

### III. Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory

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#### 1. Yap and its Outer Islands



Figure 1. Yap Day 2014

The main island of Yap proper was settled 3,500 years ago according to current archaeological theory. This settlement occurred 1,500 years before any other island of the FSM and suggests that Yap holds greater similarity to the islands of Palau and those of the Mariannas archipelago including Guam and Saipan. Cultural traits seen in Yap are particularly similar to Palau. In addition, Yap remains one of the most traditional islands within the FSM, along with the outer islands to the east of it. However there is a definite distinction between the main island of Yap and its outer island counterparts. Yap proper is described as the parent of the outer island who are the children. Within the legislative body of Yap there are two traditional councils. One of these, the Council of Pilung governs what occurs on Yap proper and the Council of Tamol serve the outer islands. This distinction in culture may be seen in many aspects of the traditional culture including the traditional dress.

Yap and its outer islands are considered by many to be those most traditional islands within the FSM. As such they maintain several unique ICH. The Yap Historic Preservation Office is in charge of assisting villages and organizations around the island with the protection and continuance of these practices.

**Traditional Canoe Carving and Sailing** is perhaps what Yap and its outer islands are best known. On Yap proper, the traditional canoe club Waa'gey has been established to continue this knowledge. In the village of Wichilap, there lives one of the last master carvers for island of Yap proper. He creates model canoes and teaches



**Figure 2 Yapese Sailing Canoe**

### **Traditional Navigation**

Traditional knowledge of navigation is only held on a few of the outer islands, such as Satawal and Puluwat (outer island of Chuuk), where it has long been considered to be a sacred art to be passed down only amongst a few. Stories say that the knowledge of navigation first developed on Pulap (outer island of Chuuk) where it was passed down from a giant bird.

### **Fish Weirs**

Yap island contains some of the most unique fish weirs in the world. Fish weirs are stone wall constructed in the lagoon that act to attract and trap fish by utilizing the changing tides. While the fish weir itself is a tangible artifact the knowledge of how these fish weirs work is an important element of ICH.

### **Woleai's Written Language**

The history of the Woleai script which contains 99 known glyphs is contentious. Riesenbergs & Kaneshiro (1960) attributed the script to the introduction of writing systems by European missionaries from 1878-1907 which were subsequently re-interpreted by people of Woleai. Others, however, find similarities between it and the rongorongo script of Rapa Nui based on 15 shared

characters. The rongorongo script was said to be used to assist in remembering chants and was created independently though its history is also ambiguous. Both are unique among the Pacific Islands.

### **Traditional House Construction**

The newly-built Yap Living History Museum a complex of five traditionally built houses representing the main house types for the traditional village. Additionally the Yap HPO has assisted many villages in the re-construction of traditional men's houses including the re-construction of the malal, or dancing ground, where the largest of the stone money is kept.



**Figure 3 Yap Living History Museum**

### **Traditional Monetary Systems**

The most well-known form of traditional money is the stone money in the shape of large wheels. This money was carved from stone in Palau and possibly some islands to the north and transported to Yap. However many other forms of money exist including shell money, whales teeth, and a myriad of other forms. Currently no complete inventory of the many types of money exist. Traditional money is often displayed before a dance and is used to make amends between people and villages.

### **Village Hierarchy**

There is a complex hierarchical system dividing the many villages of Yap. Atop the hierarchy are three paramount villages. The chiefs of these paramount

villages are subsequently the highest chiefs of the islands. Beneath these three are subsequent tiers of five and seven villages leading down to the lower-caste villages. This hierarchy still dictates how villages interact today. The Yap Historic Preservation Office has expressed its desire to record this hierarchy though the final decisions could be contentious.

### **Traditional Dances**

There are many traditional dances in Yap, some of which include

Tiyor, or Tam - performed by young women, it concentrates on soliciting goods from the traditional chiefs and community leaders.

Bamboo Dance - provides male and female dancers with the opportunity to display their agility and strength.

Women's sitting & standing dances - tells the stories of suffering and achievement of an epic event.

Men's standing dance (Gaslaw) - an erotic type of dance that tells the story of suffering and achievement.

Marching Dances - these dances are influenced by the military presence on the island and are usually comedic in nature.

### **Traditional Dress**

For the woman, there is a distinction between the outer islands who wear a woven wrap that the young women are taught to make from a young age, called a lavalava, and Yap islanders who wear a dyed grass skirt to be worn with a special black necklace for those women who are of a mature age. Traditional protocol requires that these garments be made on the respective island. This has been a hindrance for outer islanders living on Yap proper who, according to traditional protocol, are not allowed to weave lavalavas. The weaving of lavalava is learned by a young girl at an early age and is an important role in her maturation process allowing her to create her own clothes that represent her own identity. The process itself takes a long time seated at a traditional loom.

For the man, a colorful loincloth is worn called a thu`u. The colors and varieties of cloth worn are representative of his maturation. A young boy begins with only a single red piece of cloth tied around like a loin cloth. As the boy matures additional pieces of cloth are added including a woven black and white wrap. Once a man hibiscus fibers dried in the sun are added. A man will also always carry a basket which contains his betel nut and other items. Traditionally, if a



man enters a village he is not from he is to carry a leaf as a sign that he comes in peace. However, carrying a basket displays the same signal as he is prepared to sit down together and share betel nut and have a discussion. Both sexes go topless.

In many outer islands village mandates state that traditional dress is to be worn all the time. These islands still rely heavily on their traditions to survive on their remote islands. On Yap proper traditional dress is more often worn only during traditional ceremonies.

## 2. Chuuk and its Outer Islands

Chuuk is the most populated state with 50,000 people living throughout its islands. The main island of Chuuk is uniquely described as an “almost-atoll”. Geologically it has sunk over the course of roughly 13 million years to where its volcanic islands are barely above the surface and are not much different than the coral atolls that surround it in all directions. These islands were never unified under a single chief as in Pohnpei or Kosrae and there was none of the complex competitive food exchanges and other social rituals that were found on those islands. This lack of unity has led to a diverse group of individual islands with specific cultural traits. Chuuk’s culture is very similar to the outer islands of Yap and vis versa. The main social unit is the lineage group, broken into two or three households. The meeting house, or uut was the gathering place and living quarters for unmarried males of the extended family. The cookhouse is a common meeting place for the family to come together. As in Kosrae the church has taken a large role in the culture. However, magic and traditional spirits still exist beneath Christianity in an unspoken manner.



**Figure 4 Chuukese Performing at their Cultural Day**

### **Mortlock's *Tapuanu* Spirit Mask**

The Mortlock islands, a group of three atolls lying to the south-east of the main island of Chuuk are well-known for their *tapuanu* spirit masks and the dances in which these masks would be worn during the performance. The *tapuanu* meaning “sacred spirit” is the only mask produced in Micronesia. The masks were created and cared for by the *soutapuanu* secret society who met within the *falefol* ceremonial house and used in beachside and ceremonial house dances. The dance itself was said to be performed to scare away malicious spirits and the mask represents a protective ancestor spirit that could also protect against typhoons and safeguard the food sources for the island, specifically breadfruit. While the use of masks is rare in Micronesia, it is common to islands in Melanesia and Papua New Guinea. As such the use of *tapuanu* masks may represent a relict from the ancestral cultures that are believed to have settled the islands from island Melanesia to the south. Today, these masks are more commonly seen as a handicraft and memento for tourists and the dances are only rarely performed.



**Figure 5 Tapuanu Spirit Mask from the Mortlock Islands (Smithsonian Archives)**

### **Spirit Possession and the Ghost Canoe**

Spirit possession is still common on Chuuk whereby the spirits of dead relatives will take possession of one of their family members, usually a woman, to voice grievances over events that have taken place. Hazel (1993) has described these occurrences as a way for women to voice their grievances in a culture dominated

by the need for cohesion within the family household where few other opportunities exist. As such spirit possession represents an opportunity for women to express their role within the family.

Traditionally, Chuuk had many different spirits. *Anulap*, the Great Spirit, was regarded as the oldest and most powerful; *Lukeilang* was the son of *Anulap* and lord of the realm of spirits and mortals; *Olofat* was the eldest son of *Lukeilang* and a trickster. However, there is an abundance of other spirits that embody different natural features such as reefs, mountains, and animals. While most people would deny the belief in such spirits explicitly, many stories are still told of their influence.

Many of these spirits visit people in their dreams. Early ethnographies from the late 19th century tell how a small carved canoe was once hung in the lineage meeting house that served as a vehicle for the spirit. A *sou awarawar*, a spirit medium would be seated in the midst of the family who chanted the name of the dead relative. The spirit medium would convulse and speak in a special spirit language that would be interpreted. While these early accounts describe spirit possession as a purposeful act more often performed by men, today spirit possession is more often an uncontrolled act performed by women (Hazel 1993).



**Figure 6 Chuukese Ghost Canoe (Smithsonian Archives)**

### **Love Stick**

The Chuukese love stick is a well-known aspect of traditional Chuukese culture. It is an intricately carved piece of wood in the shape of a small spear. Two identical love sticks would be carved, one smaller than the other. There must not be any other like the two and the design must be kept secret. The smaller of the two would be given to a woman by her suitor. The suitor would then come to visit the

woman at night and thrust his love stick through the wall of the woman's hut. She could then compare his love stick to her own to ensure that it was indeed the person she thought it was and could then welcome him in.

Love magic still today plays a role in Chuukese society in which the goddess of love, *Inemes*, plays an important role. Such love magic is held very secret.

While the love stick is more commonly seen as a handicraft it is still a part of Chuukese culture that expresses the rights of women and respect for women within a relationship.



**Figure 7 Chuukese Love Stick (Smithsonian Archives)**

### **3. Pohnpei and its Outer Islands**



**Figure 8 Pohnpeian Man in Headdress (2012 Pohnpei Cultural Day)**

Pohnpei is the largest island in the FSM and is the seat of its national government. Roughly 30,000 people live in Pohnpei including people from the surrounding outer atolls of Pingelap, Mwoakilloa, Sapwuafik, and the Polynesian outliers of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro. Pohnpei is the only island in FSM that maintains its traditional use of sakau, known more generally as kava, and scientifically as *Piper methysticum*. Ancestrally, sakau was also consumed in Kosrae but is no longer. It is believed that the consumption of sakau, or seka as it was called in



Kosrae, ended on Kosrae with the influence of the missionaries in the 1870s. Pohnpei is known for its Nan Madol ruins around which a rich oral history is told. The Lelu ruins on Kosrae are also half of this history, though fewer stories are known on Kosrae. Thus while Pohnpei and Kosrae showed a shared traditional culture in the past their differences at present and the political boundaries lead them to be addressed separately in this report.

### **Title System**

Pohnpei maintains a complex chiefly system with two distinct lines, the Nahmwarki and the Nahnken. This title system pervades all traditional ceremonies that occur on Pohnpei. Keating (2000) describes how the title system is reinforced in the language, offerings, and concept of space within these ceremonies.

Each of the five municipalities (Madolenihmw, Kitti, Sokehs, Nett, Uh) have their own Nahmwarki and Nahnken lines. The Nahmwarki is the high chief and for whom particular respect protocols are maintained. If one visits a Nahmwarki one must bring a gift, never have one's head above that of the Nahmwarki, and one must speak in a particular language of respect which addresses the Nahmwarki as more than one person as he represents both the entire village. Because of this respect the Nahmwarki often maintains a more reclusive life. When present at meetings others defer to his judgement. The Nahnken acts as a talking chief who is able to communicate between the high chief and the community. In this way the strict respect is maintained for the Nahmwarki while allowing for interaction with the community. Beneath the Nahmwarki and Nahnken are many titles of those who are in-line to move up the hierarchy and each plays roles specific to their title. The chiefly system continues down to include smaller section chiefs who may then report issues upward. This system has developed over the past 500 years to fully incorporate the village.

The Constitution of Pohnpei and the FSM has ordained that these traditional titles and their roles are to be respected. However, the powers of the traditional chiefs and the manner in which they shall interact with the power of the government has never been well stated. As a result the role of the Nahmwarki and the Nahnken as it relates to the power of government is often ambiguous. It is recommended that the traditional title system be codified and the roles of the traditional chiefs be addressed more specifically within the Pohnpei Code in a manner similar to Yap. This does not require the traditional chiefly system to be fully integrated into the Pohnpei government, something that is likely to be impossible to do. It should also seek to reduce confusion rather than add to it. A council of Nahmwarkis is difficult because it becomes who has authority and

what respect behaviors are required. However, a council of Nahnken who then consult with their Nahnmwarki would seem to be an appropriate method whereby input from the traditional chiefs could be incorporated into the government sector.

Further, while the government maintains relationships with the international community it is the traditional chiefs that maintain a stronger relationship with the local community. Bridging the gap between the government which is capable of passing regulations and receiving international funding and the traditional chiefs who are capable of actually enforcing those regulations and allowing the funding to be used most efficiently is a very pressing issue. For an example, we may look at the traditional apology ceremony.

### **Oral Histories**

164-04 To require the Department of Education to adopt and implement a comprehensive Pohnpeian language, culture, and history of Pohnpei education program; and for other purposes.

Pending Measure for Pohnpei Education & Cultural Affairs committee

Plans have been in preparation for the Pohnpei Department of Education to further incorporate traditional culture into the curriculum, including the traditional history which had previously been passed down orally through stories. Traditional culture had prescribed that such stories should not be told all at once. However, for such stories to be included in textbooks they must be included in full an act that breaks tradition. [For a more detailed discussion see the subsection “Breaking Tradition to Save Tradition”]

Falgout (1992) explains how the value of knowledge differs between the democratic American education system and the traditional Pohnpeian hierarchy. While knowledge that is taught in schools is seen as a basic right for everyone, traditional knowledge is shared more sparingly because it is viewed as the property of specific people within the hierarchy. Thus, while in the school system knowledge may be questioned and questions are encouraged, within the traditional system questioning the knowledge of a person is disrespectful. The teaching of oral histories in school requires that this difference in meaning be resolved, a task which is not impossible.

When archaeologists speak of the history of the islands they speak in terms of beliefs. They cite evidence in the terms of radiocarbon dates and artifact

assemblages and interpret such evidence into probable theories. Questions are encouraged because it is accepted that no one actually knows. Oral historians, though, speak in unquestioning truths.

There has now been a few accounts written of the oral histories over time including those by Luellen Bernardt (1977) and Masao Hadley (1987), as well as compilations of stories by the Trust Territory Department of Education (1973) and Ashby (1983). All of these are useful texts for the teaching of oral history. Each tells stories which at their time were unquestioned. Yet, today the authority of their authors may be put into question. Even the recent local historian Masao Hadley is questioned because he was from Kitti and not from Madolenihmw and so could never have been told the authentic account of the stories.

The authoritative account of the history will always be held in secret within the community. Written accounts will always be questioned. Within the school system it is already widely regarded that all knowledge should be questioned. Therefore, teaching the non-authoritative accounts of oral history that are to be questioned should not be a problem so long as it is acknowledged that the actual true versions are still held in secret. Any written oral history must acknowledge this difference.

### **Sakau Bar Regulations**

Pohnpei is well known for its traditional use of sakau, more generally known by its Polynesian name kava, or by its scientific name *Piper methysticum*. Throughout the Pacific kava is generally prepared from a dried powder which is distributed throughout the Pacific islands in a clearly untraditional form. In some islands, such as Fiji and Samoa, fresh kava is used only within highly-ritualized traditional ceremonies. In this way the traditional use and the everyday use are clearly separated.

In Pohnpei all sakau is made from the fresh plant roots and prepared in a traditional style, though the exact situation within which it is drunk may exhibit an entire range from strictly traditional to everyday use. Currently, sakau is imbibed from bottles on the side of the road, in sakau bars, during traditional feasts and funerals or as a regular evening occasion. Within each of these occasions tradition plays a role.

Because of water pollution in more recent times it was found that traditional methods of sakau preparation which use local water could spread disease such as cholera. Accordingly, regulations were put in place to control the production of sakau in order to prevent the spread of disease. This is one of few examples where a specific form of ICH has been described by state regulations. While the

purpose of the regulation is to control disease it does account for the traditional method of sakau preparation.

It should be noted, however, that many of the regulations were not found to be enforced for sakau bars.



**Figure 9 Pohnpeian Man Squeezing Sakau**

### **Traditional Dance**

Traditional dances from Pohnpei include the *Lehp*, the marching dance, *Kepir*, a stick dance for men, *Wen*, a stick dance for women, *Tokia*, a war dance & *Sapei*. Dancers wear traditional grass skirts and *mwaramwar* headdress made of flowers. Their bodies are coated in coconut oil. Many of these dances may also be seen on the other islands of FSM including Chuuk and perhaps at one time on Kosrae. Pohnpeians are, however, well known for their dances that use a traditional paddle.

### **Sapwuahfik's Council of Traditional Story Tellers**

The island of Sapwuahfik lies west by northwest of Pohnpei. Canoes are still sailed today for the purpose of fishing. A council of elders has been appointed by the village as the keepers of the oral historical knowledge. These accounts would include the record of the massacre by European sailors and Pohnpei warriors



who killed off the male population in 1837. This event has played a significant role in the identity of the people who now practice a culture that developed during the repopulation by people from Pohnpei that occurred after that massacre (Poyer 1993). Their language is a cross between European and Pohnpeian dialects.

### **Mwokil's Re-learning to Sail Canoe**

The 1950 documentary entitled *Mokil* provides a rare glimpse into the traditional culture once practiced on this atoll to the east of Pohnpei. Today that culture has long changed. Efforts are now underway though to teach the youth the art of sailing canoe. The senior citizens organization under the leadership of Ichiro John is running the program and hopes to develop a summer camp for the Mwokilese youth on Pohnpei to return to their home island to learn traditional skills.

### **Kapingamarangi Carving**

A large proportion of the carvings created in Pohnpei as well as in Kosrae are made by wood carvers from Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro. These carvings follow a rather uniform style and motif, though some new designs are being developed. The most traditional of these is the god and goddess figures from the island.

### **1990's Canoe Carving Program**

Throughout the 1990s a program funded by the US National Park Service supported the carving of traditional canoes from each of the islands of Pohnpei and its outer atolls for incorporation into the Lidorkini maritime museum exhibit which existed at that time. Canoes were constructed from Mwoakilloa, Pingelap, Sapwuahfik, Nukuoro, and a warasap canoe from Pohnpei which was traditionally only used by the Nahnmwarki. Today the museum is no more and the canoes rest in storage. The Mwokilese canoe has been brought out to help to youth the Mwokilese youth on Pohnpei and Mwoakilloa the art of sailing canoe. These canoes could still be displayed if the proper facilities were acquired.

#### **4. Kosrae**

Kosrae is the easternmost island of the Federated States of Micronesia and has no outer island within its political boundaries. It is the smallest population of any of the states at roughly 6,000 people and much of its island still lies in uninhabited forest. In the mid-19th century an epidemic decimated the population killing an estimated 90% of the people leaving the total population at that time at less than 300. This epidemic followed the devastating impact of whalers and pirates from 1820-1840 who introduced alcohol and firearms at that time. The effect of the population loss was a dramatic loss of traditional culture. Following the epidemic, missionaries helped to revitalize the population while introducing Christianity that is now a hallmark of the Kosraean culture. Today many people on Kosrae refer to their culture in terms of the Church. Thus few elements of the traditional ICH survive.



**Figure 10 Kosraean Man at Cultural Fair Presentation**

#### **Fafa Pounding**

Fafa pounding is the pounding of banana and/or taro into a thick paste. It likely shares a common ancestry to the pounding of poi on Hawaii and other Polynesian islands showing a connection between these islands and Kosrae.

Fafa pounding is perhaps the most revered tradition in Kosrae that dates from a prehistoric origin. For example a fafa pounder has been included on the state flag of Kosrae. It is a major feature of its cultural fair and occurs at funerals and major cultural events. The role of fafa at these events to bring people together under the umbrella of their culture should not be underestimated.

Following strict tradition the fafa pounder should be made of stone, but pounders are also made of wood and cement. The best fafa is said to be made by a stone pounder. It is said that the sound of the pounder hitting the fafa is what tells the preparer when it is done. Numerous examples exist in the Kosraean museum of ancient fafa pounders found at archaeological sites around the island. Following tradition only certain varieties of banana and taro are used to produce fafa. The protocol extends to the type of coconut used for the coconut cream that tops it and even the outer husk of a certain type of coconut is used to squeeze the cream.



**Figure 11 Fafa Pounding at the 2014 Kosrae Cultural Fair**

### **Banana Fiber Weaving**

The antiquities from Kosrae contained within museums around the world show the excellent skills of banana fiber weaving on the island of Kosrae. Today the traditional knowledge of such a fine art is mostly gone and perhaps retained by only a few elders. Specific banana trees are said to have been used just for their fiber. The fruit of these trees is very small and the trunks thinner, retaining less water and greater fiber. Traditional looms for the weaving of banana fiber into traditional dress called *tol* can still be found at the Kosrae museum alongside a 130 year old example of the garment. However, it is unlikely that the traditional could be reinvigorated to its full extent.

### **The Last Remaining Traditional House at the Kosrae Village Resort**

The largest traditional house found on the island of Kosrae and the largest collection of traditional houses is found at the Kosrae Village Resort. While houses made of thatch roof and poles are still constructed none can match the size and scope of the main dining area at the Kosrae Village Resort. As such, there is an inherent value in maintaining this large traditional house as an example for people to copy from should other style houses be wish to be produced in the future.