

# GOING TO THE METROPOLIS AND BUILDING LEADERSHIP IN THE HOMELAND: A CASE STUDY OF PALAU, MICRONESIA

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Palau is a small island society in Micronesia, which attained independence in 1994 after successive colonial rule by Germany (1899–1914), Japan (1914–1944), and America (1944–1994). This presentation examines how Palauans actively use their experience of going to the metropolis to build leadership in their homeland. Palau underwent two international population movements, one each in the colonial and postcolonial eras. The first movement started during Japanese rule, when a few Palauans traveled to Japan, while numerous Japanese immigrated to Palau. The other movement occurred during American rule, when many Palauans migrated to America and its territories, but very few Americans immigrated to Palau. In this presentation, I compare the Palauans' travel to Japan with their later emigration from Palau to America.

Under the Japanese administration, cultural tours to Japan were organized almost annually to instill favorable attitudes toward Japan among Micronesian leaders, especially the traditional chiefs and their families. The participants stayed in Japan for one or two weeks, visiting the Imperial Palace, factories, military facilities, entertainment districts, etc. According to the oral history of the Palauans, some chiefs were so impressed by the townscape of Tokyo that they reconstructed their villages to look like city streets after returning to Palau. Such accounts may demonstrate the chiefs' strategy to use their travel experience to enhance their leadership at home.

Under the American administration, ordinary and younger Palauans rather than the older chiefs had the opportunity to migrate to America and its territories for education and employment. The emigration from Palau grew considerably from the late 1960s onward. The Compact of Free Association between Palau and America, which came into effect in 1994, assures Palauan citizens free entry, residence, and employment in America and its territories. In 2000, it was estimated that over 6,000 Palauans lived in America and its territories, while 13,364 resided in their homeland. These overseas Palauans have formed a new elite, whose status may not be high in the traditional hierarchy, but who have returned home with competence in English, technical training, and professional degrees, all of which are useful for dealing with modern Palau. Some Palauans have also used the benefits of their migration experience to become chiefs in their homeland.

Through the discussion in this presentation, I develop a perspective on power at the extreme periphery: people constructing leadership by locating themselves in broader international situations.

**Keywords:** Palau, Cultural tours, Traditional chief, Migration, New elite