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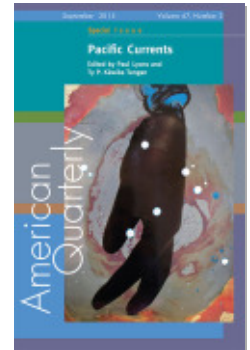
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Tiara R. Na'puti, Michael Lujan Bevacqua

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Militarization and Resistance from Guåhan: Protecting and Defending Pâgat

Tiara R. Na'puti and Michael Lujan Bevacqua

In June 2014, US president Barack Obama announced a proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument by thousands of square miles. This proposal designates ocean, small islands, submerged lands, coral reefs, atolls, and deep waters as subject to US federal control—effectively removing these spaces from indigenous peoples and public trust.¹ It limits access to traditional fishing grounds, removes original landowners, and designates land and ocean as marine monuments that can be converted into spaces for Department of Defense (DOD) activities and US strategic military bases. A few months later, in September 2014, an estimated eighteen thousand service members arrived in Guåhan (Guam) to participate in the “Valiant Shield” joint military exercises that have been conducted by the United States since 2006. The exercise includes personnel from the air force, army, marine corps, and navy; it features infrastructure based out of Japan and San Diego and had units participating from US bases in Japan, Guåhan, and Hawai‘i. These “war games,” the largest peacetime exercises of their type, have a tremendous impact on our island and on peoples struggling to protect sacred land and ocean from US military expansion.

This is the daily reality for Guåhan and for the Native people, Chamorus (Chamorros), on an island consumed by the US war machine.² Labeled the “Tip of the Spear,” and a manifestation of US colonialism, imperialism, and militarism, Guåhan is a place where the hammer of American power is remarkably visible, and the network of violence through which its force and interests around the world are protected. In this essay, we discuss Guåhan as a site through which American studies can contend with the centrality and paradoxical banality of militarism to the constitution of American imperial identities and power. To do so, we also bring in a critique from the standpoint of Native Pacific cultural studies and discuss how resistance to American power was manifested in the defense of Pâgat, a place sacred to Chamorus, which was identified as the location for a new US Marine Corps firing range.

Native Pacific cultural studies resists US imperialism by (re)centering indigenous epistemologies and cultures in the Pacific. In the twenty-first century, US nation-building has included colonialism and militarization throughout the Pacific, where military logic is mapped onto Oceania with little regard for indigenous peoples. Against this backdrop, our goal is to illustrate one instance of how contemporary resistance and political projects of decolonization have advanced among indigenous peoples of the Pacific. In this essay, we navigate from Guåhan as a starting point to illustrate how these spaces converge through their practices of resistance, rethinking, and embodiment of indigenous critiques of US militarization. Guåhan, and specific sacred places within Pacific currents, are frequently marginalized and footnoted (if noted at all). Therefore, this method of placing our island, sacred places, and struggles at the center is an intentional move that strengthens our efforts to resist empire from the roots of Chamoru existence. An affirmation of Chamoru identity, grounded in the specificity of our experiences and sacred places, is crucial to imagining a world beyond colonialism and to providing strength and guidance in our efforts to connect outward. By launching *from* here, we center efforts to restore harmony within our community, which offers ways to deepen connections and foster transoceanic dialogue among existing social movements and indigenous peoples practicing decolonization and resistance throughout the Pacific.

Guåhan in an American Studies Context

As Amy Kaplan argues, the absence of empire in the study of American culture and the absence of thoughtful discussions of culture from the history of US imperialism “curiously reproduces American exceptionalism from without.”³ This phenomenon obligates scholars to challenge neglected areas in academic fields such as American studies by studying and critiquing “the meanings of America in their multiple dimensions, to understand the enormous power wielded in its name, its ideological and affective force as well as its sources for resistance to empire.”⁴ We extend Kaplan’s emphasis on disrupting American exceptionalism by recognizing US imperialism abroad. Our extension flows with other scholars who argue and critique the ways in which the United States itself was founded on the elimination of native sovereignty, the internationalization of what is actually “without” or external, and the “transit of empire.”⁵ In taking up this task, part of the difficulty lies in the frequent elision between state and international frameworks. Jodi Byrd explains, “Current multicultural settler colonialism provides the foundation of U.S. participatory democracy,” yet this

phenomenon is not understood as precisely “the colonization of indigenous peoples and lands by force.”⁶ Recognizing empire as a constitutive measure of the US nation-state highlights that nationalism, imperialism, and settler colonialism must be understood as interconnected spheres in an encompassing system.⁷ Thus we situate our analysis at these intersections. Our project foregrounds Pacific-centered approaches to critical issues of US colonialism by attending to the particular case of Guåhan, one of America’s oldest colonies and a location that exists in a “luminal space, betwixt and between, somehow outside the normal order of sovereignty or integration.”⁸

The Pacific Ocean remains one of the most significant blind spots for American studies. While it’s a huge swath covering almost half of the globe, it is perceived as populated with “small” islands and small island peoples, and thus imagined as a place meant to be traversed by imperial and world powers, rather than a site from which we can understand the structure of colonial power. The smallness of the islands and peoples of the Pacific makes them ideal as anthropological laboratories, but not as sites for understanding the structure of American sovereignty. In the Pacific we find stolen lands a plenty, stolen kingdoms, islands transformed into fortresses, bodies and lands poisoned through military testing and an array of colonial bodies shipped off to war. In the Pacific, we see that militarism and colonialism are not exceptional facets of American existence but structures that are constitutive and essential to the historical and contemporary production of American power.

The importance of a location like Guåhan for American studies is what it can provide in terms of helping enhance potential critiques for militarization and also colonization. Both these things continue today in banal terms, as things that either do not exist or do not exist to be critiqued.⁹ The island of Guåhan is often overlooked because of its “small” size and is rarely covered by mainstream US media. This isolation and silencing contributes to “Micronesia’s absence from Pacific studies.”¹⁰ However, it is in this space that the dynamic and complex issues of national belonging, indigenous identity, and US security and military policy converge.¹¹ Guåhan is understood as a place that belongs to the United States, and therefore there is no appearance of transgressing national or international borders when the United States exercises power over it. In a much-publicized interview in the 1990s, a Lieutenant Colonel Douglas in the US Air Force made clear this colonial reality:

People on Guam seem to forget that they are a possession, and not an equal partner. . . . If California says that they want to do this, it is like my wife saying that she wants to move here or there: I’ll have to respect her wish and at least discuss it with her. If Guam says they want

to do this or that, it is as if this cup here [he pointed at his coffee mug] expresses a wish: the answer will be, you belong to me and I can do with you as best I please.¹²

Despite the fact that increasing its military presence in Guåhan violates international law on the protection of non-self-governing territories, contemporary media coverage of the proposed transfer of US Marines to Guåhan from Okinawa largely supports Lieutenant Douglas's assertion. These increases are reported not as infringement on the rights of Chamorus or instances of colonialism but as mere transfers or policy shifts.

This intersection of issues also reveals the complexity of a place that is in-between, where the enduring presence of settler colonialism has created a seemingly impossible colonial bind that positions indigenous peoples as “domestic to the United States in a foreign sense.”¹³ Together this is a complex matrix of identity (as indigenous Chamorus) and strategy (that is adapted to US institutions and nation-state-centered arenas that ultimately contradict). To better understand how these discourses operate, the Chamoru scholar Keith Camacho asks: “What kinds of Pacific Islander interventions—that is to say, indigenous vernaculars for ‘self’ and ‘other,’ ‘village,’ and ‘city,’ ‘land’ and ‘sea’—occur because of America’s colonial presence in the Pacific and in the diaspora?”¹⁴ This query situates the contradictory space in which Chamoru identities and resistance emerge. It at once highlights the colonial presence of “America” within the Pacific that has influenced how indigenous Pacific Islanders attempt to articulate and understand themselves in relation to and at times in opposition to the United States. As an “unincorporated territory” of the United States, Guåhan remains trapped in an imposed colonial relationship. As the Chamoru scholar and activist Julian Aguon explains:

We are utterly dependent on the success of the U.S. colonial project for our survival. Thus, the re-assertion of our indigeneity is a way back to wholeness and integrity; it not only provides us with a measure of political freedom, but also reestablishes our sustainability and our ability to thrive on our own island and to rejoin the family of Pacific nations.¹⁵

Guåhan needs decolonization not as a simple metaphor for change but as an actual process of removing American colonialism from a community.¹⁶ This situation requires an intervention that does not remain within the limits of US national interests or power but that by definition requires the transgression of those limits: a theoretical model that Indigenous studies scholar Andrea Smith calls “American Studies without America.”¹⁷

We argue for a study of the United States that does not accept its existence or its presence as setting the discursive limits. This offers the possibility of

understanding and reimagining the world in a way that the United States in its present configuration is not an immutable fact and should not be assumed as the basis for articulation. Tied to this is demilitarization, in the sense not just of being antiwar but of challenging the intimate ways in which militarism of Pacific spaces extends beyond physical spaces and becomes a part of peoples' bodies, cultures, and identities, both in the colonies and in the center.¹⁸ Following many other Pacific and decolonization scholars, we argue that a discussion of US Empire should not begin and end with wars: it needs to begin and end with bases.¹⁹ Thus our examination uncovers the particular discourses surrounding US militarization and buildup, and assesses the rhetorical strategies of activists challenging these structures. Centering on resistance to militarization demonstrates another way that the "seemingly unassailable architecture of US empire is under erosion from both within and without."²⁰ This project illuminates the manifestations of indigenous culture and identity within social movements, and it examines "views from *within* the Pacific rather than [views that] simply peer in from its rim or look across to the other side."²¹

Just as emergent Pacific studies work in the area of Micronesia is concerned with how colonialism operates through representational and narrative strategies, our work begins from the assumption that analysis of rhetorical and discursive practices is a prerequisite to uncovering contemporary manifestations of colonial control and military dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. The impact of settler colonialism is visible in the landscapes and displacements it produces. The land narrates the stories of our colonization, where legitimate spaces for indigenous peoples recede both conceptually and geographically such that they have come to "be considered and treated as legally and socially anomalous in their [our] own lands."²² Following Tuhiwai Smith, we trace the intellectual histories and methods of indigenous peoples practicing decolonization, resistance, and survival. From Guåhan, we focus on indigenous responses to militarization and colonization in the Pacific by assessing the relationship between the consequences of militarization and decolonization movements. Our intervention into existing literature in American studies and Native Pacific cultural studies addresses the need for views from Guåhan, extending Michael P. Perez's argument that Chamoru movements parallel sovereignty struggles throughout Native America and Latin America and are informative to the struggles in other US territories, as well as in Hawai'i.²³ As Candace Fujikane explains, "Those of us who live in Asia and the Pacific are connected by ocean currents and thus have a responsibility to build on each others' struggles."²⁴ Thus we extend the scope from Guåhan to other areas of

the Pacific where parallels or comparisons can be drawn. Using Guåhan as a reference point, we move beyond imperial centers and toward reimagining different geopolitical sites.²⁵

Centering Guåhan reveals the complexity of discourses of national belonging and legal frameworks that entangle (but never completely capture) the island in the net of US settler colonialism, producing us as both inside and poking outside the settler state. Julian Aguon explains that Guåhan is a particularly important locale where the law has an “inability to accommodate our stories in U.S. territorial jurisprudence” and the judicial branch has yet to “come up with a satisfactory legal justification for maintaining modern colonies deemed not to be a part of the United States, but instead merely possessions of the United States.”²⁶ This colonial enterprise inflicts violence on a people “who must find our way in a country that *neither* wants us nor wants to let us go.”²⁷ As a result of experiences with colonialism and displacement, generations of Chamorus have been propelled to the continental United States, contributing to a minority status for Chamorus living within their own lands.²⁸ Chamorus articulate a physical dislocation from within our lands while critiquing the overt proximity of the US military that causes this internal distancing. Activists often combine arguments about the literal barriers of the military buildup with the metaphorical barriers of Chamoru exclusion from decisions about our own lands and lives.²⁹

Guåhan History: Displacement by the Red, White, and Blue

The discussion of US strategic interests and commitments can be distracting, often appearing to be a conversation with defined borders and limits. However, from a Native Pacific cultural studies perspective, we recognize the currents and interconnectivity that exist throughout the long, rich history of our islands. We recognize the youth of the US nation-state and the importance of not letting its gaze, its sense of history, its influence and interests become the bookends of our existence.

Chamoru history extends back nearly four thousand years in the Mariana Islands, with multiple colonial rulers staking claim only relatively recently in that temporal frame. Guåhan was first taken by the United States in 1898 as a “spoil” of the Spanish American War; Chamorus had been under centuries of Spanish rule. For the first half of the twentieth century, a US Naval commander who held total authority over the Chamoru civilian population governed the island.³⁰ Despite US control, Chamorus were not US citizens and

had no inherent rights. In 1941 the Japanese attacked Guåhan, just hours after attacking Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i. During this thirty-two month period of occupation, Chamorus fled from villages into the jungles and farms to escape the new colonizers.³¹ Chamorus were forced to work to feed Japanese soldiers. Chamorus were beaten, tortured, raped; in the closing days of the Japanese occupation, more than one hundred were massacred. An accurate count of the number of Chamorus who died in World War II has never been recorded. The United States returned in July 1944 to take Guåhan and to carry out bombing raids against Japan. What had once been a "minor," "small," "backwater" US colony was now to be transformed into a modern military fortress ideally located for defending US global interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

After World War II, Guåhan became part of America's plans for global defense. In 2015 this legacy of US colonialism and empire building relies on the mechanism of establishing overseas military bases created with the apparent agreement of the officials acting in the area. The majority of the US federal government budget goes to maintaining a vast, previously unimaginable empire of bases. The United States has created an expansive network that we might consider a "sea of bases."³² Guåhan is simultaneously considered by US defense and military experts one of the most important bases in the world, but it is also one of the most invisible. As John Pike, a global security expert, explains, "Guam is a front-row seat. It is essential."³³ It seems that "all of the Pentagon road maps lead to Guam," which is quickly becoming one of the major hubs for US military activity in the world.³⁴ The phenomenon of militarization is not simply expressed through US military control of approximately 33 percent of lands in Guåhan; its effects bleed out all over the islands.³⁵ As militarization projects predominate, the island's inhabitants are drawn into greater participation in the US armed forces or affiliated occupations. This phenomenon, which creates an insidious form of dispossession, occurs in the extremely high enlistment rates from Guåhan and the numbers killed-in-action while serving the US military.³⁶ This cycle continues as Chamorus are displaced from their lands to transform their island into "Fortress Guam."

The discursive construction of Guåhan occurs through slogans and naming that label and preposition the island solely in relation to the United States via rhetorics of Americanization, securitization, and geographic spatialization as always already "in relation to." The US–Guåhan relationship is characterized by the primacy of US federalism and militarism. This saturation of military dominance holds material and discursive implications and frames the geopolitical relationship in overtly militarist terms. Guåhan is often referred to as

“America in Asia,” a slogan that inextricably links the island to Asia and subsequently US security policy throughout the region while articulating Guåhan as a place intelligible only in relation to the US nation-state. Thus it erases/replaces Guåhan with America as its synonym. This dependent discourse is also exemplified by the slogan “Guam, Where America’s Days Begin.” Used to market the island to tourists and island residents alike, this slogan constructs the island as *understandable only in relation to* the US nation-state. These and other slogans continue to reinforce the dependent connections of the territory to the United States, the island’s military importance, and also the spatial dimensions of the island as both at the edge of and periphery to the United States. American security policy constructs Guåhan and the surrounding island waters as a “strategic” waterfront protecting the United States from perceived enemies in Asia and the Pacific region.³⁷ Yet it is a base that is the least analyzed and the least critiqued. The imperial consciousness of Americans is tied to their lack of criticism or understanding about militarization and the ease through which they accept or forget their vast network of bases around the world. This snapshot highlights the “complexities of living simultaneously on the margins and at the center of the American empire,”³⁸ and Guåhan is precariously positioned through its discursive construction as both the “tip” and the “center” of US imperial desires.

To understand this juxtaposition requires attention to the geographies of resistance to bases. Indeed, various movements and groups resist US bases, focusing on a diverse range of issues for local communities. These groups generally “share a common concern for the everyday effects of the militarization of their places” and are “born out of resistance to in-place violences to the bodies of activists, their families, and communities.”³⁹ Oceanic communities share experiences of dispossession by the US military. In the 1940s the US Navy conducted repeated removals on Vieques, displacing thousands as it seized three-quarters of the island for military use. The United States also conducted nuclear testing in the Bikini Atoll, causing a long-term exodus of the Bikini people and grave hardships because of radioactive contamination. Hundreds were also displaced in the creation of its missile-testing base in the Kwajalein Atoll of the Marshall Islands. Across the globe there is ongoing local opposition to military training, and resistance efforts through environmental lawsuits have blocked training in areas such as Farallon de Medinilla in the Northern Marianas and Makua Valley in Hawai‘i. Still, other sites such as Vieques (Puerto Rico) and Okinawa have been lightning rods for protest grounded in particular localities.⁴⁰

These examples highlight the need for centering on militarized islands, especially those with colonial histories and presents. The fights are often represented as small, minor, and local, yet in the same way in which the US “sea of bases” stretches across the globe, so do these struggles possess global possibilities in terms of critique, resistance, and transoceanic dialogue. Although the US military network is increasing operations in these islands, these sites still remain understudied in analyses of American studies. From this situated history of Guåhan, we ground our discussion of community opposition to the US military buildup plans for the region.

US Military Buildup and the DEIS Period

In 2006 the US military announced that as part of a plan to resolve tensions over US bases in Okinawa, as many as eight thousand US Marines from Okinawa with their nine thousand dependents would be transferred to Guåhan.⁴¹ The proposed buildup meant more than doubling the size of the current US military presence on Guåhan, where the military heavily influences the “local economy, patterns of land-use, political priorities, and perhaps most dangerously, the psyches of the people.”⁴² On November 20, 2009, the US Department of Defense (DOD) released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the buildup planned by 2014. The DEIS was a nine-volume, eleven-thousand-page document that covered many of the structural changes and environmental effects that would result from the largest US military base relocation in the twenty-first century.⁴³ The DEIS assessed some of the buildup impacts on the region’s natural resources including core topics such as the massive expansion of the Guåhan’s population (a possible increase of seventy-five thousand in as little as four years); Army Air and Missile Defense systems; a new military complex, utilities, and roadway projects; and the dredging of seventy acres of coral reef to create a berth in Apra Harbor for nuclear-equipped submarines and aircraft carriers.⁴⁴

The DEIS also revealed the US military’s intentions to acquire more land: hundreds of acres of jungle may be bulldozed to create housing for US Marines, more than one thousand acres of new land may be leased to build five new firing ranges, and new training facilities may be built on Pâgan and Tinian.⁴⁵ This proposed buildup was the largest single project ever proposed by the DOD, totaling an estimated \$15 billion. Following the DEIS release, public hearings were held leading up to the formal “Review and Comment” period for the public. The Guåhan local government requested to extend the

DEIS review, but ultimately the US secretary of the navy granted an extension for only ninety days.⁴⁶ The people were forced to respond to the longest DEIS report in US history within only three months. This time frame was very limited, forcing rapid public deliberation about one of the most complex changes to the local environment and the “largest transient peacetime military buildup in U.S. history.”⁴⁷

The DEIS “virtually ignored the social and cultural implications of the plans,” heightening local concerns for the lack of an integrated plan that would address the “social and health care needs of non-active duty connected personnel and their families.”⁴⁸ The public comments also incited anger over land control. The DOD planned to “acquire” an additional 2,200 acres of both public and private lands, including 950 acres for a live firing range at Pãgat Village, which stirred up deep resentment, as the plans were reminiscent of US land grabbing that had historically displaced Chamorus.

Public meetings went hours over the scheduled time as hundreds of community members signed up to speak and voiced their concern about the military’s plans. By the end of the ninety-day comment period, the DOD had received more than ten thousand comments. These comments demonstrate how advancing the buildup will lead to further oppression and marginalization of Chamoru people. Many community members remained frustrated after articulating their concerns and being met with a lack of acknowledgment from the DOD. During the DEIS process, various groups throughout the island collaborated to bring international attention about the US military buildup to the global peace and justice movement.⁴⁹

Pãgat Village: A Sacred Space

Since 1974 the ancient village of Pãgat has been registered as an archaeological site in the Guam National Register of Historic Places; this is a designation of historical significance, given by the US National Park Service.⁵⁰ In 2010 the National Trust for Historic Preservation, concerned with places of “architectural, cultural, or natural importance that are at risk of destruction or extreme damage,” identified Pãgat as one of the eleven most endangered historic places. Located along the northeast coastline of Guãhan, Pãgat is about three miles east of the village of Yigo. The area contains “remains of prehistoric structural stone foundations, known as lattes, freshwater caves, medicinal plants, as well as stone mortars, pottery and tools of the Chamoru people.”⁵¹ It is one of the “last remaining and best preserved pre-colonial site[s] owned by the Govern-

ment of Guam,” offering one of the most tangible connections to the island’s ancient past; it is “frequented by educators, traditional healers, fishermen and the public at large.”⁵² This deep historical connection influences the belief among Chamorus that Pãgat is a dwelling place for the souls of their ancestors, and they visit the area often to seek advice and engage in traditional and religious activities.

Despite the history and the present cultural significance of this space, the DOD planned to construct a live firing range complex immediately adjacent to and directed toward Pãgat Village.⁵³ In November 2010 We Are Guåhan, an organization created in response to the buildup, joined the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Guam Preservation Trust to file a lawsuit against the DOD, challenging the building of a complex of firing ranges at Pãgat Village. This legal campaign culminated in the DOD considering alternative locations for the firing range, and completing another environmental impact statement.

Inafa’ Maolek: Restoring the Balance

Many facets of Chamoru activism and social movement organizing have emerged in response to the military buildup, some of which build on the foundation of activism established in the mid- to late twentieth century in Guåhan. Local activism corresponds with overlapping cultural, environmental, and historical concerns. We argue that by using historical-cultural-environmental discourse, the struggle for Pãgat positioned movement actions within the broader cultural framework of inafa’ maolek.

Literally translated as “to make things good for each other,” inafa’ maolek is said by Chamoru scholars to be the foundation of Chamoru culture. It is based on the assumption that mutual respect must prevail over individualism.⁵⁴ Therefore, if “there was once a state or condition that was somehow altered, perhaps by an act of commission or omission, that must be restored to its original state or condition.”⁵⁵ This principle of interdependence has persisted in Chamoru culture despite centuries of colonial influence. We find that over time it shifts, however, in its articulation. Prior to colonization, this principle extended to the spirits, or aniti, of Chamoru ancestors and was key in the ancestral worship that drove Chamoru spirituality at the time. Later, after Catholicism had been introduced, inafa’ maolek became the value through which Chamorus maintained harmonious relations among extended family. Today, it is increasingly used to connect Chamorus and others in Guåhan to

their environment, and to encourage them to be stewards of *i guinahan i tano' yan tasi*, the resources of the land and the sea.

This framework offers a mode of communicating that begins to shift beyond identities that are dependent on US values and their colonial repetition in schools and institutions to articulate self. A concept of restoring harmony or order, the cultural values of *inafa' maolek* provided an effective mode of communicating and organizing the community around Pãgat by discursively articulating deep cultural connections and galvanizing opposition to the military's plans for the area. This concept is not an essential characteristic of the Chamoru people but a rhetorical production and a strategy for articulating collectivity first within society in Guãhan, but also within social movements. Using *inafa' maolek* as a cultural framework for analysis illuminates how activists focused on the local environment, culture, and history to assert the need for mutual respect and care for Pãgat and the broader island community. *Inafa' maolek* is also a reciprocal network and provides a strong challenge to the imbalance imposed by the US nation-state—the inequality, lack of representation, and colonial connection.

Among Pacific Islanders the struggles for sovereignty and decolonization are resistance activities. Struggles against militarization have also emerged through identity-based resistance that reveals the significant impact of colonization on the inherent collective rights of indigenous peoples. The history of displacement and land loss has helped radicalize Chamorus. Although many Chamorus serve in the US military, there is still a persisting sense that the US military already occupies enough land. According to Robert Underwood, *tãno'*, or land, is the one issue in Guãhan that can turn anyone who protests the United States, whether they be a soldier, a priest, a teacher, a nurse, into an activist.⁵⁶

Often weaving together these concerns, local activism demonstrates resistance through its articulations of cultural resources and environmental stewardship connecting to a deep historical framework. These articulations resonate with the local and indigenous population to craft identity among the inhabitants against the buildup, yet at the same time they must grapple with the US nation-state and characterizations of the island as part and parcel of US militarization without representation. The emergence of an overt visible Chamoru resistance is a relatively new development. Thus, applying a framework of resistance to contemporary Guãhan reveals the opportunities of myriad strategies of resistance.⁵⁷ The movement in Guãhan “is composed of numerous organizations, some of which have been fighting for decades, such as *I Nasion Chamoru* or Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R),

and some created just recently, such as Famoksayan,”⁵⁸ We Are Guåhan, and the Guåhan Coalition for Peace and Justice. These organizations and others focus on grassroots educational campaigns, protest at the local and federal level, and travel to testify at the United Nations. The efforts and experiences of the Chamoru movement emerge from a precarious situation of being intertwined with and part of the national belonging of the United States while being outside political decision-making. These examples indicate the complexity of resistance movements in the context of the dominant symbols and structures of the United States, of “Americanness,” and of security in the “Pacific Century.” Thus movement members must attend to the symbolic and structural elements of militarization, and to the material conditions that influence their efforts toward decolonization.

Prutehi Yan Difendi: Local Responses

The campaign to save Pâgat employed the slogan “prutehi yan difendi,” or “protect and defend.” This statement is taken directly from the inifresi, the Chamoru pledge, which offers to protect and defend the beliefs, culture, language, air, water, and the land of the Chamoru.⁵⁹ The inifresi was written by Bernadita Camacho-Dungca, an activist in the group OPI-R. It was created to help support the growing consciousness of Chamorus that saw that their history, their identity, and their future could not be fully accounted for within an American legal, political, and cultural framework. The American pledge of allegiance rang hollow because of Guåhan’s history and the continuing reality of colonization; a new pledge, to the imagined Chamoru nation, was necessary.

The inifresi contains a strong relationship between the culture and the environment. The command to “protect and defend” parallels military slogans, but in the local context the securitizing mantra was flipped by demanding individuals at the grassroots level to protect and defend against the US military buildup. This call to “protect our land and ocean. Defend our way of life” connects to the inifresi principles and the goal of appreciating the island homeland.⁶⁰ This discursive move also aligns with the cultural concept of *inafa’ maolek* by focusing on restoration and the struggle to make things right within the delicate balance of the environment. Coupling environmental resources alongside cultural resources provides the catalyst for direct action. These contemporary concerns were rooted within a broader historical frame that was effective in organizing opposition to the military relocation at Pâgat. The prutehi yan difendi efforts involved many different strategies from com-

munity cleanups where hundreds came out to remove trash along the trail, to protests where about three hundred people organized during a visit of federal officials to the Pāgat area. In this following section we focus in on two other prominent responses, the lawsuit against the DOD and the Heritage Hikes.

The Lawsuit: Challenging the DOD

In November 2010 a coalition of Guåhan groups filed a lawsuit against the DOD. The lawsuit argued that the US military violated federal historic preservation and environmental laws when selecting Pāgat as the location for a new live firing range. It argued that the US Navy failed to adequately consider alternative spaces for the firing range that would have less impact on historic and environmental sites.⁶¹ Even within the legal system, the efforts of local agencies were hindered by Guåhan's territorial status. The local movement was unable to challenge the buildup outright; instead, it was limited to attacking the United States for not going through the proper national legal channels when imposing the buildup on Guåhan. This situation demonstrates the complexity of identities as local activists and agencies strive to triumph in opposition to the United States from within the US domestic legal system. It is from this precarious position that activists sought to challenge US illegal land-taking and continuing militarized colonization on Guåhan soil by articulating Pāgat's distinctness and the island's separateness from the US nation-state.

These movement tactics simultaneously reveal an embedded sense of national belonging to the United States, which results paradoxically in expressions of continued dislocation even when organizing to sue the DOD. As the local activists pushed for recognition of Pāgat and attempted to achieve *inafa' maolek* with the surrounding environment, their arguments about the importance of the site were packaged within US labels of an "endangered historic place." This classification of Pāgat is complicated, because it is preserved for sites in the "United States," and by applying this designation as an argument in favor of saving Pāgat, the movement demonstrated its dependency on the US framework of environmental law and advocacy. In the attempt to articulate the rationale for protecting Pāgat, local organizations had to argue how this space was part of the US nation-state to "prove" its significance and to sustain a strong argument against the buildup. Absent these qualifications within US historical and environmental regulatory missions, Pāgat may have been further dislocated from the island landscape and designated for incorporation into the growing military landholdings. Even as the territorial designation for Guåhan establishes a precarious relation to the United States, by engaging in the en-

vironmental discourse of the nation-state, the efforts to preserve and protect Pãgat proved to be an effective strategy for the movement. In December 2011 the DOD indirectly admitted to not doing enough research on the selection of Pãgat for the firing range. The DOD was forced to conduct two more years of study. In 2013 it submitted a supplemental EIS (SEIS) that identified a new preferred site for the firing ranges, which also happens to be the site of an ancient Chamoru village, Litekyan.⁶² The DOD also announced plans to convert two-thirds of Tinian and annex the islands of Farallon de Medinilla and Pagan as part of a sprawling military training complex.⁶³

Heritage Hikes: Connecting to Our Lands

From November 2010 through December 2011, a few months after the lawsuit was filed, a series of Heritage Hikes were organized as part of continued efforts to educate and engage the community on the impacts of the military relocation.⁶⁴ The Heritage Hikes series had Chamoru titles, provided an opportunity for the local public to get to know the land, and were rooted in Chamoru cultural practices. The hikes offered a discursive shift toward *inafa' maolek*; they made direct ties with cultural resources, environmental stewardship, and the island's historical frame. Such maneuvers also generated greater interest and participation by situating the hikes within the terrain of the local landscape that would be affected by the buildup.

The first Heritage Hike series, *Tungo' i Estoriã-ta* (Know Our Story), focused on sites that would be affected by buildup and included historical sites previously threatened by military expansion. The hikes took locals to Pãgat to focus on the contemporary military plans and the proposed effects on the area.⁶⁵ The second hike series was *Un Nuebu na Inatan* (A New Look) that added a trip to Tumon, a site destroyed during the Spanish colonial period and a crucial area of US military land grabbing after World War II. These initial series of hikes were a great success, with over 240 people in attendance. The third series, *I Kantan I Latte Siha* (The Song of the Latte), gave the opportunity to learn more cultural history, whereas earlier hikes focused on learning about local places that were crucially and sometimes tragically involved in the history of American militarization in Guåhan. *Nã'i Tãtte, Chule' Tãtte* (Give Back, Take Back) was the final Heritage Hikes series; it focused on the complex history of US land returns and land grabs in Guåhan. Each hike included brief lectures about the history and current landscape, and they mobilized people to consider the buildup in relation to US militarization and its impacts on the island over the past century. Locations offered three representational goals for land.

1. Land (sort of) returned by the Federal Government,
2. Land currently held by the Federal Government,
3. Land which is being sought after by the Federal Government.⁶⁶

The hikes showed how land is held in a proprietary relationship with the US federal government; at no point is land left alone or completely separated from the US claim, or desires. The third set of hikes represented land in this way by repeating the hike to Pāgat and including visits to Hila'an Village and Haputo. Hila'an Village is a prehistoric village that was returned from the US federal government to the government of Guåhan in March 2011. On these hikes participants could see over seventy latte, archaeological remains unique to the Mariana Islands.⁶⁷ Ancient Chamorus used latte as the foundation for homes and other structures, providing the literal foundation for life on Guåhan. The latte maintains cultural significance; it represents a symbolic foundation of Chamoru identities as rooted in this ancient history and is often used as a metaphor for Chamoru strength and permanence over centuries of change. The hikes strengthened connections to land and latte as resources for mutual respect and caring. They navigated through historical and future concerns about the island. Heritage Hikes were a prominent feature of grassroots organizing: they told stories of the locales and shared information about the buildup; they used Chamoru language to establish cultural significance and build community. The hikes offered a way to take value in "our history, and our culture, and our land" by helping "educate ourselves on our true history."⁶⁸ Hikes worked to recenter Chamoru history and cultural values to change Guåhan's "story."

Navigating toward Decolonization

Cultural and political responses were woven together to create a movement to Save Pāgat, which achieved a decolonial character. The desire to protect Pāgat drew energy from a challenge to the American claim to Guåhan and ability to decide what happens to the lands. As Konai Helu Thaman explains, "Decolonization implies an attempt to reflect critically on the nature, scope, and processes of colonialism in the Pacific Islands (or Oceania), particularly its impact on colonized people and their environments."⁶⁹ During the earlier periods of Spanish colonization, Chamorus became disconnected in many ways from their land, which weakened their cultural idea of preserving and protecting their natural resources. As the US military moved to take control of Pāgat, a local discourse emerged that asserted a different value and a different meaning to the land. This was new, but also connected to older values.

The movement represented a discursive decolonization. It challenged the US legacy of land grabbing and colonialism while reimagining older values and empowering contemporary Chamorus in new ways.

People rallied around Pãgat as a way to connect to their ancestors, upset by the idea that the spirits of ancient Chamorus would be disturbed by bullets and bombs nearby. People felt a need to protect the land and the heritage of the place. As people protested and began to speak out against the military expansion, Pãgat became a symbol of how Guåhan's people wanted more control over what happened on their island, how they were tired of being a colony, of not having power in the process, and of living in the shadow of the United States. Pãgat symbolized the ancient Chamoru value of *inafa' maolek* and the need to *prutehi yan defendi*, even as the actions of social movements and the process of decolonization were riddled by the dominance of US legal frameworks and settler colonial control. Whereas the US military may have seen Guåhan as a possession to do with as it pleased, the movement to defend Pãgat countered and moved beyond the ability of the United States as an imagined entity to contain. Pãgat and Guåhan were not simply assets, bases, or strategic locations. They became, in the discourse of activists, sacred sites: the homes of our ancestors, tied to histories and values that predated the United States that could not be accounted for in the experiences of US colonialism.

Pãgat: Advising Pacific Currents

The local activism grappled with complex and often contradictory roadblocks associated with American influence and simultaneous disregard for the island. However, the interweaving of Chamoru cultural beliefs and practices from *inafa' maolek* to the *inifresi* provide evidence of the indigenous element generated by local responses. The US military buildup continues, and Guåhan remains at the intersection of militarization, colonization, and American national identity. Connecting these phenomena illuminates how the political, social, and economic context of contemporary struggles is a continuation of past conflicts. Pãgat was a symbolic tool for the movement and also represented a site for cultural contestation. By rhetorically positioning the local demands within the cultural framework of the people, their efforts prevailed to organize communities in opposition to the buildup and in preservation of the sacred site of Pãgat.

As a site, it illustrates the implications for social movement organizing and resistance that occurred through local and international efforts centered on the

issues of ancestral land, language and cultural revitalization, antimilitarization, and decolonization. Pâgat means “to give advice,” which conveys the importance of the land and the sacred area that commands reverence. In a similar fashion, this case study hopes to give counsel to the next wave of resistance to US militarization. In reestablishing a respectful relationship to Pâgat, the people raised indigenous critiques to speak out and act publicly. Its existence as a material site with environmental and cultural significance provides further strength for its rhetorical power as a tool of the movement and offers opportunities for transoceanic dialogue.

By foregrounding Chamoru ways of knowing and emphasizing the role of rhetoric in the struggle for social and political change, this project informs broader inquiries of US military policy toward non-self-governing territories and contributes to interdisciplinary work in American studies and Native Pacific cultural studies. This case study shows how exploring our own ways of thinking and knowing works to create a Pacific studies that is “Pacific in orientation and inclusive in its processes, contexts, and outcomes.”⁷⁰ Centering from Guåhan and navigating outward allow us to attend to the interrelated critiques of settler colonialism and challenges to US cultural imperialism and militarization that speak to problematics of American studies. This offers a constructive area for critical inquiry and interdisciplinary work with indigenous studies and decolonization methodologies, particularly the rhetorical processes of contemporary indigenous resistance to settler colonialism throughout the Pacific.

The movement in Guåhan is characterized by actions that both depend on and reinforce communicative channels directed against the US nation-state. This involves connecting outside Guåhan, such as with the Chamoru diaspora located throughout Hawai‘i and the US continent, as well as linking up with groups addressing militarization in Japan. The local movement provides a way to shift the worldview and orientation away from the devastating effects of settler colonialism and toward decolonization. It demonstrates multifaceted strategies of opposition to the US nation-state, the complexity of Chamoru indigenous identity and US national belonging, and the discursive tactics of antibase movements manifested by politically vexed locales. We hope that this project also provides possibilities for creating strong alliances and dialogues with the ongoing antibase movement and struggles of Okinawans as they continue to seek justice. Given the political status of Guåhan, the efficacy of these efforts remains to be seen. Understanding how dominant political discourse serves the foundations of colonial ideology is a crucial recognition for social movements seeking to build solidarity and to voice their demands for a decolonized future.

Centering in Guåhan and from sacred places engages our efforts to restore the balance. From this understanding, peoples worldwide are in better positions to launch their emancipatory potential, to challenge, resist, and wage peaceful forms of protest against the insidious forms of colonial violence throughout Oceania and beyond.

Notes

Si Yu'os Ma'åse para i linahyan ni' manannok yan mangahulo' kontra i machule'-ña Págat, ya i mamaila na linahyan siha ni' para u prutehi yan difende mo'na i tano' Chamoru siha. Thank you to those who came out and stood up against the taking of Págat and to those who will continue to protect and defend Chamoru lands in the future. We are grateful to the *American Quarterly* guest editors and reviewers for their insightful edits and critical reading of our work, and to Isa Kelley-Bowman (University of Guam) and Judy Rohrer (Western Kentucky University) for supportive feedback on earlier drafts of this project.

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