

IV. Relevant Organizations

1. Governmental Organizations

(1) Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

The government authority responsible for ICH matters is the MIA and the Senior Cultural Officer (SCO) is assigned by the Secretary of Ministry of Internal Affairs with the performance of that important function. Furthermore, the SCO is in charge of the Cultural and Museum Division (C&MD) where the ICH is managed and artefacts and books of traditions are stored.

Policy advice and development of ICH rests with the Administration Division of MIA of which the Secretary serves as head thereby plays a management and executive role.

C&MD through MIA does not perform its ICH function within the legal framework of a law that specifically governs the safeguarding of the ICH. The C&MD manages ICH affairs merely because ICH falls within the ministerial portfolio of the MIA thereby it has become the responsibility of the C&MD under the direct supervision of the SCO.

The ME's three divisions namely the Curriculum Unit (CU), National Archives (NA) and the National Library (NL) are playing this important roles in the preservation and safeguarding of ICH. For education the preservation of ICH is performed within the legal framework of the Education Act 2013. The NA and NL are playing their role in this regard in the absence of a legal mandate.

Beginning from the early part of the last century the desire to include I-Kiribati History in the social studies curriculum was translated into reality in 1927. The new curriculum of studies was based heavily on the writings of Arthur Grimble. H.E. Maude helped Capt. F.G.L Holland the Headmaster of the King George V Secondary school in the production of Gilbertese History in typescript in 1933.

The desire for the Kiribati history of forming an integral part of the curriculum was alive only for a while in those years. The externally designed curricula and examination influenced later developments that led to the disappearance of Gilbertese history from the School syllabus.

(2) National Library

The NL was originally intended for safekeeping of collections and books of Kiribati traditions. However, given the absence of other libraries that could provide other services to the public the NL also serves as Public Library. It has about 30 books of Kiribati traditions by the same authors who are considered authorities of Kiribati traditions. Books suitable for the general public including students and children are also available. This included books of early writers such as Author Grimble, H.E. Maude and Father Sabatier. Books produced by writers in more recent years Dr. Gerd Koch, Dr. Jean-Paul Latouche, Dr. Barry Macdonald are also available in the NL. Also available in the NL are the published work of the Group of I-Kiribati writers who produced the: Kiribati Aspects of History prior to July 1979. Last but not the least the books produced by Dr. Kambati Uriam and others are also available with the NL.

The safekeeping, storage, display of books of Kiribati traditions and borrowing are considered excellent at the NL. They are separately stored in a compartment of the counter the top of which is made of glass. Through that glass one can have a look at the books. Also on the counter is the list of books of traditions. This easily helps people who want to know the books of tradition that are kept in the NL and available for borrowing. The counter also serves as the desk from which the receptionist serves visitors to the NL.

Catalog is used to record the books and in this way the exact location of books in the library is known and every book borrowed could be traced. Heavy fines are also imposed on borrowers for a late return, destroying or loss of books.

The NA like the C&MD of the MIA as already been mentioned stores the Kiribati traditions as collected in the early parts of the last century and in later years and published over a century go.

The NA keeps records of minutes of Land Courts throughout Kiribati. These minutes ranged from retrospective records during the colonial period, post war era up to these days. NA keeps closed files from the colonial administration and their equivalent in the post-independent era. Genealogies of Islands of the Northern Gilberts Group notably Makin, Butaritari, Marakei, Abaiang, Tarawa, Maiana and Marakei are also kept in the NA.

Overall the NA plays an equally important role in the preservation and protection of the Kiribati cultural heritage. The NL looks after its own copies of Kiribati traditions and books assigned for the Public Library.

The public borrows books from the NL under strict control. Borrowing is allowed only for those who have Identity Cards with Library. Borrowers complied with date upon which to return book.

(3) National Archives

The National Archives (NA) plays an equally important role in the preservation of cultural heritage matters. At the NA books of Kiribati traditions are also available. They include myth and legend of the creation, the earth the moon and the sun. There are also stories about early migration to our islands and how these islands were settled.

The NA also keeps old colonial closed files of genealogies of some islands notably Tarawa, Marakei, Butaritari and Makin. Among these are the Land Commission's reports of pre-World War period which includes titles to native lands.

The colonial annual reports are account of activities performed by the colonial government from one year to another. There are also Colony Information Notes a colonial government periodical the forerunner of the present government-owned newspaper Te Uekera.

Microfilm and cassettes featuring traditional dances and Kiribati songs composed by traditional composers of many years ago and other elements of the Kiribati culture are also kept with NA.

The Minutes of the Land Courts is the only updated information as Lands Court on each island in the archipelago meets from time to time.

Moreover, given the deteriorating conditions of minutes of land courts of the past i.e. 1940s up to the 1960s minutes are soon to be transformed into microfilms to ensure adequate preservation.

In addition, the NA was undergoing renovation at the time of this field work hence there was much difficulties on my part to looking at how books, pamphlets, papers, microfilms and cassettes were displayed and stored.

It is obvious that there was hardly any professional training provided to NA staff.

Enhancing the quality service of the NA is required. Proper study of the present situation of the NA is important so that appropriate technical assistance is provided to address loopholes of the NA service and to improve them in the very near future.

(4) Land and Agricultural Division, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development

On a different matter, the Lands and Agricultural Divisions of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development (MELAD) are playing their respective roles in the preservation of native lands and the maintenance to some extent of plants that that is valuable to I-Kiribati traditional way of life.

First and foremost the Lands Division which is an integral part of the Ministry responsible for Native Lands has lawful mandate and authority conferred upon the Chief Lands Officer to safeguard native lands in accordance with the law concerned.

The law moreover provides for the establishment or registration of titles to native lands by the Commission to be evidenced by a Register of Native lands coupled also with registration of those titles by the Courts.

Once those titles are established pursuant to the law the land owner becomes the legal owner of the land and such title becomes indefeasible.

Furthermore the law restricts alienation of native land by way of sales, gift, lease and other forms to foreigners. Only the State, the Co-operatives registered under the Co-operative Ordinance the National Loans Board other bodies registered in Kiribati may lease native lands for normal government business, commercial purposes and for security of loans.

The Agricultural Division deals with agricultural policy development in the country and replants coconut trees, indigenous plants and other trees.

The division encourages poultry and piggery development in the country as well. It controls imports of plant product, seeds, tissue culture, sand or sand aggregate and other relevant imports to avoid coming into Kiribati dangerous species that are a threat to the flora and fauna.

The Agricultural Division provides pesticide control where it is required.

Overall the flora and fauna which this country inherited from its past including those recently imported into Kiribati are protected to a certain degree.

This implies the protection of the flora and fauna is not adequate. Fire in the bush easily caught by dry climate, exacerbated by climate change, spreads easily, and destroys whatever trees that stands its way. Coconut and pandanus trees scientific name of which is *pandanus tectorius* are the major victims of fire.

However, coconut trees are often replanted with pandanus tree attracting less attention for planting. Therefore young coconut trees are abundant relatively than the pandanus tree.

The importance of the pandanus tree is that it is suitable for timber for local houses. People cut the pandanus tree for that purpose. Coupled with fire, the destruction of the pandanus tree is more severe than coconut trees. There are at present relatively few pandanus trees in the islands.

Moreover, pandanus trees which are Indigenous to certain islands are indeed on the verge of disappearance, especially the type of pandanus tree whose fruits provide low quantity of juice. They are replaced with pandanus trees imported from other islands in the archipelago that produces high quantity of juice.

Juice of high quantity is conducive to the production of Te tuae. Te Tuae is one of the foods made purely of juice extracted from the boiled pandanus fruits. The juice which is creamy is poured and spread on a clean flat stuff laid on the ground amid the heat of the day. The juice becomes dry as a result, reddish in color and very nutritional. Te tuae could be preserved for a long period of time.

It is therefore the desire for higher quantity and better quality of Te tuae that has led to the disfavor of a certain pandanus tree and their destruction. It would do no harm if the different species of pandanus trees are allowed to grow together.

The agricultural Division plays a significant role in the protection of our trees and plants. However, that protective measure needs enhancement so that indigenous plants and trees remain intact.

2. Others

There are other Relevant Organizations playing their own roles in this context:

The Kiribati Police Service administers the Penal Code²⁶ which deals with crime control in the country. The Penal Code does not talk about safeguarding the ICH. However it provides for the “protection of life and properties”. The properties may include cultural artefacts such as the sacred sites and the stuff that are kept in the sacred sites.

The ME also plays an important role in the preservation of the Kiribati cultural heritage. The Ministry develops the Policies and Guidelines²⁷ that prescribes the content, structure and delivery for national curriculum for primary and secondary schools in Kiribati. The Policy was developed in line with the legal framework²⁸ governing education in Kiribati which allows the Community and Culture to become part of Syllabus of Year 1 and Year 2. Community and Culture are also integrated in the Syllabus of secondary schools. The copy of the Education Act is attached for easy reference. In this way the ME contributes to a large degree of effectively preserving the cultural heritage of Kiribati.

²⁶ The Offices of the Attorney General, the Penal Code, Tarawa, 1982

²⁷ National Curriculum and Assessment Framework, Tarawa, 2014

²⁸ The Offices of the Attorney General, the Education Act, 2013 Section 4 (a),(i), (ii) and (ii), Tarawa, 2014