

## Candido Babauta Taman Bio

Candido Babauta Taman was born to Soledad Iguel Babauta (Sa'i) and Vicente Olaitiman Taman on 9 January 1948. Like many Saipanese, he traces his genealogy to both the late 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Chamorros from Guam (Sumay) and to several 19<sup>th</sup> century migrations from Carolinian atolls surrounding Chuuk. His life story is one of an individual who capitalized on a God-given aptitude for language and music to become an effective and inspiring proponent of cultural revitalization in the Marianas and throughout Micronesia.

Taman grew up in Saipan and was recognized for his extraordinary musical gifts through his countless performances, singing and playing ukulele at school functions, the church choir and community events. As a teen he sang popular American music but he also learned more about traditional Chamorro and Carolinian music from respected singers and songwriters including Benusto Kaipat and Tun Akin San Nicolas (Katmelo).

At the age of fifteen, he was forced to leave school to support his mother and siblings after his father passed away. Taman worked various jobs including laborer for the Trust Territory government Public Works Department, while continuing to perform music.

At the age of sixteen, his elders gave him the Carolinian name "*Soughulmwar*." Roughly translated by Taman as "twist things and put them in perspective." The name recognized his ability to use language with subtlety and tact when approaching delicate issues. Throughout the 1970s, he served as a police officer while also playing rock and roll in nightclubs. But in the 1976, amidst a resurgence in pride in traditional culture that accompanied Saipan's transition from Trust Territory to Commonwealth, he employed his linguistic and musical talents to write Chamorro and Carolinian songs in modern styles. Lyrics he wrote for his late 1970s bands Tropicsette and Chamolinian addressed tensions within the Northern Marianas and promoted a syncretic "Chamolinian" identity in which all Northern Marianas islanders could take pride.

On Guam, Taman is best known for his impact on 1980s Chamorro music with songs like "*Patgon Nene*," "*Pau Asu Amerikanu*" and "*Triste Yo*" but during the 1980s and 1990s, Taman moved between Saipan, Guam and briefly, Chuuk. During these years he became fluent in Chuukese and Pohnpeian and began writings songs in many of the indigenous languages of Micronesia.

The 1982 song "Jesus I King" was his first Chuukese language recording while "*Kom Fin Son*" was the first commercial music recording in the Kosraen language. In 1992, he recorded "*Menlau*," a Pohnpeian language song that became popular throughout the Northern Marianas.

In 1995, he recorded "Yigo Akasasa," perhaps the first pan-Micronesian hit. The rhythm which Taman composed for the song has become a staple of contemporary Micronesian music. Through five albums with Tropicsette and Chamolinian and 21 solo albums, Taman has helped develop a sound that is uniquely Micronesian and his music has influenced musicians from Belau to the Marshall Islands.

Since the early 1980s, Taman has worked in various capacities for the CNMI government, even serving a term in the 15<sup>th</sup> CNMI Legislature. However, he remains best known as a cultural authority and for his efforts to perpetuated language and culture through music. In 1995 his skill was recognized when he was appointed to the boards of the CNMI Council of Arts and Crafts and the Chamorro/Carolinian Language Commission. That year, he also helped found the CNMI chapter of PIBBA (Pacific Islands Bilingual Bicultural Association) and served as interim president. In 2004 Taman represented the CNMI in the Festival of Pacific Arts in Belau.

Since moving to Guam in 2010, Taman has continued to share his gifts through dozens of voluntary performances at island public schools during *Mes Chamorro* and as a judge in the University of Guam's annual Chamorro Language Competition. Taman is a living archive of traditional Micronesian music, using his talent to bring traditional sounds into the contemporary cultures of the region.