Pacific Studies Journal

Volume 12 | Number 1 Article 6

9-1-1988

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Recommended Citation
Shuster, Donald R. (1988) "ELECTIONS, COMPACT, AND ASSASSINATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU," *Pacific Studies Journal*: Vol. 12: No. 1, Article 6.
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## Cover Page Footnote

Vol.12, No. 1—November 1988

This article is available in Pacific Studies Journal: https://digitalcollections.byuh.edu/pacific-studies-journal/vol12/iss1/6

# ELECTIONS, COMPACT, AND ASSASSINATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU

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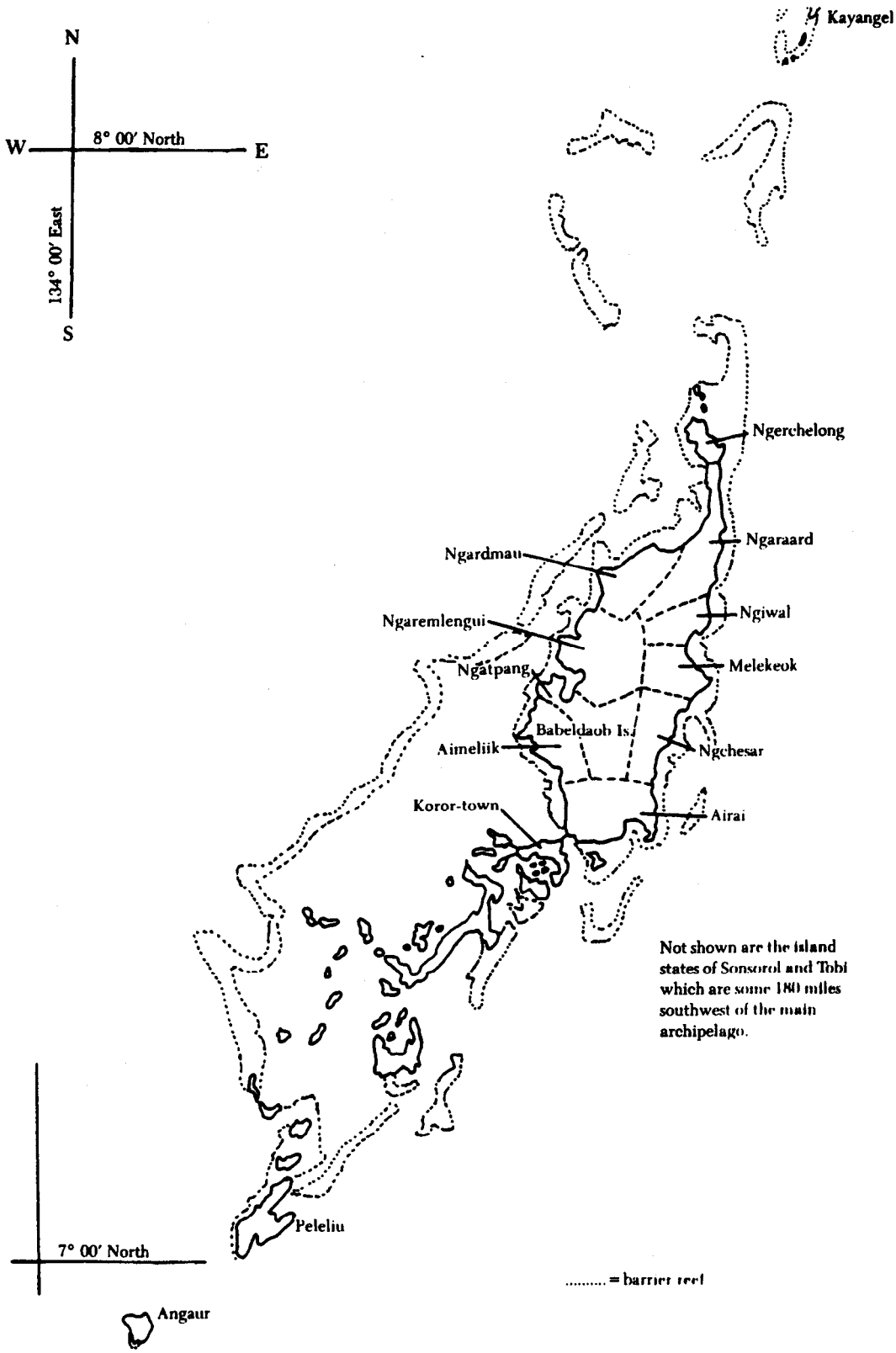
## Introduction

When Charlie Gibbons and Joseph Tellei, native policemen during Japanese rule of Palau (1914-1944), returned from Guam in 1947 after a U.S. Navy-sponsored workshop on Western-style government, they became the local experts in the new institution of elected government.[1] Some months earlier, thirty-one Palauans had been elected as members of the Palau Congress, which in 1955 rewrote its charter to form the Olbiil Era Kelulau Era Belau (Palau's Congress of Whispered Decisions). In 1963 this body reorganized itself as the Palau Legislature. At the same time, the leading members of the legislature formed the Liberal and Progressive parties, which provided candidates for the seven Congress of Micronesia elections (1965-1976). These parties, based more on personalities than platforms, disintegrated in 1978 during debate on a unified Micronesia.

On the issue of Micronesian unity, Roman Tmetuchl and his faction opposed it and urged Palauan separation. On the other hand, Lazarus Salii and his group supported political federation with the other ethnic areas of Micronesia--Truk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, and the Marshall Islands--under a constitution drafted by islanders in 1975. The Palau separatists won in a close vote, 55 percent *no* to 45 percent *yes*. This

*Pacific Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1--November 1988




**STATES OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU**

dramatic event set the stage for the Palauans to draft their own constitution, which was finally ratified in 1980 (Shuster 1980). This document has become widely known throughout the Pacific for its nuclear-free clause.[2]

The Constitution of the Republic of Palau established a presidential form of government, which was legally installed on 1 January 1981. The government consists of separately elected offices of president and vice president; a sixteen-member Council of Chiefs to "advise the President on matters concerning traditional laws, customs and their relationship to the Constitution and the laws of Palau"; and an appointed five-member Cabinet, whose members head the five executive branch ministries--social services, natural resources, justice, administration, and state.

The Olbiil Era Kelulau (Palau National Congress) consists of a fourteen-member Senate[3] with representation based on population size and a sixteen-member House of Delegates with one delegate for each of Palau's small states.[4] Both the executive and legislative branches are elected for four-year terms. The Palau judiciary consists of a Supreme Court headed by a chief justice with three to six associate justices and a National Court of Common Pleas. The former consists of both trial and appellate divisions.

## Palau's First Constitutional Government

A decision made by the Palau Constitutional Convention in 1979 and codified into law by the Seventh Palau Legislature in 1980 called for the election of the nation's chief executives by a plurality vote. This decision, in hindsight probably a mistake, had a major impact on the first government. In Palau's first general election, held in 1980, both Haruo Remeliik and Alfonso Oiterong emerged from five-men presidential and vice presidential fields as winners, but with only 31 percent and 32 percent margins respectively.[5] Roman Tmetuchl and Lazarus Salii, two very politically ambitious men, trailed Remeliik with 25.6 percent and 23 percent of votes cast. A few hundred votes more would have won either of them the much coveted office of president.[6]

The Remeliik-Oiterong administration had a very tenuous beginning. On 8 September 1981, after just eight months, the executive office building adjacent to the National Congress Chambers was firebombed by a mob of angry government workers demanding higher salaries. Remeliik was overwhelmed by the contemptuous aggressiveness of the workers and granted them fifty-dollar biweekly increases with addi-

tional adjustments scheduled for the future. But these did not materialize and two further strikes broke out in 1982. During the last strike one striker was shot and killed and three others were wounded by policemen. President Remeliik declared a ten-day state of emergency, ordered the workers back to their work sites, and reached an agreement with the strikers' spokesman, Roman Tmetuchl. The workers were given a salary increase and charges against their leaders were dropped.

While these strikes were serious, explosive situations, they were not the only problems the Remeliik administration faced during its first term. Some of the major ones included deficit spending, reduction of the work week from forty to thirty-two hours, confrontation with the Senate of the Palau National Congress that included several court suits that Remeliik lost, failures in 1983 and 1984 to have the Compact of Free Association approved by 75 percent of the Palau electorate, and pressure by the U.S. Department of the Interior to persuade the Palau government to increase tax collections, reduce operating costs, and enact revenue-generating legislation.[7]

## Candidates and Campaigning, 1984

Given what appeared to be a rather dismal first-term record, it seemed unlikely that President Remeliik and Vice President Oiterong could be reelected. Early in 1984 Remeliik experienced a crisis of self-confidence and was uncertain whether he would run for reelection. He was perceived by some observers as ineffectual, indecisive, and weak. Nevertheless, both men ran and were reelected by clear margins. What gave Remeliik and Oiterong an advantage was their dogged support for the Compact of Free Association. During their first term, both men had recognized a need for technical expertise in dealing with the complexities of the compact document and its many subsidiary agreements and for this purpose they chose Lazarus Salii, who had been Micronesia's chief political status negotiator (1969-1975) prior to his departure from the Senate of the Congress of Micronesia in 1975.[8] Salii served as Palau's ambassador for status negotiations and trade relations. He was given wide-ranging authority to negotiate with U.S. President Reagan's personal representative, Ambassador Fred Zeder.

Salii had run third in the 1980 presidential race and worked for a short time as an advisor to the mayor of Koror, Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons. Following his ambassadorial appointment in late 1982, he and Polycarp Basilius, a successful businessman and leader of the east-coast Babeldaob elite clan, became key advisors to and even controllers of President

Remeliik. Salii along with four or five others--the so-called "Saipan Mafia"--took over directing the campaign strategy for Remeliik's 1984 race. This group knew it had a strong candidate and that a well-run campaign would assure continued control of the executive for another four years.

The Basilius-Salii group marketed Remeliik as the people's candidate, a common man with no high title or great wealth. Remeliik, they claimed, had guided Palau through the turmoil and turbulence of workers' strikes in 1981 and 1982 and was perceived as Palau's strongest compact advocate. In his April 1984 State of the Nation address, Remeliik made it clear that he would call for a second compact referendum before the end of the summer.[9] He and his advisors also realized that the compact issue provided significant political leverage: "Some people, both here and elsewhere, have made the suggestion that we put a complete stop to the [compact] negotiations until after the elections this year. It seems that the only reason given for this unusual suggestion is that some people may be afraid to take a position on this all important issue and would try to avoid being accountable to the voters in November for their opposition to the compact" (Remeliik 1984:9).

Despite enormous resistance from the Senate of the Palau National Congress, President Remeliik issued Executive Order Number 25, setting 4 September 1984 as the date for Palau's second compact referendum. In response, the Senate and its supporters requested the Palau Supreme Court to grant temporary restraining orders. Both requests, however, were dismissed in August. The first was dismissed on the ground that the Senate did not have legal standing and the second on the ground "that the issue was purely political and one in which the Court could not be involved" (Shuster 1984b).

The efforts by the Remeliik administration in July and August to promote the Compact of Free Association were, in retrospect, a well-crafted precampaign for the November 30 general election. The Remeliik group successfully polarized the Palau political situation into pro-compact and anti-compact factions. Polycarp Basilius, chairman of the Presidential Task Force on the Compact, characterized the majority group in the Senate as "afraid to have the people approve the compact prior to November because they think this would give too much credit to President Remeliik and Ambassador Salii" (Ulechong 1984).

During August 1984, Basilius's task force promoting the compact visited each of the Babeldaob rural villages, brought in Ambassador Zeder to answer villagers' questions, and used his considerable stature as President Reagan's personal representative for a double purpose: to improve

the compact's chances of gaining a 75 percent approval margin and to improve the Remeliik administration's credibility. The task force visits to the rural villages were the first major efforts at winning voter approval since Remeliik's first general election campaign in 1980. That unexpectedly successful campaign, which had put Remeliik into the presidency, had been engineered by Moses Uludong, Moses Ramarui, and Tony Bells (Shuster 1983: 126). Early in the Remeliik administration, Uludong and Ramarui had become disenchanted with what they perceived as the president's lack of leadership. By election time 1984, Bells remained a reluctant supporter but was not part of the inner circle dominated by Basilius and Salii.

The two other presidential candidates, Roman Tmetuchl and Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons, were more anti-Remeliik administration than anti-compact. Despite attempts they and their supporters made to persuade voters that they supported the principle of free association with the U.S., the Remeliik campaign strategists successfully portrayed Tmetuchl, the Ibedul, and the Senate as anti-compact.

In an attempt to clarify their position, Tmetuchl and the Ibedul sponsored a compact rally just two days before the September 4 referendum. A dozen chiefs, governors, and some 350 people attended the event. Speakers claimed that the Compact of Free Association with the U.S. was a highly desirable goal, but that traditional leaders had not been consulted on the latest version of the document, that the nuclear and land issues remained unclear, and that compact funding was inadequate (Quimby 1984).

Tmetuchl had been Palau's chief compact negotiator since the time of Palau's separation from the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands in 1978 and had authored some of the basic tenets of the free association relationship. His political ambitions, however, had been damaged by the 347-vote loss to Remeliik in the 1980 general election. Soon after the election results were announced, Tmetuchl predicted trouble and confusion for Palau.

Tmetuchl had officially announced on 2 November 1984 that he would run again for the presidency. Since 1981 he had served as governor of Airai, the state adjacent to Koror-town. The first campaign billboard to be erected in Koror for the 1984 election urged passersby to vote for Tmetuchl, while his campaign headquarters sign proclaimed that a "vote for Roman Tmetuchl is a vote for a fair and just island society" (Shuster 1984c). Tmetuchl made a campaign trip overseas to Guam, Saipan, and Hawaii, and he visited the rural villages on Babeldaob and Peleliu. During his campaign gatherings he told voters that if

elected he would assemble all the chiefs, state governors, and the elected and business leaders to consider the various compact options and then make recommendations, which he would put before the public. Only after such citizen input would he open new political status negotiations with Washington. In his talks, Tmetuchl claimed that Palau's budget crisis was more a matter of waste and inefficient management than a lack of funds. Such statements were the closest Tmetuchl came to public criticism of President Remeliik, since Palau political etiquette does not permit public attacks on political opponents.

Tmetuchl's assertive and bold approach to issues was frightening to some Palauans. Throughout the campaign Tmetuchl managers attempted to moderate this impression. For example, in his meetings with government employees, Tmetuchl assured them that his election would not mean any reduction in employment. He reminded a group of teachers that Palau Public Law 1-37 protected all government employees and prohibited removal except for cause. Governor Tmetuchl also campaigned on his record of infrastructure and social development that he had sponsored in his home state of Airai. The Remeliik campaign group perceived Tmetuchl as a fiercely competitive, even feared, opponent who wanted passionately to win the 1984 election.

Yutaka Gibbons, the Ibedul or high chief of the southwestern half of Palau (the Reklai, the paramount chief of northern Palau, being his counterbalance), was the third presidential candidate. He had been successful in several Koror-town elections in the 1970s but was inexperienced on the national scene. In 1980 the Ibedul supported Lazarus Salii for president. Now, the situation appeared to be reversed. As early as April 1984, Salii urged the Ibedul to run for the presidency because he recognized that the chief and Tmetuchl would take votes from each other, thereby improving significantly the chances of a Remeliik reelection.

The Ibedul's campaign was run by Toshiwo Nakamura and Moses Uludong. They projected the Ibedul as a unifier, a bridge between tradition and modernity, a peacemaker who had brought the strikers and President Remeliik together during Palau's civil unrest of 1981 and 1982. The high chief supported the principle of free association with the U.S., but felt the Remeliik administration had not consulted with the traditional leaders on the substance of the new compact that went to referendum two months before the nation's second general election. The land issue, military impact monies, and the continuation of student scholarships and federal programs were the major areas where the Ibedul believed the compact needed improvement.

As early as August 1984, the Ibedul released his platform statement, the only one to appear during the campaign. It was mainly the work of Uludong. Strange as it might seem, the platform statement did not mention either the Compact of Free Association or the United States as Palau's political partner. The statement consisted of six points: (1) preservation of tradition and culture; (2) an open, organized, and responsive government; (3) setting of a development plan; (4) enhancement of national-state relations; (5) respect for the national Constitution; and (6) active external affairs.

While the Ibedul and his supporters attempted to use title and tradition as avenues to the presidency, their campaign was also the glossiest of the three. Besides the attractive platform statement, bumper stickers, T-shirts, calendars, flags, picture posters, and slogan posters were distributed throughout Palau. A day before the election the Ibedul's Northern Mariana Islands Presidential Committee ran a full-page advertisement in the *Pacific Daily News.* The main item of the advertisement was a congratulatory letter to the then newly reelected President Reagan in which the Ibedul stated that, if elected, he would do all in his power to negotiate and resolve all the remaining issues in the Compact of Free Association (*Pacific Daily News* 1984).

The November 30 vice presidential race also had three candidates: incumbent Alfonso Oiterong, Sadang Silmai, and John Tarkong. Despite a problem-filled first term, Oiterong was perceived as an honest, capable, and dedicated civil servant. As minister of state he was responsible for free association negotiations with the United States, and relied on Salii to carry out these duties in his capacity as Palau's ambassador for status negotiations.

Roth Remeliik and Oiterong tended to be quiet, nonaggressive, and unassuming individuals. Oiterong often stood in for Remeliik at public gatherings and meetings with the National Congress. Throughout the first term, Oiterong reported on the status of the territory to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, and his many overseas trips provided opportunities for fresh insights and new channels of communication. Through such contacts, Oiterong was able to launch two projects, one highly successful, the other a financial disaster.

Palau assumed postal independence in November 1982 and this event was marked with the issuance of the republic's unique stamps depicting cultural, political, natural, and historical themes. After just eighteen months Palau's stamps were turning a profit, which Oiterong predicted could possibly reach as much as $1 million annually. The vice president served as the chairman of the nation's Task Force on Power and, fortu-

nately for him, Palau's default on a $32.5-million loan for a sixteen-megawatt power plant built in Oiterong's home state of Aimeliik did not occur until seven or eight months after the 1984 general election.

Sadang Silmai was, covertly, the running mate of Roman Tmetuchl. Silmai had served as speaker of the Sixth Palau Legislature, which was turned out of office in 1979 by the People's Committee for the Constitution (Shuster 1980:81). He had run for a congressional seat in 1980 but his political colors had proved unacceptable. For the 1984 campaign, Silmai literally walked his way across Palau, visiting every hamlet and village on Koror and Babeldaob. This is possible in Palau because rural villages are relatively small, varying in size from twelve to 123 households. In his campaigning, Silmai often talked of the problems plaguing Palau and asked for the people's help in solving them.

The third vice presidential candidate, John Tarkong, a lawyer, gave up his Senate seat to run. He viewed the vice president's role as that of a mediator for the various groups and factions that make up the dynamic Palau body politic. The Remeliik campaign strategists possibly persuaded Tarkong to run because his roots, as were Silmai's, were in northern Babeldaob and the two would divide the area's votes, making a victory for either unlikely.

### *The Race for Congressional Seats*

Politics is "big business" in Palau and always generates enthusiastic dialogue and debate. At least one anthropologist has claimed that Palau's social structure "both takes into account and tends to support or encourage competitive expression" (McKnight 1960:20). In no aspect of contemporary Palauan society is this clearer than in the striving for elected office.

The 1984 race for congressional seats was considerably tighter than four years earlier. The work of a five-member Reapportionment Commission had reduced the Olbiil Era Kelulau Senate from eighteen seats to fourteen and, as noted above, activities and psychologies had polarized the Palau political arena into pro-compact and anti-compact groups.

Many of the congressional candidates produced campaign literature of two general sorts: announcements and platforms. The former were handbills, invitations, or premarked sample ballots. The platforms ranged from essays on the pros and cons of the compact, like that produced by incumbent Senator Kaleb Udui, to one-page letters designed for mailing to overseas voters. Both Dr. Minoru Ueki and Victor Rehu-

her made mention in their overseas letters of Palau's first four years of self-government as a period of "troubles and unprecedented financial crisis" and of "difficult problems and pressing issues."

As in 1980, the congressional candidates went from house to house talking politics, giving gifts, and asking for support. Younger candidates, especially, had to "sell" themselves in culturally acceptable ways. According to Palauan social mores, a candidate never boasts of accomplishments or qualifications. Good campaign style follows social mores of self-effacing behavior, self-sacrifice, and concern for community.

*Results*

On 30 November 1984, forty-three polling stations opened all over Palau at seven A.M. Most of the voter action, however, occurred in Koror-town, where the main road was jammed most of the day with bumper-to-bumper traffic that included candidates' campaign cars carrying voters to and from the polls. The two major polling stations, at Palau High School and Palau Civic Center, were surrounded by colorful campaign tents where supporters were serving food, waving posters, and watching the flow of voters. Many of the campaign groups, especially the presidential and vice presidential ones, had tally-keepers. These individuals, armed with long voter registration lists of people in their hamlets, had been dispatching cars since early morning to transport voters. In a small-scale society where quite literally everyone knows everyone, it is easy to keep tally of who has and has not voted. When the tally-keepers noticed that someone sharing their political persuasion from their clan or hamlet had failed to arrive, a car was sent to collect the person in question. This technique has always ensured a very high voter turnout in Palau.

Every incumbent in the House and Senate ran for reelection with the exception of Senators Abel Suzuki, Moses Uludong, and John Tarkong. Suzuki dropped out and threw his support to Salii. Salii's joining the Senate race was an important development because it signaled that the Remeliik group aimed to infiltrate and perhaps take over a previously uncooperative Senate. Uludong, who had left a significant mark on Senate legislation, withdrew for personal and family reasons, while Tarkong was pursuing the vice presidency.

The most heated Senate race was for the three seats for the district of east-coast Babeldaob. Incumbents Baules Sechelong, Kaleb Udui, George Ngirarsaol, Seit Andres, Victor Rehuher, and David Ngirmidol ran the political race of their lives against eleven hungry opponents.

Only Ngirarsaol and Andres survived. Young Thomas Remengesau, Jr., emerged from near-obscurity to become the top vote-getter.

In a portion of Koror-town making up the Second Senatorial District, Johnson Toribiong lost to a Congress of Micronesia veteran, Isidoro Rudimch, and to two dark horses--Nicholas Rechebei and Sam Masang. Toribiong, overconfident, had not done his campaign homework and lost to Rechebei by just twenty-eight votes. Isabella Sumang, a high-ranking Koror woman, finished fifth in a field of seven. In Koror's Third Senatorial District, incumbent Joshua Koshiba emerged as the top vote-winner followed by old-timer Itelbang Luii, speaker in the Fourth and Fifth Palau Legislatures, and John Sugiyama. Incumbent Edobo Temengil, a complete dark horse in 1980, did not campaign as vigorously as he had four years earlier and lost his seat. In Koror's Fourth Senatorial District, Kuniwo Nakamura regained his seat with newcomers Etibek Sadang and Hokkons Baules emerging as winners from a field of nine. Katherine Kesolei, the second of two women in the 1984 Senate race, trailed most of the men, finishing ahead of only three in the ten-person field. The Palauans, it seems, were not yet prepared to elect a female senator.

In the west-coast Babeldaob district, Lucius Malsol beat Masami Siksei. Both were incumbents but their district had been shrunk to one seat by reapportionment. Siksei campaigned hard, but Malsol had the advantage of more relatives in the four coastal states and blood connections are more important than endless rhetoric on issues.

As expected, Lazarus Salii ran away from the field in the Sixth Senatorial District. He received nearly two-and-a-half-times more votes than the second-place finisher. The incumbent, Mitch Solang, had been a Remeliik administration supporter but was unable to match Salii's voter appeal.

Of the fifteen incumbent senators who ran for reelection, only five were successful. Nearly all the losers had been anti-compact and this was the main reason for their losses. Unlike the Senate, the House had been pro-compact and supportive of the Remeliik administration. Five of the sixteen delegates were new faces. The only incumbent female delegate, Akiko Sugiyama, was challenged by Kubarii Etchell, another woman, and by Schwartz Tudong. Tudong defeated Sugiyama by fifty-five votes, thereby forming the second exclusively male National Congress. Given a two-thirds change of Senate seats and minor changes in the House where Carlos Salii had been speaker, the election results, at least on the surface, boded well for the Remeliik administration and the compact.

In the vice presidential race, Oiterong thrashed Silmai and Tarkong by taking 53 percent of the vote. The 1984 campaign had been organized by Yoichi Rengiil, who attributed the success to a door-to-door, low-keyed, personal approach. "Mr. Oiterong never tried to buy votes with food or money. He didn't believe in that technique," Rengiil reported.

Remeliik also defeated his challengers handily, taking 50 percent of the vote to 31 percent for Tmetuchl and 18 percent for the Ibedul. Remeliik won for several reasons: he rode on the compact issue, gaining, ironically, most of the government workers' votes; he had the strength of incumbency; and, most importantly, the opposition split their votes. On two occasions during the campaign Moses Uludong, from the Ibedul camp, and Bena Sakuma, from the Tmetuchl group, attempted to consolidate the two sides. The arrangement, which Tmetuchl reportedly accepted, was for Tmetuchl to pay all the Ibedul's campaign expenses and allow him to choose four cabinet ministers in exchange for dropping out of the race and giving Tmetuchl the choice of presidential assistants and overseas liaison positions. The Ibedul refused the deal because he thought he could win.[10]

## President Remeliik: His Life and Funeral

Just six months into his second term, President Haruo I. Remeliik was brutally gunned down outside his official government residence in Koror during the early morning hours of 30 June 1985. At the time Palau had been preparing for its annual fair. A time of celebration and happiness was suddenly transformed by one criminal and senseless act into a national tragedy that generated a crescendo of shock, shame, sadness, and grief beyond understanding.

Haruo Ignacio Remeliik was born on 1 June 1933 and baptized on Peleliu on July 29 of that same year by Father Marino La Hoz, a Spanish priest. After the Pacific War, the young Remeliik attended Koror Elementary School and then transferred to Mindszenty Intermediate School, graduating in 1950. At the urging of Father McManus, he entered Xavier Minor Seminary in Truk and spent two years there studying for the priesthood. He returned to Palau and gradually worked his way up through the court system to become an associate judge. Remeliik began his career as an elected official in 1968 when he won an at-large seat in the Fourth Palau Legislature, where he served as vice-speaker. In 1970 he was appointed deputy district administrator for the then Palau District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

However, the pace of political events was accelerating throughout Micronesia. Under the leadership of Roman Tmetuchl, Palau broke away from the other Trust Territory districts in 1978 and later that year Remeliik was elected a member, and in the following year president, of Palau's Constitutional Convention. This return to elected office perhaps determined his fate because it brought him into Palau's political spotlight as a major player opposite Tmetuchl, who was then the dominant figure in Palauan politics.

Haruo I. Remeliik served as Palau's first president and reelected president from 1 January 1980 to 30 June 1985, the day of his assassination. He was a gentle and gracious man who, until his tragic death, was a man of good fortune rather than keen ambition. Of the five candidates in the 1980 presidential race--Palau's first under its new Constitution--Remeliik was an unlikely contestant and a more unlikely winner. He had not been a Congress of Micronesia member nor did he have the outward sophistication from years of travel and experience in dealing with foreigners as was true of the four other candidates. Yet he had certain advantages. Remeliik was perceived by some voters as a down-to-earth, people's candidate for whom the energy and vision of a group of young Palauan activists (including Moses Uludong, Tony Bells, and Moses Ramarui) worked a campaign "magic" that catapulted Remeliik ahead of both Tmetuchl and Lazarus Salii in the final vote count. In a five-man field, Remeliik took just 31 percent of the vote compared to 26 percent for Tmetuchl and 23 percent for Salii. John Ngiraked and David Ramarui rounded out the 1980 presidential field.

During the early part of his first term, President Remeliik hired several Salii supporters to fill key positions. When Salii had a falling-out with Ibedul Gibbons, one of Palau's two paramount chiefs and the mayor of Koror, Salii joined the Remeliik administration as ambassador for status negotiations and trade relations. This was an important solidification of political forces because Salii and former Palauan colleagues from Saipan--the so-called "Saipan Mafia"--formed an advisory group for Remeliik that later organized his very successful reelection campaign. In that election the Ibedul and Tmetuchl violated an age-old principle of Palauan culture, that of dualism. Instead of joining forces, they campaigned separately, and on election day they split the vote, returning the reins of power to Remeliik and his supporters.

President Remeliik's four-and-a-half years as chief executive were filled with opposition and setbacks. During his first term he went half a year without a Cabinet, had his office embarrassingly burnt to the ground in a violent strike by government workers, accomplished little in

the area of economic development, and faced defeat in court suits and in two compact referenda. So difficult was his first term that he stated in his 1985 inaugural address that "unless this Republic pulls together its various elements of leadership in one concerted action, we cannot hope to make any significant progress" (Remeliik 1985: 1).

Ironically, a scant six months after his inaugural call for people to observe and obey the laws of the land, Remeliik was shot and wounded after leaving his car, pushed down an embankment, and brutally assassinated, half his skull blown away. Hospital Road in Koror ran red with the president's blood, just one month after his fifty-second birthday.

The six days between the president's assassination and the state funeral were very long, sorrowful ones for Palau. Many Koror taxi drivers kept quiet vigil in shifts outside the hospital morgue. There too sat Sena Sugiyama, the late president's secretary. With deep loyalty and respect, Sugiyama remained almost without interruption for six days and nights. She was angry and shamed--"How could any Palauan commit such a horrible crime?"[11]

Moses Uludong, a member of the Palau National Congress during Remeliik's first term, broke down and wept uncontrollably the morning of the assassination when he saw Remeliik's body, broken and lifeless on the Koror hospital emergency room table. Uludong had been enormously influential in putting Remeliik into office in 1980, but the two men had had serious disagreements throughout the first term. However, early in Remeliik's second term, they had become intimate friends again, having long talks about political and personal problems. It was during these discussions that Uludong realized that Haruo Remeliik was a desperately lonely president who did not have close male friends with whom he could share the anxieties of personal problems or talk about the joys and enormous burdens of his high office. This was the other tragedy of the Remeliik presidency that few knew about.

More than one thousand Palauans and leaders from throughout the Pacific basin and the United States attended President Remeliik's state funeral ceremonies on Saturday, 6 July 1985. His body had remained at the Remeliik private home in Koror overnight. At 9 A.M. on Saturday the casket was placed on an open-air hearse and followed by a fifteen-car cortege to the Palau National Congress Building. Because a huge crowd was expected, hundreds of chairs had been set up under awnings outside the building. These were filled and more people stood under the shade of nearby trees.

The Palau Evangelical Church choir sang the Palau national anthem, "Belau er Kid," "Palau is Ours." Father Thomas Smith, S. J., who had

rushed to the Remeliik home soon after the shooting seven days earlier, gave the invocation. Senate President Isidoro Rudimch read the National Congress resolution conveying its deepest sympathies and condolences to President Remeliik's widow, Regina, and family.

Palau's Interim President Alfonso Oiterong spoke in Palauan. He paid solemn tribute to his fallen colleague and reminded everyone that Remeliik "was a humble man . . . a reformer who understood his people, who cherished his culture and heritage and worked hard to preserve and enhance them" (Oiterong 1985).

Rubak Ngirakidel Secharkebur delivered a Palauan chant on behalf of the sixteen traditional chiefs who had served as advisors to President Remeliik on matters of custom. The chant reminded people of the necessary relation between leadership and social unity.

Thomas O. Remengesau, Sr., minister of justice in the Remeliik Cabinet, delivered a moving eulogy. Since Vice President Oiterong had been away in New York at the time of the assassination, Remengesau had assumed leadership of the government within hours of the president's death. Remengesau and the late president had worked together for nearly ten years as the district administrator and deputy administrator prior to self-government in 1981. Remengesau's eulogy brought tears to many eyes. Visiting dignitaries sat transfixed by the reverence of the moment. Remengesau's delivery was broken several times as he struggled to hold back his emotions. The time, he said, was "the darkest moment in the history of our nation." Remengesau described Haruo Remeliik as a man of peace and moderation, as a man who could have lived aloof from people but instead intermingled freely and thereby came to know nearly everyone in Palau by name, lineage, clan, and title. "Mr. President," Remengesau said in a hushed voice, "we bid you farewell. And as you enter eternal rest we assure you that your magnanimous spirit and wisdom will continue to guide this young nation as we journey over difficult waters toward our final destiny" (Shuster 1985a).

The Reverend Hubert Charles closed the state ceremony with a benediction and then hundreds upon hundreds of people from both inside and outside the Congress Building filed quietly past the closed, light blue casket. A crown of flowers and the Palau national flag--a golden full moon on a sky of dark blue--graced the top of the casket. With the conclusion of last respects, the hearse carrying Remeliik, followed by a motorcade of local and visiting dignitaries and escorted by policemen on motorcycles, slowly traveled the mile to the Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Dozens of Remeliik family members, dressed in mourners' black,

entered the church. Visiting dignitaries followed. Next came Remeliik's Cabinet ministers and other executive branch officials, President Oiterong and his wife Josepha, National Congress leaders, and citizens. The Reverend Felix Yaoch, S. J., assisted by Northern Marianas Bishop Tomas A. Camacho and several other priests, said the funeral mass. The ceremony was graced with beautifully sung Palauan-language hymns. Father Yaoch blessed the casket with incense and holy water. After Mass, the casket was carried from the church by six policemen and placed once again on the hearse. The body of the late president was returned to his Koror private home. During the remainder of the day and far into the night, Mrs. Remeliik and women of the clan sat with the casket, keeping constant vigil as small groups of people paid their final respects. The Palauan *kemeldiil,* funeral custom, takes place over several days and nights and performs an important social unifying function.

Funeral ceremonies continued on Sunday, July 7. A motorcade again accompanied the casket and family members as they traveled together from the Koror home to the Fisheries Dock, Malakal. There the casket was taken by speedboat to Peleliu. After a third nightlong vigil at the Remeliik family home on Peleliu, the casket was moved by a carriage pulled by a dozen Peleliu young men. A police color guard carrying the Peleliu State, Palau, and American flags headed the procession. Following the casket down the narrow sandy road walked some hundred Remeliik family members, President Oiterong, his ministers, Mrs. Oiterong, congressmen, and citizens. Peleliu women holding flowers stood reverently every twenty paces along the wide sandy path leading to the Peleliu State Government Building.

At half past one, the final ceremony honoring the late president was conducted by the Peleliu State Government. Hundreds of mourners stood under wide shade trees near the crowded building. After the Palau national anthem and a prayer by Father Yaoch, President Oiterong again paid tribute to the man with whom he had worked so closely. Peleliu Governor Yukio Shmull entreated everyone to pull together to complete Remeliik's political agenda. The ranking chief of the island, Obak Singeo, spoke, followed by solemn remarks from the speakers of the Peleliu and Melekeok state legislatures, who each presented a resolution of condolence to Mrs. Remeliik and the Remeliik family.

When the Peleliu State ceremonies ended, the casket was carried to the carriage and transported a short distance to the grave site. There Father Yaoch said prayers and blessed the casket for the last time with

holy water. It was then lowered carefully into the grave. Loved ones, colleagues, and neighbors walked solemnly past the grave, dropping flowers gently onto the casket and praying silently. Women wept without a sound. Palau's first national leader, Haruo I. Remeliik, was laid to rest on the island of his birth surrounded by his family, friends, and citizens of the new republic. The young nation's first president was gone.

## Special Election, 1985

Upon the death of a president, the Palau Constitution calls for an election within two months of the vacancy to fill the offices of president and vice president. The newly elected executives would complete the remaining three-and-one-half years of the Remeliik-Oiterong term.

At the time of Remeliik's assassination, Vice President Oiterong had been in New York City. He returned to Palau immediately. It appears that during his long trip home he had made up his mind to run for the presidency. Shortly after the Remeliik funeral, Lazarus Salii met with Oiterong and agreed to run for vice president.[12] This was a short-lived agreement: On July 28 Salii announced his own candidacy for the presidency. Prior to that announcement, both Oiterong and his campaign manager, Yoichi Rengiil, were more concerned with the likelihood of an Ibedul candidacy. Following the president's murder, the chief had calmed Palau's turbulent emotional waters and appeared to be a national unifier.

Despite his poor showing in 1984, the Ibedul was in fact poised to run in the special election, but changed his mind because the nine other Koror chiefs told him that Oiterong was too strong to be beaten. However, about two weeks before the August 28 election, these same chiefs switched their support to Salii.

Oiterong's 1985 campaign was more intensive than the one in 1984. He and Rengiil made trips to all the Babeldaob villages, visited Peleliu and Angaur, and had their campaign team canvass Koror's hamlets numerous times. As the Salii campaign gained momentum through August, a group of Ibedul advisors became alarmed. They joined the Oiterong team and began campaigning in what was interpreted as a non-Oiterong style.

Salii established his campaign headquarters at the same site used eight months earlier for the successful Remeliik campaign. The Salii group ran a strong campaign. They were very eager for a win and began with a simple but effective idea--"We're behind!" Keeping this constantly in mind, the Salii team worked hard. Salii went to every

leader and personally asked for his support. He said he would follow Remeliik's programs and deal with issues decisively. He also went from office to office within the government, promising to raise salaries and begin a workers' retirement program.

*The Vice Presidential Candidates*

The seven-man vice presidential field for the 1985 special election consisted of two Cabinet ministers, two national congressmen, a lawyer, a state legislator, and the former speaker of the Seventh Palau Legislature. Palau election law does not provide for a primary, so the seven candidates were expected to chop the expected 8,060-vote total (based on an 84 percent turnout in November 1984) into small pieces with the luckiest runner winning.

Listed first on the ballot was F. Kazuo "Frank" Asanuma, forty-one, a House of Delegates member representing Melekeok State, which had 431 registered voters. Asanuma based his campaign on accomplishments. "I deliver to my constituents. Look at the capitol project and road in my state." Asanuma enjoyed the support of the high-clan people of east-coast Babeldaob and the minority group in the Olbiil Era Kelulau House. He said that he would try to get two thousand votes but thought thirteen hundred might be enough to win the race. Asanuma was a long shot, however, because his base of support in Koror and Peleliu (4,027 registered voters altogether) was weak.

At sixty, Sadang Silmai, number two on the ballot, was the senior candidate in the large field. Silmai, an educator for many years and speaker of the Sixth Palau Legislature, was a member of the Ngardmau State Legislature and had mounted a strong vice presidential campaign in November 1984, taking 2,373 votes (30 percent) to winner Oiterong's 4,252 (53 percent). Silmai supported the compact but felt it needed improvement. He was a solid candidate given his age and experience. His chances were weakened by two other candidates--Tarkong and Remengesau--who were competing for the same base of support in northern Babeldaob.

Third on the ballot was Palau's minister of administration, Haruo Willter, forty-eight. He had run for the vice presidency in 1980 and felt a vice president "must go in with an open mind, without political or business connections. I have a neutral stance and could bring people together," he said (Shuster 1985b). Having lived outside Palau for many years, Willter tended to be rather candid and even blunt, an unusual characteristic in Palau, where indirect statements and subterfuge are

valued behaviors. In an August 5 campaign letter to voters on Guam, Willter stated that people in Palau had "suffered a great deal as a result of internal political fight[s] among our leaders to gain political power." He further stated seven reasons for the suffering:

1. Because of politics, we are disunited and do not seem to trust each other.
2. Because of politics, some of our people have turned against their own government even to the extent of destroying government properties.
3. Because of politics we have forced our government into deficit financing.
4. Because of politics, it has become extremely difficult to attract foreign investors and as a result our economic development has suffered.
5. Because of politics, our negotiations regarding our future political status with the United States has been stalled.
6. Because of politics, people who used to support each other are now working against each other.
7. Because of politics, we are suspicious of and fear each other.

(Willter 1985)

Like Asanuma, Willter was another long shot due to an apparently narrow political support base.

Thomas Remengesau, Sr., Palau's minister of justice, was listed fourth on the ballot and was the front-runner. Like Silmai, Remengesau, fifty-five, was well known in and outside of Palau because of his nine years as district administrator prior to the beginning of self-government under the Constitution. Remengesau favored village development in Palau's fifteen rural states outside Koror as a way of equalizing the distribution of wealth. He had served as acting chief executive in the tense days following President Remeliik's assassination. His campaign momentum might have been stalled by the uncertainty clouding the murder: Charges against the three men suspected of killing Remeliik were dropped on August 16. The minister of justice was in charge of the investigation.

John Tarkong, forty-six, was number five on the ballot. He had finished third in the vice presidential race in November 1984. Tarkong, a lawyer who likes clarity, said that issues get very confused in Palau. "The lack of clarity and communication is the foundation of all the confusion and problems in Palau," the candidate said. Tarkong favored

what he called "a people-approved compact" and agreed that in Palauan politics, personality is often more important than issues (Shuster 1985b). With seven candidates vying for support, Tarkong believed that issues should be used to differentiate them. Tarkong was another long shot in the race.

Number six was Toshiwo Nakamura, forty-seven. He had run a very strong campaign in 1980, finishing second just 247 votes behind the winner, Oiterong. Nakamura believed he could be a good unifier. "A vice president should unite the three branches of government, the state governors, and traditional leaders in order to get this country moving," he said (Shuster 1985b). Nakamura supported the compact but wanted a statement that the U.S. would not store, test, or dump dangerous substances in Palau. He had the support of key leaders in Koror and Peleliu but needed to win some votes on Babeldaob. His chances looked good at election time.

Seventh on the ballot, Senator Joshua Koshiba was a skilled campaigner and legislator, having served four terms in the Palau Legislature and National Congress. Outspoken, popular but combative, Koshiba takes on issues and individuals. "I despise the rumors I've heard floating around Palau. If I'm elected vice president, no one will manipulate me. My allegiance will be to the Palau Constitution," Koshiba said (Shuster 1985b). Koshiba believed Palau was then in a good position regarding the compact. He was deeply concerned about lax law enforcement and misuse of tax monies. He had a sense of justice and wanted the nation's wealth more fairly distributed. Koshiba had a good number of supporters in the thirty-member National Congress and in Koror. He was a strong candidate and the only one who publicly called for the assistance of the Almighty in his campaign billboards.

### *Results*

As expected with a seven-man field, the vice presidential vote was highly fragmented. Of the 7,573 votes cast, Remengesau received the largest chunk--l,968 votes or 26 percent. Nakamura finished with 18 percent, Asanuma with 15.5 percent, and Senator Koshiba fourth with 15 percent.

In the presidential race, Lazarus Salii won with 4,077 votes or 53.6 percent. Oiterong captured 46 percent (3,484 votes). If Oiterong had won every one of the 4,252 votes he had received eight months earlier, he could have defeated Salii. Oiterong's loss was due to several factors. Certain members of the Salii group began an effective dirty rumor campaign, linking Oiterong with Tmetuchl.[13] These rumors were effec-

tively spread on Guam and Saipan and lost votes for Oiterong. Second, the change in style initiated by former Ibedul followers appeared to break Oiterong's momentum; third, Oiterong suffered from overconfidence due to a commanding win in 1984; and, finally, the perception that Salii was more able or mentally agile than Oiterong hurt. With 4,077 votes, Salii had finally achieved a goal he had set for himself during the 1979 Palau Constitutional Convention. He now was president of the Republic of Palau.

## Conclusion

Since self-government began in 1981, the compact has been a dominant, even obsessional, issue for Palauans. In the 1984 election Remeliik and Oiterong swept back into office on the basis of their strong compact stance. Other 1984 candidates, whether incumbents or challengers, perceived as anti-compact inevitably lost.

President Remeliik, by temperament, was not an assertive leader yet he attempted to secure approval for the compact document from the Palau electorate in February 1983 and again in September 1984. His work was frustrated by his opponents' insistence on respecting the Palau Constitution's nuclear-free clause, which required approval of the compact by not less than 75 percent of the Palauan electorate. Remeliik faced a dilemma here. He had been the president of the Palau Constitutional Convention and fought both Palauan and U.S. government officials who insisted the Palau Constitution be changed to incorporate U.S. defense and security needs. He gained the national presidency partly because of his nationalist loyalty to the original Constitution. On the other hand, Palau's compact is "front-loaded" with over $140 million granted to the government in the first year. The prospect of millions upon millions of U.S. dollars flowing into Palau has been overpowering to many Palauans, especially the leadership class. In the two referenda during President Remeliik's first term, the best his efforts could bring were a 62 percent approval in 1983 and 67 percent in 1984. And there, perhaps, lay his fatal weakness.[14]

For Palau, the beginning of self-government in 1981 under the Constitution was an enormous change. Many areas of overt political life--an arena traditionally given to Palauan men--were up for redefinition and room for maneuver and countermaneuver was extensive. At the root of much of the controversy and even violent confrontation over the compact is the constant struggle for political power within Palau. Haruo Remeliik, it appears, was a victim of that struggle.

President Salii has brought the compact issue to the electorate on four

separate occasions with the following results: 21 February 1986--72 percent approval; 2 December 1986--66 percent approval; 30 June 1987--68 percent approval; and 21 August 1987--73 percent approval. On 4 August 1987, President Salii was able to have the nuclear-free clause of the Constitution suspended in a referendum called for that purpose. Some 73 percent of the Palau electorate approved the suspension, Throughout 1987, President Salii pushed the compact issue vigorously and even forcefully, creating a host of political enemies who have, it appears, coalesced to form the Palau National Democratic Party.[15] The compact issue and Salii's handling of it will be the key factors keeping the Palauan cauldron of political passions boiling as the republic approaches the November 1988 general elections.

## NOTES

1. Joseph Tellei (also known as Oikawasang), personal interview, Koror, Palau, 21 December 1980.

2. The nuclear-free section of the Constitution of the Republic of Palau does not declare an absolute ban on nuclear materials but, rather, it calls for a conditional ban on such materials. Article XIII, Section 6 of the Constitution reads: "Harmful substances such as nuclear, chemical, gas or biological weapons intended for use in warfare, nuclear power plants, and waste materials therefrom, shall not be used, tested, stored or disposed of within the territorial jurisdiction of Palau without the express approval of not less than three-fourths (¾) of the votes cast in a referendum submitted on this specific question." Article II, Section 3, defining sovereignty and supremacy, contains nearly identical language. This 75 percent condition has prevented the consummation of a political relationship of free association as defined in a compact agreement between the United States and the Republic of Palau whereby Palau is granted full self-government, including control of its foreign affairs. The U.S. will provide financial assistance in exchange for full authority in defense and security matters for fifty years.

On 4 August 1987, the Palau electorate approved the suspension of these two sections of the Constitution in an amendment referendum. This change allowed the compact to be approved by a simple majority vote. Voting a sixth time on the compact issue, Palauans went to the polls on 21 August 1987, and 73 percent voted approval. However, prior to the two August referenda, three Palauan men filed a suit in Palau's Supreme Court challenging the legality of the two plebiscites. The men withdrew their challenge at the urging of High Chief Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons, while President Lazarus Salii agreed to refrain from using his power of eminent domain to provide land for U.S. military use without the consent of the owners and just compensation, and also to designate Palau's Council of Chiefs responsible for considering all U.S. requests for military land use rights within Palau. The issue took a new twist when the Bilung (queen), Gloria Gibbons Salii, sister of the Ibedul and wife of President Salii's younger brother, leading a group of about thirty elite-clan women, on 31 August 1987 refiled the suit. The women claimed that the August 4 referendum to amend Palau's Constitution had been illegal.

This opposition to President Salii's efforts created tensions that resulted in a strafing attack on the home of Santos Olikong, Palau National Congress's speaker of the House of Delegates, on 5 September 1987; and two bombing attacks on the evening of 7 September 1987, one dangerously near the home of Gabriela Ngirmang, a plaintiff in the suit. The same night, the father of Roman Bedor, an antinuclear activist and legal advisor for the elite-clan women, was murdered. These violent acts appeared coordinated: All occurred within minutes of each other just after Koror's electrical power went off that evening. Two days later, the women took action to have the court dismiss their suit. Judge Robert A. Hefner, who was to have heard the case, wrote, "There are indications that the dismissal was brought about by intimidation through the use of violence" (Perry 1987).

3. The first Olbiil Era Kelulau had eighteen seats. A constitutionally mandated reapportionment was carried out in 1984 before the second general election and reduced the number of seats to fourteen. The five members of the Reapportionment Commission appointed by President Remeliik and confirmed by the Senate were Norman Chin, Kaleb Olegeriil, Masaharu Tmodrang, Grace Sam, and Mike Ngirairikl.

4. The Republic of Palau consists of sixteen local governmental units called states. Koror (7.1 square miles) has the largest state population--9,419--and Sonsorol State (.9 square mile) is thesmallest with 38 people (Republic of Palau 1987:98, 99).

5. Unlike most presidential systems of government where presidential and vice presidential candidates run on joint tickets, the Palau Constitution requires such candidates to run separately. This creates a contradictory situation where vice presidential candidates, according to political etiquette, publicly state that they can work with any of the presidential candidates, yet maintain an unspoken preference or alliance.

6. For a descriptive analysis of the Republic of Palau's first election under constitutional government, held in 1980, see Shuster 1983.

7. President Remeliik, in his 20 April 1984 State of the Nation address, described the difficulties of his first term: "The survival of the Republic was manifestly earned through our own hard work, despite the occurrences of numerous misguided efforts both from within and from without the Republic to bring the government to its knees. Together we have survived extremely critical financial crises for each of the last three years and we are now in the midst of our fourth financial woe" (Remeliik 1984).

8. Lazarus E. Salii served as a consultant to the Koror State Government for a short time in 1981. After a falling-out with Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons in 1982, Salii became Palau's only ambassador, without pay. At the time of his appointment he did not hide his disenchantment with the poor showing to date of the Remeliik administration: "I do feel resentment over the fact that the National government has failed in nearly two years to provide any direction to the nation. No goals, no vision have been defined for us as a people, as Palauans" (*Koror State Government Newsletter* 1982[?]:3).

9. The first referendum on the Compact of Free Association was held on 10 February 1983. Proposition 1 on the ballot contained two questions: one regarding approval of free association on which 62 percent of the Palauans voted positively and a second regarding approval of an agreement concerning the introduction into Palau of radioactive, chemical, and biological substances. Some 53 percent voted approval of this issue. In response to the Remeliik administration's claim that the compact had been approved, the Senate of the Palau National Congress filed suit. Justice Robert A. Hefner of the Palau Supreme

Court ruled that because the Palau Constitution requires 75 percent approval on the second question and because the two questions were inseparable, the compact was disapproved according to Article XIII, Section 6 of the Constitution (see note 2 above).

10. Moses Uludong, personal interview, Agana, Guam, 30 May 1987.

11. Sena Sugiyama, personal interview, Koror, Palau, 4 July 1985.

12. Yoichi Rengiil, personal interview, University of Guam, 14 March 1988.

13. A week before the special election, Roman Tmetuchl's son, nephew, and another man were arrested for the murder of Haruo Remeliik. A few weeks later charges against the men were dismissed without prejudice because of inconsistencies in a key informant's story. The same three men, however, were rearrested, tried, and convicted in March 1986. The men remained free on bail pending an appeal. In July 1987 a three-judge Palau Supreme Court appeals panel reversed the convictions (Stinson 1987). Since the reversal, the Palau government has attempted to appeal the panel's decision to the 'Rust Territory High Court. This appeal may not be heard because U.S. Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, seeking to extend self-government in Palau, issued a secretarial order on 10 July 1987 limiting the Palau court's appeals process such that there could be no appeal beyond the Palau Supreme Court. In January 1988, Secretary Hodel amended his original order, allowing appeals of Palau Supreme Court rulings to the Trust Territory High Court. Regarding the appeals panel reversal, Palau's attorney general must file a new motion with the Supreme Court and, if rejected there, the government could appeal to the Trust Territory High Court. In March 1988, the appellate division of the Palau Supreme Court reaffirmed the reversal decision, rendered by the appeals panel eight months earlier, that there was insufficient evidence to convict the three men (Teodosio 1988).

14. It seems likely that the truth of Remeliik's brutal murder may never be known because the dynamics of Palau's small-scale, face-to-face society require that such sociologically destabilizing truths remain hidden. A full revelation of the historical truth might hurt too many highly placed people. Regarding assassination, the anthropologist McKnight has written about Palau, "Individual striving for status in Palauan society did, to some extent, assert itself in direct assaults upon higher positions in the vertical structure and many eras of chiefdomship are punctuated by an assassination" and "the privacy of clan conflict does not, necessarily, reduce its intensity--it may be in fact the most emotion-involved area of competition in the whole arena. There is at least one clan in Palau that, as a result of political competition, produced a series of strategic assassinations a generation ago that has left only a single side-leg. The fission of this single leg, with internal friction among the remaining lineages and population growth, is already evident" (McKnight 1960:100, 67).

15. In September 1987, the Ta Belau Party, Inc., was formed to support Salii's reelection. The party replaced the Furlough Committee, which was involved in activities viewed by some Palauans as harassment during July, August, and early September 1987. Furthermore, the Progressive and Liberal parties formed in 1963 and quiescent since 1978 had been formally retired during an elaborate ceremony held in April 1984. The occasion was the formation of the Sunshine National Policy Platform spearheaded by John O. Ngiraked. The purpose of the movement was to solidify political forces to challenge President Remeliik in the 1984 election (Shuster 1984a).

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