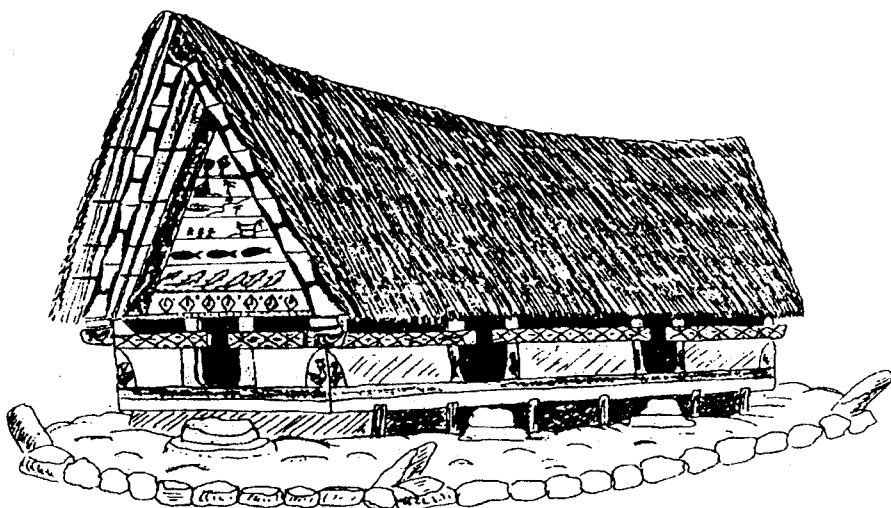


Traditional Leadership In Palau



**Division of Cultural Affairs
1998**

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP IN PALAU

by
The Palau Society of Historians

Division of Cultural Affairs
Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs
Koror, Republic of Palau

***Traditional and Customary
Practices English Series 3
1998***

THE SOCIETY OF HISTORIANS

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The cover illustration depicts a men's meeting house, or *bai*.

English translation by Julie Tellei, Palau Resource Institute. This translation reflects the words of the Historians as closely as possible, and is based on DeVerne Reed Smith's translation of Palau Ethnography, "Rechuodel: Traditional Culture and Lifeways Long Ago in Palau". The English translation was edited to improve readability without changing the meaning.

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Traditional Leadership in Palau

Introduction

The organization of leadership (*omerreder*) of each *beluu* in Palau is traditionally passed down through the *klobak* of the *beluu*. The *klobak* have traditional female counterparts (*kldorolir*) who are known as *rubak-el-dil* (*klobak el dil*). These *mechas*, or respected female elders, are also *ourrot* of their *klebliil*. The term *rubak* or *klobak* indicates that a person holds a title, whether male or female title (the term *rubak* is also used loosely to refer to an older male to show respect).

In each *beluu*, there exist traditional age graded male and female *cheldebechel* (clubs) which generally provide proper leadership and perform important community functions and work. These *cheldebechel* are headed by *ochell* or *ulechell* of the leading *kebliil* in the *beluu*.

The *klobak* of each *beluu* in Palau possess certain *kelulau*, or whispered policies, which are the basis on which they lead, manage, protect and preserve the *beluu*. These special skills are secretly and wisely guarded only or mostly by the leaders of the *beluu*.

***Kelulau*: The Whispered Policies**

Kelulau refers to important secret or sensitive political matters.¹ The legend of *Kelulau er Belau* is an unusual one. It tells how the *kelulau* of Palau was obtained from the snake of Angaur (*Bersoech er Ngeaur*). This legend is an illustration of how the *kelulau* came to be; it is not an explanation of its actual nature and function. The legendary derivation of the *kelulau* of Palau from a snake is

¹ *Kelulau* is "whisper" or "confidential and important *beluu* matters." Thus, the Palu Congress is termed the *Olbiil er a Kelulau*.

because a snake is long and has but one head and one tail. By comparison, the *kelulau* of Palau is well maintained and systematized from its head down to its tail in each *beluu* of Palau. *Kelulau* arranged and established the *kebekuul* and *teleuechel* titles, made them sacred, and empowered them as well. *Kelulau* installed them as the *klobak* of the various *beluu* of Palau and entrusted them with aspects of *kelulau* to enable them to preserve Palau.

Thus, the following traditional basic principles (*mekloululechel a kelulau*) were preserved, protected, and practiced by the people of old:

1. Respect and honor (*omengull ma omeluu*)
2. Praise or appreciation (*odanges*)
3. Compassion (*klechubechub*)
4. Cooperation and communication (*klaiuerenges*)
5. Good or right conduct/character (*kldung*)
6. Unity (*odekial a reng*)

The basic principles for establishing *kelulau* are followed by the leaders in each Palauan *beluu*. Yet, each *beluu* has its own *kelulau*. Having various *kelulau* does not mean they are in contradiction to the “mother of *kelulau*” (*delal a kelulau*) in whom all the various *kelulau* are preserved and protected. Variations arise in the leadership system within a particular *beluu* based on the requirements and use of *kelulau* within each *beluu*.

Kelulau Leadership (Kelulul a Omerredel)

Kelulau leadership consists of approximately seven types of *kelulau*. *Kelulau* is a profound set of basic principles or policies used for administering and unifying all affairs within a *beluu*. Techniques in the use of this knowledge are secret, held only by the leaders. The techniques are as follows:

1. Techniques of force and intimidation (*tuich el kelulau*)
2. Techniques of diplomacy (*meluus/chesuch el kelulau*)

3. Techniques of battle (*rasech el kelulau*)
4. Techniques of harmony (*ralm/moiuui el blaol el kelulau*)
5. Peace strategies (*chedeiaoch el kelulau*)
6. Techniques of deceit (*chemaidechedui el kelulau*)
7. Techniques relating to resources and the economy (*dudalm el kelulau*)

Tuich el kelulau: The meaning or purpose of *tuich el kelulau* is to force and intimidate the *beluu* and its people. In other words, this strategy is characterized by force, false accusation and intimidation (*Tuich* is torch).

Meluus el kelulau is a very secretive and mysterious strategy which is passed along and transacted between *beluu* and *klobak*. It is a fearful *kelulau* because it can lead to the seizure of a *beluu*'s land and murder or assassination. This type of *kelulau* also is characterized by envy and covetousness (*meluus* is to sew thatching or a hiding place).

Rasech el kelulau is a technique for war, fighting or conflict. These strategies are used to put one's own interests into effect (*rasech* is blood).

Ralm el kelulau is a very good strategy because everything in the *beluu* is harmoniously organized; the people, *rubak* and *rubekul* a *beluu* enjoy and appreciate one another with respect, resulting in a peaceful *beluu*. Other *beluu* improvements — such as business, trade and a good economy — can be developed in this atmosphere (*ralm* is water).

Chedeiaoch el kelulau is the *kelulau* of peace. The *beluu* always is at rest, and there is joy among the people. People rely on one another, and they exchange information on everything concerning their *beluu*. This *kelulau* does not include force, for people respect one another.

Chemaidechedui el kelulau is a dangerous *kelulau*. It involves purposeful deception. It breeds intentional scandal, and creates

morbid suspicion and deceit among the people. This *kelulau* breaks down cooperation and communication among the people and creates mistrust and disrespect resulting in disunity of the *beluu* as well as ruthless behavior.

Dudalm el kelulau is also one of the good *kelulau* for it contains knowledge and skills, along with the art of conservation. This strategy is not easily defined. The general purpose of this *kelulau* is for someone to obtain training from knowledgeable or skillful people by means of praise or to obtain knowledge, skills and abilities from such people by close maneuvering and observation. It is a well-guarded *kelulau*, not to be given out or granted easily (*dudalm* is a deepwater fish).

The above *kelulau* are known and utilized by the heads of the *beluu* and by the *rubak* who are in charge of the executive branch of *beluu* affairs.

Appointment of a Titleholder

There are ten or eleven titles in a *beluu*.² The four highest-ranking titles (*kebekuul*) and the lowest-ranking titles (*teleuechel*) of a *beluu* are the property of a *kebliil*.³ A *kebliil* has the full authority to appoint someone to bear its title *kebekuul* or *teleuechel*. When a title is vacated through death or other means, the *ourrot*⁴ who represent their *telungalek*⁵ gather to select the person to hold the title. Each *telungalek* is represented by *ourrot*, and a titleholder

2 *Beluu* refers to a place, hamlet, state or country.

3 Palauans gloss the term *kebliil* as clan. A clan is usually defined as a group that traces descent through real or fictive bloodties. A Palauan *kebliil* includes members who are there through means other than consanguinity. Therefore the term clan does not convey the full meaning of *kebliil*.

4 Traditionally, this category consisted of elder females who were members through matrilineal descent (*ochell*).

5 *Telungalek* is a polysemous word that refers to a descent-based unit or a residential unit. The meaning depends on the context in which it is used.

is selected from their candidates. However, those who have the greatest power to select are the "mothers" of the *telungalek* (*delal a telungalek*) or the *ourrot* of the *kebliil*. This decision is also based on observation and the knowledge that the *ourrot* have about the conduct and performance of each *oktemaol*⁶ of the *telungalek* in the *kebliil* on behalf of the *kebliil* and the public (*buai*). The wishes of the *rubak*⁷ also are considered. Assessment of the strength of the *telungalek* within the *kebliil* is another factor in selection. The *telungalek* that is most powerful—because of its contributions of *udoud*⁸ and work for the public and the *kebliil*—often has its *oktemaol* selected to take the title.

In fact, the title is the property of a *kebliil*. However, authority over its functions for the public and the *kebliil* is divided so that one-half of the title is held by the *kebliil* while the other half is held by the public. Thus, the *kebliil* confirms the appointment; it then gives the name of the person to the *klobak* (council of chiefs) for final approval. If the *klobak* do not approve, the *kebliil* again appoints another person. This process continues until the *klobak* approve the appointee. The *kebliil*'s selection can be changed at the request of the *rubak* (*rubekul a beluu*) of that *kebliil* for another *oktemaol* in whom they have trust. The *kebliil* also can ask the *rubak* for their approval of the proposed *oktemaol* if there are no more eligible candidates (*chad er a blai*, people of the household). When the *ourrot* gather for the selection of the one to become *rubak*, the female titleholders (*dui el dil*) of the *kebliil* head the

6 In the past the term referred to elders, generally the *ochell* members. Today the term is applied to adult male members.

7 *Rubak* refers to an adult male, a foreigner or a chief.

8 *Udoud er a Belau* refers to small bars and beads of glass and mineral that once functioned both as currency and as valuables. Today, use of these pieces is restricted to important exchanges; as such, they have been termed "valuables" by some writers to emphasize that the pieces no longer function as currency.

gathering. All things going out to the *klobak* of the *beluu* and from the *klobak* to the *kebliil* come through them. Through this method appointments first are given to the *ochell* members; if there are no eligible *ochell*⁹ candidates, appointments are given to *ulechell* members. Appointments may be given to *rrodel* (adopted)¹⁰ members.

In the past, when there were no eligible *ochell* candidates in the *blai*,¹¹ it actually was said that there were no eligible *ochell* in the *kebliil*. In that case, the *ourrot* selected one of the *ochell* members from one of the *kebliil* that was *kaukebliil*¹² to bear the title. None of the *ourrot* in any of the *telungalek* of the *kebliil* alone appoint the one to become *rubak*; none of the *ochell* can take the title independently if the *ourrot* of the *kebliil* have no knowledge of him. The female titleholder of the *kebliil* cannot appoint someone to be the *rubak* on her own. The procedures for this appointment are the same for a man or woman who will carry a *kebekuul* title or a lower-ranking title (*teleuechel*).

Some variations exist in this practice, depending on the *beluu* or the *kebliil*. However, these variations do not undermine the general principle of the process of appointment in Palau.

9 *Ochell* is best defined as "male or female children of a woman of the *blai*." *Ulechell* is defined here as "children of a male *ochell* of a *blai*."

10 There are several categories of adoption (*omerodel*) in Palau. Not all such transfers entail total surrender of parental jural rights to the child. *Omerodel* is adoption and *rrodel* is adopted child or "pot lifted from the fire."

11 *Blai* (house) refers to a social unit that may be a household, a *telungalek* or a *kebliil*. Concepts of relatedness or kinship are expressed by saying "we are just one house."

12 *Kau* denotes mutuality, reciprocity or relatedness. *Kaukebliil* thus refers to *kebliil* that are related to one another through some means.

Inauguration of a *Rubak*

Kebekuul

A *kebliil* gives an inaugural feast to honor its newly selected *rubak*. *Udoud* must be given as his "entrance" and "bridge" into the *blai*. On the same day, one of the *ourrot* (his sisters or the daughters on his mother's side) produces an *udoud* termed "entrance fee into the *bai*". Only the women of that *kebliil* who reside in the *beluu* conduct this collection and payment.¹³ If there are *ourrot* of the *blai* which the new *rubak* represents residing in other *beluu*, they are notified to attend the feast day to participate in the *tichiiu*. On this day, shark is included in the feast.

On another day, the *udoud* termed *kingall* (the "seat" in the *bai*) is shown to the *rubak*. This *udoud* is given by one of the *ourrot* or the new titleholder, or it may come from the *kebliil*'s own treasury. After this, the new *rubak* takes his seat amongst the *klobak*. From this point on, the *klobak* address him by his new title. To address him by his title means the new *rubak* has done all that is required by traditional procedures for the distinction of his *kebliil* and *klobak*. This constitutes the stingray feast.

Another feast follows the inaugural feasts, which is called *olbeluul* (the turtle feast of the *klobak*). Finally, the ripe seeds of the almond tree (*miich*), which have been fried in sweetened water and blended with coconut syrup (*ilaot er a lius*), are shaped into a large dugong (*mesekiu*). This is called the *debechel miich el mesekiu* (hereafter referred to as the "dugong *miich*"). Only the four-highest *rubak* (*saus*) have this dugong *miich* in their feasts. A smaller dugong *miich* is prepared for the *ourrot* to sample. The

¹³ A man's contribution to his brother-in-law is his *orau*. It is part of the marital obligation that exists between the two men through the wife/sister. His *orau* becomes part of the *tichiiu* payment, or the "entrance fee into the *bai*."

smaller one serves to ascertain that the large *miich* to be shared by the *rubak* in the *bai* is delicious. The large *miich* then is brought to the *bai* to be divided amongst the *klobak*.

The dugong *miich* for the four highest-ranking *rubak* is purchased in such a way that the value of the *udoud* used to pay for the *miich* for the fourth-ranking *rubak* is not greater than that of the third-ranking *rubak*. The value of the third-ranking *rubak*'s *udoud* is not greater than that of the second, and the second-ranking *rubak*'s *udoud* is not greater in value than that of the first-ranking *rubak*.

The shark (*chedeng*) is the "bridge" (*didil a rubak*) for the *rubak* to the *bai*. The stingray (*rrull*) is his "seat" in the *bai*, and the turtle (*uel*) is the "cleansing of hands". The dugong, shark, stingray and turtle are brought to the *bai* for the *klobak* to divide and eat during the inaugural feasts for any of the four highest-ranking *rubak* (*kebekuul*). These items are not simply food to consume but they symbolize the very characteristics of the *klobak*.

The shark symbolizes the qualities of fortitude, diligence, courage and skill and the ability to shoulder and handle great responsibilities or hardships for the *beluu*. The rayfish symbolizes strength, integrity, loyalty, honesty and faithfulness in any cause. The turtle symbolizes willingness, cooperation, kindness and unselfishness concerning financial assistance, personal property and any other things in the interests of the *beluu*.

Teleuechel (Titles 5 - 10/11)

A person selected to hold any of these titles does not include a shark, rayfish or the dugong *miich* in his ceremonial feast in the *bai*. The *ourrot* women of his *kebliil* collect *udoud* (*tichiiu*) which serves as his "entrance" or "admission" into the *bai*.

The *udoud* which acts as the "seat" and the "seat posts" in the *bai* is presented to the *klobak* for examination and as proof of that

person's eligibility to become a *rubak*. The size and value of each *rubak*'s *udoud* must be equivalent to the rank of his title. In other words, the highest-ranking *rubak*'s *udoud* is the greatest in value and so on down to the lowest.

Slight changes have been made in this traditional practice to fit the needs of the local *klobak*.

Messengers of the Traditional Council

If age or illness renders a member of the *kebekuul*, (the four *saus* of a council) unable to come to the *bai*, he communicates with the other members through messengers (*mad*). He would send messages with his messenger and receive messages through their messenger. Even so, the traditional councils in most villages in Palau have but two messengers for the *kebekuul*, mainly for the first and second title holders. Therefore, the messenger for the first titleholder is the messenger between the first and third titleholders; the messenger for the second titleholder fulfills that role between the second and fourth titleholders.¹⁴

Seclusion of *Rubak*

Seclusion of a title holder is a procedure required of new appointees to certain titles. Through this process the new title holder is briefed and taught all the proper behavior — the *kelulau* of the *blai*, *kebliil* and *beluu* — by his elders and key *kebliil* members. He is essentially fed and whispered to of all the important wisdom necessary for good leadership.

The *rubak* of Palau who go into seclusion are: Ibedul of Koror, Reklai of Melekeok and Ngirturong of Ngeremlengui. Each of these *rubak* also goes to a different traditionally-designated place in Palau to obtain his head-covering. The other *rubak* —namely,

¹⁴ See appendix for a list of the councils, their messengers and food servers.

Rekemesik of Ngetpang, Rengulbai of Aimeliik, Madernghebuked of Ngaraard, Uorechetei of Ngerchelong and Ngirarois of Chelab — also go into seclusion in their respective places. The latter *rubak* do not have head coverings. The head covering for Ibedul is to be taken from the Uchelkumer *blai* of Ngesias village in Peleliu. Reklai receives his head covering from Ngerdoko *blai* of Ngcheiangel. Ngirturong takes his head covering from Ngetchab *blai* of Ngerchol village in Peleliu; although an appointee to the title from a particular *telungalek* is not required to go to Peleliu. He is only secluded and presented in the village at the end of seclusion.

A new appointee of the Rekemesik title of Ngatpang is secluded for ninety days and cultivates a shrimp which is roasted and eaten by him at the end of his seclusion. He comes out of seclusion from his house in Ngatpang. Rengulbai of Aimeliik is secluded in Ngerkeai village for one hundred days and comes out of seclusion in the same village. Madernghebuked of Ngaraard goes into seclusion for one hundred days. On the hundredth day, Ibedul of Koror comes out to bring him out of seclusion at the *blai* of Tublai in Ngebuked. Uorechetei of Ngerchelong goes into seclusion in Ngerchelong for a hundred days as well. Ibedul of Koror goes out to the *blai* of Chetei to bring him out of seclusion. Ngirarois of Chelab goes into seclusion for a hundred days and Reklai of Melekeok goes to the *blai* of Rois in Chelab to bring him out of seclusion.

Status of the *Klobak*

All men bearing the top ten or eleven *kebliil* titles in a *beluu* represent the full body of that *beluu* in Palauan society. This group has all the power or authority to rule over the *beluu*. The legislative, executive and judicial branches of government are under their jurisdiction. In order to ensure proper governance, members of the *klobak* must not take part in any feast prepared and

brought to the *bai* of the *klobak* unless the sponsor has met the requirements of his *kebliil* and *klobak*.

Secondly, as explained in the preceding pages, the *klobak* fulfill their traditional responsibilities in the order of their title rankings. The first-ranking *rubak* is the first to give and to perform, and shoulders the greatest and the most difficult responsibilities. The second-ranking *rubak* follows; then the third, and on down the line of titles until the last one, who gives the least and performs the least. If a *rubak* with a lower-ranking title bypasses another *rubak* whose title ranks higher, he is punished by the other *rubak*. This practice of preserving and respecting this line of rank and authority not only is followed in inaugural feasts for the *klobak* but also in accommodating their visitors. The distribution of food goes from the highest *rubak* down to the lowest. It never is permissible for a lower-ranking *rubak* to precede a higher-ranking *rubak*.

Third, all *klobak* wait until the highest-ranking *rubak* removes the cover for his food; then all may begin to eat, and no *rubak* can finish eating until the highest-ranking *rubak* does. When the highest-ranking *rubak* finishes, all others must stop eating.

The *klobak* (*rubekul a beluu*) can attend the feast of any person or any feast held in the *bai* of the *beluu*, by request or by invitation, but they cannot execute their traditional authority over that feast.

The preparations for the inaugural feasts for *klobak* differ from *beluu* to *beluu*, depending on the various circumstances.

Fines or Punishment for a *Rubak*

Fines or Punishment for Kebekuul

Any one of the four highest-ranking *rubak* who violates a law of the *klobak* will be punished. The other three titleholders and the rest of the *klobak* meet to discuss the issue amongst themselves through traditional means. They then agree on the type of punishment suitable to the offense. The offender can be punished by expulsion from the *klobak* or the *beluu*, by paying Palauan *udoud* (*chelbucheb*, or one of lesser value) to the *klobak* and by any other means decided upon by the *klobak*. If any one of the four highest-ranking *rubak* violates a *beluu* or public law, he will be punished. Traditionally, a witness informs the fifth or seventh-ranking *rubak*, who serves as the messenger between the *klobak* and the guilty *rubak*. The guilty *rubak*'s penalty might be expulsion from the *klobak* and the *beluu*, impeachment or the payment of a fine (*chelbucheb*, or one of lesser value), depending upon the decision of the *klobak*.

Fines or Punishment for Teleucchel (Titles 5-10/11)

Any person bearing any of the lower-ranking titles who is classified as being under one of the four "cornerposts" (*saus*) titles will be punished if he violates a law of the *klobak*. He alone pays for his infraction, either by expulsion or by another penalty decided upon by the *klobak*.

A man holding any of the *teleuechel* titles who breaks a law of his *beluu* will be punished. His punishment is decided by the means described above.

Supporting Klobak (Tekaulobak)

Every *beluu* has supporting *rubak* and their numbers, the titles they bear and the names of the *klobak* differ from *beluu* to *beluu*.

They have authority because they come from the ten major *kebliil* in the *beluu*, and they also are well respected. Their titles are ranked from first to last.

The responsibilities of the supporting *rubak* are to assist the *klobak* in preserving and protecting the laws of the *beluu*. They also deliver, provide, direct and manage *beluu* projects and programs planned by the *klobak*. Through their traditional positions as titled persons (*chemachel*) in the major *kebliil* of the *beluu*, they hold leadership positions over the clubs, both within and without the *beluu*.

The full body of supporting *rubak* is the next closest minor *klobak* (*kekerei el klobak*) to the *kebekuul* and the *teleuechel* titles. They have their own *bai* where they hold meetings and feasts. Their seats in the *bai* are arranged and ranked in an order similar to the ranked seats of the *rubekul a beluu*. However, all plans they put into effect first must be approved by the *rubekul a beluu*. They are the ones who support each and every one of the *kebekuul* and the *teleuechel* titles in the execution of their responsibilities, obligations and work for their *kebliil* and *beluu*. They also can be messengers for the *klobak* in secret and significant missions between their *beluu* and other socially-related or nonrelated *beluu*. Small variations may exist in the practices of the supporting *rubak*, depending on the *beluu*.

Leadership Structure in Palau

Palau traditionally did not have a centralized government as it does today. Each *beluu* had its own leadership structure based on an organized traditional *klobak* council. Each village was essentially autonomous. Leadership, lawmaking and administration of community programs was done by the *rubekul ordomel*, the council of the head village of the *beluu*. Each self-governing *beluu* had *renged*, (satellite-villages or sub-villages) as well which in

turn had their own organized councils with functions and responsibilities limited to their jurisdictions. Decisions by the councils within a *beluu* or a *renged* were relayed to the *rubekul ordomel*. Although this arrangement was generally true of most *beluu* in Palau, there were *beluu* which did not have a head village hence no *rubekul ordomel* existed. In such cases, the first *rubak* of each *renged* within that *beluu* together made up a council which provided overall leadership for that community.

Bipartite Division of the Ten Major *Kebliil*

Bitang ma bital taoch (one-half of the channel and the other half of the channel) is a term that comes from Ngeburch. The division of the *klobak* is as follows: the first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth *rubak* comprise the first half-channel (*bital taoch*) while the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth *rubak* make up the other half (*bital taoch*). This division also is used in reference to the men's clubs (*cheldebechel el sechal*) and women's clubs (*cheldebechel el redil*) of the *beluu* and for the group of women who hold the major *kebliil* titles in a *beluu* (*klobak'l dil*). The *klobak* are divided into *bitang ma bital taoch* when purchasing or paying for their *bai*, when building a boathouse (*diangel*) and for any other traditional or political arrangement within the *beluu*. The top-ranking *rubak* heads one division while the second-ranking *rubak* heads the other division when they do their assigned duties. This dual system also is utilized by any club in purchasing their *bai* (*bai ra cheldebechel*). There were other miscellaneous functions but they are not in use today.

Leadership Based on *Kebliil*, *Telungalek* and *Ongalek*

Kebliil is composed of *telungalek* and *ongalek* (nuclear family). There are ten *kebliil* in each large and small *beluu* of Palau. These

kebliil are the basic components (*uchul a teketekel*) of a *beluu*, and they are numerically ranked from one to ten. A *kebliil* is responsible for selecting its representative to the *beluu* body of *klobak*, which is the government of the *beluu*. There are positions which each of the ten *kebliil* have that are called *kebekuul* and *teleuechel* titles. The power and authority of these titles is ranked from one to ten. Those selected from the ten *kebliil* are given their *kebliil* titles, and they hold responsibilities toward and roles within the public and the *beluu*. Their traditional powers are granted according to rank.

Status and Responsibilities of Male Titleholders

The responsibilities of the *kebekuul* and *teleuechel* titles are as follows:

Kebekuul

1. The first *rubak* is responsible to buy the *umad nglosech* (section of thatched roof on the right side near the front end — the *medal a bai*) section of the *bai*. He presides over *bai* meetings. He is responsible for peace and the economy as well as for maintaining the confidentiality of *kelulau* and *beluu udoud*. He must purchase a war canoe (*kabekel*) for the *beluu*'s defense. A major responsibility is to purchase a *kaeb* (sailing canoe), to be kept in the *diangel* (boathouse), which serves as a status symbol for the *kebliil*. He is the head of the half-*bai* (*bital bai*) when the *bai* is split. He is responsible for the *bital taoch* (half-channel) divisions. He gives and receives *udoud* as payments for *orellet a rael* (repairing internal relationships) and repairing relationships between *beluu* (*osumech beluu*). He pays for any damages for which the *beluu* is responsible. These include paying the debts of the *beluu*. He must discuss and decide the most confidential *kelulau* of the *beluu* with the second, third and fourth *rubak*.

2. The second *rubak* is next to the first in the responsibility to conduct and implement decisions and *kelulau* of the *beluu*. Like the first *rubak*, he is the head of the *bital bai* and is in charge of matters under his power and authority for the *beluu*. He is responsible to buy the *bai nglosech* which is the other side of the roof (*umad*) toward the back. He is assigned the same *nglosech* of a boat house. He fulfills the first *rubak*'s responsibilities when the first *rubak* is absent, whether due to death or another reason. The second *rubak* must purchase a war canoe for the *beluu*, and he must purchase a sailing canoe to be kept in the boat house for the prestige of his *kebliil*. He implements his duties with the first, third and fourth *rubak*, including planning and making decisions on the most confidential *kelulau* of the *beluu*.

3. The third *rubak* is responsible to purchase the end of the *umad* of the *butelbai* on the right side of the *bai*. His *nglosech* of the boat house is similar to the *nglosech* of the *bai*. The third *rubak* also must purchase a defensive war canoe (*kabekel*) to be owned by the *beluu*, as well as keep a sailing canoe (*kaeb*) in the boat house. He is next to the first *rubak* when the *bai splits* and for the half-channels (*bital taoch*). He decides the type and amount of fines and penalties. Along with the first, second and fourth *rubak*, he carries out his duties based on the secret *kelulau* of the *beluu*. He leads the clubs that are within his half-channel (*bital taoch*).

4. The fourth *rubak* is responsible to purchase the *umad* of the *butelbai* toward the back of the *bai* (*rebai ra bai*). He also is responsible to purchase a *nglosech* section at the canoe shed which is similar to his section in the *bai*. He purchases a war canoe and a sailing canoe similar to the first three *rubak*. He supervises the distribution of food for the *klobak* and the lighting of the *bai* lamp. He is next to the second *rubak* when the *bai* splits and creates the

half-channels of the *beluu*. He is the spokesman for the *klobak* in the public *bai* (*bai el beluu*). He manages and supervises the clubs of his half-channel. Along with the first, second and third *rubak*, he plans and implements the secret *kelulau* of the *beluu*.

Teleuechel (Titles 5-10)

5. The fifth *rubak* is responsible to buy the *ngot* (the frame and flooring on the foundation) and the *buadel* (main horizontal beam of the rooftop) of the *bai*. He is responsible to notify and announce to the public all information that comes from the *klobak* and to evaluate all incoming information and events and to notify the first *rubak* and the other three *rubak* of the truth of the matter. He supports and directs *beluu* projects. He must break the coconut frond sticks into pieces and place these sticks on the top surfaces of the *rubak* portions of the dugong *miich* or *uleld*. He is the only one who can bring his child into the *bai*.

6. The sixth *rubak* has *nglosech* of the *bai* only of a *chelid el nglosech* section of the thatching at the center of the roof. He must know the condition of the boat house, war canoes and any other types of water transport (*mlai ra daob*) of the *beluu*. He enforces all laws of the sea.

7. The seventh *rubak* is also responsible for a *chelid el nglosech* or *nglosech chelid* of the *bai*. This *rubak* oversees any visiting clubs from other *beluu*, and he places them either at the *bai beluu* or the *klobak bai*. He ascertains the duration of their stay, their contributions to the *beluu* as a *klechedaol*, and he so informs the first *rubak* and the other three *rubak*. He determines the number of days the *klechedaol* will stay, and he is notified of all program activities of the *klechedaol*.

8. The eighth *rubak* is responsible to pay for a *melai nglosech*

section of the *bai*. He must know the number of incoming groups or individuals from other *beluu* and ascertain the nature of their visit to see if it is a *klechedaol* or just a private visit, to see if they present any danger and to notify the first *rubak* and the other three *rubak* via the seventh *rubak*.

9. The ninth *rubak* is responsible to pay for one of the *melai nglosech* sections of the *bai*. He is the ears and eyes of the *klobak* for all events within the *beluu*.

10. The tenth *rubak* is responsible to pay for a *melai nglosech* section of the *bai*. He informs the first *rubak* and the other three *rubak* of the war plans and strategies of the other *beluu*. He does this via the seventh *rubak*.

The fifth down through the tenth *rubak*, *teleuechel* titles, have *nglosech* sections in the canoe house in accordance with their *nglosech* sections of the *bai*. Depending on the preservation of laws by the *klobak* of each *beluu*, slight differences may exist between the *beluu*.

Responsibilities of Female Titleholders

The *rubak'l dil* are similar in arrangement to the *klobak*, ranked from the first down to the tenth. They are called *klodorolir a rubak* (counterparts to the *klobak*). The female council of titleholders (*dui'l dil*) of each *beluu* has a name for its group.

A woman newly selected to hold a title has a feast given in her honor. Her feast does not include the "bridge" (shark), the "seat" (rayfish) or the "handwashing" (turtle). The expenses for her feast are taken care of only by the closest members of the *blai* (*ar ngalek ra blai*, "children of the house"). The feast is eaten by the other female titleholders in the *bai* of the *beluu* or at the inductee's *blai* or any other *blai* which has been designated for this purpose.

1. The highest ranking female titleholder comes from the highest-ranking *kebliil*, and she is the *kldorolel* of the first *rubak*. She heads the female council and keeps the treasury for the whole *beluu*. She maintains the confidential *kelulau* of her *kebliil*; she is responsible to teach or correct those male and female members of her *kebliil* who hold traditional titles. Her part in the economy of the *beluu* is to oversee production in the taro swamps, farms and gardens. As head of a half-channel (*bital taoch*) of the *beluu*, she functions to promote economic ventures for the *beluu*, as well as upholding the laws for the women of the *beluu*.

2. The second ranking female titleholder is the *kldorolel* of the second-ranking *rubak*. Her *kebliil* responsibilities are similar to those of the first female titleholder. She is the head of the *bital taoch* when the *beluu* splits. She also supports economic ventures, including assisting the first female titleholder to meet her responsibilities. She assumes the responsibilities of the first female titleholder when the latter is absent from the *beluu* for a long period.

3. The third-ranking female titleholder is the counterpart to the *rubak* of the third rank. She supports the first and second female titleholders in implementing decisions. She assumes the responsibilities of the second woman of rank in the event of the latter's prolonged absence from the *beluu*.

4. The forth-ranking female titleholder is the *kldorolel* of the fourth-ranking *rubak*. Her role is to help reinforce all decisions made by the *beluu* and those above her. She is the spokesperson when the council of female titleholders assembles. She assumes the responsibilities of the third-ranking female titleholder when the latter is absent.

5. The fifth to the tenth female titleholders guard and oversee laws involving women's affairs. They support all decisions and also assist the four "cornerpost" (*saus*) female titleholders within the *klobak'l dil*. There are only a few *beluu* in Palau that do not have any female *klobak'l dil*. The wives of the *rubak* act as their counterparts (*kldorolir*) but the *ochell ourrot* (through matrilineal descent) of these *kebliil* hold responsibilities over the affairs of the women in the *beluu*. Due to varying *kebliil* systems and laws of each *beluu*, the responsibilities of women differ from *beluu* to *beluu*.

Leadership Status by Birth

A person selected to bear the *kebliil*'s title should be *ochell* within that *kebliil*. This privilege also can be given to *ulechell* and *rrodel*; next are the *ultechakl* and the *terruaol* (non-kin members of the *kebliil*). Selection from the latter two categories is based on their good performance within both their *blai* and the men's clubs (*cheldebechel*). However, the highest status members of the *blai* are the *ochell*.

Another principal method of selecting a person for the title is as follows: if a *blai* has no eligible *ochell* members, the title is given to the *ochell* of another *kebliil* that is related to the major *kebliil*. This may occur before the privilege is given to children of *ulechell*, *rrodel* and *terruaol*.

Traditional Leadership in Sungesol

Traditionally Sungesol (Sonsorol) did not have a distinct head village in its village leadership structure. The villages were far apart from each other and each community developed its own traditional leadership structure and managed its own village ac-

cording to rules set forth by the leaders.

Leadership and administration of laws rests on the traditional council. In case of breaches of law, the first and second chiefs impose fines for such offenses. When a person is proven to be guilty of breaking any law or rule in the village, the first and second chiefs of the traditional council organize a village meeting. Then they send some of the strong young men to bring the canoe belonging to the offender to the elders at the meeting place. If the offender refuses to let the people take the canoe to the *bai*, the traditional council and their relatives move to the shore and identify and destroy the canoe belonging to the offender. Serious offenders and recidivists are banished by being forced onto their boats and cast adrift, never to return. Criminals may petition the traditional leaders to accept an apology as well as to receive a fine of lesser degree.

Appointment to a Title

High titles (*Tamor*) and lesser titles (*Pasa Nur/Tamor Sao*) are *kebliil* properties. The title holder is traditionally responsible to appoint a successor and such a move must take place before he dies. In the event the appointment was not made before his death, or for any incident which would require the appointment of a title holder, his sister or younger brother may appoint the successor. In cases where the title holder does not have a sister or brother, the next kin closest to him is charged with that duty.

In this sense then, the child of the title holder possesses the most influence and hence is likely to be the next title holder. Next to the children of the title holder are his sisters' children; then next in line are his younger brothers and their children. Adopted children whether they were *mlodars a keai*, *chelteklllel a chebechiil*, or *terrual* may achieve the title holder's position through good behavior, contributions and good citizenship.

Inauguration of the New Title Holder

The new appointee to become *tamol* must have a feast in the *bai*. One of his sisters is responsible for preparing the feast. In the event he does not have a sister, one of his closest relatives takes charge and prepares the feast.

Before the feast takes place, the new appointee prepares certain foods in the earth oven (*klum el kall*) and brings them to the highest ranking title holder of the village to inform him of his appointment. The foods are also offered as a request for a seat with the council. If the new appointee is for the first title, the food prepared for the same purposes are brought to the holder of the second title.

Thereafter, the full council meets in the *bai* where the new title holder again prepares foods in the earth oven and brings them and other items with him to the *bai*. These are essentially his entrance fees into the *bai* which will be distributed among the council members. The foods brought to the *bai* are only earth-oven cooked *ongraol* (carbohydrates), six pairs of unhusked coconuts and syrup. No *odoim* (protein) is included. The non-food items include a rope, one *thue* (loin cloth), one woven mat and one bunch of *suld*, which is shredded coconut husk for making coconut strings.

The new title holder prepares himself at home by covering his body with tumeric, putting on a new *thue*, and adorning his head with a floral headband (*ma'alé*). Once he enters the *bai*, the council members distribute the foods and the other items among themselves. Hereafter he is addressed by his title.

A new title holder of the first rank must prepare the same as that which has been described above. In addition, he must prepare a feast for all the people in the village including even the youngest baby. These activities demonstrate the glory (*klebkellir*) of the titleholders, which must be displayed before they are called by their titles.

Sonsorol does not have corresponding female council leaders. The wives of the title holders act as the matriarchs of the community and take charge of functions which relate to the affairs of the female population.

Appendix

The following are the traditional councils, their messengers and food servers or distributors for the various villages.

Ngiwal

Traditional Council: Ngaramaderrak

Messenger for Uong: Ngiruios

Messenger for Ngiraibai: Ngirbengchall

Food distributor/Server: Koibad

Chelab (Ngaraard)

Traditional Council: Ngarabailechelab

Messenger for Ngirarois: Ruauch

Messenger for Rdangraiterir: Odaol

Food distributor/Server: Esebeirekmei

Ngebuked (Ngaraard)

Traditional Council: Ngaruau

Messenger for Madrengabuked: Maderngesmos

Messenger for Kerai: Keraremiou

Food distributor/Server: Maderngesmos

Oreor

Traditional Council: Ngarameketii

Messenger for Ibedul: Derbai

Messenger for Ngiraikelau: Rmerang

Food distributor/Server: Rmerang

Ngardmau

Traditional Council: Ngaraurdmau

Messenger for Beouch re Kebai: Adelbai ra Reakl

Messenger for Beouch ra Ngedengoll: Adelbai ra Ngedengoll

Food distributor/Server: The two messengers

Ngerbelau (Ngeaur)

Traditional Council: Ngarngebiis

Messenger for Obak: Mad

Messenger for Adelbai: Mad

Ngermasech (Ngeaur)

Traditional Council: Ngaracheriud

Messenger for Uchelremasech: Mad

Messenger for Dib: Mad

Rois (Ngeaur)

Traditional Council: Ngarangcheed

Messenger for Uchelrekemul: Mad

Messenger for Uchelramedeb: Mad

Ngebeanged (Ngeaur)

Traditional Council: Ngarakesuk

Messenger for Ngeruchell: Mad

Messenger for Ongeim: Mad

Sungesol

Traditional Council: Tamor ni Dongosar

Messenger between the council and members of the public and food server: Longouau (no food server within the bai).

Puloana

Traditional Council: Tamor ni Pur

Messenger between the council and members of the public:

Fifth and sixth ranking chiefs

Food distributor/server: Sixth ranking chief

Ngchesar

Traditional Council: Ngaroldiang

Messenger for Ngirakebou: Mad ra Orrekong

Messenger for Rechesengel: Mad ra Idub

Messenger for Umiich: Mad ra Isngai

Messenger for Buk: Mad ra Skesuk

Food distributor/Server: The four messengers

Irrai

Traditional Council: Ngarairrai

Messenger in side the bai: Rurcherudel

Food distributor/Server: Rurcherudel

Melekeok

Traditional Council: Ngarabaimелекеонг

Messenger for Reklai: Madrengchar

Messenger for Rechebong: Madralmii

Messenger for Ruluked: Maderchulsiang

Messenger for Ngirkungiil: Kamedaol

Food distributor/Server: A member of Ngaruchob

Imeliik

Traditional Council: Ngarekeai

Messenger for Rengulbai: Bludes ma Rechirikl

Messenger for Rebes: Ngiraibelau

Food distributor/Server: The two messengers

Ngcheangel

Traditional Council: Ngarurou

Messenger for Rdechor: Adelbai ra Rikel

Messenger for Obakrusong: Adelbai ra Sebangiol

Ngeremlengui

Traditional Council: Ngaraimеонг

Messenger for Ngirturong: Dingilius ra Ngerturong

Messenger for Ngiraklang: Dingilius ra Klang

Food distributor/Server: Dingilius ra Klang

Ngatpang

Traditional Council: Ngaimis

Messenger for Rebelkuul: Mad ra Sikos

Messenger for Rekemesik: Mad Inglai

Food distributor/Server: The two messengers

Ngerchelong

Traditional Council: Ngaramengellang

Messenger for Uong: Adelbai ra Keong

Messenger for Adelbai: Information unavailable at publication

Food distributor/Server: Information unavailable at publication

Beliliou

Traditional Council: Ngarmululau

Messenger for Obak er Delolk: Mad ra Choleb

Messenger for Iderrech: Mad ra Chelilai

Food distributor/Server: The two messengers

Glossary

Bedul -- head (relating to head, nose, ears and eyes).

Buadel -- main horizontal rooftop beam of bai, house or diangel.

Butelbai -- toward the back of the bai (rebai ra bai), opposite of medal a bai.

Chelid el Nglosech -- section of thatching at centre of the roof.

Cheltekellet a Chebechiil -- refers to a child (male or female) in a family who was brought into the marriage by the wife or the husband and usually adopted into the family.

Chemachel -- titled persons in a village (usually ten in number).

Cheremelet -- a piece or small amount of food given to taste or to check the content or quality of the bigger portion prepared.

Chesmachel -- male in-law of family.

Kaudiais -- a state of a relationship where respect, adoration and basically omelengmes, that Palauan value of always thinking of the other person first, prevails.

Kebekuul -- the titles or status of the first four titles in the council of chiefs in a village.

Klum el Kall -- food cooked in an earth oven.

Melai Nglosech -- sections of thatching between ends and centre of roof.

Merengel -- a feast held for a person.

Metelil -- a person who shoulders leadership and responsibility; one who is an ochell of the blai.

Modeuades -- quiet peace.

Nglingil -- organization.

Omeluu -- humbleness, deep respect and thinking of others first.

Ouerrong -- to oppress and intimidate.

Ourrot -- an elder woman of the blai who has done important

and great deeds as well as having made numerous contributions to the kebliil.

Rubak el dil -- ourrot of the kebliil who holds one of the female titles.

Tamor (also tamol or tamoru) -- a Sungesol term for a person who holds a traditional male title. Tamor is used also to refer to a leader. In this case it may refer to a male or female leader in a group.

Tekaulobak -- the council of the lower and younger title holders one step below the kebekuul and teleuechel el dui, who come from the ranks of the ten large clans in a village.

Tichiiu -- udoud gathered by the ourrot of the kebliil, offered to the rubak who is the new title holder.

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