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Donald H. Rubinstein, PhD, MPH

Micronesian Area Research Center
University of Guam

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Donald H. Rubinstein, PhD, MPH

This paper discusses the historical and ethnographic literature on abortion in Guam, in order to ascertain cultural traditions of abortion in Chamorro and Micronesian culture. First, historical and ethnographic writings on Guam are reviewed, that pertain directly to the question of abortion in Chamorro culture. Although the historical record on this topic is scanty, observations by early Spanish commentators and historians provide explicit accounts of abortion in Chamorro culture. Secondly, ethnographic writings on other Micronesian cultures are reviewed. These studies are considerably more numerous and thorough than the comparable material on Chamorro culture. The ethnographic record shows that among societies that are culturally related or had close and long-term contact with Chamorro culture, abortion methods are known and practiced. On the basis of this review, it is fair to say that abortion methods were known and practiced in Chamorro culture at the time of the Spanish invasion and during the early period of Spanish occupation on Guam. Furthermore, the ethnographic record indicates that techniques of abortion are known and practiced in all the major Micronesian cultural areas, including Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and the Marshall Islands, as well as in Filipino culture. It is also evident that post-contact Chamorro society received cultural influences from Micronesian and Filipino cultures that had extensive knowledge of abortion methods and that practiced abortion.

ABORTION IN CHAMORRO CULTURE

The earliest historical reference that was found to abortion in Guam is in an 18th century centennial history of the Philippines Province and the Society of Jesus, published in 1749 and written by Pedro Murillo Velarde, a Jesuit priest and historian stationed in the Philippines (excerpt cited in McGrath 1973:220). Velarde was evidently quoting an earlier writer's statement, but that source has not yet been located in the Spanish Documents Collection at the Micronesian Area Research Center. Most likely he was citing a comment from Jesuit letters written in the early 1700s from

Guam, or else from the official reports from the governorship of Lieutenant General Juan Antonio Pimentel. Pimentel was the Spanish Colonial Governor from 1709 to 1720 on Guam, and the historical records attest to Governor Pimentel's harsh treatment of the Chamorros.

The Jesuit historian Joannis Joseph Delgado was probably using Velarde's or the earlier source in a document he wrote in 1751:

There is in said [Marianas] islands a governor appointed by the King, [which is] a useful and easy occupation since he has little governing to do, inasmuch as today, all the residents, including the Spaniards and the people from Manila who are living there, barely reach 3,000. According to some people, the cause of this diminution was a great epidemic from which many died. But others give other reasons, such as that they cannot abide the yoke of the Spaniards because of their great pride and haughtiness, and that they would like to live as they did in the past, in freedom and [following their] barbarous customs. Because of this, many hang themselves and others kill themselves [each other?]; and there are those who flee to other distant islands. The women, likewise, purposely sterilize themselves; or if they conceive, they find ways to abort, and some kill their children after birth in order to save them from the subjugation of the Spaniards" (Delgado 1751, Folio 83, trans. by M. Driver).

A possible allusion to Chamorros' self-inflicted deaths and abortions appears in a letter dated September 20, 1722, sent to the viceroy of New Spain (Mexico), reporting on the "Indians of the Marianas." This letter was written shortly after the repressive governorship of Pimentel, and was protesting the abusive administration. "...[T]here is no brake with which to restrain his [governor of the Mariana Islands] abuses and injustices toward the recently converted unfortunates and so everything is being notably reversed and the vexed Indians (seeing themselves in such an oppressive slavery) do things unworthy of their professed faith" (Alcorobarratia 1722, trans. M. Driver).

Velarde's 1749 observation was repeated in the multi-volume study by the Spanish historian Juan de la Concepción, another Jesuit priest based in the Philippines. Writing in 1788, de la Concepción addressed the problem of the depopulation of the Chamorro people, and attributed it to several factors, including suicide, abortion and infanticide.

"This very large diminution of population comes from the subjugation imposed upon them by the force of arms. As lovers of liberty they could not tolerate a foreign yoke. This became so painful for them that, not being able to free themselves of it, they preferred to lose their lives by hanging and by other desperate means. The women purposely sterilized

themselves, and they threw their newborn children into the sea, convinced that an early death would free them of travails and a painful life -- [in death] they would be fortunate and happy. Subjugation was so despicable that, for them, it was the ultimate and most deplorable calamity" (Volume 7:348-9, trans. by M. Driver).

This phrase "purposely sterilized themselves" in de la Concepción is ambiguous, but is usually interpreted to refer to intentional abortion (Thompson 1947:204-5; cf McGrath 1973:220). This statement evidently is the basis for several other historical references to abortion in Chamorro culture. The statement was accepted and repeated by Abbé Rochon in 1783 (1891:83), Chamisso in 1817 (Kotzebue 1967, Vol. 3:78-9), Freycinet in 1820 (1839:330), Ibáñez y García in 1886 (1990:83), and Beardsley in 1964 (1964:135). None of these authors added original observations on abortion in Chamorro culture; on the other hand, none of them disputed the earlier observation.

Twentieth century ethnographic accounts of Guam indicate that abortion methods are known. Laura Thompson, an anthropologist who studied Chamorro culture prior to World War II, and also wrote extensively on Marianas archaeology, summarized four contemporary techniques of abortion.

"Several means of bringing on abortion are known. (1) Boil a small piece of ironwood (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) trunk, from which the bark has been removed, with *aguardiente*. Drink one cup from this brew three times. This is the most effective dose. (2) Boil the roots and leaves of the *chaguan lemae* (*Cyperus Kyllingia*) grass and drink a dose of this three or four times. (3) Mix ground *plemento* pepper with *aguardiente*, and drink one small glassful. (4) Grind *kapok* (*Ceiba pentandra*) root, boil, and drink" (Thompson 1947:201).

"Occasionally abortions are induced artificially by one of the methods described on page 201. After an abortion the foetus is usually buried near the house" (Thompson 1947:240).

ABORTION IN FILIPINO AND 17TH CENTURY HISPANIC CULTURE

The knowledge and cultural acceptance of abortion methods in Filipino culture has relevance to evaluating the issue of abortion in contemporary Chamorro culture, owing to the long and close relationship of these two cultures on Guam. Chamorro language and culture during the past three centuries has assimilated innumerable items of Filipino origins. Indeed one might argue that the imprint of Filipino culture has been at least as pervasive if not more widespread than that of Hispanic culture on Chamorro culture. Population numbers are one rough measure of cultural

influence. Mixed Chamorro-Filipino marriages by the mid-1700's were more common than Chamorro-Spanish marriages, and by the early 1800s, Filipinos outnumbered Spanish on Guam by nearly two to one (Thompson 1947:35-36).

There is a large cultural repertoire of folk abortifacients in the Philippines. Over three dozen techniques have been described (Damo 1970, Demetria 1969). These have been summarized (Yu and Liu 1980:137-141) under seven categories, including (1) external applications with herbal concoctions; (2) external pressure, including combinations of forceful massage and squeezing of the abdomen, applying a poultice to the woman's abdomen, and applying weight to a bamboo pole placed across the woman's abdomen; (3) internal intrusions, including the insertion of wires or fingers into the vaginal canal, or the application of a hot enema; (4) use of chemicals ingested orally, including a variety of locally produced pharmacological agents, quinine, ergot tablets, paregoric, and alcoholic drinks; (5) use of inanimate objects, such as infusions made from magnetic stones that are soaked in water or ground and mixed with water; (6) herbal preparations for internal consumption, made with the roots, barks, seeds, or leaves of a number of plants; and (7) external pressure combined with herbal consumption, which is the most commonly used method.

It is noteworthy that abortion techniques are culturally elaborated in the Philippines, despite their illegality, the disapproval of the Roman Catholic Church, and the "restrictive sexual mores" (op cit, 141). Also, it appears that the practice is equally common in rural and urban areas, and among the low, middle, and upper class Filipinos (op cit, 139-40).

Chamorro society underwent a period of profound and rapid restructuring following the Spanish invasion and conquest in the latter third of the seventeenth century. It is relevant therefore to consider historical attitudes and practices regarding abortion in Hispanic society of the time, which may have influenced Chamorro attitudes that emerged from the initial period of intense disruption and early cultural contact.

Payne's recent historical overview of Spanish Catholicism (1984) makes the point that seventeenth century Spanish sexual mores were "rather relaxed" and that the cities were character-

ized by crime, prostitution, vice, and a "cynical attitude toward common morality" (op cit, p. 59). The institution of marriage was often mocked, and even clerical guidelines on abortion were "remarkably tolerant" (Kamen 1980:296, cited op cit, p. 59). Abortion and infanticide were both practiced as the common post-conception means of family size limitation for centuries in Europe (Gies 1987:13; Flinn 1981:46), and neither contraception nor abortion were terribly controversial subjects (Gies 1987:304). It does not seem likely, therefore, that Chamorro society would have encountered and assimilated strong anti-abortion cultural values from seventeenth century Spanish administrators, relocated prisoners, or even clerics.

ABORTION IN OTHER MICRONESIAN CULTURES

The numerous references indicating cultural knowledge and practice of abortion in Micronesian cultures outside of Guam bear on the issue of abortion in Chamorro culture in two ways. First of all, Micronesia is a "culture area" in which a number of cultural traits were traditionally shared, including matrilineal transmission of land rights and clan (descent group) membership, ranked social classes based on inheritance and presumed priority of settlement in particular estates or villages, similar material culture adaptation to tropical horticulture and fishing, and a related family of languages. On the basis of the widespread presence of a cultural practice such as abortion throughout the Micronesian culture area, one may infer that the practice was also indigenous to Chamorro culture prior to the Spanish invasion.

Secondly, the frequent contacts between Chamorro people and the peoples of the Caroline Islands provided ample opportunities for Chamorro exposure to and familiarity with abortion practices among related cultural groups. Carolinians from the Woleai-Satawal-Puluwat area were making frequent trading voyages to Guam in ancient times, and by the early to mid-1800s there were permanent settlements of Carolinians in Saipan and Guam. Likewise, significant numbers of Chamorros migrated to the Caroline Islands in the first two decades of the 20th century. By 1926 there were two hundred Chamorros living in Palau, Yap, and Truk (Hornbostel 1926:196).

Today there are an estimated 3,000 Palauans living on Guam, and an estimated 5,000 Micronesians from the Caroline Islands. Many marriages between Chamorros and other Micronesians

have taken place, as well as daily informal contacts. The traditional knowledge of abortion among these Palauan and Carolinian residents on Guam is another source of cultural knowledge about and familiarity with abortion in contemporary Guam society.

In Palau, abortion techniques have been described in detail by several anthropologists who collected information from Palauan women.

"Traditional 'medicines' were once used to abort an unwanted child...Modern attempts to abort include using traditional medicines, drinking a quart of soy sauce or alcohol in the belief that the resultant nausea will abort the fetus, and deliberate jumps or falls" (Smith 1983:178).

"The usual method is to take some potion orally. This potion may be derived from the bark of the *ngas* tree. After drinking it the individual is encouraged to exercise strenuously and later is massaged. The final phase of this method is to sit in cold sea water for a while. Dilation and physical injury is also practiced after the fashion of Yap. A poison from the *dub* tree, which is used in killing fish, is inserted into a bamboo tube that has been sharpened to a rough point. The point is then forced into the cervical os breaking the skin and permitting the poison to reach the blood stream" (McGrath 1973:219).

"Abortions were sought through exaggerated physical activity and by the use of abortifacients (*olecheicheb*) – compounds of plant leaves which were taken as infusions. These compounds are still in use today. A woman who suspected a pregnancy might also attempt to abort by repeatedly jarring her abdomen by flopping face forward into shallow water or jumping from some elevation on land and landing on her feet. Both physical approaches are said to have been kept up until internal bleeding was induced" (Force 1972:55n).

Abortion practices and depopulation in Yap were studied in detail by a research team from the Harvard Peabody Museum shortly after World War II (Hunt et al 1949, Hunt et al 1954, Schneider 1955). They documented three classes of abortion practices: magical manipulations, the consumption of boiled concentrated sea water to induce vomiting and severe cramps; and the insertion of a plug made of hibiscus leaves into the cervical os, accompanied by self-inflicted wounding of the cervix. It is interesting to note (Underwood 1973:116) that these techniques are very similar to those described to a German physician by Chamorro women residing in Yap prior to World War I, and corroborated by Yapese informants (Kohl-Larsen 1957:117-118). This reference to Chamorros' familiarity with abortion practices of a related Micronesian society provides strong evidence of shared cultural knowledge regarding abortion.

In Truk, techniques of abortion are also well known (Gladwin 1952:158). A German ethnographer wrote in the early 20th century:

"The Trukese do not know how to prevent conception. Abortion, on the other hand, does occur occasionally among those for whom it is too burdensome to raise a child, especially in the case of extramarital pregnancies...Medicines made of certain herbs, massage, and jumping from high objects serve as the means" (Bollig 1927:101).

An ethnographic study of Truk conducted shortly after World War II found similar information.

"The techniques of abortion are widely known and consist in violent jumping or massage of the abdomen. However, while this used to occur in the past it is said not to be practiced any more. This statement must be considered suspect: not only do the doctors in the administration hospital report cases of women with entirely normal pregnancies who suddenly lose their babies, but it is also hard to understand how the women so anonymously reported not to want children can realize this wish and still maintain a high level of sexual activity, for contraceptives are—or were at the time of this study [1947-51]—unknown" (Gladwin and Sarason 1953:133).

In Pohnpei also, there are indications that abortion is a traditional practice (Fischer 1970:81); methods include massage and eating green mangoes (op cit, 125). East of Pohnpei, in Kosrae, abortion has also been documented.

"Abortion has always been known, and was employed by young girls as well as married women. In the case of the first, in former times the deciding reason for it is supposed to have been that fact that illegitimate children detracted from the girl's worth and respect. They readily admit that the bad habit was still very much in vogue nowadays. Older women perform the abortion. Massage alone was administered as the means for effecting it" (Sarfert 1920, Chapter 7:10).

A more recent study of Kosrae provides additional methods of abortion in Kosrae, including the use of herbs, the insertion of objects into the cervix, and violent activity (Ritter 1978:378).

In the Marshall Islands, abortion is also practiced. "If possible [Marshallese] try to avoid that unmarried girls or newly wed women bear a child. In order to avoid fertilization, the male semen is artificially removed after sexual intercourse. Abortion (*jibun*) is rare with married women, but frequent with girls. They apply massage (*aanor*) with the hand or now also with bottles, assisted by hot baths" (Kramer 1938:179). Another study of Marshallese culture (Rynkiewicz 1972:12) cites an earlier German source (Erdland 1914:124) that also documented abortion practices by massage and plant medicines, as well as birth control through the removal of semen after intercourse.

In the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), the easternmost island group in the Micronesian culture area, abortion practices were noted by the visiting physician-missionary Luther Gulick in 1860. "So prolific are they [the Gilbertese] as yet on the greater number of islands – that their population is deliberately limited by practicing abortion to prevent too great a number of mouths..." (1861-2:69).

Abortion has also been noted in Nauru, at the geographic periphery of the Micronesian culture area. Nauru is more similar to "nuclear Micronesia" (the Caroline and Marshall Islands) than to the Gilberts (Alkire 1977:80).

Although children are always desired and although a pregnancy is considered always to bring good health, in some cases a termination of pregnancy might be desirable, or a pregnancy might even be prevented. Therefore, there are contraceptive practices [orig. emphasis], as there are in many Pacific islands. In Nauru, massage and potion are the two techniques used to interrupt or prevent a pregnancy. A special massage of the genitals of the woman, as well as her abdomen, will bring about a miscarriage, and a similar massage is able to prevent a pregnancy. Although these very precise and competent massages have to be done by specialists, they are neither unusual nor secret (Petit-Skinner 1981:55).

Evidently there is only one published study of a Micronesian society – Ulithi Atoll in the outer islands of Yap – that denies any cultural knowledge for abortion. "Abortion, like the prevention of conception, is not practiced, nor are methods for causing abortion known...It is claimed by Ulithians that abortion and infanticide were not even practiced in the days when Christianity was weak and the population greater" (Lessa 1950:192). In contradiction to this statement, however, is information from a Ulithian man with doctoral training in anthropology (Josede Figirliyong, personal communication, May 1990), that Ulithian young women abort their pregnancies by violent activity or over-exertion, such as by jumping or carrying heavy objects or running. Shortly after the Outer Islands High School in Ulithi was established, providing the first opportunity for Ulithian girls to pursue an education locally, there were several known cases of young female students aborting their pregnancies. Several aborted fetuses were found near the school during its first years of operation. Apparently the motive for abortion was that the young women wanted to continue their education, rather than marry and assume the responsibilities of motherhood. Whether or not abortion was part of the traditional medical knowledge and practice on Ulithi, the opportunity for girls to pursue an education provided an incentive to terminate pregnancy however possible.

LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

Indigenous linguistic terms for abortion provide further evidence that the practice was culturally recognized in Micronesian societies. If the practice was unknown or was a foreign cultural technique, then it is likely that the indigenous language would either lack a word for intentional abortion, or would have borrowed a foreign word. For example, suicide by hanging evidently was not a traditional method of self-inflicted death in the Marshall Islands, although other methods of suicide were practiced. There was no indigenous term for suicide by hanging until about 1930, when a Kosraean sailor hanged himself aboard ship near Jaluit in the Marshall Islands. Since then, suicide by hanging has been called '*kilaba*', a word derived from the name of the man who hanged himself (Alfred Capelle, personal communication, September 1985).

In Chamorro, the two terms '*maffak*' and '*pokká*' are both given as translations of 'abort' (Spanish *abortar*) in the Ibañez dictionary of 1865 (p. 3). Both terms generally connote 'shatter, crack open, break into fragments, burst.' The Guam Capuchin priest, Rev. P. Román María de Vera, compiled a Chamorro dictionary in 1932 which also gave both the Chamorro terms the meaning 'abortion', among other general meanings (165, 226). The more recent dictionary by Topping, Ogo and Dungca (1975) glosses only '*pokká*' as 'abortion' (op cit, 170) although the word '*maffak*' is also included (op cit, 128). Of the two terms, '*pokká*' is a transitive verb which corresponds to the English verb 'abort', while '*maffak*' connotes 'to miscarry' and is formed from the passive marker '*ma*' prefixed to the stative verb stem '*ffak*,' meaning 'broken.' Contemporary Chamorro suruhana understand '*pokka*' to mean intentional abortion (Anthony Ramirez, personal communication, May 1990).

In Palauan, the term '*melécheb*', a transitive verb, has the general meaning 'to remove (something) from wherever it is attached or stuck' and also has the specific meaning 'to perform abortion on' (McManus 1977:151-2). There is also a derived term (instrument noun) '*olécheb*' meaning 'medicine to bring on an abortion.'

In both Chamorro and Palauan languages, there are terms apparently in use that connote intentional abortion. In other Micronesian languages, such as Ulithian-Woleaian and Marshallese,

terms that primarily refer to miscarriage ('*mmo!*' in Ulithian) or stillbirth ('*jibun*' in Marshallese) are also applied to abortion (Josede Figirlyong, personal communication, May 2, 1990; Abo et al 1976:102; Kramer 1938:179).

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