



*Steadfast Movement Around Micronesia:
Satowan Enlargements Beyond Migration*
L. Quan Bautista

Reviewed by MAC MARSHALL

Lola Quan Bautista. (2010) Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. 177 pp, 12 plates, 5 maps, 19 tables, 6 chapters, notes, references cited, index, \$52 (cloth).

The author of this timely book is one of a new generation of Pacific Islander scholars trained in the United States. When she returned home to her native island of Guam in the summer following her first year of college at Washington State University to help her father work in his cucumber farm, she discovered that he had hired a number of young men from Chuuk (Federated States of Micronesia or FSM) as farm laborers. They had come to Guam seeking employment soon after the Compact of Free Association was signed between the FSM and the USA in 1986. Quan Bautista worked alongside these young men all that summer harvesting, packing, and delivering cucumbers to Guam's large tourist hotels and small groceries and the summer's experience piqued her curiosity about her co-workers' home islands. She decided to major in Sociology at Washington State and when it came time to select a topic for her senior undergraduate thesis she chose to conduct a small field research project on alcohol consumption in Chuuk during 1989 (p. 27). For her visit she was sponsored by a prominent local businessman and politician and his family from Lukunor Atoll, Raymond Setik, and she became a *pwiipwi* 'created sibling'¹ with one of Setik's daughters.

Subsequently, Quan Bautista enrolled in the graduate program in Sociology at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa and when she needed to design a dissertation research project Chuuk beckoned once again. The goal of her doctoral research was to study the movement of people from Chuuk back and forth to Guam, and more broadly to investigate the concept of mobility as it is understood and employed by the people of Chuuk State, FSM. The results of that research form the basis of the book under review. In the author's words, "How people from Chuuk move about and their cultural interpretations of movement itself, is the focus of this book" (p. 2).

As before, the summer's farm work on Guam in 1986 influenced her later research. It led her to focus on the people of Satowan Islet, Satowan Atoll, in the Lower Mortlock Islands of Chuuk State because her *pwiipwi* (who is from Lukunor Atoll in the Lower Mortlocks) knew a man from Satowan (Simon Sivas) whose father had stayed with Raymond Setik in Chuuk's urban center of Weno.² Simon was married to a woman (Mama Sarlote) who in turn was related to some of the men who had worked on Quan Bautista's father's farm on Guam. So when Quan

Bautista arrived on Satowan bearing a letter from her *pwiipwi* asking that they care for her the two of them took her under their wing.

The book is organized into six chapters and includes five good maps.³ The opening chapter provides the reader with an introduction to the study's goals and the locations where research was carried out. Chapter 2 concentrates on the movement of people from the FSM to Guam, especially following passage of the Compact of Free Association in 1986, and argues that they are "transmigrants" insofar as they periodically return to their home islands (e.g., for funerals) and because many claim that they eventually expect to return to live back home. The excellent data that Quan Bautista provides in this chapter on remittances in cash and kind are among the first that we have for Micronesians living abroad. In her third chapter she mounts a critique of much anthropological research in Micronesia, suggesting that there has been a failure to examine "the important question of how a culture integrates mobility" (p. 43). She then proceeds to a discussion of the history and present status of migrants from the Mortlock Islands⁴ to the urban center that was established on Weno following World War Two. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of how social space is configured on Satowan. That discussion leads directly to Chapter 4 where she endeavors to connect "Emic Understandings of Movement" to the life cycle of individuals framed within what she terms "proper" and "improper" forms of mobility. Chapter 5 introduces "Conceptions of Social Groups" and provides rich ethnographic data on the thirty household units in the villages she studied on Satowan. The final chapter seeks to enlarge on the traditional idea of migration as a one-way street and to frame her argument "in opposition to Euro-American epistemologies of migration" (p. 142).

Given the amount of circular migration from the FSM and the other Freely Associated States (FAS) of the former U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (the Republic of Palau—ROP—and the Republic of the Marshall Islands—RMI—as well as the FSM) to Guam, Hawai'i, and the Mainland USA over the past quarter century there has been surprisingly little social science research focused on such mobility. Quan Bautista's work is important in helping to document such population movement and to understand it from the perspective of the Islanders themselves. Her data collection included a 2-month stay on Satowan Islet interspersed between two different periods of survey and interview work on Guam that totaled 7 months during 1997-1998. She then spent approximately 2 months conducting a survey of Satowan households on Weno. These 11 months of research constitute the data base for *Steadfast Movement Around Micronesia*.⁵ The movement on which she focused is that between Satowan Islet and Weno on the one hand, and Weno and Guam on the other, given that one cannot go directly from Satowan to Guam without passing through Weno. While movement to Weno from Satowan is via small inter-island ships, that from Weno to Guam is via several flights per week on Air Micronesia's jet aircraft.

Quan Bautista's training is as a sociologist, but her book draws usefully on social science more generally and is not limited to sociological sources. In part this is because she was strongly influenced by Murray Chapman, a human geographer at the University of Hawai'i who she counts as her mentor (p. xv). Numerous citations to the work of human geographers appear throughout the book. She also relies heavily in her book on publications by sociocultural anthropologists who have carried out studies in Micronesia, and she expands this (particularly in

her conclusions) to include research by anthropologists elsewhere in the Pacific Islands and to a few anthropological studies from outside Oceania as well.

Quan Bautista uses two concepts as key organizing devices for her project: circular mobility and transnationalism. The former concept derives from human geography and the latter from sociology and anthropology. Although she refers to these as theoretical perspectives or frameworks (p. 2), I do not think either qualifies formally as a theory. Rather, circular mobility offers a way to look at patterns of population movement among two or more places over time, and transnationalism is simply a term that describes the relationships that continue to obtain (or not) between those who move away from a home place to another country and those who remain, recognizing that the sets of persons who move and remain are in continual flux.

Wishing to present an insider's view of "steadfast movement" Quan Bautista takes three words from the local language in Chuuk that she believes offer alternatives to the kinship groupings commonly discussed by anthropologists who have worked in the islands. The first such word is the intransitive verb *uruur* which she translates as 'to wander'. This word, like so many in the Chuukese language, has multiple meanings, and that poses a dilemma for the way Quan Bautista uses it. As Ward H. Goodenough and Hiroshi Sugita indicate in their definitive *Trukese-English Dictionary*, *wuruur* (the correct spelling) means 'visit, take a walk or stroll; loaf or play' (1980:386), and Quan Bautista clearly understands this (p. 96). But while visiting/walking/strolling bear a similarity to wandering, it is important to note that there is a separate Chuukese lexeme for 'vagabondage, wandering, traveling about': *táwán* (Goodenough and Sugita 1990:434).⁶ In my view Quan Bautista might more appropriately have used this word (*táwán*) to build her argument about the movement of people from place to place. This exemplifies a few difficulties that arise in her study because she does not speak the Chuukese language (p. 15).

The second Chuukese word Quan Bautista uses to help present an insider's view of mobility is *falang* which she translates as 'homesite', and she notes that it is a word with several meanings (p. 112), one of which is 'hearth' (p. 114). Apparently she did not consult Ward H. Goodenough's classic study, *Property, Kin, and Community on Truk* (1966, orig. 1951) in her discussion of *falang*, since Goodenough makes it clear that *fanag* (Chuuk Lagoon spelling) is the named site of a lineage's earth ovens and the central work place for lineage members when they work as a group. In that sense it functions as a lineage's "homesite," but not necessarily as the everyday homesite of nuclear families, extended families or descent lines. All of these groupings are encompassed by a matrilineage which is only very rarely a co-resident domestic unit. Quan Bautista seems to understand this when she writes that "The *falang*...speaks more to the ways in which domestic units are socially enmeshed; it does not always describe the ways in which domestic groups perform activities on a daily basis" (p. 110). But note *a la* Goodenough that a *falang* is a location—a site or place for lineage work—and not a social group *per se*.

Quan Bautista's use of a third Chuukese word, *pei*, which she translates as 'household', accurately captures the locations of everyday homesteads occupied by families and descent lines. In her words, "The *pei* entails a minimal kinship grouping sharing a common residence and engaging in common activities of consumption and socialization" (p. 111). But the problem here once again is that while she correctly understands *falang* and *pei* to be "vital to an emic

understanding of a household” (p.120), she confuses these terms for particular landed sites (places) with the social groups that own and occupy those sites.

Soon after she arrived on Satowan Quan Bautista realized that completing a full census of the islet’s entire population was more than could be accomplished in two months’ time. She therefore wisely concentrated her census and other data collection on two of Satowan’s four villages that had a total of 285 people in thirty households.⁷ Households were viewed as active units of social organization with control over the movements of their constituent members, and that perspective allowed Quan Bautista to tilt against previous studies that placed their focus on individuals seeking to maximize their own economic potential (pp. 5-6). In her analysis of mobility as a strategy employed by household members she sorted the sample households into four types: (1) broadly extended households (of which there were nine examples), (2) extended nuclear households (five examples), (3) nuclear households (ten examples), and (4) one-woman households (six examples). She found mobility “to be strategic for the broadly extended and extended-nuclear households, but unlikely for both nuclear and *aleman* [one-woman] households” (p. 126).

Near the end of her book the author emphasizes the significant role played by women in processes of mobility, movement, and migration, and she chides other social scientists who’ve worked in Micronesia for a tendency “to romanticize the image of women as rooted, circumscribed, or coherent rather than to focus on contemporary issues of womanhood” (p. 148). Quan Bautista goes on to observe that “What has been learned about Micronesian women on Guam indicates that their role is not solely or simply to follow husbands” (p. 149) and she then reiterates a point she made earlier in her book that migrant women on Guam remitted more consistently than men, returned home more frequently than men, and were also more concerned than men about children’s education on Guam. To this salutary point I can only write, “Hear! Hear!” and to suggest that Quan Bautista’s insights on differences in gendered behavior among migrants receive further study.

There are a few omissions of work that would have strengthened Quan Bautista’s argument about movement/mobility and about gendered differences in behavior. I mention these here not to detract from this book’s useful contribution to the literature on Micronesia, but rather so that the future research likely to grow out of this study can include them. All are focused in one way or another on Chuuk or Chuukese migrants, and two have specific connections to the Mortlocks and Satowan Atoll. Dernbach (2005) studied people from Kuttu Islet, Satowan Atoll both on Kuttu and on Weno, and her material gives rich attention to gender differences. Larson (1989) conducted highly pertinent research on college students from Chuuk State, FSM who studied in the USA and then returned home in search of employment. Moral (1996) explicitly explored Chuukese women’s senses of body, self, and sexuality. Lastly, Oleson (2007) completed a fine investigation of migrants from Ta Islet, Satowan Atoll to Pohnpei that importantly includes information on their continued contact and return visits to their home community in the Mortlocks.

Finally, a few minor quibbles. Quan Bautista correctly translates *makal* as ‘paramount chief’ on p. 67, but then on p. 114 she translates it as ‘chiefs’. There is only one *makal* in any Mortlockese community; the proper word for other chiefs is *samol*. On p. 101 Quan Bautista refers to Kuttu and Oneop each as “another atoll,” and later on to Moch as “an atoll” (p. 105). All

are islets and named communities contained *within* atolls (Satowan Atoll in the cases of Kuttu and Moch and Lukunor Atoll in Oneop's case). Also on p. 101 Pohnpei is referred to as "an island nation;" it is an island, but not a nation unto itself (it is the capital of the FSM), and Nama is called an atoll (it is a raised coral island, but not an atoll). On p. 105 it is highly unlikely that a woman would act *re Merika* since that means 'like an American man'; she might act like a *finen Merika* 'American woman'. And last but not least (since I wrote the study to which reference is made), *Weekend Warriors* is a study of alcohol use and drunken behavior but it is emphatically *not* about alcoholism.

Quibbles aside, I want to close this review by complimenting Quan Bautista for pioneering research on the movement of people from the FSM back and forth to Guam, for drawing our attention to the importance of mobility as a value in Micronesian societies, and for alerting us to the significance of gender differences in patterns of migration and remittance. Her book belongs on the shelf of every serious student of Micronesia.

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Notes

¹ *Pwiipwi* is the Chuukese word for a 'created sibling'; Bautista refers to this as a "promised sister" relationship. For more information on *pwiipwi* and other non-biogenetic kinship relationships in Chuuk see Marshall (1977).

² The name of this small high island in Chuuk Lagoon is properly given as Wééné, although the Americanized spelling of Weno that Bautista uses has become commonplace.

³ Given the prominence of Guam for this study I wish that a map of that island also had been included.

⁴ This term covers the *makatea* island of Nama and the ten distinct named communities found on the five atolls farther to the southeast of Chuuk Lagoon, namely Losap, Namoluk, Ettal, Lukunor and Satowan.

⁵ Although her Table 1.2 (p. 14) also reports 7 months of survey research with Satowan people in Hawai'i during 1998-1999, none of that information is included in her book as far as I could determine.

⁶ Quan Bautista lists Goodenough and Sugita's 1990 supplementary volume in her bibliography, but not the original 1980 volume.

⁷ Satowan Islet's total de facto population at the time of Quan Bautista's fieldwork there in 1998 was approximately 900 people, so her sample covered about one-third of the de facto residents (p. 9). The two villages she studied had 199 household members resident elsewhere than on Satowan Islet at the time of her study (p. 119).

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