

PALAUAN SONGS AND DANCES

A Program Sponsored by the Koror Municipality and the Palau Congress

For Presentation at the Community Center

Wednesday

October 21, 1959

## PALAUAN SONGS AND DANCES

To initiate tonight's program in the proper spirit, you will be led in an Elituuk Procession from the Royal Palauan Hotel to the Community Center by the elder women of Ibukel Hamlet at 7:30 p.m. The chant, composed for this traditional and rather rowdy way of welcoming guests to a village, will be as follows:

"Mellomes arengul e dachelbai le choitii abelual ma  
Blil edimere maoldingel ra chelebuul ngaraikal beluu."

In translation:

"These Excellencies, with enlightened hearts, have relinquished the comfortable life of their fine country that they may know the forlorn and deprived life of our land."

Following the Palauan feast, dancing will be initiated by the elder women of Ngerechemai. In general tonight's program is the product of a recent celebration opening a newly repaired Community House (bai) at Ngerechemai hamlet, Koror. It is largely through funds raised at such celebrations that Palauan communities are able to build and maintain the institution of the community center. This earlier celebration, which lasted about a day and a half, involved dance groups from five different Koror hamlets; two of these hamlets, Ngerechemai and Ibukel, have been requested to perform dances this evening.

The verses for the dances performed by the groups from Ngerechemai Hamlet were written with tonight's occasion in view.

### I. Dances by the Ngaraseseb Women's Club of Ngerechemai

1. Psalm to the Rainbow God (Nglikei Orrekim). The verse of this traditional dance contains archaic and some unknown words, many of which seem to have only magic-symbol significance, and thus no translation is offered. The spirit in which the dance is performed, however, is known.

This dance was first performed as a psalm of praise to the Rainbow God (Orrekim) by the Demigoddess Oberekei. The Rainbow God in Palau appears in the sky before gathering storm clouds and his manifestation is as a guarantor that, through his beneficent control, devastation will be averted. This evening the women of Ngerechemai offer the psalm in the same spirit to the guest-leaders of the Trust Territory.

2. Psalm for the Occasion (Boideinglolk). In the same traditional class as the first performance, the second dance is characterized by the use of batons and by a verse which was written especially for this evening. The following translation is offered:

"Thanks to you, our Rubak and Captain, Mr. Mahoney, with your forthright leadership and your staff, through your various good efforts, these two great persons have come to inquire after us. Surely, Captain, upon your knowledge of our land, we ask that you make your best recommendations."

"We believe that the Spanish, Germans and Japanese were interested mostly in using our land for their profit. It seems they had no plan for the advancement of our economy and our civilization. Now, in these American times, we should praise our leadership, since their skilled way will lead our country toward improvement."

"That which you see and hear while in our land, we ask you please, please, take firmly to heart without forgetfulness. Your trip is long, and on your way back to America, you may forget. But when you return you will be meeting and there will be talk about what you learned here in Palau. We ask you, then as well, to study our situation with care."

3. A Palauan-Yapese Dance (Bulukab). This dance is characterized by Yapese hand movements (without batons) and a current, popular Palauan tune. The verse was composed in honor of the distinguished visitors:

"Fortunately, at a time when we want but know not how to achieve, these great persons have come to decide if our way is good. We feel that, following our present course, things will go well. This is because of the strength of your leadership. Thus we ask again, please, please, when you return to America, think wisely about our problems."

## II. Dances by Young Men and Women of Ngerechemai Hamlet

The Palauan Matamaton: the Palauan matamaton dances are a lively combination of military commands, brittle choral movements, mixed languages and tomfoolery. The style is said to have originated at Angaur, Palau, when the Germans, using labor recruited throughout Micronesia, mined phosphorus there. It was promoted, especially, by expert male dancers from Truk and Ponape. The name, according to an unverified source, is Ponapean and Japanese in origin. Maton is supposedly the Ponapean word for this type of dance. Many years ago a number of Ponapeans lived in exile in Aimeliik, Palau; among them a girl who was mistress to a Japanese and who loved to dance. Thus, almost every evening the Japanese man would come to the village and, upon finding his mistress dancing, would say with despair: "Dancing, again!" or "Mata-maton!" (Ponapean's, however, tell us that MATAMATON means "to play.")

Four Matamaton are programmed as follows:

1. Pump (Bemkii), a dance with harmonica accompaniment. Perhaps the motions suggest the familiarity we now feel in Palau with the flat tire.

2. To Praise (Chodanges), with verse as follows:

"We come in greeting to praise you, our hopes have been met. Why? Because we are a people with a forlorn life and we want civilization. Thus we ask again, when you can, arrange to come again."

"Americans - we see that because of war many places have suffered. Since, thanks to you, we have been helped, we shall not forget our debt to you throughout our lives. We ask, and plead, do not abandon us."

"This is the peace for which we wish. From now on, all for the good of all, using our strength for our selves and remembering throughout the island that we build - ah - remember it no matter what."

3. If it can be done (Mosi Dekiru Ni Nareba) with harmonica accompaniment.

4. Do it with spirit (Mongilkekiau), a lively number with a verse combining nonsense and military commands from German, Japanese and American.

III. Matamaton by the Young People of Ibukel

Presenting something of a contrast with the preceding dance-verses, the young people of Ibukel chose to retain the original flavor and content of the dances they presented at the aforementioned celebration at Ngerechemai. Thus, in a mood akin to Calypso (in its native environment) the Palauan matamaton verses may cover a wide territory from love songs, to political satire. Though the matamaton medium is not exactly traditional, the use of song to seal a peace between villages, to inflame to war, to describe a humorous event, to shame, taunt or simply poke fun is characteristically Palauan. A little of this flavor is found in the following verses.

Dances by Ibukel Hamlet

1. A Ponapean Song.

PONAPEAN

Bitalong ngimonti tamerata  
nonimange kemeye weiye  
Tapue imasik kalo rar

Imeniko baiyen namimese  
nieti puenikaberame  
Obekenikilang

Nioumu kilaito akinikara  
Saiyen lingenin abikari  
Metakeri yeita

PALAUAN

Bemtuu mem tiuii a bedengek  
emosumech er ngak  
eakmal choremang

Ulekumeng kahol tial renguk  
mak mkisii meke  
mesang a chelsei

Sel mdum era medak  
ea renguk a kmong dichel a  
bisebusech a mla tuichak

ENGLISH

Come caress my body,  
Massage my body  
For I am suffering

I wish my heart were  
Something like a box  
So I could open it for you to see

Whenever you look at me  
I think the light of twilight  
Is shining on me

2. A song composed to answer certain accusations, for performance at the opening of the community bai at Ngerechemai in September. There are personal names and group names used in the verse which had meaning to the participants and there is, in the context, a "poetic" reference to a group of fishermen, in one of the villages, that years ago used to catch fish by the illegal method of blowing off dynamite (i.e., the "kneeding something" is in reference to the preparation of the dynamite charge).

Cheledui and Masan, and the Ngarachosonge too,  
We now go home, turning our backs on you.

We heard rumors about a certain cafe  
And so, we looked inside of it today.

In Ngerekesaol there are some fishers hiding.  
They are fierce, they are frightening, is the tiding.

While driving on the reef Obak 'l Takuji \*  
Saw a large rock (the asterisk's for Taxi).

There two people kneeded something, we hear,  
You'll get your hands cut, Mobel dear.

3. The following popular song is thought of as sung by a young girl in Babelthuap, reflecting upon the "faster" life in Koror.

Come to think about it, now that it is evening  
I suppose all have gone driving  
I am simply here, lonely, simply  
Watching the canoes coming and going

I suppose they've gone to Ngeredis at Imungs  
Or, maybe, some are at Ngemelachel  
Or sitting on the dock at Mangtekang  
Or at the dock where the ships come in.

Well, soon it will be morning (morning will be breaking)  
Now I suppose they are coming home from their drive.  
My eyes are opened and I have gotten cold  
I get my blanket and my pillow.

4. MATAMATON, with harmonica accompaniment

5. The Sorrow of Love (Koe no Nasake)

So we parted in good will  
I waited long, you came, but left at once  
I have been true to those things you said -  
Like a fool

I always do nothing but wait for you.

Lucy - you - do you think about the things you said to me  
You left at once, leaving me high and dry

If we part, I will meet you again when I can  
At least, when I die my heart will return again to me  
If we part, I will meet you again when I can  
At least, when I die my heart will return again to me.

6. Final Matamaton by Ibukel Young People

Welcome Mr. Seaton and the people who came with you  
You came to visit us and we are very pleased.

Chorus:

Let us be joyful and give praise to Secretary Seaton  
He came to visit us so let us join together in our  
great thanks.