culturally sanctioned authority to exercise discretion and flexibility in the distribution of land in an effort to enhance their physical, geographic,

and epidemiological security together with their economic, social, and political capital. These decisions were made possible by their rights as chiefs to employ the practice of *mejed kapilōk kōj* in order to let their “eyes advise” and to work within the structure of *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology to override typical matrilineal inheritance as necessary and appropriate. In the case of Likiep Atoll, Jortōkā seems to have done this by agreeing to a sort of revised *kaat-eļap* replanting of the atoll with a matrilineage he thought had the capacity, resources, and will to make the atoll and, he hoped, the rest of his domain in northern Ratak more productive, prosperous, safe, and healthy.

What Jortōkā probably did not realize at the time, however, is that it was probably not deBrum’s intent to retain ownership of Likiep Atoll exclusively for himself and his family. Instead, he would resell the atoll in its entirety to A. Capelle & Co.¹⁰⁵ just ten months after the original purchase agreement in a transaction that essentially divided ownership of the atoll among its three partners, who would register this joint ownership before the Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands in 1887 as required at that time by the German imperial administration.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, while Jortōkā likely sold Likiep Atoll with the best intentions in mind, it appears that the chief was not fully informed of the possibility that Anton deBrum was purchasing Likiep Atoll not for himself but rather on behalf of his employer, and that deBrum and his business partners had alternate and undisclosed plans for the atoll in terms of use, ownership, and inheritance.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Jortōkā may not have understood that the sale would

¹⁰⁵ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

¹⁰⁶ “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

¹⁰⁷ Seven days before Anton deBrum purchased Likiep Atoll from Jortōkā, Adolf Capelle composed a somewhat ambiguous written statement granting deBrum “the right and privilege to buy and bargain for, on his own account and risk all lands, islands or parcels of land he may wish to purchase.” While the meaning of this statement seems relatively clear on the surface, the statement also raises questions about Capelle and deBrum’s intentions going into the sale just seven days later. Why, for example, did Capelle need to construct such a statement, especially when deBrum had engaged in at least one similar transaction with Jortōkā seven years earlier at Oļōt Island, Maļoeļap Atoll? Why, meanwhile, did Adolf Capelle need to authorize deBrum to make a land purchase that was completely independent of his association with A. Capelle & Co.? Given that deBrum was, in fact, a partner in the firm A. Capelle and Co.—and, perhaps even more significantly, that he would resell Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. just ten months later—I cannot help but wonder if Capelle’s statement was intended to conceal the fact that he and deBrum had plans to transfer the Likiep title to A. Capelle & Co. soon after deBrum’s purchase. “Adolf Capelle Authorization for José deBrum to Purchase Land.”

permanently strip him and his successors of any future claims to or authority on Likiep Atoll.

Likiep “Planting” and Plantation

As I have demonstrated thus far, decisions by Rālik and Ratak *irooj* to give, lease, and sell their land to *ri-pālle* missionaries and traders during the mid- to late nineteenth century were wrought with complexity as *irooj* began to use their land and adjust their ownership structures in an effort to access *ri-pālle* economic, political, socio-cultural, and epidemiological resources they hoped would make life in the islands more sustainable, prosperous, and secure. With this in mind, I have suggested that Iroojlaplap Jortōkā of northern Ratak actively and strategically granted ownership of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum in an agreement he hoped would enrich and strengthen northern Ratak and ensure Likiep’s place within his realm and genealogy for generations to come.

Jortōkā’s active participation in the sale of Likiep Atoll is demonstrated by a variety of factors including a series of exploratory visits through northern Ratak prior to the sale during which Jortōkā not only made it clear that he approved of deBrum’s presence in the area and was willing to sell him land, but also that, as *iroojlaplap*, he would have the final say in terms of which land parcels or group of islands deBrum would be permitted to acquire. As I have demonstrated previously, Jortōkā refused deBrum’s first offer to purchase Wōjjā Atoll and initially declined to part with Likiep after deBrum rejected his offer of Ādkup Atoll, which deBrum found too small and without sufficient passage or anchorage for large ships.¹⁰⁸

Then, following Jortōkā’s initial refusal to sell Likiep, the negotiations reached a standstill until deBrum’s wife Likmeto intervened and approached Jortōkā at his home in Maļoeļap with her son Joachim in tow to convince Jortōkā that Likiep was the best choice for her family and that he should grant the land to her husband and allow them to move there.¹⁰⁹ It was apparently only following Likmeto’s entreaty that Jortōkā agreed to

¹⁰⁸ *Micronesian Reporter*, “Likiep Is Chosen,” 5.

¹⁰⁹ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 101; *Micronesian Reporter*, “Likiep Is Chosen,” 4-5; Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7; L. deBrum, “I Still Remember”; Leonard deBrum, interview by Mark Stege, 2001.

the sale and granted Likmeto permission to take Anton and Joachim to Likiep to make their life there. Indeed, after more than a decade of challenges and changes that had brought Jortōkā to the point of considering selling his land at all, Likmeto’s plea was the crowning incentive that convinced Jortōkā to make the sale. And while there has been some debate over the years as to whether Jortōkā sold the land for its “true worth”¹¹⁰ or, as I have demonstrated, whether he sold the land at all, Jortōkā’s presumed willingness to finally agree to the sale reflects a combination of historical and genealogical circumstances together with an assumption on the part of the *irooj* that the benefits of the sale and of re-planting of Likiep with deBrum’s family went well beyond the trade items listed in the original purchase agreement.

Not long after signing the agreement,¹¹¹ Jortōkā further demonstrated his approval of the sale by making an announcement confirming that he and several *irooj*¹¹² associates—one of whom might have been Irooj-iddik Lajen, a son of one of Jortōkā’s brothers who had been previously adopted by the chief¹¹³—had granted ownership of “lagoon, reef, and all islets of the atoll . . . to Mr. Jose DeBrum also known as Antone [*sic*].”¹¹⁴ With the statement, Irooj Jortōkā informed the people of Likiep that Anton deBrum had taken on the role of primary authority on Likiep Atoll. In turn, Jortōkā gave people the option of either remaining on the atoll or joining him on another island or atoll where he had land holdings and where he would presumably grant them use and

¹¹⁰ Ikirtok, “A Perspective on the Likiep Problem,” 7.

¹¹¹ It is not altogether clear when Jortōkā made this statement as it has no date. While the wording suggests that Jortōkā delivered it to the people of Likiep soon after the original sale took place, another document dated January 30, 1880 suggests that Jortōkā could have made the statement almost two and a half years after the original purchase agreement, which would have been a full year and a half after deBrum resold the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. This suggests that Jortōkā may not have been aware of deBrum’s arrangement with his employer. “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll.”

¹¹² Although Jortōkā’s statement suggests that he made this decision along with other northern Ratak *irooj* who sold Likiep and “divided the proceeds of the atoll,” it is unclear who these other *irooj* were or if any *alap* were involved in the decision. Portions of the statement also remain untranslated and require further attention and research. “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

¹¹³ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 99.

¹¹⁴ While the date of this announcement is unknown, the wording suggests that it was made not long after the August 14, 1877 agreement between Jortōkā and Anton deBrum. It is unclear whether Jortōkā actually wrote the original statement in Marshallese or if someone transcribed it on his behalf. “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.” See Appendix D for the original Marshallese text and a partial translation.

inheritance rights to make up for their losses on Likiep. The *irooj* also encouraged anyone who chose to remain on Likiep to obey (*pokake*) deBrum who, he assured them, would be “gracious and true” to those who chose to live under the discretion and authority of the new *ri-pälle* owner.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Jortōkā’s description of Anton deBrum suggests that the *irooj* had few if any doubts about his decision and that he regarded the *ri-pälle* as an honest and respectful man who would take good care of his land, his people, and, most importantly, his family.

Meanwhile, Jortōkā’s statement and his depiction of Anton deBrum therein evoke contrasting feelings about and memories of less amiable characters such as Captain Ben Pease and his agents and the unidentified slavers who had wreaked havoc in northern Ratak just a few years earlier. Indeed, Jortōkā’s praise of deBrum’s character is telling not just in terms of what it says about deBrum per se, but also for what it suggests about Jortōkā’s fears about the possibility of any of the *ri-pälle* residing in southern Ratak at the time heading north to his domain in search of land and profits. To be sure, Jortōkā made the statement at a time when former associates of scoundrel and blackbirder Bully Hayes and others seemed to be carving a place for themselves and buying land in southern Ratak. Among these was the Italian Basilio Terranova (also known as George Brown), who first arrived to Rālik and Ratak from Hawai‘i in 1867 aboard Captain Ben Pease’s ship *Blossom*.¹¹⁶ Soon thereafter, Terranova became affiliated with the much-despised Bully Hayes¹¹⁷ and by 1872 had acquired various *wāto* on Ine Island in Arņo Atoll from Hayes’ friend Irooj Lekman.¹¹⁸ In the meantime, other *ri-pälle* traders including Thomas Farrell, Henry Burlingame, and Giles Williams—at least two of whom

¹¹⁵ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep.”

¹¹⁶ Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Terranova purchased Lejalik, Lotadjeing, and Maneketak *wāto* on Ine Island (new spellings not available; spellings from the original). It is possible that, like Capelle in southern Rālik and deBrum in northern Ratak, Terranova had genealogical ties to southern Ratak through a *ri-aelōñ-kein* wife. It has been said that “shortly before his death Teranova [*sic*] transferred [his] property to Hensheim & Co. who undertook the obligation to transport Terranova’s six children to Sicily.” Given that Terranova had arrived to Rālik and Ratak as a ship hand aboard Pease’s *Blossom* and that he remained in the islands for at least twenty years, it is possible that the children were *ri-aelōñ-kein*. Ibid.; Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 4-5.

also had connections to Bully Hayes at one time or another¹¹⁹—had acquired land in the southern Ratak atolls of Mājro and Mile.¹²⁰

Competition for land and resources in southern Ratak further intensified when A. Capelle & Co. competitor Hershheim Co.—a firm that had purchased a portion of what was probably Emmeej Island¹²¹ in Epoon Atoll from Irooj Litōkwa a year earlier—purchased Maḷok Wāto on Mājro Island from Irooj Kaibūke¹²² not long before Irooj Jortōkā decided to transfer Likiep to Anton deBrum. It would surely not be long before these and other *ri-pālle* made their way north with the hopes of expanding their enterprises and increasing their profits, and it is quite possible that Jortōkā aimed to keep them away by fixing deBrum’s position in northern Ratak through a substantial sale of land. Anton deBrum may have capitalized on these fears by reiterating for Jortōkā the many benefits that would come from his family’s presence in northern Ratak and his sole ownership of Likiep Atoll. Meanwhile, in an effort to help safeguard Jortōkā’s people from these and other intrusions even as he knew that Jortōkā would only concede to the sale if deBrum was the sole purchaser, deBrum may have strategically avoided mentioning his intentions to transfer ownership of the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. within just a few months.

While the much feared Pease and Hayes no longer had an actual physical presence in Rālik and Ratak by the late 1870s—in fact, Hayes had been murdered just a few months earlier by one of his own crew and Pease had left the area in the early 1870s only to be killed in the Bonin Islands in 1874¹²³—their legacies lived on in the hearts and minds of *ri-aelōñ-kein*, many of who remained understandably cautious in their dealings

¹¹⁹ Henry Burlingame moved to Mājro from Pingelap Atoll to the southeast of Pohnpei in 1869 to work for Bully Hayes, which he did until at least 1871 and maybe longer. Although Burlingame lived on Mile Atoll for some time, by 1876 he was back on Mājro working for Adolf Capelle. Giles Williams also worked for Bully Hayes from 1875 until Hayes’ death in March 1877, at which time he signed on with A. Capelle & Co. Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls.”

¹²⁰ Unlike Burlingame and Farrell, Williams does not appear to have acquired any land. Farrell, meanwhile, suffered a series of setbacks and as a result left Rālik and Ratak after no more than a year despite his plans to “open a string of trading stations in the islands.” Ibid.; Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 14-15.

¹²¹ Spelled Medj in the original. Spennemann, “Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands,” 7.

¹²² This is not the same Irooj Kaibūke of Rālik who has been featured throughout this manuscript. Ibid., 13.

¹²³ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 169-175.

with newly arrived *ri-pālle* and in particular those who were associated with Pease, Hayes, or other criminals at one time or another. With this in mind, Jortōkā's description of deBrum may have been as much about the dangers of leaving northern Ratak vulnerable to the encroachments of unfamiliar and potentially malicious *ri-pālle* from the south as it was about deBrum himself.

Compared to the likes of Pease, Hayes, and their associates, deBrum was respected throughout Rālik and Ratak. Even more significantly, he was the husband of Likmeto and father of Joachim, which surely convinced many including Jortōkā that he was trustworthy on all counts. Perhaps with all this in mind, Jortōkā encouraged the people of Likiep to accept his decision to sell the atoll to his relative and to respect him much as they would a chief should they decide to remain on Likiep Atoll following the impending replanting. Surely, deBrum's presence in northern Ratak would lead to a more peaceful existence even as it ensured the preservation of Likiep Atoll within Jortōkā's extended genealogy.

And yet even as Jortōkā and other Rālik and Ratak *irooj* enthusiastically engaged in the sale and let of various *wāto*, islands, and atolls in their various domains during this period, their unique philosophies and beliefs about land and land tenure and inheritance may have led them to approach the transfers with fundamentally different assumptions about what the transactions meant for their own status and authority in relation to the land in question. Indeed, because *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology presume the divine origins and authority of the various *bwij-in-irooj*, *irooj* are bestowed with “unquestionable regality, leadership, and the ultimate authority in the administration of the land” under their domain (see Chapter 3).¹²⁴ In Rālik and Ratak, this status and authority cannot be traded, exchanged, or earned and persists even when an *irooj* is absent from his land or when he allots or assigns land to another person or *bwij*. It is quite possible that *irooj* preserved this notion in their various land deals and exchanges with *ri-pālle* traders in the mid-nineteenth century, and Irooj Jortōkā would have been no different in this respect.

¹²⁴ A. Kabua, “Customary Titles and Inherent Rights,” 5. Also see Oliver, *Oceania 2*: 977-978.

The standard *ri-aelōñ-kein* practice of *irooj* awarding or conferring land and land rights without giving up their title or position as *irooj*—a status that *ri-aelōñ-kein* consider not only divinely sanctioned but also inherently irrevocable and nontransferable—serves as further evidence that Jortōkā did not intend the sale of Likiep Atoll to totally and completely divest him or his successors of their *iroojlaplap* status and influence on the atoll. Indeed, when Jortōkā’s successor Labareo gave Jemō Island, a bird and turtle sanctuary east of Likiep Atoll to his niece Lijoan (who was also the wife of Anton and Likmeto deBrum’s son Joachim) through an *imōn aje* land gift (see Chapter 3), he did not give up his rights or position as *iroojlaplap* of that land in the process. Instead, Labareo designated Lijoan and her descendants as *irooj-iddik* or “small” chiefs of Jemō even as he retained his place and that of his successors as *iroojlaplap*.¹²⁵ And while Labareo and his inheritors remained *iroojlaplap* of Jemō following the *imōn aje* gift to Lijoan, all parties involved in the transaction surely understood that the high chief’s participation in the affairs and maintenance of the island would be relatively removed as Lijoan and her descendants took on the primary role of stewards and beneficiaries. Meanwhile, Lijoan and her descendants’ designated tenure of Jemō would have been considered permanent and irrevocable except under the most extreme circumstances such as a severe weather event or a serious transgression on the part of the new landowners.

With this in mind, it is possible that Irooj Jortōkā’s impression of what it meant to “bargain, sell, release, convey, assure and assign” Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum and his heirs “forever absolutely free from all claims incumbrances [*sic*] and demands” was much different than was assumed by deBrum and his partners.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, Jortōkā’s declaration to his people that he had transferred Likiep to deBrum, that he (Jortōkā) no longer had any decision in matters concerning Likiep, and that they should all obey deBrum from that point forward may have been more a reflection of Jortōkā’s cultural and epistemological understanding of what it meant to grant land rights to another person or *bwij* than a complete divestiture of his *iroojlaplap* claims. With this in mind, it is

¹²⁵ R. deBrum, interview by Jack A. Tobin.

¹²⁶ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

reasonable to assume that, although Irooj Jortōkā willingly participated in the sale of Likiep, he did so not only with the understanding that deBrum would be the sole “owner”, but also with the assumption that the transfer did not represent a comprehensive nullification his own authority as *iroojlaplap* of the atoll. To be sure, a wholesale reversal of this sort would have been culturally and epistemologically out of the realm of possibilities for Jortōkā and other *ri-aelōñ-kein*.

Dividing Ownership

Although it is unclear exactly when, by whose hand, or under what circumstances Jortōkā’s declaration to the people of Likiep concerning the sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum was composed, Jortōkā’s words in the statement indicate not only that he respected Anton deBrum, but also that he and his *irooj* associates envisioned the *ri-pälle* and, by implication, his wife and son and any children they might conceive in the future as the sole owner of and authority on Likiep Atoll following the sale. To be sure, while Jortōkā’s statement does imply a recognition of deBrum’s intent to use the land at least in part for a coconut plantation—he refers at one point, for example, to the “value” of the land and alludes to the possibility that deBrum would clear the underbrush and use it for copra production¹²⁷—nowhere in the announcement does Jortōkā mention the possibility that deBrum would surrender ownership of the atoll to A. Capelle & Co. or subsequently divide the land between himself and his partners Adolf Capelle and Charles Ingalls.

And yet, despite Irooj Jortōkā’s stated and implied intentions in the purchase agreement and in his subsequent declaration to the people of Likiep, Anton deBrum did not remain the sole owner of Likiep Atoll for more than ten months following the original transfer. Rather, on June 26, 1878, deBrum sold Likiep Atoll in its entirety “together with all buildings, trees, reefs, harbours [*sic*], and other appurtenances” to the partners of A. Capelle & Co. for \$886.73,¹²⁸ a sum that, while not stated explicitly, likely represented the combined shares of deBrum’s two business partners Adolf Capelle and Charles Ingalls who purchased two-thirds of Likiep Atoll and left the remaining one-third to

¹²⁷ “Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep.”

¹²⁸ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

deBrum.¹²⁹ In the statement of transfer, deBrum declared that, because he had lawfully been granted “all rights and privileges concerning” Likiep Atoll by Irooj Jortōkā ten months earlier, he also had the “full right and power to dispose of and alienate the” land in question¹³⁰ in whatever way he saw fit. The result was that Likiep Atoll was owned jointly and equally by A. Capelle & Co. partners Anton deBrum, Adolf Capelle, and Charles Ingalls, with the three conjointly owning the islands of Likiep, Lō-to, Mūkil, Piepe, and Āne-amej in the southeastern most part of the atoll and dividing ownership of the remaining islands more or less proportionately among themselves (see Figure 37).

Under this arrangement, Ingalls had sole ownership of the islands from Kōle to Jaltoon-ej (inclusive); Capelle owned the northern arc from Jaltoon-ej to Roñōddik (inclusive); and deBrum controlled the western rim between Roñōddik and Likiep Island.¹³¹ The partition was apparently based on the *ri-aelōñ-kein* practice of grouping territory according to *bukwōn* districts; on Likiep Atoll, the first *bukwōn* represented the property owned jointly by the partners of A. Capelle & Co.; *bukwōn* two and three belonged to deBrum; *bukwōn* four was claimed by Ingalls; and *bukwōn* five went to Capelle.¹³² Nine years later, on May 17, 1887, Adolf Capelle, Anton deBrum, and Charles Ingalls verified this arrangement by complying “with the German High Commissioner’s order whereby all foreign land-holders in the Marshalls were required to register their titles and prove their claims with proper documentary evidence” and registering their ownership of Likiep Atoll with the Imperial German High Commissioner

¹²⁹ According to the original purchase agreement, deBrum purchased Likiep Atoll for “cloth, hardware, cannon, muskets, ammunition, tobacco, etc., etc., to the value of twelve hundred and fifty dollars.” Since \$1250 divided equally into three parts is \$416.67, it can be assumed that the \$886.73 paid to deBrum on or around June 26, 1878 represented a buyout of two-thirds of deBrum’s claims to Likiep by Capelle and Ingalls plus a bit of interest or commission for deBrum for his efforts in the acquisition. It has been suggested that deBrum’s resale of Likiep was prearranged and that deBrum retained “for himself a one-third interest.” “Iroojlāplāp Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum”; “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”; *Micronesian Reporter*, “Likiep Is Chosen.”

¹³⁰ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”

¹³¹ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 100. Also see “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

¹³² Mason, “Economic Organization,” 100.

for the Marshall Islands.¹³³ Given Jortōkā's statement not long after the original sale in which he confirmed his approval of deBrum as the new and rightful owner of Likiep and all its appurtenances, together with the likelihood that deBrum's marriage to Likmeto played an important role in Jortōkā's decision to sell the atoll to deBrum at all, this was probably not the arrangement Iroojlaplap Jortōkā had in mind when he signed his mark to the original agreement of sale.

Despite documents that suggest that Anton deBrum resold Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co. on June 26, 1878, Jortōkā and the other *ri-aelōñ-kein* stakeholders on Likiep Atoll may not have been aware of the transfer for quite some time after its conclusion. Indeed, while the wording of Jortōkā's undated declaration regarding the original sale implies that the chief delivered the statement soon thereafter, further documentation indicates that Jortōkā may not have made the announcement until sometime in 1880 almost two years after deBrum's resale of Likiep to his employer.¹³⁴ In fact, a contract of tenancy signed by more than thirty *ri-aelōñ-kein*¹³⁵ and three *ri-pālle* representatives on January 30, 1880 makes no mention of deBrum's sale of Likiep to the partners of A. Capelle & Co. and instead indicates that Anton deBrum remained the "only and lawfull [*sic*] proprietor of" Likiep at that time. The language of the contract suggests, in turn, that the people of Likiep and perhaps Jortōkā himself had no knowledge of deBrum's division of ownership of the atoll among the partners of A. Capelle & Co. two years earlier. The possibility that Jortōkā and the others were not informed of deBrum's resale of Likiep is confounded, however, by yet another document also dated January 30, 1880 and signed¹³⁶ by many of the same *ri-aelōñ-kein* who signed the accompanying document of the same date that names A. Capelle & Co. as the "owner" of Likiep Atoll and thereby suggests that the various Likiep stakeholders did have knowledge of the resale at that time.¹³⁷

¹³³ Ibid. Also see "Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties."

¹³⁴ "Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll."

¹³⁵ Signed with their "mark" ("X"). Ibid.

¹³⁶ Signed with their "mark" ("X"). "Agreement between Likiep 'Natives' and 'Owners' (1880)."

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Despite their detailed and legalistic language, these assorted deeds, documents, and declarations likely did little to elucidate the people, events, or decisions involved in transforming Likiep Atoll's ownership structure for the various stakeholders involved. In fact, the many contradictions presented across these documents make it difficult to surmise what "really happened" and when—or what, exactly, those *ri-aelōñ-kein* with a stake in Likiep Atoll really understood about its sale and subsequent resale. These contradictions have in turn undoubtedly and understandably contributed to the presumption held by many that Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum's acquisition of Likiep was only made possible through deceptions and half truths or that the purchase did not really take place at all. This being said, it is perhaps not surprising that someone named "Letau" (i.e., ̄etao) was among the signatories of the January 30, 1880 document that makes no mention of deBrum's resale of Likiep.¹³⁸ Indeed, some might say it was the trickster himself who, in an effort to subvert *irooj* authority in northern Ratak, orchestrated the series of deals and negotiations that would eventually grant ownership of Likiep to the descents of two *kajoor* commoners from Epoon Atoll and Mājeje Island.¹³⁹

Regardless of what people knew or understood about the sale and resale of Likiep Atoll in the late 1870s, the land in question remained in the joint ownership of Anton deBrum, Adolf Capelle, and Charles Ingalls until Ingalls' death in 1896. At that time, Ingalls' widow Jennie, who apparently had little desire to remain in the Marshall Islands, transferred her husband's Likiep shares to the Jaluit Gesellschaft, a trade firm commissioned following Germany's annexation of the Marshall Islands in 1885 by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to administer Germany's possessions there beginning in 1888,¹⁴⁰ since deBrum and Capelle were "unable financially to relieve her of

¹³⁸ "Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll."

¹³⁹ Adolf Capelle's wife Limenwa was a *kajoor* from Epoon; Anton deBrum's second wife Likōmju was a *kajoor* from Mājeje. Together, their descendants would eventually inherit the majority of rights and assets on Likiep Atoll, with Joachim deBrum, son of Anton and his first wife Likmeto, inheriting only the portion allotted to him in his father's last will and testament. "Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum."

¹⁴⁰ Following Germany's annexation of the Marshall Islands in 1885 on the insistence of various German trading companies, Chancellor Bismarck "turned to the same firms for assistance in administering the new German possession. DHPG and Robertson & Hensheim both refused on the grounds that for them to assume full administrative responsibility would be too costly and would interfere with their business operations. [...] By January 1888, however, the German chancellor had broken down the opposition of the two big firms and persuaded them to establish a joint-stock company known as the Jaluit Company, which

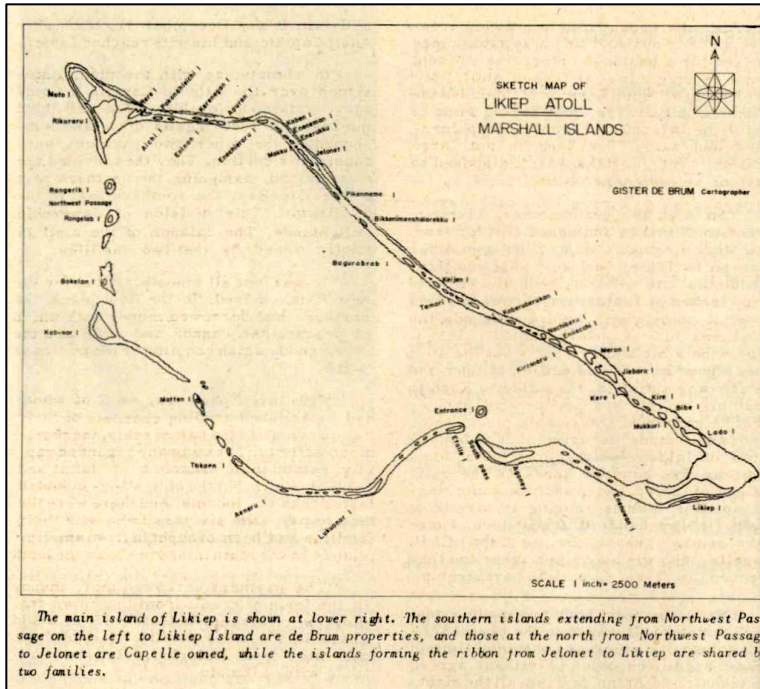


Figure 37. Map of Likiep Atoll Ownership (contemporary)

Source: *Micronesian Reporter* (January 1, 1959)

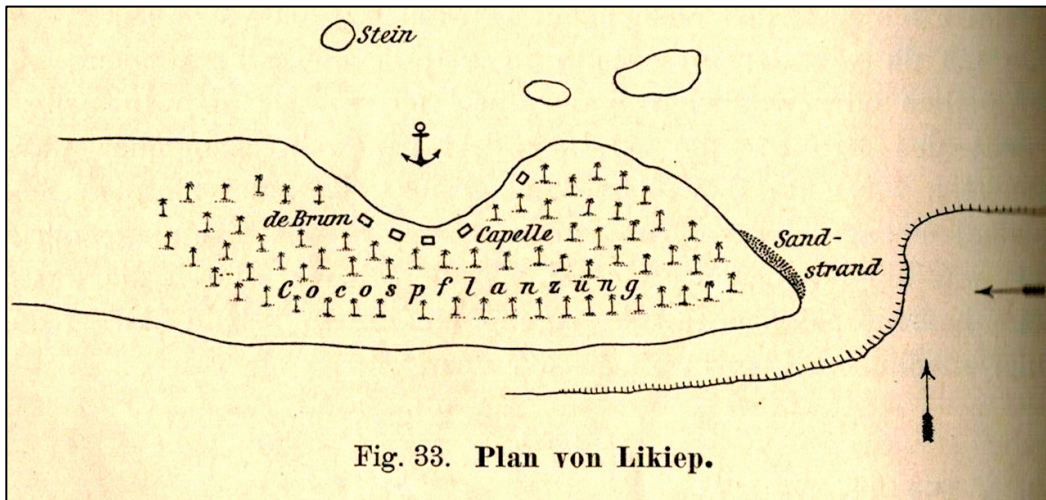


Figure 38. German map of Likiep coconut plantation, Likiep Island

Source: Augustin Krämer, *Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa*, 1906

would be empowered to take on the administration of the Marshalls in exchange for certain commercial benefits." Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 48. Also see Deutsches Reich, "Agreement between the Jaluit-Gesellschaft and the Reich 1888."

relieved of its interest in Likiep and the deBrum and Capelle families owned Likiep Atoll in its entirety.¹⁴³

At that time, Anton deBrum took legal ownership of the southern islands extending from Likiep Island to the northwest passage between Roñōddik and Roñolap islands, while Adolf Capelle took legal ownership of the northern islands from the northwest passage to Jaḷtoon-ej Island. The islands from Jaḷtoon-ej to Likiep, meanwhile, which included those islands previously under joint ownership together with Ingalls' former property, remained in the mutual possession of the two families as "joint plantation" lands (see Figures 37 and 38).¹⁴⁴ Various *wāto* land parcels or *lain* on Likiep Island and various other jointly owned properties were in turn divided among deBrum's eight children and Capelle's six children and their descendants (see Figure 39) in yet another arrangement that probably went well beyond what Jortōkā intended when he transferred Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum. Indeed, by that time, deBrum's first wife and Jortōkā's relative Likmeto, who had been so instrumental in convincing the chief to sell Likiep to her husband, had passed away. Anton deBrum, meanwhile, had taken a second wife—a *kajoor* woman from Mājej named Likōmju—with whom he had seven children (see Figure 40).¹⁴⁵

The result was that, following the deaths of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle in 1901 and 1905, respectively, Likmeto's descendants were not the only ones to inherit land and authority on Likiep Atoll as Irooj Jortōkā had perhaps intended with the original sale; instead, the land was divided among all of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle's fourteen children. This division was facilitated not only by the two men's consolidation of ownership following the death of their partner Charles Ingalls, but also by an additional flurry of legal documents through which deBrum and Capelle divided and bequeathed their land and copra proceeds to their heirs as they saw fit. To this end, Anton

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ *Micronesian Reporter*, "Likiep Is Chosen," 4.

¹⁴⁵ Anton and Likmeto deBrum had one son, Joachim deBrum. Following Likmeto's death, Anton deBrum married Likōmju of Mājej and they had seven children together: Domingo, Rose, Anton Jr., Melander, Capelle, Manuel, and Katherine. Adolf and Limenwa Capelle, meanwhile, had six children: Wilhelm Eduard ("Eduard"), Adolf Jr., Elija (or Elisa), Christian Wilhelm ("William"), Frederick ("Freddie"), and Godfrey (Spellings of names vary across texts.)



Figure 40. Likōmju deBrum and her children, Likiep circa 1904
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-829)¹⁴⁶

deBrum willed all his houses, furniture, and appurtenances to his wife Likōmju for her sole use. Meanwhile, he bequeathed to his eldest son Joachim (Likmeto's only child) one-fifteenth of all net revenues and income of his lands and plantations in advance of all his other heirs, with the remainder being equally divided among all his heirs including his wife Likōmju and all his children (Joachim included).

At the same time, deBrum used his last will and testament to confirm that his heirs were prohibited from selling any portion of his holdings at any time in the future and that they would instead pass their shares on to their own "lawful and legal heirs" (i.e., their children). So were they restricted from letting out parcels of land any larger than

¹⁴⁶ Pictured starting with the girl to the left of Likōmju (seated in chair) and moving clockwise: Katherine, Melander, Rose, Domingo, Anton Jr., Capelle, and Manuel (seated in front).

two or three acres for more than ten years at a time. Clearly, Anton deBrum and, presumably, Adolf Capelle had learned from the mistakes of Iroojlaplap Jortōkā, who had not had the foresight or the knowledge of *ri-pālle* legalism to insist on similar provisions in the original Likiep Atoll purchase agreement.¹⁴⁷

Plantation

In the midst of these deals, acquisitions, procurements, registrations, transfers, and consolidations of ownership and title, Likiep Atoll was being gradually transformed from overgrown and typhoon-damaged brush land and small subsistence communities and outposts into a relatively large and productive coconut plantation, plantation village, and boat building hub. The transformation began soon after Anton deBrum transferred ownership of the atoll to his employer with efforts to clear the land of underbrush and fell coconut trees that were too old to be productive.¹⁴⁸ While these efforts started off slowly and gradually due to an initial lack of funds and labor,¹⁴⁹ they accelerated following the arrival of *ri-aelōñ-kein* and other laborers from around Rālik and Ratak and neighboring island groups and the subsequent relocation of the Capelle and deBrum families to Likiep from Jālwōj Atoll in southern Rālik in 1883. In fact, within just nine years of the families' move, Likiep Island¹⁵⁰ had been cleared of all brush and replanted with 8,500 young coconut trees across more than fifty hectares (123 acres). Between 1891 and 1892, more than twenty-five additional hectares (sixty-one acres) were brought under cultivation and the atoll produced more than 210,000 pounds of copra.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, Likiep's growing ship building establishment was supplying "excellent, large sailing

¹⁴⁷ At this time, I do not have access to Adolf Capelle's last will and testament or information about how he divided his land or proceeds among his heirs. Further research is needed. "Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum."

¹⁴⁸ L. deBrum, "I Still Remember."

¹⁴⁹ Drucker, "Social Conflict in Likiep," 4.

¹⁵⁰ Since the terms "island" and "atoll" are often confused in translations from German and other languages, it is not clear if "Likiep Island" refers to Likiep Island proper or the whole of Likiep Atoll.

¹⁵¹ Germany Reichstag, "*Denkschriften betreffend (Jahresberichte über) das Schutzgebiet der Marshall-Inseln (1893-1894)*," 4.



Figure 41. Building the *Likiej* circa 1907
 Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-695)¹⁵²

vessels” to the German protectorate and to the neighboring Caroline and Gilbert Islands.¹⁵³

Since many of those residing on Likiep Atoll following its resale in 1878 decided to follow Jortōkā to Maļoelap in order “to avoid becoming tenants on the land of A. Capelle and Company,”¹⁵⁴ the initial transformation of the atoll into a productive copra plantation was largely made possible by the labor of dozens if not hundreds of migrants from other parts of Rālik and Ratak including Maļoelap, Mājej, and Mile, and from the Caroline Islands where A. Capelle & Co. maintained an active presence.¹⁵⁵ While those who came over from Maļoelap were recruited by their relative Likmeto, ri-Mājej who

¹⁵² According to Leonard deBrum, this photo was taken in 1907 at Mōjetōnpat Wāto on Likiep Island. The boat was called *Likiej* after the evening star (according to the MOD, *likiej* means windward or eastern side of an atoll). The men pictured are (from left to right): Lokajojo, Lenkwon, Nabunbun, Loboit, and chief carpenter William Harris. “Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection,” J-695.

¹⁵³ An 1896 report by the German Reichstag states: “During the past year four large schooners have been built in Likieb and have had their seaworthiness tested. These are the ‘Ebon’ (50 tons), now the property of Captain Cameron of the Gilbert Islands; the ‘Jaluit’ (20 tons), belonging to chief Kabua; the ‘Laurak’ (20 tons), belonging to the chief Loiala; and the ‘Maggie’, [*sic*] belonging to the trader, Gordon [Flemming], of Maloelab. The schooner ‘Ebon’ was built under the direction of a White shipbuilder, and the other three by the half-breed sons of de Brum and Capelle. The timber for these boats had, of course, to be imported since there is no timber in the protectorate suitable for construction, the heavy ironwood and coconut-tree-wood breaking like glass.” Germany Reichstag, “*Denkschriften betreffend (Jahresberichte uber) das Schutzgebiet der Marshall-Inseln (1894-1895)*,” 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 117.

¹⁵⁵ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 216.

arrived early on were mainly refugees of a civil war that was plaguing their island at the time. Friends and relatives of these early Mājej migrants later made their way to Likiep after hearing about the opportunities for wage labor on the growing plantation, with Anton deBrum’s second wife Likōmju being among this group. Still others came in from Arņo and Mājro via Maļoeļap after escaping civil strife in their home atolls and being sent to Likiep from Maļoeļap by Irooj Jortōkā. Yet another group came in from Mile in southern Ratak, where Capelle had many friends “and was able to persuade a few of them to locate temporarily on his plantations on Likiep.”¹⁵⁶ These groups of *ri-aelōñ-kein* were also joined by people from Yap, Chuuk, and the Mortlocks in the Caroline Islands who were “brought in on short contracts but were subsequently returned” to their homes even as many of their ri-Ratak associates established a more permanent presence on Likiep Atoll. Whereas ri-Mājej settled primarily on the islands along the east side of the atoll, from Āniiej to Jaļtoon-ej, ri-Mile settled on Maat and Emejwa Islands on the northern end. Descendants of the original Likiep inhabitants, meanwhile, worked on Maat Island under the leadership of a woman named Limojlok, on Emejwa Island under the *aļap* lineage head Labingwitok, as well as on Jepaļ Island on the eastern edge of the atoll.¹⁵⁷

As deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls consolidated their ownership of Likiep and brought in laborers to work on the atoll’s growing copra plantation, Likiep *irooj* and *kajoor* and their rights and obligations to their landholdings on Likiep Atoll were actually and semantically supplanted by two new groups and categories of people—owners and *ri-jerbal* workers—only some of who had customary rights to Likiep land and inheritance.¹⁵⁸ In the process, Irooj Jortōkā and the other *irooj* of Likiep Atoll were replaced by deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls who, through a series of legal documents and agreements, declared themselves the legal “owners” of Likiep Atoll in an arrangement

¹⁵⁶ Mason, “Economic Organization,” 117-118.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Because Anton deBrum’s first wife Likmeto was a relative of Jortōkā and is thought to have been one of Jortōkā’s primary motivations in replanting Likiep Atoll with Anton deBrum and his family, the descendants of Likmeto’s son Joachim are considered by some to be customary owners of Likiep in addition to being legal owners. The *ri-aelōñ-kein* children and descendants of Adolf Capelle and his wife Limenwa of Epoon together with those of Anton deBrum and his second wife Likōmju of Mājej, meanwhile, became legal owners without customary title or claim to the land. This distinction would become important as deBrum and Capelle’s *ri-aelōñ-kein* descendants struggled to forge an identity and make a place for themselves on Likiep Atoll and in the larger culture and society of Rālik and Ratak.



Figure 42. Charles Ingalls and Anton deBrum clearing Likiep Island circa 1879
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image J-155)¹⁵⁹

that was later corroborated and sealed by the Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands. The new “owner” designation was subsequently passed on to the children of deBrum and Capelle whose descendants have retained legal ownership and the owner designation ever since. With the possible exception of the descendants of Likmeto, however—and this remains up to debate—Likiep owners are generally not considered to have culturally sanctioned rights to the land beyond legal ownership or to possess the social and cultural authority or divine qualities reserved for *irooj*.¹⁶⁰ Today, their ownership of Likiep continues to be confirmed instead by copies of legal documents that not only attest to Jortōkā’s sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum but also legitimize deBrum’s transfer of ownership to A. Capelle & Co., as well as by copies of the various contracts and agreements that followed these transactions.¹⁶¹

Likiep ownership is further corroborated, meanwhile, by an array of histories and genealogies—both oral and written—that identify the 1877 purchase as Likiep’s

¹⁵⁹ According to Leonard deBrum, this picture was taken on the main island of Likiep when Anton deBrum, Charles Ingalls, and various *ri-aelōñ-kein* men started clearing the island to get it ready for A. Capelle & Co.’s coconut plantation. The coconut trees pictured are too old to be productive and were cut down and replaced with new plantings. In the picture, Anton deBrum is on the right, Charles Ingalls is on the left, and an unidentified *ri-aelōñ-kein* man is between them. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

¹⁶⁰ Reimers, “*Kajitokin Kijien Likiep: Iroj in Ta?*,” 12.

¹⁶¹ See Appendices.

historical starting point and Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle and their wives as its founding ancestors. Among these is a “True Genealogy of Likiep” that appeared in the *Marshall Islands Journal* in 1996 (see Figure 43), possibly to prove genealogical descent and rights to land as part of a political campaign, which not only validates deBrum and Capelle ownership of Likiep, but also overwrites centuries of history and the various other genealogies—*irooj* and *kajoor* alike—that continue to regard Likiep as their rightful *lāmoran* heritage land.

Meanwhile, those *kajoor* who migrated to Likiep Atoll from around the Ratak islands and beyond in search of work and refuge, together with the few ri-Likiep who chose to remain on the atoll following its sale and subsequent transfer, came to be referred to interchangeably as *ri-jerbal*, *kōṇakō*, and *ri-kilmeej*, with *ri-jerbal* denoting people’s employment as plantation workers, *kōṇakō* being derived from the Hawaiian *kanaka* meaning person or laborer, and *ri-kilmeej* meaning black skinned person, a derogatory designation that referred to the sometimes darker skin color of *ri-jerbal* who, with few exceptions (e.g., Likōmju deBrum), did not intermarry with owners during this period.¹⁶³ Together with deBrum and Capelle’s claims to ownership, these designations effectively devalued *kajoor* by redefining them as plantation workers and stripping them of many of the rights and responsibilities otherwise extended to *kajoor* within *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and epistemology. In the process, the renaming served to overwrite and in turn delegitimize the customary position of Likiep *kajoor* and *alap* lineage heads as secondary owners of the land and thereby strengthened claims to sole ownership of the atoll by Capelle, deBrum, and Ingalls. At the same time, it served to distinguish *kajoor*-owners (i.e., the children of Limenwa Capelle and Likōmju deBrum) from those *kajoor* who were plantation workers and to thereby further differentiate the two groups and their roles and positions in Likiep’s new plantation economy.

Just as Likiep’s land and geography were undergoing a major transformation under the supervision of deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls, so were the economics of

Teresa deBrum; it includes her handwritten notes and additions. *Marshall Islands Journal*, “*Korkan Likiep Eo Emol*,” 17.

¹⁶³ For a more detailed explanation of these designations, see “Names and Naming: Likiep, Marshall Islands, and Beyond” immediately preceding Chapter 1 of this manuscript.



Figure 44. Family of Aloa preparing to clear Piepe Island, Likiep Atoll circa 1907
Source: Joachim deBrum Photograph Collection (Image H-45)¹⁶⁴

landownership and copra production dramatically altering socio-cultural patterns and relations throughout the atoll. These changes were substantiated by a contract initiated by A. Capelle & Co. that redefined the rights of *ri-jerbal* who chose to remain on Likiep, which under Jortōkā or any other *irooj* would have ideally followed *ri-aelōñ-kein* customary practices of redistribution and reapportionment, as those of “tenants at will” who were required to follow assorted rules in relation to the functioning and maintenance of Likiep Atoll as a copra plantation. By abiding by these regulations, those *ri-jerbal* residing on Likiep Atoll were in turn permitted to stay on as residents and granted the opportunity to work for A. Capelle & Co. for “current wages at the rate of two Dollars a month, to be paid to them by” the company “from time to time in trade.”¹⁶⁵

Beginning on December 31, 1883,¹⁶⁶ these and other transformations to Likiep Atoll geography, structures of authority, and social relations were accelerated when the families of Adolf and Limenwa Capelle and Anton and Likmeto deBrum relocated to the atoll¹⁶⁷ from their headquarters in Jālwōj following the bankruptcy of A. Capelle & Co.

¹⁶⁴ According to Leonard deBrum, most of the people in this picture are the family of Aloa, a Likiep *alap* lineage head. The family lived on Piepe Island to the north of Likiep Island. In this picture, they are preparing to clear parts of Piepe for coconut planting. L. deBrum, “I Still Remember.”

¹⁶⁵ “Agreement between Likiep ‘Natives’ and ‘Owners’ (1880).”

¹⁶⁶ *Micronesian Reporter*, “Likiep Is Chosen,” 5.

¹⁶⁷ It is not clear whether the family of Charles Ingalls resided on Likiep Atoll before his death in 1896.

earlier that year. Indeed, as one of the few¹⁶⁸ possessions not sold by the firm to DHPG and subsequently transferred to the Jaluit Gesellschaft in 1887, the land and people of Likiep experienced these effects intensely as Capelle, deBrum, and Ingalls increased their efforts to transform Likiep Atoll into a coconut plantation and boat building hub. On Likiep Island proper, these efforts were compounded by the construction of a European inspired village whose buildings, roads, and manicured lawns little resembled the geographic, cultural, or social landscape of Rālik and Ratak.

Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum's move to Likiep with their large families also brought with it a pseudo-*ri-pālle* lifestyle that included a reliance on imported trade goods, intensified missionization, and the establishment of schools and an increasing emphasis on *ri-pālle* style education that were often restricted to owners and were in turn used to uphold the atoll's new structure of ownership and authority. These transformations had many far reaching consequences for land tenure and inheritance, land use and cultivation, and island ecology and biodiversity—and, in turn, *ri-aelōñ-kein* culture and cultural practices, many of which are still being felt today by the various groups and constituencies who maintain interests in that place.

Contested Ownership, Contested Histories

And yet, as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, not all members of the larger Likiep community have accepted these transformations unreservedly; instead, they have employed a variety of narrative and other strategies to contest the validity of the sale of Likiep Atoll and the legitimacy of the system of ownership and structures of authority that have dominated the atoll for more than a century; in the process, they have managed to carve out a place for themselves in Likiep's altered physical, cultural, and hegemonic landscape. And while perhaps not ideal from the perspective of many Likiep *ri-jerbal* and *aḷap* lineage heads (and would-be *irooj*), the result has been a system that is a far cry from the *ri-pālle* style fee simple ownership Capelle, deBrum, and Ingalls likely

¹⁶⁸ Hezel notes that in 1883 “Capelle & Co sold its stations on Kosrae, Ponape, and seven islands in the Marshalls for seven thousand dollars and retrenched to its plantation on Likiep and the few other small holdings that it retained.” It is not clear, however, where these other possessions were located or when they were subsequently sold. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 304.

envisioned in 1877 and in practice remains in many ways uniquely and culturally of the islands even today.

Following the sale of Likiep and its subsequent transformation into a copra plantation and colonial village, these strategies took on a variety of explicit and more subtle forms—refusals to work,¹⁶⁹ wage increase demands and requests for higher copra returns,¹⁷⁰ the formation of worker associations,¹⁷¹ appeals to missionaries and colonial administrators,¹⁷² lawsuits,¹⁷³ marriages and alliances between owners and *ri-jerbal*, secret and open discussions about overthrowing Likiep owners and returning to the *irooj* system,¹⁷⁴ the preservation and perpetuation of oral traditions and counterhistories, and many others—which have together allowed ri-Likiep to transform the atoll’s *ri-pālle* inspired ownership structure perhaps more than it has transformed them or their land, values, culture, and beliefs. In the process, these resistances have contributed to the formation of a hybrid system of tenure which, despite the intent and efforts of deBrum, Capelle, and Ingalls to transform Likiep into a western style plantation and village through fee simple ownership, challenges western concepts of landownership by continuing to recognize the traditional rights of Likiep *aḷap* and *ri-jerbal* to a certain degree. In this way, while the various changes on Likiep since its sale have certainly been profound, they have been far from complete as Likiep owners and *ri-jerbal* have found ways to adapt their always-already changing culture and epistemology to the requirements of the copra industry, several colonial administrations, and the now independent government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. These and other challenges and resistances should perhaps come as no surprise since, as I have demonstrated throughout this manuscript, *ri-aelōñ-kein* have been confronting,

¹⁶⁹ One such work stoppage took place in 1976 after the deBrums and Capelles brought in an Australian plantation supervisor who many *ri-jerbal* considered unfair in his labor and supervisory practices. Ikirtok, “Likiep Man Says Treatment Forced Work Stoppage,” 10.

¹⁷⁰ “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-jerbal*.”

¹⁷¹ “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep.”

¹⁷² Ibid.; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-jerbal* (1947)”; “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft)”; “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-jerbal* (1951)”; “Civil Action No. 49”; Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, “Likiep Atoll Excerpt.”

¹⁷³ Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, “Likiep Atoll Excerpt.”

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 10.

negotiating, and contesting foreigners and foreign influences and ideas since *ri-pālle* first arrived on their shores nearly 500 years ago.

Chapter 7. Conclusion: *El Jān Juron*: Uprooted Pillars

El jān juron: “‘Uproot the pillar.’ This term was an expression used to describe the dilemma faced by the surviving islanders when their *Irooj* was killed in battle. The literal meaning makes reference to the four pillars supporting the *mon kijidik* or traditional family home. Just as such a home would fall upon removal of one of its four essential pillars, so an island society would experience similar stress upon the sudden fall of its chief.”¹

For more than a century, ownership of land and rights to copra proceeds on Likiep Atoll have been debated and contested among various sectors of Likiep society and on occasion in the presence of representatives of successive imperial administrations of the Marshall Islands. In 1926, July and November 1947, 1951, and 1955, Likiep *ri-jerbal* workers challenged the owner-descendants of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle on tenancy rights, labor contracts, and copra production and proceeds before Japanese colonial officials and representatives of the United States Navy and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.² Significantly, the final outcomes of all five disputes were decided not by *ri-aelōñ-kein* but rather by the representatives of foreign imperial regimes. Meanwhile, not one of the rulings questioned the legitimacy of Likiep’s ownership structure or the complete absence of the *irooj* system on the atoll and none challenged the assumption that envoys of Japan and the United States were justified in adjudicating the domestic affairs of *ri-aelōñ-kein* on Likiep Atoll or in the Marshall Islands more generally.

On July 10, 1926, a group of thirteen *aļap* lineage heads argued before Japanese official Takasaka Seiichi that “in accordance with the promise of ... Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle[,]” *aļap* and *ri-jerbal* had the right to “half the copra production in Likiep Atoll” and to dispose of it as they wished.³ At issue was who could purchase copra from *ri-jerbal* and who would bear the burden of the costs of production if copra proceeds were divided equally between owners and *ri-jerbal* as deBrum and Capelle had

¹ Stone, *Jabōnkōnnaan in Majel*, 30.

² “The Likiep Trial,” 10.

³ “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-jerbal*.”

apparently intended,⁴ with owners asserting that they should be the sole purchasers of Likiep copra on the one hand and that they could not afford to provide food or transportation for *ri-jerbal* out of their half of the profits on the other. In the end, Takasaka directed owners to pay the stated expenses and required that *ri-jerbal* continue to receive fifty percent of copra proceeds as outlined in a memorandum of understanding drawn up by deBrum and Capelle before their deaths.⁵ He also ruled that *ri-jerbal* were required to “store their copra in the Likiep Warehouse,” which meant they could sell their copra only to the owners and not to any outside individual or agency.⁶ Along the way, concerns about *ri-jerbal* tenancy and land rights on Likiep were raised; in the end, Takasaka ruled that *ri-jerbal* would “have permanent tenant rights in their respective areas of management” and “full control over” those areas.⁷

Four months later on November 22, a second Japanese official confirmed that, much like *irooj* on other islands and atolls, Likiep owners were required to pay taxes on all copra produced on their land. The same official identified those pieces of land that were assigned to *ri-jerbal* who were not descendants of deBrum and Capelle and named an *aḷap* for each.⁸ Together, the 1926 rulings represented small victories for Likiep *ri-jerbal* whose rights to land and copra proceeds were validated by the highest authority in the Marshall Islands. At the same time, they confirmed that as long as Japan continued to administer the Marshall Islands as a foreign colonial power, neither owners nor *irooj* would be fully in control of land or governance on Likiep or on the neighboring islands and atolls of Rālik and Ratak.

Not long after the defeat of Japan by the United States in World War II, portions of the 1926 agreements were reiterated by representatives of the United States Navy and the TTPI. First, on April 15, 1947, owner Anton deBrum, Jr. and *aḷap* Monna went before E.B. Miller, Commanding Officer for the United States Military Government Unit with headquarters on Kuwajleen Atoll, who confirmed that Likiep owners would

⁴ Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 5-6.

⁵ So far, I have not been able to access a copy of the memorandum of understanding.

⁶ “Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-jerbal*.”

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep.”

continue to “provide copra knives, cutting knives, axes, screen for ovens and storage ovens” for the production of copra and that “the price of the copra [would continue to] be divided half to the landowners and half to the workers.”⁹ Then, on February 20, 1951, just five months before governance of the Marshall Islands officially passed from the United States Navy to the United States Department of the Interior,¹⁰ twenty-nine owners and thirty-four *ri-jerbal* went before the United States District Director of Internal Affairs. The Director’s ruling echoed those of his colonial predecessors by declaring that owners should continue to provide the tools, materials, and transportation necessary for the production of copra, that *ri-jerbal* were required to sell their copra directly to owners, and that *ri-jerbal* would maintain the right to live on and work the land assigned to them as long as they followed the provisions outlined in the agreement at hand.¹¹ At the same time, the ruling corroborated the authority of the TTPI District Court to “settle land matters” and to impose any “injunctions, fines, penalties, or damages, including the restoration of the land to the Owners” as it deemed necessary “to insure compliance with the provisions and intent” of the agreement. With this, the District Court validated its own authority in all matters concerning control and ownership of land on Likiep Atoll and throughout the Marshall Islands.

On October 10, 1955, these judgments were confirmed yet again and this time by Chief Justice E.P. Furber of the Trial Division of the High Court of the TTPI Marshall Islands District. In a ruling dubbed Civil Action 49, Justice Furber reiterated those of 1926, 1947, and 1951 and more clearly outlined the rights and obligations of owners and *ri-jerbal* on the atoll. To this end, Furber declared that in the parts of Likiep where rights to work had been assigned to anyone who was not an heir of Adolf Capelle or Anton deBrum, Sr. (i.e., *aḷap* and *ri-jerbal*), the total property rights of any descendant of Capelle or deBrum (i.e., owners) would mirror the rights of an *irooj!apḷap* on pieces of land with *aḷap* lineage heads and *ri-jerbal* workers but no *irooj-iddik* sub-chiefs.¹²

⁹ “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-jerbal* (1947).”

¹⁰ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 276.

¹¹ “Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-jerbal*” (1951).

¹² This format resembles ownership structures in Rālik where there are no *irooj-iddik* sub-chiefs as there generally are Ratak.

Meanwhile, *aḷap* and *ri-gerbal* assigned to the same pieces of land would maintain “the usual [*aḷap*] and [*ri-gerbal*] rights and obligations under the Marshallese system of land law in connection with land so assigned them, except as their rights and obligations [had] been expressly modified by agreement.”¹³

With this, the judgment granted *iroojḷapḷap* status to the owner-descendants of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle and confirmed *ri-gerbal* (i.e., *kajoor*) status for all others to whom they had assigned land—a conclusion that would be captured years later in the Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and still stands today.¹⁴ Owners would sustain the rights and privileges of *iroojḷapḷap* only as they pertained to property and land tenure, however, which at the time would not carry “any governmental powers or any ceremonial rights”¹⁵ or the deific status bestowed on *irooj* at birth according to *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom. The ruling thus codified the fact that, despite their primary ownership of land on Likiep, owners are not true *irooj* since, with perhaps a few exceptions, they are not appropriately descended from Iroojrilik’s basalt rock pillar-daughters Liwātuonmour and Lidepdepju who made their way to Rālik and Ratak from the west so many generations ago (see Chapter 2).

At the same time, the judgment confirmed that despite the hopes expressed by some among Jortōkā’s successors including Irooj Labareo and Irooj Lañmoj during the first part of the twentieth century about the possibility of regaining title to and control of the atoll,¹⁶ the *irooj* system on Likiep had been made obsolete through a series of legal documents and maneuvers by Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle and their descendants and decades of legalistic corroboration by Germany, Japan, and the United States. Together, these efforts were presumed to advance Irooj Jortōkā’s 1877 decision to absolve himself and his successors of any ties to Likiep Atoll in exchange for merchandise valued at approximately one thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars.¹⁷

¹³ “Civil Action No. 49.”

¹⁴ Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands reserves one seat on the Council of Irooj for a Likiep owner. All other seats are reserved for *iroojḷapḷap*. “Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.”

¹⁵ “Civil Action No. 49.”

¹⁶ Drucker, “Social Conflict in Likiep,” 11-12.

¹⁷ “Iroojḷapḷap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum.”

Meanwhile, owners' part European heritage, fluency in German and English, and high educational achievement allowed many of them to form alliances with and in some cases attain positions of rank within the successive colonial administrations.¹⁸ These relationships may have in turn had some bearing on the fact that ownership was not officially raised as a matter of discussion during the contestations over residency and copra proceeds from 1926 to 1955.

Much like its antecedents, the 1955 ruling also reiterated that the absolute "powers of government over the lands in question" and the Marshall Islands as a whole "rested with the officials duly constituted by law."¹⁹ In the mid-1950s, said officials were American administrators of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which oversaw the governance of the islands until 1986 when the Marshall Islands officially gained independence after just over a century of formal and indirect imperial rule that continues to undermine *ri-aelōñ-kein* sovereignty even today.²⁰ This weakening of *ri-aelōñ-kein* sovereignty was formally set in motion with the signing of the Jaluit Harbor Treaty in 1878 by a selection of German traders and *irooj* including Irooj!ap!ap Kabua of Rālik. In addition to granting Germany "most favored nation" status in the Marshall Islands, the treaty "gave German authorities the right to settle disputes" and thus effectively stripped *irooj* of many of their traditional socio-cultural roles and responsibilities.²¹ *Ri-aelōñ-kein* sovereignty in the islands was further undermined by the German Treaty of Friendship of 1885 and an agreement between the Jaluit Gesellschaft and the German Reich in 1888, with the former prohibiting *ri-aelōñ-kein* from leasing or selling land to any foreign government other than Germany and the latter authorizing the Jaluit Gesellschaft to administer the Marshall Islands on Germany's behalf and to annex any unowned land and

¹⁸ Anton and Likmeto deBrum's grandson Raymond was appointed Recorder of Courts in Majuro under the TTPI. Anton and Likōmju deBrum's grandson Oscar was the TTPI District Administrator for the Marshall Islands District for many years. Drucker, "Social Conflict in Likiep," 12; Hanlon, "Dumping on Ebeye," 209.

¹⁹ "Civil Action No. 49."

²⁰ Presently, the Marshall Islands is an independent nation in free association with the United States, a status that has led some to question the country's sovereignty and autonomy. Underwood, "The Amended U.S. Compacts of Free Association," 2.

²¹ Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 192.

oversee all land purchases, maintain a monopoly on trade, and impose taxes.²² While it is unlikely that Irooj Kabua or his co-signatories intended to relinquish their hegemony by signing on to these agreements, their marks and signatures have been considered proof that *ri-aelōñ-kein* either willingly sacrificed their autonomy in exchange for the material and other resources the Germans had to offer or were tricked into signing the contracts by malevolent foreign imperialists.²³ The result was that *irooj* greed and naïveté came to share the blame for what would turn out to be more than a century of foreign imperial rule in the Marshall Islands.

On Likiep, *ri-pālle* dishonesty and Jortōkā's eagerness to acquire guns, ammunition, and tobacco have been similarly pegged as the source of the centuries long displacement of *irooj* and *ri-gerbal* from their *lāmoran* heritage land,²⁴ with little regard for the possibility that Jortōkā's decision to sell was motivated by a host of complex and sometimes contradictory circumstances and considerations that are not captured by his signature or "mark" on the 1877 sale agreement. The fact that Jortōkā was just one of many *irooj* during that period who saw land sales and leases as a means of empowerment rather than as a step toward the perhaps unanticipated loss of sovereignty is also frequently overlooked—as is the likelihood that, despite Jortōkā's preliminary willingness to sell his land, deBrum and Capelle's perpetual ownership of and empowerment on Likiep were facilitated first by a certain level of deceit on their part and later by the formal institution of German imperialism and establishment of the Jaluit Gesellschaft which endorsed deBrum and the others as primary owners and leaders of the atoll. Meanwhile, the bankruptcy of A. Capelle & Co. and sale of the majority of its holdings except Likiep to DPHG in 1883, the consolidation of most other foreign landholdings by the Jaluit Gesellschaft beginning in 1887 and A. Capelle & Co.'s registration of ownership of Likiep Atoll in the same year, and the continued recognition of the legal ownership of Likiep by the owner-descendants of deBrum and Capelle under three successive colonial administrations has meant that, while Jortōkā's original sale of

²² Deutsches Reich, "Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire (1885)"; Deutsches Reich, "Agreement between the Jaluit-Gesellschaft and the Reich (1888)."

²³ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 305.

²⁴ Ikirtok, "A Perspective on the Likiep Problem," 7.

Likiep was not an exceptional event within the context of mid- to late nineteenth century Rālik and Ratak, the atoll's ownership and leadership structure became unique and has remained so into the present.

When I started assembling this preliminary history of Likiep, it was my intent to explore this distinctiveness and the many ways Likiep's physical, socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes have been transformed since Jortōkā's fateful 1877 decision, along with the unofficial counternarratives and oppositions that have challenged those transformations and in some cases the sale itself for more than a century. As I started writing, however, I quickly came to understand that conflicting evidence and debates about Jortōkā's intent as well as the validity of the land deal would make it difficult to construct a history that assumes the sale of Likiep Atoll as its starting point without exploring the cultural and historical context and circumstances that made the sale possible, probable, and desirable for the *irooj* of northern Ratak at that time.

I also realized that although several historical and other written works have made initial attempts to explain the apparent sale of Likiep and its socio-cultural repercussions (e.g., Drucker 1951, Hezel 1983 and 1995, Hezel and Berg 1979, Ikirtok n.d., Mason 1947, *Micronesian Reporter* 1959, and Walsh and Heine 2012), none has gone beyond Jortōkā's signature on the contract to consider the complex ethnographic and historical context and circumstances that may have contributed to the chief's decision to sell his land or the resulting formation of counternarratives that have called the veracity of that decision into question for decades. At the same time, no work of scholarship has engaged in a rigorous historical evaluation of the importance of land in *ri-aelōñ-kein* society and its central role in *ri-aelōñ-kein* encounters and negotiations with *ri-pālle* from the late-1850s to the late 1880s in particular.

Meanwhile, the few works that delve into the relationship between land and power in the Marshall Islands (e.g., Hezel 2001 and 2013, Pollock 1974, Rynkiewich 1972, K. Stege 2008, Tobin 1956, Walsh 1995, and Walsh and Heine 2012) tend to approach the issue through a presentist lens that does not adequately consider the possibility that *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure beliefs and practices in the pre-colonial period

and throughout the pseudo-colonial possession of the Marshall Islands by Spain²⁵ differed considerably from those that have emerged since the institution of more formal colonial administrations and their accompanying land regulations beginning with the Germans in the mid-1880s.²⁶ At the same time, because Likiep remains the only privately owned group of islands in the Marshall Islands today, these studies largely neglect the numerous land sales and leases that took place between *irooj* and *ri-pälle* beginning with Kaibūke's first gift of land to the missionaries in 1850 until Germany officially began to limit *irooj* authority in transfers of land in 1888.²⁷ As a result, most studies overlook the fact that, as I suggest here, Jortōkā's decision to sell Likiep Atoll was far from unique.

Despite these gaps in historical scholarship, several authors have made important strides in representing *ri-aelōñ-kein* as active producers of culture and contributors to their own histories and as strategic participants in their many encounters and negotiations with *ri-pälle* since Spanish explorers first landed in Rālik and Ratak in the late 1520s. Within the realm of culture, Kristina Stege (2008) demonstrates that despite the strict rules and principals underlying *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure, lineage heads traditionally relied on the *mejed kapilōk kōj* ("our eyes advise") principle to exercise flexibility and to actively respond to real world circumstances in their decisions about landownership and succession.²⁸ Julianne Walsh (2003) considers how *ri-aelōñ-kein* have applied this flexibility in their encounters with *ri-pälle* in an effort to incorporate and indigenize "foreign discourses and resources into culturally informed models and practices of authority" and to enhance their political and economic capital through relations and alliances with outsiders.²⁹ Meanwhile, Francis Hezel (1983 and 1995) offers an important

²⁵ In 1494, Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesilla dividing the globe into two zones of influence and granted Portugal "the right to explore and lay claim to any lands east of an imaginary line that lay well out in the Atlantic Ocean" and Spain the right to do the same to the west of that line. While Spain established a formal presence in the Mariana Islands (e.g., Guam and Saipan) and the Caroline Islands (e.g., Pohnpei and Chuuk), it does not appear to have established anything more than nominal possession of the Marshall Islands. *The First Taint of Civilization*, 8, 51-52.

²⁶ Deutsches Reich, "Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire (1885)"; Deutsches Reich, "Agreement between the Jaluit-Gesellschaft and the Reich (1888)"; Howe et al., *Tides of History*, 34-35; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 47; Walsh and Heine, *Etto ñan Raan Kein*, 192.

²⁷ Deutsches Reich, "Agreement between the Jaluit-Gesellschaft and the Reich (1888)." Also see Chapter 2.

²⁸ K. Stege, "An Kōrā Aelōñ Kein," 13-14.

²⁹ Walsh, "Imagining the Marshalls," xi.

reminder that while Spain ostensibly “owned” the Marshall Islands from 1494, its almost complete absence from and neglect of its nominal possessions in Rālik and Ratak meant that *ri-aelōñ-kein* were largely able to retain actual and tangible control over their land, sovereignty, and everyday affairs until the mid-1880s.³⁰ As a result, when *ri-pālle* whalers, missionaries, traders, and others began to arrive in Rālik and Ratak in the mid-nineteenth century with the intent of establishing a more permanent and calculated presence in the islands, *ri-aelōñ-kein* had little reason to equate these arrivals with a loss of sovereignty or control of the land they regarded as their birthright and divine legacy.

With these considerations in mind—the traditional adaptability of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land tenure practices, a history of *ri-aelōñ-kein* engagement with *ri-pālle*, and continued *ri-aelōñ-kein* sovereignty through the mid-1880s—I embarked on a preliminary exploration of the specific historical, cultural, environmental, and epistemological circumstances and conditions that might have contributed to what was likely a calculated decision on Jortōkā’s part to sell Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum. Along the way, I encountered a dynamic ethnographic and historical field in which a diversity of factors converged to convince Jortōkā that the sale of Likiep Atoll would not only enhance his chiefly authority, but would also secure his position as *iroojlaplap* and in turn ensure the economic, geographic, and genealogical well being of his realm in northern Ratak for generations. More specifically, I found that the period between the late 1850s and 1888 presented a unique set of circumstances that allowed Jortōkā and other *irooj* to use their culturally sanctioned authority and the *mejed kapilōk kōj* philosophy to sell and lease their land to *ri-pālle* with the understanding that the benefits of the transfers would far surpass the trade items listed in accompanying sale and lease agreements and, perhaps even more significantly, that the deals would not necessitate the forfeiture of *irooj* sovereignty or socio-cultural authority within their jurisdictions.

Significantly, Jortōkā’s tactical and deliberate participation in the sale of Likiep Atoll seems to be representative of a larger trend among Rālik and Ratak *irooj* to use land deals and alliances with *ri-pālle* to augment and secure their authority and hegemony during this period of emerging and early colonialism in their islands—with Irooj Kabua’s

³⁰ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 8; Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 8, 45.

alliance with German traders being a case in point. It is in turn conceivable that indigenous leaders across the region implemented comparable strategies during the early stages of colonialism in their islands in an effort to not only cope with the particular historical circumstances they faced but also to exploit foreign resources and alliances to their own advantage.

With this possibility in mind, I have sought to contribute to the growing discussion in Pacific studies about the role of land and indigenous people in colonial processes in the late nineteenth century in particular. Along the way, I have found that transfers of land and sovereignty by *ri-aelōñ-kein* during this period were not as straightforward as the treaties and land deeds of the period suggest—with gullible and avaricious islanders on one end of the negotiating table unknowingly surrendering their land and autonomy to malevolent imperialists on the other side in all cases. Instead, leaders and others in Rālik and Ratak used their land to enter into purposeful and strategic alliances with outsiders who in some cases had the interests of their islander associates, friends, and family members in mind along with their own. Such was the case on Likiep Atoll in the late 1870s, it seems, where a variety of urgent events and circumstances converged to convince Irooj Jortōkā to sell his land to a *ri-pālle* who, not coincidentally, was a member of his extended family through marriage and seems to have had few if any ties to the German firms that were promoting outright annexation of the Marshall Islands by their home nation. Meanwhile, parallel sets of local and global events and circumstances surely converged in other parts of Oceania from Hawai‘i and New Zealand to Guam and the Solomon Islands to convince island leaders to engage with outsiders on the assumption that the alliances they formed would enhance their own political, economic, and cultural capital and in turn benefit their islands and communities in the short and long term.

What I have hoped to illustrate along the way is the important role that a detailed, localized, ethnographic approach can play not just in revealing the historical and cultural particularities of these encounters and decisions but also in uncovering distinctive manifestations of larger regional trends such as colonialism and imperialism, the dispossession of land and sovereignty, and islander accommodation and resistance. While

scholars from various disciplines focused on an array of Pacific contexts have initiated similar discussions with regard to land in particular (e.g., Andrade 2008, Moore 1985, Mutu 1999, Orange 2011, Preza 2010, and Stauffer 2004), I hope this initial exploration of the sale of Likiep Atoll offers some insight into how we might continue to unravel the complex and sometimes contradictory circumstances, experiences, motivations, and intentions underlying these momentous encounters across the region.

My focused, ethnographic approach, meanwhile, represents an important step toward an indigenous history of Likiep Atoll for its emphasis on local expressions of history and the important role of culture in affecting historical outcomes, experiences, and interpretations. This kind of island or atoll centered methodology seems to reflect the historical positionality and outlook of a large proportion of Pacific Islanders in relation to the larger currents and tides of history that have ebbed and flowed on their shores over the past several hundred years carrying in a diversity of people, resources, opportunities, and perspectives that indigenous communities have encountered, adapted, and sometimes rejected through the lens of their particular culture, epistemology, and historical and geographic circumstances. The sale of Likiep Atoll, I suggest, represents an important component of one chief's effort to find ways to cope more effectively with these ebbs and flows in the future.

On Likiep, the factors that appear to have most strongly influenced Jortōkā's decision to sell land as part of a this strategy include decades of typhoon and tidal wave damage and destruction to various islands and atolls including Likiep; the recent onslaught of *ri-pālle* slaving, kidnapping, and murder across the region; the genealogical devastation wrought by a growing epidemic of introduced diseases including syphilis and typhoid fever; the mounting prominence and influence of rival *irooj* in the expanding and profitable production and trade of copra; the growing trend among *irooj* to use their land to access foreign resources and alliances; and, not least of all, Anton deBrum's marriage to Jortōkā's relative Likmeto and Likmeto's active role in convincing the chief that he should transfer Likiep Atoll to her husband. These factors were accompanied and inspired by a centuries long tradition of spirited and purposeful engagement by *ri-aelōñ-kein* with foreign explorers, whalers, traders, and missionaries, together with key tenets of

ri-aelōñ-kein culture and epistemology that made it possible for Jortōkā to actively modify residence and tenure arrangements in his realm in an effort to stave off the effects of the crises plaguing the region at the time and to enhance his own economic and socio-cultural authority within his realm and vis-à-vis his chiefly rivals and competitors.

Following Walsh, I demonstrate in Chapter 2 that the sort of purposeful engagement exercised by Jortōkā stretches back over centuries to the first arrivals of Spanish explorers on the shores of Rālik and Ratak in the 1520s. And while many such encounters ended in violence, just as many or more were exploited by *ri-aelōñ-kein* as opportunities to access the resources and alliances they hoped would augment their security and well being. As a result, *ri-aelōñ-kein* generally responded negatively or with violence only when they saw these encounters as undermining rather than enhancing their safety and autonomy. In most other cases, they approached *ri-pālle* stopovers as opportunities rather than threats³¹ and welcomed and even encouraged exchanges with *ri-pālle* who landed on their shores in search of resources and provisions.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I suggest that with the arrival of missionaries and copra traders in the mid-nineteenth century, *ri-aelōñ-kein* started utilizing their land as an item of trade much as they had used other local resources such as pandanus paste, preserved breadfruit, and coconut oil to access the *ri-pālle* commodities and alliances they hoped would enhance their livelihoods. I propose that the land sales and leases that took place from the mid- to late nineteenth century were an extension of a long standing *ri-aelōñ-kein* tradition of incorporating *ri-pālle* into complex local networks of economic, political, and socio-cultural exchange with the objective of empowering particular segments of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society rather than undermining *irooj* hegemony or *ri-aelōñ-kein* sovereignty—with Jortōkā’s sale of Likiep Atoll being just one example of this trend.

In Chapter 4, I put forth the possibility that Jortōkā’s willingness to sell Likiep was part of his own strategy to forge an alliance with Anton deBrum in an effort to revive and rebuild land that was neglected and overgrown and therefore largely uninhabitable following a series of typhoons and tidal waves in preceding decades. As a result, Jortōkā

³¹ Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 45.

may have seen the sale of Likiep as a strategic transfer of some of his most undesirable land—a move that mirrors Kaibūke’s gift of Rupe (“broken”) Wāto to the missionaries on their arrival to Epoon in the late 1850s and Jortōkā’s sale of Oļōt Island (“land of no value”) in Maļoeļap Atoll in 1869 and offer to sell small and uninhabited Ādkup Atoll eight years later.

I argue in Chapter 5 that Jortōkā’s decision was furthered by his desire to bolster northern Ratak’s position in the growing copra trade and to compete with southern Rālik *irooj* including Irooj Kabua who, by the late 1870s, was well on his way to positioning himself as “king” of Rālik vis-à-vis the growing German presence in the islands.³² In Chapters 5 and 6, I contend that mounting threats of violence and epidemic disease also played an important role in convincing Jortōkā to align himself with deBrum, whose ties to the prominent copra entrepreneur Adolf Capelle and the doctor Charles Ingalls surely appealed to the chief as he struggled to protect his family and realm against threats of syphilis and other diseases and from violent and sometimes murderous attacks by the likes of ruffians Ben Pease, Bully Hayes, and others.

Throughout, I assert that Anton deBrum’s marriage to Jortōkā’s relative Likmeto was a key factor in the chief’s decision to align with deBrum specifically. Indeed, unlike many other *ri-pālle* making their way around the islands at that time, deBrum and his partners were seen by Jortōkā and others not only as credible and trustworthy members of *ri-aelōñ-kein* society whose economic and other networks had the potential to enhance *irooj* capital and secure *irooj* sovereignty, but also as members of *ri-aelōñ-kein* families and genealogies whose descendants would inherit the land deBrum and Capelle acquired according to *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom. Jortōkā’s confidence in the sale was bolstered, meanwhile, by *ri-aelōñ-kein* principles that presume divine and therefore irrevocable

³² The 1885 “Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire” designates Kabua as *König* (“King”) and all other named *irooj* as *Häuptlinge* (“chiefs”). *Irooj* who signed the treaty include (personal names spelled following the original): Lagajimi, Nelu, Loiak, and Launa of Rālik; Leangenat of Mile; Ujelang, Lejuirak, Dauwit, and Legerijar of Arņo; Kaibuke, Reme, Luet, and Jiberik of Mājro; [Jortōkā’s successor] Murijel, Lebaia, and Lebukin of Maļoeļap and Aur; and Litokwa, Lekeri, Laneo, Lereka of Epoon. Perhaps significantly, the Marshallese language version of the document names all chiefs “*iroj*” and makes no distinction between Kabua and the others. The German Emperor, meanwhile, is designated as “*Iroj elaptata in Germany*” or “the highest chief of Germany.” Deutsches Reich, “Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire (1885).”

connections between *ri-aelōñ-kein* land and *irooj* authority. I illustrate some of the spiritual and epistemological foundations of these beliefs and connections with reconstructions of various *ri-aelōñ-kein* oral traditions placed at the start of Chapters 2 through 6.

As I indicate briefly in Chapter 6 and will consider more in depth through further research, Germany's looming annexation and intensifying relations with the *irooj* of Rālik and others may have also played a role in Jortōkā's move to align with deBrum and his partners in the late 1870s in an effort to defend northern Ratak against the infringements of the looming European power. Indeed, by the time Jortōkā sold Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum in August 1877, the German firm Robertson & Hensheim had already purchased pieces of land from *irooj* on Epoon (April 1876) and Mājro (March 1877) and would soon buy additional *wāto* on Mile, Namdik, and Maļoelap.³³ When Germany formally annexed the Marshall Islands in 1885, Robertson & Hensheim and others including DPHG were so active in the purchase of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land and in promoting annexation that "German commercial and national interests in the Marshalls were all but indistinguishable."³⁴ In fact, Robertson & Hensheim employee Franz Hensheim served as German consul and official witness to the signing of the "Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire" between Kabua and his Rālik associates and German representative Lieutenant Captain Rötger in October of 1885. Just three years after annexation, Hensheim's employer merged with DHPG to form the Jaluit Gesellschaft, a company that administered the Marshall Islands as a commercial colonial on Germany's behalf until 1906 when Germany assumed direct rule of the islands.³⁵

Given the apparent absence of Jortōkā's *ri-pālle* allies from these negotiations, it is quite possible that the partners of A. Capelle & Co. encouraged Jortōkā to sell Likiep to Anton deBrum seven years earlier as part of their own strategy to keep the atoll out of the hands of competitors such as Robertson & Hensheim—and, in turn, free from the

³³ Spennemann, "Foreign Land Holdings in the Marshall Islands," 7-8, 13-19.

³⁴ Hezel, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, 48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

encroachments of German imperialism.³⁶ For while Capelle was of German ancestry, it is not clear that he or his partners supported the efforts of the German firms to persuade Germany to annex the Marshall Islands. In fact, Capelle took on the role of United States Consular Agent in 1882 or 1883, formed a partnership with Crawford & Co. of San Francisco in 1883, and invited the American Captain I.V. Melander to raise the American flag on Likiep in 1884.³⁷ This suggests that Capelle and his partners were less than enthusiastic about a possible German takeover and saw the purchase and consolidation of ownership of Likiep several years earlier as a way to secure a place in the islands for themselves, their business, and their families—which became essential following A. Capelle & Co.’s bankruptcy in 1883. Under the circumstances, Jortōkā’s willingness to concede Likiep may have come in part from a view that, unlike its German rivals, A. Capelle & Co. was a “local” company owned and managed by men who had been living in the islands for more than twenty years and had been fully integrated into *ri-aelōñ-kein* life and society through marriage and paternity. By selling Likiep to deBrum, then, Jortōkā may have hoped to keep the atoll and northern Ratak under local control as other lesser known foreign traders and governments were rapidly accumulating land and hegemony in Rālik and Ratak.³⁸

Together, this confluence of cultural and historical factors seem to have in part convinced and authorized Jortōkā to sell Likiep Atoll to a *ri-pālle* who had been living in the islands for more than a decade, was closely associated with other *ri-pālle* who had access to valuable knowledge and resources, and had been incorporated into his own genealogy through marriage to one of his close relatives. With all this in mind, I propose that Jortōkā did not initially regard the sale of Likiep Atoll to Anton deBrum as a

³⁶ Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization*, 225-226.

³⁷ *Saturday Press*, “News by the Missionary Packet”; *Micronesian Reporter*, “Heartbroken: Stars and Stripes over Likiep,” 1; Browning, “Traders in the Marshalls,” 37.

³⁸ It is quite possible that A. Capelle & Co. was a predecessor of other firms that were “localized” due to owner alliances with *ri-aelōñ-kein* and integration into *ri-aelōñ-kein* society through marriage. Among these are Robert Reimers Enterprises (RRE) founded by the son of the German Robert Reimers, Sr. and Laten Mejleb of Jālwoj in the early twentieth century and Pacific International Inc. (PII), a modern construction company owned by the American Jerry Kramer whose success is due largely to Kramer’s alliance with the late Amata Kabua and integration into Marshallese society through marriage and paternity. Hezel, “Beachcombers, Traders & Castaways in Micronesia: Marshalls”; “Robert Reimers Enterprises, Inc.”; “Pacific International, Inc.”

dispossession of his land or sovereignty, but rather as an important component of a strategic alliance that would secure his ties to his land and strengthen his position as *iroojlaplap* of northern Ratak. In the process, I challenge assumptions that the empowerment of outsiders in the Marshall Islands and Oceania more generally was fueled exclusively or at least primarily by the political and economic aspirations of foreigners or by the naïveté or avarice of a select constituency of local chiefs. I suggest instead that a multitude of historical and cultural factors, circumstances, and considerations inspired chiefs and others to allow foreigners to establish themselves and in some cases acquire land in the islands. Unfortunately, these motivations were sometimes at odds with those of foreign entrepreneurs and governmental representatives whose primary objective was to increase their own profits and hegemony even if at the expense of their islander allies and associates.

Indeed, as I put forth in Chapter 6, neither Jortōkā's intent in the sale of Likiep nor Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum's position as prominent and respected members of *ri-aelōñ-kein* families and society more generally preclude the possibility that the partners of A. Capelle & Co. had other objectives and resorted to less than honest means to acquire and consolidate ownership of the atoll. In fact, the increasingly aggressive economic context of late 1870s Rālik and Ratak may have provoked Capelle, deBrum, and Ingalls to give in to circuitous maneuvers including the surreptitious resale of Likiep by deBrum to his employer in 1878 and the official registration and division of ownership of the atoll in 1887 before the Imperial German High Commissioner to ensure their future in Rālik and Ratak and safeguard the area from their German competitors and complete German control.³⁹ And while it may be the case that the partners' less than transparent moves were motivated in part by a desire to secure and protect their business and their families and northern Ratak, there is no denying the possibility that Jortōkā was not fully aware of their actions or the implications of his decision for the future of Likiep Atoll as part of his northern Ratak realm.

³⁹ “José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.”; “Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties.”

What's more, the many complex reasons behind Jortōkā's decision to sell do not negate the fact that Likiep *kajoor* commoners and Jortōkā's *irooj* successors in northern Ratak have experienced displacement, dispossession, and a loss of sovereignty over the past century as a result of the sale. While the role of *kajoor* on Likiep was essentially condensed to that of plantation worker on the one hand, the descendant-owners of Adolf Capelle and Anton deBrum—the vast majority of who are *kajoor* according to *ri-aelōñ-kein* custom—have replaced *irooj* as primary owners of land and de facto “chiefs” of Likiep Atoll. As I suggest in Chapter 6, these and other unintended outcomes and experiences form the core of various counternarratives that capture the angst that some people feel about what they believe has been lost on Likiep along with their misgivings about the validity and authenticity of Jortōkā's decision to sell Likiep in the first place. I have hoped to demonstrate that, while largely absent from the official historical record and often dismissed by some as foolish and even fallacious, these counternarratives are an invaluable component of Likiep's history not only because they represent one set of understandings and experiences of that history but also because they contain important historical traces that can help us look beyond outcomes in our search for answers to some of the most complex and critical questions about Likiep's past and present. They also serve as an important reminder that even the best intentions can have unforeseen and adverse consequences. To bring meaning to this important period in Likiep Atoll's past, however, it is essential to look beyond the perhaps inadvertent outcomes of history in an effort to identify the specific historical and ethnographic circumstances that prompted a decision whose multifaceted motivations, intentions, and meanings may never be fully understood.

I have further hoped to suggest that, despite the various unintended outcomes and more than a century of direct rule in the Marshall Islands by three successive imperial administrations following agreements by Jortōkā and others to sell their land to *ri-pālle* in the late nineteenth century, these decisions were actually part of a longstanding *ri-aelōñ-kein* tradition of vigorous and dynamic engagement with the *ri-pālle* who periodically arrived on their shores. Throughout, *ri-aelōñ-kein* responded to changing historical, geographic, and epistemological circumstances with a variety of tactics from violent

resistance to peaceful accommodation in an effort to ensure that these encounters were of some benefit to their *bwidej* land and their *bwij* matrilineages. In the process, they demonstrated that, within the vast and expanding region known as Oceania, even the tiniest *wāto* land parcels—which represent the physical embodiments of *ri-aelōñ-kein* histories, genealogies, knowledges, beliefs, and traditions that stretch back thousands of years—are worth fighting to protect and preserve. While many *ri-aelōñ-kein* chose violent and lethal means to prevent *ri-pālle* from exploiting their most valued resource over the centuries, beginning in the mid-1860s Kaibūke, Jeimata, Jortōkā, and others turned to alliances and land sales to achieve much the same goals. Decades later, Likiep *ri-jerbal* responded to what they considered a similar threat by implementing counternarratives and direct action as part of their own strategy to preserve their land, culture, history, and way of life on Likiep Atoll.

Today, battles over the preservation of *ri-aelōñ-kein* land, culture, and society continue to be fought not only by *ri-jerbal* on Likiep, but also on the floor of the United Nations and at conferences around the world as Marshallese activists endeavor to call the world's attention to low-lying atoll communities in the Marshall Islands where climate change and sea level rise have already claimed *wāto* and entire islands and in turn pose a real and palpable threat to the continuation of Marshallese culture and society into the future. Given their long tradition of accommodating and resisting the encroachments of the outside world, it is unlikely that Marshall Islanders will abandon this fight before tangible solutions to this growing problem have been established, agreed upon, and implemented by those nations whose ways of life threaten to destroy the land, culture, and future of the Marshall Islands.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Adolf Capelle Authorization for José deBrum to Purchase Land

[August 7, 1877]

To all persons to whom these Presents may come, know you that I Adolf Capelle, Senior, of the Firm of A. Capelle & Co. of Bonham Islands, Marshall Group, have this Seventh day of August, Eighteen Hundred and Seventy-seven Granted and by these presents do grant into Jose de Brum a Member of said Firm of A. Capelle & Co. the right and privilege to buy and bargain for, on his own account and risk all lands, islands or parcels of land he may wish to purchase.

Nothing being stipulated in the agreement between the several members of the firm of A. Capelle & Co. to the contrary and by the power vested in me as business Manager of said firm and in Consideration of the said Jose deBrum valuable and faithful services to the firm of the said A. Capelle and Co., I feel fully justified in granting the foregoing right and privilege to witness whereof I the said A. Capelle have and said this seventh day of August, Eighteen hundred and seventy seven.

/s/ A. CAPELLE

Appendix B.

Iroojlaplap Jortōkā Statement on Transfer of Likiep Atoll to José deBrum

August 14, 1877

I, Jurrtaka, chief of Auhr, Maloelab, Erikub, Wotje, Likieb, and other islands of the Marshall Archipelago, on behalf of myself and all other persons having or claiming to have any estate, right, title or interest in all that group of islands lying in latitude 9° 51' 30" north, longitude 169° 13' 30" east and known among my people as Likieb and named by Capt. Kotzebue, "Count Heidan Island," the northwest point of said island being in latitude 10° 3' 40" north, longitude 169° 6' and the southeast point in 9° 49', longitude 169° 2' east.

In consideration of merchandise consisting of cloth, hardware, cannon, muskets, ammunition, tobacco, etc., etc., to the value of twelve hundred and fifty dollars, paid to me this fourteenth day of August one thousand eight hundred and seventy seven by Jose de Brum the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged.

I do hereby bargain, sell, release, convey, assure and assign to the said Jose de Brum and all singular the before mentioned group of islands to hold unto the said Jose de Brum his heirs and assigns forever absolutely free from all claims incumbrances [*sic*] and demands whatsoever. And I said Jurrtaka also hereby agree to and do accept of the purchase of the said islands according to the tenor and effect hereof as witness my hand and seal at Maloelab this fourteenth day of August, One thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven.

Jurrtaka X his mark

Signed, sealed and delivered by said Jurrtaka

The foregoing having been first interpreted to him by Isaac Madison and by the said Jose de Brum in the presence of C. H. Ingalls, Otto Löser & J. T. Elson.

Witness:

Isaac E. Madison

H. Löser

J. T. Elson

C. H. Ingalls

Lalik

Letouton

Appendix C.
Iroojlaplap Jortōkā to the People of Likiep

[date unknown]

Yokwe Kom,

Na Jurrtaka iroj in im irojlaplap remanek kain otemjelok kim ar wia kake im ajej wonen rainin non Mr. José deBrum etan Atone ailing eo kom jukwe etan Likiep, lomalo berber ak ene otemjej kabol ailin ne.

Inem ij konan bola non kom kin an jalok ao beki, ejelok ao bebe non jidrik kio, ak an Antone wot, enin komin bokake Antone inem e enaj joiy im mol non kom otemjelok elange jet iami konan wot itok non iba, ami wot bebe im lemnak I kanuij monono kaki bwe elab wonen ene ko. Emuij ao boke wonan jen bein Antone.

Im kalimur non en ear jeje ilo wonen leta in. Yokwe kom.

Na mokta ejelok tokjen ene ko iba kin an ejelok weni kab ekanuij marmar ene ko.

[Translation:]¹

Greetings to all,

I, Jurrtaka, chief and paramount chief [translation needed: *remanek kain otemjelok*] we sold today and divided the proceeds the atoll on which you live, named Likiep—lagoon, reef, and all islets of the atoll—to Mr. Jose DeBrum also known as Antone.

I want to say to you that I have no [translation needed: *beki*], and no decision in any matter now, but it is Antone's now, this land. We must obey Antone and then he will be gracious and true to each and every one of you; if some of you want to come with me, it will be your choice and idea. I am very happy concerning this because the value of the land is great. I have already received the price from the hand of Antone.

And the contract with him is written in this letter. Greetings to you.

I previously had no use for these islands because they have no copra and are overgrown with brush.

“Chief Jurrtaka”

¹ Translation help by Alan Vandermyden.

Appendix D.

José (Anton) deBrum Statement on Transfer of Title to Likiep Atoll to A. Capelle & Co.

[June 26, 1878]

Know All Men by these presents that I, Jose de Brum of Bonham Islands in consideration of the sum of Eight hundred and Eight-six dollars and seventy-three cents (\$886.73) well and truly paid to me by Messrs. A. Capelle & Co. of Bohnam Islands, Marshall Group and the receipt of which I hereby acknowledge, do hereby sell and absolutely convey to the aforesaid A. Capelle & Co. all of that Group of islands known as Likieb or Count Heidens Island situated in or about 9° 51' 30" Latitude North of the Equator and in 169° 13' 30" Longitude East of Greenwich the same being more particularly described and designated in a deed bearing date August fourteenth, Eighteen hundred and seventy-seven and signed by Jurrtaka Chief of Likieb and other islands together with all buildings, trees, reefs, harbours, and other appurtenances thereto and with all rights and privileges and concerning the same which were granted to me by the aforesaid deed and conveyance from Jurrtaka to myself, to have and to hold to themselves and their heirs and assigns forever without let, hindrance or claim from me at any time. And I hereby declare that I had power to acquire the said Island and that I have now full right and power to dispose of and alienate the same from myself as recited in the foregoing.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty-sixth day of June in the year of our Lord Eighteen hundred and seventy-eight at Bonham Island, Marshall Group, North Pacific.

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of

Witness to signature

C.W. Ingalls [*sic*]

James L. Young

/s/ JOSE DE BRUM

Appendix E.
Agreement between Likiep “Natives” and “Owners”

[January 30, 1880]

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this thirtieth day of January, One thousand eight hundred and eighty at Legieb island, Marshall Group, between the hereafter subscribed Natives of the Marshall islands, being at present inhabitants and residents of Legieb island, Marshall Group, aforesaid and hereafter called parties of the first part and A. Capelle & Co., Owners of Legieb island aforesaid hereafter called parties of the second part.

WITNESSETH:

1. The said parties of the second part hereby agree to allow the said parties of the first part of continue to reside on the said island of Legieb on the following conditions only as tenants at will.

Firstly, that they, the said parties of the first part, agree and bind themselves not to destroy any trees which may be planted by the said parties of the second part and not to trespass at any time on any plantation which may be made or laid out by the said parties of the second part.

Secondly, the said parties of the first part promise and bind themselves to behave and conduct themselves in a peaceable [*sic*] and orderly manner during the time they are allowed to stay or reside at Legieb island aforesaid.

Thirdly, the said parties of the first part agree further to work for the said parties of the second part during the time they reside as aforesaid on Legieb island at current wages at the rate of two Dollars a month, to be paid to them by the said parties of the second part from time to time in trade, and to obey all lawfull [*sic*] commands and orders of any overseer or agent sent to Legieb island aforesaid by the said parties of the second part.

2. It is distinctly understood between the two contracting parties as the basis of this agreement, that the said parties of the second part have and shall have at any time full right and power, by giving six months' notice to such effect to order the said parties of the first part to vacate their premises and remove from Legieb island aforesaid.

In Witness Whereof the two contracting parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first before written.

Lajenrikrik	X	Labunito	X
Lakojrik	X	Lajijben	X
Jemorak	X	Lejen	X
Larvatak	X	Nako	X
Lamoin	X	Lakioba	X
Ponla	X	Lamajlib	X

Lawako	X
Lejaken	X
Anjejab	X
Lejeban	X
Letan	X
Lekomkar	X
Lojot	X
Lomotin	X
Lannitbwil	X
Lomejmij	X
Laminiear	X
Lajunror	X

Larkelan	X
Lobetwe	X
Ikirtok	X
Laku	X
Labrak	X
Labeki	X
Lajim	X
Lamuri	X
Lamakroro	X
Litabrikrik	X
Lajelang	X

Signed in the presence of

W. Wolff
C. Bleckert

Appendix F.
Contract of Tenancy, Likiep Atoll

[January 30, 1880]

BE IT KNOWN to all whom it may concern that we the hereafter subscribed natives at present residing and being the only inhabitants of the island of Legieb situated and being known on the charts as Likieb islands in or about 9° 51' 30" Latitude North of Equator and in 169° 13' 30" Longitude East of Greenwich, and being the entire property of Jurrtaka, a chief and proprietor of several other islands of Radak chain, Marshall Group, at present residing at Aur, an island of the said Marshall group, have been duly informed by the said Jurrtaka of his having sold, transferred and conveyed by a deed bearing date the fourteenth day of August, One thousand eight hundred and seventy seven unto Mr. Jose de Brum, called Antone, the heretofore described island of Legieb, Marshall Group to his the said Jose de Brum, called Antone, entire and absolute property, possession thereof and all the estates, rights, titles, interests, privileges, claims and demands whatsoever thereof, together with all and singular the hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, rents issues and profits thereof which are belonging or appertaining to him and the said Jurrtaka in his quality of being the sole and only owner and proprietor of the said island of Legieb.

AND NOW THIS INDENTURE WITNESSETH that We the hereafter subscribed natives declare and by these presents do declare that We are fully informed of the bearing and meaning of the heretofore recited deed of sale of the island of Legieb and that we hereby solemnly and truly declare that neither one or all of us has or have a right, title, interest, claim of property to any part of parts of the said islands of Legieb, but that we together or every one of us in singular for himself and for his descendants or heirs hereby declare that we being up to this date and living on the said islands of Legieb, considering ourselves only subjects and tennarents [*sic*] of the said Chief Jurrtaka, shall have or will live on the said island of Legieb only up to such day or date that the aforesaid Jose de Brum now the only and lawfull [*sic*] proprietor of the said island of Legieb may decide, and that during our stay or living thereupon we shall work for him at such rate of wages he, the said Jose de Brum in his capacity of entire owner of the island of Legieb may agree to pay us. And we furthermore declare hereby that whenever the said Jose de Brum shall think fit or proper to prohibit our further work or living on the said island of Legieb, we shall peacefully and most obediently follow his command and go and settle on any other island belonging to our former and heretofore named Chief Jurrtaka, provided that the said Jose de Brum delivers us free of charge to such an island.

In Witness whereof, We the undersigned Natives have put our hands and seal hereto at the island of Legieb this thirtieth day of January in the year One thousand eight hundred and eighty.

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of

W. Wolff		Lajmiror	X
C. Bleckert		Lamakroro	X
Laku	X	Litatrikrik	X
Labrak	X	Lekamkar	X
Labeki	X	Lojok	X
Lajim	X	Lomotin	X
Lokojrick	X	Lanitbwil	X
Jemorok	X	Lomejinnij	X
Larvatak	X	Laminear	X
Lamoni	X	Lajenrikrik	X
Bonla	X	Lamajlib	X
Labunto	X	Larkelan	X
Lajijben	X	Lobetwe	X
Lejen	X	Ikirtok	X
Nako	X	Lejaken	X
Lakioba	X	Anjejab	X
Lawako	X	Lejeban	X
Laniuri	X	Letau	X

I the undersigned Isaac Madison being a resident of the Marshall Islands for the Last fourteen years and of the island of Legieb of the same Group in particular for the last two years, do hereby declare and certify, that the foregoing document has been duly translated and declared by me to the thereunto subscribed Natives, that those Natives are all the present inhabitants of the said island of Legieb and that they are fully aware of and content with the bearing and meaning of such document.

Legieb Island, Marshall Group, the thirtieth day of January, One thousand eight hundred and eighty.

/s/ Isaac Madison

Signed in the presence of
W. Wolff
C. Bleckert

Appendix G.

A. Capelle & Co. Statement of Surrender of all Property (except Likiep)

[December 20, 1883]

On the ground of a declaration made and signed by A. Capelle & Co. Dec. 19, 1883, copy of which has been recorded at the Imperial German Consulate, Jaluit, under No. 9 for III 1883, and of another declaration, made and signed Dec. 20, 1883 by A. Capelle and Jose de Brum for themselves personally and for the firm of A. Capelle and Co. stating the surrender of all their property unto the Deutsche Handels & Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee—Inseln su Hamburg—copy of which has likewise been recorded at the Imperial German Consulate, Jaluit, under No. 10 for III 1883—I the undersigned, in my capacity as representative and attorney of the Deutsche Handels & Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee Inseln su Hamburg, now herewith declare and acknowledge receipt and give acquittance [*sic*] in full for all the demands and claims of said Deutsche Handels & Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee Inseln su Hamburg against the firm of A. Capelle & Co., against A. Capelle and against Jose de Brum and I moreover herewith release and relinquish the islands of Ligiep from all claims and pretensions of said Deutsche Handels & Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee Inseln su Hamburg.

Jaluit, December 20, 1883

C. Krey

Appendix H.
Charles Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum
Registration of Ownership of Likiep Atoll Properties

Jaluit, May 17th, 1887

Before me the undersigned Imperial German High Commissioner for the Marshall Islands have appeared:

Charles Henry Ingalls
Adolph Capelle
Jose de Brum

Handed to me the following deeds concerning the atoll of Likiep, viz:

1. d. Maloelab, August 14th, 1877.
2. d. Jabwor, June 26th, 1878.
3. without date in Native language.
4. d. Likieb, January 30th, 1880.
5. a deed of the same date.
6. d. Jaluit, December 30th, 1883.
7. d. Jaluit, January 1st, 1884.

and declared:

In accordance with the just mentioned deeds the Atoll of Likieb belongs to us jointly. We intend to remain partners of the islands

1. Likieb
2. Loto
3. Mogil
4. Bibi
5. Eniarmidj

each of us for one third, and to divide the other islands as follows:

- I. C. W. Ingalls [*sic*] shall own the islands of
 - a. Killi
 - b. Jabal
 - c. Melan
 - d. Kilamar
 - e. Eniet
 - f. Ajirow
 - g. Bock in Koak
 - h. Riri

- i. Kabelabelagen
- k. Tomil [*sic*]
- l. Two islands Eniruruganjirik
- m. Kedjin
- n. Two islands Bigerigerikdjen
- o. Bogelablab
- p. Two islands Biginneminemidjerak
- q. Jaldonet
- II. A. Capelle shall own
 - a. Elo
 - b. Gemogi
 - c. Enineman
 - d. Gabin
 - e. Enidje
 - f. Enidjelal
 - g. Albada
 - h. Bugenjilik
 - i. Eninum
 - k. Renarin [*sic*]
 - l. Bodjen
 - m. Begin
 - n. Aijet
 - o. Leen
 - p. Kedjud
 - q. Dinegar
 - r. Kille
 - s. Mar
 - t. Rongerik
- III. Jose de Brum shall own:
 - a. Rongelab
 - b. Bogelan
 - c. Gabenur
 - d. Matin
 - e. Daka
 - f. Anil
 - g. Lugenur
 - h. Odile
 - i. Bird Island in the Passage
 - k. Ageni [*sic*]
 - l. 4 islands between Ageni and Likieb

The houses built on the island of Likieb, viz:

1. two wooden stores, shingled
2. one copra house, dto.

3. Office with cistern dto.
4. A wooden Powderhouse
5. some native houses and a wharf

belong to the Firm "H. L. Tiernan Venture" whereof we are partners with Crawford & Co. in San Francisco. One wooden Dwelling house, shingled, cookhouse etc. belong to C. H. Ingalls, one native house belongs to A. Capelle and another native house to Jose de Brum.

We request to record our property in accordance with the foregoing statements and to make out a deed for each of us with an English translation.

Read in German, translated in English, approved and signed

/s/ C. W. Ingalls

/s/ A. Capelle

Jose de Brum X his mark

Appendix I.

Charles Henry Ingalls, Adolf Capelle, and José (Anton) deBrum Business Agreement

[June 7, 1888]

Copy

This agreement made and entered into this seventh day of June one thousand eight hundred and eighty eight by and between C.H. Ingalls, Adolf Capelle and Jose de Brum all of Ligieb, Marshall Islands witnesseth.

I.

That whereas the aforesaid parties now and heretofore have been associated together in divers business heretofore carried on by them, and whereas by reasons thereof and of divers other reasons it is mutually agreed by the aforesaid parties that they shall make and enter into a new article of agreement relating to an governing their business and possessions to take the place and be wholly in lieu of any prior agreement and of any and all conditions thereof. Therefore in consideration of the premise it is mutually agreed by and between them as follows [to with?].

II.

They mutually agree to continue as copartners as heretofore in what is known as the Ligieb Plantation composed of the island of Ligieb, Loto, Mokil, Biebe and Eniarmej in Ligieb Atoll, the same to be held and owned by them in common in equal joint share in proportion that is to say, the said C.H. Ingalls as undivided one third, the said Adolf Capelle an undivided one third and the said Jose deBrum and undivided one third, that all debts now jointly owed by them shall be assumed and paid share and share alike, and they are to share equally in all losses and gains arising and growing out of their said copartnership, and they are to render for and [illegible] accounts of said business and Plantation equal service and should one member render services greater than the others, they shall be liable for [illegible] pay or contribute their prorate share thereof and no one shall work to the detriment or damage of the others or others.

III.

It is specially and distinctly understood and agreed by and between the parties hereto and expressly made a part and condition hereof, that whereas it was heretofore agreed between [illegible] and by them jointly declared and agreed before the Imperial German High Commissioner Dr. Knappe at Jaluit on May 17th 1887 that the aforesaid island of Ligieb, Loto, Mokil, Biebe and and [sic] Eniarmej composing the aforesaid Ligieb Plantation was and should be held and owned by them in a partnership, and for the purpose of forever keeping the aforesaid island, composing the Ligieb Plantation as aforesaid, intact, owing to their greater value while being so intact and for the further reason that the said Plantation may descend to their heirs intact and comprising the full and whole territory if now covers, that they shall always and forever remain intact and undivided by them and their heirs and successors unless by mutual consent of all parties

it be agreed that they be divided but unless so agreed it is distinctly understood that under no pretext nor for any sense whatsoever shall they be divided.

IV.

It is distinctly and mutually understood by and between the parties hereto that this copartnership shall continue until all joint debts owed by them be fully paid, or sooner dissolved by the mutual consent of all parties and should either of said parties die prior thereto it is mutually agreed that the heir executor or administrator of such deceased, shall take, hold, and enjoy the same under the conditions and subject to the same stipulations as the deceased hold the same by virtue of the terms hereof and they mutually agree for themselves, their heirs, executors and administrators that [illegible] nor either of them will sell or dispose of any interest in said Plantation to any other than his copartners until said [illegible] indebtedness be fully paid, and can sell or dispose of the same after said indebtedness be liquidated so desiring to retire from this copartnership shall be required to give written notice to his copartners of his intention to so retire, and he shall at the same time offer to them his interest herein for a certain specified sum and if they refuse to accede to his said price upon the grounds that it is excessive, then in that event the party desiring to retire shall chose one person and the other copartners shall chose one person and the two chosen shall act as arbitrators to value the interest of said party desiring to retire and if the two thus selected fail to agree, they shall shall [sic] choose a third person and a decision or [accord] of a majority of them shall be received as the final decision and all the parties here to agree to abide by such decision or award when the conditions of said decisions or award it will then be the duty and obligatory for the price or sum [illegible] buy the arbitrators and in case they shall refuse or fail to pay the said sum either in case or proper security acceptable to the party retiring, he shall in that event have the right and privilege to sell to others but it is mutually agreed that in no event shall he sell to third parties if his copartners are willing to pay the sum designated by the arbitration.

V.

It is mutually agreed that should any party hereto feel aggrieved with the actions of his copartners he shall advise them thereof and if they fail to amicably advise adjust the same the said others shall be submitted to the arbitration of a disinterested person jointly agreed upon, or in case they fail to agree upon a suitable person, then it shall be submitted to arbitration in the same manner as herein before set forth in Article IV hereof and in case they refuse to arbitrate, then the complaining party may make complaints to the German High Commissioner.

All parties hereby agreeing to abide by the decisions of whomsoever it may be submitted.

VI.

Proper books shall always be kept showing in details all transactions and business of the copartnership, access to which all parties shall at all times have and be entitled to.

VII.

All parties shall consult together upon the business of the copartnership by meeting together at the business office of the Plantation every three months to wit upon the first Monday in January, April, July and Oktober [*sic*] of each year at 10 O'clock [*sic*] a.m. and at each meeting a balance sheet of the business shall be prepared and exhibited also a statement showing the standing of each partner.

VIII.

The general management shall be vested in one of the partners chosen yearly at the meeting in January and whose duty among other thing [*sic*] shall be to keep the books of the copartnership, but for which he shall not receive extra compensation except by consent of his copartners it being understood that the management of the copartnership shall offset what one party should render in equal service to the copartnership.

IX.

One copartner may represent another copartner at any meeting by written proxy and a majority of the copartners shall constitute a quorum, and be competent to [illegible] business—and a record book shall be kept of such meetings in which shall be entered a summary of the business transacted at each meeting and of all rules and regulations made and adopted thereat by a majority of the copartners for the just and proper government of the business and Plantation.

X.

It is mutually agreed that any work is to be done on the Plantation or for [illegible] account of the Plantation the Manager shall first notify his copartners thereof in writing in sufficient time to enable them or [either?] of them to procure the natives belonging to them to do an perform their respective prorate share of the work, it being hereby mutually understood and agreed that at all such times each partner shall have the right and privilege to furnish from among his own natives his prorate number of all natives that may be required to do an perform any work and labor for and on account of the Plantation and upon the same being done by any of the partners he paying them therefor, he shall not be charged or made liable for any, or further charge or share of the expense in having such work or labor performed and any partner who fails to furnish his prorate number of natives necessary and equal to his prorate number to be furnished shall pay and contribute to his copartners so furnishing a greater number his prorate share of the cost of performing such work and above what he has furnished labor for.

XI.

It is mutually agreed that each number hereof has equal right with his copartners in and to the native food produced on the Plantation, and the Manager shall be required at all times to recognize the same and see to it that in that respect each partner's right be full protected, and to better enable him to justly carry out such provision, it shall be and herby is made the duty of each partner desiring native food to make application therefor to the manager so that an equal division can always be made and maintained and [thereupon?]

the Manager shall grant to such applicant his prorata, or what he then requires and a failure on the part of the Manager to carry out faithfully the foregoing provisions shall work a forfeiture of his position as manager upon complaint properly made and established in conformity with the [manner?] herein before set forth relating to complaints.

Any Partner taking more thereof than his share, shall pay therefore reasonable valuation and it is agreed that while Plantation work is being carried on, the laborers shall be fed as far as possible from the native products of the islands without charge against the respective partners.

XII.

It is mutually agreed that no one partner shall have, upon the aforesaid Plantation a greater number of natives than either of his copartners except as laborers performing work for the Plantation as herein before set forth and any partner having or permitting a greater number of his own natives upon the Plantation contrary to the terms here of shall be liable and pay to the Plantation a fair valuation for the approximate amount of native food consumed by them but even in that case it is not permissible to have such greater number come or remain as it is the desire of the Copartners to preserve as much as possible of the native food for the general use of the Plantation. And it is agreed that no foreign natives belonging to islands other than Ligieb shall be permitted to land or be harbored on the Plantation, but must be harbored on the Island belonging separately to the partner to whom they may come or visit. This does not apply to foreign natives brought here to work on Plantation account.

XIII.

It is mutually agreed that neither party hereto shall in any manner whatsoever, by act, word or otherwise create or incite or attempt to create or incite any dissatisfaction or discord among the natives belonging to the different copartner, neither shall one partner attempt in any way shape or manner to entice away to him or elsewhere, any natives belonging to his copartners, but on the contrary such course of conduct shall be observed by all the parties as will tend to advance the common interest of all and induce a feeling of friendly good fellowship.

XIV.

No indebtedness shall be contracted with third parties for and on account of the copartnership except by the Manager or his order in writing.

XV.

This copartnership shall be known and designated as the Ligieb Plantation Company.

XVI.

The first meeting of the copartners shall be held on Friday the 8th day of June A.D. 1888 at which meeting a Manager shall be elected and such other business transacted as shall

be deemed proper and necessary. Other meeting [*sic*] shall be held in uniformity with the terms, herein contained.

In witness whereof the respective parties hereto have hereunto subscribed their names the day and year first above written.

Signed and executed by all the parties hereto in my presence.

Sign E.M. Morgan

Sign C.H. Ingalls

Sign A. Capelle

Sign Jose deBrum his mark X

Appendix J.
Last Will and Testament of José Anton deBrum

[April 20, 1901]

This is the last Will and Testament of me, Jose deBrum, son of Antony deBrum and Catherine deBrum of Pico, Villa das Lagas, Rebeiro do Meio, Azores. I have been living since the year 1864 in the Marshall Islands and now reside at Legieb in the Marshall Group.

1. I give and bequeath to my wife Likamju my houses, the furniture therein, and [appertainments?] there so belonging for her sole use.
2. In order to prevent and by all means provide against my heirs being swindled out of their patrimony, I hereby declare, that neither my oldest son, Joachim deBrum, who is now of full age, nor the guardians of my younger children, neither separately nor conjointly shall dispose of, nor sell neither the whole nor any portion of my cultivated and [or] uncultivated lands in Legiep lagoon, nor any lands in which I possess an interest and which has all been registered in my name in the Grundbuch [Land Registry] of the Marshall Islands. And I declare that it is my express desire the whole of my property be kept intact, also free from [mortgage] for the benefit of my heirs.
3. I desire that my heirs shall enjoy the full income and revenues of my plantations, but that they shall not be at liberty to dispose of the Plantations, and that after their decease such income and revenues shall pass to their lawful and legal heirs for even.
4. I desire and ordain that my eldest son Joachim deBrum, as first born of my first marriage shall receive one-fifteenth part (1/15) of all net revenues and income of my lands and plantations [in] advance of all my other heirs, and that the remainder is to be equally divided between all my heirs, namely my wife Likamju, my eldest son, Joachim deBrum, my second son, Domingo, my daughter Rose, my third son Antonio, my fourth son Melander, my fifth son Capelle, also any children who may hereafter be born.
5. I desire that all further moneys, or other funds deposits or securities for money and other personal property belonging to me at the time of my death, shall be divided between all my heirs in equal parts. But in case I should have any liabilities left, I hereby ordain, that these shall be settled first.
6. I appoint my eldest son Joachim deBrum to be the sole and only controller and manager of the whole of my lands and plantations without any interference by any person whatsoever.
7. I declare that my heirs may let upon very advantageous terms to them small portions of land [say] from 2 to 3 acres for terms not exceeding 10 years at a time.
8. It is my desire and I hereby request my son Joachim deBrum in his capacity and controller of all my plantations always to sell and deliver the produce of my plantations to the same person or persons to whom the produce of Capelle's plantations may be sold.

9. I hereby nominate and appoint my eldest son Joachim deBrum in Legieb and Captain Felix Becker in Jaluit guardians of my children who are not of full age, with full power to determine what may be best for the welfare of [such] my children and their [?] in any circumstance that may arise. It is my especial wish that my children get a good schooling.
10. I hereby nominate and appoint the Imperial German Landeshaupmann of the Marshall Islands for the time being and Captain C. Dominick to be executors to carry the provisions of this my will into due effect.

Witness by
Adolph Capelle
Jakob Kühl

Signed
José deBrum (his mark)
Adolph Capelle
Jakob Kühl

Signed
[Arno] Senfft, Imperial Judge

Certified and signed by
Dominick

[Court scribe of the Marshall Islands?]

[Remaining text in German remains untranslated]

Appendix K.
Power of Attorney: Adolf Capelle Heirs

[February 21, 1906]

Power of Attorney

We the undersigned heirs of late Mr. Adolph Capelle, Legieb do hereby appoint and so nominate

1. Mr. Edouard Capelle together with Mr. Joachim deBrum managers of our trading business in Legieb Marshall Islands, Mr. Edouard Capelle attending to the outside business and Mr. Joachim deBrum to the store and office work.

As managers of this branch they are entitled to buy and sell goods, boats, copra or other produce, to engage or dismiss traders to settle the accounts with the Haupt Agentur der Jaluit Gesellschaft to carry on the existing contract with the Haupt Agentur der Jaluit Gesellschaft and to take care of our interest in every respect.

2. Mr. Edouard Capelle: to settle all other accounts and running business in Legieb with the Haupt Agentur der Jaluit Gesellschaft and to demand as representatives of the heirs the cancelling of the mortgages on our joint Legieb property in the register of landed property in the Marshall Islands in due time.

3. Mr. Adolph Capelle: overseer of the so called joint plantations.

In this capacity he is instilled and under obligation to engage and to dismiss laborers, to settle the accounts with them, to collect the produce and to deliver it to the vessels of the Jaluit Gesellschaft and last not least to care especially for the cleaning and clearing of the plantations and for keeping them in good order and condition.

4. Mr. Godfrey Capelle: overseer in Mat [Maat] and Emijuar [Emejwa].

In this capacity he is entitled and under obligation to engage and to dismiss laborers to settle the accounts with them so called the produce and to deliver it to the [illegible] of the Jaluit Gesellschaft and [to act not least?] to care especially for the cleaning and clearing of the plantation and for keeping things in good order and confidence.

5. Mr. Frederik Capelle: to take charge of the business at Jaluit and Ebon.

In his capacity he is entitled to buy and/or sell goods, copra and/or other produce, to engage or dismiss traders or other employees, to settle the accounts of his branch with the Haupt Agentur der Jaluit Gesellschaft and to take care of our interest in every respect.

All and everything done by the persons appointed in [illegible] of this power of attorney will be recognized as due and valid by us.

Dated at Jaluit February 21st 1906
signed Sophia [Jobia Limenwa] Capelle

signed Edward Capelle
signed Adolph Capelle
signed Wilhelm Capelle
signed Goddfried Capelle
Frederick Capelle
Elise Hahn nee Capelle

[Remaining text in German remains untranslated]

Appendix L.
Japanese Arbitration: Likiep Owners and *Ri-jerbal*

[July 10, 1926]

Arbitration Document
Translation from [Japanese into Marshallese] by Ensign Ballinger
[Translation from Marshallese into English by Anton deBrum]

Party of the first part:

Beri nin age 53

Thirteen others

Representatives for the party of the first part:

Beri nin age 53

Aroa [Aloa] age 78

Anugaru age 68

Rajeku age 59

Rabugitak age 54

Ari age 46

Kichen age 29

Ratakin age 32

Ragirobari age 35

Party of the second part:

Joachim deBrum 57

Fifteen others

Representatives for the party of the second party [*sic*]:

Jochin deBrum 57 [*sic*]

Freddie Capelle 51

Anton deBrum [Jr.] 53

The following arbitration between the aforementioned interested parties over a dispute concerning the right of thirteen alaps besides Beri nin to own [*sic*] half the copra production in Likiep Atoll has been effect on 10 July 1926 in the Jaluit Branch Office of the South Seas Bureau, as follows:

Digest of the claims of the part [*sic*] of the first part:

In accordance with the promise of the family founders, Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle, half of the amount of copra produced is ours, and it is our right of [*sic*] dispose of it as we wish.

Digest of the answer of the party of the second part:

It is our contention that the record of copra payments entered in the long-term note ledger squares with memorandum #13 of Adolf Capelle. Without the copra tax there is no discrepancy before the division.

Since there is no use in prolonging this problem which brings loss to both the tenants and us, we will not press our utmost claims, but will concede to the claims of the tenants.

In this case, it will not be possible to supply food during the time of copra-production or to pay the freight on copra. Since the prevailing price of copra in the Ratak Chain according to the memorandum was four "pfennigs" at that time, it is well understood that the tenants will be paid 14 sen a kilogram, which is the prevailing price now in that area. We, the proprietors of the land, will make a speedy settlement under these conditions.

Items settled by arbitration.

1. It is agreed by both parties that the memorandum of Anton deBrum and Adolf Capelle shall stand.
2. The parties of the First Part shall have permanent tenant rights in their respective areas of management in accordance with the same memorandum.
3. The parties of the First Part shall have full control over their respective areas in accordance with the same memorandum.
4. The parties of the First Part, in accordance with the same memorandum, shall store their copra in the Likiep Warehouse.
5. Half of the stored copra shall belong to the parties of the first part and the parties of the second part shall purchase this at the prevailing price in the Ratak Chain.
6. Henceforth, the party of the second part will bear the burden of the transportation tax or the food (quota) against the copra.
7. The preceding six paragraphs shall be effective as of 1 May 1926.
8. The copra produced in the areas under the management of the parties of the first part by the parties of the second part shall be treated as that manufactured by the parties of the first part.

However, in this event, the accounts payable of the party of the first part shall be set up with a rate of 4 sen 4 rin per kilo against the entire amount of manufactured copra.

9. The costs in this dispute 65 [Yen] shall be borne equally between the two parties.

Translated [*sic*] by MASAO, Policeman

10 July 1926

Jaluit Branch Office

Representatives of the party of the first part:

Ari

Kition

Latakin

Lañilobar

Beri nin
Anugaru
Kajieku
Rabugiku

Representatives of the party of the second pary [*sic*]:
Anton deBrum
F. Capelle
J. deBrum

Chief, Jaluit Branch Office:
Taka Saka, Sei Ichi

Appendix M.
Jaluit Jijojo to the People of Likiep

(Exhibit 1)
(Translation by Raymond deBrum)
(Personal chop of Jaluit Jijojo)
Jabwar, Jaluit, November 22, 1926
Serial Number 1549—No. 7

To all the Likiep people,

In connection with the request of Domingo deBrum on behalf of deBrum and Capelle concerning the dispute on Likiep, I went to Likiep and met all the owners and all of you and we talked over this matter and made a settlement concerning those things which I submitted to you and all the people of Likiep.

1. The copra tax. In connection with the copra tax, the copra tax is the same as for the others Irojjs [*sic*] on the other islands and on Likiep the deBrum and Capelles should have to responsible [*sic*] for it.
2. All the alabs [*sic*] names were written in [*sic*] other paper.
3. Concerning the money which the owners gave to you, if those money are already given to the Alabs and the alabs gave some part to the people of the land assigned to them, is good [*sic*].
4. To raise pigs on the island. On the island of Likiep the owners could raise pigs on but on all the different within the Likiep Atoll it is not permitted to raise pigs on [*sic*].
5. Tribute on food. If no permit has been made by Jijojo, no tribute of food will be made. However, if the season of food fully time comes such as breadfruits and bandanuts [*sic*] not to waist [*sic*] it or disposed but to divide between the owners and the people on land which such things are not on. But the foods are belonging to the people and if anyone try to take some foods without the consent of the people on the land to have him pay.
6. Harvesting the arrow root. The owners should contact with the people those who have arrow root on their island and to work this together and those who work the crops to divide the proceeds equal between them.
7. Fire Control. Whoever put fire and many trees are destroy, he should replant the same amount. If anyone will do such thing, to notify the Jijojo on this matter.
8. Put off the outer islanders from the Atoll. The Magistrate can not or take away the people who are coming from other Atolls to work, such action has been happened on Likiep but these was not done by the Magistrate it was made by Iroj Takalur. Therefore be carefully because in some instants the Iroj do such things which are not right.
9. Concerning the association of Likiep. If the association has made some wrong rules and approved, it is right not to follow, because to stop people from making copra is very bad. If the accociation [*sic*] wants to establish good things be better to ask the Jijojo for permission, but if the accociation [*sic*] want to establish unlawful things I will not permit it.

10. To establish a store for the association. If the association wants to build up a store on Likiep on the main island and has not land there, he should ask permit from the owner to build up his store.
11. About the alab Alwa. Alwa should work the land Julel as same as it was before.
12. To pay the doctor expenses. The fee of the doctor treatment and the other bills at the time you will be on Jabwor. The people should [sic] pay their own bills. If you feel sorry for those who are poor from your atoll to help him out.
13. About the cleaning and planting. [The coconut groves where brush is growing, decide with the Alaps whether to clear, and if they say so numerous times yet that they don't obey and clear them, the Halfcasts can take those places and clear them.
14. -15. Concerning the lands with brush there. The lands that are not yet cleared and planted and are only brush, the few Halfcasts are to decide, the Alabs and the workers are not free to clear there.
16. To get the copra. If there is no copra boat, the Halfcasts and all the people of Likiep should decide to make a copra boat, and it will belong to all of them together. But when the Boat is finished [?], the Halfcasts should give the Boat to them so they can get the copra with it.
17. Concerning Mr. Lamaujin. Lamaujin is a worker for Emmanen, and Elomouij, but the Alap of Loaje.
18. Concerning Arro. Arro is the Alap of Aikne islet, but he is one of the workers of Loaje who takes the responsibility for Limaet as Alap.

Concerning the deBrum lands on Likiep. These lands the deBrum relations should decide with one another and they should do well in watching one another and make anything sure. If it's not clear what they do, announce it to Jijo.¹]

If there some words written in paragraphs 1 to 20 you Halfcasts to not know and all of you on the atoll to take under consideration and if you are not clear about it to ask Jijo. From now on all of you in Likiep should meet each other Halfcast and all of you to consult matters for the benefit of your Atoll.

<u>The name of the alabs on the land</u>	<u>The land assigned to</u>
Alwa	Julel, the main land of Likiep, Biebe, Enearmij
Berinin	Loto, Mukil, Aojarej
Rakatak	Killi, and ½ of Jebal
Lebor	½ of Jebal
(Lapin bunlik)	Melan Kilammar
Lokotelen	Eniej Tamol
Larruk	Najbil
Anej	Driri
Lakiwa	Kabelbelkan

¹ Translation help by Alan Vandermyden (bracketed section only).

Jabwanik
Labijmem
Labunitak

Laiim
Lanilojar
Lidria
Jakkia
Loaje
Jibarok
Nabu
Lajeik
Jakab
Arre
22 others.

Jaluit Jijojo (His official chop)

Kejjen
Jaltuenej
Eneneman, Kinaren, Dren and $\frac{1}{2}$ of Emijwa,
and Jenke
Kaben, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of Mat
Bukinjear, $\frac{1}{4}$ of Mat
 $\frac{1}{4}$ of Mat
 $\frac{1}{4}$ of Mat
Kabinor, Ronlab
Mattien
Takaen, $\frac{1}{2}$ of Eotele
Anel, Kuronaur
 $\frac{1}{2}$ of Eotele
Aikne

Appendix N.
Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-jerbal* (1947)

Agreement Entered into on Likiep Atoll 15 April 1947
[illegible], copra workers and military government [illegible]

We, the landowners, and we, the workers represented by the worker MONNA, agree to gather and work the copra on the land of Likiep Atoll on the following basis:

The landowners will provide copra knives, cutting knives, axes, screen for ovens and storage ovens. The price of the copra will be divided half to the landowners and half to the workers.

Kim ro am jikin ko (owners) em drijerbal ro em represented ijo ikijen drijerbal MONNA re monono in naj komon waini ien aolepen jikin k oak ene ion Likiep.

Dri owners ro re naj lelok air kein jerbal bakbok in karkar em jaje, mal, ook non bwi, ruo imwen waini. Wonan waini enaj ajej kin ruo matten, jimettan (1/2) non drijerbal em jimettan (1/2) non owners ro.

Emwij an alikar jabrewot iben aolep jar eo jemettan em ijo jimettan.

[signed]
Anton deBrum (for landowners)

Monna (for workers)

Approved 15 April 1947:
[signed]
E.B. Miller, UCR., USNR,
Commanding Officer,
Military Government Unit,
Kwajalein, Marshall Islands.

COPY To be posted on Magistrates bulletin board.

Appendix O.

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Resolution: Likiep Atoll (Draft)

[date unknown]

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
Office of the Civil Administrator
Marshalls District

File

Resolution No. [blank]

RESOLVED that in the interest of prompting greater self-government and the economic efforts of the Marshallese people; and for the purpose of respecting our long standing customs and traditions in the Marshall Islands; that the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands assist us in obtaining the return of our alienated land. Particular reference is made to the atoll of Likiep which was obtained many years ago under conditions which were detrimental to the interests of the common man, and where today a situation exists which closely borders upon involuntary servitude. Reference is also made to the atoll of Jaluit where there is so-called "government land", now idle, which was obtained originally by the German and Japanese Governments under conditions which did not take into full consideration the interests of the common man and his right to live decently in his own atoll. The release of all other so-called "government land" in the Marshall Islands should also be considered.

In the case of Likiep atoll it is requested that the Administering Authority offer to purchase one-half of that atoll, at a fair price, from its alleged owners and then convey it by deed, lease or otherwise to those Marshallese alabs indigenous to the Atoll of Likiep, who are presently without land, on a time payment basis for the purpose of residents, business or any similar purpose.

In the event that the present alleged owners of Likiep Atoll shall fail and refuse to sell to the Administering Authority the desired portion of that atoll, at a price deemed fair and reasonable, then, the Administering Authority shall proceed to exercise the right of eminent domain; and shall condemn all property that it deems necessary for carrying out its purposes.

In the case of so-called "government land", it is requested that the Administering Authority convey such property by deed, lease or otherwise, to those Marshallese alabs indigenous to the atoll where the property is located that the Atoll Council shall designate, for the purpose of residence, business or any similar purpose.²

² The actions and resolutions in this draft document do not appear to have been adopted or gone into effect.

Appendix P.
Agreement between Likiep Atoll Owners and *Ri-gerbal* (1947)

[February 20, 1951]

AGREEMENT

This AGREEMENT made the twentieth day of February, 1951, by and between the undersigned parties representing the families of the purchasers and lawfully established owners of Likiep Atoll, hereinafter referred to as the "Owners," and the undersigned parties representing the families of the workers assigned to the respective lines (strips of land on the island of Likiep Atoll designated as areas of management, the boundaries of which have been clearly established and recognized by the parties hereto through long usage), hereinafter referred to as the "Workers";

WITNESSETH:

Whereas both the Owners and the Workers of Likiep Atoll are anxious to improve and raise copra and food production in order to advance the economic interests of said atoll to their mutual benefit, it is deemed desirable that an agreement mutually satisfactory to the parties hereto be drawn and made effective immediately:

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED BETWEEN THE PARTIES HERETO AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Workers agree to sell copra only through the Owners' warehouse on Likiep Island for which the Owners promise and agree to pay the Workers one-half (1/2) of the current field price for all copra upon delivery to the warehouse, payments to be made in cash on delivery;
2. The Owners promise and agree to furnish suitable materials for the construction of one copra drying shed for each line of a size adequate to process the normal production of that line, as follows:
 - a. All wood necessary for the framework of such sheds, cut to size and prepared in such form as to require only assembly and erection by the Workers;
 - b. All nails necessary to the erection of such sheds;
 - c. The Owners shall furnish metal screens for the dryer whenever such screens are available or may be procured, for both original and replacement dryers. When metal is not available, the Workers promise and [the following is from a Land Registration Authority draft copy of document: agree to use native materials for completion of dryers, as an interim measure until metal can be procured and made available.

The Owners further promise and agree to furnish said materials whenever necessary to replace such sheds rendered unfit for use through natural wear and tear, act of God, or unavoidable accidents; PROVIDED, however, that if such sheds are rendered unfit for use through the fault of the Workers, the Workers promise and agree to replace such sheds at their own expense; provided further, that if the Owners fail to furnish within six

- (6) months of the date of this agreement materials for erection of the original copra sheds as required by this agreement or within three (3) months after the submission of a request by the Workers for replacement of a shed as provided above, the Workers may, as agents of the Owners, procure the materials and perform the labor necessary to carry out the obligations of the Owners and the Owners shall be liable for the same;
3. The Owners promise and agree to furnish to the Workers on each line sufficient tools of good quality and standard make for the efficient production of copra, the minimum of which are shown on Annex "A", which annex is attached to and made a part of this agreement by reference thereto. The Owners further promise and agree to replace all tools rendered unfit for use through natural wear and tear, act of God, or unavoidable accidents; PROVIDED, however, that if any tools are lost or rendered unfit for use through the fault of the Workers, the Workers promise and agree to replace such tools at their own expense;
 4. The Owners, for themselves, their heirs or assigns, in consideration of this agreement, grant to the Workers, their heirs or assigns, the right to live on and work the lands, as shown on Annex "B", which annex is attached to and made a part of this agreement by reference thereto, so long as the said Workers, their heirs or assigns, comply with the provisions of this agreement or any amendment, modification, or replacement of this agreement, agreed to by the parties or resulting from the operation of law or lawful directive of a court or agency of the Government of the Trust Territory.
 5. The Workers promise [and agree {"deleted" handwritten above}] not to cut or otherwise willfully destroy productive coconut or food trees on their respective lines without the permission of the Owners. The Workers further promise and agree to make reasonable efforts to keep copra spoilage at a [illegible text] and carefully control] all fires on their respective lines;
 6. The Workers promise and agree to cut and process copra on their respective lines, keep them clear of brush and weeds, and to provide for the planting and replanting of coconut and food trees in such manner and at such times as necessary to maintain the economic productivity of the land;
 7. The Owners promise and agree to furnish boats to the Workers, without charge, for the delivery of copra from the outlying islands of Likiep Atoll to the Owners' warehouse on Likiep Island whenever requested by the Workers. The Owners further promise and agree to pay a reasonable sum for transportation to all Workers who deliver copra in their own boats or canoes to the Owners' warehouse on Likiep Island.
 8. The Owners and Workers agree that the District Court or other proper court of the Trust Territory having jurisdiction over land matters may impose such injunctions, fines, penalties, or damages, including the restoration of the land to the Owners, which the said court may, in its reasonable and proper discretion, deem necessary to insure compliance with the provisions and intent of this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have set their hands as of the day and year first above written.

F. Capelle
Rudolf Capelle
Anton deBrum
Albert Capelle
Melander deBrum
Hermann Capelle
Capelle deBrum
Emilie Capelle
Irene Hazard
Emily Hahn
Katherine deBrum
Mira deBrum
Edward Capelle
Dolores deBrum
Ellen Capelle

Leonard deBrum
[Armor?] Isoda
Manuel deBrum
Oscar deBrum
Adele
Otto Capelle
August Capelle
Edwin Capelle
Nerissa Capelle

Carl Dominick
Bernard deBrum
Ernest deBrum
Raymond deBrum
Lina deBrum

OWNERS

Witnessed by:
John E. Tobin, Jr. [*sic*]
District Director of Internal Affairs
20 Feb 1951

[The following names are only partially legible on my photography copied of the original typed document. Further research and another visit to the Land Registration Authority will allow me to get a clean copy of the names.]

Boaj [L?]
[Bien?]
[Benimon?]
Latabi
[Lome?]
[Bejron?]
Aijen
Mabtali
Jaklik
Kilwe
Metal
[A?]

[Lo?]
Maijon
Lenilobar
Amlej
Mijena
Labwon
Jelton
Jinira
Jiba
Batur
Emel
Laien

Juit
Anwos
Jonjen
[?]
Bano
Annej
Joreja
[Hone?]
Labunitak
Rel

WORKERS

Witnessed by:

John E. Tobin, Jr.
 District Director of Internal Affairs
 20 Feb 1951

AGREEMENT between Workers and Owners of Likiep Atoll dated the 20 day of February, 1951.

<u>Island</u>	<u>No. of Lines</u>	<u>Axes</u>	<u>Large Knives</u>	<u>Small Knives</u>
Loto and Mogil	11	13	13	26
Bibi	6	6	6	12
Killi	1	4	4	4
Jebal	[8?]	10	10	16
Melan	6	8	8	12
Eierenmar	2	3	3	6
Enier	4	4	4	8
Najibil	1	3	3	6
Riri	1	2	2	4
Kabelabelagen	1	2	2	4
Tamuri	1	2	2	4
Kedjin	1	3	3	6
Jaldonet	5	5	5	10
Eneneman	1	1	2	2
Oaben	1	2	1	2
Enidji and Enidjeljel	2	0	0	0
Eninun	1	0	0	0
Kenarin	1	2	2	4
Aijet	1	0	0	0
[Leen]	1	1	1	2
Medjua	19			
Mille	2	[8?]	12	20
Dinegar	3			
Mato	17	15	20	25
Rongerik	1	0	0	0
Rongelab	1	2	2	4
Kapenor	9	10	10	25
Matin	1	2	2	4
Takaen	1	2	2	4
Anil	1	2	2	4
Lukunor	11	11	11	22
Odile	6	6	6	12
Ageni	9	10	10	20
Likiep	<u>21</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	157	139	148	268

Appendix Q.
Civil Action No. 49

[October 10, 1955]

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
Trial Division of the High Court
Marshall Islands District

Civil Action No. 49

Monna and Others,
Plaintiffs,
vs.
Rudolf Capelle and Others,
Anton de Brum and Others,
Defendants.

JUDGEMENT

It is ORDERED, ADJUDGED, and DECREED, as follows:

1. As between the parties and all persons claiming under them, the rights in those parts of Likiep Atoll in the Radak Chain of the Marshall Islands concerning which question has been raised in this action are as follows:
 - a. In those parts of the atoll in which rights to work have been assigned by A. Capelle & Co., Adolph Capelle, Jose de Brum, or their heirs, to anyone who is not an heir of either Adolph Capelle or Jose de Brum, the total rights of any of the heirs of Adolph Capelle and Jose de Brum (hereafter referred to as "owners") are the same as the property rights of an iroij lablab in land in which there are alab and dri jermal rights, but no iroij erik rights, under the Marshallese system of land law, and carry with them the usual obligations of an iroij lablab connected with the management of land under him, except as their rights and obligations have been expressly modified by agreement binding on those concerned or by determination of other action of the government. These property rights do not carry with them any governmental powers or any ceremonial rights. All powers of government over the lands in question rest in the officials duly constituted by law.
 - b. Those (hereafter referred to as "workers", which term is used to include the alab) to whom rights to work any part of Likiep Atoll have been assigned by A. Capelle & Co., Adolph Capelle, Jose de Brum, or their heirs, but who are not heirs of either Adolph Capelle or Jose de Brum, have between them the usual alab and dri jermal rights and obligations under the Marshallese system of land law in connection with land so assigned them, except as their rights and obligations have been expressly modified by agreement binding on those concerned or by determination or other action of the government.

- c. The rights and obligations referred to in subparagraphs (a) and (b) above have been modified in important ways by the Agreement of 10 July, 1926, approved by the Japanese Government, by the determinations set forth in the Jaluit Jijojo's letter of November 22, 1926, to the owners and alabs of Likiep, and by the Agreement of February 20, 1951, approved by the Government of the Trust Territory, all of which still stand, except to the extent that any parts thereof may have been, or may be, waived in particular instances by a person or persons entitled to benefit thereunder. Two of those important modifications which have been matters of discussion in this action are:
 - i. That the workers' share (that is, the combined alab and dri jermal shares) of copra produced for sale is one-half, and the owners' share one-half; and
 - ii. That all copra produced for sale must be turned over to the owners (unless the owners consent to delivery to someone else) and the owners must pay the workers at one-half the current price prevailing at Likiep for all merchantable copra delivered.
- d. The workers have the right to erect such buildings as are reasonably necessary for their own use and that of their immediate families upon the respective pieces of land in which they have alab or dri jermal rights, and to cut down any trees that it is reasonably necessary to remove for this purpose, without obtaining the consent of the owners. Any other person, however, desiring to erect buildings on any of the lands in which there are alab or dri jermal rights must obtain the consent of both the owners and at least the alab of the land concerned.
- e. The rights of workers to maintain and use buildings or trees erected, maintained, or planted, by permission of the owners on land in which no rights to work have been assigned to any non-owner, depend in each case upon the terms of the agreement with the owner of the land concerned under which the particular building or tree was erected or planted, or is being maintained. If no time limit was fixed, expressly or by implication, in such agreement, the owner of the building or tree must either remove it or surrender it upon reasonable notice from the owner of the land.
- f. The workers have an obligation to work the lands assigned them with reasonable diligence, and to take proper care of them in accordance with the general plan of the owners as primarily copra producing land, and to see that all the copra which the land assigned them produces (beyond that reasonably needed for consumption by the workers assigned to that particular land and their immediate families living with them) is delivered to the owners, unless the owners consent to delivery to someone else, the owners providing or paying for boats for delivery when these are reasonably necessary. If those having alab or dri jermal rights in any part of the land in question seriously fail to either perform their obligations personally, or to have them properly performed for them by others authorized to do so, they may be removed from the land by the owners in the same manner and on the same principles that an alab or dri jermal might be removed under similar circumstances by an iroij lablab from land under him in other parts of the Radak Chain.

Appendix R.
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Code: Likiep Atoll Excerpt

III. RULES OF COURT

[...]

(1) RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

[...]

(1-A) SPECIAL RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

RULE 1. RIGHTS IN LAND, MARSHALL ISLAND DISTRICT

[...]

(4) For the purposes of this rule (but not as a determination for any other purpose), the following special provisions are made with regard to land in the areas listed below:

[...]

(b) In the case of lands in that part of Likiep Atoll known as the “joint plantation”, the iroij lablab powers shall be considered to be held by the heirs of Jose de Brum and Adolph Capelle. In the case of lands in that atoll known as the “deBrum plantation”, iroij lablab powers shall be considered to be held by the heirs of José de Brum. In the case of lands in that atoll known as the “Capelle plantation”, iroij lablab powers shall be considered to be held by the heirs of Adolph Capelle. Summonses and notices to the heirs of Jose de Brum shall be sent to or served on Manuel de Brum, unless and until they designate some other person to receive notice for them and notify the Clerk of Courts who this person is. Notices and summonses to the heirs of Adolph Capelle shall be sent to or served on Rudolph Capelle, unless and until they designate some other person to receive notice for them and notify the Clerk of Courts who this person is.

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