IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU
APPELLATE DIVISION

ULANG WONG,
Appellant,
v.
BERNARD NGIRAIBAI, MECHELINS SATO, VICTOR YANO, EDWINA NGIRAIKELAU, EDNA RAYMOND, MATHEW RUDIMCH, MODESTA NGIRASWEI, ELLIOT UDUI, ANN LUND, TEREBKUL TELLEI, and MELISSA UEDA,
Appellees.

Cite as: 2026 Palau 14
Civil Appeal No. 26-001
Appeal from Civil Action No. 24-095

Decided: November 4, 2026

Counsel for Appellant ..... Vameline Singeo
Counsel for Appellees ..... Brendlynn O. Joseph

BEFORE: OLDIAIS NGIRAIKELAU, Chief Justice, presiding
FRED M. ISAACS, Associate Justice
M. TODD OSTERLOH, Associate Justice

Appeal from the Trial Division, the Honorable Kathleen M. Salii, Presiding Justice, presiding.

OPINION

PER CURIAM:

[¶ 1] Ulang Wong ("Wong") attempted to claim individual ownership of Cadastral Lot No. 025 N 10, also known as *Elilai and Ulteb* through the estate of her father Singeo Techong ("Singeo"). On December 17, 2025, the trial court rejected Wong's claim that *Elilai and Ulteb* was Singeo's individual property, and found that the property still belonged to Elilai Lineage as listed on the original Certificate of Title. Wong appealed, arguing that the trial court failed to make the specific factual determinations of each claimant's status

within the lineage necessary to determine which of them had standing to challenge the alienation of property from Elilai Lineage to Singeo individually.

[¶ 2] For the reasons set forth below, we **AFFIRM**. [1]

BACKGROUND

[¶ 3] The history of *Elilai and Ulteb* spans several generations and has disputed origins. What is not disputed by the parties, however, is that in 1987, the Palau District Land Commission made a determination of ownership for *Elilai and Ulteb*, naming "Elilai Lineage" as the fee simple owners of the land and Singeo as the trustee. Although the determination of ownership was made in 1987, the Certificate of Title was not issued until 1999.

[¶ 4] In 2006, the descendants of Techong Badisang ("Techong") and his wife Kenrad attempted to alienate *Elilai and Ulteb* from Elilai Lineage to Singeo. In their deed of transfer, they asserted that Elilai Lineage began with Techong and Kenrad, and that therefore the three self-identified senior strong members of the Lineage were the ones with the authority to convert lineage property into individual property. This attempted transfer failed because it was opposed in Case No. LC/TR 06-05 by other individuals claiming to be the senior, strong, and *ochell* members of Elilai Lineage.

[¶ 5] At trial, both Wong and the individuals opposing her petition ("Claimants") presented witnesses who gave competing histories of *Elilai and Ulteb* and the origins of Elilai Lineage. According to Claimants, *Elilai* was given to a woman named Uwai from Ngerureor Clan when her father, Ngircholkeriil, died. Uwai had several children, including Techong, who collectively became the Elilai Lineage. They claimed the senior strong members of Elilai Lineage are the children of Uwai's daughters. They claimed *Ulteb* became part of *Elilai* when Singeo filed with the Land Commission for the original determination of ownership.

[¶ 6] Wong's witnesses testified that *Ulteb* was given to Techong and Kenrad for *ulsiungel* services they provided to Risong of Oiwel Clan, and that *Elilai* was given to Techong and Kenrad from Ngerureor Clan. They claimed

[1] We dispense with oral argument inasmuch as we find the parties' briefs and the trial record sufficient to address the issues presented on appeal. ROP R. App. P. 34(a).

that Elilai Lineage only consists of the children of Techong and Kenrad, not Uwai.

[¶ 7] Ultimately, the trial court rejected Wong's version of the origin of Elilai Lineage as well as her claim that Singeo individually owned *Elilai and Ulteb*. In doing so, the trial court stated:

> Petitioner's evidence that Singeo Techong owned *Elilai & Ulteb* in his individual capacity prior to his passing is insufficient to overcome the documentary evidence that the property remained with Elilai Lineage. The evidence at trial further, including the testimony of multiple Elilai Lineage members, establishes that Elilai Lineage is comprised of the Children of Uwai and their descendants.

Decision at 9. Accordingly, the trial court denied Wong's petition to cancel the 1999 Certificate of Title and issue one showing Wong as the individual owner. This appeal followed.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

[¶ 8] "We review matters of law *de novo*, findings of fact for clear error, and exercises of discretion for abuse of that discretion." *Obechou Lineage v. Ngeruangel Lineage of Mochouang Clan*, 2024 Palau 2 ¶ 5. "When reviewing findings of fact under the clear error standard, we view the record in the light most favorable to the Trial Division's judgment, and the factual determinations of the [trial] court will not be set aside if they are supported by such relevant evidence that a reasonable trier of fact could have reached the same conclusion, unless this court is left with a definite and firm conviction that a mistake has been made." *Rudimch v. Rudimch*, 2024 Palau 13 ¶ 6. "It is not the appellate panel's duty to reweigh the evidence, test the credibility of witnesses, or draw inferences from the evidence." *Takeo v. Kingzio*, 2021 Palau 25 ¶ 6.

DISCUSSION

[¶ 9] This case ultimately revolves around Wong's request that the trial court cancel the existing certificate of title for *Elilai and Ulteb* that lists Elilai

Lineage as the owner and issue a new certificate in her name. On appeal, Wong raises three arguments. First, she contends that the trial court applied the wrong legal framework by treating the existing certificate of title and present-day lineage objection as effectively dispositive, instead of deciding the underlying ownership dispute presented in this quiet-title action. Second, she argues that the judgment should be vacated and remanded because the decision does not contain sufficiently specific findings on material disputed issues to permit meaningful appellate review. Finally, she claims that the trial court failed to make the required customary-law findings establishing that claimants are strong or senior strong members of Elilai Lineage.

[¶ 10] Wong acknowledges the current Certificate of Title lists Elilai Lineage as the owner of *Elilai and Ulteb*. A certificate of title is prima facie evidence of ownership and is conclusive upon all persons who had appropriate notice. *See* 35 PNC 1314; *Estate of Pedro v. Estate of Pedro*, 2024 Palau 11 ¶ 13. The trial court concluded that Wong did not rebut this presumption, finding that Elilai Lineage is comprised of the children of Uwai, not just the children of Techong. The trial court also found that Singeo was unsuccessful in his attempt to transfer ownership of the property to himself in 2006.

[¶ 11] These are findings of fact which are supported by the record. Dr. Yano's testimony established why the property was originally given to Uwai, and the Claimants presented a family tree showing how the children of Uwai, including Techong, are related. Accordingly, there is sufficient evidence to support the trial court's decision.

[¶ 12] Wong's arguments on appeal fail for two reasons. First, Wong did not challenge the findings that *Elilai and Ulteb* remained the property of Elilai Lineage, or that Elilai Lineage consists of the children of Uwai. Accordingly, she has waived any objection to these findings. *Koror State Pub. Lands. Auth. v. Palau Pub. Lands Auth.*, 22 ROP 30, 34 n. 1 (2015). Second, each of Wong's arguments is contingent on rebutting the presumption of ownership established by the Certificate of Title. Because the trial court concluded that Wong did not present sufficient evidence, neither it nor we need to determine if the claimants were senior strong members within Elilai Lineage.

CONCLUSION

[¶ 13] For the foregoing reasons, we **AFFIRM** the trial court's denial of Wong's petition for a new certificate of title.