

MOGMOG and FALALOP: Historical Treatments, Approaches to Westernization, and the Balance of Power on the Ulithi Atoll

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The introduction of western systems and their underlying values has deeply impacted Ulithian society. The shifts have not produced uniform effects throughout the atoll. On Mogmog the community embraced certain Catholic mechanisms and have synthesized them into their social structure in ways that compliment aspects of the island's traditional system. The island of Mogmog also esteemed the western (academic) valuemment of a cultural narrative that may or may not be historically precise. The foreign interest in, and accounting of, the *Sawei* exchange system played an important role in this. While Falalop also underwent conversion it is at present a less religiously-cohesive island with a more developed (semi) cash economy. It is home to a broader system of western infrastructure. Due to these changes Mogmog is no longer in the position of practical authority that is articulated in the works of some western researchers or claimed in the contemporary tellings of it traditional narratives. The Ulithian involvement in development has been the result of a complicated mix of geographic, historical, and social factors.

Introduction And Overview

Just as Yap Proper is defined as a sort of master, leader, or advisor to the Outer Islands, so too is there a power system within these more distant atolls and islands themselves. Historically that structure was a mechanism of the larger Yap tribute system. Primarily as a result of location, that is to say proximity to Yap Proper, Ulithi served as "leader", or at least the "coordinator" for the other outer islands. Relative strength in traditional knowledge and skills seem to have either furthered this position, or at least developed from it. In more recent times inequity in development within the outer islands has reinforced the power of Ulithi, while boosting the relative traditional strength of the more distant islands in the fields of medicine and navigation.

Within Ulithi Mogmog is called the chief island. This is a role that is commonly assumed to have developed due to its position atop the Outer Island tribute to Yap chain. More recently, the forces of development have favored Falalop, with its greater area of land, while Mogmog has strengthened its position as "chief" island through the new western understanding of traditional culture. Key mechanisms include the church and the work of foreign anthropologists. This juxtaposition of new and old has led to a contemporary power system that is seen by some Ulithians as an unsettled synthesis of new and old. It does not always contain within it the mechanisms to resolve some of the newly created disputes.

The most commonly cited mediums of impact in the creation of this new contemporary Ulithian balance of power have included the Roman Catholic Church and American Government's development efforts through the Trust Territory Pacific Islands (TTPI) and later Compact I and II Funds. These are important but need to be properly framed within a broader consideration of the complex interplay of social, cultural, and material shifts and how they fueled such symptomatic changes as the western education system, the semi-cash economy, and arrival of electricity. The variance in impact and acceptance of the new is important in a foundation of understanding the present.

Intra-Atoll Power Dynamic

In terms of the traditional system on Ulithi, the commonly accepted academic treatment is a Mogmog-centered narrative. The compilation and transcription of a series of myths and tales fortified and expanded the historical justification for Mogese authority. William A. Lessa, a well known anthropologist (doing his initial research in the 1940s) who authored Ulithi: A Micronesian Design For Living, followed in the foot steps of the Germans, who centered all Ulithi research on Mogmog. Lessa wore many hats but was best known as a social anthropologist, author, and professor at the University of California in Los Angeles. His work in the years 1947 through 1960 was initially conducted under the auspices of the United States Navy, Office of Naval Research, and later under the National Academy of Sciences, Pacific Science Board. He also published The Ethnology of the Ulithi Atoll (1950) and Tales from Ulithi (1961), as well as a long list of shorter papers.ⁱ

Because there is such a close and at times peculiarly Micronesian connection between knowledge and power on Ulithi, the actual act of revealing or communicating knowledge of ownership or skill sets can reinforce or shift the flexible status quo.ⁱⁱ The formalizing of this shifting (subjective) body of knowledge through outside researchers such as Lessa, who derived their information from a handful of elite on Mogmog, was itself a force in the perpetuating or creating of contemporary power for Mogmog. The inherent difficulties of transcribing an oral tradition, particular from a highly non-confrontational culture, were exacerbated by the reliance on voices from a single island.ⁱⁱⁱ Many contemporary residents of Falalop dismiss Lessa's work as wholly untrue, and insist that the chiefs and traditional leaders he dealt with assigned him informants who were *sar-sar* (slightly off, mildly unbalanced) or those who simply told the tallest tales. On Mogmog there is a sense that concerns about the exposure and publication of gossip meant propriety prevented an open account, even from those individuals who sought to sincerely communicate with Lessa.^{iv}

The esteem for Mogmog as a result of its role in narrating western accounts of Ulithian society occurred as another post-contact force simultaneously produced other types of changes. These included economic, political, and religious change. The church provided a framework of ideas and social structures that the people of Mogmog incorporated into their historically rooted power structures. Economic and social-political forces resulted in shifts on the atoll that were less favorable to Mogmog. Perhaps, as a reaction to this, the chiefly leadership on Mogmog adopted a conservative stance that allowed for a more controlled

and deliberate approach towards westernization than was seen on Falalop.^v Understanding the historical position of Mogmog helps to outline the changes that occurred.

Traditional Role of Mogmog

Reverend Father Walter's initial observation as recorded in a personal correspondence written on Ulithi in 1731 was that "they have no paramount chief, and show their '*Thamoles*' or chiefs, neither respect nor obedience."^{vi} A member of his party, Father Antonio Cantova however described Mogmog as "home of the *Tamol*, or lord of the islands."^{vii} In the official report Father Walter broke from his first account, describing the *Tamol* [king] as a "petty king."^{viii} Three years later, Fr. Cantova's biographer, a fellow Italian born Jesuit, wrote of Mogmog as "being the residence of the *Tamol*, which is their name for the Indian Chief, who is lord of one, or a few of the islets."^{ix} Although there seems to be some slight variations within the Jesuits' accounts, it is significant that none of them describe the leadership on Mogmog as being "paramount," a word one commonly encounters more than two centuries later in the works of both American and Japanese researchers. It is hard to believe that this estimation was made out of simple ignorance. They were already quite aware of the Yap / Outer Island relationship although members of their party had not reached Yap Proper. They wrote of Yap Proper as being "the largest one, with the greatest population of all the islands in that archipelago, and where the main *Tamol* resides, that is, the small King of all of the others, the man to whom they pay tribute every year."^x

Likewise the Jesuits were cognizant of other outer islands, further to the east; namely Wooliae and Ifaluk. A number of Outer Islanders played a significant role in the Fathers' arrival on Ulithi. Accounts among the Fathers vary slightly, but we can piece together that a fleet of lost canoes from the Outer Islands found their way to the Marianas circa 1725. Although the seamen were well taken care of in the Marianas, only one chose to remain there. This man, born "Digal" on Ulithi, was rechristened by the Jesuits "Gaspar de Los Reyes."^{xi} He lived and worked with the missionaries on Guam, and then accompanied them to Ulithi, where he served as a translator and facilitator, despite the fact that Father Cantova had learned Woolian while on Guam, from yet another "lost" Outer Islander. Based on this contact and long term interaction the Jesuits certainly had a reasonably thorough understanding of the islands.^{xii} It would be silly to dismiss the Jesuit reckoning that the Mogmog chief was in control of only the Ulithian Atoll (not other islands to the east) as ignorant.^{xiii} It is even more unlikely that they knew this information but chose not to include it in either their personal letters, nor their official report – after all this would further their claims of the significance of their work, and reinforce their plan towards total regional conversion.

The fact that Jesuits spoke nothing of Ulithi's power over islands to the east, and little of Mogmog's power in specific, is very much at odds with later accounts, accounts transcribed by foreign social science researchers many years after initial contact. Listening to contemporary Ulithians tell tales of pre-contact trips to Yap one hears how men from outside the Atoll, from Fais for example, would sail to Falalop in order to recruit or hire the services of an expert navigator, and set then off for Federai where magic

would be performed in order to bless and protect their voyage. Visiting Mogmog, particularly close to Federai after a fifty plus mile journey from Fais, would seem prudent to the extent that we hear how Mogmog not only served as the seat of power in Ulithi, but also as the spring board and intermediary for tribute to Yap. Evidently this was not as mechanical as the stops at Falalop and Federai. The example of Fais is particularly interesting in that the research of University of Guam Professor Donald Rubinstein points out how the people of Fais view the relationship between Mogmog and their island as “more coordinate than super-ordinate.”^{xiv}

Role of the Chief

Sawei is the name of a historical exchange between atolls in the mid-Carolines and Yap Proper. The treatment of, and fascination with, the Yap *Sawei* system (be it characterized as exchange or tribute) is important in understanding the western academic curiosity with Mogmog. It sets the stage for the tendency to frame Ulithian studies within a Mogmog-centered narrative.

Lessa writes in the 1960s (his initial research was done in the 1940s) of a “paramount chief” with “some judicial authority” who serves a mere “executive head” for affairs within that atoll.^{xv} For Lessa the importance of Mogmog’s chief lies “in his office[s] in external matters, principally involving relations with Yap and other islands in the Western Carolines.” Lessa expands though, and goes on to introduce new terminology for the chief of Mogmog within the atoll, but more significantly he creates an account and records powers over islands outside of the atoll. It is interesting to note that the Jesuits spent most of their time, and were learning from the people on Falalop, while Lessa’s work was Mogmog based. Lessa does allude to the inconsistency in accounts (between his and the first Jesuits’) by simply noting that “Unfortunately, when Father Cantova got to Ulithi in 1731 he failed to speak of the Chiefs and their lofty status.” Fortunate or not it is a significant omission.

Dave Bird, an American professor who lived and worked in Yap during the mid-1980s, authored a book documenting the process of creating Yap’s first State Constitution.^{xvi} In outlining Yap Proper’s history he uses the sort of language one finds in Lessa’s work; namely of a Yapese “empire” extending towards Chuuk. He recalls how leaders of family units were organized into councils and “these councils were arranged in a hierarchy with local councils at the bottom and a region-wide council headed by the paramount chief of Mogmog Island in Ulithi Atoll at the top.” Esteeming the Yapese position further than Lessa did, Bird does not talk of the Mogmog as working as an intermediary or organizer, but rather as “reporting” to the chiefs in Gagil, through which the Mogese served as “the outer island link” rather than it’s leaders, in the “old ‘Yap Empire.’”

William H. Alkire investigated the details of the *Sawei* system in greater detail than Lessa. Alkire took a broader view since he had personally completed fieldwork on island groups further to the east (namely Lamotrek and Wooleai). In the 1977 edition of An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia he explained how the vast linkage of exchange, reaching from Yap to islands outside of Chuuk Lagoon

concluded as the chief of Mogmog dealt directly with Yapese chief in Gatchepar.^{xvii} He also outlined the way in which representatives from each island group dealt with specific clans they were associated with on Yap Proper. This latter interaction supports a more decentralized and atoll-specific network of exchange than the accounts by Bird or Lessa. Alkire characterized association between atolls as “supra-island alliance(s)” rather than in the more hierarchical wording that Lessa employed.

Alkire also deals with the fact that lines of authority on one island did not always translate into prominence or leadership on other islands. He explained that such roles are rooted in a given family’s line since “the Carolinian explanation of chiefly status emphasizes seniority of settlement on the particular island.”^{xviii} This is important when considering the chronology of habitation in the settlement myth (see below).

In The Demystification of Yap David Labby outlines the ways in which Gatchepar gains credence and standing among other Yapese villages as a result of its relationship with the outer islanders.^{xix} Within the strict caste system on Yap Proper the exchange strengthened Gagil, home to Gatchepar. He uses a parent-child simile to describe the relationship. Labby ascribes no specific importance to Ulithi beyond its physical proximity to Yap making it an en-route relay point. Neither does he make special mention of Mogmog within the exchange system.

Japanese researchers of the post-war period embraced a Lessa-inspired understanding of Mogmog. Social science students affiliated with the Kagoshima University still make occasional group visits to the Atoll, where their work tends to be narrowly focused on Mogmog. The content generally deals with contemporary issues, but their careful framing of the historical context perpetuates an esteem of Mogmog as outlined by Iwao Ushijima in 1982.^{xx} Although the “traditional kingship was abolished during Japanese colonial times” the island still “ranks highest.”^{xxi}

Interestingly the Japanese cite the work of Josef Figiriyong, a native of Mogmog who wrote a thesis in 1976 dealing with the intra-atoll political dynamic.^{xxii} He states that Mogmog is above all islands, even atop the presently unpopulated Losiep, a claim in conflict with spoken accounts from Falalop who claim lineage from Losiep.^{xxiii}

Seeking to break free of a definition dependent on Yap Proper, Carmen Petrosian-Husa speaks of the *Rei Metau* rather than the “Outer Islanders.”^{xxiv} She emphasizes the depth and balance of cultural traditions they hold, and seeks to develop the basis for scholarly work that treats these people and their customs outside of the standard Yap Empire approach. In doing so she may have gone to a dialectical extreme, improperly homogenizing three or more distinct atoll groupings and languages. However she is correct in her thesis that the bulk of academic treatments fail to break free of the dependency narrative and may therefore paint an unbalanced portrait.

Petrosian-Husa'a understanding of Mogmog's role in atoll leadership is close to Alkire's. The island of Mogmog may be home to the "highest chief" and the "tip of the hierarchy" but its power as she describes it is weak. It "hardly influence[s] the daily life of people." She explains how, historically, communities functioned in an "egalitarian manner."

The details of these various accounts from the last 60 years not only conflict with one another, but in some cases prove to be internally inconsistent. Nor do any of them fit squarely with the varied myths and accounts I heard during my time on Falalop (two years) or Asor (nine months). Christophe Descantes has argued forcibly that the failure of the 1731 Jesuit mission was the direct result of the Fathers' underestimation of the power held by Mogmog, and that the Jesuit's work to undermined that power.^{xxv} This would suggest that their summation of the Ulithian political system may be flawed. On the other hand they provide the only direct source of information when one considers that even Lessa arrived and worked five decades after the conclusion of the *Sawei* system.

While it seems that Mogmog did hold a key position in the broader exchange system, the way(s) in which this translated into an intra-atoll leadership role within Ulithi is hardly clear. The western interest in the *Sawei* system fueled the contemporary view of those on Mogmog who place themselves as the traditional head of all outer-islanders. It is a self-understanding of traditional authority that most obviously manifests itself within the atoll now that the broader exchange system is out of use. It is a position driven by opposition to Falalop. The western investigations have placed an emphasis on Mogmog, which has framed the contemporary Mogese claim to authority over Falalop, Asor, and Federai. The assimilation of Church structures has also complimented this pseudo-traditional understanding of atoll leadership.

The Roman Catholic Church

Serious and sustained conversion efforts by American Jesuits during and after World War Two led to great changes in the religious and medical spheres of Ulithian society. With the immediate presence of a new and competitive narrative of metaphysical and behavioral norms, the very fabric of the culture began to change in ways that weakened the continuity of power held by the chiefs. One major forum for changes seems to be extended family unit, which the church relegated to a secondary status, in favor of the immediate, or nuclear family unit. This included the elimination of plural marriages as well as a demystification of some aspects of gender relations encompassed in the loose marriage structure, such as allowing men to eat food cooked by women other than their own wives. Magicians were also debunked, and many converted, but their "power" was still held in regard by members of the faithful, even if the perception had shifted from simple awe into fear and condescension. Such changes did not formally alter the mechanism of the chief's rule, but certainly chipped away at the singular cultural narrative that the chiefs were a faucet of.

Interestingly the people of Mogmog, who presently pride themselves on being the most traditionally aware or culturally oriented among the Ulithians, are also cited as the most devout of the Atoll's

Catholics by the Clergy. This is not so much a true and singular gauge of spiritual steadfastness, as perhaps indicative of community cohesiveness in the form of church celebrations or special events. The Catholic Church altered some outlets of the expression of Ulithian communal norms, while fully restructuring or eliminating others. In this light the role of the Church has on the whole done little to diminish Mogmog's position relevant to the other Ulithian Islands. In fact the church seems to have reinforced that role within the realm of religious and spiritual life on Ulithi. This is most evident in the recognition of Mogmog as having the strongest faith community within the atoll, the stricter adherence to religious holidays shown on Mogmog, the active role of its church board in island leadership, and the presence of (the American Jesuit of post-war times) Father Walter's grave.

It is important see this as a dynamic interaction between newer and older. This means being careful not to overly simplify the shift into what David Hanlon called "a false dichotomy between traditional and modern."^{xxvi} Mogmog developed a synthesis of traditional moral order and formal political-religious leadership of olden times with new Catholic-styled outlets and frameworks.

Peter Black has outlined the function of religion on small atoll islands of Micronesia as "primarily an external, social phenomena" and a "framework" for the structuring of community activity.^{xxvii} He explains how Catholicism did bring significant changes, but that in many ways "certain fundamental orientations persisted." These included the power of a formal hierarchy and decision-making process in the management of cooperation in labor and physical resources. The historical connectedness of political and religious power was weakened, but the public sphere was prevented from expanding. Such a development has begun on Falalop.

Examining the *Modeknigi* Palauan revitalization movement of the Japanese period Donald Shuster further described this manner of using new systems to preserve vestiges of old ones.^{xxviii} During the 1920s and 30s there was a deliberate "...respon[se] to foreign culture pressure by combining old local religio-medical beliefs and practices with new Christian ones in order to evolve a variable synthesis that would revitalize and reintegrate Palaun perceptions of the world..." This was a conscious response to the vast array of changes threatening the traditional systems and world-view. It was a choice of certain outside influences over others, namely those that were seen to be compliment traditional structures and authorities.

The people of Falalop did undergo conversion, and church attendance still is common, but no one would dispute that in the present the church there does not serve as the locus of activity and proactive-influence that it does on Mogmog. As western infrastructure and political understanding on Falalop continued to expand and develop at a greater rate and level of complexity, the people of Mogmog choose to embrace a more traditional and hierarchical basis for their social order through the adapted forum of the church. This was reinforced by formalization of traditional narratives, which justified the old system. The Mogese remained limited in their ability to host economic and structural development so they selected and fueled the two outside systems that complimented their identity and power. Falalop slowly became more

egalitarian and secular as a result of a larger cash economy, more non-native visitors and inhabitants, greater physical infrastructure and development, and finally U.S.-medias which initially took the forms of film projectors, records, and radios. A recognition of how Ulithians see their past is important to viewing the changes.

The Settlement Myth

Talking with the people on Falalop, one can piece together a sort of simplified mean of the various versions of the atoll establishment myth. The people of Losiep attacked Falalop, and expelled its inhabitants who themselves went on to resettle on Mogmog. On their way to Mogmog they attempted to overrun Asor, whose people fended them off. The resettled people on Falalop (formerly Losiepan) attacked Mogmog, but were either repulsed, or simply made peace. The loose hierarchical chain developed, from top to bottom, Losiep, Mogmog, Falalop, Federai, and then Asor. The population on Losiep sank down to insignificance and Mogmog became the lead island, home to the paramount chief^{xxix}. This establishment or transfer of power is conveyed through myth. A love sick Losiepan man constantly paddled across the atoll to a young woman on Mogmog in order to court her with ever greater gifts of turtle meat. The turtle meat is of course one of the most significant aspects of the traditional power roles, whereas only one family in Mogmog may butcher turtles. This clan in turn redistributes the best meat to their historically designated relatives and neighbors on Mogmog, and then return the remaining meat to the hunter.

In a different telling, we hear of a Yapese woman who first came to settle on the Atoll of Ulithi. She initially lived on the Island of Mangeyand which is the most central of the large inhabitable islands. Because of the great numbers of rats there, this Yapese woman chose to move to Mogmog, and establish her seat of power there, as from the shores of Mogmog one can view nearly all of the Atoll. In light of the failed assault on Asor, and the inconclusive battle for Mogmog the position that island holds may not seen as solidly based or deeply rooted. In line with this telling, the "first to settle" basis of Mogese power is less clear. That emphasis on the chronology is supported by the Yap-initiated account, which is the story we find recounted in foreign academic examinations that outline a justification for seafood redistribution.

Seafood Tributes and Redistributions

A single clan on the Island of Mogmog holds claim to turtles, whale, dolphin, large fish tributes. All such animals caught anywhere in the atoll must be taken to Mogmog. There the head of a certain family takes traditionally defined portions of the meat, and then returns the remaining parts. On special occasions this is followed by a community redistribution.

There are important differences between this Ulithian system and the seafood prohibition or distribution practices found elsewhere in the Pacific. The Ulithian limitations emphasize control over all turtle killing

through atoll-wide tributes of defined portions to specific clans on Mogmog with the remaining portions being returned to the hunters.

Key aspects of hunting and sharing practices elsewhere in the Pacific include: prohibiting turtle hunting and capture on certain islands or reefs within an atoll;^{xxx} placing uniform restrictions on the harvest of eggs;^{xxxi} community distribution of meat during certain celebrations and ceremonies;^{xxxii} age and pregnancy related consumption limitations;^{xxxiii} complete egalitarian redistribution of all turtle meat in all cases;^{xxxiv} community redistribution with variable and special larger allotments for elders, special guests, and hunters;^{xxxv} rank-based apportion during special feasts;^{xxxvi} and religious offerings.^{xxxvii}

Broadly speaking there are four categories - time and or location restrictions on procurement, egalitarian redistribution, special events and celebrations, and the limitation of consumption to holders of certain rank or roles.

Several theories exist to account for a range of meat sharing practices among humans. Reciprocity based resource transfers involve a distribution of labor or an exchange.^{xxxviii} Risk reduction is a form of this and often includes distribution based on participation or equity.^{xxxix} In cost signaling models the hunters promote their self-interest by advertising skill and leadership.^{xl} In other cases culturally defined public ownership of the meat promotes an entitlement approach to resources and results in equitable redistribution.^{xli} Competition and status rivalry can also led to meat sharing.^{xlii}

A cultural-materialism account might suggest that turtle restrictions evolved in order to preserve a necessary but limited resource.^{xliii} Balazs argues convincingly that western-influenced advances in transportation resulted in more hunts (with greater efficiency in capture).^{xliv} He suggests that some traditional systems are only now being employed with a conscious aim towards preservation, as this would have not been necessary due to such large pre-contact turtle populations.

None of these broad explanations provides a satisfactory accounting of the Ulithian practice. Neither does the practice fit neatly within the models found elsewhere in the Pacific. Because a certain family on Mogmog always receives a designated portion with the bulk of the meat returning to the hunter(s) the Ulithian practice is best defined a secular tribute or tax rather than a gift, redistribution, or exchange. In this way it is unique among pacific cultures and can be seen primarily as an exercise of power.

Turtle Consumption In Contemporary Practice

Certainly whale and dolphin meat are not consumed with any regularity in contemporary times but there still are manifestations of the traditional practice.^{xlv} In early 2005 the Pacific Missionary Airlines (PMA) pilot noticed several large patches of murkiness and disturbance in the water, and speculated that a Taiwanese vessel had come through the lagoon using dynamite for illegal fishing under the cover of darkness. He asked a number of people if anyone had seen or heard anything that might confirm this.

Indeed a dead dolphin, with no external injuries save a broke jaw, washed ashore on Federai. The people of Federai said nothing, not wanting to bring the carcass to Mogmog.

More often turtle meat is the issue. A possible scenario might involve a group of boys from Falalop purchasing enough gasoline to boat over to Losiep where they spend a day spear-fishing and slay several turtles. If there were half-dozen boys this considerable quantity of meat must be shared among several families. Bringing the turtles to Mogmog would require the purchase of many more gallons of gasoline, and would result in the loss of a significant portion of meat. The boys would instead most likely return to Falalop. The islands being small and full of gossip the Mogese might know if this thing happened regularly. Not only are there quite a number of people from Mogmog who have married into Falalop families, or attend, teach, and assist the high school, there is even a man from Mogmog living on Falalop whose job it is to look out for and report turtle consumption. The fact that it does occur and that the Mogese know, is a serious erosion of authority because continuity and justification of effort are as much the driving forces of tradition on Ulithi as is fear of punishment.

Examining how modern technologies, and the upheaval they have brought to the traditional power hierarchy, guide and perpetuate the disregard for traditional turtle killing practices one cannot ignore the direct role of outsiders. Sueo tells us that “various taboos were also broken under Japanese direction such as the killing of turtles on Asor instead of Mogmog” and goes on to argue that the “abolition” of the “Paramount Kingship” (situated on Mogmog) was the key factor in the breakdown of turtle (as well as other sea creature) offering and redistribution. Indeed turtles were brought to Asor during the Japanese Mandate period, as this was the site of the Japanese head quarters on Ulithi.^{xvi} Evidently the leader of the Japanese contingent employed a variant of the tribute practice in order to provide himself and his subordinates with a small quantity of turtle flesh for their own consumption.

Falalop – Home of Infrastructure

Some on Mogmog are weary of exercising punishment options. Because of the American Navy, and later the Coast Guard, Falalop is home to the runway. This airstrip is the main point of entry to the Atoll. Furthermore Falalop has the cell phone and internet relay tower, as well as being home to the bulk of atoll fuel supplies. The forces of development have raised Falalop to a sort of de-facto prominence that in practical economic matters seems to overrule the traditional power of Mogmog.

Still the sense of Mogmog as leader remains. Falalop may be allowed increasing autonomy but the two other populated islands (Federai and Asor) do not have such leverage. For example, as recently as the late nineteen-nineties, the Mogese punished the people of Asor for killing a turtle. Two men slay the beast (average weight of Loggerheads is well over one hundred kilos), took it to the backside of the island and butchered it, but failed to dispose of the remnants. The next day a boat from Mogmog came, someone on Asor told them, and the Mogese found what was left of the turtle. The punishment was extreme; for three months no one from Asor could enter the ocean. For an island without electrical power (no refrigeration),

very few cisterns (concrete water catchments) and only one small store (usually empty) this is a far-reaching punishment. Subsistence fishing occurs nearly each day and the bulk of water used for daily cooking and cleaning is brought from the ocean as well.

The extremeness of the punishment was greeted with resentment, and rumors abound that some men would fish secretly on the far shore at night. Despite all this (or perhaps because of it) there is still a great emphasis placed on the value of tradition for tradition's sake; namely the maintenance of power by the Mogese over Asor and Federai, and at least some residual lip service on Falalop. The high esteem for consensus, and the ever present drive to avoid conflict means that change seems destined to remain slow, and that at least in the Mogmog / Falalop rivalry, it will not likely be directly and openly addressed. Development means a diminishment of the role of Mogmog. This is ironic to degree that it was outside anthropologists and researchers who may have helped reinforced the power of Mogmog by using western mechanisms to formally record accounts of it. Indeed their narratives continue to fuel the sense of leader-entitlement on Mogmog.

Economic and political power of a western sort has shifted to Falalop. All interaction with the foreign occupying powers has in effect worked towards this direction - consolidation of people, and relocation of the power seat onto Falalop through either the development of facilities, or simply the physical residence of the outsiders. Within his first three months on Ulithi, Father Cantova had written of recognizing the physical size of Falalop as being of more significance than Mogmog's role as "home of the Tamol, or lord of the islands."^{xlvii} Mogmog was "so small, hardly a league in circumference, with little land for cultivation and no supply of good drinking water, I decided to go and settle on the Island of Falalep [sic]."

The View from Mogmog

Many on Mogmog value the idea of a deliberate isolationism and communal cohesion. For them this is a pleasing contrast to the changes on Falalop.^{xlviii} The speculation that the forces of development, or the disparity in infrastructure, have brought about "social changes" matches the contemporary belief of some Mogese as Sueo reports it. Sueo states that Roman Catholicism, the founding of Outer Island High School on Falalop, the activity of American Peace Corps Volunteers, as well as the spread of television are perceived to be the four "main causes for great social change."^{xlix}

This listing gives us insight into the Mogese perspective on, and evaluation of, cultural shifts. It does not treat the underlying variance in physical island-size and western exposure, which played an important part in the greater westernization on Falalop. Indeed three of the four factors listed are manifestations of the later stages of these developments. Only the role played by the church represents changes complimentary to Mogmog's contemporary claim to leadership.

Outer Islands High School (OIHS)

The creation of an outer island high school on Asor, and its subsequent relocation to Falalop did allow Outer Island students access to Western Style education without the complications of living amongst, and dealing with the Yapese. The location (or really relocation from Asor) of the High School to Falalop was due to the presence of the runway, and the amount of open or available space. In fact the land (*Hapilbill*) was already controlled by the government, so no new complicated land lease arrangements needed to be worked out or further negotiated. This land ownership, and the development of concrete buildings during the Navy and later Coast Guard periods, were all centered around the airstrip. Just as the High School had been moved from Asor over to Falalop, so too had the Coast Guard facilities earlier been transferred, to provide the service with access to the runway. The high school on Falalop did not itself lead to great social change through its instruction nearly as much as it reflected and furthered the shift of power from Mogmog to Falalop and was just one more inevitable event in the continuing westernization of the latter at the “expense” of the former. Not unlike the 1731 Jesuit choice to relocate, the relative size of Falalop predisposed the island to development by outsiders.

Sueo and his Mogese sources may be confusing cause and effect when speculating that the high school’s location was a major cause of change, or that the high school by itself altered the traditional system. They seem to be suggesting that this occurred through the creation and consolidation of students, teachers, and physical resources, or that teaching itself caused change.

A more significant shift accompanied the creation of elementary schools on each island years before. These primary schools would have had a much greater impact through the formal transmission of western knowledge, values, norms and curriculum. The younger students would be much more likely to internalize the new-to-them western influences. These elementary schools also represent one of the first sources of western style formal employment, and the arrival of the cash economy. The presence of the high school was one of many factors that reshaped Falalop, but the primary schools reached into and altered all four of the inhabited islands before this. Although the high school did create a primarily western environment that tested the cultural flexibility of many Ulithian norms (post pubescence siblings in the same room during candid instruction, etc) this was really an extension of what had already begun at the primary school level.

Sueo also cites Peace Corps Volunteers. The role and presence of Peace Corps volunteers on Ulithi has decreased during that last several decades, and it should be seen as but a singular portion of the larger TTPI, as well as Navy and Coast Guard, presence and influence during the period of time from the mid 1960s through early 1980s. In the formal role of classroom teachers they did indeed produce a generation that was comfortably fluent in the English language, but because the other (Mogmog, Asor, and Federai) island populations remained essentially homogenous and without much contact with, or influence from American sources other than priest, the presence of this new tongue did not by itself effect much change. It did allow for more individuals to pursue education and economic opportunities outside of the lagoon,

but its power as a catalysis for change rests mainly in its relationship to other factors Sueo mentions – most notably television (a phenomenon of only the last decade) and the high school.

Television has impact, but again it has changed Falalop more than Mogmog. Presently it is much easier to gauge the power of television in terms of its influence on English language skills, than its social-cultural impact, though there is unquestionably impact. The casual observer will note a greater usage of English on Falalop than any of the other Ulithian islands. Television should be seen within the larger framework of western media, and this included film projectors, radios, and record players becoming common in the 1960s, with phonographs and some films as early as World War II. Again existence of Navy, Coast Guard, and TTPI personnel on Falalop resulted in an exposure to these items that Mogmog lacked. Falalop also had semi-regular power through these US institutions years before the creation of a Yap-State utility, and later the Yap State Public Service Corporation. Mogmog did not begin to establish an electrical infrastructure until the 1990s. While Falalop had centralized electricity decades earlier, the Mogese leadership actually delayed adoption until 2000.

It is important to note that three of the four mechanisms of change cited by the Mogese in Sueo's work had deeper and more immediate impact on Falalop than Mogmog. The exception, the Church, was synthesized into local norms most fully, and is an area where Mogmog retains particular strength and influence within the Atoll.

The Power Of Continuity

While the code-based ethics of formal Catholic tradition mark a departure from the more proprietary and spiritual systems of pre-contact magical-religious practices, the hierarchical and absolutist nature of the system lent itself to the non-confrontational decision making processes on small corral atolls. This was key to the marrying of the new metaphysics with the public morality and framework for social cooperation provided by the old beliefs.

The people of Falalop and Asor that I lived among agreed that the Atoll's traditions are powerfully self-perpetuating. It seems to be a mix of a justification of effort, as well as the effects of western efforts to deliberately preserve indicators of pre-contact ways. Even many of those Ulithians who break tradition will in the end admit they must at times do so secretly because it is the tradition, or the non-confrontational consensus to it, that is itself the final justification for them.

Although there is a significant dichotomy between the two islands' treatments of development and foreign influence there exists a great deal of inter-marriage and common identity. While all four inhabited islands collectively comprise a distinctly Ulithian culture, there are key island-specific traits, and a definite sense of individual island ethos. Mogmog in particular embraces a cohesion and communalness that is contrasted with slowly increasing liberalization on Falalop. The disparity in treatment of

development and foreign influence plays an important part in these processes, and speaks of the larger interplay of cultural, social, political, and economic forces.

A Note About Perspective and Intent

I have briefly outlined a range of historical treatments and asked questions about how social scientists may have influenced the shifting of local perceptions. I have not attempted to present a singular or revised view of the Yap-Outer Island exchange or the turtle meat tributes. Nor am I fooling myself (or the reader) into believing that I am “giving voice” to an inherently Ulithian perspective.¹ I simply hope to raise questions about how the (primarily non native) documentation of histories and norms may have fueled the complicated process of change. I realize that these words now constitute a tiny portion of that vast dialogue. I also recognize that the flux is ongoing, and that it involves factors of greater breadth and complication than I have space to deal with. This example is not intended to be prescriptive but rather I hope to have highlighted the inherent complexity in understanding continuity in social, political, and cultural terms on the Atoll of Ulithi.

Conclusion

The Jesuit Father Cantova was martyred on Mogmog’s shores in the 1730s. Centuries later the people of that island have synthesized aspects of the Catholic framework into their own social-cultural structures to a much deeper level than exists on Falalop. Likewise the Mogese choose to value western intellectual projects and perspectives that reinforce the esteem they placed on traditionally styled leadership roles. They worked to articulate a narrative that provided these leaders and their role with continuing relevance. Falalop’s western-spurred development has been of a more economic and political manner, this as a result of greater direct impacting and western-funded government projects. The people of Falalop behave with ever-increasing autonomy just as the Mogese seek to maintain hegemony through neo-traditional mechanisms. Mogmog’s approach to change was not only an effort perpetuate distinction of the island within the atoll, but provided for greater cohesion on Mogmog itself as the population of Falalop expanded and became increasingly diverse due to the presence of both non-Ulithian outer-islanders and westerners. The disparity in resources and divergence in historical treatments is important for the understanding of contemporary intra-atoll disputes.¹ⁱ

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ⁱ Federig, Karen (Revised by Robert Leopold) “Register to the Papers of William Arnold Lessa”, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute, August 2000.

ⁱⁱ Dening, Greg, “Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880.” Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bedbedin, La and Knight, Gerald, “Man This Reef.” *Micronitor*, Majuro, 1982.

^{iv} Korn, Carrie, Peace Corps Volunteer on Mogmog from 2002-04, telephone conversations with Author in 2005.

^v Ibid

^{vi} Walter, Rev. Fr. Victor, Letter to Rev. Fr. Bernard Schmitz, written on Falalop Ulithi, dated 10 May 1731. (AGI Fil. 320; cited by Astrain VII, 769, 773, 774, 777; copies exist in AHN Ultramar 5352, Part 2, and in Colección Pastells, Fil. 8, fol 239-301. Reprinted in History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents, Volume 13, compiled and edited by Rodrique Lévesque, Lévesque Publications, 1992.

^{vii} Cantova, Fr. Antonio, Letter to Fr. De la Hera, written on Falalop Ulithi, dated 12 May 1731. This letter was edited by Carrasco and published in the Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid 10:2 (1881); 263. Reprinted in History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents, Volume 13, compiled and edited by Rodrique Lévesque, Lévesque Publications, 1992.

^{viii} Walter, Rev. Fr. Victor, Declaration of Fr. Victor Walter, "Official Reports from Manila about the Voyage to Ulithi." Dated 3 July 1731. Source Agi Fil. 320, with copies in AHN Ultramar 5352, Part 2. Reprinted in History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents, Volume 13, compiled and edited by Rodrique Lévesque, Lévesque Publications, 1992.

^{ix} Spilimbergo, Fr. "Biography of Fr. Cantova." Published in Mexico in 1740 as "Carta Del P. Fulcherio Spilimbergo, Provincial de la Provincia de Philipinas, acerca de la Vida, Virtudes, y gloriosa Muerte del V. P. Juan Antonio Cantova, de la Compania de Jesus, muerto a manos de los Barbaros Carolinos. Sacala a luz publica el G.D.B. aficionado al V.P." Source ARSI Phil, 20, fol 379-416. Reprinted in History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents, Volume 13, compiled and edited by Rodrique Lévesque, Lévesque Publications, 1992.

^x Ibid

^{xi} Ibid

^{xii} Descantes, Christophe "The Martyrdom of Father Juan Cantova on Ulithi Atoll." *Missionalia*, Volume 32, Number 3, November 2004

^{xiii} Father Walter was also aware of yet another "drifter" who came from "Pais" [sic, "Fais] and specifically remarked how on Ulithi there was a "more or less close contact between any one of them and the islands of Pais or Palaos and Carolina" Walter, Rev. Fr. Victor, Declaration of Fr. Victor Walter, "Official Reports from Manila about the Voyage to Ulithi." Dated 3 July 1731. Source Agi Fil. 320, with copies in AHN Ultramar 5352, Part 2. Reprinted in History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents, Volume 13, compiled and edited by Rodrique Lévesque, Lévesque Publications, 1992. Christophe Descantes (footnote xii) raises important questions about how these two individuals may in reality have been one and the same.

^{xiv} Rubinstein, Donald. Personal Correspondence with Author, January 16, 2005.

^{xv} Lessa, Willam A. Ulithi: A Micronesian Design for Living, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston Inc. New York, 1966.

^{xvi} Bird, Dave. Yap Regains Its Sovereignty: The Story of the First Yap State Constitutional Convention. Betelnut Press, Colonia Yap, 1994.

^{xvii} Akire, William H. An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia. Cummings Publishing Company, Menlo Park, California 1977.

^{xviii} Ibid

^{xix} Labby, David. The Demystification of Yap. University of Chicago Press, 1976.

^{xx} Ushijima, Iwao, "The Control of Reefs and Lagoons: Some Aspects of the Political Structure on Ulithi." Islanders and Their Outside World, P35-75 Rikkyo University, 1982.

^{xxi} Sueo, Kuwahara. "Traditional Culture, Tourism, and Social Change in Mogmog Island, Ulithi Atoll." And Toru, Aoyama. "Politics of Dancing: Cultural and Social Negation Among the Islands of Ulithi and Yap Proper." *Progress Report of the 2000 and 2001 Survey of the Research Project "Social Homeostasis of Small Islands in an Island-Zone."* Published by Kagoshima University as an "Occasional Paper" number 39, July 2003.

^{xxii} Figirliyong, Josede. "The Contemporary Political System of Ulithi Atoll." Master's Thesis, California State University at Fullerton, 1976.

^{xxiii} There is an elderly woman in the village of Pelyaou on Falalop who was born and raised on Losiep before the war. She is the eldest and most influential woman on the island of Falalop and her many children and their kin constitute the bulk of that village.

^{xxiv} Petrsian-Husa, Carmen. "Powerful and Powerless: The Rei Metau on the Outer Islands of Yap." *Anthrolobe.ca*, May 15, 2005.

^{xxv} Ibid ^{xxii}

^{xxvi} Hanlon, David. "Micronesia: Writing and Rewriting the Histories of a Nonentity." *Pacific Studies*, Volume 12, Number 2. March 1989.

^{xxvii} Black, Peter W. "The Domestication of Catholicism on Tobi." *Pacific Studies*, Volume 17, Number 1. March 1994.

^{xxviii} Shuster, Donald R. "State Shinto in Micronesia During Japanese Rule, 1914-1945" *Pacific Studies*, Volume 2. Spring 1982.

^{xxix} Some say the magic was the cause. Others suggest that the Mogese chiefs conspired with the chiefs in Yap. A third claim (cause or effect?) is that the early colonial powers removed the few remaining Losiepan to Falalop.

^{xxx} Balazs, G. "Sea Turtles and their Traditional Usage in Tokelau." *Atoll Research Bulletin*, Number 279, Washington, Smithsonian Institute, 1983.

^{xxxi} Johannes, R. E. "Traditional Marine Conservation Methods in Oceania." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematic*, Volume 9, 1978.

^{xxxii} Bliege, Bird. and Smith, Eric Alden. "Turtle Hunting and Tombstone Opening: Public Generosity as Costly Signaling." *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Volume 21, 2000.

^{xxxiii} Ibid ^{xxx}

^{xxxiv} Huntsman, J. W. "Kin and Coconuts on a Polynesian Atoll: Socio-Economic Organization of Nukunonu, Tokelau Islands." *J. Polynesian Soc.* Volume 82, 1973.

^{xxxv} Ibid ^{xxx}

^{xxxvi} Thompson, L. "Southern Lau, Fiji: An Ethnography" *Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin*, Number 162, 1940(Kraus Reprint Co.).

^{xxxvii} Luna, Regina Woodrom. "Traditional Food Prohibitions on Marine Turtles Among Pacific Islanders." *SPC Traditional marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin*, Number 15, July 2003.

^{xxxviii} Hawkes, K. "Sharing and Collective Action" *Evolutionary Ecology and Human Behavior*. Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 1992.

^{xxxix} Trivers, R. L. "The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism." *Quarterly Review of Biology*, Volume 46, 1971.

^{xl} Ibid ^{xxxii}

^{xli} Ostrom, V., and Ostrom E. "Public Goods and Public Choices." *Alternatives for Delivering Public Services: Toward Improved Performance*. Westview, Boulder, 1977.

^{xlii} Hawkes, K., O'Connell, J.F. and Jone, N.G. Blurton. "Hadza Meath Sharing." *Evolution and Human Behavior*. Volume 22, 2001.

^{xliii} Haris, Marvin, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture*. Waveland Press, Long Grove, Illinois, 1998.

^{xliv} Ibid ^{xxx}

^{xlv} Once in my time on Ulithi, during the first year of my three-year service I ate whale. A pod of sperm whale passed close by Mogmog, inside the lagoon, and the men were able to divert a young whale away from it's mother. It was steered up to the beach,

slaughtered, and butchered with Machetes. The quantity of meat was so great that some of the smoked blubber made its way to Mogese families living on Falalop, one of whom shared it with me.

^{xlvi} Sueo, Kuwahara, "Traditional Culture, Tourism, and Social Change in Island, Ulithi Atoll." reproduced as "Report One" in *The Progress Report of the 2000 and 2001 Survey of the Research Project "Social Homeostasis of Small Islands in an Island-Zone."* Published by Kagoshima University as an "Occasional Paper" number 39, July 2003. Kuwahara Sueo cites Josede Figirliyong's Masters Thesis extensively.

^{xlvii} Ibid vii

^{xlviii} Ibid iv

^{xlix} Ibid xlvi

¹ Lepowsky, Maria. "Gender, Egalitarian Societies, and the Writing of Pacific Anthropology." Response to a Book Review, *Pacific Studies*, Volume 20, Number 3. September 1997.

ⁱⁱ Rubinstein, Donald H. "A Tale of Two Islands" Tourism, Culture, and Conflict in Yap State." *The Progress Report of the 2000 and 2001 Survey of the Research Project "Social Homeostasis of Small Islands in an Island-Zone."* Published by Kagoshima University as an "Occasional Paper" number 39, July 2003.