Four Stones:
The Concept of Space and Time in Palauan Mythology

Akari Konya
Meiji Gakuin University

Abstract: Stones are symbolic signs in Palauan mythology. Some that are considered sacred are known as *btangch*, which is a collective term for mythical stones that include inalienable possessions, such as a stone tombs, monoliths, stone deities, and stone bead money. Each *btangch* is associated with an oral history. Islanders articulate their stories through everyday connections with the *btangch*, which creates a lithic social space. The myth surrounding the creation of Palau alludes to four symbolic stones. According to the myth, a goddess gave birth to four stones (children). Each of the four stones travelled around the islands, and then each founded a village; this is considered the origin of the Palauan village. Today, these four out of sixteen states in Palau that occupy the highest positions in the traditional chiefly system. This paper refers to this stone-mediated network in terms of "in-betweenness" and discusses the concept of deep time in the Palauan mythical space that is critical to its understanding. I compare the concept of *Vā*, which is widely used in Oceania, with the concept of place and time, known as *Ba* or *Ma* in the Eastern philosophy, to highlight the affinity and continuity of the sense of *Vā* in among the Pacific Rim regions. Through this discussion, I will examine how mythology intersects with the inherent sense of "in-betweenness" in Palauan society.

Key words: stones, signs, language expression, in-betweenness, agency in language

1. Introduction: Agency in Language

Pragmatics, which has its originates in the philosophy of language, is a response to the trend in a North American Linguistic Anthropology (Boas 1940), which holds that there are as many cultures as there are languages, and that the concept of metacommunication that abstracts linguistic expressions, can be applied to other regions as well (Bateson 1968; Goffman 1974). Communication here does not refer to the meaning of the message of the communicated language itself, but rather the inference or sharing of an accompanying meaning that is not explicitly stated but is conveyed along with it. The meaning of the words that make up a sentence is the accumulated and integrated meaning of the words (Utsumi 2003:337). Pragmatics attempts to decipher the coded meaning that is inferred based on people's behavior, i.e., the image of the linguistic expression (Sperber & Wilson 1995). In

other words, pragmatics is the science of how the images created by a language are produced and shared.

In the pragmatic analysis of meta-concepts, Speech Act Theory (SAT) examines the process by which ritual speech is produced. It is argued that linguistic expression requires the setting up of a frame (Bateson 1972; Goffman 1974; Lindstrom 1992) or scheme (Lindstrom 1992:103), a specific focal event that is conditioned by several factors (Bateson 1972; Goffman 1974; Lindstrom 1992:103; Duranti & Goodwin 1992:2). At the same time, however, the diffused nature of these frames has been discussed (Lindstrom 1992:103-5).

Duranti (Duranti 2007:451), who built on previous studies of contextual analysis with language as a problematic system, presented the concept of "Agency in Language"-- a term that refers to the "Linguistic Relativity" (Duranti 2007:451), as opposed to the idea that considers language itself to be an agent with an independent purpose (Duranti 2007:452), an analytical perspective that seeks to examine the relationship between linguistic interaction and society (Duranti 2007:451). Here, the three properties of agency are defined as:i) subjectivity (the message is transmitted due to one's own initiative), ii) relatedness (the message has some influence on both the actor and on others, including the actor), and iii) openness (the linguistic expression is subject to evaluation in a particular society) (Duranti 2007:453). In other words, "Agency in Language" refers to both the action (performance) over language expression and the encoding (Duranti 2007:467). Duranti (Duranti 1997:337) points out that not only in chieftainship, but also in bureaucracies and any other political system, power, hierarchical relations, and social categories are understood by such language agency, not by the meaning of language itself.

In this paper, I discuss "Agency in Language" and attempt to interpret myths in terms of pragmatics rather than semantics. I also examines how images of creation myths are generated based on mythical symbols. In doing so, I will focus on stones symbols in Palauan creation myths and clarify what functions they have in village society and their concept of space and time. I also compare the spatial concepts that are widely observed in the Asia-Oceania region with those of Palau and examine the continuity between them, to clarify the image of language depiction in Palauan creation myth.

2. Symbols in Their Daily Life

In Micronesia, the usage of the stones in their social relations has been discussed as follows in the field of the Symbolic Anthropology as well as the History Anthropology. Kawai (Kawai 2001:38) states that a stone functions as a metaphorical medium for one's experiences and recognition of the body and life:

In Chuuk, words that enter the ear become knowledge, accumulate like leaves piled up
in the ground, become soil, and then harden, and become 'stone'; conversely, when the
'stone' that comprises thoughts, emotions and knowledge comes out of the mouth and
forms words, it is materialized into things such as 'leaves', 'cloth' and 'boards', and is
recognized as an entity.

The 'stone' that exists in the mouth is invisible and shapeless. However, this invisible
stone is inside one's body, and acquires form as it lives there (=i.e., through language
expression). This series of processes in which the "invisible" stone is reified is seen as a
form of stone-human communication. However, the stones in Chuuk not merely conceptual;
rather, they also serve as actual symbols in village society. Stones that settled both in the
middle and the edge of the village, are a signs of special/ social order in Chuuk. Besides,
there are similar uses of stones in another Micronesian islands of Pohnpei. Honlon (Honlon
1988: 4) explained the sacredness of the stones as being the origin of the land, like so: After
the voyages, people decided build an altar in Pohnpei. Following this, two women came
from a southern island and built the island of Pohnpei by layering soil over a stone
foundation.

On the other hand, in Polynesia, a different form of stone-human communication is
observed in their social system. In Tahiti, for instance, Sahlins (Sahlins 1958:165;
Parmentier 1987:13-14) describes the *matae*, a system of elevated stone pavements, as
follows:

The ramage system was reflected in the system of ancestral temples (*matae*). Each
family had a temple. The largest temple in a district, that of the senior family, was
considered the parent temple from which the others branched off… When a household
was divided and lands were partitioned, a stone from the old temple was used as a
cornerstone for the new one. The latter was reconsecrated to the same god as the old,
while the head of the segmenting group took a hereditary title associated with the older
temple.

Parmentier (Parmentier 1987:2) demonstrates two effects of mythological signs in
Palau, where the symbolism describes stone that takes various forms –such as chiefs'
backrests, village boundary markers, gravestones, anthropomorphic monoliths, and various
classes of exchange beads –that appear in oral histories and the Palau creation myth. He

further divides the effects into historical objects that have (1) signs of history; a historic symbolism, and (2) signs in history; a form of action or linguistic expression (Parmentire 1987:146). It is said that the signs exist not only in material form but also in the form of events and the actions of people, and that the social order, which is based on the chiefly system, is formed by a rhetorical, political, and mutual relationship between the object and the people through symbolism. This point indicates that the social relationship in Palau are astringent in their collective and temporary manner of communication, and social order is understood as a collection of agencies generated by the diverse activities of the people surrounding the symbol. Thus, stones as mythological symbols in Palau are also called 'nodules', 'knots', and 'complexes of multiple agencies', and build interrelationships with people, being actors in the social order. Such a semiotic interpretation liberates the social order from the system theory to the relational theory and invites it embrace communication theory.

Meanwhile, stones play the role of symbols in village society. In Palau, the stone of Chuuk, Pohnpei, or Tahiti are not only symbolic; it is said that the central stones and border stones are installed in houses, the villages, and the island spaces to separate the regional spaces, and that the stones provide the people with a sense of social order. In short, a stone is an entity that exists both in the inside and the outside of people's bodies (i.e., recognition) according to Micronesian mythology, and each space affects the communication between people differently. It is clear from the previous studies that the concept of mythical space in Palau has been created by the linkage between mythical symbols and landscapes. Parmentier (Parmentier 1987:11-12) explains "in-between" connection with a both signs, as follows:

> The phrase signs in history refers to those signs of history which, as object, linguistics expressions, or patterns of actions, themselves become involved in social life of historical intentionality because of their function as representational vehicles.

A common feature that the aforementioned Pacific islands share is that stones serve two functions in island life: that of mythological symbols and that of symbols that form order in the village society. In other words, it is important to understand the mythical space so that the social system of Oceania is not merely the meaning of the story itself; rather, we must first carefully pay attention to the relationships between the oral-scape that exists within material forms such as stones that exist in their stories, and its connection to the island's landscape. Thus, the story could finally be imagined visually and learnt using the senses.

3. The Creation Myth of Palau

The creation myth of Palau consists of two parts. The first part (Myth of *Uab*) tells of an island formed in the sea, and in the second part (Myth of *Milad*) discusses a village on the island. In the second part, the goddess called *Milad* gives birth to children in the form of four stones that are considered the origin of the village.

I will examine the symbolism hidden in the creation myth of Palau, *Uab* and *Milad*. The myth begins at a time when gods and people lived together in harmony.

Myth of *Uab*[1]

First, there was a god in heaven who descended on a star in the rain and wind to form Palau Island. The sea was empty so the god saw it and said, "Let there be land." When the land began, the deep became shallow and a clam grew in it. The clam grew bigger and bigger. In a clam there is a shrimp type which was called *Latmikaik*. *Latmikaik* grew bigger and became pregnant. She didn't give birth when it was time for delivery. The god saw it and said, "Let there be storm with currents." *Latmikaik* delivered during storm with currents. Her children were both fish and human. They were human beings when they came to the shallow lagoon and were fish when in the deep sea. Eventually *Latmikaik* had a lot of children so deep became crowded. "Form the land by making a pile with the bottom of the sea so you can live on it." She said to her children. The child was an *Obechad* goddess. *Obechad* was the founder of humans (*chad*) who gave birth to the goddess *Turang* without the aid of a male god. *Turang* gave birth to the great goddess, *Uab*, who was the god of all the earth. She became *Iluochel*, and, travelled from *Ngeaur* (place name) to the *Cholei* (name of the wharf) in the village, she then turned into a stone. However, as a little girl, *Uab* lived in a house called *Ngatelkou* in *Ngeaur*.

Well, *Uab* grew very big. At first, she sat down, but she kept growing, so the people let her lie down. She was given food, but *Uab* ate so much that the food was running out, and the people could no longer take care of her. They decided to kill her by loading firewood under her to burn her. When the firewood was piled up, *Uab* asked them what they were doing. People told *Uab* that they wanted to burn a small fire, and would keep the wood away from her so that her legs would not feel the heat. *Uab*, however, knew

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[1] The creation myth of Palau has been recorded since the German Period (1885-1914) at the end of the 19th century. Krämer's (Krämer:1917-1929) German ethnology is the oldest, followed by Hijikata's (1985) ethnography during the Japanese Period, followed by Parmentier's (1987) intervied in the Post-World War II American Period. Based on these three documents, I reconstruct the myth below using interviews.

that she was to be burned by them. She murmured with, '*O Meaul* (you are deceitful)". The fire blazed brightly, and *Uab* fell, and covered the base stone. Her body became soil and formed the islands *Koror*, *Babeldaob*, and *Kayangel* of Palau.

  (Hijikata 1985:3-8; reorganized by the author based on interviews in *Aimeliik* State, Palau, December 2008)

The second myth depicts the time in which Palauan village society was created after *Uab* fell, and the *Koror, Baberdaob* and *Kayangel* Islands were created. The *Milad* part of the creation myth is recognized as the legend that marks the beginning of the Palauan social order.

Myth of *Milad*
Uab gave birth to the goddess named *Dirramellomes* who lived in the sea, and was found by a person named *Ebekeu,* who took her home and fed her food. However, she ate everything she was given and this became a habit, due to which she was taken to another village. But from *Ngeremlengui* to *Ngatpang,* she had built herself the same reputation. Following this, a person in the village of *Ngatpang*, was asked to prepare a feast for *Dirramellomes* at once. To this, *Dirramellomes* saids it was not possible for her to eat this time, and that the money spent in the preparation of the feast had taken care of her. She left and went to *Ngiptal* Island and became *Dilrachedebsungel*. *Dilrachedebsungel* had two children, *Mengidabrutkoel* and *Tellames*. There an old goddess on *Ngiptal* Island named *Chedebsungel* who had a big breadfruit tree in front of her house that her son *Mengidabrutkoel* had planted and put the spell on it so his mother would get the fish and breadfruit from the tree. There was a hole on the breadfruit tree, and when the sea waves crash the shore, the fish would come out from the hole of the breadfruit tree branch.

Chedebsungel had fish every day and the people in the island got jealous. Because when the people in the village needed the fish, they have to go out by canoes to catch fish, rain or shine. So one evening they went and cut the tree down. The sea blew in again, and *Ngiptal* Island finally sank into the sea, so *Chedebsungel* went to *Ngerchebukl* and became *Dilrabkau*. *Dilrabkau* predicted that the great flood would come on the fifteenth night, and was told to build a large raft and tie a rope to anchor it. The flood came and the rope got lose and *Dilrabkau* lost consciousness and died while her bamboo raft drifted away until it got stuck in the *Roismlengui* tree. A god appeared and brought *Dilrabkau* life that is wrapped with a taro leaf. *Dilrabkau* was

out of breath while she was at *Roismlengui* tree, so *Uchelchelid* and *Ngiselacheos* came and gave *Dilrabkau* her breath of life back. It is said that it was good to drink the stone, however the *Terriid* bird came and said that it was good to drink the wind. *Dilrabkau* drank the wind and breathed again, but if she had drunk the stone, then her life would have continued indefinitely. *Dilrabkau* then became called *Milad*, meaning she died and came back to life. She later gave birth to four stones; *A Imeuns* (*Ngeremlengui*/ the eldest son), *Olekeok* (Melekeok/the second son), *Oreor* (*Koror*/the third son), and *Imeliik* (*Aimeliik*/the eldest daughter)."

The myths of *Uab* and *Milad* are structured around the following commonalities: femininity, and stone apparency. First, both the *Uab* and *Milad* myths tell of a woman eats a lot. Some oral histories represent *Uab* as a male, but it is said that when *Uab* formed the island of Palau, he changed from male to female. Similarly, *Milad* appears as a female who later gives birth to stones. In short, this is believed to be the origin of the matrilineal system of Palau. Second, stones are depicted as a symbol of life. *Uab* was a stone before she became a giant, following which she became soil over time. Meanwhile, stones were used as tools to bring *Milad* back to life (although she drank the wind). *Milad* then gave birth to four stones. Therefore, a stone is represented as a medium that symbolizes the lives of *Uab* and *Milad*.

4. Palauan Spatial Concept

Apart from the aforementioned commonalities, the creation myth features other hidden laws besides above commonalities since it is a unique combination of equality and the hierarchy systems (Shimizu 1989:122-124). Palauan society runs on the principle of dichotomy, and this dichotomy very clearly manifests in the composition of villages (Aoyagi 1982, 1985:20). A village consists of 10 (or 11) groups of origin called *kebliil,* which are divided into odd and even groups of hierarchical rank called *bitang ma bitang* (this side and that side). The spatial dichotomy is also evident in the village landscape. Houses, villages, and islands are built on a central stone along an edge of the stone, all of which are used as landmarks in their daily lives (Aoyagi 1985:20). These spatial political dichotomies demonstrate the characteristics of the egalitarian system as seen in the chieftainship.
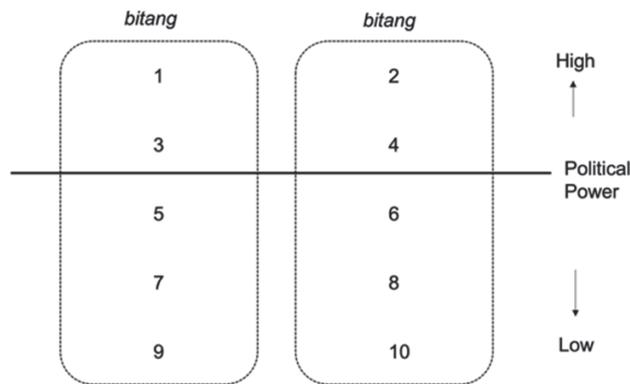
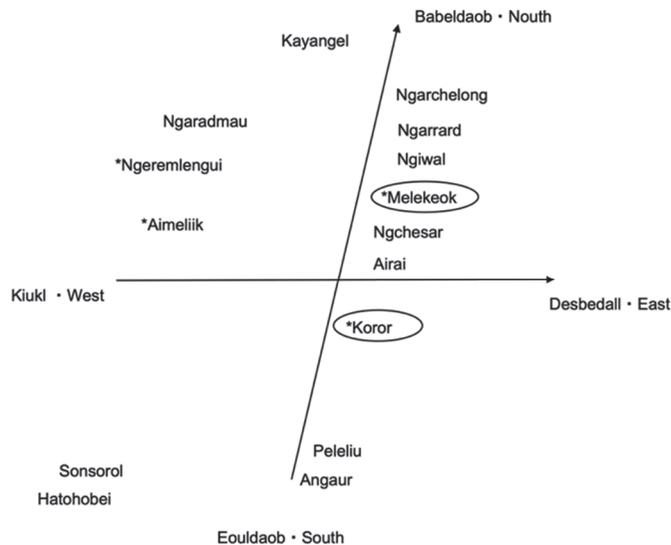**Figure1: Conceptual Diagram of Village Society（Endo 2002:28）**
Note. The numbers demonstrate the hierarchical order.

Each *kebliil* of the 1st to 10th hierarchal ranking, they have one male and female each (or the wife of a male title holder as her husband's counterpart, a rare case seeing in couple villages) , who receive a traditional title (*dui*). Village politics are run by those title holders. Once they receive the title, they contribute to the community through performance in daily household roles and participation in village meeting that are held at a meeting place called *a bai*. This system of village governance has been maintained since Palau gained independence and adopted a new presidential system as a modern state[2]. According to the diagram of the old villages as recorded in the ethnography of the German Period (Krämer 1929), all the meeting houses (*a bai/bai*) are positioned in the center of the village. The meeting house is set on a stone platform, and stone base forms chairs for the chief. These seats also form part of the *btachang*, as mentioned earlier, and each one is accompanied by a historical narrative of the village. The village has a stone path that connects the meeting houses to the left and right. At the end of the road are scattered villages, and the spatial order that divides the village into 10 levels can be visually observed.

Furthermore, squares corners, which are called *eual saus* in Palauan, forms a social hierarchy within the egalitarian system. The *eual saus* are based on the four stones produced by *Milad's* children and form a hierarchical order between the villages. Of the 16 states (four or five villages make up one state), the four are called *Ngeremlengui, Melekeok, Aimeliik* and *Koror*. Further, the four high-ranking states have an East/West divide, with the highest

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[2] The Constitution of Palau enumerates the traditional rights, and the Chief Parliament is organized by the holders of the first title, who not only have a certain voice in the parliament, but also show their superiority in customary law, especially in matters such as land management, so long as it does not conflict with the codified law.

state in the East being *Melekeok*, and the highest state in the West being *Koror*. Males and females in the main villages, from either *Melekeok* or *Koror* who holding the first ranking title are called the Great Chiefs (or Paramount Chiefs, as they are called today) . The paramount chiefs are recognized historically and today as symbolic of traditional village politics.

**Figure2: Conceptual Diagram of Inter-village Hierarchy**

Note. *shows the four high-ranking states (*eual saus*); the circle show the two highest-ranking states.

The chieftainship in Palau is based on a complex principle, which combines equality and hierarchy with a spatial order (Sudo 1989:152-7; Shimizu 1989:122-4) that follows the logic of dichotomy and law of four corners. The social structure of Palau is rather complex, as the attribution of the matrilineal axis is ambiguous (Shimizu 1989:122). Smith (Smith 1983:317) described the social structure of Palau as follows: "There is no principled vector running through Palauan society, and the best that can be done is to suggest a hierarchical scale of complementary or oppositely shifting principles". He then points out the anomalies and fluidity of the social order, and states that "The only way to present the Palauan system is to extend it hierarchically through several different steady states within a diachronic framework" (Smith 1983:317). Inshort, although the logic that runs through Palauan society is grounded in the laws of stone which encompass the dynamics that anomalize the social order.

In the previous anthropological literature, Palau has been defined as a competitive society (McKnight 1960; Aoyagi 1986). Competition arises when rules become redundant, as illustrated in the complex principle of chieftainship that combines equality and hierarchy (Sudo 1989:152-7; Shimizu 1989:122-4) and a matrilineal-midaxial complex system (Shimizu 1989:122). When an individual is born, he or she acquires a social status according to innate conditions such as maternal-paternal origin group rank, sex, number of siblings, and so on, on the basis of the law of hierarchy. However, such conditions also have the potential to change. Everyday activities such as decisions regarding one's place of belonging, adoption, marriage, acquaintance with oral histories, participation in rituals, etc., pave the way for the unpredictable acquisition of social status. In other words, it can be noted that while the laws ordered by the creation myths certainly exist in their social order, however, on the other hand, people could reorganize them and form a new social order. These characteristics of fluid and reorganizable social relations are called "in-betweenness", in this paper.

5. Deep, and Distant Time

To explain such in-betweenness-like networks as observed both in the creation myth of Palau and in Palauan village society, it is necessary to also address the Palauan concept of time. This concept is best expressed through the Palauan saying, "*cherecher a lokelii*". Nero （Nero 1987:35）translated this as: "the essence of the past is held to sustains the future." Similarly, Yamaguchi (Yamaguchi 1990:102), an ethnomusicologist, translated the saying as: "seeing the past notifies one about the future." Although these authors expressed the saying in different ways, both translations describe its conception of the continuity between the past and the future. On the one hand, *cherecher* refers to "tomorrow", or a "distant time", such as the "past" or "future" (i.e., chaotic time). On the other hand, *lokelii* is a verb that means "to extracts" or "pull out." The literal translation of "*cherecher a lokelii*" is, therefore, to "extract something from a distant time." Nero and Yamaguchi also illustrated the Palauan concept of time in the diagram presented in Figure 3. In this diagram, the Palauan concept of time is represented by a double circle, where *chelechang* (i.e., today/the present) forms the middle center and *cherecher* (i.e., tomorrow/the past/ the future) forms the circle outside.

Cherechar (past, future)

Chelechang (present)
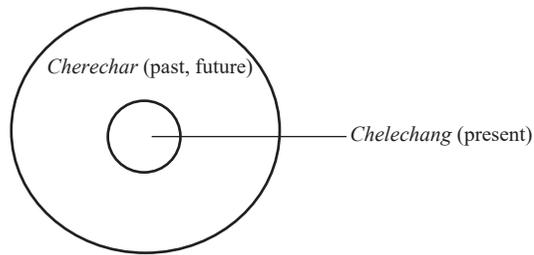
Figure3: Palauan Concept of Time (Nero 1987:33; Yamaguchi 1990:107)

The characteristics of the Palauan concept of time will become clearer when compared to the written cultural concept of time. In the writing cultures of both the West and the East, events tend to be arranged in chronological order, from either side-to-side (or from top-to-bottom), as if drawn like an arrow. In such cases, the past is supposed to be behind the present, whereas the future is presumed to be ahead of the present. However, the Palauan concept of time is generated by the relationship between one moment; that is, the present and distant time. Therefore, the present time is both "here" and "not here", and can be observed within both "the past" and "the future." Accordingly, the present time can be interpreted as existing in "distant time." One of the oral histories called "Today and Tomorrow"（Nero 1987: 32-44; Yamaguchi 1990:102-107）explains this chaotic concept of time, as follows:

Chelechang me a Cherechar
There were two brothers named *Chelechang* and *Cherechar*. One day, they went to the inland sea to fish. They caught many fish, and their fish net became full. *Cherechar* called *Chelechang* to take a full net to thier father. *Chelechang* did as his brother told him. Then *Cherechar* became hungry and asked his father for something to eat. His father had taro, which was still rare in Palau at that time, so the father split it in half and gave one of the halves to *Cherechar*. *Chelechang* took the half taro and returned to his brother. After a while, the net was full of fish again, so *Chelechang* went back to his father to deliver the fish. His father took the fish out of the net and placed them on a plate. *Chelechang* was hungry again, so he told his father who gave him another piece of taro. *Cherechar* ate it and went back to fishing. This time, he and his brother decided to carry the full fish net. *Cherechar* was hungry, so he thought he would ask his father for something to eat. However, their father said that he had already given the taro to *Chelechang*, and that he did not want to give it to *Cherechar*. When *Cherecher* heard

this, he became angry, and said, 'You only think about *Chelechang*.' Subsequently, *Cherechar* ran away with all his parents' wealth. Since then, the family has been searching for *Cherechar*.

As described by this story, the Palauan concept of time is understood in terms of deep time and continuity between the past and the future. The past and the future coexist and cannot be viewed as separate entities. The present, however, refers to a point that has been temporarily extracted from the flow of deep time. If we replace this with the mythical space, then the present is understood as the act of people telling myths, which is generated by the relationship with deep time. Further, the characteristics of deep time can be clearly seen through the following comparison with Aboriginal dreaming (dreamtime). Aboriginal people materialize their stories by drawing them geographically and mapping them into landscapes that they experience daily (Morphy 1999). Moreover, their ethical codes are defined according to their geographical regulations, and are guided by spirits (Hokari 2002:154). For example, the trajectory that emus and snakes take to travel from west to east is considered an ethically correct path. In short, their mythical spaces are physically present in the landscape (Hokari 2018:100-117).

Morphy (Morphy 1999: 265) points out an important facet of the concept of Aboriginal time that provides a deeper understanding of it, and describes it as: "The Dreaming exists independently of the liner time of everyday life and the temporal sequence of historical events. Indeed, it is as much a dimension of reality as a period of time." There is a similarity regarding the sense of the creation of oral-scapes, both in Palau's conception of the "signs in history" or in the Aboriginal way of the "landscape of history" and not a "history of landscape" (Hokari 2002: 166). The Aborigines map out their lives on the physical landscape of a large continent, while Palauans using stone to create deep time in a much smaller scale of land compared to Aboriginals. However, geographical conditions do not limit the mythical space, because as Morphy mentioned earlier, their deep time exists independently away of society. Palauans use stones as a medium to recreate "distant time" in the present, which create a mythical space that can be expanded. In short, just as there is no word for time in Palauan, so too is time to the Aborigines something that is created in connection with people's actions and linguistic expressions.

When refocusing on stones on the basis of the Palauan concept of time, it is possible to understand that in the Palauan mythical space, stones are perceived as a device that connects myth with the reality (i.e., connects distant time with the present). In short, by interacting with the various stones within the village society, the people may be able to create network-

like spaces while simultaneously experiencing the mythology associated with such spaces.

6. *Vā, Ba, Ma*, and Their Relationality

Vā is a concept widely used in Oceania. It refers to the space between places or people and "connotes mutual respect in socio-political arrangements that nurture the relationship between people, places, and social environments" (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009:12; Simati 2011:3). *Vā* characterizes culturally appropriate behavior. Food division and distribution, sleeping and sitting arrangements, and language usage in private and public spaces are all conceived through *Vā* (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009:14). In Samoa, *Vā* refers to a social space, and is perceived as a concept that combines the power of space and place (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009:1). Therefore, *Vā* can be translated as connectedness in Samoa, which is a concept that overlaps with the Palauan concept of "in-betweenness." The logic of in-betweenness, as seen through *Vā*, is not limited to Oceania. As Wendt (Wendt 1996) wrote, "Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of Va or Wa in Maori and Japanese." *Wa* is an conceptual Japanese word that refers to unity or harmony which is very much of a moral concept that maintains social harmony. It is interesting to observe how Wendt identified the affinity between the Samoan concept of *Vā* and *Wa*. As he studied founded the connections between the islands that face the Pacific Ocean, he observed that Japan also has a philosophical concept of space that differs from that of the Western notions and is shared by the *Vā* of Oceania. In short, although the languages of the users is different, the concept of space is widely discussed in the Pacific Rim. This paper will further examine the affinity between the Palauan concept of "in-betweenness" and the Eastern philosophical concept of space and time.

Aristotle stated that although all material objects in the universe have some sort of "place", and only the universe, which is perfect, can be deemed the fixed and final "place," while its location cannot be specified" (Knox 1936). Conversely, Eastern philosophy's concept of place "gives form to shapeless things by limiting them", with its depths considered to be infinite" (Iwata 1979: 15-16); which is called *Ba* in Japanese. "Place" or *Ba,* is thus seen as a "pure experience" that comes before either subjectivity or objectivity is distinguished. In this way, a "place" (*Ba*) can be viewed as an "field of consciousness" that reflects itself when one is consciously thinking about something (Nishida 1987; Uehara 2008). Such theories of place are based on comprehensive logical theories that do not presuppose a dichotomy between subjects but instead involve new philosophical methods that abandons dualism, do not target entities, and incorporates subjectivity within the theory (Uehara 2008: 65). The difference between Aristotle and Nishida's spatial concepts is clear.

According to the former, nothing else exists if a place is not present; meanwhile, a place is present, even if nobody is around or aware of it. In this sense, places are essentially fundamental (Iwata 1979:16). According to the latter, a place is created by means of the interaction of subjectivity and objectivity through a "field of consciousness" (*Ba*) rather than by independent subjectivity or through a collection of independent objective things (Shirai 2008:199).

Since the time of the Japanese Mandate, Japan's spatial concept of *Ba* has been found in local Palauan society. In Palau, more than 400 words which were borrowed from the Japanese language are still in use. One such word is *basio*[3], which refers to a place in Japanese, whereas *Ba* refers to a specific range of places. The former is often used as a conceptual term, as in Nishida's philosophy, whereas the latter refers to a specific range of real space or land. In Palauan society, *Ta belau* refers to the entire island society. *Ta* is a preposition used in the Palauan language to collectively refer to a group of things. *Ta belau* is used to refer to Palauan society as a whole, and includes the totality of the traditional village political system based on the creation myth. *Ta belau* is a conceptualization of the island-wide social network that has been used by the islanders from pre-colonial times until today. On the other hand, *chutem* refers to a specific range of land. Moreover, the term *beluu*, which refers to a village, village community, or island space, primarily refers to a social space. In addition, *basio* has been used since the Japanese Era to refer to a specific area of land that has a specific name. In addition to the names *chutem* and *beluu*, *basio* is often used in oral histories, and can be understood as a word that refers to a space that is shared and used in both mythical and physical spaces.

The concept of *Ma*, as seen in Japanese philosophy, is a key concept in the examination of the "in-betweenness" of Palauan mythical space. Since *Ma* is at the center of the Japanese spiritual world, it is also a central component of Japanese culture that directs and influences Japanese arts, architecture, religion, and theater (Di Mare 1990:319). Although *Ma* can be translated as "distance." "silence" or "hollowness," it is difficult to find an appropriate English translation. Further, *Ma* can be largely be divided into a spatial and social *Ma*. Spatial *Ma* refers to the silence required to creates rhythm and pause, or a flow of time. For example, "distance" in *Ma* does not refer to a linear timeline that is marked by a start and end point. Rather, it refers to the emotional space-time that occurs between people and

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[3] The term *basio* is a combination of the Japanese word ba(場:place) and syo(所:place or a spot), and has the same meaning in Japanese as ba or basyo(place). The notation used for translating Japanese into English differs from that used in the Palauan alphabet.

people, people and things, things and other things, or within time gap. Instead of being an incomplete concept that was merely created by accident, *Ma* must belong there in the space, as if to seal a hole that had appeared in the space. *Ma* -like silence has the functionality of a moment that connects events and actions. This type of silence is often found in traditional performing arts, tea ceremonies, or everyday conversations. In Japanese culture, when a conversation moves to the next stage, a particular *Ma* (silence, moment) is placed between the two events/actions. Here, *Ma* can be described as the "emptiness" in space, but it can also be called the "space-between" (Odin 1992:482) . This is because it functions as an adhesive that connects past events/actions. This *Ma* also offers people the illusion of the next moment (i.e., the unseen). As observed through this explanation, in the Eastern conception of space, devices and approaches that create a flow of time in space can be observed by the creation of a distance between events.

In addition, *Ma* is used to refer to the social relationship between the people. These social networks are not described here, yet they are said to be social relationship, and an individual relationship with the person who builds the social relation is also referred to. However, it is close to the meaning of companionship or relatedness. This relationship possible not only due to innate conditions but by everyday people's action, such as gift-giving or sharing food with the same church or school classroom. The associations formed through these individual, mutual acts might be organized as some kinds of aggregate, such as a union or a faction. However, it is thought that there is a continuous connection between daily relationships of such structural social relationship in Japan. Thus, *Ma* as a social relationship refers to as an intermediary that connects time and space, as well as the camaraderie that exists between people.

If we replace the concept of *Ma* with the mythical space of Palau, we can observed that *Ma* comprises of the relationship that is created between people when they tell stories that reside in stones, or when they use stones to build social networks. Through the stones, the *Ma* that occurs between people or between "distant time" and the present is combined to form social relationships. Accordingly, the organic concept of space (i.e., the creation of time in space, or the relationship that arises between people) that allows for the openness of space and the construction of relationships through people's actions and experiences, as seen in *Ba* and *Ma* in Japanese philosophy, is a way of being. The concept of space, as observed in *Vā*, can also be understood as a continuum. This can be understood as a commonality of the geographical and ecological environment of the islands connected by the Pacific Ocean, in a framework that transcends the geopolitical divisions of Asia and Oceania.

7. Stone Mediated Network

There are a variety of representational forms that surround the four stones as a symbolic mythical sign, but the most representative of these is what is translated as "the stone at the bottom of the sea." In Palauan, it is called *ralm ma bad,* which translated to water and stone. This water and stone are a metaphorical expression that refer to the four stones, or the four the children *Milad* gave birth to in the ocean. One of the well-known chants illustrates these metaphorical symbols as follows:

> a. *E meker diul di merael el mei,*
> b. *a beluu a dial erngii aikang,*
> c. *me chutem a diak er ngii aikang,*
> d. *eng di ralm ma bad ngeasek,*
> e. *a marredel ra chutem.*

> a' We have all together walked this far.
> b' We do not own the village,
> c' nor do we own the land.
> e' Only the stones in the deep ocean,
> d' owns the land authority.
>   (Chant with no title. Genre: *Chesols* (meeting chant), collected by the auther from interviews with historians from the state of *Aimeliik*. Each lines of the chant were translated into Japanese by the historian herself, in 2008. The author retranslated those into English.)

The stones, the mythical symbols of Palauan chieftainship, can be broadly divided into two types as follows. One is "the stone at the bottom of the sea", as it appears in the myths described so far. The other, the stones used in daily life in the operation of the chieftainship. These are the *btachang*, or stones that have been modified by people. The main types of *btachang* as I described earlier, are tombstones, village boundary markers, monoliths, and stone money called *udoud* made of hardened peat (Parmentire 1987:2). These *btachang* are also thought to be inhabited by Palauan deities, and each is accompanied by its own oral history. Among them, *udoud* is a key to the deciphering of the social dynamics. *Udoud* is an indigenous male property, despite it being a necklace that can only be owned by women (Nero 2011:135). *Udoud* that correspond to women's social position are given as gifts; they are positioned on the basis of hierarchical relationships similar to those in human society,

and each is given an individual name. Social relations are maintained and reorganized through the exchange of these *udoud*. The stone at the bottom of the sea and *btachang* are indexical symbols that are different in form, but are continuous in how they are conceived by the people.

In addition to functioning as a signifier of social hierarchy, the *udoud* also functions as a medium for imagining new historical narratives. For example, the women from *Aimeliik* were familiar with the following narratives (Konya 2015:148-149) about the genealogy of the noble *udoud*:

> The most valuable *udoud* in *Ngerkeai* village was lost one day when it fell out of a canoe into the sea. Later, when the woman who owned it was eating fish, the *udoud* that had fallen into the sea appeared from the belly of the fish. Sometime later, the woman's house was bombed during World War II and the *udoud* disappeared. It was thought that the *udoud* had burned with the house. However, one day a few years after the war, the woman who owned the *udoud* was taking a walk and found her *udoud* stuck in the tip of some tall grass. Thus, the *udoud* had returned to the rightful owner. After a while, again, the *udoud* disappeared again. This time, there were rumors that someone might have stolen it. However, two years later, it returned to its owner. This is because a woman from another state who had stolen the *udoud* was wearing it, and a one of the members of *Ngerakeai* happened to find it on her person. Thus, she was able to recover the *udoud* from the woman who had stolen it. That is what the *udoud* is. Because it has a Palauan deity attached to it, no matter what happens, it will always come back to its owner.
> (This story was shared by woman who lives in the state of *Aimeliik* in November, 2012.)

Udoud also serves as an indicator of land ownership. For this reason, in recent years, there have been discussions in the political arena; such as in the Palau Women's Conference, which has been held annually since independence in 1994; to establish a copyright law for the individual name of the *udoud*, its owner, and the genealogical narratives associated with the *udoud*. This can be understood as an attempt to establish the legitimacy of the ownership of *udoud* and to avoid any confusion. However, as Smith (Smith 1987) pointed out earlier, with regard to the complex workings of Palauan society, which is fluid and variable, the indexical nature of the social status of the *udoud* cannot be captured as something fixed within the system.

Here I have examined the social relations that stones create –the Stone Mediated Network– with particular attention to the *udoud*. However, other forms of various stones are also interconnected with them. Thus, through the making of in-between connections with stones, people create images of oral histories in their everyday life.

8. Conclusion: Image of Language

In this paper, I have examined the concept of space and time on the basis of the creation myth of Palau. Thus far, two points have been implied. One is that the ideas of "in-betweenness" generates the wholeness of Palauan society. "In-betweenness" here is characterized by a "field of consciousness," a concept commonly found in Oceania, like *Vā*, and in the spatial concepts of Eastern philosophy, *Ba*, or *Ma*. It can be called a dynamic space without limits, or a movement wherein objects and people, people and people, or past and future, are connected through everyday practices such as linguistic expressions, gift-giving etc. Second, in the "in-betweenness" relationship described above, the stone as mythical symbol functions as a medium for the generating of organic relationships. It generated diverse forms of stone-human communication, not only as a political symbol, but also as an index of economic and social functions and of the island environment.

Another purpose of this paper is to clarify how the images of the language are produced from a pragmatic perspective with reference to the "Agency in Language" (Duranti 2007:451). The "Agency in Language" theory, as mentioned in the introduction, was formulated to examine the weaknesses of the frame theory of linguistic representation. However, Duranti (Duranti 1997:336) points out that in such an analysis of "Agency in Language", the misalignment between linguistic expressions and their social context cannot be overlooked. And it is this misalignment that may be the key to understanding the complex power relations of spatial/social order. As we have examined in this paper, Palau's social order is organized by its creation myths. However, these orders have the potential to collapse and regenerate in the "in-betweenness" relationships that people create. In such cases, stones continue to move among these social gaps within the complex power shift, as an indicator. Thus, the images of the Palauan creation myth can be called a communal imagination that is produced each time in the "in-betweenness."

In Palau, stones are seen as objects that imprint knowledge and stories that exist in the "in-betweenness" of the "distant time" to the present. The people of Palau, therefore, depict myths by using, possessing, and relating with stones.

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