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## BOOK REVIEW

Penelope Bordallo Hofschneider (2001) *A Campaign for Political Rights on the Island of Guam, 1899-1950. Occasional Historical Papers Series, No. 8, 2001.* Saipan, CNMI Division of Historic Preservation.  
220 pp. ISBN 1-878453-50-5

reviewed by

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In 1898 the United States became a colonial power following her entry into the Spanish American War. Among the territories she seized during this short-lived conflict was strategically placed Guam, the largest and southernmost island in the Mariana Archipelago. At the time of the American occupation, Guam was home to 10,000 indigenous Chamorros who had previously been subjected to Spanish colonial rule for more than two centuries.

The U.S. military government of Guam was established in 1899 and administered by a series of naval officers who held the title of island governor. With the exception of a three-year Japanese occupation during World War II, military rule would continue for the next fifty years. Although Guam's naval government was less harsh than most other colonial regimes of the era, it represented arbitrary and often offensive martial law bereft of local representation, citizenship and constitutional protections.

Penelope Bordallo Hofschneider's *A Campaign for Political Rights on the Island of Guam* provides a detailed overview of the persistent and sophisticated efforts of the Chamorro people to define their political status vis-à-vis the

United States and to expand their participation in the system under which they were governed. We learn of a frustrating half century during which the Chamorro leadership repeatedly called upon America to uphold her democratic ideals, and of the "Mother Country's" steadfast refusal to extend them to the residents of Guam.

Hofschneider combines solid research, skillful writing and a much-needed local perspective to illuminate this important topic. Her work clearly outlines the major events leading to the creation of the Organic Act in 1950, the legislation that finally extended citizenship and constitution rights to residents of Guam within the framework of an "unincorporated territory." It also provides the reader with critical contextual data with which to understand the current state of Guam's relationship with the United States, and the continuing efforts of the Chamorro people to fully exercise political self-determination.

This contribution is not peer-reviewed.

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