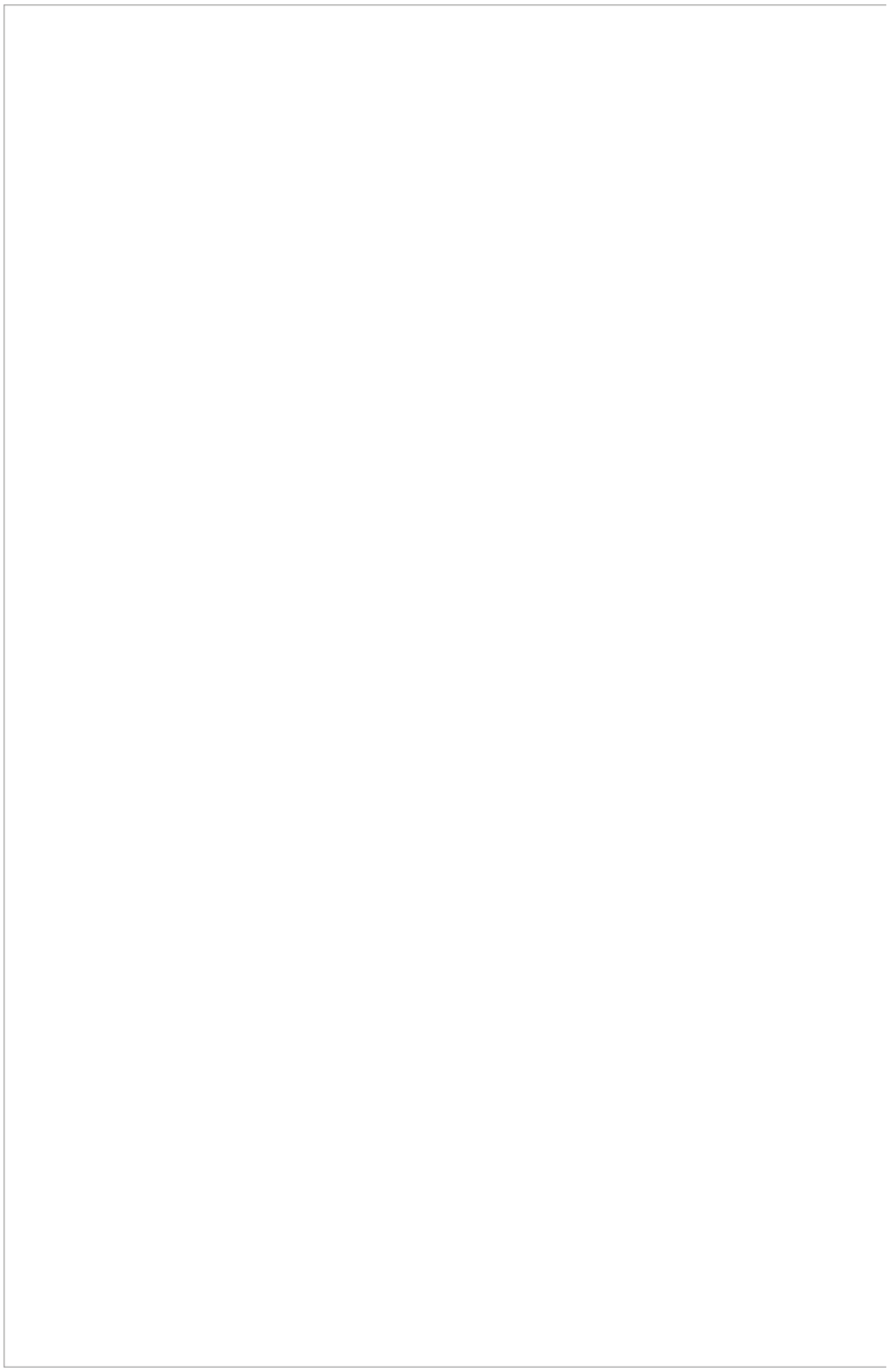
Traditional Education System of Palau

Osisechakl er a Rengalek er Belau er a Irechar

Bureau of Arts and Culture
2006



Traditional Education System of Palau

by

Palau Society of Historians

and

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Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs
Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

Traditional Customary Practices
Palau Series 12
2006

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The Traditional and Customary Practices Series provides information about Palauan culture in Palauan and in English. All booklets are abstracted from Rechuodel with additional information provided.

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The Traditional and Customary Practices Palauan Series is produced by the Bureau of Arts and Culture, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Government of Palau. It is intended to make available for Palau's present and future generations the information on traditional and customary practices in the old days. Under the leadership of Palau Historic Preservation Officer and Director of the Bureau of Arts and Culture this series of booklet was successfully completed.

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THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM OF PALAU

FOREWORD

The Traditional Education System of Palau is the 12th volume to appear in the Traditional and Customary Practices Series published by the Bureau of Arts and Culture. These booklets have been produced in Palauan since 1995, with English translations added to the Palauan text since 1998. The information in this booklet has been collected during the course of ten day-long meeting sessions with the Palau Society of Historians. The Palau Society of Historians embodies the living memory of local elders and culture-bearers, and consists of 16 members, nominated from each of Palau's states and appointed to their role as Historian for their lifetime by the President of the Republic of Palau.

The information collected from them was tape-recorded and transcribed, with the written transcriptions read out to the historians and amended as needed line by line. This process was done entirely in Palauan, and results were transcribed into English at a later stage. A total of four months was spent doing background research, interviewing elders on one-to-one basis, and verifying research results with the Society of Historians.

As in the other volumes in the series, this booklet does not attempt to present the entirety of available data on

the subject. It instead presents a summary based on the living memory of the Society of Historians and should be considered as an introduction and starting point for those interested in traditional education. In addition, it should be noted that many subtle variations in education principles exist(ed) among the many villages and different clans in Palau. Readers who wish to follow up on these matters in greater depth should consult the bibliography appended to this volume.

The information in this booklet is drawn from life-experiences of Palauan culture bearers many of whom were raised in the years before the onset of WW II. Some of the ancient ways described in this booklet live on only in cultural memory, some are still present but disappearing, yet others are an essential part of Palauan cultural identity until this day. We are grateful to the Society of Historians for helping us to comprehend and appreciate how long-held traditions have been developing into the dynamic mix of the ancient and the modern that characterizes Palauan lifeways today. With their testimonies and stories as documented in this booklet, they have left a valuable legacy to their descendants that will only become more valuable as time goes on.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional education system of Palau made it possible for Palauans to live in a healthy and peaceful community. Children were called to good verbal conduct toward others by their parents, and encouraged to perform small tasks assigned to them. As they reached the age of maturity, they were required to join the small clubs in the community, in this way exposing themselves to different skills and types of knowledge the appropriation of which was considered appropriate for their respective age. At this point, they were expected to master various skills and to conduct themselves according to ways acceptable within the society. Children acquired knowledge in private homes and, later on, the clubs, two institutions which in combination served the goals that today are targeted by schools. Each home and club taught different skills and knowledge to children, drawing on different techniques, but the most important thing a children had to learn was respect (*omengull*). The teaching of respect (*omengull*) was the basis for behavioral conduct among family, clan, and village.

THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM OF PALAU

Traditionally, the education of Palauan children took place in private homes (*obliil*). Naturally, homes were educational spaces within society, and all families taught their children by similar pedagogical principles. Children learned the basics of conduct at home so that when they emerged into society (*buai*) or traveled between villages (*beluu)*, they were able to conduct themselves in a manner acceptable to society, in this way shedding a good light on their family (*blai*), clan (*kebliil)* and village (*beluu)*.

The fundamental principles and components of traditional education in Palau are listed below:

◊ Respect (*Omengull*)

◊ Responsibility (*Ngerachel*)

◊ Occupation (*Omengerker*)

◊ Obedience, Kindness, and Perseverance (*Blekongesenges, Blekokeuii, me a Ducherreng*)

◊ Visits to Kin and Others (*Odingel er a Klauchad*)

◊ Humility and Verbal Conduct (*Klengariou el Reng me a Omelekoi*)

◊ Care and Compassion (*Ulekerreu me a Klechubechub*)

◊ Concern for the Needs and Problems of Family (*blai)* and Village (*beluu)* (*Chelbulel a Blai me a Beluu*)

A detailed explanation of each of the above-mentioned traditional principles and components follows.

RESPECT (*omengull*) – The act of showing honor or esteem to others.

Parents began to teach their children respect (*omengull*) at home by demonstrating esteem for one another as well as cooperation among themselves. As time went by, children learned by close observation of how their parents conducted themselves, for instance by listening to how their parents talked to each other. Parents taught respect (*omengull)* by diligently trying to develop a sense of hierarchy in their children's hearts so that the latter learn to show respect (*omengull)* to their father and mother and the elders in the home. Also, respect (*omengull)* among brothers and sisters was fostered. In this way, mutual respect (*omengull)* as exercised between father and mother served as the basis for teaching respect to children. Children also learned from their parents' lived example the customary ways to display respect for their clan (*kebliil)*, village (*beluu*), and society (*buai*) in general. Children who had lost either parent were placed under their mother's brothers (*oktemelir)* or under their elder brothers (*obekrir*) for instruction.

Listed below are some fundamental principles concerning respect that kids learned from their parents:

◊ Children need to respect their parents and any elders in their homes. It is essential that they be observant (*melanges-mad*), and need not be reminded of a certain task that was previously assigned to them;

◊ Children must not verbally relate a person to his mother, his mother's relatives, and/or his mother's village, as this would convey disrespect;

◊ Children must not use obscene language;

◊ When moving in a crowd, children must bow their heads. It is not acceptable for children to walk among people who are seated with their head upright and their hands swaying.

◊ Also, children must not go and stand at the doorstep with their arms raised up and lean against the door frame.

Scolding and spanking was not considered the right means to encourage a child to develop into a person that would show an acceptable attitude of respect. Instead, careful parental acts of respect–reprimands and reminders made in gentle voices–were considered apt to support a child's personality development.

RESPONSIBILITY (*ngerachel*) – Duties assigned to a child and the latter's sense thereof.

Responsibility (*ngerachel)* was one of the most important values that were fostered and developed in children in traditional times. Again, the teaching of responsibility started in the private homes through the example of the parents. Parents demonstrated their own faithfulness by performing their responsibilities to the family (*blai)*, the clan (*kebliil),* and society (*buai*) in their everyday lives. They moreover taught their children by explanation. Learning thus consisted of observing and listening. In addition, individual responsibilities, i.e., performing small household duties, were assigned to children.

Girls were assigned small duties, such as collecting and weaving and preparing and serving meals at meal times (an assignment that included, for instance, peeling taro and serving it along with fish). They were taught to pay attention to prescribed table manners in performing these services to others. For example, when serving fish, the fish's bottom side would have to face the person being served. Also, from the perspective of the person being served, the taro would have to be placed on the right, and the fish on the left side, of the person being served. A girl spent most of her time with her mother, watching her and slowly appropriating these womanly responsibilities.

A boy, on the other hand, spent most of his time with his father, learning fishing techniques and other "male" skills. Among the basic duties assigned to a boy were collecting

firewood, cleaning and cooking fish, weaving fish traps, and making bamboo spears.

OCCUPATION (*omengerker*) – Work assigned to children in order for them to acquire skills and techniques needed in life.

Teaching in private homes continued until the boys and girls reached maturity. From then on, they were considered ready for advanced vocational learning, and also for matters that involve interaction with the public. Young men joined the young unmarried men's organization (*kekerei el cheldebechel el sechal*), whereas young women joined the young unmarried women's organization (*kekerei el cheldebechel dil*) of the village (*beluu)*. The peers learned from one another in the clubs, contributing or exchanging knowledge and skills relating to their assignments, occupations and responsibilities. Their choice of occupation varied in dependence on their individual learning backgrounds.

Once this stage in an adolescent person's life had been reached, especially in the case of a boy, parents selected someone whom they considered knowledgeable, skillful, and experienced in the occupation that their son wished to pursue. If he chose fishing, then they select an elder man who possessed the relevant knowledge. They then entrusted their son's training into his care. Gathering coconut sap (*omelenges*), wood carving and the building of boats, canoes, or houses (*omelasech*), and hunting (*tekoi er a ked*) were some of the vocations from which a

boy could choose.

A daughter usually spent much time with her mother's mother, learning about her clan (*kebliil)* and family (*blai)*. She acquired the skills and knowledge commonly associated with women, such as were related to taro gardening, marriage, motherhood, the organization of a household, childbirth and child raising, personal relationships, and the behavior expected from the female member of a family (*blai)* and clan (*kebliil*) in connection with the interests and welfare of the village (*beluu)*. Women's work was always economically important, so the proper instruction of a girl through her mother's mother and her mother's brother was considered indispensable. A woman was expected to perform *klomengelungel* (*bai* visits), which was of great economic importance for the family (*blai)* and the village (*beluu)*. In marrying, a woman provided another source of income for the clan (*kebliil)* – her marriage united and tightened the relationships between clan (*kebliil)* and family (*blai)*. Handicrafts were among the occupations in which women could specialize: among them were weaving and grass skirt making.

Skills and abilities acquired through traditional education became very important in the course of a person's life:

> Every individual, from the moment of his birth, had a definite rank in his village, clan, and family. This rank was based on family background, but advancement because of individual merit was possible. As a person matured, vied for prestige and advancement through forms of prescribed competition which enabled him to accrue wealth

and power. It became a life-long goal of most people to increase their status and rank through excellence in their skills and abilities (Kesolei 1976).

OBEDIENCE, KINDNESS AND PERSEVERANCE

(*Blekongesenges, Blekokeuii, me a Ducherreng*) The act of showing respect, the habit of doing good things to others, and the determination to pursue one's goals even in the face of difficulties.

All these values were taught at home; however, the major portion of learning and appropriating these virtues took place in the clubs (*cheldebechel*). Kindness (*blekokeuii*) was generally demonstrated by the club members' sharing of food and drink amongst themselves. Through the kindness (*blekokeuii*) of individual members, all members of a club ate from one plate and drank from one cup (*ta a blatingir me a kebengir*), and through the generosity of others, all members of a club ate from the same food and drink, although not all of them might have contributed a share in the first place. Moreover, members combined forces in order to earn money to keep their club in good financial condition. They showed kindness (*blekokeuii*) toward their village (*beluu)* by giving whatever financial assistance they could to society (*buai*). Obedience and perseverance (*blekongesenges me a ducherreng*) were also practiced within these clubs, for these virtues were required among the club members. Members had to cooperate because teamwork was considered the only way for a club to remain strong and endure.

Clubs deliberately sought to accomplish difficult tasks in order to train their members and improve their skills. Through the clubs' striving for excellence, community service and competition in sports and games were promoted within the village (*beluu)*.

There were at least three kinds of clubs in each village, all associated with different responsibilities.

The first club was the largest and consisted of male titleholders (*rubekul a beluu*); it was called *klou el cheldebechel* ("the large club"). Its members established, strengthened, maintained, protected and envisioned programs for the village (*beluu*), and they supervised the other clubs. They were also responsible for protecting the laws and guarding the peace in the village (*beluu)*. Female titleholders (*klobak el dil*) were organized in a corresponding club, which was called *klou el cheldebechel er a redil* ("large club of the women"). Corresponding to the men's clubs' assignments, their role was to generate, promote, supervise and protect village (*beluu)* programs, and they also supervised the smaller clubs and acted as guardians of law and peace in the village (*beluu)*.

The second-ranking clubs of both men and women consisted of usually married adults who owned their own homes and had obligations and responsibilities within their family (*blai)* or clan (*kebliil)*. These organizations were called *ongerung el klou el cheldebechel* ("second large club"). The second men's club's role was to assist the chief of the first club (*rubekul a beluu*) in protecting

and promoting programs for the *beluu* (village), and to supervise the small clubs. The women's second-ranking club's role in the village was to organize the women's activities and to foster economic well-being by performing *klomengelungel* (visits to other village's men's houses (*bai)* in exchange for payment which would then be used to support their club and village activities).

The third-ranking clubs were called *kekerei el cheldebechel* ("small clubs"). These were the first clubs that a child had to join after leaving its family. Members generally were young unmarried men or women without house (*blai*) responsibilities. Its members taught skills important to the welfare of the village (*beluu)* to other young people. These clubs were usually given minor assignments in assistance to the second-ranking club. Because they were skilled in warfare, they protected the village (*beluu*) in war. The third-ranking women's club functioned similarly to the third-ranking men's club. However, the former did not participate in warfare, nor did they perform *bai* visits (*klomengelungel*).

Clubs from either side of society, which was organized into two half-channels (*bitang me a bitang el taoch*), had separate work assignments and responsibilities, and they also worked independently from one another. This did not necessarily mean that they opposed or contested one another. On the contrary, they often exchanged praise and expressions of appreciation. They competed with one another only in their efforts to further the advancement of their village (*beluu*).

Children were taught at home by their parents and later, at the small clubs of men and women where they would be introduced to various skills and knowledge required of their age group. After attending at the small clubs, they could proceed to the next level of learning in the second club and then, the third club.

VISITS TO KIN AND OTHERS (*Odingel er a klauchad*) To pay a visit to members of the extended family and relatives.

Visits to the extended family and relatives (*Odingel er a Klauchad)* were demonstrations of love and affection among kin in traditional times. Visiting kinsmen was considered useful for the village (*beluu)* and the clan (*kebliil)*. The behavior that was expected during such visits was mostly taught by the older *okdemaol* (mother's brothers and male kin) and the *delal a blai* (mothers of the *blai*, older *ourrot* females, titleholders), as well as clan (*kebliil)* members related to a child. Young men were also sent to visit their sisters, mothers and other kinswomen in their clan (*kebliil)* with gifts of food or large fish. They moreover joined their parents in visiting blood relatives who were in need of any type of help, or simply visited other clan members (*kebliil)* who were in need of assistance. Young women also assisted their mothers or elder kinswomen in visiting blood relatives and other clan (*kebliil)* members during funerals, when collecting money to help kin pay their debts, and on many other occasions.

TEACHING HUMILITY AND VERBAL CONDUCT (*klengariou el reng me a omelekoi*) To teach a child humbleness in mind and spirit and the proper ways of speaking. Humility goes hand-in-hand with respect. Humility was also learned from parents in the first place, their behavior, their relationship with one another, their general conduct in domestic life and in relation to the clan (k*ebliil)* and the public. Children moreover learned by reflecting on the way they themselves were treated. Talking to a child was a method of teaching respect and humility, and fostered an understanding of the traditional hierarchical position of family (*blai*) and clan (*kebliil)* within the village (*beluu)* from the scratch.

The hierarchical structure of society defined the positions of the high-ranking (*meteet*) families, the ordinary people of a village (*beluu)* who were rich (*dichad er a beluu*), and the educated or well-trained people (*medengei a tekoi el chad*). Disapproving of pride and self-assertiveness, each home taught the children to display respect and humility toward other strata of society. Membership in a high-ranking clan (*kebliil)* or personal wealth did not make up for a lack of respect and humility toward others.

The bearers of high-ranking positions consciously taught their children how to display respect for and around other people. Humility and respect were considered inseparable and shone through in a person's conduct amongst people and in the village (*beluu)*, for instance in the way a person spoke. Humility and respect were considered the foundation of Palauan culture.

Both family (*blai)* and community houses (*bai)* were built in a style known as *rrengodel el blai* or *rrengodel el bai*. To children and adults alike, this architectural design was a reminder of the socially required respect and humility because the crossbeams (*imuul me a didil a charm*) of any such traditional house (*rrengodel el blai*) as well as the crossbeams of a *bai* (*olik*) were placed to revoke these values. If anybody rising from a sitting position hit their head against a crossbeam (*imuul me a lechub e ng didil a charm*), or if, walking within the house, they bumped their head into a crossbeam because of an upright posture, this was considered shameful but in due consequence of their lack of respect and humility, for proper behavior called for a bowed posture within the house. This was one of the established means through which a person learned the basic values of Palauan culture.

CARE AND COMPASSION

To love, to comfort and to be able to help others. These were other values and traits that went with respect and humility, and implanting them in the hearts of children and young people in traditional Palau at an early stage was considered to be of great importance. As mentioned before, the teaching of compassion and care began in the private homes: the lived example of other family (*blai*) members familiarized children with these values early in their life. Children were thus taught how to care for one another like brothers and sisters, as well as to extend this

behavior to their own siblings and to any other children in the house. Compassion also was taught to each child by instructing them how to care for each person in the family (*blai)* and clan (*kebliil)* who might be in need. Accordingly, a caring and compassionate nature was recognized and appreciated by the public. Children were instructed to care for elders and adults, to assist elderly people in doing hard work, and to carry heavy loads for them. In putting these values into practice, they helped sick and elder people. By providing them with food as well as a place to sleep and bidding them farewell when they left, they also showed hospitality to any travelers passing through the village (*beluu)* in the evening. They learned to look after people in need within their own village (*beluu)* and from other villages (*beluu),* or after any other stranger who might appreciate their assistance. They learned to always help others who were in trouble, to aid them in problem-solving, or to help by speaking on their behalf. Such customs were practiced in the old days so that when people traveled from village (*beluu)* to village (*beluu)*, there were no serious concerns about transportation, food, or lodging. One could travel all around Palau relying solely on others' hospitality and care. Providing food and accommodation to strangers and others was one of the most common exercises of compassion and care that was found in the villages (*beluu)* of Palau. Palauans also showed great compassion by nursing strangers who had accidentally drifted (*motechakl*) to Palau. From the time of ancient Palau until the present, it has been believed and commonly accepted that a caring and compassionate people will be blessed.

NEEDS OF THE FAMILY (*BLAI)* AND VILLAGE (*BELUU)*

Necessities required from a house and village. The term "*chelbulel a blai me a beluu*" (needs or shortcomings of the family or village to be resolved) was a first step in fostering discipline in the hearts and minds of the children and young people of traditional Palau. Being a Palauan, one was expected to consider and keep in mind the needs and shortcomings of the family (*blai)* and village (*beluu)* from which one came, wherever one went and whatever one did, and to know where, when, and how to return home. One was expected to perform good deeds with respect, kindness, compassion as well as obedience throughout one's life in order not to bring disgrace or bad reputation to one's native family (*blai)* and village (*beluu)*. Great care was taken to lead a life that would result in praise and good reputation.

There is an old saying in Palau: "When leaving home, go and stand at the edge of the yard and take a good look at your house. When leaving town, go to the landing and departure dock *(klemedaol*) and take a good look at your village (*beluu)*. Anywhere you go, hide your shore (*ke mertii kederaol)*." This saying cautions one not to forget one's village and family bonds, and to conceal from the outside world any shortcomings that relate to one's place of origin. In traditional times, this was a basic principle that was consciously anchored in the hearts of children and young people in order to help them conduct themselves in an acceptable way and perform good deeds that would improve the reputation of their family

(*blai)* and village (*beluu)*.

As has been explained above, the educational system of Palau included eight main principles and components. In combination, they laid the very foundation for the Palauan notion of character and good personality: *omengull* (respect). Respect was thus at the heart of the traditional Palauan culture (*uchetemel a klechad er Belau*). Respect also was a bond between family (*blai*), village (*beluu)*, and clan (*kebliil)*.

OMENGERMODEL is to secretly seek skills and knowledge outside of one's home. Traditionally, *omengermodel* was a way for children to appropriate knowledge from other sources than those readily accessible to them. A child would sneak out at night to hide under their neighbor's house, listening to what they were teaching their own children. Most families of higher clans had special skills and knowledge that they would pass on to their children in the seclusion of their own place only. How they disciplined their children, and the kinds of skills and knowledge that they shared with them, were different in nature than those that were available from members of ordinary homes, and they formed a well-guarded treasured intended to be shared exclusively with their own children. It was mostly the children of lower clans who performed *omengermodel* in order to obtain knowledge that would further their opportunities. Also, children who had lost their parents, or whose parents had limited knowledge to pass on, would turn to this option.

There is a quote that neatly describes children who *mengermodel* ("do the *omengermodel*"): "Those who sneak out to earn skills and knowledge (*mengermodel*) lack them in their own homes, and those who have them in their possession (*ar meluchet er a techerakl*) do not need to sneak out to get them." It was considered shameful for children to *mengermodel,* and an insult for their family because it exposed a family's lack of skills and knowledge. In any case, few children were smart enough to think of the possibility to obtain more skills and knowledge from other families' homes.



The diagram shows the traditional education system as used long ago in Palau. Among all the components, respect (*omengull*) was a must for all kids, and they needed to practice it at all times. Without respect, it would be impossible for children to successfully accomplish the other components listed in the diagram. Children who were obedient enough to acquire all the skills and knowledge given to them would be able to lead a good life and contribute to their family's and village's kudos.



Table 2: Students taking a break at the back of their school in Ngiwal. 1970. Photo contributed by Lynda Dee Tellames.

Story-telling was one teaching technique used by elders. At home as well as in public, elders taught children respect and proper conduct by narrating stories with morals. At night or daytime, elders and children got together to share a story. Older members of the family and the community also enjoyed listening to stories.

STORIES WITH MORAL LESSONS

DILMELLOMES

Dilmellomes was a beautiful young woman from the House of Omengiil in Ngeruikl, a village of Ngchesar. When she was born her parents knew that they had been

blessed with this beautiful child. She was a gentle child, always considerate of others and helpful to elders. As she was growing up, she learned all the aspects of house keeping, tending the taro patch, and other things that a young woman should know.

When she was a young woman, at an age when she could be courted, the young women of Ngeruikl were requested to go to Ngiwal as *mengol*, concubines. Dilmellomes was chosen as one of the young women to go because of her beauty and sophisticated manners. She left with the rest of the women to Ngermechau where they were taken to Bairemechau. On the first day, the *mengol* prepared themselves to be able to earn money. *Klemengelungel*, concubinage, was one of the traditional ways for the women to earn money.

In Ngiwal the *mengol* knew that they could not be harmed because they were protected under the *mengol* agreement. If any harm would fall on any one of them, the high chief of Ngiwal would have to pay a stiff fine. Once the *mengol* had prepared themselves, they went out into the village flirting outrageously with the men of Ngiwal.

They had been there for a while, and every *mengol* had been able to find a lover. Their lovers would take them to the beach, hills, and other places to have a good time and bring them back to the *bai* in the evening. Dilmellomes, on the other hand, was a bit different from the other women of Ngeruikl. She did not have a lover. When everyone left with their lover, she would stay behind and clean the *bai*. Afterward, she would go and sit

in front of the *bai* platform to wait for an old woman who usually passed by the *bai* on her way to her taro patch.

Dilmellomes sat at the platform every day, waiting for the old woman to pass by. And when the old woman passed by, Dilmellomes walked over to her and asked, "*Chedil* [polite way to call an elderly woman], where are you going?" The woman replied, "I am going to the taro patch. And my dear child, why are you sitting here all alone when you friends are in the village having a good time, are you feeling sick?" Dilmellomes shook her head and said "No, I'm not sick, I want to go and see the taro patch. *Chedil,* do you think I could go with you?" The woman agreed to take her along.

Dilmellomes took whatever she needed and left with the old woman to the taro patch. When they were half-way to the taro patch, the woman stopped and said "My dear child, fix yourself a betelnut from my bag and wait for me while I go and get a bundle of leaves for fertilizer." Dilmellomes replied "*Chedil*, you sit here while I go and get the fertilizer." She left and went into the forest to fetch two bundles of leaves for fertilizer, one for each of them. Then, they went to the taro patch.

When they got to the taro patch Dilmellomes asked the old woman, "*Chedil,* where is the area that needs to be mulched?" The woman replied, "My child, it is right over there, but don't pay attention to it. I have a coconut oil in my basket so take it to the stream and wash your hair while I finish it. It is not a big job and I have to plant my taros before we leave." Dilmellomes then said, "No, you

just sit here and watch me do it." She went in and began to cultivate the taro patch using the leaves she had collected as fertilizer. The woman sat and watched he feeling overwhelmed with Dilmellomes's behavior. After she had finished, she cut the grass and cleared the dry area around the woman's taro patch. When she finished they went to the stream and bathed before they returned to the village. She let the old woman lead the way to her house while she carried the basket of taro. At the old woman's house, Dilmellomes asked the old woman if she was going to cook the taro that evening. The old woman agreed and said that she could do it herself. But Dilmellomes did not leave her. Instead, she took a pot, put the taros inside, filled it with water and covered the taros with leaves and built the fire. She turned to the old woman and said, "I have built the fire, so you will only have to watch it and I will go now to the *bai*." The woman said, "My child, wait!." She went over to her husband's basket, in the old days, the husband had a separate basket filled with good taros. The women took some taros, put them together in a basket with soup, fat, and coconut syrup and gave it to her. She also went to the smoking house and got some dried tobacco for Dilmellomes to take to the *bai*.

When Dilmellomes reached the *bai*, her friends were already there. They were all hungry, dirty, and covered with leaves and grasses because they had spent all day in the forest and on the beach with their lovers. They did not have any food because the women of Ngiwal did not like them, flirting with their men and shouting in the village. When the *mengol* went to the houses to ask for food, the villagers threw spoiled taro and other foods at them. When Dilmellomes came with the basket full of good food, they were surprised. They asked her, "Where did you get all this food, look at it, it is very good, where

did you get it?" But Dilmellomes just smiled and told them to come and eat.

Dilmellomes continued to ask each woman of Ngermechau to take her with them to the taro patch and allow her to do all the work on their taro patches. Every morning when her friends left with their lovers, she would clean the *bai* and go outside, waiting for other women to pass by. The last woman she approached was Diltkebui who was the leader of the women's club of Ngermechau. Dilmellomes' good deeds had spread around Ngermechau, so when she approached Diltkebui, she was aware of it.

The women of Ngermechau were wondering about her because her friends were all out enjoying themselves, running around the village, yet she did nothing of the sort. She sat outside the *bai* waiting for the women of Ngermechau to ask to go with them to their taro patches. The women of Ngermechau got together to decide what to do for Dilmellomes since she had done so much for them. At the end of the concubinage, Diltkebui requested that Dilmellomes stay behind so that they may deal with their unfinished businesses.

When everyone left, Dilmellomes stayed alone at Bairemechau. Every day she would go outside and sit. The women of Ngermechau would come to visit her, giving her food and anything that she needed. The time came for the women of Ngermechau to escort Dilmellomes back to Ngeruikl. They got together before

the day of departure and Diltkebui said, “Dilmellomes has done great deeds for our village. She has cultivated our taro patches, planted them, cleared them and even cooked our food. So between us club members we will give her money. I will pay the *kelsuk*, largest sum of money, and the rest of you will pay the n*gelsang*, smaller sum of money. The k*elsuk* will go to the bottom of the *olbedabel*, money container, and all of you will fill it up with n*gelsang*.” The women of Ngermechau filled up the *olbedabel*, prepared the food, and everything that Dilmellomes would need on her return trip to Ngeruikl. All the canoes of Ngermechau escorted Dilmellomes to Ngeruikl. At Ngeruikl, they spent the night and returned to Ngermechau the next day.

This story is a lesson for young women. They have to listen to their parents and learn all the things that women have to know, like making taro patches and housekeeping. They should be considerate and respectful to elders. When they get married, it will be easier for money and other good things to come their way.

THE STORY OF TEB AND LUK

Teb and Luk were the sons of Dam and Dirraibar of Ngeruchob. The two brothers had four sisters who were married and lived with their husbands far away. While Teb and Luk were still very young their father became ill and died. So these two brothers lived with their mother alone.

As the two brothers grew to manhood, their mother became older, weaker and less able to fulfill her traditional obligations to her four married daughters who lived away from home. One day she called her sons together and explained that her own weakness and the absence of her husband made it important that they learn to assume her responsibilities toward her daughters. She told Teb and Luk that they must help their sisters learn to be good wives, and providers for their families. Dirraibar went on to say that the death of their father had made it difficult for the family for there was no one to provide fatherly advice. She knew of a man, however, who could provide good guidance. His name was Olengkoi and he lived in Ngerderar.

Early one morning following their mother's talk, Teb declared to his mother that he would seek Olengkoi's advice. Teb set out for the village of Ngerderar where Olengkoi lived. When he arrived at Olengkoi's house it was morning and Olengkoi was sitting at the "cheldeng" (a sacred section of the house usually at the end). Upon arriving at Olengkoi's house, Teb did not, as custom demanded, walk to the side of the house and make his

on his return trip, stopping on the way to acquire the bamboo club. When he reached home he quickly summoned Luk and passed on what he had learned. Luk heard what his brother had to say without comment, but he could not accept the advice his brother had brought back from Olengkoi. The more he thought about the advice given to Teb, the more he felt it to be disgraceful and improper. He could not accept the idea of beating his own sisters for the sake of receiving money.

Unable to express his concern to his older brother, Luk awoke early the next morning and without being seen set out to consult Olengkoi himself. As he approached Olengkoi's house, he took care not to cross the threshold directly but, as was the custom, he quietly approached the side of the house and slowly lifted the end of "ulitech" and entered the house.

Olengkoi observed Luk's behavior quietly and marveled at how respectful the young man was. Olengkoi asked Luk why he was looking for him this early in the morning. Luk said, "I have four sisters who are married and live with their husbands. While I was still young my father died and no one gives me advice and teaches me proper behavior. I am here because I want you to teach me so I will be able to care for my sisters properly."

"Are you married?" asked Olengkoi, after hearing the story. "Yes, I am," was Luk's reply. "Does your wife have a taro patch?" Luk answered, "Yes." Do you know how to fish?" The old man went on. "Yes, but not very successfully," responded the young man. " I am often

good at catching crabs." The old man, his curiosity satisfied, went on to advice Luk that when fish and taro were available, the best of each should be chosen and given to each sister in turn starting with the eldest. "By practicing this regularly," Olengkoi concluded, "You will find that when you need help, your sisters will help you."

Satisfied with the advice, Luk returned to his home and together with his wife, began to practice what he had learned from Olengkoi. The best foods were always carefully prepared and taken to Luk's sisters where they were distributed to husband and relatives. This practice continued regularly and Luk never demanded or requested anything in return.

It soon became apparent to Luk's oldest sister that her brother's exemplary care and behavior should be rewarded. She therefore gathered her three sisters together and planned, in the best traditional manner, a feast to do honor to Luk's wife, thereby expressing their gratitude to the brother who had so well fulfilled his obligations.

The feast brought together husbands and friends.
When it was over the husbands of the four sisters presented Luk with offerings of money. "The money," they said, "is to be used to pay off Luk's debts."

Teb observed the behavior of his sisters with anger, for traditionally the older brother's debts should be paid first. Luk, a thoughtful man, sensed his older brother's anger and told his sisters that the money left from his feast

should be used to honor Teb. Having been so honored, Teb began to learn what had prompted the gratitude of his sisters toward Luk and he soon began to help Luk in caring for their sisters. When Teb gathered firewood (a departure from custom since the elder brother is exempt from such chores), he presented Luk with a bundle. Before putting the wood down in front of Luk's house, he said: "Here is your firewood, *ochellei-chokdemang*," acknowledging thereby his respect for the judgment and proper behavior of his younger, but wiser brother.

Note: This story is said to mark the beginning of the *omeluchel* system, the prime element of which is the exchange of goods and services between brothers and sisters, a custom still prevalent in Palau.

The Story of TEBANG

Rekesiwall, a man from Ngiwal, went to Ngerngesang hamlet of Ngchesar where he settled down after marrying a woman of that hamlet, Merderad. He had a son, Tebang, from Merderad, but Merderad died when Tebang was still an infant. Rekesiwall continued to live in Ngerngesang hamlet, devoting his life to raising his infant son.

Years later when Tebang reached maturity, Tebang married a maiden of Ngerngesang hamlet. With his marriage, however, Tebang's filial affection towards his father lessened more and more until he finally ordered his father, Rekesiwall, out of the house.

Rekesiwall returned sadly to his native village of Ngiwal

where he discovered that his home was gone and all his relatives deceased. Bent with age, Rekesiwall could neither build himself a house nor go out fishing. He had, therefore, no recourse but to live in the village *bai* and beg for his food among the people.

Back in Ngerngesang hamlet at Ngchesar, Tebang went into the forest with his friends one day to cut down a tree for his canoe. After hewing the timber roughly into shape, Tebang and his friends dragged his canoe toward the sea. On the way, however, it slid into a taro patch, and no matter how hard the men struggled they were unable to pull the canoe out. All the strong men of the hamlet, more than sixty, were gathered and effort resumed, but the canoe remained in the taro patch.

A diviner (*chad el mengelil*) was consulted to explain this mysterious predicament. The diviner obtained a coconut, cracked it open, and examined the jagged edges where he shell had split. The divination was as follows: the predicament was in punishment for Tebang's failure to observe his filial duties towards his father.

Tebang then sailed to Ngiwal where he found Rekesiwall in the abai. He proffered his apologies for having neglected Rekesiwall all this while, adding, "Come live in my home with us father. From this day on, whatever good fortune that befalls me shall be shared with you."

Rekesiwall returned to Ngerngesang with Tebang where Rekesiwall supervised the hauling of the canoe from the

taro patch. He uttered a chant, the men at the towline strained in unison to its rhythm and the canoe was dragged successfully all the way to the beach.

Rekesiwall lived happily thereafter at his son's home in Ngerngesang.