

MICRONESIAN

JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol. 3, n° 1–2

December 2004

POST COLONIAL AND MODERN LITERATURE OF THE MARIANAS A Critical Commentary

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Saipan

This paper discusses selections of the body of writing published in and about the Marianas since the 1940s both in book form and in the form of literary and other magazines.

In a previous papers I have discussed pre-Contact Marianas literature, folklore and legends (Torres 2003a), and the Colonial and Conquest Lore (Torres 2003b) as part of a critical commentary and review of the scope of literature and folklore of the Mariana Island group in Micronesia and have discussed the emergence of a written body of literature from what was originally an oral tradition. It is now time to look at the post-colonial and the modern period.

What is defined in this case as post-colonial literature is the period following the Spanish departure in 1899 up to 1941 with the eruption of World War II. I use the term 'post-colonial' for this period, acknowledging that the German period (1899–1914) and the period of the Japanese Administration (1914–1941) are also be regarded as colonial by others. The modern period is that following the American recapture of Guam and the rest of the Marianas, through the Trust Territory Administration of the Northern Mariana Islands, and up to present day Marianas. Of course, the categories serve only as only arbitrary demarcations, but they

are necessary to illustrate the path that the literature has taken following the Spanish years.

In this paper the novels and stories discussed are selections of the body of writing published in and about the Marianas since the 1940s. The number of published novels, short stories, and poetry produced in the islands has not been large. For example, many of Mark Skinner's (1990) entries in his Micronesian literature bibliography are from *Xanadu*, a local literary magazine, and publications by the Trust Territory Education Department. These, together with the *Guam Recorder* and *Hafa* magazine, account for most of the published short stories and poetry. Chris Perez Howard's *Mariquita: A Tragedy of Guam*, the children's stories by Cat Major and Evelyn Flores, Louise Stout's *Kalon: A Legend of Saipan*, D. L. Northway's *Kirida*, and William Peck's *I Speak the Beginning* comprise most of the Marianas' written literature.

One problem I encountered during my research is that many of the stories or books listed in the various catalogs and bibliographies, were unavailable for purchase or loan.

This is a peer reviewed contribution. *Accepted:* 17 December 2003.

© *Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* ISSN 1449-7336

Letao Publishing, PO Box 3080, Albury NSW, Australia

For example, Bonnie Mitchell's *Coconuts for Candy: A Story of Guam*, Mary Stevens's *Marjory with the Chamorros*, and Jesus Naputi's *Nightmare Near the Kiosk* were all published in the islands, but remain scarce and difficult to obtain for interested readers. Of particular importance in this paper is Jesus Naputi's book which is post-World War II era fiction. It is significant because it is written in English by a Guamanian writer, with the setting and plot taking place on Guam. Unfortunately, along with Mitchell's and Stevens' books, these texts were unavailable for review and inclusion. There is a good chance that there remain many more stories not found that deserve acknowledgement. With the increasing awareness and concern for local writing, these forgotten texts may be re-discovered. The material discussed in this chapter constitutes only those that were available during its composition and it is my hope that one day I can find and comment on what light they shed on the issues of Marianas literature.

In his analysis of the literary history of South Pacific literature, Subramani remarked that literature functions in a dialectical interaction with history and society, which accounts for the slow development of a literary tradition (152). By looking at a few texts that are part of the modern literary tradition of the Marianas, we can see this dialectical relationship between literature and history working by analyzing and interpreting the themes and images in particular texts and poetry. Also, through these texts, we see how Western themes and models have become incorporated in the writings since the American administration of Guam from 1899, and the northern islands following World War II.

REGIONAL VERSUS NATIONAL LITERATURE

It is at this point in this project that the issue of regional and national or local literature arises. Regional writing is defined as literature intended for a wider audience, apart from the local culture. English is the language of regional writing and this assumes an audience familiar with Western literature, but unfamiliar with Pacific themes and forms. National and

local writing is written primarily in Chamorro by local writers and assumes familiarity with local themes. It may also be written in English or English and Chamorro. The trend in the Marianas today is toward national themes written in English. The younger generation of readers and writers is well-versed in Western literary models and have incorporated them into their literary background and tradition.

Questions of ethnicity and audience are also important and should be considered. They determine the condition of literature today and will affect the development and future of writers and writing in the islands. This chapter argues against Subramani's position regarding the danger of cultural "self-appreciation" and politicization of literature in which "literary vocation requires that the writer think in as many different modes or systems as possible" (154). It is difficult to de-politicize the literature of the Marianas at this time because it is so closely linked with historical themes. The literature of the South Pacific, which Subramani discusses, has reached a point of reconciliation with its colonial heritage, and few anti-colonial sentiments find expression in it. But, this has not occurred in the Marianas. Although the islands have been "Americanized" and have adapted culturally to American values and models, this has happened because the United States has been less oppressive than its administrative predecessors. It has done well to preserve what little that is left of the native culture. Thus, it is no accident that little remains of German culture in the northern islands, and that Japanese customs were never accepted on Guam during its occupation from 1941-44. These powers did little to take the cultural and social values of the natives into consideration during their colonial rules. The necessary conditions of a literate, English-reading audience is continually being strengthened through media and texts by Marianas writers written in English.

The problem with these events in recent times is that there is a limited audience of bilingual readers in the Marianas. Literature demands a literate and educated audience, interested in the oral literary tradition of the past, and just as interested in the new writings of its

present generation. It is only in recent years that viable outlets in the form of writers guilds and publishers have become available in the islands to cater to this audience. With such a limited national audience, the costs do not justify production of stories in Chamorro and English. The fact that Chamorro is an oral language with no established written literary tradition makes it difficult to publish and market texts in Chamorro. For this reason, writings have been in English or have been translated into English, so that the literature may reach a wider variety of readers.

What will this do to the oral tradition of the Chamorro language? There will probably be a gradual and continual deterioration of the Chamorro language. Literature in the Marianas will be written entirely in English with Chamorro yielding to the favored English language and Western literary models.

This yielding to an outside culture is more prevalent with the American influence because Chamorros tend to embrace American ways more than their traditional culture. They have enjoyed a better lifestyle and become a more literate people through the American educational system. The price of acculturation has been what remained of the Chamorros' own value systems. Today only clouded notions of what are actually authentic native customs, as opposed to Spanish and American-introduced traditions, remain.

Since literature is intertextually bound to history, culture, and politics, interpretation must take into account the native audience and writer, and their links with the oral tradition when considering new writings that deal with native themes and issues. This work is, of course, different from that written about the islands by non-native writers who write for wider regional consumption. The writing by such regional writers tends to be less political and more historically oriented. For example, Don Jones's *Oba: The Last Samurai* tells about Captain Oba who led the final fierce Japanese resistance against the Americans, eluding them for months, and finally surrendering only after suffering starvation. Such war novels contribute little to the national literature, since they do not focus on the Chamorro experience during

these years. And, as we shall see in the first book discussed, the deterritorialized native writer has yet to connect himself significantly with his literary past. Perhaps only when the wounds of colonial oppression have been healed will Marianas literature re-establish this continuity. And, perhaps, it may never happen.

HOOR OF GLORY: AN AMERICAN HERO IN SPANISH GUAM

Robert Lund's novel, written in 1950, takes place around 1898, the final years of Spanish rule on Guam that ended with the USS *Charleston's* invasion on June 21. The main character, Peter Borne, was part of a small local welcoming party of men who greeted the *Charleston*. Lund's work provides an example of how history and literature connect. His central character is drawn directly from Marianas' history. Don Francisco Portusach was a naturalized American citizen and former whaler who was living on Guam when the *Charleston* arrived. The ship's arrival signaled the coming of the Spanish-American War to Guam (Sanchez 71), and the novel parallels the historical events of those years. The American forces were to proceed to Manila after securing Guam and because there were no Americans other than Portusach on the island, he was made its interim governor. Borne is depicted as a miscreant and indolent beachcomber content with a carefree life drinking and annoying the Spanish, who were afraid to kill him for fear of antagonizing relations with the United States.

Since Borne was not a Christian, an adversarial relationship exists between him and the zealous Spanish bishop. For the Spanish, Borne was the personification of paganism and his clever arguments against Christian dogma were viewed as a threat to the religious well-being of the island. This issue comes to a head when Borne falls in love with Rosita, a devout Chamorro maiden. The bishop requires that Borne convert and that there be a trial period to verify his acceptance of Catholicism. As a carefree American governor with newly legitimized power, Borne refuses, and his relationship with Rosita is also disapproved of by the Chamorros because they too respect the values of the Church.

Another historical figure who appears in Lund's novel is Choco, a Chinese man who had been shipwrecked on Saipan prior to the arrival of the missionaries in 1668, and incited the islanders to resist the Jesuit priests (Fritz 3). He told the islanders that the baptismal water was poisonous and was intended to kill their children. Choco also told them that the missionaries ate eels and burned the skulls of their ancestors, which provoked an attack upon the Spanish (Plaza 34). In Lund's novel Choco is depicted as a sage who counsels Borne in his relationship with Rosita and the Spanish. Borne and Choco's relationship stirred rumors that the governor was able to communicate with the *Taotaomona*, and that it was through their protection he remained untouched by the cruel Spaniards. The islanders' fear of this relationship allowed Borne to carry out his duties as governor for a time.

The story is a romantic tragedy about Borne's love for Rosita, who dies giving birth to their child, and his transformation from a carefree beachcomber to an administrative ruler with a businesslike and, at times, totalitarian approach. Ultimately, his drive for land reforms brings him to a final confrontation with the Church and aristocracy leading to a series of events that discredit his attempts to improve the living conditions of the Chamorros. The result is a revolt organized by church leaders against Borne. He and his friends narrowly escape by sailing off to Manila. Lund has the dying Peter Borne recounting this tale of his faded glory as the first American governor of Guam, in a remote Philippine province.

Lund's novel is commendable and rather well written considering the historical complexity of the times he is dealing with. He creatively manipulates historical events to produce a love story in which fiction reflects actual political events.

Lund is, of course, writing to an American audience, predisposed to seeing an American hero as a benevolent bringer of order and civilization to an illiterate and uncultured society. Borne satisfies this predisposition because he rebels against the Spanish and, as the appointed governor, brings about reforms considered crucial to establishing order from an American

point of view. Three hundred years of brutal Spanish rule and the anchoring of the Catholic church on the island run counter to Borne's ideals of democracy and fairness. Nevertheless, he remains the underdog hero who unexpectedly assumes the position of authority and power.

The problem with Lund's novel from the perspective of native readers is that they are reading a novel about Guamanian history but it is one in which their figure rates insignificant. Rosita fits neatly into her role as a subservient woman whose main purpose is to marry Borne and die bearing his child. Other Chamorro characters serve as Borne's friends and political cohorts or antagonists. Lund's picture of the Catholic church and Spanish leaders shows how thoroughly the natives had been Hispanicized by 1898. However, the native reader, like the natives in Lund's story, is caught between binary cultures—their heritage of Spanish colonialism and their new connection with the American government. The native reader cannot identify with Borne's world because Americans are insensitive to the extent to which natives have become deterritorialized and alienated from their own physical environment and culture. The native has become marginalized, relegated to an exterior role both in the novel and in history. Memmi addresses this when he remarks that the colonized reference point in history and literature is a multiplicity of cultures alien to the native. He says that “the most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community,” so that books talk to him of a world which in no way reminds him of his own culture (91, 105).

Hour of Glory is the romanticization of the American arrival in the Marianas. The USS *Charleston's* taking of Guam marks the first movement away from Hispanization and towards Americanization that continues until today. Furthermore, the *Charleston's* “liberation” of the island made Guam and its people territorial wards of the United States. It is ironic that at this present time Guamanians are trying to free themselves from the United States' control and become a commonwealth. The people want to decide, as a sovereign na-

tion, if they desire a compact of free association with the United States or any other country. They have looked back in history and found that the power that the United States exercised over the island was not any different politically from the Spanish. The Chamorros throughout simply never had any choice in political matters. They went from one ruler to the next in a matter of days, and the American forces did not see fit to return the island to the native people; instead, Borne was appointed governor solely on the basis of his citizenship. Lund's text is an example of ficto-history in which the native reader is alienated from the referential world of the Guam of 1898. Unfortunately the Chamorro experience hardly mirrored Borne's experience and Lund's romantic depiction of the era.

Robert Lund's novel dramatizes the intertextual connection between history and literature, but it is a connection from the perspective of the non-native. For Lund the native experience is insignificant, because the regional audience demands a story that fits the traditional Western conventions of romantic tragedy in the paradise setting of Guam.

MARIQUITA: A TRAGEDY OF GUAM

Chris Perez Howard's novel is a historical love story in which he retraces the relationship between his mother, Mariquita, a native Guamanian, and Edward Howard, an American sailor from Indiana, in 1938 on pre-war Guam. In his book, Howard acknowledges his mother's mixed ethnicity, in which "she was part Spanish, Filipino, Chinese, and a direct descendant of the last full-blooded Chamorro," reflecting the amalgamated composition of the new Chamorro lineage (2). Mariquita's relationship with the American sailor was a microcosm of historical events in which Guam was under American Naval administration following the island's capture from the Spanish in 1899. Their relationship suggests an amicable coexistence between the Chamorro and American cultures:

The relationship between the Americans and Guamanians was overtly one of friendship and mutual respect. Racial prejudice, if any existed, was hidden,

although it could be argued that it did in fact exist because there was a private school for military children and the social clubs and party lists were very exclusive. . . . the somewhat paternalistic Naval Government was mindful of the Guamanians' feelings and kept a watchful eye on the Americans, especially the military personnel who could expect swift disciplinary action for any offensive behavior.
(23)

The story is a romantic tragedy about two lovers caught in the events of history very much like that of the "Two Lovers Point" legend. However, in *Mariquita*, the events are true, the characters real, and the American culture stands alongside the Chamorro world against an invading and brutal Japanese Imperial force. Howard's text also reflects the history of the separation between Guam and its neighboring islands to the north which were under Japanese control following the United Nations mandate after World War I. The mandate granted the Japanese government administrative rights over the rest of Micronesia except Guam. Whereas Guam was enjoying a tranquil and peaceful coexistence with the American administrators, Saipan and the rest of the islands would undergo great economic development at the hands of the Germans. This development continued with the rapid Japanese industrialization and the islands' subsequent militarization in preparation for war. The Chamorros in the northern Marianas today have few lingering traces of German and Japanese culture, and those few remnants have given way to the favored American culture following World War II.

Howard's book serves this dual purpose of articulating the history of Guam during American Naval administration and recovering the identity of a mother whom he never knew. His hope is that "people will know through the life of one girl, the sad history of the occupation of Guam" (89). Howard's text follows Subramani's position that literary evolution in the Pacific is "historically conditioned," and that the new literature is inextricably bound with the past (153).

Mariquita embodies her Chamorro ethnicity along with the Spanish influence in Guamanian

culture, which Edward Howard wanted her to maintain. In response to growing American influence, Edward said to her, "No matter how Americanized you become, you will always be a Chamorro and you need your culture for your own identity" (40). One could understand the implications of the couple's conversation in a wider scheme. The challenge of maintaining one's heritage becomes important when that fragile tradition is in danger of being overwhelmed by a more sophisticated and developed tradition. Mariquita's character personifies the continuous intermingling of the Chamorro, Spanish, and American worlds. In 1938 though, status and class were accorded to Americanized Chamorros. The higher wage earned by Edward, because he was an American, enables Mariquita to become part of the Guamanian upper class in social circles (40).

Like most islanders of the time, Mariquita views herself as an American, because she identifies with the American flag, and is patriotic—an example of the misguided vision of the Guamanian Chamorro in 1938. Although they enjoyed security and prosperity under the American banner, Guamanians were not United States citizens, regardless of their fervent loyalty. They had no national history or identity as a people. This becomes important for it illustrates the forgotten memory of the Chamorros who had been so conditioned to foreign rule that they were ready to shed their cultural identity and citizenship in favor of American society. This is not an indictment of the Chamorro people nor of American culture, it is simply a reflection of that historical intertextuality in which their world vision was a product of the political events stemming from over 300 years of subjugation. Because American administrators have been the most sensitive to the Chamorros, the islanders have gradually assimilated American cultural values and social structures and made them their own. By the same token, American literary models in poetry and prose have been assimilated to the point that many are familiar with American folktales, nursery rhymes, novels, and poets.

Howard's text mirrors the pace of literary and cultural development in the Marianas, especially Guam, following the United States'

capture of the islands from Spain and Japan. At the same time, he contributes to the literary development in the Marianas by articulating historical events and shaping the local writing tradition in the islands.

Through the context of *Mariquita*, the semi-otic relationships and binary oppositions with their ties to history appear. Mariquita represents the Chamorro-Spanish order, and Edward, the incoming American tradition. They are dichotomous cultural entities who will merge through marriage, and create a new culture and a new order for the islands. The fact that Edward is a sailor and Mariquita a civilian illustrates the binary relationship between military rulers and pacified islanders. She symbolizes the Chamorro of the colonial Spanish world, and Edward is the savior symbol who will raise her up from the heaps of colonial subjugation. The question today becomes whether one can assume that because the natives accept a foreign culture, is the loss of native folklore and tradition part of this deterioration of Chamorro culture? I believe the answer to this lies within each individual Chamorro in how he or she chooses to react to the cultural and literary events of today that threaten to erase the memory of our Before Time Ancestors.

XANADU: A FUSION OF NATIVE AND WESTERN THEMES

Xanadu is a literary magazine published in the 1960s and 1980s by the University of Guam. Many of Mark Skinner's entries in his "Micronesian Literature Bibliography" refer to items published in this magazine. He notes that the publication of the journal was erratic. Because its pieces were written by university professors and students, its quality varies (6). And because of its limited publication, bound holdings of the magazine are available only at the Hamilton Graduate Library's Pacific Collection and the Micronesian Area Research Center, and at both places, the journal is non-circulating.

By looking at the titles of some of Skinner's entries and not evaluating their quality, we see the need to separate native and non-native, Chamorro and American, and Chamorro and

English writing. With only titles to scan, it is difficult to tell much about the writers or even the genre of the work in *Xanadu*. The magazine is a hodgepodge of creative writing and poetry in Chamorro and English. Myths and legends, either creative or variants of the traditional, composed by native and non-native writers alike, are interspersed with writing unassociated with island or native themes.

When looking at some titles that deal with supposed native images, I found entries such as "Juan Mala and the Haole Teachers," "Chamorri," "My *Tata* (Father)," "Two Lovers' Point: A Chamorro Legend," and "Guillermo, The Blessed Gecko, After the Coming of the Spaniards." However, just because the titles deal with native themes, the writers are not necessarily Chamorros or Guamanians.

Other entries that deal with wider themes include "Piccolo Pete," "The First Snow," "God and Edison," "The Apple Singer in the Market," "On Death and Dying," and "Old Man By The Sea." These texts bear testimony to their Western influences and reflect how writers, native and outsiders alike, have been influenced by American literature. Skinner noted that one reason for the difficulty of separating the writing of Chamorros and non-natives in his project was the degree of intermarriage with statesiders, which has made it "difficult to determine a person's Chamorro ancestry" (5).

A question that a literary magazine such as *Xanadu* raises in Marianas literature today is whether or not writing by natives and non-natives should be separated. Is it important to categorize Chamorro writers and writing so as to provide a separate forum? If *Xanadu* is an example of how regional and local literature are fused together so it becomes difficult for each particular audience to distinguish between the two, the answer is yes.

In the context in which Chamorro and English are fused, there is a bilingual binary opposition for the reader and the audience. That is, in order to fully grasp the whole scope of the prose, one must be able to read in both Chamorro and English. This is a problem for two reasons: first, the Chamorro language is an oral language that even a native Chamorro

struggles with in written form; secondly, the monolingual English reader is unable to grasp the nuances of the native vernacular, even after becoming fluent in Chamorro. Fluency does not take into consideration the connection between language and culture. *Xanadu* propagates the notion that a literate reader is the bilingual university student, when this is seldom the case. It is difficult to continually switch codes and language references within the span of two pages and be able to appreciate the writing of each language and writer.

English, being the language of wider communication, is culturally more prestiged at this time in the Marianas. As in the *Mariquita* story, one would move up the class ladder as literacy in English and acculturation to American values increases. Because of this, Chamorro plays a minor literary role and is written to serve the literary endeavors of particular professors or students. The problem is that the audience for vernacular writing, as in the case of *Xanadu*, is minimal and insignificant. Thus, writing in Chamorro is for the sake of the writer, and the reader plays no direct role in the success or failure of vernacular prose. This is why *Xanadu* is what Subramani calls a "negative influence" in Marianas literature. At a time when Chamorro writing is crucial, the Western literary influence has become so integrated into the new culture that there is no forum in which a Chamorro writer and his audience can interact. The writing in *Xanadu* moves towards American literary models, which are favored because of the larger, Westernized, and English-literate audience. Literature composed in Chamorro is doomed to very minor status. To be significant literature must take on a collective value, but the audience and readership is extremely limited and in danger of being consumed by the English language. Albert Memmi comments that bilingualism requires participation in two psychical and cultural realms which are in conflict—they are those of the colonizer and the colonized:

The colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is

precisely the one which is the least valued. It has no stature in the country or in the concert of peoples. . . . In the linguistic conflict within the colonized, his mother tongue is that which is crushed. (107)

For this reason, it is critical to reexamine *Xanadu* as an example of what modern literature should not be in the Marianas. There must be more accountability for the ramifications of the lack of a viable forum for the native writers and readers on the part of the university. Those native and non-native writers who attempt to write prose in the spirit of the traditional models must look to those tales and legends so that the new literature becomes the attempt to continue the lineage of the Chamorro literary tradition. At the same time, they must forge a modern Marianas literary tradition that addresses the composite culture and ethnicity of the present generation of Chamorros in their works.

Finally, the native writer must write for a Chamorro-literate and reading audience who will read and evaluate his work. Let *Xanadu* be the forum for regional writers; however, the University of Guam, as the highest educational institution in the Marianas, is responsible for creating the environment for the publication and consumption of national and local literature. If this is not done, the nebulous and abstract definition of Marianas literature will continue to be clouded. One result might be a creative project such as *Kalou: A Legend of Saipan*, which Westernizes the traditional literature for an ignorant audience, unable to discern between aboriginal legends from those of recent times.

KALOU: A LEGEND OF SAIPAN:

DEBASEMENT OF TRADITIONAL MODELS

The author of this story, Louise Stout, had apparently spent some time in the Middle East prior to her arrival in the Marianas. Because of this, the story contains a migration motif of the original Chamorros' movement from the Alborz Mountains and the Caspian Sea to the Pacific. The migrating people were carried by a giant bird under the control of Kalou, a little girl who was their talisman. The people of a mountain village overlooking the Caspian Sea

are forced to leave after a great earthquake. A giant bird carries the caravan to an island, "it was a land with sea all around it. A mountain high in the middle of it" (3).

On the island, the young girl Kalou begins to name objects, *atbot* for tree, *fache* for clay, *Saipan* for the island, and *Laulau* for the village by the ocean in which they settled.

Because Kalou was their talisman who brought good luck to the village, she was able to understand the giant bird's warnings. In one incident, the bird warned the people to run to the highlands. As they reach the top of the mountain, great winds and tidal waves destroy the village. With her precocious strength and creativity, Kalou was able to design a sturdier house, built on giant pillars and elevated off the ground, which they call *latte* houses. Thus, the *latte* ruins on the islands and the great white birds bear testimony to Kalou's great work as the talisman of the first people of the Marianas.

One may argue that Stout's text is a creative adaptation of a migration motif, of which none exists in Marianas folklore. Also, her book may be said to continue the spirit of traditional folklore as it explains the existence of the *latte* ruins and the arrival of man in the Marianas. However, when we look at the particular themes, it is clear that Stout does more to debase the traditional legends and myths than point out their significance in Chamorro culture. She tries to merge her own personal migration from the Middle East to the islands through the text, and attempts to explicate the process of naming the island of Saipan, Laulau village, and others. In fact, there are no historical documents or legends that tell how Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan were named. Stout submits her text as folklore so that readers unfamiliar with the islands would look to her work as a credible representation of the literature and folklore of the islands. This is the problem with Stout's work.

The literary environment on Saipan in 1969, when Stout published, illustrates that the years following World War II were significant times in the formation of modern literature in Micronesia. Many writers and folklorists explored, collected, and commented on the oral tradition of the islands. Stout, who lived on Saipan dur-

ing the Trust Territory administration, was in an advantageous position as a writer because there was little written commentary on the folklore of the Marianas produced during this period. The generation following World War II was only in the formative stages of literacy in the new American culture and English language.

Stout's work is an example of regional writing in the Marianas. She tries to create the illusion of a native legend for the interested Western reader. Her influence is negative because it deals only with what the regional reader wishes to find in Pacific legends and stories. If Subramani's remark that European literature about the South Pacific revealed more about Western thought than Pacific man is true, then Stout's text is an example of the effect of regional writing on traditional folklore (77).

The story of Kalou is an intermingling of Middle Eastern and Marianas culture. Stout attempts to fuse the Western talisman theme and migration motif with the *latte* ruins, built by the great aboriginal Chamorros. Yet, the terms "Kalou" and "Caspian Sea" are not native to the Marianas and neither is the migration motif. Particular problems with her vocabulary are *atbot* for tree, which is Spanish not Chamorro, in origin, and *laulau*, which she defined as meaning "rough," but actually means "shake or tremble" in Chamorro. Suffice it to say that her misnomers reflect an inability to relate to the culture about which she writes. This offends native readers because an author is appropriating the island culture and traditions in a creative work that is neither an accurate representation of the culture nor the folklore. Following this is the dangerous possibility that Stout's work could be construed as representative of the culture and literary tradition of the Marianas.

MODERN POETRY AND VERSE

One of the more interesting areas to see the dialectical relationship between history and literature is in the realm of Marianas poetry. Three selections of poems epitomize the issues that must be considered in a definition of Marianas literature. William Peck's anthology, *I*

Speak The Beginning, illustrates the difficulty of trying to collect what he calls the last surviving remnants of traditional Marianas poetry. Although Peck is a notable scholar of Marianas poetry and a poet in his own right, his anthology reflects the challenge in translating Chamorro poetry and the question of whether such an anthology is as comprehensive as it could have been. He acknowledges this in his introduction. Peck asserts that the new oral tradition came about in the form of a literary renaissance from the Spanish era in which cultural values were heightened (ii). The question I have with Peck's anthology is why did he choose to translate and make arbitrary reconstructions of the poems? It seems that *I Speak the Beginning* is more Peck's subjective definition of the beginning of the poetic tradition and his reworking of those traditional poems.

Juan Sanchez's *History's Four Dark Days: An Ode in Honor of the Late John Fitzgerald Kennedy* raises another issue—regional, non-native themes in native poetry. Sanchez wrote this epic ode in Chamorro, but it deals with a regional theme for a local audience. Sanchez may quite possibly be the ultimate example of how poetry in the Marianas can be written for a native audience, but not necessarily limited to local or national themes. Sanchez's poem, now included in the Kennedy Memorial Library, is considered a national treasure both as a reflection of the poet's gift for verse, and for the poem's moving tribute to the assassinated American president. It also reflects the Americanization of the islands and this influence on native writing.

A third issue is raised by John Mazur's three books of poetry, *Typhoons in Paradise*, *Saipaniana*, and *Pacific War*. His poetry is written in English and intended for a regional audience. He writes about the Marianas experience in both history and culture. Much of Mazur's poetic form and meter display the influence of English and American poets. At times, his stanza forms and rhyme schemes detract from the Marianas themes and images he discusses. In his doctoral dissertation, "Pacific Poetry and Versified Violence," Mazur admits that he is an outsider writing about the Marianas and Chamorro experience in history through poetry (v). The

problem is that his poetry demands a highly literate English reader, but such a regional reader unfamiliar with Marianas history would be unable to fully appreciate many of the poems he writes because they would not be able to recognize, let alone identify with, the historical experience. This experience remains within the native Chamorro's arena. Even more disturbing is his alienation of the Chamorro audience. The Chamorro reader feels that Mazur is writing about his or her history, but Mazur cannot identify with that experience because he is an outsider. Mazur's poetry is an example of how a regional audience would perceive the islands through the eyes of one particular foreign writer appropriating local themes and images.

When Mazur uses universal themes such as love and romance, his work lacks substance and depth. Because of this, his success as a poet may ultimately be connected with the fact that he has hit upon new ground, Marianas history through poetry, which nobody has ever done before.

I SPEAK THE BEGINNING: ISSUES OF TRANSLATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND ORIGIN

Peck's anthology, funded by the Commonwealth Arts Council on Saipan, represents the first attempt by the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas to gather and preserve the traditional poetry of the islands. However, the anthology raises the issue of literal translation, which Peck acknowledges "falls flat to the uninitiated, both in Chamorro and in the literal English translation" (iii). These Chamorro translations were made by Gerald M. Calvo from Rota, where all the Chamorro poems were collected. Another issue is Peck's own attempt to go beyond literal translation and "incorporate essential, missing information into the poems themselves so that their full intent becomes clear to modern readers, and reclaims for them some of the esthetic joy that is intrinsic in the poems" (iv). Finally, in his quest to incorporate the Carolinian poetic tradition, which he had difficulty collecting, Peck resorts to collecting chants from Chief Kintoki of the Western Truk district as a way of pre-

serving the Carolinian poetry. Aside from the obvious fact that Peck's collection is fragmentary and controversial with regards to his methodology and his incorporation of his own nuances into the poetry, we may look to Peck's work as a fusion of regional and national literature.

By explicating and editing the poems in order to reveal the intrinsic beauty of the poems, Peck is addressing a regional audience. His editions are not intended for the Chamorro reader who would like to appreciate and rediscover his own oral tradition. Although Peck's collection is significant for its role in transcribing and recording the oral tradition, Skinner adds that one begins to question why they are reading one non-native man's version of Chamorro poetry, noting "it may express general beliefs and sentimentalities of Chamorro culture but lacking an author makes it bastardized without individuality and expression of self" (6). One of Peck's interpretive rewrites "For Thy House' Sake," expresses this:

*A father's blessing strengthens a house
O honor thy father & his blessing
But a mother's curse demolishes a house
Though strong-built
O conduct thyself seemly & earnestly
As thy mother hath instructed thee
For thy house' sake. (6)*

Peck reworks this poem from Rudolfo Atalig Mundo's song in the Chamorrita four-lined stanza, a form with basic alternating end-rhymes, but no specific organized rhyme scheme. Peck takes one stanza from Calvo's literal translation of Mundo's song and creates a poem in itself:

*The blessing of the father
makes his children's house strong.
The curse of the mother
shakes all strong houses. (37B)*

This is the pattern of most of Peck's reinterpretations. He relegates the original versions and their literal translations to the end of the anthology and his editions follow his introduction, leaving only a few of the original poems unedited. Because Peck chooses to transform the traditional into the modern English poetic

form with rhyme and meter, he has accomplished what Stout did to the traditional legends—devalued and debased their original significance as the closest remaining connections to ancient oral poetry. His anthology is not so much an attempt at preserving the native poetry as it is a renovation and appropriation of the oral tradition to fit Western perspectives of the poetry of the islands.

Most of Peck's reworkings of Calvo's literal translations demonstrate how he has converted the traditional poetry and modernized it according to Western poetic forms. Is this anthology representative of authentic, native, and original poetry? Are the singers of these chants and Chamorrita songs continuing the oral tradition or should they be considered original compositions? How ancient or aboriginal are the poems? Peck fails to address and articulate these issues. He focuses on the importance of recording and editing these poems. Looking at another example "The Wind," we see the difficulty, for native and non-native reader alike, to ascertain and differentiate between the original poem and Peck's interpretation. The literal translation by Moses Fejeran goes as follows:

*And the wind took you
Then the wind shall return you
And wherever it takes you
That's where it will put you again. (41A)*

Peck takes this stanza from a song by Ana Castro and Jose Hocog, and creates an adaptation of the original:

*And the wind takes you
O my love
From my arms
It's the wind
The brave salt wind telling of far places
And manly deeds
The soft jungle wind heady with scents and sighs
And jealous invitations
It's the wind that takes you
But the wind that takes you
Same wind will bring you back
I listen to the wind for signs & portents
I search the lonely wind. (6)*

The danger in Peck's editing of the stanza is that it displays a lack of concern for authenticity and originality. Also, it suggests that the audience for *I Speak The Beginning* is not the native Chamorro reader, but the literate English reader. Originally intended to gather and preserve the original poetry, the collection clouds the oral tradition by attempting to infuse it with a Western literary flavor that he believes the unfamiliar outsider wants.

The problem is that Peck forgets that the audience for these songs and poems are Chamorros and Carolinians, not non-native readers. Yet he aimed at a national audience who could appreciate in written form the oral tradition of Marianas poetry. When the original songs and poems are sung or read aloud, the local reader is able to grasp the traditional images and themes being performed. This is much more effective than the dismantled workings that Peck's editions provide.

When Peck remarks that Gerald Calvo "keeps the faith" in transcribing the original vernacular of the poetry so that they retain their traditional flavor and origin, he glosses over what the goal of *I Speak The Beginning* should have been in the first place (37A). Unfortunately, Peck also chose to incorporate Trukese poetry in the anthology because he felt that the Carolinian oral poetic tradition had been lost. For him, the inclusion of Trukese chants would be reflective of the Carolinian oral tradition. This is a gross and insensitive assumption by Peck. Most Carolinians would be unable to identify with either the language or poetry that Peck includes. They do not reflect the Carolinian culture as it has evolved since its migration and establishment in the Marianas by the late 1800s. In reality, Peck found only one original Carolinian poem, entitled "Funeral Chant," and the rest were taken from Chief Kintoki of the Truk District. He includes a poem entitled "Chuk (Truk): The Beginning," which relates the original Trukese migration to the Truk island group. The following are the opening lines:

*I speak the Beginning:
Soukachau who with one woman
first inhabited Chuk*

*Soukachau whose seed is the seed of all
born on these islands
Soukachau, first parent, creator of laws—
eternal demigod of Chuk. (22)*

The Chuukese poems such as the one above are inappropriate because they do not tell of the Carolinian experience nor are they part of the Marianas literary tradition. Yet, Peck feels that these poems are the only way to get a semblance of the Carolinian poetic tradition. Chief Kintoki's poems do not relate the Carolinian migration from Satawal island to the Marianas, and Peck acknowledges that the traditional poems have been lost.

Peck attempted to recreate the poetic history by reinterpreting the poems and revising their traditional forms. But he reveals more about Western perceptions of poetic forms and conventions than the native poetic tradition. Peck asserts that his anthology is the first collection of recorded Marianas traditional poetry. The title is a paradox in itself because by defining the text as a beginning, Peck has created a distorted version of the oral literary tradition. He fails to trace the roots of the poetry and how these poems, related by the elderly on Rota, either reflect that tradition or have deviated from ancient Chamorro verse form.

SANCHEZ'S ODE TO JOHN F. KENNEDY: A LESSON IN CHAMORRO VERSE

Juan A. Sanchez, a Chamorro poet from Saipan who died in 1988, was well known among local circles for his skills as an oral poet. His most famous work, an epic ode in Chamorro in memory of President Kennedy, is an example of how the poetry in the Marianas following the inception of the Trust Territory moved towards American and Western themes. He has composed poetry in Chamorro dealing with themes such as abortion and Haley's Comet. Sanchez's memorial ode, composed in 1965 and entitled "History's Four Dark Days: A Memorial Ode To The Late John Fitzgerald Kennedy," expresses the feelings of the Marianas Islanders that President Kennedy was a president who truly cared for the new charges of the United States' Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Sanchez was moved by Kennedy's

reputation as a compassionate man, calling him the "defender of the peace of nations," saying "he was known not only to political leaders but also to our young and old people here. For this reason I have attempted to put the story of his tragic death in poetic form and in our own Chamorro language" (i).

Sanchez's Chamorro version is written in four-line quatrains with no specific rhyme scheme or meter as shown in the opening lines:

*Manainaho yan manelubo
yan todos hamyo ni man-presente
Estague un estoria
pot i defunto (na) Presidente. (1)*

However, the English translation by Father Andrew San Augustin follows the ballad stanza form but without consistent meter or beat. This was probably because of the difficulty of translating while maintaining the poetic tone:

*Friends all and fellow countryman
and all who her attend:
Here we begin the story
of our beloved President. (1)*

From these opening lines, Sanchez relates the experience of the Chamorros upon hearing of Kennedy's assassination, "the news of the death of our President/soon reached all human ears; / And from round the globe world leaders came / to his funeral, in tears" (1). The four dark days refer to the four days in which Kennedy's body lay in state at the White House. The poem's epic structure, encompassing sixty-eight stanzas, reflects how highly regarded the president was in the islands. Sanchez writes, "our Saipanese people were quick to erect / a bust of the Kennedy they love; / A white marble bust to help us remember / that your goodness was never enough" (7).

Sanchez's stanza form followed the traditional four-line Chamorro song structure with its alternating rhymes and beat, the translation from the Chamorro reflects the Western ballad stanza tradition. Perhaps this form is now "universalized" and appropriate because of its hymnal quality, to Sanchez's poem. Paul Fussell notes that using the ballad stanza is relevant for the unsophisticated's person experience with poetry. The four-line quatrains become ap-

pealing, giving an “illusion of primitive sincerity and openness” (133-34). The elegiac tone and quality of Sanchez's ode reflects the deep appreciation the Chamorros had of the young president, “the story of President Kennedy / we ought never to forget; / So I've written this poem in the vernacular. / In us, may his memory be kept” (7).

The significance of Sanchez's poetry becomes apparent in his dexterity as a local writer writing about both regional and national subjects. In national poetry, Sanchez composed one of his final works, a tribute to Brother Isidro Ogumuro's ordination as the first Carolinian Catholic Deacon of the Marianas, also in Chamorro. Translated, Sanchez's poem echoes the historical significance of Carolinians in Marianas history:

*Our first doctor
was Benusto Kaipat
And our first deacon
the brother Isidro Ogumoro. (1)*

He also includes the period under American administration and the social sentiments of those few who harbored prejudice towards the Carolinian minority population:

*He was the first Carolinian
ordained as a Brother
The Brother Isidro Ogumoro
here during the time of the American.

Some came to the service
but not all approved of the event
Because of this intention
some were not present. (2)*

Sanchez addresses the social impact of Ogumuro's ordination because he felt that the Carolinians had been neglected by the Church and the Chamorro community. I believe Sanchez felt that some people did not approve of Ogumuro's ordination and saw it as an affront to the Church. To some in the community, Ogumuro had not been properly instructed in the traditional dogma. This disapproval was reflected in the decision of some members of the community to not attend Ogumuro's ordination.

Sanchez's poem also raises the issue of language upon Ogumuro's inception as a Brother into the Capuchin Friars:

*Here us o'Bishop
on this occasion we call.
For him to show us the way
because we understand him in our language.*

*We all know that Chamorro
has more flavor to us.
It is all fine and well for us
but woe to our children o'Bishop. (2)*

The mass of ordination for Brother Ogumuro was in Chamorro, Carolinian, and Latin. Sanchez's plea to the bishop was part of his dismal projection that the children in succeeding generations would be unable to comprehend the Chamorro mass because of the prestige and increasing acceptance of English as the language of wider communication on Saipan. In the lines quoted above, Sanchez articulates the language issues in the islands today. For Sanchez, Ogumuro represents a figure who can cross language and cultural barriers in the church, especially that great cultural rift between the Chamorros and Carolinians.

Sanchez's work may be the best illustration of how literature and poetry in the Marianas can strike a balance between the constant oppositions of language and culture. At times, many writers following World War II have overlooked the importance of writing in Chamorro and Carolinian. Writing the vernacular languages is the only way of preserving the literary tradition of those languages and maintaining a native reading audience receptive to it. Bilingualism is an integral part of the new requirements for the Marianas writer. In addition to being aware of the traditional and ancient literary models of Chamorro culture, the Marianas writer must also be aware of the influence of Western literature in prose and poetry in order to create the new literature because it is part of the composition of outside influences throughout Marianas literature and history. Sanchez's poetry has done well to serve as an example of how such Marianas writers can influence both regional and local literature,

creating a language and culture context for the reception of prose and poetry by a wider audience.

JOHN MAZUR: MARIANAS HISTORY AND THEMES FOR A REGIONAL AUDIENCE

In the preface to his 1989 doctoral dissertation "Pacific Poetry and Versified Violence," John Mazur addresses his position in Marianas literature and history, saying "this paper is another accounting of the history of the Marianas Islands written by a foreigner in the late 20th Century, far removed from the aboriginal Chamorro, yet attempting to contribute to island history" (v). The problem is that the poetry he discusses consists of his own work, and he does not bring in any works by Chamorros or Carolinians. Thus, Mazur's poetry is a viewing of Marianas history through the eyes of an outsider who may write and speak well of the Marianas experience, but whose work romanticizes Marianas history and is not representative of the native experience.

The poems in Mazur's dissertation were composed during his residency as a high school teacher on Saipan. He published three books of poetry in 1990, *Typhoons in Paradise*, a collection of love poems, *Pacific War*, with themes about World War II events in the Marianas, and *Saipaniana*, which covers Marianas history from Magellan's landing to the Americanized Commonwealth of today. Most of the poems discussed in his dissertation are in these three books. They were published by Mazur himself and are available for purchase in many of the bookstores on Guam and Saipan. Although this was unprecedented before Mazur, many writers today are becoming their own critics and analyzing their own poetry. It is a dilemma for me because Mazur's poetry represents an outsider's perspective of Marianas history, and his commenting on his own poetry does not lend an objective critical view of the merit of his work as a poet.

In looking at the themes and images of Mazur's poems, we see a detachment between the poet and the culture about which he writes. *Typhoons in Paradise* contains only love poems that lack depth and fall short of the romantic

tone the poet wants to convey, as his "Carpe Diem" illustrates:

*Rush to me, and I to you
Before our year is through;
Death waits to snatch us all too soon;
Let's enjoy our sun before the rising
of our moon. (Typhoons 23)*

Mazur's poetry displays some dexterity in traditional English versification, but little else. He employs a variety of rhyme schemes, including sonnet forms, and is efficient in his use of metre and scansion, as seen in a stanza from "The I of the Storm (I)":

*As the eye of the storm passes surely
And the typhoon winds again blow free
Then love is tossed again so foul
And tatters comprise my soul. (Typhoons 16)*

Mazur's use of the ballad stanza and rhyming couplets throughout his three books is workmanlike. He is also able to incorporate other poetic forms such as haiku, "I hear a pounding .../ Only your heart? Or just mine? / It has to be both," and terza rima, as in "Torch Song":

*Amid wartime's unprecedented trouble.
Tokyo, Oriental gem mysterious,
Fire-bombed at a cost double

That of Hamburg and Dresden, more serious,
A conflagration where fire consumed
Oxygen, the lack made people delirious. (Pacific
War 17)*

Mazur's work demonstrates his proficiency with the various English poetic forms and techniques. However, his tendency to focus on technique and structure at times detracts from the themes and images within the poetry. Also, Mazur seems to try too hard to align himself with Western poets. For example, he uses Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Sweet Night" too slavishly in his poem, "Sleep Gently":

*Do sleep gently in thy long night
Made too early by throes of war
You, brave soldier, whose soul took flight—

Yours, that hardly had shown its might—
Severed, squandered on foreign shore,*

Do sleep gently in thy long night. (Pacific War 24)

He takes Thomas's theme and works it into his poem about an American soldier's experience landing on the shores of the Marianas, facing fierce resistance, and ultimately going into that long sleep of death. Mazur's poem also echoes the anti-war poetry in poems such as Richard Eberhardt's "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment" and Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner."

Mazur also draws on the English poet, John Donne:

*It's said, "War is hell."
Bits of shrapnel, torn
Bits of flesh, shorn
An empty shell
Where it fell (living bell)
For whom tolled the bell? Pray
tell. (Pacific War 6)*

It seems that Donne in particular had a profound impression on Mazur's poetry. This poem (and others) reflects not only the images that Donne introduced, but also, in *Saipaniana*, there is the heavy contemplation at the desolation and destruction of the Chamorros by the invading Spanish conquistadors. "Valediction Requiring Mourning" is another example of Mazur's alliance with Donne's philosophy and world view in poetry:

*Those before time have gone away.
The Spanish Jesuits made them go,
And Spanish soldiers helped, I say.
None heeded the Chamorros' "No!"*

*These invading immigrants' noise
Disturbed him and required him move,
Uprooted him from his life's joys,
His way of life and homely love. (Saipaniana 38)*

He brings Donne's theme of mourning and loss into the context of Marianas history, with the forced migration of the Chamorros to Guam by the Jesuits to pacify and Christianize the islanders. Mazur accomplishes this historical agenda in many of his poems to articulate the struggles and experiences of the Chamorros. He addresses in poetry the experience of what he calls a "generous, uncomplicated, un-

assuming, and simplistic people" at odds with the encroachment of modern ways (vi).

As a poet Mazur is able to incorporate the themes and images with technical precision. On the other hand, Mazur's poetry also raises questions of audience and motivation in the poetry by an outsider attempting to articulate Marianas history and the Chamorro experience. He tries to assume the voice of Chamorros during the Spanish occupation, and World War II. He attempts to relate the pain and suffering from what he reads in history books and accounts of the native experience, as in "The Aboriginal Chamorro Speaks":

*Chamorro is a Spanish word meaning bald
And thus, from then on, I was called
They said I was so fat that I appeared swollen,
But I was happy before I espied Magellan.

I could hurl the slingstone so forcefully
That I buried it deep in the trunk of a tree.
I am playful, fun-loving, and prone to trickery,
And stubbornness, violence, and mockery. . . .
I love to run naked and at liberty!
When left alone, I love to be me!
(Saipaniana 6)*

He takes the accounts by Pigafetta, who was on Magellan's voyage, and versifies the Spanish historical descriptions of the Chamorros. This is an example of Mazur's work that appropriates the Chamorro experience for the poet's own personal self-expression. He cannot presume to relate to the centuries of native oppression and claim them as part of his experience as a poet. This is why Mazur's recognition depends on the fact that he is one of the first few outsiders that has written about the Chamorro experience. Only the regional audience and readers unfamiliar with Marianas history would look upon Mazur's romanticizing of the destruction of the Chamorro culture as part of his poetic license, and as a Chamorro, I disapprove. Mazur fails to realize that he has appropriated an entire people's culture and experience for his own poetic advancement, feeling that because he is familiar with Marianas history he possesses the legitimacy to write about the people's destruction.

From this assumption, Mazur goes through the various cultural influences in Marianas history, continually portraying the Chamorros as victims, and the foreigners as insensitive and destructive forces. Yet, he does not realize the implications of his poems, which may be assumed by outside readers as representative of Chamorro world view and experience, as shown in "Song of the Chamorro":

"Don't worry, be happy," he sings.

He's content with just a few things:

Betelnut, Budweiser, cigarettes, too;

These, his woman, children and shack will do.

He has no desire for Tiffanies or Mings.

(Saipaniana 28)

This is an example of how the literary tradition in the Marianas can be impaired by such regional writing appropriating the cultural history. Such writing serves to stereotype Chamorros and Marianas culture. More importantly, Mazur's readers must understand that his poetry, like William Peck's reworkings of native poems, and Stout's legend, constitute an outsider's account of Marianas history.

Mazur's work serves as an excellent example of New Historicism's intertextuality between Marianas literature and history. He dramatizes the Western perspective of Marianas history, romanticizing Marianas history for a regional audience interested in an exotic subject.

I submit that John Mazur's poetry parallels Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is, among other things, an attempt to shed light on an unknown and unfamiliar culture to a hungry Western audience. Like Conrad, Mazur wants to penetrate a "dark continent," but he further presumes to be the sole source for satisfying the literary needs of a literate regional audience, while pilfering from and denaturing his host culture.

The poetry of the three men discussed here reflects the current state of literature in the Marianas today. There is a lack of a definition of what literature, especially poetry, should be in the Marianas. With John Mazur, we can see the problems that arise from the romanticization of history. The next chapter discusses the

criteria necessary to establish a definition of what is literature in the Marianas today as well as the conditions required for this new literary tradition to succeed. It advocates a literary movement that addresses these literary controversies and reflects the present composite culture in literature.

ADVOCATING CHAMORRO AND CAROLINIAN LOCAL LITERATURE

From this critical overview of selections of Marianas literature, we have seen the development of Marianas literature from its genesis to present day and its ties to history. The various historical events and influences of foreign nations and cultures have produced what Chris Perez Howard called the "composite culture" of Chamorros and Carolinians. The present generation of natives in the Marianas are becoming even more influenced by new cultures and peoples who have come to the islands in search of a new life, and have come to call the Marianas their home. The ever-growing presence of Filipinos, Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, and other nationalities is a result of the current rapid economic development in the islands. This is a critical time in the islands because the native culture must again compete with other traditions. However, the natives at this point in history have more resources and power to preserve and encourage local traditions. The problem is that economic prosperity takes priority over culture. Native traditions, language issues, and cultural concerns take a back seat to prospects for individual wealth.

It is good that traditional customs such as basket weaving, local art, and music, have prominent and significant positions in Marianas culture today. Unfortunately, with literature, there is a lack of public encouragement for local writers, either in English or Chamorro. Aside from Chris Perez Howard's *Mariquita*, only D. L. Northway's *Kirida*, a 1987 novel about child abuse on Guam, comes to mind as recent writing. Even more disappointing is the lack of vernacular writing in Chamorro or Carolinian. The Bilingual Project on Guam produces daily Chamorro lessons in the island's *Pacific Daily News*, but they remain small and juvenile, intended for younger read-

ers. There is a lack of writing workshops in the secondary and post-secondary schools that might encourage local writing, as well as a shortage of money for such programs. If and when such programs are funded, they lack substance and direction. Finally, there is little prestige attached to vernacular writing because fluency in English and Japanese, the languages of commerce and academe, are considered more practical. These are all issues that will determine the ultimate direction of literature in the Marianas and its connections to the oral traditions of the past. In 1945, Mavis Werner Van Peenen predicted what has become a disappointing reality today:

With the decline of his folklore, and without any other form of literary development to take its place, the Chamorro is understandably in a precarious cultural position. He walks the precipitous ledge of Past-Present, with the abyss of "Americanization" waiting to engulf him. (41)

There has been a decline of folklore awareness in the islands because of the movement towards a literary "Americanization" in which American writers and poets assume prominent positions in Marianas literature. Thus, the native folklore and poetry are compared to American models, and the supposed lack of sophistication and development in local writing tends to move readers towards those American literary models.

What is Literature in the Marianas today? The answer is that it is a minor literature, embodying its collective historical and political past, and written in different languages in addition to Chamorro. Literature is multicultural and multinational today—the link with the aboriginal Chamorro with regards to traditional oral tales has been severed forever. However, the literary tradition of today is a reflection of the island's diverse and composite literary influences. Sadly enough, the native Chamorro writer has become estranged from the pre-contact literary traditions, Before Time Ancestors, and must forge a new identity within the bounds of these contemporary influences.

This new marginalized literature bears significant parallels to Chicano literature or what is termed "border literature," in which there is

an area between American and Mexican cultures where there is a fusion of both world value systems and traditions. It is this border region, this minor and marginal world, that Marianas literature must explore and articulate in order to reflect the native experience in relation to history and present culture. Marianas literature is a composition of those native traditions and foreign influences.

The proposition for a new literary tradition in the Marianas is part of the ever-increasing movement towards local literature in the Pacific regions, including Hawaii. The answer to "What is Literature in the Marianas?" cannot be found without serious consideration of the following: (1) an acceptance of the political and historical experiences of the natives and the realization that history is an arbitrary definition, a construct attempting express the Marianas experience, but not necessarily that of the natives; (2) writers today must look to the folklore from pre-contact times to the present in order to understand the intertextuality between literature and history as a base point for their writings, which are also part of this coexistence between the two; (3) the New Marianas Literary Tradition must articulate the Chamorro and Carolinian experience of language, ethnicity, politics, and culture in which the present conflicts and successes of the Marianas people are experienced by national and regional writers alike. In other words, local writers must own up to their own present position and be accountable for establishing an audience that identifies with Marianas themes and imagery from local perspectives. At the same time, they must attempt to redefine stereotypical perspectives of the natives and advocate a national Marianas literature. It is an exciting time for a literary resurgence in the islands today. However, the ultimate success of a literary resurgence of native writing is up to the Chamorro and Carolinian people. For the first time since Magellan's discovery, the natives have a chance to develop, maintain, and advance their own traditions and culture.

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