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Traditions and Transitions: Explorations of Chamorro Culture through the Rosary Practice

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Asian American Studies

by

Jessica Ann Unpingco Solis

2014

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2014

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Traditions and Transitions: Explorations of Chamorro Culture through the Rosary Practice

by

Jessica Ann Unpingco Solis

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Valerie Matsumoto, Chair

Chamorros are the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands. This region's long colonial history can be seen in the strong presence of Catholicism. As a part of the Catholic religion, the rosary prayer is used for many occasions including, death. This particular rosary prayer is known in the Chamorro language as a *lisåyo*. Drawing on twelve interviews, newspaper articles, and several scholarly works I explore how the *lisåyo* is an important space for examining aspects of Chamorro traditions. Just as these traditions continue to be perpetuated, they are nonetheless in flux, renegotiated in response to the changing socio-economics of Chamorros wherever they may be. One example I discuss is the role of the *techa* or prayer leader. The role is seen as a powerful position for Chamorro women within their community and continues to perpetuate the Chamorro culture by teaching its language and values. However, this role has undergone changes as

perceptions of the *techa* become feminized in response to larger flows of power such as capitalism, Catholicism, and migration. Due to these continuous forces, the future of the role of the *techa* and the rosary practice remains unknown as they continue to impact how Chamorros practice and perceive their traditions. As second-generation Chamorros in Southern California reexamine what it means to be Chamorro away from the Mariana Islands, the rosary practice and its future remains unclear. This thesis addresses the concerns and perspectives of Chamorros living on the Mariana Island of Guam and second-generation Chamorros living in Southern California, exploring how these narratives paint a larger picture of Chamorro culture change and adaptation.

The thesis of Jessica Ann Unpingco Solis is approved.

Keith Camacho

Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo

Valerie Matsumoto, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

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## ***I. Introduction***

The house looks no different from others in the neighborhood. People are talking in the doorway. Touching elbows, the crowd in the house feels almost claustrophobic. The smell of food hits you, and, although you are a guest, the scene feels comfortable. In the living room, an altar stands on a table draped in purple cloth. Candles surround a photo of your friend's deceased grandfather. An older woman sits near the altar, rosary beads in one hand and a booklet in the other. People slowly fill the living room, and the light mood turns solemn. She opens the booklet.

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," she says.

"Amen," everyone replies.

The rosary has begun. Your eyes move to the photo in front of you, an unfamiliar face. Who *is* this person? ...*Abe Maria, Purissima. Abe Maria, Bula Hao Gracia*... The ceremony continues with song. It is in a language you have never heard before. You recognize a few words in Spanish, but pronounced differently.

As the rosary books are collected, people exchange hugs and kisses on the cheek. A few women move to the food table, lifting foil covers. Next to red rice with bits of bacon<sup>1</sup> is a small bowl of soy sauce with chopped green onions and red peppers.<sup>2</sup> Farther down is a bowl of finely chopped chicken with more green onions and red peppers.<sup>3</sup> Barbecued beef spare ribs, chicken, and pork dominate the table. Everyone holds hands, and a family member says a prayer. Elders

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<sup>1</sup> *Hineksa' agaga'* also known as "red rice," is a traditional Chamorro dish of rice dyed with small achote (*annatto*) seeds which gives the rice its red color, other ingredients such as chopped onions and bacon are sometimes added.

<sup>2</sup> *Fina'dene'*: A favorite condiment made of soy sauce, lemon juice, chopped green onions and red peppers; sometimes shredded coconut and tomatoes are added. Note: All dishes vary according to island, region, family, and personal preference.

<sup>3</sup> *Kelaguen Mannok* (chicken): chopped barbecued chicken marinated in lemon juice, seasoned with salt, onions, and hot pepper and sometimes served with grated coconut. Other proteins are used as well including deer (*binadu*), shrimp (*uhang*) and fish (*guihan*).

and children are served first, the guests serve themselves, and the conversations and laughter resume. *Eat more! There is plenty of food!* The hospitality is relentless.

Leaving with precious leftovers, you say “good-bye” and “thank you,” and head to your car. You cannot help but feel that you have experienced something special, and indeed you have.

For second-generation Chamorros living in Southern California, the passing of a loved one can be a time of great sorrow and loss, but these moments can also provide sources of comfort, reassurance, and an opportunity to claim one’s ethnic identity. What makes “the rosary”<sup>4</sup> in particular a valuable area of study is that attending one is a commonality among many second-generation Chamorros.<sup>5</sup> The practice of the Rosary Prayer for a deceased family member provides a rare opportunity for second-generation Chamorros to become immersed in Chamorro culture.<sup>6</sup> In this temporal place, components such as kinship ties, spirituality, language, gender roles, and foodways all converge for nine consecutive evenings.

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<sup>4</sup> The Rosary Prayer itself is a devotional prayer of petition to the Virgin Mary, mother of God. This prayer can be used for many intentions including as devotionals prayer for a number of Saints, important liturgical holidays such as Christmas, as well as during life events such as when someone passes away. Father Eric Forbes the Capuchin Superior for Guam and known as “Pale’ Eric” notes in his blog *paleric* that in the Mariana Islands the Rosary prayer specifically for the dead is called a *lisâyo*, the Chamorro pronunciation of the Spanish *Rosario*. Though the term *lisâyo* is the proper term, many Chamorros especially in California often referred to the prayer and reception that follows simply as “a rosary.” I refer to the event as “the rosary” also to keep a sense of second-generation references to this event unless otherwise specified.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to address here that a rosary can be used for many other occasions besides death including saint feast days and liturgical holidays such as Christmas in which case they are referred to as *nobenas*. I specifically look at rosaries for the dead or *lisâyos* as they are the most common intentions for which rosaries are still practiced in the Chamorro diaspora.

<sup>6</sup> I am aware that not all Chamorros identify Catholicism as their belief system and that the two are not synonymous. William D. Pesch in his article “Praying Against the Tide: Mission and Context of Protestants in Guam, 1900 to 1910” in *Guam History Perspectives: Volume II* he discusses how the end of the Spanish-American war brought attempts to convert Chamorros from Catholicism to Protestantism. These efforts however could not sway the large influence of Catholicism, these efforts were first led by two Chamorro brothers from Guam, Luis and Jose Castro (later changed to Custino). The well-documented history of Catholicism in the Mariana Islands can be seen in such works as *Lettres de Quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus, écrites de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* by Father Charles LeGobien in 1702, *Cause of Beautification of Ven. Diego Luis de San Vitores* in 1981 by the Historical Commission of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints and scholars such as Francis

The Rosary practice serves as a cultural space where Chamorro culture is perpetuated through the use of the Chamorro language to pray and sing, reliance on kinship ties to support these events, and the production of traditional Chamorro foods. Though not all rosaries in Guam and California have all these components, I argue that the rosary is still a Chamorro cultural practice based in strong kinship ties and respect for deceased family members. These attributes are what make the rosary a valuable site for academic study.

Though this space today continues to serve both a religious and cultural purpose, it is also a space of transition, as larger flows of power such as Americanization and capitalism have influenced many Chamorros, both in Guam and California. These forces affected traditional gender roles in the rosary as well as how it is practiced. Wage labor in particular had a huge impact on men's roles in the rosary. The division of roles between men and women were more visible as men and women worked together to put on the event with men handling the grave digging, coffin building, and the slaughtering and butchering of animals for food dishes. As men had less time at home due to their jobs and services became commercialized such as coffin building and butchering, men's traditional roles in the rosary began to lose visibility, and as a consequence the rosary space became feminized as women's roles took a more visible prominence.

Changes continue to reshape the rosary practice as they are relocated to churches instead of houses in Guam, and in California have been re-interpreted by second-generation Chamorros primarily as a time of family and food rather than a ritual to save a loved one's soul from hell. As

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X. Hezel have also written on the subject in his article "From Conversion to Conquest: The Early Spanish Mission in the Marianas." Because of this early and persistent presence of Catholicism, many Chamorros and second-generation Chamorros today do identify as Catholic or acknowledge a Catholic upbringing. Therefore the Catholic prayer of the rosary as it is used within the community is a common experience among many Chamorros.

Chamorros on Guam struggle to continue the use of their native language and prioritize the religious versus the cultural aspects of the rosary, second-generation Chamorros in California doubt that they will continue the tradition altogether. One thing is certain: the future of the rosary tradition both in Guam and California is in transition, and in what forms these changes will take is left unclear.

### **Methodology and Thesis Organization**

My primary source of information is six oral history interviews I conducted, as well as my own experiences as a third-generation Chamorro. Five interviewees were conducted with second-generation Chamorros and one with an individual who migrated to the continental United States. All of these primary interview participants were between the ages of 20- 40 and consisted of three women and three men. These interviews were also followed up with email correspondence to follow up on interviews. I interviewed, in addition a first-generation elder currently living in California and seven individuals on the Mariana Island of Guam to gain insights into how Chamorros in different generations and locations view the rosary practice. Interviewees were informally interviewed in places of their choosing including coffee shops, homes, work offices, and in a private area of the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum in Long Beach, California. For this thesis I use first and last names unless the interviewee preferred that only their first name be used. I also chose not to ask for names of friends and family who were mentioned during interviewing in consideration of their privacy.

During my research I was also given the opportunity to visit Guam from January to March 2014. My interviews there broadened my knowledge of the cultural practice of the rosary as well as concerns Chamorros have today about continuing its practice. I interviewed seven individuals who ranged from Chamorro culture scholars and *techas* to activists, all of whom gave

their time to share their experiences and knowledge. These collected histories have enriched my research, broadening my scope to look at multiple Chamorro realities across the Pacific. I also did archival research which provided context for many of the remarks made by my participants in Guam.

Though I have tried to be thorough in my research, incorporating as many perspectives as I could, I also must acknowledge the limitations of my study. The sample size of this preliminary study is small and in order to do a substantial analysis a much larger sample size is needed. I make no assertion that my findings encompass the ranges of second-generation Chamorro realities. Rather, I demonstrate that second-generation perspectives on the rosary offer valuable insights into how indigeneity, diaspora, and cultural identity interact. I also want to acknowledge that the participants represent a group of second-generation Chamorros who are culturally self-aware<sup>7</sup> and were able to discuss these topics along those lines. In reaching out to my own personal circles for interview participants, their involvement within the Pacific Islander community and academia became apparent. This is due to time constraints and interviewee availability.

Despite these limitations, their shared insights regarding Chamorro identity and memories of their participation in Chamorro rosaries provide invaluable information. They also speak to many of the responses and memories that many Chamorros on Guam also expressed, while lends itself to more study of trans-pacific Chamorro culture. The three major topic sections are organized in order of aspects you would encounter as a participant at a rosary. In “*I Familia: Kinship and Memories of the Rosary*” I first explore the ways in which kinship obligations

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<sup>7</sup> By “culturally self-aware” I mean that all my participants had a basic knowledge of Chamorro history and culture. Many participants have years of experience of participation in many Pacific Islander organizations in Southern California.

function to assist both with the financing and facilitation of the rosary. My analysis links this phenomenon not only to Chamorro culture, but more specifically to early indigenous practices. As second-generation Chamorros witness and participate in these social interactions they learn indigenous Chamorro ideologies of reciprocity.<sup>8</sup>

The second section, “*Tináyuyot para I Mangguelo*’: Ritual and Worship through Catholic Prayers” explores the relationship between Catholic and the Chamorro language. I address particularly how Spanish contact has influenced Chamorro language in its current hybrid state as well as how Chamorros have adopted Catholicism to perpetuate indigenous practices. Finally, in the third section, “Boka?: Chamorro Sustenance of the Physical, Spiritual, and Cultural Kind” I discuss Chamorro foodways and their significant role in Chamorro identification, particularly for second-generation Chamorros in the diaspora. Scholars such as Eliot Singer have argued that food is a key component of ethnic identity and enculturation.<sup>9</sup> I address the role of food in the grieving process as well as its significance in the maintenance of Chamorro culture away from its origins.

It is also important to state that another major theme which connects these sections is both the perception and reality of Chamorro gender roles. From maintaining kinship ties and leading the prayer to preparing a majority of dishes, the rosary is in part run by women.<sup>10</sup>

Women do hold much power in perpetuating these traditions, including through the role of the

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<sup>8</sup> Scholar Vicente Diaz in his book *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam* discusses Guam’s long history of colonialism and how this, in turn, has had tremendous impacts on Chamorro culture. Because of these layers of colonization, Chamorros challenge conventional ideas of indigeneity as an insular form of colonial influence. Building on Diaz’s argument, I argue that since part of Chamorro indigeneity has its influence from outside forces, then the practice of the Catholic rosary can be viewed in indigenous terms as well.

<sup>9</sup> Singer, Eliot A. “Conversion Through Foodways Enculturation: The Meaning of Eating in an American Hindu Sect.” *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*. Ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984. 212. Print.

<sup>10</sup> Though the role of a *techa* is predominantly done by women, the role is not strictly gender based.

*techa* or prayer leader. In this section I address how gender roles related to the rosary, including the roles of the *techa*, have changed due to larger socio-economic forces. I argue that traditionally the rosary was a liminal space, neither feminized nor masculinized. In this section I address how Chamorro men's participation changed, and as a consequence how the role of the *techa* became perceived as a female role. I originally considered addressing the role of women in a separate section, but found it would limit the understanding of women's roles within the rosary as well as in Chamorro culture overall. Therefore, I have chosen to develop the theme throughout the thesis, reflecting cultural practice. Drawing on my interviewee responses, my own experience as a third-generation Chamorro, and secondary sources from various scholars in anthropology and history, I explore the ways in which Chamorro culture and identity are expressed and perceived within the social/cultural space of the rosary practice in the diaspora.

### **The Participants**

The first interview I conducted was with Joey Atoigue Quenga, whose family is from the Mariana Island of Guam or *Guahan*<sup>11</sup> in Chamorro. His kinship lineage on his mother's side is Atoigue from the *familian*<sup>12</sup> *Bibang* and Mantanona from the *familian Naba*. Joey's father's side is Fejeran from the *familian Tanaguan*. What is interesting is that Joey mentioned that his last

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<sup>11</sup> All Chamorro spellings are taken from the *Chamorro-English Dictionary* by Donald M. Topping, Pedro M. Ogo, and Bernadita C. Dungca.

<sup>12</sup> The term *familian* is the Chamorro term which refers to Chamorro clan names. Often times these names are totems of nature or "nicknames" which can give specific information such as "*Chino*" meaning "Chinese" signifying Chinese ancestry or "*mannok*" meaning "Chicken" in Chamorro, referring to the family being known as chicken farmers. As Lawrence J. Cunningham discusses in his book *Ancient Chamorro Society*, clan affiliations are an indigenous practice which aided in sharing emotional and physical burdens from the immediate family. Clan names play a larger role in identification on the Mariana Islands in order to differentiate specific families who share common last names Ayuyu, Cruz, Sablan, and Taitano whose sur names represent some of the major clans in the islands of Guam, Rota, Saipan and Tinian. Clan names are still used in the diaspora. However due to the small population of Chamorros they are not relied on as heavily for identification; larger forms of identification such as one's last name and village name are sufficient. It is also important to note that not all interview participants have clan names mentioned. This is either due to their request, lack of knowledge of their clan names, or there is no clan association.

name “Quenga” has no clan name to his knowledge due to his grandfather’s objection to having a clan name; he did not know the specific reason for this decision. Currently 40 years old, Joey graduated from San Francisco State University with a bachelor’s degree in Communication. Since his father was in the Navy, Joey grew up in Long Beach, California. Mentioning the unique diversity of people he met in Long Beach, Joey also remembered the lack of other Chamorros in the area. Today, He and his wife continue his mother’s organization the *Kutturan Chamoru Foundation*.<sup>13</sup> Joey is also a radio host for *The BBQ with Q and Joe Sav* a radio show on *Betel Nut Radio*.<sup>14</sup> In both cases, Joey uses his communications degree and years of experience in the Pacific Islander community in Long Beach to bring visibility to the Pacific Islander population, especially Chamorros.

Keith Castro, who is 37, was my second interviewee. His mother’s lineage is from the Mariana island of Rota or *Luta* in Chamorro while his father’s family is from Guam. Keith’s father’s lineage is Castro from the *familian Atanacio* and Santos from the *familian Pai*.

Keith went to school on Guam while he spent his vacations back on Rota. He remembered the striking difference in lifestyle between Guam and Rota, noting that Guam seemed more “Americanized” than Rota in part due to their different political relationships with the United States. Keith originally migrated to Georgia, then Virginia, and finally settled in Long Beach, California in 2000 to attend DeVry University and pursue a degree in computer programming.

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<sup>13</sup> The *Kutturan Chamoru Foundation* was founded in 1993 and was initially named *Kutturan Chamoru Performers* whose mission was to provide Chamorro representation in the arts at Pacific Islander festivals throughout

California. In 2010 the organization expanded to become a foundation as well as to promote Chamorro culture, language, and education. More information can be found at <<http://www.kutturanchamoru.org/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Betel Nut Radio is a Pacific Islander owned radio station that addresses themes pertinent to ethnic media. *The BBQ with Q and Joe Sav* which is a show of *The Betelnut Radio* aims to highlight organizations and talent in order to add to Pacific Islander representation. Show guests consist mostly of local Pacific Islanders in Southern California but other guests from around the world have phoned in or visited the show as well. Joey argues that media plays a huge role in creating bridges between islands and their diasporas. More information can be found at <<https://betelnutradio.com/the-bbq/>>.



He helped found a non-profit organization called *Empowering Pacific Islander Communities*<sup>15</sup> (EPIC). Currently Keith conducts Chamorro language classes in Long Beach along with the *Kutturán Chamoru Foundation*.

Alfred Flores who is 32 years old comes from a mixed-race background. His mother was Korean from the western side of South Korea while his father was Chamorro from the island of Guam. His clan lineage is Flores from the *familian Kabesa* and *familian Kulu*. Alfred grew up in the Palm Springs area and is currently a PhD candidate in History at the University of California, Los Angeles, examining Filipino migration to Guam and Chamorro land struggles in the context of U.S. militarization.

Jesi Lujan Bennett grew up in San Diego, California, assisting her grandmother with organizations including the *Sons and Daughters of Guam Club*,<sup>16</sup> and *Chamorro Hands in Education Links Unity*.<sup>17</sup> Born to a Chamorro mother and Irish/ Native American father, Jesi self identifies as Chamorro. At 26 years old Jesi is pursuing her PhD in American Studies at the University of Hawai‘i, Manoa. Her research involves examining San Diego as a site of Chamorro cultural production in diaspora.

Taylor Lujan Torres, 23 years old, was born in Guam and grew up in Long Beach, California. Her mother’s lineage is from the island of Guam, Lujan from *familian Katson* and *Bitut*. Her father’s lineage is from the Mariana Island of Saipan. Currently working as an

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<sup>15</sup> *Empowering Pacific Islander Communities* (EPIC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to mobilize Pacific Islander communities to foster culturally relevant opportunities for achieving social justice through advocacy, research, and development. For more information, please see <<http://empoweredpi.org/>>.

<sup>16</sup> *The Sons and Daughters of Guam Club* is an organization which has chapters all over the state of California. Started in the 1950’s this organization served as a space to create community for many Chamorros away from Guam. For more information see <<http://www.goisland.net/2013/02/07/the-history-of-the-sons-and-daughters-of-guam-club/>>.

<sup>17</sup> *Chamorro Hands in Education Links Unity* (CHELU) is a non-profit organization which is dedicated to Chamorro community by strengthening our native language, culture and health through education. For more information see <<http://www.chelusd.org/>>.

administrative assistant for *Sounds Smart Speech Therapy* and a new mother, Taylor mentions the strong role her own mother played in her upbringing and in teaching the Chamorro culture.

Monique Matautia comes from a Chamorro and Samoan background. Her mother's lineage is from the island of Guam, Mantanona from the *familian Mahetok* and *Naba* and Evangelista from the *familian Apo* and *Deggo*. Monique grew up in Long Beach, California, and has been involved with the *Kutturán Chamoru Foundation* since she was seven years old. She graduated from California State University, Long Beach, with a bachelor's degree in Political Science. Monique currently works for the *Orange County Asian and Pacific Islanders Community Alliance*.<sup>18</sup>

I also interviewed Preciosa<sup>19</sup> who I refer to as "Auntie Perci,"<sup>20</sup> a first-generation Chamorro who is living in Long Beach, California. Away from the island of Guam for forty years, she migrated to California in 1973. Currently 70 years old, Auntie Perci has been working for *Guam Communications Network* in Long Beach since 2000<sup>21</sup> as well as being the founder of *Cal-Islanders Humanitarian Association*.<sup>22</sup> During my interview with Auntie Perci attributed

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<sup>18</sup> The mission of *Orange County Asian and Pacific Islanders Community Alliance* (OCAPICA) is to build a healthier and stronger community by enhancing the well-being of Asians and Pacific Islanders through inclusive partnerships in the areas of service, education, advocacy, organizing, and research. For more information, see

<<http://ocapica.org/us/>>.

<sup>19</sup> Interviewee chose to only use first name.

<sup>20</sup> It is common for Pacific Islanders in the diaspora to refer to elders as "aunties" or "uncles" regardless of the presence of a blood relation or island group affiliation. The terms are used as a form of respect, acknowledging their age which is seen as a form of status among Pacific Islanders. It also functions as a means of creating a sense of community and family which is a cornerstone of Pacific Island culture, especially in diasporas where actual blood-related kin may live far away. Auntie Perci mentioned this practice, and how this is only encountered away from the islands. She shared that on Guam where she grew up, strangers were never addressed as "auntie" or "uncle"; this is where clan affiliations and village localities were relied on to establish family ties.

<sup>21</sup> *Guam Communications Network* (GCN) was founded in 1992. It is an organization dedicated to facilitating increased public awareness of the issues concerning the people, Island, and culture of Guam through education, coalition building and advocacy. For more information, see <<http://www.guamcomnet.org/>>.

<sup>22</sup> *Cal-Islanders Humanitarian Association* (CIHA) is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 1994. CIHA is dedicated to meeting the humanitarian needs of medical patients from Guam and other

first becoming a *techa* to her move to California from Guam. She explained that due to the lack of Chamorros, Auntie Perci and many in her generation who migrated to the continental United States found themselves in the position to perpetuate their culture, including taking on the role of *techa*.

*Techas* have held and continue to hold cultural significance for Chamorros. Scholars such as Dominica Tolentino *familian Edo*, whose PhD research looked at the *techa* specifically as a women's role, and Father Eric Forbes, a scholar of Chamorro history and culture, gave much historical background of the rosary and its traditional practices. I also interviewed Eddie Benevente *familian Lale'* and *Chedo'*, a well-known Chamorro rights activist who gave his perspectives on language preservation and changes in the rosary on Guam today. I was fortunate to interview *techas*: Malia A. Ramirez, Maria Tenorio and Maria Rivera *familian Tudelan* from Talofofo, and Joshua Paulino *familian Rambat, Cabesa, Lâzara*. All generously shared their histories of how they became *techas* and their perspectives on the rosary practice today in Guam.

## ***II. Historical and Cultural Overview***

To understand current Chamorro culture and practices of the rosary in the Chamorro diaspora, it is important to first understand that the Mariana Islands have a long history of interactions with and influences from multiple colonial powers. The first documented encounter was in 1521 when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan came across the archipelago.<sup>23</sup> By the late 1500s the Mariana Islands had become a known stop along the Spanish Galleon Trade route for crews to replenish provisions.<sup>24</sup> In 1565 the Mariana Islands were claimed by Spain.<sup>25</sup>

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surrounding islands who are in transient in Southern California. More information can be found at <<http://www.cal-islanders.org/>>.

<sup>23</sup> Rogers, Robert F. *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam, second edition*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. 6. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Rogers, 35-36.

<sup>25</sup> Farrall, Don A. *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*. CNMI: Public School System, 1991. 132. Print.

The name “Mariana Islands” was bestowed on the archipelago in 1665 by Spanish Jesuit priest Father Diego Luis de San Vitores in honor of both the Blessed Virgin Mary and the reigning Queen of Spain, Mariana de Austria.<sup>26</sup> Though the indigenous Chamorro population continued to have sporadic visits from various migrations of people, it was not until 1668 when San Vitores visited again and formally established a missionary presence.<sup>27</sup> His goal was to convert the indigenous Chamorro population to Catholicism.<sup>28</sup> Because of this dedication and perhaps obsession, Spanish colonialism in the islands can still be felt in every aspect of Chamorro culture today, including food, language, and the adoption of the Catholic religion. Catholicism plays such a strong role in Chamorro identity today that it manifests itself in Guam’s local politics.<sup>29</sup>

Spanish colonialism and the introduction of Catholicism would be one of many changes for the indigenous Chamorro people of the Mariana Islands. After Spain’s defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898, Guam came under the possession of the United States. The rest of the Mariana Islands were sold to Germany in 1899.<sup>30</sup> In 1914 Japan captured the Northern Mariana Islands from Germany.<sup>31</sup> During the Second World War, Guam was invaded on December 8, 1941 by Japan and was occupied until July 1944 when American soldiers reoccupied the island.<sup>32</sup> The establishment of the Organic Act of 1950 in Guam<sup>33</sup> and the Commonwealth of the

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<sup>26</sup> Diaz, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Francis X. Hezel in his article “From Conquest to Colonization: Spain in the Marianas 1690-1740” discusses the history of the Spanish colonization in the Marianas Islands including early missionary work of Jesuit priest Fr. Luis Diego San Vitores.

<sup>28</sup> Diaz, 148.

<sup>29</sup> In his book *Pacific Passages: World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, Ronald Stade discusses the ways in which anti-abortion bill 848 was defended by many Chamorros on the grounds of preserved traditional concepts of family based on Catholic ideology, 237.

<sup>30</sup> Farrell, Don. A. "The Partition of the Marianas: A Diplomatic History, 1898-1919." *Isla: Journal of Micronesian Studies* 2.2 (1994): 273-301. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Farrell, Don. A. *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*. 287.

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, 170.

<sup>33</sup> Underwood, Robert A. “Excursions into Inauthenticity: The Chamorros of Guam.” *Pacific View Point* 36 (1985): 167. Print.

Northern Marianas (CNMI) in 1970<sup>34</sup> provided Chamorros with the opportunity to migrate to the continental United States. Because of a sentiment of gratitude to the United States for “liberation” from Japanese oppression, many Chamorros from Guam were overcome with a sense of patriotism obligation and thus volunteered in large numbers to join the U.S. military.<sup>35</sup> Economic competition with foreign laborers and discriminatory labor practices<sup>36</sup> in Guam partly explain why many Chamorros left the islands for places like California; they often migrated to port cities such as San Diego and Long Beach.<sup>37</sup>

They brought with them their Catholic faith and rituals as they settled in Southern California.<sup>38</sup> The strong values Chamorros placed on maintaining relationships with immediate and extended family took on even more importance as new diasporic communities began to form in California and away from the Mariana Islands. In this new location, rituals provided a means of performing Chamorro culture away from the islands and helped to maintain kin networks. By performing culturally significant rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and hosting rosary prayers, these networks help to supply a larger demand for labor and financial support which are initiated outside of any formal state assistance.

Scholar David Gegeo argues that for indigenous peoples the concept of “space” is linked with practicing indigeneity through language and genealogy.<sup>39</sup> Examining how indigenous

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<sup>34</sup> Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*. 566.

<sup>35</sup> Camacho, Keith. *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. 11. Print.

<sup>36</sup> Underwood, 168.

<sup>37</sup> Underwood, 167.

<sup>38</sup> Historian Robert A. Underwood discusses the history of migration of Chamorros from Guam. In his paper “Excursions into Inauthenticity: The Chamorro Migrant Stream,” Underwood addresses the motivations of many Chamorros to leave Guam especially during the 1960s such as the military and for education. He also mentions perceptions these first generation diasporic Chamorros and those who still live on Guam had of each other.

<sup>39</sup> Gegeo, David W. “Cultural Rupture and Indigeneity: The Challenge of (Re) visioning ‘Place’ in the Pacific.” *The Contemporary Pacific* 13:2 (2001): 491-507.

peoples relate to space and the increasing lack thereof, concepts of diaspora and return migration can be used to understand connections between a group and their homeland. Gegeo states that indigenous peoples who are away from their native lands experience a particular stigma of illegitimacy. This is because indigeneity is seen as a political status in relation to a certain location rather than as an identity. Further complicating this long held assumption, scholar Jean-Paul Restoule comments on how indigenous identity is maintained by people removed from their native land and living in urban spaces. Specifically looking at the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and the United States, Restoule critically engages the concept of indigeneity and its relationship to diaspora.<sup>40</sup> He contends that the “loss” of or disconnection from land is a key distinction for indigenous peoples in a diaspora as compared with other ethnic groups in that indigeneity.

None the less, Restoule asserts that despite this fundamental difference and continued pressures for Aboriginal peoples to settle in urban spaces, these groups have also revitalized indigenous practices and sentiment for a homeland through memories or myth.<sup>41</sup> He argues:

The imported values that take hold in urban communities are no less important or authentic because they are expressed in urban areas. Indeed, they may remind us all of where we come from. The issue of return to homeland that is a core of the diasporic identity suggests that there is an element of indigeneity in all diasporic consciousness.<sup>42</sup>

Considering both Gegeo’s and Restoule’s arguments, I refer to Chamorros as a diaspora while still an indigenous people. Chamorros have made a new sense of place in Southern California

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<sup>40</sup> Restoule, Jean-Paul. “Urban Aboriginal Migration in North America: A Diasporic Identity.” *Transforming Diaspora: Communities beyond National Boundaries*. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2011. 21-36. Print.

<sup>41</sup> Restoule, 31.

<sup>42</sup> Restoule, 34.

while maintaining kinship ties to the Mariana Islands.<sup>43</sup> These ties include the rosary practice, where for nine consecutive evenings Chamorro identity is reaffirmed and perpetuated.

Looking at similar systems of familial obligations, anthropologist Ilana Gershon has examined how the Samoan diaspora utilizes informal means of gift exchange and obligation situated outside of the state, offering a lens through which to see culture in action within the diaspora.<sup>44</sup> For the Chamorro community in Southern California, the continued practice of the rosary gathering for the benefit of a deceased person is, among other things, a form of informal exchange. These social exchanges can be seen as modern-day versions of much older, indigenous forms of gift exchange and obligation. The mutual support system based on social reciprocity known as *chenchule*' is one of the biggest cultural practices for Chamorros and is a large part of Chamorro identity.<sup>45</sup> Funerals are considered one of the most important occasions for observance of family ties and assistance.<sup>46</sup> The term *ika* is used to refer to the specific type of *chenchule*' specifically for the death of a family member. Unlike *chenchule*' in general which are informal gift giving, *ika* comes with a formal obligation to the recipient that must be repaid to that donor and their family at a later date when they are faced with a death.<sup>47</sup> Its importance stems from the need to support the community and from the core value of *inafa'maolek*, which expresses the importance of the obligation to provide for the community's well-being as a

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<sup>43</sup> Scholar James Clifford in his book, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* revisits the term "indigenous" and its current implications as many indigenous groups recover and renew their roots.

<sup>44</sup> Gershon, Ilana. *No Family is an Island: Cultural Enterprise among Samoans in Diaspora*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012. 25-26. Print.

<sup>45</sup> Guampedia. *Chenchule': Social Reciprocity*. Website. Sep. 2012. <<http://guampedia.com/chenchule/>>

<sup>46</sup> Iyechad, Lilli Perez. "Reciprocity, Reunification, and Chamorros in Guam: An Ethnographic History of Death Rituals" *Guam History: Perspectives* vol. 2. Ed. Lee D. Carter, William L. Wuerch and Rosa Roberto Carter. Mangilo: Richard R. Taitano Micronesia Area Research Center, University of Guam. 2005, 260. Print.

<sup>47</sup> Cunningham, Lawrence J. *Ancient Chamorro Society* Honolulu: The Bess Press. 1992, 80. Print.

whole.<sup>48</sup> It is important to mention that though *ika* refers to assistance in the event of a death, participants I interviewed referred to this *ika* as *chenchule*, this distinction or lack of it speaks to the absence of certain Chamorro terminology for many second-generation Chamorros. Another example of this is reflected in the term “rosary”.

### ***III. The Rosary***

The Rosary Prayer is a Catholic devotional prayer, repetitive in nature and based on significant events in the Bible. The prayer allows for contemplation of these events as well as reflection on one’s Catholic faith.<sup>49</sup> This prayer is used for several occasions, but for the purpose of this paper I will focus on how the rosary called the *lisåyo* in Chamorro which is performed by the family of the deceased.<sup>50</sup> Catholics believe in purgatory, a place of limbo where one is spiritually cleansed until finally being placed in heaven or hell. The prayers for the deceased by loved ones who are still alive are like advocates, asking for mercy and passage into heaven for their souls.<sup>51</sup>

A traditional *lisåyo* lasts eighteen days, nine public and nine private. The significance of the number nine symbolizes the nine days the apostles waited for the Holy Spirit, thus this symbolic waiting for nine days is reserved for *lisåyos* and *nobenas*.<sup>52</sup> The first nine are called

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<sup>48</sup> Kelly G Marsh and Julian Aguon. Guampedia. Inafamaolek: Striving for Harmony. Website. Sep. 2012. <<http://guampedia.com/inafamaolek/>>

<sup>49</sup> The types of life events of Jesus recollected during the rosary depend on the liturgical season and day of the week the prayer is performed. The rosary is divided into four mysteries: The Five Joyful Mysteries, The Five Sorrowful Mysteries, The Five Glorious Mysteries, and The Five Luminous Mysteries introduced by Pope John Paul II in 2002. These events range from Jesus’ birth, death, and Assumption as well as some of the miracles that he performed. They each consist of five decades representing five events. Within one decade there consists one “Glory Be” prayer, one “Our Father” prayer, and five “Hail Mary” prayers. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “How to Pray the Rosary,” n.d., <<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/devotionals/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm>> (accessed September 14, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Forbes, Eric. Paleric. “If Your Name is Rosario.” Blog. October 15 2011, <<http://paleric.blogspot.com/search?q=rosary>>

<sup>51</sup> Father Eric Forbes, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.



*lisåyon linahyan* (group rosary) which begins the evening immediately after the death and includes the burial of the deceased individual. During this period, the rosary prayer is said every evening, usually at the home of an immediate family member or at a local Catholic parish.<sup>53</sup> Refreshments are then served afterward.<sup>54</sup> After the first nine days, the rosary then shifts into another phase called *lisåyon guma'* (home rosary) which is held only for the immediate family.<sup>55</sup> *Nobenas* which are rosaries said for specific saint feast days and the baby Jesus are also mentioned here as their organization and practice are similar.

The second-generation participants noted that their experiences only included the first nine days of the *lisåyon linahyan*. This practice shows one of the ways in which how traditional Chamorro rosary practices have changed within the diaspora. Within the Chamorro community in Southern California the term “rosary” is commonly used in reference to both the prayer itself and reception of food which follows. The lack of the use of the term “*ika*” to refer to assistance, the same is true for the term *lisåyo*. Throughout my research, the terms “rosary” and *lisåyo* are used interchangeably.

#### ***IV. i-Familia: Kinship and Memories of the Rosary***

The physical, temporal, and financial strain of hosting a rosary is substantial; more often than not the organizing of a rosary requires assistance from extended family and friends. I myself have participated in the *lisåyo* for my mother when I was twelve and more recently helped coordinate others for several uncles with whom I was very close. The seemingly never ending cycle of grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking, praying, and then cleaning again each day can be

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<sup>53</sup> Malia A. Ramirez, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 13, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> “Burial Practices: Celebration of the *finakpo*”, “June 18 2012, < <http://guampedia.com/burial-practices/>> (accessed September 14, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Malia, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 13, 2014.

emotionally and physically draining. I have also attended more casually the rosaries hosted by far-removed extended family and friends.

Throughout my own participation I have donated much time, money, and energy in supporting both my immediate and extended family during these times of grief. The tasks have changed as I have gotten older. When I was much younger during my mother's rosary, I remember doing a great deal of cleaning which many interview participants also recounted about their experiences. As I grew older, my tasks included cleaning dishes with my other cousins as well as helping my aunties prepare dishes. At the last rosary I helped host in 2013, I was asked by my auntie who is the family *techa*<sup>56</sup> or prayer leader to lead the rosary prayer for one decade.<sup>57</sup> This task in particular had great significance because it displayed my aunt's desire to perpetuate the rosary tradition through me and others she asked to participate. As I mention later, rosaries can also offer spaces for younger Chamorros to practice and gain experience in facilitating a rosary. This can also be seen in the typing up and paying for the rosary prayer booklets, of which I was also in charge. These booklets allow family and friends to follow along and participate in the prayer regardless of their familiarity with the words and sequence of the prayers. Through hours of typing and editing the booklet I became familiar with the rosary's organization and prayers as well as the Chamorro language as I double checked words for the

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<sup>56</sup> The rosary prayer leader's role is to lead the group in the rosary prayer as well as keep count of the repetitions of prayers. This role is almost always done by older women, and often times within a family there are designated matriarchs with the assigned role. For more information see: *Guampedia* "Techa: Traditional Prayer Leader." Website. Sep. 19 2012. < <http://guampedia.com/techa-traditional-prayer-leader/>>

<sup>57</sup> There are five sets of "decades" in a rosary which represent five mysteries or events in the life of Jesus. Depending on the day of the week or liturgical calendar a certain set of five mysteries or events are said. Once decade consists of saying the mystery, one prayer known as the "Our Father", followed by five repetitions of another prayer known as the "Hail Mary," followed by another prayer known as the "Glory Be." For more information see < <http://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/maryd5.htm>>.

hymns. Besides these tasks, I also prepared a few dishes myself, receiving advice and assisting my aunts in the kitchen. Through all these acts, I contributed my *ika* to the rosary.

The extent to which an individual would be expected to contribute depends on his or her relationship to the deceased. This is not just limited to family but also close friends. For example, a close family member such as a wife, brother/sister, a godson/daughter, or son/daughter would be expected to spend much of their time and finances (if possible) to assist with the rosary and burial preparations. This is a much larger social obligation than that of extended family or family friends who are not obligated to show up to all nine days of the rosary, and may not be as invested.<sup>58</sup> Individual family members' circles of friends can also contribute to the rosary's participants. For example, it is not uncommon for friends or coworkers of a family member to attend the rosary without knowing the deceased, but due to having a close relationship with a family member. In my case, I was in charge of many tasks due to my close relationship with my uncle as well as the limited number of family members available to help. Taking into account my particular situation, many factors besides relationship can affect the amount of time and effort one puts into a rosary such as proximity to the location of the rosary as well as one's availability.

Though it might be easy to view these practices primarily as Catholic rituals rather than as indigenous ones, it is important to note that the rosary (which does not include the actual mass and burial of the individual) is conducted solely by the family. The Roman Catholic Church does not sanction this practice. The rosary thus functions as a modern platform for and adaptation of indigenous, pre-contact emphases on kinship ties and ancestor worship.<sup>59</sup> More specifically, the rosary in the Chamorro diaspora is a moment where reaffirming kinship ties and performing

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<sup>58</sup> Personal observation and informal conversations with family members.

<sup>59</sup> Cunningham, Lawrence J. Cunningham. *Ancient Chamorro Society*. Honolulu: The Bess Press, 1992. 99-100 and 161-163. Print. Souder, Laura. *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lanham: University Press of America, 1992. 44 and 58. Print.

obligations are expected, whether through financial means (money, buying items) or labor (cooking, cleaning). Whereas other rosaries commemorate liturgical events or religious figures, I argue that a rosary for the deceased in particular holds significant importance because of its familiarity among second-generation Chamorros. These rosaries specifically provide a valuable lens through which an analysis of Chamorro cultural performance and maintenance can be understood.

Vicente Diaz in his book *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam* argues that the boundaries between what constitutes the performance of indigeneity and the performance of religion become blurred when looking at Chamorros' intentionality.<sup>60</sup> He states that Chamorro indigenous culture has been able to survive decades of colonial occupation through adaptive measures. Diaz uses the imagery of the phoenix, a Greek mythological bird cyclically reborn from the ashes of its predecessor,<sup>61</sup> as a metaphor for Chamorro culture. Diaz asserts that, for outsiders, Chamorro culture may seem "dead" because of its interaction with years of colonial rule. Frustrated, he shows that, like the phoenix, Chamorro culture has been "reborn" or reinvented by fitting into various colonial powers.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, historian Robert Rogers' *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam* mentions the use of kinship obligation from historical accounts:

The close family and clan linkages of the precontact Chamorro kinship structure were supplemented by pervasive custom of mandatory obligations between related and unrelated individuals. The principal expression of such obligations were (and still are) *ika*, the giving of gifts or services that obligates the recipient to reciprocate to the giver,

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<sup>60</sup> Diaz, 110.

<sup>61</sup> Broek, R. Van Den. *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972. 146. Print.

<sup>62</sup> Diaz, 215.

and *chenchule*', gifts without direct obligation for reciprocity. Important gifts had to be rewarded either by repayment in kind or by forming a kinship bond with the giver.<sup>63</sup>

Keeping in mind this older tradition of kinship structure and forms of obligations, the rosary for the death of a family member serves as an example of the intricacies of gift giving.

This presence of social obligation can also be seen in some of the participant responses such as this one from Jesi, "The people that attend *nobenas* vary depending on the occasion and who is hosting it. If a family is hosting a *nobena* for an anniversary of a death or for another personal matter, typically extended family and friends will attend."<sup>64</sup> Thus the intention, as Jesi notes, plays a crucial role in how the rosary or *nobena*<sup>65</sup> is practiced and interpreted. Looking at it from a generational perspective, Auntie Perci mentioned other aspects which affect rosary participation, such as the geographical distance between relatives and the desire to stop participation in family obligations.<sup>66</sup> She addresses the fact that the number and proximity of family members are very different in the diaspora compared to those who live in the islands. Because the Mariana Islands are very small, families live closer together and in larger numbers where travel times are no more than an hour and a half instead of even longer distances in California. Auntie Perci also explains that many first-generation Chamorros make the choice to stop family obligations once they migrate to the continental United States, seeing the move as an opportunity to escape what can be a physical and financial burden. This desire to leave family obligations behind is also mentioned in *Pacific Voices Talk Story* by Soledad C. Santos, a first-generation Chamorro: "...I do feel sometimes that Chamorros leave the Island to get away from,

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<sup>63</sup> Rogers, 35-36.

<sup>64</sup> Jesi, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Chamorro pronunciation of "novena," another term for the rosary prayer

<sup>66</sup> Perci, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, October 25, 2013.

not so much the closeness, but all the obligations of being around family and not having their own space... You always had a funeral to go to, or a party, or some family get together.”<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly enough, though both Auntie Perci and Soledad Santos mention how many first-generation Chamorros leave some family obligations behind, they can also find ways to reinvent these indigenous kinship ties in a diasporic context. Auntie Perci mentioned an organization she founded called *Cal-Islanders Humanitarian Association* whose purpose is to meet a patient’s non-medical needs such as providing community and alleviating some of the financial burden of the patient’s immediate family.<sup>68</sup> Auntie Perci explained that one service the organization provides is paying for and facilitating a reception if a member or a member’s immediate family member dies. Every month each member donates five dollars to a fund which is used when funds are needed for a reception. Also, members of the organization are obligated to coordinate the food preparation and service in order to eliminate one of the immediate family’s obligations. In doing so, Auntie Perci and other first-generation Chamorros have found ways to use non-profit organization spaces to fulfill kinship obligations as members become adopted kin,<sup>69</sup> in order to address their needs left unfulfilled by blood kin due to distance or lack of participation. Thus, in both generational accounts, the rosary is still seen as a space of familial and cultural significance. The importance of kinship roles in minimizing the financial and emotional burden on the nuclear family speaks to why, as Diaz notes, early Chamorros used

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<sup>67</sup> Lenson, Margo King ed. "Accent on Confidence Required." *Pacific Voices Talk Story: Conversations of American Experience*. Vacaville: Tui Communications Vol. 4 (2003): 148. Print. Interview with Soledad C. Santos.

<sup>68</sup> Perci, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, October 25, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Laurel Monnig, in her article "Adoption is Blood: Understanding Chamorro *Poksai* as Chamorro Authenticity within Racialized Decolonization Politics on Guam" in *Pacific Studies* Vol.31:3/4 discusses the concept of adoption or "poksai" as an indigenous Chamorro family practice which challenges western notions of authenticity through a direct biological connection. As Monnig argues, Chamorros have used adoption as a legitimate means of growing families and caring for children in need of care.

Catholicism as a means to continue pre-contact values such as kinship<sup>70</sup> as well as the formation of *Cal-Islanders Humanitarian Association* in order to address the weakened presence of extended family within the diaspora.

As my interviews revealed, some participants remembered experiencing rosaries at a young age and have not participated as adults or identified themselves as Catholic. Many of these early memories were of being surrounded by many people, being made to kneel for long periods of time, and of course, eating food. All of the interviewees had some memories of the ceremony and all knew in general what a rosary was for and what events took place. Thus, even though there is no one experience that exemplified the rosary, key themes surfaced. Many participants noted how during rosaries they always showed respect to their family.

When asked how she would describe a rosary to someone who had never been to one, Taylor stated bluntly, “Basically you are paying your respects and you get to eat after.”<sup>71</sup> The simple statement reflects her childhood experiences of greeting family and anticipating the meal at the end of each night, but also speaks to what important aspects are remembered over time. Other participants, with more experience participating in rosaries, gave similar responses, such as Jesi who said, “A rosary, or *nobena* in Chamorro, is a time when Chamorros come together as a family, community, or village for a particular intention... After the *nobena* is done, everyone eats and spends time together catching up.”<sup>72</sup> Comparing these responses, both participants had different levels of experience with rosaries. However, they chose the same two specific aspects to describe: family/community and food. When questioned about their rosary experiences, all of my interviewees mentioned community and food.

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<sup>70</sup> Diaz, 17.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Jesi, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.

Many of the participants recalled their community engagement through physically participating in the event. As Monique remembers,

...Three years ago, the first of my grandmother's siblings sadly passed away due to ovarian cancer...My grandmother knows I like to bake, so she assigned me to do the desserts. I felt kind of honored really, for my grandmother to trust me with the desserts. She is nothing less than a perfectionist, so to trust me with the desserts made me feel special. It may sound dramatic, but that's really how I felt.

As Monique reflects warmly on her contribution, she expresses her sense of pride in being asked to honor her aunt in this particular way.

Many of the participants mentioned their lack of memory of the event; however, they also stated with certainty that they would have been made to help in some way. Taylor recollected, "I was too young to remember, but I am sure if I was there I helped."<sup>73</sup> In looking at this response, it seems that participants hint at their own expectations of what roles they would have had to play. Though Taylor expressed her limited memories of rosaries, her certainty of her involvement beyond the capabilities of her memory shows how strongly Chamorro social norms have been integrated into her assumptions of what role she would have been charged with, which she states would have been cleaning. Alfred, another participant, also discussed how he would have also been assigned with the same chore, "If I did, it was probably limited to cleaning up and putting things away." In this way even participants who had limited memories of these events had still internalized expectations, such as the basic understanding that they would have been expected to help family with the event, even at a young age, through cleaning. Alfred also recalled how families would bring food and drinks to the rosary. Jesi recounted her participation

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<sup>73</sup> Taylor, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.



in rosaries: “My family hosted *nobenas* many times. I helped out by cleaning the house, preparing food, welcoming people in the house, and cleaning the house as people finish eating and leave. When I was younger, my cousins and I would be the ones to say the decades of the rosary.”<sup>74</sup> Though some interviewees remembered their participation and others did not, all noted they would have been made to help. In their statements, they acknowledged their own forms of *ika*.

The importance of family contribution can also be seen in many of the respondents’ notions of what it means to be Chamorro. Joey, another participant, recalled:

Another childhood memory would be, my family was raised Catholic, I was raised Catholic, so in the Chamorro culture we would have *nobenas* and they would be held at the house. So some of my early childhood memories would be singing Chamorro songs, and although not being able to understand the words or what I was saying, I was able to pronounce and read the Chamorro language which actually I was pretty thankful for; so, one: showing signs of respect and calling them aunts and uncles when I didn’t know them, two: the religious aspect of it, and three: and most importantly the food. Growing up I was fortunate to have aunts...one of the elders in my family lived with us and she was a phenomenal cook and so I was raised eating Chamorro food.<sup>75</sup>

Joey’s reflection shows how this one event holds so much cultural richness and the role that Catholicism plays in perpetuating these cultural values, not only through religion, but also in the maintenance of kinship ties as well as language and food practices. Joey mentions his family’s history with Catholicism and the role of the rosary as a site of learning the Chamorro language.

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<sup>74</sup> Jesi, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Joey, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, Nov. 16 2012.

Joey and two other participants observed that the rosary was one of the few ways in which Chamorro culture is experienced within the diaspora. Though the participants have differing levels of involvement in the rosary, none claimed to be Catholic. This shift between first and second-generation Chamorros could be explained by the migration from the Mariana Islands. Many Chamorros in the Mariana Islands are surrounded by Catholicism, and most are raised Catholic. Family pressures and cultural policing to reinforce Catholic morals in these small islands have a strong influence. However, for many second-generation Chamorros living in the diaspora their loyalties to Catholicism and choices to perpetuate the faith to their children may not be as strong. Part of this can be the lack of familial pressure as the proximity of extended family is limited. Another factor can be the presence of a diverse range of cultures and populations within southern California. Whatever the causes may be, the rosary is experienced and remembered in the folds of the community. It is a site where kinship ties can be reaffirmed or abandoned as can be seen in Auntie Perci's reflections. This practice of affirming kinship was witnessed by the participants I interviewed as well as practiced through the guidance and even parental pressure to learn Chamorro cultural norms. As Joey articulated, for many of these participants growing up in the diaspora, the rosary was one of the first moments in their lives where they were immersed in Chamorro culture, through hearing and speaking the Chamorro language, touching the rosary beads or the hands of elders, smelling and tasting the food, and participating in the exchange of gifts of food and labor. As Malia Ramirez states, "You always have to think about what the people are going to eat, what they are going to drink after this thing because they are not just gonna come there and you're not going to do anything to show your

appreciation.”<sup>76</sup> As Malia explains, when family and friends come to offer their prayers and assistance, there needs to be an exchange of food as a sign of appreciation.

Forms of labor and participation are not just related to kinship but are also heavily gendered. In terms of food preparation, men typically are in charge of barbequing while women take care of the various other dishes which accompany the meat. Men along with children may also help to clean and put away chairs and tables as well as running errands. These gender roles can be seen in Alfred’s reflection: “From my memories, the women are the people who primarily cook the food. The only exception I can remember is that the men primarily did the barbequing. The men also played an active role in clean up, except for washing the dishes.”<sup>77</sup>

Along with women’s part in food preparation, anthropologist Micaela de Leonardo discusses the role of women in the form of labor that is kinship creation and maintenance.<sup>78</sup> In discussing the roles that many Italian American women play as kinship facilitators and caretakers, she also notes their shared responsibility through strong networks of kinswomen.<sup>79</sup> This too, is reflected in Alfred’s memory of multiple women coming together to cook food as well as my own participation among all of my aunties in the kitchen. When reflecting on interviewee responses, di Leonardo pointed out that when participants were asked to state what it meant to be Italian-American, often times they chose terms such as closeness, food, and family. These concepts are, as she argues, all traditionally women’s roles within the family. This is significant because based on women’s responsibilities within the family, in essence, women are responsible for ethnic behavior. I also found the same themes resurfacing in my own interviews.

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<sup>76</sup> Malia, interview conducted by author, February 13, 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Alfred, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> di Leonardo, Micaela. *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender Among California Italian-Americans*. Ithaca: Cornell UP. (1984).194. Print.

<sup>79</sup> di Leonardo, 201.

Anthropologist di Leonardo also discusses how the women she interviewed had more detailed memories of family events and information than their male kin.<sup>80</sup> She argues that women in particular are charged with recording kin details and events in order to maintain kinship ties.<sup>81</sup> In her article “Tumuge’ Pa’pa’ (Writing it Down): Chamorro Midwives and the Delivery of Native History,” the Chamorro historian Christine Taitano DeLisle discusses the unique position and importance of Chamorro women in recording Chamorro history, specifically within academia.<sup>82</sup> She notes the tension she experienced as a female Chamorro scholar in both re-writing and contesting previous colonial representations of Chamorros, while at the same time being a part of that very same structure as an academic. Addressing the difficulties of “writing it down,” DeLisle acknowledges the delicate balance Chamorro scholars strive to attain between scholarly objectivity and cultural accountability.<sup>83</sup> She uses the metaphor of “hands” throughout her article, positioning academic writing as part of a long lineage of female Chamorro archivists. Whether through the acts of cooking, gardening, and delivering babies<sup>84</sup> or writing within academia, the Chamorro women’s hands have been at the forefront of recording Chamorro culture. This role of Chamorro women can also be seen during the rosary practice where women not only record *ika*, but also lead the prayer itself.

Within the context of the rosary, women are often in charge of recording *ika* gifts for the household, whether that may be money, bringing food, or other forms of assistance. The kind

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<sup>80</sup> di Leonardo, 198.

<sup>81</sup> di Leonardo, 195.

<sup>82</sup> DeLisle, Christine Taitano. “Tumuge’ Pa’pa’ “Writing It Down”: Chamorro Midwives and the Delivery of Native History.” *Pacific Studies* 30 (2007): 20-30. Print.

<sup>83</sup> DeLisle, 23-24.

<sup>84</sup> In traditional Chamorro society, the tasks of medicine were given to herbal healers called *suruhanu* for males and *suruhana* for females. Skilled midwives or *pattera* were assigned to aid women in labor along with care immediately before and after childbirth. Anne-Perez Hattori in her book, *Colonial Dis-Ease: US Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898-1941* discusses the many changes in health care for Chamorros on Guam, including efforts by the US Navy to institutionalize health care and cease traditional practices.

and quantity of gifts are carefully written down by the hosting family. The purpose of this meticulous record keeping is to keep track of just how much the family is indebted to those who assist them. If one helps out at a rosary, then the receiving family becomes obligated to assist one's family should the need arise.<sup>85</sup> This practice further strengthens and adds to both di Leonardo's and DeLisle's arguments regarding the significance of women in cultural preservation.

I feel it is important here to acknowledge that although there is a strong theme of women playing key roles during the rosary, this does not mean that men do not participate in the practice as well. Anne Perez-Hattori warns that histories have privileged women's roles in upholding Chamorro culture. In this "erasure" of Chamorro men from scholarship, often times their own agency is forgotten.<sup>86</sup> Keith commented on how thankful he was to his father and grandfathers for teaching him how to hunt and to know his genealogy, which he explains is a very important aspect of what it means to be Chamorro.<sup>87</sup> Whether or not their agency is as visible as women's roles, men do participate in decision making and preparing for a rosary. One example in particular, as Alfred remembers, is that men are usually trusted with preparing and barbecuing the meat which is usually the main dish on the food tables.<sup>88</sup> Men also assist in cleaning, gathering items, and donating money to ensure that the rosary can be held.

Men in Guam for example, had many important roles during a rosary such as coffin building, supervising burial arrangements, and setting up canopies and chairs, as well as slaughtering and preparing animals to be cooked. Men and women each had their respective

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<sup>85</sup> I discussed with my aunt who keeps the records of *ika* for my family and she explained how they are still used to keep track of transactions. She keeps all these records, and makes a special effort to assist families who have helped in the past. Perci, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Hattori, 92.

<sup>87</sup> Keith, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, November 18, 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Alfred, interview conducted by the author, Buena Park, California, May 12, 2013.

roles during a death in the family, and together as a unit were able to successfully take care of what needed to be done.<sup>89</sup> This notion of a family working together was mentioned by *techa* Malia A Ramirez; when reflecting on her own experiences, she noted that one can tell when a family is working together. She said that rosaries are big events and take much work to pull off. Some families who work well together are able to supply chairs, canopies, tables, and food in a day or two: “some families it’s so rudimentary...my God it’s all there, in an instant.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, these spaces can only be created with the collaboration of both men and women. It is also important that men can be and are *techas* as well, as I will discuss later.

***V. Tináyuyot para I Mangguelo’ (Prayers for the Ancestors): Ritual and Worship through Catholic Prayers***

The colonial history of the Mariana Islands is still lived out today by many Chamorros. Catholicism brought by Spanish missionaries still has a cultural strong hold on Chamorros in the Mariana Islands, and for some living in the diaspora. The rosary prayer or *nobena* in particular, has been a part of Chamorro culture from the late 1600s when the Spanish priest Diego Luis de San Vitores came to the Mariana Islands. However, the ancient Chamorro burial practices also consisted of the community participating in chanting called *tinaitai* and singing for six to eight days.<sup>91</sup> With the introduction of Catholicism, these original practices of honoring the dead were continued in the practice of offering prayers to Jesus Christ. The rosary prayer along with all other prayers were, according to Father Eric Forbes, translated into Chamorro by San Vitores.<sup>92</sup> This change in languages demonstrated, how important language is in religious participation.

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<sup>89</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Malia, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 13, 2014.

<sup>91</sup> Iyechad, 259.

<sup>92</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

In the Chamorro diaspora, the language used most often now is English, as younger generations of Chamorros do not understand Chamorro. This reflects another transition as second and third generations of Chamorros have grown up in the continental United States and become influenced by mainstream American culture. Many of my participants noted that their experiences with rosaries have been with them said in English and some songs sung in the Chamorro language. This represents a dramatic shift both in California and in Guam currently as the number of Chamorros who speak the language had dropped significantly.

As a result, issues of language retention and revitalization have become urgent topics of discussion among diasporic second-generation Chamorros. Highlighting the urgency of the issue, Keith said,

...but there's much more to being a Chamorro than using the Chamorro gear<sup>93</sup>, you know what I mean? There's language, there's knowing your culture, knowing your history...you know, those are the elements... [they] are critical to being a Chamorro... Because if you look at the statistics with our language, it's dying at a rapid rate, and if we don't sustain the language as Chamorros.....we're not going to be an indigenous people anymore, because we don't even have our own language to start with. So...and that's why I teach the language... you know what I mean? But another thing too, and this goes along with disassociation. I mean, there's a lot of Chamorros out here and ... everybody is busy, I understand and we have our Chamorro class... But for the amount of Chamorros we have out here, our Chamorro classes should be packed. But... there's a lot

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<sup>93</sup> "Chamorro gear" refers to the variety of merchandise produced both on the Mariana Islands and on the continental United States for sale during Pacific Islander festivals. These items often times include t-shirts, hats, key chains, jewelry, household items and car decals, among other things. As many participants noted, the term "Chamorro," specific island or village names, and flag images are used to note cultural and regional pride among diasporic Chamorros.

of people, I don't know if they feel that it's not important to them or for some odd reason they don't come, you know what I mean?<sup>94</sup>

Here, Keith expresses both his personal motivation and the issues he faces in trying to teach the Chamorro language within the diaspora. He states that, for him, language plays a huge role in legitimizing Chamorros as a unique, indigenous group. As Keith observes, "if we don't sustain the language as Chamorros.....we're not going to be an indigenous people anymore, because we don't even have our own language to start with."<sup>95</sup> He articulates what he believes to be the deciding factors of authenticity: the presence and transmission of a spoken language. This assertion reflects long standing Western standards of qualifying categories of people and evaluating "otherness" through key factors such as language. Keith warns that with the loss of the Chamorro language, Chamorro also lose their identity as an indigenous people. Though many immigrant groups also express concern about the rapid loss of language within a few generations, it is important to keep in mind that Keith's sense of urgency speaks to both the Mariana Islands' long colonial history and also the concerns that many immigrant groups face when dealing with adjusting to a new location. This issue of how to transmit and revitalize language is complex. This is seen in the difficulties Keith faces in maintaining regular attendance for his community-run Chamorro language classes in Long Beach, California. His efforts mirror recent movements by younger generations of Chamorros in the islands and in the diaspora to revitalize and preserve Chamorro culture, especially language.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Keith, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, November 10, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Keith, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, November 10, 2012.

<sup>96</sup> In his articles, "Chamorro Resistance and Prospects for Sovereignty in Guam" and "Contested Sites: Pacific resistance in Guam to U.S. Empire," Michael P. Perez gives the history of the decolonization movement in Guam. The articles discuss two waves of Chamorro activism. The first is during the U.S. re-occupation of Guam after WWII where Chamorros pushed for clarification on their political relationship with the U.S., including demands for U.S. citizenship. Because of political resistance by Chamorros, The Organic Act of Guam was legalized in 1950. This document paved the way for a more radical second



The issue of Chamorro language preservation was the universal topic mentioned by those I interviewed in Guam. As a matter of fact, it became a main point of conversation. What prompted this topic was the concern that the use of the Chamorro language to say the rosary is becoming less common, reflecting many younger generations' inability to understand and speak the language. Some participants, such as Maria Rivera, expressed optimism in the growing interest among the youth to learn the language. Others like Eddie Benevente gave the impression of possible Chamorro cultural extinction. Though there were differing perspectives on the severity of a threat to the Chamorro language, all agreed that they would prefer the Chamorro language to be used. The sense of sadness and anger can be easily heard in Eddie's words:

So when I as a person who does *nobenas* in Chamorro hear that (rosaries said in English)

I get very disappointed because I can see that it is no longer a Chamorro practice.

Anybody can do that. Because doing *nobenas* in Chamorro has a different feeling as opposed to doing *nobenas* in English and a lot of people don't see that from the outside.

If you are looking from the outside into our culture and say 'he's doing it in English' you might think 'Oh, that's ok.' No it's not! It has a different feeling, it just feels different.<sup>97</sup>

Eddie's words express a strong value placed on the Chamorro language, making it the one characteristic which makes something Chamorro. He emphasizes this again when he comments,

"It is our language that identifies who we are as a people throughout the world."<sup>98</sup> Indeed,

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wave to occur in the 1970's. Political reform, Chamorro nationalism, and indigenous rights characterized this second wave. Commenting on contemporary issues, attorney and activist Julian Aguon in his book, *Just Left of the Setting Sun*, addresses legislation brought forth in 2005 aimed at the privatization of Guam's one water provider. His other book, *The Fire This Time: Essays on Life Under U.S. Occupation*, discusses plans beginning in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Defense to build-up the military presence on the island of Guam. In both cases, Aguon addresses how larger forces of U.S. imperialism wreak havoc on the Mariana Islands both environmentally and in Chamorro efforts for self-determination.

<sup>97</sup> Eddie Benevente, interview conducted by the author, Tamuning, Guam, February 22, 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Eddie Benevente, interview conducted by the author, Tamuning, Guam, February 22, 2014.

Eddie's strong conviction about the language is unmistakable. To clarify, I bluntly asked if a rosary done in English is no longer a Chamorro cultural practice, with which he agreed completely. This sentiment may be a bit more extreme than those of others I interviewed, whereas some felt that the rosary was still an example of Chamorro culture if not done in Chamorro as Father Eric notes, "Language is a significant loss, but it is not a total loss. The Irish don't speak Irish, they speak English but they are Irish." "There is more to it than language, but language is a big factor."<sup>99</sup> Well-known *techa* Malia A. Ramirez expressed similar opinions: having learned the rosary prayers in Chamorro from her grandparents. She finds through her years as a *techa* that as more and more Chamorros cannot understand or speak Chamorro, they choose to say the *lisåyo* in English. This convenience in turn also further displaces the Chamorro language.<sup>100</sup> Thus, today in Guam a majority of rosaries are conducted in English, though those I interviewed expressed that it is important to say it in Chamorro.

The next logical question then would be: why do *techas* continue leading the prayer in English, when they themselves believe it should be said in Chamorro? Eddie believes that as *techas* are now given money for their services, they are subject to the requests of the family. Therefore they must comply with requests to do the rosary in English as families mention their desire for everyone's participation in praying for the deceased. Eddie rebuts this reasoning, "That to me is a dead excuse, it's a lame excuse, and that is the excuse that is going to lead us to extinction."<sup>101</sup> These strong words express the frustration Eddie feels as many Chamorros continue the cycle of displacing the Chamorro language from their cultural practices. But the *techas* I interviewed cited a very different perspective as to why they honor the families' requests

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<sup>99</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Malia, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 13, 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Eddie, interview conducted by the author, Tamuning, Guam, February 22, 2014.

to say the rosary in English. It is important to remember that the *lisåyo*'s purpose is first and foremost a Catholic one. As previously noted, the prayer is an intention for the soul of the deceased, to ask for the soul's eventual entrance into heaven. A *techa*'s primary role is to assist in this intention; although it is also a cultural practice. *Techa* Maria Rivera represents this tension between these two aspects of Chamorro culture today, Catholicism and the Chamorro language. Maria works as a Chamorro language teacher and is a strong advocate for Chamorro language preservation. She confessed her personal conflict in her roles as both a Chamorro language teacher and a *techa*:

In the beginning I really didn't like it. I am a Chamorro teacher, I am a proponent for the teaching of Chamorro. So I would say in my mind, it has to totally be Chamorro. But when the parents or the people who want the rosary say 'I want my kids to respond, and they only respond in English so can you please say it in English' I cannot say no. It's the family's request and they do respond...In the beginning I was backing, but prayer, the way the family wants it -give it to them. My thinking all the time is I teach in whatever I do, but sometimes you have to put that aside, I can also understand the family. This is what they want, this is what they need.<sup>102</sup>

As Maria mentions, the families' wishes must be addressed. She continues, "And I tell you what, you can always be replaced."<sup>103</sup> This cautionary comment is something that *techas* face if they do not heed the family's request.

During my stay in Guam, I lived at my great-grandmother's house, directly across from the side entrance of our local church. Often times I attended *lisåyos* in the church after the daily

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<sup>102</sup> Maria Rivera, interview conducted by author, Talofofo, Guam, February 15, 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Maria Rivera, interview conducted by the author, Talofofo, Guam, February 15, 2014.

mass with my aunt. On one occasion, we attended a rosary done in Chamorro. The audience's response was small though the church was full of people, because few knew how to respond in Chamorro, including myself. The *techa* continued through the whole rosary in Chamorro. When we returned the following day, there was a different *techa* and the rosary was done in English, with much more response from the crowd. Later I found out from my aunt that the family had replaced the previous *techa*. The family had asked her to say the rosary in English due to the lack of response, which the *techa* had refused to do. This first-hand observation illustrates Maria's comment. Though the *techas* do comply with family requests, all had reservations, "Eighty to ninety percent are in English. It's a shame because I think our language needs to be perpetuated as much as it can,"<sup>104</sup> stated *techa* Joshua Paulino. The importance of language and the stakes involved in using English or Chamorro during a rosary are high. To preserve Chamorro culture or increase the number of prayers for a loved one's soul? These are the questions that do not have easy answers, and for *techas* in Guam in particular, it puts them in a hard position as a prayer leader and symbol of Chamorro culture.

But this does not mean that the *techas* I interviewed do not serve as advocates for the Chamorro language. When asked to say the rosary in English, Malia makes an effort to ask the family if they are sure that is what they want. Maria Rivera offers the prayers in Chamorro on sheets of paper so that those who do not know can follow along. And Joshua offers to alternate the nine days between Chamorro and English. These *techas*, and the *techa* who refused to switch to English, are strong cultural and community leaders, who directly or indirectly resist the current dominance of the English language in Chamorro spaces. They serve as symbols of Chamorro culture's resilience in the midst of drastic changes, which provides hope for the future.

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<sup>104</sup> Joshua Paulino, interview conducted by the author, Tumon, Guam, February 20, 2014.

Resistance by *techas* to changing tradition is another component of the interviews I conducted in Guam. In 2002, Pope John Paul II introduced a new set of mysteries for those praying the rosary prayer and named the year 2002 as “The year of the Rosary.”<sup>105</sup> A year later in response the archdiocese of Agana established an “acceptable format” of the rosary to be used in the church.<sup>106</sup> The article, “The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community” it describes the role of the *techa* as a non-ordained position as a representative of the church, who is made “official” “when she is acknowledged by her pastor to assist in leading prayer.”<sup>107</sup> These guidelines positioned the Catholic church as the form of legitimization as a means of gaining control over how *techas* performed their roles, making them subject to how it wanted the rosary to be prayed. There is also a tone of gender association in this article, noting *techas* as “she” though the term “techa” is a unisex term. As the organized Catholic Church is run by priests, always men, these changes in 2003 feminized the role of *techas* as needing to gain their validation and authority over the community through “her pastor.” This goes against the *techa*’s authority and image as they have always worked directly with the community, and men have always been *techas* along with women. The article notes the deep tradition of passing prayers down orally:

For many years, devotional prayers for the Chamorros were taught orally and later recorded in a prayer book, *Debosionario*, prepared by Pale Roman Maria de Bera, OFM Capuchin in the 1930s. This book is a collection of Chamorro translations of Spanish and Latin prayers. It was an important resource that helped our native people through the throes of World War II. Since the 1960’s the Catholic Church has undergone liturgical

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<sup>105</sup> "Pope changes rosary on 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary in office," *Pacific Daily News* [Guam], October 18, 2002.

<sup>106</sup> Thavis, John. "The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community," *Pacific Daily News* [Guam], September 07, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> "The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community," p.1.

reforms that have caused all of its members to make necessary adjustments for change.

Today, the Archdiocese of Agana is preparing guidelines that will assist the faithful in their life of prayer and worship together.<sup>108</sup>

Prior to the 1960s these rosary prayers were taught orally for decades. Only in the past forty years have there been major reforms to the prayer practices. The “guidelines” stated that *techas* could no longer pray additional prayers or “commercials” as they were called.<sup>109</sup> These additional prayers are included in how *techas* traditionally said the *lisåyo*. Which prayers were used in addition to the standard rosary prayer was passed down between generations, often times including prayers for family saints. The *techas* I interviewed said that though these changes were formally implemented in 2003, today some *techas* do observe the shortened version, while others choose to pray the rosary at their homes in order to maintain control. Maria Rivera noted that one *techa* still said the traditional rosary in the church, to no objection from even the priest. She noted that she did stop saying some prayers, yet kept a couple she personally felt were important.<sup>110</sup> These examples of resisting changes to the rosary and the church’s inability to enforce these guidelines attest to *techas* as very much still holding power in how the rosary is prayed. As my interviews with individuals in Guam echo Keith’s comments back in California, Chamorro language perpetuation and preservation are tied to that of the rosary practice’s.

Another aspect in which the rosary has changed in Guam is its location. Traditionally the rosary was prayed in the home, with the body in an overnight vigil. While the bodies were later sent to the mortuary immediately after death in a hospital, the *lisåyo* was still done in the home.<sup>111</sup> However recently it has become very common, almost standard, to hold the rosary in

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<sup>108</sup> “The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community,” p.3.

<sup>109</sup> Dominica, interview conducted by the author, Mangilao, Guam, February 11, 2014.

<sup>110</sup> Maria Rivera, interview conducted by the author, Talofoto, Guam, February 15, 2014.

<sup>111</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

the church out of convenience. Joshua noted this change because many families and people are very busy and find driving to a church and leaving immediately after are easier to do.<sup>112</sup> As a consequence the church began grouping rosaries together in its guidelines:

It is also the desire of the Church that where two or more members of the parish community have died, the entire community will pray the rosary together for these members, rather than having multiple rosaries on a given night at the Church. Most rosaries are scheduled before or after the parish evening Mass Sharing one rosary will give mourners the opportunity to offer support to the families and to pray for one another. Multiple rosaries however complicate scheduling particularly when Mass is the central prayer and the rosary for a loved one is scheduled an hour later due to a previously scheduled rosary.<sup>113</sup>

Joshua Paulino commented on his experiences with doing group rosaries, finding them a bit confusing, and much less intimate than having them in the home. He also mentioned that, because it is in a public space, often times with other families that are not known personally, a majority of rosary participants leave immediately afterward.<sup>114</sup> This shift to having rosaries in the church and with multiple families seems to break, in part, the cultural/ social space which it creates. Whereas family members are only briefly seen for the rosary in the church and leave immediately, within the home family and friends tend to linger a bit longer, allowed to spend time together. Father Eric Forbes noted that because so many Chamorros choose to have their rosaries in the church, the need for grouping them together came about. Also, as churches must stay open longer their power bills have also gone up, causing them to start charging fees to pay

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<sup>112</sup> Joshua, interview conducted by the author, Tumon, Guam, March 20, 2014.

<sup>113</sup> "The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community," p.3.

<sup>114</sup> Joshua, interview conducted by the author, Tumon, Guam, March 20, 2014.

these added costs. He encourages families to return to having rosaries in the home as not only does it help to console those in mourning to share time with family, but also takes pressure off of churches to schedule and pay for these rosaries.<sup>115</sup> Looking at both California and Guam, changes are being made in both areas to accommodate a busier lifestyle.

Just as much as many reinvent ways of continuing the rosary practice, still many younger Chamorros choose not to have a rosary at all. Father Eric feels that more education on the rosary and what it represents is needed: “Many know they should have it, but do not know why. Many are willing to forego having one, but do not know what they miss.”<sup>116</sup> As many younger Chamorros lose the true meaning behind doing a rosary, often times the amount of work which it requires no longer seems warranted. One cannot help but wonder if this hints at the slow loosening of Catholicism’s hold on Chamorro culture in Guam. These trends are occurring, and much more rapidly among young Chamorros in California.

Despite participation in and acknowledgment of the significance of rosaries, many of the participants I interviewed in California did not consider themselves devout Catholics. Instead, they viewed themselves as “spiritual people,” or only acknowledged certain aspects of the Catholic religion. A majority of the individuals interviewed were college educated with some form of higher education degree. All of the interviewees were culturally aware of and to varying degrees knew a great deal about Chamorro culture and practice; because of this, they knew the complicated and devastating history of the Mariana Islands in relation to colonization. Many of the participants expressed internal conflicts regarding certain issues, especially the U.S. military and Catholicism. When asked about their relationship to religion, many acknowledged that it had

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<sup>115</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.



a huge part in their upbringing, but said that as adults they are not as involved with the Catholic religion. For example, Joey discussed the role of religion in his life now, “Am I the most religious person? No. Am I spiritual? Yes. I was raised Catholic and believe in certain aspects of Catholicism.”<sup>117</sup> Regarding religion, Joey remembered that rosaries performed in the house were the experiences that he considered important: “A lot of my faith-based experience was...Did I go to Church? Yes. Every Sunday? No. But we held novenas in [the] home, in [the Chamorro] language. So did that play a part in who I am today? Yeah, I think so.”<sup>118</sup> As Joey’s comment suggests, the ways in which second-generation Chamorros actually experience the Catholic religion is not always through the organized Catholic Church itself, but often through more intimate settings in the community. It is within this community that multiple aspects of Chamorro culture, such as language, are often presented and taught.

Therefore, the importance of rosaries does not necessarily reside in the Catholic faith for many second-generation Chamorros in California, but rather in the space it creates within the community. This serves as a rare opportunity for second-generation Chamorros to confront, acknowledge, and/or reaffirm their Chamorro identity. For many of the participants, their first experiences of speaking the Chamorro language occurred within the intimate setting of the rosary. Joey reflected:

But for me growing up I really appreciate looking back, I really appreciate being forced to sing novenas songs in Chamorro, being forced to... or not being forced but having the opportunity to hear a rosary done in Chamorro and now these kids now a days won’t have

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<sup>117</sup> Joey, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, Nov 10, 2012.

<sup>118</sup> Joey, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, Nov 10, 2012.

that opportunity. So there's a loss there, and they are missing out on a beautiful part of the culture that they probably will never get a chance to experience. It's sad.<sup>119</sup>

Jesi also commented on her first Chamorro words having come from participating in so many rosaries growing up. She mentioned, "The rosaries I grew up in were in English. There would be a few lines in Chamorro but the *nobenas* were primarily in English. The songs were mostly in Chamorro. The first Chamorro song I learned (and still know) is from *nobenas*. Most of the Chamorro spoken was in the conversations before and after praying." As both Joey and Jesi's experiences show, the rosary can and often does serve as an informal opportunity for younger generations of Chamorros to learn and practice speaking the Chamorro language.

While there is socializing and performing of cultural identity during a rosary, the main intention is always to commemorate the family member who has passed away. As Monique reflects,

The biggest thing that happens is everyone pays their respect. Now that can mean anything from simply showing your face, bringing some food or giving *chenchule'*. But over all you do whatever you are capable in order to support the immediate family of the loved one. I have also observed other beautiful things. Some family drama or ancient grudges that once kept people from keeping in contact with the recently departed are put aside. However, I have also witnessed regret – a lot of regret. Some people who have held their grudges with the recently departed regret not visiting them, or not forgetting them sooner, and wish they would have forgiven them sooner.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Keith, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, Nov 18, 2012.

<sup>120</sup> Monique, follow up interview questions, October 19, 2013.

As Monique describes, rosaries can be a site of familial solidarity as well as tensions. With the passing of a loved one, their families are reminded of their kinship ties, and in Monique's family, this may bring about feelings of regret over family disagreements. As she states, "Rosaries are kind of like a reality check for me that any one of my loved ones could be taken at any time. Scary, but reality."<sup>121</sup> Thus, as Monique expresses, for many second-generation Chamorros, rosaries are a rupture in everyday life that reinforces Chamorro cultural values, such as the importance of family.

Ancestor worship has long ties to Chamorro culture; in fact many scholars agree that ancient Chamorros did not have an organized religion involving deity worship, but rather looked to their ancestors as the source of spiritual power. The substantial amount of financial, physical, and emotional strain of producing a rosary for a deceased loved one shows the importance Chamorros place on their family, even in death. Historian Genevieve Cabrera argues that many of the images of Chamorro petroglyphs and pictographs were of ancestors whom Chamorros not only revered but cared for, even in death.<sup>122</sup> Chamorros have adapted to waves of colonial influence through the absorption and adaptation of introduced practices such as Catholicism. The result is what Vicente Diaz calls the oxymoron of the "thick veneer," where transculturalisms such as Chamorro Catholicism yield no clear distinction or separation between what is or is not Native.<sup>123</sup> One might argue that the Catholic Rosary Prayer is strictly an introduced, Catholic religious practice. However, when discussing with Chamorros themselves how the rosary is actually experienced, we begin to see that the key themes that are identified have much to do

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<sup>121</sup> Monique, follow up interview questions, October 19, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Cabrera, Genevieve "Conversations with I Man-Aniti: Interpretation of Discoveries of the Rock Art in the Northern Mariana Islands." *Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*. 5:1 (2006): 42-52.

<sup>123</sup> Diaz, 27.

with supporting kinship ties of the living and the dead as well as performing cultural identity. This is confirmed in interviewees' comments that although they grew up Catholic, they themselves do not identify Catholicism as their religious dogma. Therefore, if a rosary's importance is not limited praying for the soul of the deceased, other themes which resurface time and time again in my interviews speak to something else, as Diaz argues "the native".

The rosary also serves as a way for second-generation Chamorros within the diaspora to get in contact with their cultural roots. According to Robert Orsi, religious events have served as a medium for reaffirming and passing on cultural knowledge for Italian Americans.<sup>124</sup> Not all Chamorros grow up as Catholics in Chamorro-only households. Some participants who are mixed race or whose families were not practicing Catholics had their own distinct memories. Alfred recounted that his first experience of a rosary was for his father when he was very young. Although his mother was not Chamorro, she also participated in her husband's rosary. For Taylor who grew up within a Chamorro family but whose immediate family are not practicing Catholics, her experiences with rosaries were limited to her extended family when she was very young. When asked about their memories, both Alfred and Taylor recounted that besides eating food and meeting family members, they remember the discomfort of kneeling down during prayer for what felt like long periods of time. These memories acknowledge their participation in the prayer. Thus, they became socialized into what would be considered proper behavior and, in this case, painful behavior during prayer. Robert Orsi also states that religious events and more specifically death can be moments where the community reaffirms social and cultural relationship in the midst of the loss of a family member, especially a matriarch or patriarch who

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<sup>124</sup>Orsi, Robert. *The Madonna of 115th Street faith and community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.170. Print.

could represent tradition.<sup>125</sup> Indeed the “theology” of a people, as Orsi contends, can be seen in action, and for Chamorros the rosary is a specific space where Chamorro culture is performed or acted out. Certain behaviors and traditions are transmitted which in normal day-to-day activity are not practiced. Though the rosary itself is a Catholic ritual introduced by Spanish Jesuit priests, the practice of commemorating death anniversaries and honoring the dead has indigenous roots as well; and for second-generation Chamorros, behaviors learned during the rosary are often their only exposure to native customs from the Marianas.

Women have been seen as moral compasses and models of culturally accepted behavior. Historian Valerie Matsumoto in a section of her article “Desperately Seeking “Deirdre”: Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s” discusses how female columnists such as Deirdre addressed moral issues such as interracial relationships and gender which reflect concerns at the time.<sup>126</sup> In providing guidance, Chamorro women often play central roles within religious rituals and the socialization of their Chamorro children.<sup>127</sup> Robert Orsi similarly emphasizes the central role of women not only within the Italian American *fiesta* of the Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street but also within the community as a whole. Overall, Italian American women held significant power within the home and maintained cultural norms known as the *domus*.<sup>128</sup> In the interviews Orsi conducted, participants talked extensively about their mothers, yet said little about their fathers.<sup>129</sup> In my own interviews, the presence of strong women was also apparent. Keith, for example discussed extensively his close relationship with his mother:

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<sup>125</sup> Orsi, 101.

<sup>126</sup> Matsumoto, Valerie. “Desperately Seeking “Deirdre”: Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 12:1 (1991), 24-25. Print.

<sup>127</sup> Souder-Jaffery, *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam 2ed.* Lanham: University Press of America. 1992. 58-61 and 68-69. Print.

<sup>128</sup> Orsi, 75.

<sup>129</sup> Orsi, 132-133.

But my mom raised us up, where it's like, make sure you take care of your mom you know, like the mom is the...like the ancient ways what we call *magahaga* right? ...the women are the matriarch, the matriarchal society of the Chamorros, you know, the women are like the queens. And my mom raised us up to make sure we respect all the women. You know what I mean? I learned a lot, more so from my mom. My grandmothers from both sides they taught me a lot ... my mom and my grandmothers really taught me how to really respect the women...and they even taught me how to cook! Haha so you know, that was a great thing...My mom taught me a lot about cleaning and all those things, you know, how to clean the house, wash, everything. So you know, some I learned on my own, but my mom had a lot to do with my upbringing, so yeah. That's one thing that I love about her.<sup>130</sup>

Keith acknowledged the significant impact of women in his life, including their specific roles as teachers.

Just as Keith learned many practical skills from his mother, Joey acknowledged his mother's role in creating the *Kurrutan Chamorro Foundation* to teach Chamorro dance and culture to younger generations in the Long Beach area. When I asked if he was the current director of the organization he was quick to correct me that his wife is the one in charge, "Actually, no. Actually she [his wife] runs it. And she is the director and the brainchild and the final word in terms of the direction of the organization and my job as her husband as a volunteer in the organization is to see her goals for the organization are carried out."<sup>131</sup> This image of powerful elder women being the primary agents of the community's and their family's cultural

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<sup>130</sup> Keith, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, Nov 18, 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Joey, interview conducted by the author, Long Beach, California, November 10, 2012.

education is also presented by Jesi who gained her initial introduction to Chamorro culture from the grandmother who lived with her. With great admiration she depicted her grandmother as strong and active in community organizations. Jesi mentioned how living with her grandmother gave her the opportunity to eat Chamorro food and listen to the Chamorro language. Her grandmother strongly influenced her to become involved with the Chamorro community in San Diego, California. Taylor also talked about the significance of her relationship with her mother, “I have a great relationship with my mother. She is my hero and I’m so thankful for her every day.”<sup>132</sup>

Women in the diasporic Chamorro community dominate many cultural and educational spaces. Sitting down with Auntie Perci at the *Guam Communications Network* office you cannot help but be aware of the years of experience she has had with non-profit organizations. Working for *Guam Communications Network* and founding her own organization *Cal-Islanders Humanitarian Association* Auntie Perci is an example of the many “aunties” who run several of the Chamorro non-profits in Southern California. Laura Marie Torres-Souder also discusses the large roles that women on Guam have played in organizing. Arguing that Chamorro women have pre-existing networks through their experience in maintaining familial ties and obligations, these same networks form the basis for assistance for other political issues, such as women’s rights.<sup>133</sup>

This pattern of strong, powerful women is also seen in Chamorro prehistory. Ancient Chamorro society was matrilineal, meaning that land was often passed through the mother’s genealogy, not the father’s. Early Spanish accounts portray the strong role of women, as one account describes: “In the home it is the mother who rules, and her husband does not dare an

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<sup>132</sup> Taylor, follow up interview questions, May 21, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Souder, 220-222.

order contrary to her wishes, nor punish the children, for she will turn upon him and beat him.”<sup>134</sup> This image of female power continues even in the diaspora as older Chamorro women dominate the communities’ activities. Rosaries in particular have a gendered tone as women primarily are the cooks and prayer leaders. Further, the prayer is not only to God, but to the divine mother of God, Mary. Robert Orsi also discusses this prominent role which women undertook: “Married women were the guardians of traditional mores in Italian Harlem. If a person wanted to know what the appropriate forms of behavior were in a particular situation, he or she would not go to the old men sitting in front of their regional clubs in East Harlem, but to old women, grandmothers and *comari*, revered in the neighborhoods.” As my own interviewees attest, a large part of their Chamorro cultural knowledge came from their mothers and grandmothers. Jesi, for example, remembered:

My earliest memories of the *nobenas* are from around the age of 5. I can recall picking which rosary I wanted to use for the *nobena*. I remember getting nervous when my cousins and I would have to say a decade of the rosary. I also remember how fast our *techa* would say the prayers and how all I wanted to do was eat the food that was waiting for us in the kitchen.<sup>135</sup>

Jesi’s memories of helping to lead the rosary under the tutelage of the *techa* show that Jesi, like me, acculturated into the role that women play as prayer leaders from a young age, and that this occurred during a rosary event. These experiences mirror what Souder argues in that Chamorro women are charged with children’s socialization, which for daughters in particular means observing and helping their mothers as a means of learning cultural traditions. Souder mentions

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<sup>134</sup> Rogers, 33.

<sup>135</sup> Jesi, emailed follow up interview questions, May 24, 2013.



in particular how girls assisted in leading prayer (roles of the *techa*), taught the importance of familial obligations, and performed housework. As she argues, “As apprentices from an early age, young girls learned to care for siblings and take greater responsibilities for managing family affairs as they grew older.”<sup>136</sup> As both Souder and Dominica’s research discuss, women’s play large cultural roles within Chamorro society.

The role of the *techa* is another example where many Chamorro women show power and authority; however, this role is not gender exclusive. In Guam *techas* are called upon not just for death rosaries, but also for *nobenas* which are rosary prayers said for liturgical holidays or for specific saints. Many families also have what are called *promesas* or “promises” which are pacts that they make to a specific saint for assistance. If the saint intervenes and answers their prayer, the family will annually offer a rosary to that saint. These *promesas* are not only continued annually, but are also inherited by children as an obligation. Often times families have multiple *promesas* which they must keep through *nobenas*. While staying in Guam for three months, I observed there was a *nobena* or *lisåyo* every day; *techas* are designated by each Catholic Church and could be located by calling the parish office. Hence *techas* play a large role within the lives of Chamorros on Guam, providing a needed service for many families. This need for *techas* and their services is what establishes their power as an integral part of Chamorro culture. Though many women do hold this powerful position, men can also be *techas*. All of the individuals I interviewed in Guam knew of male *techas* both historically and currently. Maria Rivera mentioned that both her father and uncle were *techas* and that she knew of several male *techas* today.<sup>137</sup> Looking at why women in particular tend to account for the majority of *techas*, her

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<sup>136</sup> Souder, 58-59.

<sup>137</sup> Maria Rivera, interview conducted by the author, Talofoto, Guam, February 15, 2014.

mother Maria Tenorio commented that women were usually restricted to the home and church and therefore gravitated towards roles within the Catholic faith, unlike men who usually were out working and did not have the time. She also mentioned that men often times do not find interest in the *techa* role.<sup>138</sup>

It is difficult to pin point when the role of the *techa* became feminized, but it may be in part due to what Maria Tenorio mentions about men's lack of time to perform the role due to their wage jobs. As a result, a majority of the *techas* were women who had the time and were able to access their local churches which were relatively close to their homes. This coupled with the commodification of coffin building and slaughtering of animals further diminished men's visible roles within the home and as part of the community. As a result, the home sphere and traditions located in the home such as the rosary became feminized, and began to be perceived as run by women. It would be unwise to assert that Chamorro women naturally become *techas* for this ignores a long history of writing out Chamorro male agency. The assumption also does not acknowledge larger socio-economic forces from Spanish and American colonialism in Guam which perpetuated a rigid barrier between genders which contradicted traditional Chamorro concepts of gender as shown by the non-gender-specific role of the *techa*.

Another possibility for the feminization of the *techa* role might come from the term itself. An article mentioned earlier, "The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community," refers to the *techa* as female: "when she is acknowledged by her pastor to assist in leading prayer."<sup>139</sup> Addressing *techas* as "she" speaks to the immediate gender association of the term. As many *techas* I interviewed in Guam were quick to correct, "techa" refers to a prayer leader regardless

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<sup>138</sup> Maria Tenorio, interview conducted by the author, Talofoto, Guam, February 15, 2014.

<sup>139</sup> "The Techa: Leading Prayers of the Parish Community," p.1.

of gender and there is no such term as “techo” for a male *techa* as some misinformed Chamorros have apparently been addressing male *techas* in Guam. Since the modern day Chamorro language is heavily influenced by Spanish, this might explain the confusion. In Spanish, words referring to objects or people are either feminized by an “a” or masculinized by an “o”. That being said, part of the confusion can stem from the term “techa” ending with an “a” which under Spanish language rules would be feminized.

Regardless if any of these explanations address this immediate assumption about the term “techa”, this shift in interpretation does bring added insight into how traditional roles change and their meanings are re-negotiated in response to western cultural norms, both through American perceptions of the home as a women’s domain and strict binary gender associations in the Spanish language. In both cases the option of a liminal space for the *techa*, one assigned to neither gender, was not possible within this framework, thus forcing the term and how it is perceived to become feminized. As second-generation Chamorros in California may not know the history of the *techa* or the larger forces which have shaped these current perceptions of gender associations they very well may assume that the *techa* role is one assigned only to women. This assumption can again shift the traditional role of the *techa* from one of gender neutrality in Guam to gender assigned within the California diaspora.

Amongst *techas* I interviewed in Guam, many still mentioned their grandmothers and mothers as those who initially taught them. For Joshua, being close to his grandmother and accompanying her to *nobenas* and church functions resulted in his interest in becoming a *techa*.<sup>140</sup> Maria Tenorio also recollected her time listening and reading along with her

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<sup>140</sup> Joshua, interview conducted by the author, Tumon, Guam, March 20, 2014.

grandmother.<sup>141</sup> Though it cannot be said that men do not play a role as *techas*, it can be said that women figures did help encourage the *techas* I interviewed. And as prayer leaders, they each have shown their own wisdom in performing the role. Being a *techa* is an art, and knowing how to keep tempo and the prayer's organization make it a big task. Many times a "good" *techa* is seen as one who has a natural tempo, not too fast or too slow.<sup>142</sup> Maria Tenorio is a good example of the dedication needed for this art form as she proudly mentions that as a little girl she memorized the *nobena* books and currently can recite all their other prayers and sing all their songs from memory. This she says came in handy since after World War II there were no books left to read.<sup>143</sup> Indeed such an important task as assisting in the prayer for a deceased loved one takes much time and effort on a good *techa*'s part.

I argue that the prayer serves as a means of continuing to nurture the deceased in death through concern for their souls. After a family member passes, the family is left with the obligation, and often times desire, to care for their loved one through prayer. This concern and sacrifice of resources reflect an ideology which does not consider death an end to kinship. Rather, the rosary signifies a shift from physical nurturance to that of the spiritual. Women in particular hold a strong position within this shift as *techas*. For second-generation Chamorros like Jesi, rosaries provide the cultural context in which Chamorro women learn gendered kinship responsibilities.

## ***VI. Boka? Chamorro Sustenance of the Physical, Spiritual, and Cultural Kind***

*Boka?* In Chamorro the word *boka* means "to eat" and in Spanish *boca* means "mouth." In my experience, I was never asked *boka?* My aunts and Uncles said it to each other during

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<sup>141</sup> Maria Tenorio, interview conducted by the author, Talofoto, Guam, February 15, 2014.

<sup>142</sup> Dominica, interview conducted by the author, Mangilao, Guam, February 11, 2014.

<sup>143</sup> Maria Tenorio, interview conducted by the author, Talofoto, Guam, February 15, 2014.

visits. I, on the other hand, was always called by a different phrase, “Come and eat, girl!” But there is something comforting in the simplistic one word question: *Boka?* I always equated this one word with love, concern, and most of all, family. David Bell and Gill Valentine argue that food inhabits a liminal space, one between biology and culture, edible and inedible and crossing boundaries from outside to inside our bodies.<sup>144</sup> Literary scholar Meredith Abarca discusses the intimate relationship between food, love, and family in her article “Los Chilaquiles de mi ‘ama: The Language of Everyday Cooking.” Abarca emphasizes that food is not just a means of filling an empty stomach, it is a language. In particular, this language can serve different needs.<sup>145</sup> In reflecting on her own family, Abarca explores how cooking ethnic food can be a political act in that food embodies a culture counter to dominant society.<sup>146</sup> Also the act of offering food can be seen as an active assertion of one’s ethnic identity.<sup>147</sup> In both di Leonardo’s and my own interviews people mentioned food as a symbol of ethnic identity. Discussing the relationships between groups and food, scholars Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell argue:

Foodways bind individuals together, define the limits of the group’s outreach and identity, distinguish in-group from out-group, serve as a medium of inter-group communication, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for performance of group rituals.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Bell, David and Gill Valentine. *Consuming Geographies*. London: Routledge. (1997): 44. Print.

<sup>145</sup> Abarca, Meredith E. “Los Chilaquiles de mi ‘ama” The Language of Everyday Cooking.” *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*. Ed. Sherrie A. Inness. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. (2001):120. Print.

<sup>146</sup> Abarca, 122-123.

<sup>147</sup> Abarca, 127.

<sup>148</sup> Brown, Linda Keller and Kay Mussell. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*. Ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. (1984).5.Print.

Traditionally, refreshments were served after each rosary in the home, but they were light, consisting of coffee and desserts. This was in part due to the fact that rosaries were usually said later at night around 8pm, past dinner time.<sup>149</sup> However, after World War II, food became more accessible and refrigerators became more common place. Also as wage labor became more common place, rosaries began to occur earlier in the day around 5pm as people got off work, around the same time as dinner. Thus the light refreshments seen earlier soon grew into heavier main dishes to feed those who attended.<sup>150</sup> Today in Guam what types of refreshments vary by family, however it is still expected that on the ninth day of the public rosary that there will be a larger spread of heavier foods.<sup>151</sup>

For Chamorros living in Southern California, food is one of the ways that ethnic culture continues to be performed and communicated within the Chamorro diaspora. For second-generation Chamorros, food serves as one of the primary means of experiencing and expressing Chamorro culture. For many of the second-generation Chamorros, the sensory experiences of cooking, smelling, and tasting Chamorro food not only conjure up real memories with family and friends, but they also link the sensory to a physical place, a cultural process many second-generation Chamorros have never otherwise experienced. As Chamorros have come to settle across the United States, being able to cook Chamorro food is one of the few means of expressing Chamorro culture.

This importance placed on food is not limited to second-generation Chamorros. During my interview with Auntie Perci, she starts talking about food immediately. We discuss the types of dishes present at rosaries that she has seen both here in California and back on Guam. When I

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<sup>149</sup> Maila, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 13, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

<sup>151</sup> Father Eric, interview conducted by the author, Agana, Guam, February 28, 2014.

asked her why she decided to start with the food, she stated, “It’s the food! Because they know there is a lot of good food coming out.” Auntie Perci’s comment spoke to how important food is as an incentive to attend a rosary. While all of my participants remember going to a rosary at one time or another, Auntie Perci’s insights brought another dynamic to how many first-generation Chamorros have chosen not to continue the tradition due to the financial strain the rosary places on the family. She remembered that, when she was younger back on Guam rosaries were big events since families lived in nearby villages. Many different family members would bring a dish each night and menus were coordinated between the many women for each night.

However, Auntie Perci marks a shift as many first-generation Chamorros migrated to California. In the diaspora family circles became significantly smaller and rosaries became a burdensome practice to maintain. As a consequence, they became smaller, limited to immediate family, or even discontinued altogether. Ironically when I asked why many chose to discontinue the rosary practice, she explained that many first-generation Chamorros choose to not put on rosaries because of the burdens of cooking a large quantity of food. Besides this, many want to prevent future family obligations to family members who offer their assistance.

Indeed, food seems to hold an interesting position within the rosary in terms of being an incentive. As Auntie Perci expresses light heartedly, “We have to have food, if there is no food no one will show up!” Her insights emphasize that migration from the Mariana Islands transforms traditional Chamorro family structures. Within the diaspora, practices such as the rosary which rely heavily on extended family can become burdensome for some families. However, just as the rosary may seem to be a quickly disappearing practice, Auntie Perci provides reassurance that rosaries are still done in the diaspora though they may not be as large as they are in Guam. She explains that the need to pray and care for family is still there. Rosaries

are seen in the diaspora as significant events which bring together family from all over the world to show emotional and financial support for the immediate family of the deceased.

Food plays a central role within the rosary. In fact, food is so important that besides the mention of the prayer itself, food is the most frequently mentioned aspect. During rosaries, like other large family events, women often “show off” their Chamorro cooking skills where they are sure to have a large audience. I have heard stories of rosaries that were identified and distinguished by the dishes that were prepared. A well done spectacle of Chamorro foods can bring prestige to its hosts. If one wants to question the sincerity of a family member’s commitment to kinship ties, often times they are discreetly accused of only attending for the food provided by immediate family. In *Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics*, anthropologist Niko Besnier looks at the intricacies and role of gossip as an intimate form of politics within the communities of Nukulaelae atoll, a part of the nation of Tuvalu. He argues that among the many other functions gossip serves on Nululaelae, it plays a large role in both the production and negotiation of social relationships.<sup>152</sup> For Chamorros, family events such as rosaries can be spaces to strengthen family ties, as much as they can be sites to monitor cultural conduct. Actions deemed inappropriate or failing expectations such as not helping the hosts or taking too much leftovers leaves one open to judgment and gossip.

For many of those I interviewed and from my own experiences, there is always anticipation of the Chamorro dishes that might await you at the end of the rosary prayer. The dishes present on the table vary throughout the nine days, depending on time, amount of assistance money, and also by who attends each night. Some common favorite Chamorro food

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<sup>152</sup> Besnier, Niko. *Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press (2009):163. Print.



include: “red rice”, barbequed meats, shrimp patties<sup>153</sup>, and *tinaktak*.<sup>154</sup> These foods require additional ingredients such as coconut milk and *achiote*<sup>155</sup> seeds as well as knowledge of how to cook Chamorro food. Besides these requirements, these foods are also more labor intensive. Rice in particular is a good example. To cook rice you can use a pot on the stove, an electric rice cooker, or even bake it as one of my aunts does. But making Chamorro red rice rather than plain white rice adds extra steps. While white rice is usually prepared by washing rice and placing it with water in a rice cooker, Chamorro red rice requires a few more ingredients including green onions, and *achiote* seeds to dye the rice red. Many families, including mine, also chop bacon into small pieces and place it in the rice cooker as well. Red rice also requires occasional stirring to prevent the onions and bacon from settling to the bottom of the rice cooker pot. So, although the rice is still cooking in an electric rice cooker, it demands additional steps and attention to prepare. The presence of either white or red rice on a food table could say a few things indirectly about the family hosting the rosary. White rice, being easier, cheaper and less time-consuming to prepare could reflect that the family did not have the time, knowledge, or family to help. But the presence of white rice could also simply be a preference or circumstantial to that specific day of the rosary.

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<sup>153</sup> Shrimp patties consist of chopped shrimp and vegetables mixed into a pancake like batter with flour, garlic, black pepper, salt. They are fried in about 4-5 inches of oil, baking powder is added to make the patties fluffy as they rise to the top. I am told by my aunts that my great-grandmother used half a can of beer before baking power was very accessible-apparently she would always drink the other half. I have cooked both versions and they do have different consistencies and flavors since the beer makes the patties fluffier and gives them a slight alcoholic taste. The process of frying these patties is very time consuming as the cook must stand watch over the stove, pouring a spoonful of the batter and taking the finished ones out. They must also be turned to make sure they cook evenly.

<sup>154</sup> *Tinaktak*: finely chopped meat, usually chicken; cooked in coconut cream with tomatoes, lemon, onions, salt and pepper.

<sup>155</sup> *Achiote*: small red seeds from a shrub, it is originally from the American and introduced to Chamorro food. Despite its adoption, today Chamorro food is not complete without the flavor and color that the seed produced. When used in cooking, the seed gives a nutty and slightly bitter taste. It gives Chamorro red rice, a staple in Chamorro cooking, its signature color.

Besides traditional Chamorro foods, an array of American foods such as fried chicken, cold salads, and casseroles are also usually present.<sup>156</sup> Some of my interviewees mentioned the different types of food present at each rosary's table. For example, Jesi mentions that it is not uncommon to see other foods besides Chamorro dishes on the table.<sup>157</sup> Alfred commented that his father's rosary also included Korean food, reflecting Alfred's mixed Korean-Chamorro background. He said, "In addition to Chamorro dishes, you would also find *kimchi* and other kinds of Korean food present. I think that is because several of my Chamorro family members enjoyed my [Korean] mother's cooking."<sup>158</sup> As Alfred recounts in his early memories of his mother's Korean food, food can become a physical marker of the various individuals present at a rosary. These intricacies demonstrate how food offers an important lens through which to see cultural reproduction and hybridity, not only as Chamorros bring the practice outside of the Mariana Islands, but also as many Chamorros have married spouses of other ethnicities.

Just as Alfred's mother's participation had an effect on the types of food available at his father's rosary, women as the cooks can help to bridge not only kin of Chamorro descent but also family from other ethnicities. Many scholars have written on the role of food in reaffirming and extending ties within and beyond kinship ties. Robert Orsi describes how, for Italian Americans in Harlem, food played an important role in the reintegration of the Italian American community during the religious holiday of the *festa*.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, Susan Kalčik discusses the use of food

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<sup>156</sup> The Mariana Islands has had a long history of introduced cultural influences and food is no exception. The presence of "American" food like other American pop culture has been a presence due to the United States' political relationship with both the island of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. Items such as pizza, potato salad, and fried chicken are not uncommon both in the Mariana Islands and in the diaspora. In fact, cold salads and fried chicken have become beloved favorites expected at the food table.

<sup>157</sup> Jesi, emailed follow up questions, May 12, 2013.

<sup>158</sup> Alfred, emailed follow up questions, May 12, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> Robert Orsi, 172-173.

to help reestablish familial bonds. Kalčík argues that food serves both as a means of maintaining community cohesion as well as determining the relation of the individual to the larger society and other smaller groups.<sup>160</sup> As food maintains relationships within the community, its preparation and consumption become a means of performing identity. Kalčík points out this performance and symbolism: “The use or avoidance of certain foods becomes identified with a group and symbolic of it. Such symbolic foodways may strengthen the group’s internal ties or indicate out-group status.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, the rosary becomes a space where not only “being Chamorro” is remembered, but it is also performed through the giving of *chenchulé*, participating in the rosary prayer, and in the preparing and eating of Chamorro food. In doing so, value systems and cultural practices are perpetuated. This perpetuation becomes important as the loss of a loved one, like the passing of an older family member, can subconsciously signal the end of traditional values. As older generations of family can themselves embody the “past” or authentic culture, in physically losing these matriarchs and patriarchs, Orsi makes the connection that this equates to losing culture itself for the Italian-American community.

Robert Orsi also mentions this fear about maintaining values as older generations of Italian Americans passed on. However, he argues that times of mourning clarified social relations and the perpetuation of cultural values.<sup>162</sup> In particular, the preparation and consumption of traditional foods showed that the community would continue to uphold cultural values such as foodways. This juxtaposition of death and life along with physical and spiritual

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<sup>160</sup> Susan Kellick. “Symbol and Performance.” *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. (1984). 38. Print.

<sup>161</sup> Susan Kalčík, 47.

<sup>162</sup> Susan Kalčík, 49.

sustenance along with the intimacy of being located within the home embodies the tone with which many second-generation Chamorros experience the rosary of a deceased family member. As Kalčik states, “This eating ties the living together. The living eat to keep up their strength perhaps as a celebration of their living status. The group plays a part in making sure the living go on supporting life. Eating at such a time is a celebration of life in the face of death.”<sup>163</sup> This sentiment of celebration was also mentioned by Malia, “It’s all a part of the sharing, the commemoration and all that. When you come you serve something...it’s like a celebration.”<sup>164</sup> Just as the consumption of food helps to sustain the community and reaffirm cultural survival, it is also central to Chamorro culture both in knowledge of preparation and in symbolism. As a predominantly female domain Chamorro food places women in the role of cultural perpetuators.

## **VII: Conclusion**

The rosary brings together many aspects of Chamorro culture and values and serves as an important cultural area of study. For second-generation Chamorros living in southern California, often times attending a rosary is one of the few moments where certain aspects of the Chamorro culture are experienced and learned. In my interviews with five second-generation Chamorros and other Chamorros who migrated, the persistence of Chamorro values such as the strong priority of family is expressed in the form of *chenchule’* or *ika*. The rosary provides a site where other cultural components such as Catholicism and the Chamorro language are encountered by second-generation Chamorros. Food, as a form of assistance also plays a significant role in facilitating communion between family and friends. Instead of being sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church, these rosaries are performed outside of the church itself and instead are

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<sup>164</sup> Malia, interview conducted by author, February 13, 2014.

experienced within the Chamorro networks of family and friends. For Chamorros in Guam, the rosary seems to be one of the many events which make up their everyday life. Though it is much more ordinary in Guam than in the California diaspora, the *lisåyo* still holds a revered place in Chamorro tradition. Many Chamorros mentioned to me in Guam that a *lisåyo* is much more of an important event than a birthday or holiday--though there will always be more birthdays and holidays, deaths are final and require the extra effort to attend. The cultural significance for many Chamorros in Guam cannot be ignored as they express their concern about the loss of the use of the Chamorro language.

Though the rosary practice provides an important cultural space, that space is in transformation. Chamorros on Guam are concerned with the increasing shift from Chamorro as the primary language of the rosary to English. In response, many *techas* and concerned Chamorros continue to raise awareness that the Chamorro language should not be overlooked. At the same time the gender role perceptions are also undergoing changes. Many interviewees both in Guam and second-generation Chamorros in California mentioned elder women as having a central role as teachers, *techas*, and in facilitating rosary prayer and reception. Though there is no doubt that many women have taken on significant roles regarding the rosary practice, this current perception is distanced from traditional Chamorro roles regarding the *techa* and the labor required for the rosary. The role of the *techa* was not gender specific and both men and women participated, even today in Guam. Labor for the rosary was more evenly divided between genders, with men taking on important tasks such as coffin building and slaughtering animals. As socio-economic changes occurred in Guam and wage labor jobs became available, Chamorro men's roles began to recede from visibility. This is in part due to their lack of time as some *techas* I interviewed mentioned, as they were farther away from home. Another aspect is that as

services like coffin building and butchering became commodified, these jobs were then outsourced to businesses instead of men in the family as they were done in the past. This diminishing visibility of Chamorro male participation along with the growing assumptions about the role of the *techas* as a gender specific role for women have contributed to the rosary space becoming feminized.

As a changing practice its uncertain future presents many questions for the *lisåyo*'s perpetuation into the future. As Chamorros in Guam face continuing changes in how the rosary is practiced, many second-generation Chamorros I interviewed expressed doubts about transmitting the practice to their children. Though this can seem as a saddening forecast for Chamorro culture in the diaspora, it can also be seen as the continuation of Chamorros' innovativeness in recreating and perpetuating what it means to be Chamorro. This can come in the form of creating organizations which supplement the lack of familial support in Long Beach, California like Auntie Perci, or the grouping of rosaries within the church to combat overlapping schedules and utility bills in Guam as Father Eric mentions, or continuing to resist changes to tradition as Eddie Benevente demonstrates. Nonetheless, Chamorros today are continuing to reshape and negotiate cultural practices in order to fit their own needs. These changing lifestyles provide rich, as yet unstudied spaces for academic scholarship. Though I have presented a great deal of material, there is much left to be addressed. Though I looked at the rosary through a cultural lens, issues of class also have important implications, determining whether or not a family has the financial resources to perform the tasks needed for the rosary. Also, as Chamorros try to enter mainstream American culture, the rosary tradition which is both financially and temporally exhausting may seem unnecessary. These Chamorros may choose to alter or abandon rosary obligations. Though the future of the rosary practice seems unclear and research is still needed, it serves as an

engaging and informative lens into understanding how Chamorro culture in the diaspora is experienced, maintained, and transformed.

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