

INTERVIEW OF FRANCISCO A. HOCOG

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Francisco A. Hocog was a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission and has served in a variety of government positions since that time. He has consented on short notice to be available for an interview and we appreciate very much your willingness to cooperate in this historical project. Frank, we will begin with some basic background information about where you grew up and your family.
- Hocog: I was born and raised on Tinian. I was born on December 3, 1949. I started my education here in elementary, first to sixth grade. And moved on to Saipan to complete high school. In 1968, I graduated from Hopwood High School. I got this training, educational training for teaching. Right after graduation, I came back to Tinian and started teaching at elementary school.
- Willens: In about 1968 or 1969?
- Hocog: 1968.
- Willens: Do you have any further education beyond high school?
- Hocog: I did not, although I have less than one semester of college at Pohnpei.
- Willens: When did your mother and your father come to Tinian?
- Hocog: That was early 1940s. They established themselves here in 1940s.
- Willens: Was that after the war?
- Hocog: That was after the war?
- Willens: And where did they come from?
- Hocog: My father originally was from Rota. While my mother was originally from Saipan.
- Willens: The island of Tinian as I understand it was basically uninhabited after the war. Is that correct? Or were there local people on the island in the post-war period?
- Hocog: I would say that there were some people here before the war. And those people were being transported either to Saipan or back to Rota.
- Willens: After you began work here, when did you first become aware that there was a question about the future political status of the Northern Marianas Islands that would have to be resolved?
- Hocog: That was the time during the Legislature, way back in I would say the 1960s. And that's when they started working toward unification with Guam and then later on trying to develop their own part with the United States. And from there we established the organizing group of people to establish the Marianas Political Status Commission.
- Willens: Were you active in politics when you begin teaching here in 1968?
- Hocog: I was little bit active although it was low level politics such as started up from the Municipal Council.
- Willens: Did you become a member of the Municipal Council?
- Hocog: I did become a member of the Municipal Council for two terms.

- Willens: How long would that be?
- Hocog: It would be for four years.
- Willens: And that would be approximately which four year period of time?
- Hocog: That was before the establishment of this Political Status Commission.
- Willens: So you were a member of the council at the time that you were appointed to the Commission. Is that correct?
- Hocog: No. I was already out at that time.
- Willens: I see.
- Hocog: I started serving on the Municipal Council in 1970 until 1972.
- Willens: The political leadership on Saipan that was pushing for a change in political status was largely composed of the leaders of the Popular Party. They were the ones who were urging reintegration with Guam. Did you have any views at the time as to whether reintegration would be the preferred way to achieve a future political status for the Marianas?
- Hocog: No, I did not pursue that matter. At that time I started thinking instead of going with Guam. I would rather have some sort of an association with the main part which is the United States.
- Willens: Were the people here on Tinian organized into political parties the same extent they were on Saipan?
- Hocog: Yes. Like you said, the Popular and the Territorial.
- Willens: Did you become affiliated with one of the parties?
- Hocog: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was a member of the Territorial Party.
- Willens: And was that in part because the Territorial Party wanted to have direct relationship with the United States rather than through Guam?
- Hocog: I would say it was that idea.
- Willens: They were many occasions during the 1960s and early 1970s when people from Tinian and Rota complained about the fact that people on the two islands did not receive the same benefits from the Trust Territory as did the people of Saipan. Did you have any sense of the time that Tinian was lacking in development in comparison with Saipan?
- Hocog: I would say not exactly that, but because of the fact that we had only one representative, perhaps from the Legislature that's why we're always a minority at that time. And we could not outnumber the representatives of Saipan. Therefore, we cannot do much better as far as requesting for funding and as we know that there should always be a close attention to be given to the capital. Therefore, we cannot do anything but try our best to ask.
- Willens: Did you ever consider on living on Saipan rather than returning to Tinian?
- Hocog: No. At that time I really wanted to come back to Tinian after graduation and start my own life here.
- Willens: Did you enjoy teaching?
- Hocog: I did enjoy teaching.
- Willens: How many years did you teach?
- Hocog: I taught for about five and a half years.

- Willens: What grade levels did you teach?
- Hocog: I taught from elementary all the way to junior high.
- Willens: Was that the extent of the educational program on Tinian at that time?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Through junior high school.
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Now we see that there is a very large high school being built.
- Hocog: Yes, it is true.
- Willens: After you stopped teaching, what did you do?
- Hocog: When I stopped teaching I started a small farm. I found out its really hard, it was really hard that time.
- Willens: Did your family have farm land?
- Hocog: Yes, they do.
- Willens: When you were growing up, did they have land here on Tinian that they farmed?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Did you help in the process of farming?
- Hocog: Yes, I did.
- Willens: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- Hocog: I have five brothers and five sisters.
- Willens: Have most of them stayed in the Northern Marianas?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: All of them?
- Hocog: All of them.
- Willens: How many live on Tinian?
- Hocog: I'm sorry, I want to come back. I have one sister on the mainland. But the rest they are here.
- Willens: I see.
- Hocog: Nine of us all together.
- Willens: That makes a very substantial political party, doesn't have?
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Did you believe that a future political status with the United States would provide more economic advantages than remaining part of the Trusteeship?
- Hocog: I will say yes.
- Willens: I will put it another way. What motivated you in the late 1960s and the early 1970s to think that a change in political status would be a good thing?

- Hocog: With all these hardships and all these things that are going on at that time. Instead of staying at the Trust Territory level, I decided to join in with the group so that we can have better way of living.
- Willens: Some of the people emphasize the importance of obtaining U.S. citizenship. Was that an objective that was important to you?
- Hocog: To me it doesn't really matter whether I become a U.S. citizen or U.S. national as long as we get better living conditions.
- Willens: You were thinking of a better quality of life in terms of education, health services, economic development or something you thought was needed for the island of Tinian as well?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: What was your general assessment while you lived in Saipan being educated and after you returned to Tinian about the Trust Territory Administration. Did you think the TTPI Administration was responsive to the needs of the people?
- Hocog: Well, I would say part of it. Part of it we have to come up with our own and try to push it instead of waiting for whatever they have to decide for us.
- Willens: What would you say was the principal problem that you perceived with the TTPI Administration?
- Hocog: I would say at that time we have very few employees here. That should have been improved. At that time also we have fewer programs because most of the programs have been pilot projects on Saipan. At that time, we're only finding out whether it's good for the entire island or not.
- Willens: So most of the pilot programs that you remember all were implemented on Saipan.
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Is it your recollection that the people of Tinian never really saw the benefits of those programs that worked out?
- Hocog: In my own thinking, I would say yes, they do see some of it. Yet some of them are not very valuable to our place.
- Willens: Did you see that the needs of Tinian were different from the needs on Saipan in terms of financial assistance and economic development?
- Hocog: No, I don't think so.
- Willens: There was a regular complaint through the 1960s and the early 1970s that the Trust Territory Administration did not hire enough Micronesians, that they were staffed principally with expatriates. Did you have any sense at that time that this was a problem?
- Hocog: Well, if we're talking about Tinian I would say no, because at that time we really don't have enough expertise. It's not the same as Saipan where there are people who can take the positions and those expatriates could be limited at that time. But as for Tinian, no.
- Willens: What do you recall about the circumstances under which you were designated to be a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission?
- Hocog: I guess that came from the opinion of the people.
- Willens: As I recall, the Municipal Council on Tinian designated two representatives and they

designated you and the current mayor, Herman Manglona. Did you seek out the position or did someone come to you and ask you if you were willing to do it?

Hocog: I don't recall whether someone came to me and asked me to go for it. It was an appointive type of thing.

Willens: Do you have any recollection about the early meetings of the Marianas Political Status Commission before the negotiations began. Just to refresh your recollection, the Commission members were designated in August 1972. There were 15 members of the Commission drawn from the three islands and from various interest groups and the Commission had some meetings there in the fall of 1972 when they selected the chairman and vice chairman and so forth. Do you have recollections of these early meetings of the Commission when they organized themselves?

Hocog: I recall being designated for the committee on land, and that was during the establishment of the Political Status Commission itself before the negotiations. I think at that time we were selecting from different sections or parts as the organizing group got ready for the negotiations.

Willens: Did you know of any members of the Commission other than Mr. Manglona?

Hocog: I did.

Willens: Had you previously met Ed Pangelinan or Ben Santos or any other members from Saipan?

Hocog: I have met some of my colleagues.

Willens: But at that time in 1972 when you first became part of the Commission, was this a group of people that you knew from your years on Saipan or were there people you had to get to know for the first time?

Hocog: Not really all of them perhaps on Saipan I know. Some of them, others I have to get in touch with them, and get acquainted more.

Willens: Were you relatively young at that time?

Hocog: Yes, I was.

Willens: Were you and Mr. Manglona of the same political party at that time?

Hocog: I really don't recall that one.

Willens: You said you were Territorial Party at that time, and he is now. But were there any differences between you and him about how the Tinian people should be represented on the Commission?

Hocog: I don't think so. At that time we are pursuing the same things for the benefit of the people of Tinian.

Willens: Were you aware at the time the negotiations began that the United States was going to make a request to purchase or lease most of the island of Tinian for military purposes?

Hocog: Yes.

Willens: And how did you become aware that the island of Tinian was going to be such an important element of this negotiation?

Hocog: I think because of these military activities.

- Willens: Were there military activities on the island that you were aware of in the late 1960s and the early 1970s?
- Hocog: No. But what I was saying is that the—that's the starting stage that the military would be coming in.
- Willens: Did you have any view at that time as to whether the interests of the people on Tinian would be well served by making available this substantial portion of the island?
- Hocog: At that time as I recall a group of people came to Tinian at the Municipal Council meeting room. And at that time they were showing us a map of houses that will probably be built in exchange for a land for the military. But it went so difficult at that meeting, the people of Tinian rejected that offer.
- Willens: You are certainly correct. They did come over to make the presentation including colorful charts and promises of new concrete houses. At the second round of negotiations in May 1973, the United States set forth its proposals to acquire the entire island of Tinian, to lease back one-third to civilian community, and to relocate the village of San Jose. The *Pacific Daily News* had a story on the front page disclosing this plan and it generated a lot of opposition here in Tinian. Do you remember having any reaction when you learned for the first time that the United States wanted to purchase the entire island of Tinian?
- Hocog: The first round I did not know anything about that one. Although I have seen their demonstrations to the people, we don't like how the United States told them about the proposal as to taking the entire island. As a matter of fact, at that time there were demonstrators who would rather have two-thirds instead of one-third.
- Willens: That's right. The Marianas Political Status Commission and the chairman came over in May 1973 to explain to the people that the Commission had not yet made any decision with respect to the request of the United States and that the island of Tinian would be well represented by you and Mr. Manglona. The Commission was going to evaluate this request before making any recommendation. Subsequently Ambassador Williams came over for a seven hour public meeting at which time the military people made presentations and he answered questions. Were you present at that meeting? When Ambassador Williams came over?
- Hocog: In 1973? I did not attend that meeting.
- Willens: The published reports that I read in the newspaper had indicated the people who attended the meeting were divided. Some of the older people were in favor of the U.S. proposal including the relocation of San Jose because of the benefits that would be made available to them. Some of the younger people and some of the political leaders at that time were opposed, saying that no more than one-third of the island should be made available. What was your first reaction at that time?
- Hocog: My position at that time was to have rather two-thirds instead of one.
- Willens: Two-thirds for the civilians?
- Hocog: Civilians, right.
- Willens: So you thought the United States should be limited to one-third of the island?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: What was your sense about the relocation of San Jose village? Did you think that was going to be a benefit for the people of Tinian or was that a sacrifice that you did not think the people should make?

- Hocog: I do not know much about that relocation business because I wanted, at that time, for the housing to be placed in the same place rather than relocation.
- Willens: You thought the people should be allowed to stay in the village next to the harbor rather than be moved.
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Were the people here divided about evenly on this issue or was it your view that more people were opposed to the U.S. request than favored it?
- Hocog: At that time I would say that more people are opposed to that proposal.
- Willens: At that time, when the negotiation began, the mayor of Tinian was replaced by Felipe Mendiola during the early years of negotiation. I think 1973, or it might have been 1974, I forget which but Mr. Mendiola was active in the Municipal Council I believe before he became mayor and was viewed as a strong opponent of the military request for land on Tinian. What is your recollection of Mr. Mendiola's position?
- Hocog: At that time, former Mayor Mendiola was really opposed to having the military getting two-thirds rather than one-third. And, if I am not mistaken, that also came from this presentation by the United States that instead of giving us the chance of improving our place they would rather see us move by means of trying to get the harbor area. And that time I believe Mr. Mendiola was so vocal in opposing what the military or the United States is proposing.
- Willens: Was he regarded as an effective political leader on Tinian?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: He served as mayor for many years.
- Hocog: Two terms.
- Willens: Two terms, eight years.
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: After the second round of negotiations, Mr. Manglona was replaced on the Commission by Joe Cruz. Was Joe Cruz a political leader on Tinian at that time?
- Hocog: Let say, that's way back
- Willens: Way back, Mr. Cruz represented Tinian in the Congress of Micronesia from 1965. I think for a few years he may have served on the Municipal Council. I don't have any information before me. But tell me what your general reaction was of Joe Cruz at that time and his position with respect to U.S. request?
- Hocog: If I am not mistaken he, the late Joe Cruz was a member of the District Legislature that time.
- Willens: That could be.
- Hocog: And he replaced Mr. Manglona. But what I know is that I was out first in 1972. I was replaced by Hofschneider, Bernard. Then later on came Joe Cruz replacing Mr. Manglona.
- Willens: Why did you elect to withdraw from the work of the Commission?
- Hocog: It was not really from the work of Commission. But at that time I was a teacher and Tinian at that time really didn't have extra teachers. So I had to decide which one is

more important for me and the community and I would say at that time it was teaching. Leaving the children here without a real teacher is really something.

Willens: Was there no one else here to teach the children?

Hocog: At that time there were no extra teachers. No teacher aides. Not like today.

Willens: Did you have any hand in selecting Mr. Hofschneider as your successor?

Hocog: I did suggest that to the mayor and the Municipal Council at that time. That since he was a member of the District Legislature, it is a good fit for him to be on this job.

Willens: How would you describe Mr. Hofschneider at the time as a political figure. Is he someone you respected, very intelligent?

Hocog: Yes. In fact, he was another agriculturist here at the time.

Willens: He was an agriculturist?

Hocog: Right. And because of his services with the community as a political leader, I respected him very much. That's why I recommend him to the mayor and the Council at that time to have him replace me.

Willens: I heard recently that he has retired and lives on Saipan. Are you still in touch with him?

Hocog: No more. I didn't even know that he is retired already. But he served long enough, or more than enough to be able to retire already.

Willens: Do you know why Mr. Manglona was replaced by Mr. Cruz?

Hocog: Personally, I cannot answer that question.

Willens: There were some newspaper reports that suggested that it was all done very quickly and that the Tinian Municipal Council replaced Mr. Manglona with Mr. Cruz without even appropriate resolutions being executed by the Council. Do you have any recollections of the politics that were engaged in that replacement?

Hocog: I don't have that recollection.

Willens: One of the issues that has come up is the extent in which the people on Tinian were kept informed by members of the Marianas Political Status Commission regarding the negotiations. Did you feel both when you were a member and later when you were not a member that the people on Tinian were aware of the negotiations?

Hocog: At that time, there are parts during the negotiation that cannot be released to the public until such time that there is an assurance of what ever. We had never come out to the public and try to tell them something that is not really supposed to be disclosed.

Willens: As you recall, after the negotiations began, there was a practice of joint communications at the end of the session that summarized the preliminary agreements which were reached. From time to time, the Commission came over to the islands and to the villages on Saipan to report what they were doing. Did you feel that was a useful way to keep the people informed?

Hocog: I think that was the best way at that time.

Willens: There is some controversy existing even today about whether the ultimate agreement to make about two-thirds of the island of Tinian available on lease to the United States government was a price worth paying for the Covenant. Do you have any sense now, today in view of what's happened, that the agreement to provide two-thirds of the island was in the interest of the people of Tinian?

- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Do you think it was in their interest?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: During the negotiation, United States kept changing its position. At one point it decided that no longer had to relocate San Jose village and that the people could remain in the village. Did you change your view then about the extent of the U.S. request and did you think that more land could be made available to the United States than one-third of the island?
- Hocog: No, I remained at that time—to say that trying to get more of that area is better than reducing it down.
- Willens: Near the end of the negotiation, Ambassador Williams informed the Commission that the Defense Department had decided not to build this large base on Tinian in the immediate future. That meant many of the benefits that would be associated with facility such as employment opportunities and so forth would not going to be available. Did you recall having any reaction when you learn that military facility was not in fact going to be built here?
- Hocog: Most people there at that time really enjoyed hearing that.
- Willens: They were glad to hear that the base was not going to be built?
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Did the people here basically not think that there would be employment and other kinds of opportunities for them if the base were constructed?
- Hocog: Not really that much. Because during those times a lot of these people here do their living by farming and they would rather see their land being farmed you know, than have something else.
- Willens: Well at that point, near the end of negotiations, the agreement was reached to lease two-thirds of the island, but with no immediate promise of construction of military facility. Did you feel that the people on Tinian were going to lose access to their homesteads and other land in the northern two-thirds of the island that the United States wanted to have access to?
- Hocog: That's right.
- Willens: Was that a concern to you?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Is it still a problem today?
- Hocog: With all this arrangement now that we're having lease back from United States again and I don't know what's going to happen next. But we feel—I feel now that it's better than before.
- Willens: So you think enough land has been made available on a lease back basis to permit the people here to do the farming that they wanted and also to have land available for economic development.
- Hocog: Not really, but what we are trying to get only is that we would like to see United States state clearly which area, specifically which area does it need. And that's it, you know.
- Willens: And then give all the remainder back to the people.

- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: That was the subject that was discussed recently, I believe a few years ago with the United States. Have you been involved in any of those discussions?
- Hocog: Not lately.
- Willens: Joe Cruz whom I did work with closely for couple years was always convinced that the benefits of the becoming U.S. citizens were worth making available to United States the two-thirds of the island that ultimately was agreed to. Did you feel that Mr. Cruz did have a strong bias in favor of U.S. citizenship and accommodating this request.
- Hocog: I think so.
- Willens: In that respect, do you think he represented a majority of the people on Tinian?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: When the Covenant was agreed to and signed and became the subject for a referendum, did you participate on the island of Tinian in any of the political education efforts to inform the people before they voted?
- Hocog: Part of it, part of it.
- Willens: What do you recall doing as part of a political education effort?
- Hocog: Well, at that time it is in the process of how do we go along with the situation, this situation like that, you know. Make them understand that there's always an obligation for the United States to help the citizens here. And that was also not known.
- Willens: Do you think the people were fully informed about the provisions of the Covenant before they voted on that?
- Hocog: I will say it's not really—at that time we have been suggesting that there should be a longer time of political education. That was kind of short.
- Willens: It was only about four months between the signing of the Covenant and the plebiscite.
- Hocog: Right.
- Willens: Did you first have any dealings with Mr. Canham during that period of time? He was the Plebiscite Commissioner who was designated by the United States to help organize the plebiscite and conduct the political education.
- Hocog: No.
- Willens: You do not recall him coming over to Tinian on any occasion?
- Hocog: I did not recall him.
- Siemer: Who did work on the plebiscite over here; the actual mechanics of voting?
- Hocog: I don't even recall those things.
- Willens: Frank, just going back to the Commission for a moment. The consultants were introduced to the Commission for the first time prior to the opening session in December, 1972. Did you have any views at the time about the need to have legal and economic consultants helping the Commission?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: What was your view at that time?

- Hocog: I had always wanted to have them close us, dealing the Commission and the people of Tinian rather than as a whole of Marianas.
- Willens: I'm not sure I understand that. Did you think that there should be consultants who were helping the people of Tinian?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Not consultants serving the entire Commission.
- Hocog: Right.
- Siemer: What did you think of the work of the economic consultants for the Commission?
- Willens: That was Mr. Leonard.
- Hocog: James Leonard. I think he did a pretty good job.
- Siemer: At that time how realistic did you think the projections were that you were given by them?
- Hocog: To be honest with you, at that time I was not a consultant or have any ideas to how much this, and like that. But like I said he did a good job.
- Willens: After the first ceremonial session, my law firm was asked to analyze the various different status alternatives the Commission could consider ranging from an incorporated territory to commonwealth to free association. We produced a long memorandum that analyzed these alternatives and that was the basis for internal Commission meetings before the second round in May 1973. Did you feel that this material was helpful to you in helping you serve as a member of that Commission?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Was it too legalistic or technical?
- Hocog: I would say they are pretty much in legal and realistic.
- Willens: Well, you cited to a practice in May 1973 that went on into the period of the Commission when you were not active. We would meet for a week or ten days in advance of the formal session began and the consultants would then review their analysis with the Commission and after comment, position papers would be prepared that would be approved by the Commission. Do you recall participating in that process?
- Hocog: I don't think I remember that time because I only served on the Commission for several months. And 1973, I wasn't there already, if I am not mistaken.
- Willens: Were you there for the May 1973 session which was a session where the whole question of commonwealth was presented for the first time and there were discussions about self-government and U.S. sovereignty, citizenship and citizenship the variety of issues like that. Do you have any recollection of those issues being discussed?
- Hocog: No idea.
- Willens: Do you have any other recollections about the work of the Commission that you can share with us today?
- Hocog: I can only say at this point of time that the Commission had other consultants who were involved in the Commission. And that if I can only sit back 23 years ago and go back to my books, I could tell you more about that.

Willens: I know it's very hard to do that. Okay. We'll bring the interview to conclusion and thank you very much for your time and your patience. Thank you.

Hocog: Thanks also for coming to this tiny island.