Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom

Themes from the Pacific Islands

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

ichcap
International Information and Networking Centre
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region
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Preface

I am very delighted and privileged to write this preface for *Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom: Themes from the Pacific Islands*. This book is the result of our two-year journey for a joint publication project that ICHCAP and the coordinators of six Pacific countries—namely, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Tonga, and Vanuatu—planned and implemented with the spirit of solidarity and mutual respect.

The idea originated at the fourth sub-regional network meeting of six Pacific countries in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in April 2013 to promote the visibility and viability of Pacific intangible cultural heritage. At the beginning, however, selecting proper themes and authors was quite a challenge due to the long distances and the lack of communication tools. Through continuous e-mail and telephone calls, we finally managed to find authors and collect articles for this publication. For the book, two editorial meetings were held this year, one in Pohnpei, FSM, in May, and the other in Jeonju, Korea, in August.

While traditional knowledge is now receiving more attention due to its potential value, for some time, 'traditional' was generally synonymous to 'old' and 'outdated.' But, by the end of the twentieth century, the so-called modern approach to the world has revealed its limits as expressed in the many problems facing modern society, including environmental degradation and dehumanization. In post-modernist discourse, a central task has been to overcome the negative side of modernity in the fields of not only the arts and humanities but also social, natural, and applied sciences. And many people are looking for alternatives in traditional knowledge or intangible cultural heritage. Re-examining, reinterpreting, and applying traditional knowledge in a contemporary context often leads to viable solutions.

An example of a return to traditional knowledge creating viable solutions can be found in the field of medicine. It has long been the practice of many societies to try to cure diseases and stay healthy by using locally grown herbs to boost the immune system. This approach to human health was supplanted with modern medical science, which is based on the idea that diseases can be eradicated by identifying pathogens and killing or removing them with modern medical materials and devices.

This approach flourished in the twentieth century until it was suggested that locally grown herbs can be better for overall health and result in fewer side effects than antibiotics and other universally applicable and diagnosed materials.

Applying traditional knowledge in the modern world is not confined to the field of herbal medicine. Traditional customs and know-how can be applied to overcome various social, environmental, and ecological challenges today.

The editors of this book have compiled informative articles on traditional knowledge from the Pacific that may provide solutions and ideas for problems facing modern society. To help create a clearer platform for conveying ideas about traditional wisdom, we have categorized the articles under five themes: Worldviews, Relationships and Social Cohesion, Harvest and Landscapes, Voyaging and Seascapes, and Art and Technology.

In Worldviews, the articles reflect not only how people in this region conceptualize the world around them but also how such conceptualizations best suit their living conditions as well as their social organization and their interactions with the world. Their ideas of the world manifest themselves in events, myths and legends, important food, communication, and traditional laws and systems.

And, as is well acknowledged, the traditional knowledge demonstrated here can motivate those in industrialized society to reflect on our own ways of living. In many of these articles, you can see that people in the Pacific pay special attention to the ways they communicate to and with others, especially through the power of song, where they have chosen not to speak directly, instead alluding to the main point in beautiful and poetical words, and often the messages in the songs are more significant.

In Relationships and Social Cohesion, we find interesting descriptions revealing the way people in this region think and interact individually with each other as well as through the larger society. This can include intergenerational family systems, family relationships that drive post-natal practices, rites of passage, and systems to solve and manage social conflict. Though these ideas and approaches are as diverse as the cultures in which they are found, they do collectively show how people in this region form and respect social relationships and how they work on problems that develop in those relationships.

The article on Palauan childbirth practices in this section is of special interest to me personally because the Palauan practices are very similar to the traditional childbirth practices in Korea and it illustrates how modern approaches may benefit from traditional ideas. For example Palau's postnatal care of giving the mother a hot herb bath is similar to the Korean practice of

having the mother rest on a well-heated clay floor with branches and leaves of pine trees piled on one side. Both practices may have the effect, through perspiration and with the help of plant anti-oxidants, of eliminating toxins, such as adrenalin hormones that are secerned during the delivery process, and of restoring the health of cells and organs of the maternal body. Such similarities may not be confined to the birth practice, and they can be the rich source of ideas and practices conducive to improving human health and living conditions in general.

Harvest and Landscapes provides us with information on the way people of this region prepare some of their staple food, mostly taro, cassava, and yams. The familiar western saying of 'You are what you eat' seems to be more applicable here as the people of this region are more engaged in the production and consumption of their food, from taro-field making to the semi-ritual way of eating *laplap soso'ur*.

The descriptions in these papers are telling in that they give clues to solutions for some problems contemporary food culture faces. The preparation process of *nogoytam* and *nelet* is a good example. These two ways of cooking cassava have several effects in terms of helping the people get through hard times: the long storage of cassava roots to be used during food shortage, the multiple ways of using all parts of the cassava for tasty dishes, the know-how of processing the bitter (toxic) part of cassava to make a good and safe food, etc. Longer storage, full usage, and efficient detoxification of food stuffs are pending issues in modern society.

Voyaging and Seascapes reveals one of the most characteristic parts of Pacific ICH. The use of sea routes has not only facilitated networking and cultural exchanges but also contributed to the conservation of traditions, as has been illustrated by the case of Yapese navigation.

Modern navigation methods have mostly relied on magnetic devices to identify the location of the ship. However, in recent decades, earth's geomagnetic system has begun to change with growing speed, and the magnetic signals that modern navigation uses are becoming less reliable. As a result, researchers in various fields of science are trying very hard to find an alternative way to navigate, and some of them are looking to traditional navigation methods.

Art and Technology, which is more directly related to tangible cultural heritage, shows how traditional views can reveal themselves in objects of display and use. In the beautiful hand-printing skill of *kupesi* in Tonga, for example, the patterns created have roots in Tongan history and culture with specific meaning, and the skills needed to create such works are traditionally passed from one generation to the next, but the results show an intricate weave of the tangible with the intangible. This same idea is represented in traditional house building in Palau as well as in the art of archery in Vanuatu, which shows how people can take living necessities and turn them into visual arts, both delicate and grandiose.

I am certain that all the articles under the five themes will help our readers to understand more about Pacific wisdom that is transmitted through generations and is still much a part of Pacific people's lives. Also, to help readers better perceive the rich heritage of the Pacific, we included as many images as possible.

The publication of this book was possible thanks to the efforts of numerous people, and I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to those authors who contributed. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to editorial board members for their indispensable efforts from the very inception of the project; they provided invaluable insights in the selection of topics and authors, among the myriad ICHs of the Pacific region; they have corresponded with the authors throughout, and were involved in structuring and editing the manuscript. I am also grateful to Ms. Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, and Dr. Lea Lani Kinikini-Kauvaka who contributed a great deal to editing and categorizing various articles and jointly wrote the introduction.

I would like to thank the Korea Cultural Heritage Administration for the generous sponsorship and understanding of the significance of this project. Last but not least, I would like to remember the devoted efforts of my staff in ICHCAP, Ms. Boyoung Cha and Ms. Saymin Lee, who coordinated this publication work for last two years.

I hope this book will be recognized as an important resource book of the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the Pacific islanders and used not only by Pacific researchers and educators but also by all those who are interested to learn about the valuable wisdom and vivid life in the Pacific islands.

이 삼 열

Samuel Lee, PhD
Director-General
ICHCAP

Congratulatory Remarks

I would like take this opportunity to deliver my congratulations for publishing *Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom*: *Themes from the Pacific Islands,* the result of a two-year ICHCAP safeguarding project undertaken in cooperation with six countries across the Pacific region.

As a valuable inheritance handed over through many generations, traditional culture is said to be at the heart of national identity. At the same time, however, it is sometimes denigrated as an archaic legacy to be left behind. In this sense, this publication takes on a critical value in not only transmitting traditional knowledge to coming generations but also establishing this knowledge as a bridge connecting the past with the future. What is described here provides a genuine look into the traditional culture of Pacific islanders and further describes their wisdom and cosmology as evidenced in their traditional practices.

This publication spans a wide range of the traditional practices and customs of Pacific communities, including their methods for open-water navigation, agricultural techniques, and stories of communal reconciliation. All of these cultural elements epitomize traditional wisdom and knowledge as transmitted across generations and show the value assigned to both humans and nature. I hope that it will offer us clues for solving some of the problems facing humanity today.

Some would assert that no harm can come from being unaware of traditional culture in this rapidly changing society and that it is more beneficial to focus on learning about the new. However, the past and the traditional can serve as the basis for learning about the new, and it can also be a treasure trove for inspiring creativity and originality that can enrich the future.

Traditional knowledge is like a precious gem passed down from our ancestors. It is the adamant duty of the current generation to refine, polish, and help it to shine for transmission into the future.

I hope that this publication will contribute to enhancing the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage of the Pacific and will open the gate to further opportunities for identifying and disseminating traditional knowledge in other parts of the world.

I offer my congratulations on the successful publication of this book, and please accept the sincere gratitude that I feel for all the staff of the ICHCAP involved in this project. I hope that this will spark new opportunities for the organization as it develops a network for safeguarding traditional culture in the Pacific region.

나 선 화

Sun-hwa Rha
Administrator
Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea

Congratulatory Remarks

I am most honored to have been asked to make some brief remarks for this important publication, *Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom: Themes from the Pacific Islands*. I would like to commend ICHCAP for creating the conditions that brought together these articles, written mainly by Pacific islanders, who are all in some way or another working to safeguard their heritage for the well-being of their future generations.

As a center operating under the auspices of UNESCO, ICHCAP has a core mandate to promote networking and information sharing for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, and making this publication allowed for important networking and information-sharing events among Pacific islanders. The themes of the book cover fundamental aspects of Pacific cultures, including worldviews and social relationships, landscapes and seascapes, harvesting and ocean voyaging, and arts and technologies. Indeed these themes point to the fact that intangible cultural heritage represents much more than just performances or ceremonies but lies at the heart of people's economic, political, spiritual, and social lives.

By coming together from the different parts of the Pacific and sharing experiences on efforts made to safeguard their living cultural heritage, the people of Oceania will have a better chance of responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century. By safeguarding the wisdom and knowledge passed on from ancestors, future generations will continue to have a strong identity and knowledge of themselves and their environment. It is our hope that this publication can contribute to that process of sustaining intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate ICHCAP and all the contributors for their efforts and work.

Tim Curtis, PhD
Chief of Culture Unit
UNESCO Bangkok: Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Introduction

Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg
Unaisi Nabobo-Baba
Lea Lani Kinikini-Kauvaka
(Associate Editors and Advisors for Indigenous Knowledge)

Knowledge and wisdom are parts of intangible cultural heritage that are embodied and manifested in the tangible features of a culture or knowledge system, including buildings, farming systems, harvesting methods, labor practices, customs, and arts. As such, the tangible and intangible are intertwined and give meaning to each other. Knowledge and wisdom may mean different things in different Pacific languages. In Fijian, for example, *kila ka* is knowledge as an accumulation of facts that only become wisdom, or *yalomatua,* when it is used or applied to benefit oneself and one's people. As such, wisdom has a spiritual connotation. The deeper principle underlying knowledge and wisdom is ethics—the ability to know when, how, why, and for what purposes we do something. Today, the intertwining of intangible cultural heritage is more relevant than ever as we face increasingly complex challenges. Thus, documentation of the Pacific's intangible cultural heritage is necessary for cultural survival, rejuvenation, and transformation.

WHAT IS ICH TO THE PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the Pacific islands is the focus of this book. The Pacific islands span about a third of the world's surface and hold about 25 percent of all the world's languages. This book outlines systems of knowledge that are deeply ingrained in the thinking styles, wisdom, social practices, and values of the Pacific people represented here. But this is only a small window into their souls, hearts, and minds. The Pacific islands featured here are countries that have ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The papers presented here represent a small portion of the diverse and rich cultural traditions of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Tonga, and Vanuatu.

From time immemorial, Pacific islanders have lived, danced, dramatized, transmitted, critiqued, and shaped their ICH through their family and tribal knowledge and skills as well as through their language expressions, social practices, songs, oral histories, ceremonial nuances, rituals, poetry, and silences. From the geographically higher and larger Melanesian islands, such as Papua New Guinea, with its diverse people numbering six million, to the smaller countries, such as Tokelau, with only 1,200 people, the Pacific islanders' ICH has always been multifarious in form, both secular and spiritual. These heritage elements are also individually and collectively owned.

In 2014, this book reflects the tenacity of Pacific islanders to affirm their cultures and ICH in the context of rapid change. Pacific islanders are negotiating such changes, which involve re-thinking about the world, re-making relationships, and re-imagining their cultural resources while integrating and adopting new technology, both tangible and intangible. Such dynamic processes show that our cultures, knowledge, skills, and philosophical beliefs are vibrant and life-affecting. Pacific ICH is distinctive and dynamic and able to carve out identities, strengthening old relations as well as forming new ones. ICH captures the spirit and soul of each person and community, and it belongs to everyone as a form of intergenerational wealth that serves as an important marker of kinship and life. This is carried into tangible objects like the land, sea, environment, languages, relationship networks, ceremonies, arts, and rituals. ICH comes alive when metaphors, stories, knowledge, skills, and values are transmitted to a tangible form by our people and for our benefit.

Civilizations often survive on economic, diplomatic, and/or military might, but as the histories of our islands show, Pacific ICH builds inner spirits, courage, and self-esteem. ICH, such as the examples in this book, ensures the survival of our people. ICH is the fulcrum that supports and motivates our people today as it did in the past. It fuels our lives and gives meaning to who we are. Without it, our people may remain rich materially but devoid of soul.

This book documents a variety of ICH. The type, nature, and approaches taken by various owners to practice, live, and ceremonially engage with this heritage helps to safeguard these gifts and wealth. The papers and topics here are also selected depending on the priorities that indigenous owners give to certain ICH elements. The collection further suggests potential scenarios or consequences if these heritage elements are not safeguarded or propagated.

THE PACIFIC: WHAT IS HAPPENING

The countries of Melanesia (PNG, Fiji, and Vanuatu) largely constitute the higher islands of the Pacific, with hundreds of languages and dialects as well as millions of people. PNG is the largest Pacific island and has more people than the rest of the Pacific islands combined. What this

means is that the richness, diversity, and complexity of ICH knowledge and wisdom in PNG presented here is really just a fraction and a tiny taste of the enormity of heritage knowledge that exists across the many indigenous cultures within the country. Likewise, Fiji is comprised of three hundred islands with a population of about eight hundred thousand, and as such, the ICH represented here represents a small dosage of the potential wealth out there lived today by indigenous Fijians. Vanuatu, similar to PNG and Fiji with its many islands and immense richness of its cultures, has a number of articles here providing a glimpse into the ICH of its indigenous people.

Tonga, the only kingdom in the Pacific, prides itself for many of its customs and ICH relate to its ancient Tu'i Tonga dynasty, which has ruled continuously for over a thousand years and is the basis of the modern monarchy. In that regard, Tonga is a very special place. There is also Micronesia, comprising the smallest of our islands but perhaps covering the widest span of our oceans, hence its complexity and variations in ICH. Represented in the book by Palau and FSM, Micronesian ICH is as deep as the Marianas Trench and is as varied as the region itself.

In the face of modernization and globalization, with the global mass cultures, cultural change, and displacement that go hand in hand with these, the Pacific islands and their ICH have also undergone immense changes. One major change that is especially rampant and insidious in Micronesia and Polynesia is outward migration. Together with this, all other manners of social change have seen transfers, transformations, appropriations, and adaptations of Pacific ICH, but the tenacity of Pacific islanders to affirm their ICH in the context of rapid change is admirable. This shows our cultures, knowledge, skills, and philosophical beliefs are vibrant and life-affecting. Pacific ICH is distinctive, dynamic, and fluid.

RESPONSES TO THE 2003 ICH CONVENTION

The 2003 Convention gave impetus for creating this project on Pacific ICH. Pacific islanders' wisdom, when requested to be documented by writers and researchers, generally followed proper indigenous knowledge protocols of access and propriety. This project raises visibility and understanding of ICH among the people of the Pacific, as well as, perhaps, functioning as a fulcrum to encourage others to do similar projects.

Such collaborative efforts as seen in creating this book promote, among other things, unity of spirit and shared purpose and commitment among Pacific islanders as well as important partners like ICHCAP. ICH safeguarding is pivotal as it links people to their past and informs on the present.

SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

ICH is presented in the book through five sub-sections: Worldviews, Relationships and Social Cohesion, Harvest and Landscape, Voyaging and Seascapes, and Art and Technology. Through these five themes, the importance of ICH is highlighted as embodied and manifested in the way Pacific islanders perceive their nature and the universe.

The first section, Worldviews, governs all other elements of life, knowledge, ways of knowing, and philosophy and includes the ways Pacific islanders perceive reality and relationships. From the social significance and symbolic nature of the Fijian *valenivanua* and the wisdom of Tongan myths passed on from elders to the significance of traditional place names in Palau, this section involves seeking out Pacific islanders' views of the universe and how they came across in their entirety: as both sacred and secular, relating to the spirit world and to that of heaven or some supernatural life beyond earth. Likewise, customary law and the sung tales of PNG occur in the realm of the secular as well the supernatural. The Tongan *heliaki* presents the relationship and status Tongans give royalty as persons originating from the heavens, hence the special significance of speech type and forms of language usage that befit the king and nobility in their social system of kings, nobles, and commoners.

The Relationships and Social Cohesion section is pivotal to ICH because relationships represent an important organizing principle of life among Pacific islanders and determine how intangible heritage can be safeguarded. Pacific islanders generally take the utmost care to mark and honor relationships important to them: relationships ensure family and tribal/clan ties are enhanced and social cohesion and sustainability is achieved. Relationships are marked in ceremonial events and rituals, such as during the seasonal and communal harvest of fish or balolo or during other ceremonies such as the *bel kol* in PNG and *omengat* in Palau. There is also the mind map of established ties in *tako-lavo*, an inter-generational marker of kinship in Viti Levu, Fiji. These articles display just a sampling of how central relationships can be and the diversity of how such relationships are maintained and perpetuated.

The Harvest and Landscapes and Voyaging and Seascapes sections explore how such categories are an important universal or sub-universal theme of sorts within which Pacific ICH is framed. Life centers around land and sea, so many life stories, metaphors, songs, poems, and dances reflect them. In the higher islands of Melanesia, land is the most prized possession and is guarded well because it reflects wealth and power. In Polynesia and Micronesia, land is important as well, but the ocean and navigation are subjects of everyday conversation; thus, metaphors and rituals celebrate these to this day, even if modernity is changing how people interact with their environments. This collection ranges from the rituals and sacredness of *mesei* taro fields in Palau to the traditional farming calendars and festivals in Tonga as well as

floodways that were built around cyclone-prone areas, such as the Vanuatuan recipe of *laplap soso'ur* and *nogoytam* and *nelet*. In terms of the sea and voyaging, sea-based ICH is captured in Palauan knowledge of the sea, the legend of *kanahe* from Tonga, and traditional navigation and canoe building in FSM.

Lastly, the Art and Technology section comprises important ICH elements in the Pacific. In the book this is presented via the *kupesi* of Tonga, the *bai* of Palau, and the importance of the traditional art of archery to the well-being and development of young men in Vanuatu.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS BOOK?

This book represents a wide variety of cultures in the Pacific with subjects as diverse as the cultures they represent. The efforts that went into compiling the sections include elaborations—conceptual, spiritual, and aesthetic—by the authors, editors, and advisors to ensure that the resultant ensemble is both meaningful and defensible. The book will contribute to safeguarding, propagating, and transmitting elements of Pacific islanders' ICH. It also provides an important addition to the resources available in the area of Pacific ICH, hence heightening the potential of the successful delivery of cultural work. Pacific ICH is real and relevant today. It is dynamic and, with appropriate support and promotion such as that of this book, will continue to inspire and add depth and richness to our lives. The life-force that Pacific islanders' ICH provides can be used to resolve some of today's lingering problems in areas such as sustainable livelihood, social cohesion, family life, climate change, and the increase of poverty. These also include problems related to identity and self-determination. As such, Pacific ICH points to a rich heritage that can provide many lessons for, effective remedy of, and potential benefits to modern-day challenges of society.

EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to ICHCAP, a Category 2 Centre in the ICH field, for its interest and support in safeguarding and promoting ICH in the Pacific and for working with regional partners to design and develop the publication of *Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom: Themes from the Pacific Islands*.

1 Worldviews

In a region as geographically immense and culturally diverse as the Pacific, intangible cultural heritage must be seen in terms of diverse worldviews, each with its own knowledge system and philosophy of life that structures and informs. This section addresses how intangible cultural heritage is reflected through specific cultural worldviews. As specific and unique as they are, however, each Pacific worldview can be seen as having a commonality structured by three dimensions: the spiritual, the physical, and the afterlife or ancestral realm.

Despite their commonalities, the themes in this section still represent Pacific elements of knowing, philosophy, governance, and wisdom that sculpt life from vastly unique perspectives. The Tongan concept of *heliaki*, for instance, is not just a knowledge of language and prose, but rather a construct through which the Tongans build views about themselves and their interactions as well as the hierarchy within their society. In a similar way, Palauan place names are much more than words to mark locations; they are capsules of knowledge, events, and history that help the Palauan people identify themselves and their connections to one another. In these and the other themes in this section, the included values incorporate how the Pacific peoples perceive reality and interconnectedness and how their knowledge has shaped their worlds.

Valenivanua: A Communal Cultural Space, the Pinnacle of Indigenous Values, Peace, and Mana

Sipiriano Nemani

The size and value of a vale [house] is determined by social usage and the effort and support received during its construction.[1]

—A. Ravuvu

The indigenous architectural heritage of Fiji richly shows the culture and traditions of inhabitants and mirrors their way of living.[2] A variety of traditionally built houses existed prior to the advent of modern materials, which were better adapted to the islands' climatic conditions. However, the sad issue is that traditional architecture is declining in Fiji, with only Navala Village in Ba Province showing resistance to modern "Western-style" comfort and privacy. The value and importance of historical traditional buildings in the lives of the indigenous people have diminished greatly. An elder from Lau Province once lamented, "House building [is] a poor affair [as] compared with what it used to be [in the olden days]."[3] Perhaps, with the introduction of cash economy, it has become quite expensive to construct a *bure* (traditional house) properly. At the same time, galvanized iron houses have been introduced into indigenous Fijian villages (even though they are considerably hotter) because the Ministry of Health felt these modern houses were cleaner and more hygienic.[4]

1. A. Ravuvu, *Vakaitaukei--Fijian Way of Life* (Suva, Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1983), 17.
2. U. Herbig, G. Zohrer, and F. Zamolyi, "Recording the Cultural Heritages of Samoa and Fiji Islands," *The International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences* XXXIV-5/C15 (2003): 1682-1777.
3. A.M. Hocart, "Lau Islands, Fiji," Bernice Bertroff Museum Bulletin (1929), 126.
4. John Wesley Coulter, *Fiji: Little India of the Pacific* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 5.

Nevertheless, this paper seeks to highlight the organization of work along with the related processes and language used regarding the building of traditional architecture, specifically the *valenivanua*—a traditional house used as a meeting or cultural space for village chiefs and clan heads. This will be followed by a discussion of rituals and ceremonies associated with building the valenivanua and a look into the role of the structure as a sanctified cultural space symbolizing peace, social cohesion, *mana,* and *sau*.[5] Other societal significance of the valenivanua will be discussed using the Malomalo District in Nadroga Province, Western Viti Levu (Fiji's main island), as a case study.

Like any other element of traditional wisdom and expression of the indigenous Fijians, traditional architecture differs from one region or province to another. The word "house" differs to a greater extent between regions. Generally it is referred to as *vale* in many parts of Fiji. In the Yasawas Islands, Ba, and Rakiraki (Western Viti Levu), a house is referred to as *sue* while in Vuda, Nadroga/Navosa, Savatu, Waya, Vatulele, and Serua it is called *were*. Also, the word *bure*, which generally refers to a traditional thatched house, is denoted differently in various parts of Fiji—it is known as *bato* in Serua Province and *bito* in Nadroga Province.[6]

The form, magnitude, and rituals accorded during the building of the Fijian bure or traditional house vary depending on their intended social functions, symbolism, and occupants. Some were built for the *bête*, or priests, as temples (*burekalou*), others to serve as visitors' houses (*burenivulagi*), like the *ulunivuaka*[7] in Bau in the 1800s. Most, though, serve as the valenivanua in which the elders meet to discuss

5. *Mana* in this context refers to power to effect while *sau* is a powerful and effective influence to cause ill or good.
6. iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture, "Vale Vakaviti" (unpublished, 1999), 3.
7. Literally translated as "pig's head"; during traditional feasting pig or pork is usually reserved for chiefs, especially the pig's head, hence the significance and importance of this traditional house in Bau. The *ulunivuaka* was used mainly by important visitors on the chiefly island of Bau.

1 *Ulunivuaka*—visitors' long house on Bau Island, Fiji in the nineteenth century. Source: Steven Hooper and Jane Roth (ed.), *The Fiji Journals of Baron Anatol Von Hugel* 1875-77 (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1990).

important matters regarding the people, land, customs, and traditions; these valenivanua are also used as official residences of the village or vanua chiefs (*valelevu*).[8] There is also the *burenisa*, a designated house where older and younger men converge and sleep in preparation for war or prepare for the next hunt, fish drive, or other collective pursuit for sustenance (land, food, or water) for the community. The use of the burenisa to prepare men for war is synonymous with the infamous indigenous Fijian counting system related to the subject of traditional architecture: *tini na iwau sa dua na bure* (ten war clubs [assuming 10 warriors] are equivalent to one bure).

The formation and thatched characteristics of the valenivanua also vary in different parts of Fiji. The valenivanua is unique in that it is the biggest of all houses in the village. It is the vanua that postulates the site and builds the valenivanua. Another significant feature of this particular cultural icon is that its foundation (*yavu*) is higher than any other built dwelling in the village, with interior decorations intricately woven to the poles and wall hangings in the form of mats and *masi* (tapa cloth) hung to showcase the craftsmanship of the people.

There are three basic types of vale:[9]

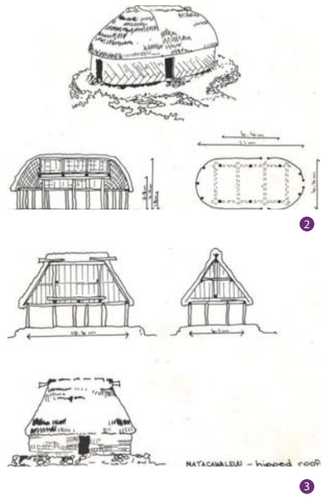
(a) Tongan-type vale (Figure ②) can be found mostly in the Lau Islands in the eastern parts of Fiji. These are houses with straight sides and rounded ends, with arched roofs throughout. This type of traditional house was introduced by Tongan builders who came to Fiji in search of timber to build large double-hulled sailing vessels (canoes) that became known as the *drua*.

(b) The thatched oblong (Figure ③), which is without a center pole, is the most common vale found in almost all parts of Fiji. There are two forms: (1) houses with a main post in the middle of each of the short ends and (2) houses with no main posts.

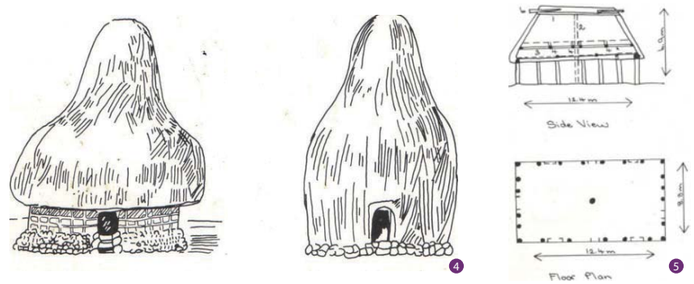
(c) Thatched vale with center poles are a feature of Western Viti Levu. These houses are rectangular in form and have a single main post in the center of the floor to support the ridge pole and the apex of the roof. This special form of traditional architecture is known as the *rausina*.

8. Literally translated as "big house," the magnitude of the house is symbolic of an occupant who is of a high status in society.

9. George Kingsley Roth, "Housebuilding in Fiji," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 84, I & II (1954): 1-2.



② Tongan-type vale. Source: S. Freeman, "The Centre-poled Houses of Western Vitilevu," *DOMODOMO* IV:1 (1986): 3.
③ Thatched oblong vale with no center pole. Source: "The Centre-poled Houses of Western Vitilevu," *DOMODOMO* IV:1 (1986): 5.



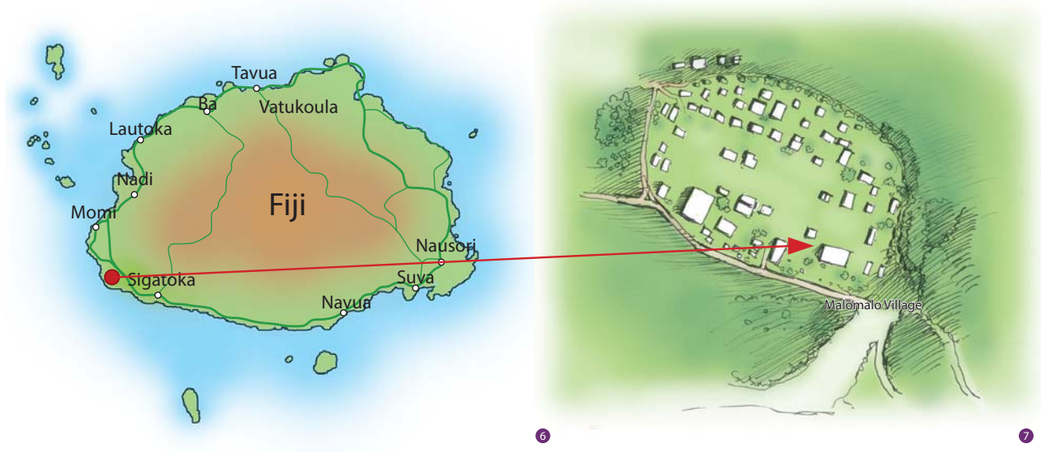
A voyager in the 1800s once observed that "in architecture the [indigenous] Fijians have no mean progress; and they are the only people I have seen…who manifested a taste for the fine arts."[10] Sadly, this is not the case as there are no traditional architectural structures in place manifesting this observation. The traditional wisdom pertinent to the building of the valenivanua is slowing disappearing.

REVITALIZING TRADITIONAL WISDOM ASSOCIATED WITH BUILDING OF THE VALENIVANUA IN MALOMALO VILLAGE, NADROGA, FIJI

The valenivanua used in this account was built at Malomalo Village on the southwestern coast of Viti Levu, Fiji's largest and principal island, by men of the Malomalo District in Nadroga Province.[11]

10. *The Cyclopedia of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, and the Cook Islands* (Sydney: The Cyclopedia Company of Fiji, 1907), 39.

11. Nadroga is one of the fourteen provinces of Fiji and one of the eight based in Viti Levu. Malomalo is one of the twenty-two districts that make up Nadroga. There are a total of eight villages in the district, and Malomalo Village is the principal locale.



④, ⑤ Thatched vale with center pole. Source: S. Freeman, "The Centre-poled Houses of Western Vitilevu," *DOMODOMO* IV:1 (1986): 8, 12.
⑥, ⑦ Map of Fiji and Malomalo Village.

The building of the valenivanua for Malomalo was in response to a *bosevanua* (meeting of elders in the tribe) called by the grand chief of the vanua[12] or district of Malomalo to discuss the need to revitalize and transmit associated skills and knowledge to youths of the village (mainly males). Through government grants, the reconstruction was undertaken by the people of Malomalo, where the different clans and families assisted through an organized communal activity called *solesolevaki*.

The name of the valenivanua and the site on which it initially stood is called *Nahohowaqa*. Built in 1953 (with a few roofing renovations in 1973), the actual bure had deteriorated. It is customary for the vale to have names to demarcate social standings and legitimacy for one's place in relation to the tribe, clan, or village. Names often trace generations of current and previous occupants of the bure as well as link and rekindle the relationship that exists between two different vanua, tribes, or villages in the same district or province or across borders (in other provinces).

Organization of the Work

The Malomalo valenivanua revitalization and skills transmission was undertaken by three of the eight villages within the district or vanua of Malomalo. The three villages—Nadiri, Nalele, and Malomalo—had different responsibilities during the rebuilding process.

A master carpenter hailing from Cuvu District,[13] Kitione Wainiqolo (aged 79), was traditionally approached to lead the work because there were no other locals to spearhead the reconstruction. This particular carpenter is unique in that even though his origin is from another village (Cuvu), he grew up in Nadiri Village and is a *vasu*.[14] Although he is not a traditional carpenter by lineage, he grew up observing and assisting elderly carpenters who have passed on but who had been involved in the building of bures in the village. Similarly, while Wainiqolo is linked maternally to the village of Nadiri, it is the people of Nalele Village, the traditional builders, who are also responsible for the rebuilding of Nahohowaqa.[15] Regardless of his origins, if the vanua elders and chiefs and the traditional carpenter clan are in agreement (and in this case they were), Wainiqilo can deliver the task without any hindrance. This is testimony to the fact that knowledge learned can be *mana* (power to effect) when there is consensus among a group and community.

12. *Vanua* literally means "land," but also refers to the social and cultural aspects of the physical environment identified with a social group.
13. Cuvu District is one of the twenty-two districts in Nadroga Province. Cuvu is about ten kilometers from Malomalo Village traveling south toward Sigatoka Town, Viti Levu. It is the principal district of the province as the Paramount Chief of Nadroga Province resides in Cuvu Village, Cuvu District.
14. The *vasu* system traces descent through the mother. The term *vasu* in Fiji refers to an individual's maternal ties to a village, etc.
15. Kitione Wainiqolo, personal interview with the author, 2013.

The age of people is another determining factor in work distribution. Young men in their prime from Nadiri, Nalele, and Malomalo villages were expected to do the heavier tasks that required strength and involved risk, including clearing of bushes, cutting huge logs and transferring them to the building site, and erecting the bure framing. In Malomalo, an assistant carpenter, Isoa Naihoko, was specifically recruited by the vanua to lead the young men in choosing and collecting raw materials necessary for building the bure.

8 Young men fully engaged in thatching the roof of the *valenivanua*. © Department of National Heritage, Culture & Arts

Elders are expected to do little work, and if they work at all, they are assigned tasks that require little effort and can usually be done squatting or sitting, such as preparing cordage and scraping of reeds. In the case of Malomalo, Wainiqilo directed and inspired the workers while sitting around a bowl of *yaqona* (kava); hence, the transmission of knowledge and skills was more practical and hands-on for the young people of the district. The presence of the elders gives a sense of purpose and is appreciated as evidence of their interest. Much of their effort is directed toward discussing and organizing social and economic activities. They are the ritual heads of their households and of the village, participating in rites and performing at ceremonies.

It is also customary that in a huge communal activity such as this, each village that is part of the vanua contributes to undertakings concerning the head village. In 1935, the traditional meeting house of Namosi Province was built, and the Veivatuloa District[16] was responsible for organizing labor for the house building.[17] The distribution of tasks was as follows:

VILLAGE	RESPONSIBILITY
Veivatuloa Village	Collected leaves of the sago palm and prepared them for thatch-roofing.
Mau Village	Provided the two main posts and shorter wall posts as braces for the house.
Qilai Village	Collected reeds and binding string called *vau* to create walls for the house.
Lobau Village	Collected long timber pieces required as rafters, beams, and purlins for the roof.
Nakavu Village	Provided the sprigs of the *makita* leaves for thatching walls, supplementary wall posts, and wild creepers for binding purposes.

Table 1: Distribution of tasks and responsibilities in building valenivanua in the Veivatuloa District.[18]

The building of the valenivanua begins with the installation of all framings and ends with the thatching of the house. However, the distinctive feature of bure building is that no plans or sketches are needed. It is a skillful form of art, and the ultimate creation is not known to the user until it is finished. Skills and types of bure are similar, yet the knowledge sustained through the language, vocabulary, and techniques that have been passed from one generation to the next are the most creative and varied.

Rituals and Associated Ceremonies

Although there is no taboo observed by the master carpenter and his team of helpers during the building process, certain rituals and ceremonies are performed to ensure that the process of building the bure is undertaken with minimal hiccups. Often these rituals are essential to bring prosperity in terms of knowledge and skills, and similarly, for the gods and ancestors to guide the entire activity.[19] These ceremonies, which have their roots deep in the past and in the memories of men who perform them, serve to solemnize a special occasion and to give it decorum.[20]

16. There are five villages in the Veivatuloa District in Namosi Province. Namosi is one of Fiji's fourteen provinces and one of eight based in Viti Levu, the largest island. Veivatuloa is located to the west of Suva, the capital city.
17. Roth, "Housebuilding in Fiji," 1-2.
18. Ibid.
19. Peni Bulikula, personal interview with the author, 2013.
20. B. Milner, "The Language of House Building," Suva: Fiji Society (1948): 11.

In Malomalo, the grand chief of the district called a meeting of elders and noblemen from the different villages that make up the vanua and presented kava to all, explaining his intentions in that he wished to rebuild Nahohowaqa. Once all were in consensus, the chief, together with the elders, called a meeting with the traditional carpenters from Nalele Village and performed the same ceremony. Peni Bulikula of Nalele Village, head of the carpenters' clan, received and affirmed the request of the grand chief. Even though approval to build rested with Bulikula, his clan again had to traditionally approach Wainiqilo by presenting the whale's tooth (*tabua*) to ask him to lead the revitalization work as most clan members were not previously accustomed to building a bure. This does not mean that the carpenter clans had totally lost the skill and knowledge; sometimes, as is the case around Fiji, mana and sau remain in the veins and blood of the anointed holders until a special place, space, and time in which they will reveal themselves.

When the rebuilding commenced, the *ivakasobu duru* (lowering of the post) was performed. This ritual involves the presentation of the whale's tooth to the chief or owner of the house when the first post is lowered into the dug pit. In the past, men were placed alive in the hole and posts lowered on top of them to satisfy the gods and secure the stability of the building. This, however, is no longer the practice today. During the building process, a feast is held daily so that builders are well nourished and work is efficiently carried out.

At the conclusion of the work, the *talatalavi* ritual (presentation of kava and a tabua) was performed by Wainiqilo, Bulikula, and the carpenter clan to the grand chief and elders in order to formally inform them of the work completed and to officially hand over the finished valenivanua to the chief and vanua. The chief also offered kava (in a ceremony known as *vivinidewa*) and a tabua, reciprocating the goodwill and commitment shown and thanking the master carpenter and builders for their effort in successfully completing the sacred house.[21]

A large feast known as *ulubewa* was held in honor of the master carpenter and his clan after the handing-over ritual (Figure 9). This ceremony also involved the presentation of a hefty collection

21. Bulikula, personal interview, 2013.

of tabua and other gifts to the carpenter clan. Interestingly, in accordance with the customary practice in the past, no monetary gifting was undertaken as the task remained the traditional role of the Nalele people.[22]

A CULTURAL SPACE: PEACE BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION OF THE VANUA

For Prestigious Cultural Events

The building of the valenivanua is enriched with various rituals and events to celebrate its construction. Similarly, the building is used only for specific cultural events for the vanua. Since rebuilding Nahohowaqa, it has been used to hold meetings of all village heads in the Malomalo District and to host the funeral of the Grand Chief's late brother, who passed away soon after its completion.[23]

Establishing Boundaries of Social Status

The valenivanua is different from an ordinary house in that it is an open space with no rooms. When in use, sitting arrangement is such that the chief would sit at the upper end of the house, with other prominent members of the vanua next to him in rank of seniority. The lower part of the house is for the common people. Sitting arrangement defines both the clan that the bearer represents and his traditional role. The arrangement will also define who can speak, what they say, and how they say it.

22. Isoa Naihoko, personal interview with the author, 2013.
23. Bulikula, personal interview, 2013.

9 The *ulubewa* ceremony involving the presentation of gifts to the carpenter clan. © Department of National Heritage, Culture & Arts

Promoting Reconciliation and Harmony

The respect accorded and silence observed inside the valenivanua and areas surrounding the site reflect the type of behavior and protocols to be observed during proceedings held in the valenivanua. It therefore acts as the most appropriate space to handle disciplinary cases in the village and to solve arising conflicts and crises. In Malomalo, an informant confirmed that the valenivanua was also used as a traditional court to settle disputes and resolve social injustice arising in the vanua. This is because only one voice is heard and people respect the wisdom in the decision handed down by the Grand Chief after consulting the elders.[24]

Unity in Reconstruction

The rebuilding of the valenivanua in Malomalo was significant as it brought unity among the people of the district. Villages in the entire Malomalo District came together to assist in the rebuilding, brought food for the builders, and participated in regular kava sessions and billeted the young builders. Visitations also came from as far as Malomalo descendants residing in Australia. They specifically came to witness this great event in their history as a vanua.[25]

24. Samuela Naulago, personal interview with the author, 2013.
25. Wainiqolo, personal interview, 2013.

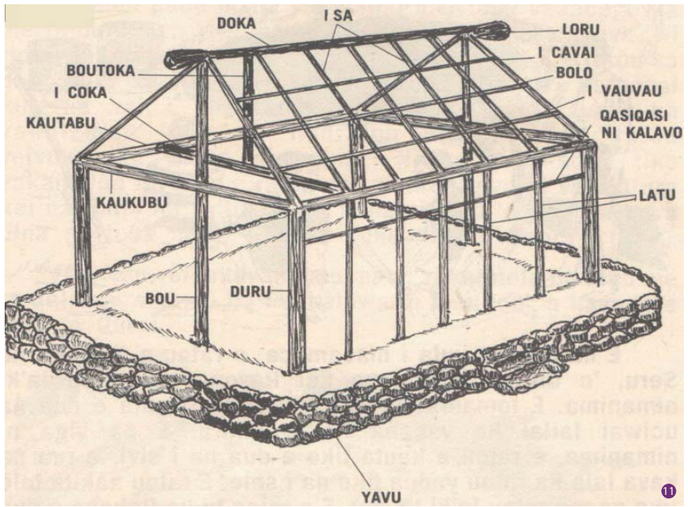
10 The completed *valenivanua*. © Department of National Heritage, Culture & Arts

Appreciating and Rekindling Traditional Roles and Functions

With the presence of the valenivanua, the young and old alike were able to understand and appreciate their traditional roles and specific obligations to the vanua and to their chief. The traditional carpenters of Malomalo based in Nalele Village were able to regenerate their skills, which had all this while been dormant yet were a gift rooted in their blood.[26] This is mana unfolding.

Vanua-strengthened Links to Parts of the Valenivanua

The elders also emphasized the importance of the relationship that existed in terms of certain parts of the bure to their traditional roles, the values of the vanua, and spirituality (Figure 11).



The *yavu* (earth foundation) links the people of the vanua to their ancestors; it is their origin. The foundation solidifies the vanua and reminds members that each has a role to play in as far as maintaining the sanctity of an esteemed house and the vanua in general. The *bou* or *turuga* is a specially chosen log or post that is a part of the main support structure of the house located in the middle upper end of the structure; it is meant to be the leaning post for the chief, and its location is a reminder to the people that there will always be a chief, a leader to whom they should uphold and accord reverence. The bou is the chief and the yavu is the vanua. They are intertwined. The *kautabua* or *kaitabu* is a special part of the bure that identifies the different ranks and clans in the vanua and their sitting places in the house. The clans provide the necessary support needed to lift and sustain the vanua. The *duru* refers to the house pillar and is synonymous with "knee." It signifies strength, and its huge size implies its dependability. This is similar to the vanua and the chief; both are symbolic of institutions upon which people depend. The *loru* are trunks of fern trees decorating both ends of the *doka* running across the upper part of the bure. The loru, often referred to as the "two faces of the bure," signifies the presence of the spirit and the ancestors and their protection of the vanua (people).

26. Bulikula, personal interview, 2013.

11 Different parts of the bure and their general indigenous names. Source: Ministry of Education, *Na Viti Va* (Suva: Government Printer, 1983), 19.

Opportunities Unfold

The rebuilding of the valenivanua brought back *sautu*[27] to the people, their land, and the sea, and it even opened doors of opportunity through development projects coming through to assist the district after years of seeking assistance from both the government and private sector.

The valenivanua is a magnificent structure, an iconic heritage symbolizing the identity of the people that is always revered and sanctified. An in-depth reflection of the processes involved, including the rituals, the language used, and the skills and knowledge required, shows the significance of the structure as a cultural space that promotes harmonious living, legitimacy of the vanua, solidarity, and well-being. It is believed that the valenivanua is not only symbolic but also functional. It transforms an ordinary space into a sacred one, exerts a power that transforms moments in life into experiences, and transcends ceremonies and rituals held inside the bure to a new dimension, bringing ordinary people closer to their ancestors.

27. *Sautu* refers to a period of peace or calmness. It is also a time when there is an abundance of opportunities, goodness, and resources.

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The Political Wisdom of Our Forefathers

Siotame Havea

Si'i pe kae hā
(We are a small island; we are still great.)[1]

Editor's Note:
Myths are collectively owned in Tonga by many individuals, and, as such, there could be many individual tellings despite the general meaning remaining the same. Thus, the myths re-told here are those told and known to the author, based on the author's position, relationships, and life experiences. These represent one of many ways to tell these stories.

This essay retells two selected Tongan origin myths along with some exegetical commentary. The myths are known as "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" and "'Aho'eitu." These two myths are among the oldest of the Tongan myths that have been transmitted to us from our forefathers and thus hold significant wisdom for understanding Tongan worldviews. Myths are not simply mere fictional stories; rather, they carry within them socio-political principles relevant to bringing about socio-political unity in Tonga. They are also vital in investigating the political structure in ancient Tonga. Doing exegetical commentary on these myths is crucial so that we are able to see what lies behind them. While other myths, such as "Kava'onau" (the kava myth) or the myth of "Maui Teke Langi," talk about other aspects of the structuring and restructuring of Tongan political life, the first two above-mentioned myths reveal the initial blueprint for organizing the ethical and political worldview in Tonga.

1. This proverb basically says it all: You don't have to be large in numbers or have lots of resources or money to be great.

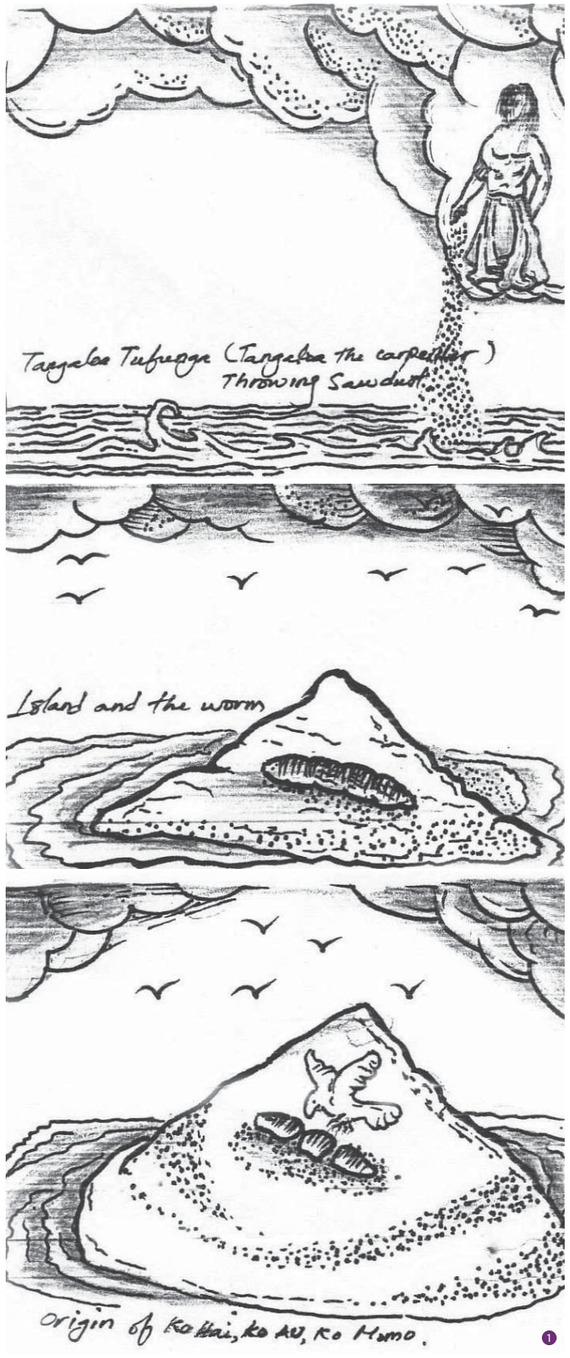
Myths are stories created not by the gods of ancient Tongans, but by our ancient forefathers as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and wisdom learned over generations of close existence on the lands and seas. Tongans revered those myths in a way that eventually shaped their way of belief and thinking. This is not only applicable to the Tongan people but is a worldwide occurrence that appears in all communities, both big and small. We often wonder how it is that these man-made stories hold such a powerful force in creating the belief system of all societies, especially the ancient ones. This work does not aim to prove the authenticity of myths, but rather is an attempt to see the wise teachings behind the myths selected above. Myths were sacred to the ancient Tongans, and to break their teachings was seen not only as a sin but as a crime. To our ancient forefathers, myths were like the word of the Bible, taken as words of truth. The following myths are quite well known among Tongans as they are taught to young children, and they are presented here to further elaborate how myths transmit our forefathers' wisdom.

THE MYTH OF "KO HAI, KO AU, KO MOMO"

In the beginning there was no land, in spite of the fact there was sky. The gods were believed to live in the sky. Then one of the gods, Tangaloa Tufunga (Tangaloa the Carpenter), threw sawdust in the water, and it formed an island. Later, a bird flew down and bit a worm on the land into three pieces. Those three pieces eventually turned into the first people of Tonga.

Meaning of the Names

Taking the time to elaborate on the meanings behind the names is highly relevant to fully understand the political wisdom of our forefathers. Upon grasping the meanings of the names, we will be able to see why this myth failed to become the ontological root for the formation of Tongan politics. Politics is about the organization of various powers in the society so that it can function in a way that the people of that particular group believe to be the right mechanism for power structure.



1 Drawing of the "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" myth. © Paula Mahe

The meaning of the name Ko Hai is "Who is it?" This was said to be the name of the first Tu'i Tonga (king of Tonga). The name expresses a state of confusion and uncertainty, depicting the image of a person groping in the dark. The name of the second person was Ko Au (I Am) . He was taken to be the second Tu'i Tonga, and his name echoes out the sound of confidence. The second king must have learned a great deal from the first, thus finding some kind of strong foundation to be confident in his ruling. However, the name of the third brother was Ko Momo (fragmented but plenty). This brother was the origin of the commoners. They may be small but are plentiful in numbers.

This myth was bound to fail. It did not have in itself the political ingredients for the organization of a formidable political system. Our Tongan forefathers realized that this myth was based on a classless socio-political formation and that the psychological perspectives of this myth could not create a belief in the system itself. Conclusively, the formation of this myth was not built on a vertical structure of politics but rather on a horizontal basis, in which the psychology of respect (based on belief) had no place to become strong. Our forefathers knew that this horizontal basis for political formation was as weak as the classless society itself. In such a formation, no one is greater than the other—that is the psychology of a horizontal political formation. However, this paved the path for our forefathers to seek a vertical formation.

Critical Interpretation

There are two interpretations of the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo." The first interpretation sees the myth as representing the origin of the Tongan people, with all three men as the origin of the commoners. The second interpretation sees the first two men as the emergence of the first Tongan kings, with the third man taken as the origin of the commoners. Either interpretation we are willing to take on will lead us to conclude that the myth points toward a worldview acknowledging that such a society would always be in socio-political chaos. That Tongans emerged out of such an origin can be taken as a commentary on the origin of a classless society—a society in which all were equal in social, political, and economic rights. The myth

contends that, in such a societal state, the continuing struggle against others for survival would always be a way of life.

When we look at the second interpretation, we cannot escape the fact that such a state of existence would always make it difficult for kings to rule. In the Tongan worldview, rulers had to be inaugurated by a recognized authority, so to initiate rulers from a group of equal status would be impossible. In the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo," no one person could be taken to be of a higher status than the other. In such a situation, effective ruling would always be extremely difficult to attain, for two reasons. The first is that none of them could be seen as having higher socio-political status than the others. The second reason is based on the fact that there was no authoritative power to inaugurate any of the three men in this myth as a recognized ruler. Who has the right to authorize a ruler in such a situation? The right to rule and the right to be ruled must both be accepted and revered by both ends of the socio-political spectrum.

The political wisdom of our Tongan forefathers can easily be seen as we continue to unravel the truth behind these two ancient myths. However, some of the modern scholars contemptuously refer to ancient myths as *fakamolitonga* (old and useless). By looking at the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo," we cannot deny the literal story is impossible. How can it be that a human being can grow out of a part of a worm? Thus, one can easily be tempted to discard such a story as having nothing to do with reality. Though myths are not factually true, they carry within them principles that are indispensable to structuring the socio-political formation of society. Myth does establish the historical formation of the society, but in this case, the myth of "'Aho'eitu" established the historical description of early feudalism in Tonga, as discussed below. As the origination of history, it is an irreplaceable and dynamic principle in the formulation of political identity within the kingdom of Tonga.

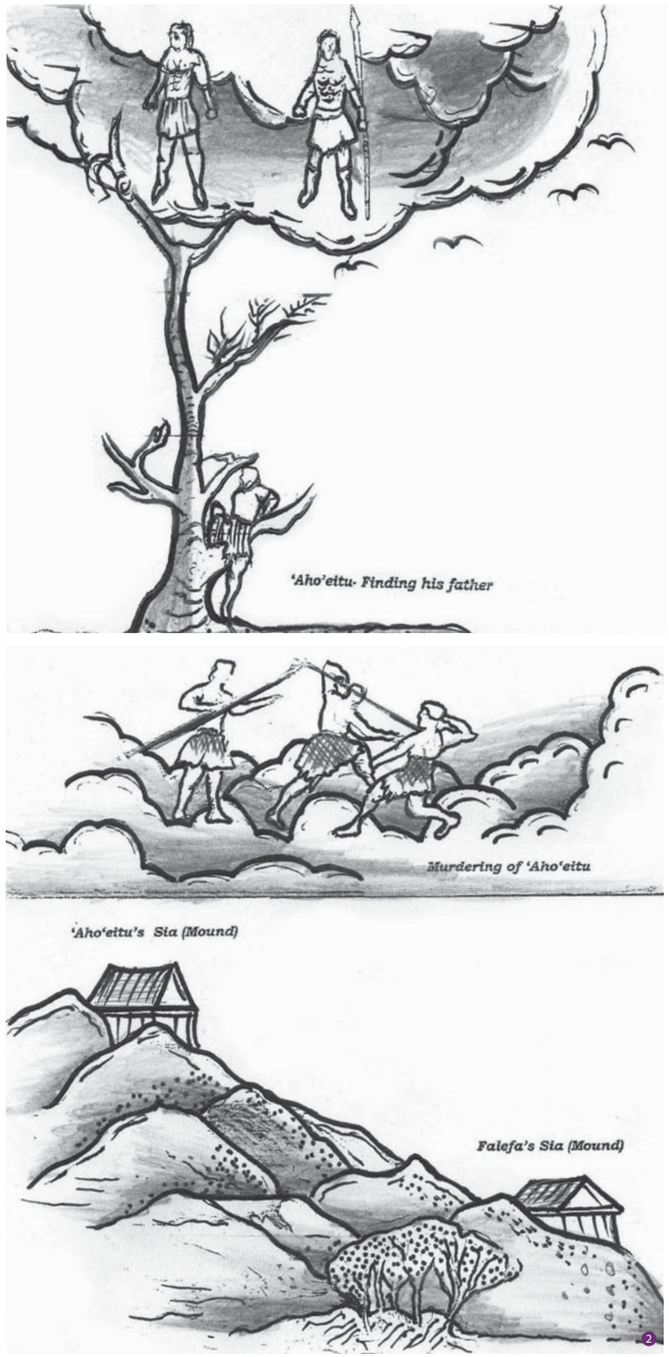
In ancient society, myth created culture, which in turn determined the nature of communal living. In the methodology of Tonga, the people came to know the social, political, economic, and psychological means for self-expression. They had to express themselves through the principles of their myths because myths

had been to them the reality of their history. In this situation, three important factors must exist in a myth so that it can be nationally accepted: it must be religiously based; the structure of the economic system must find its root in that myth; and the political structure must, through the religious factor of that myth, have the power to rule the core of the economic system. In other words, the second and third modes must find their strongholds only in the religious perspective of the myth. Without the involvement of a religious factor in a myth's formation, it cannot be communally accepted. Thus, ancient religion could not be done away with in the structuring of ancient Tonga.

THE MYTH OF "'AHO'EITU"

According to legend, one of the gods, Tangaloa 'Etumatupu'a, came to earth and became the father of a boy, 'Aho'eitu. Before the boy was born, Tangaloa returned to his home in the sky, and the boy was brought up singlehandedly by his mother, Va'epopua. 'Aho'eitu wanted so dearly to know the whereabouts of his father, so his mother told 'Aho'eitu how to find him. He climbed up an iron tree to where the gods lived and was welcomed by Tangaloa himself. 'Aho'eitu found out that he had four older brothers. They became jealous of him. Resolving to do away with him, the brothers killed and ate him. Tangaloa was very angry when he discovered the crime and made the cannibal brothers vomit out what they had eaten into a bowl (kumete). 'Aho'eitu was reconstituted and restored back to life. The brothers were compelled to pay respect to 'Aho'eitu as their superior, although he was younger and half-god/half-man. They were then ordered to serve 'Aho'eitu as he was sent back to earth to rule in Tonga as the Tu'i Tonga (king of Tonga), representing his father.

It is now more interesting to closely investigate the myth of "'Aho'eitu," for it will continue to unravel further development of interplay of various important factors in the formation of the Tongan political system. After the classless myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" and its failure to organize any political scheme that could uphold society, the myth of "'Aho'eitu" was formulated to bring a stable and formidable structure to



2 Drawing of the "'Aho'eitu" myth. © Paula Mahe

Tongan politics. It is vital for us to see the interplay of the various factors of religion, economics, and politics in shaping the type of political unity in Tonga that still exists today.

It is also fundamental to see the involvement of ethics in the initiation of political unity in ancient Tonga. Ethics was not an alien principle then; it was the nature of the gods of the sky, especially Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, the father of 'Aho'eitu. He was the godly figure who originally organized the Tongan political formation. However, let us focus on the interplay of the above-mentioned factors in bringing about the existence of the Kingdom of Tonga.

The difference between the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" and that of "'Aho'eitu" is basically the direct involvement of the god Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a in organizing the structure of various political classes in the society. The only involvement of Tangaloa Tufunga in the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" was when he threw down the sawdust. The sawdust finally turned into an island and produced a worm that eventually turned into the first human beings in Tonga. The organization of the society after these brothers came into being, though, was wholly dependent on their whims. There was no recognized authority that was above these three beings to inaugurate the socio-political system of the time. In contrast, in the myth of "'Aho'eitu," the involvement of 'Aho'eitu's father in organizing the formation of the socio-political structure of the time can be vividly seen.

The important element to refer to in this part is the power of religion in laying the foundation of politics in Tonga. It has been mentioned above that the inauguration of new political power has to be initiated by a recognized authority, and the only recognized authority at that time was the god of the sky, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a. The Tongan term for god is *'otua* ("being of beyond" or "of beyond": *'o-tu'a*). The Tongans unquestionably accepted the existence of the gods. It is the existence of beings beyond what human beings are capable to understand. They are ineffable and beyond the power of the human mind to explain, yet the people accepted their existence with a sense of reverence and the belief that they could never be questioned. Anything to do with gods was seen as sacred and *tapu*

(taboo). Sacredness strengthens the belief system. When sacredness of the gods is taken away or the people fail to respect it, it dismantles the vitality of such religious belief.

This is why the involvement of Tangaloa ʻEitumatupuʻa in the myth of "ʻAhoʻeitu" is so fundamental to the structuring of Tongan politics. Tangaloa ʻEitumatupuʻa was the basis of religious belief at that time. Instead of allowing the myth of "Ko Hai, Ko Au, Ko Momo" to dominate the formation of the political mindset in Tonga, the myth of "ʻAhoʻeitu" thus shifted the political belief to the involvement of the gods in such organization.

The coming of Tangaloa to earth was a way of saying that the gods were bringing the core of religion to earth. Thus, the identity of ʻAhoʻeitu was religiously formulated: half-god and half-man (god-man/*ʻotua mo tangata*). By stating the identity of ʻAhoʻeitu this way, his socio-political status rose above anybody else in Tonga. He was religiously formed at a higher rank in every aspect of the society, and as his socio-political status was brought from the sky (*langi*), nobody could question it. Thus, to have Tangaloa as the father was a rock-solid foundation upon which to build politics.

The other interesting part of the myth is based on how ʻAhoʻeitu came to know his father in the sky. He climbed up an iron tree and came to find his father there along with four of his godly half-brothers. After the killing of ʻAhoʻeitu and his reconstitution, Tangaloa laid the socio-political foundation of Tonga. Thus, the original structure of Tongan politics was not done on earth, but was carried out in the sky by Tangaloa himself. It is hard, then, to deny that formulation of the "ʻAhoʻeitu" myth was religiously based. It was done in such a way in order to eliminate any opportunity to question the authenticity of the identity of ʻAhoʻeitu.

When Tangaloa found out that ʻAhoʻeitu's four half-brothers had murdered and eaten his son's body, he ordered them to vomit it into a bowl and brought ʻAhoʻeitu' back to life. He then sent them to earth and made ʻAhoʻeitu the first king of Tonga, with his four godly half-brothers relegated to being the first *falefa* (four houses) to serve ʻAhoʻeitu. They were relegated to this socio-political status because

of the unethical deed they had done to their half-god/half-man younger brother. Here, Tangaloa set the tone of ethics in the socio-political formation of the kingdom so that crime was unfit to remain in the sky: the perpetrators had to come down to earth to serve their younger brother. Such an ethical move set an example to the people of Tonga that if such relegation could be done to Tangaloa's sons, it could also be done to anybody on earth. The ethical principle of respecting life had to be observed at all times. On the other hand, the stronger person could not do as he liked with the life of the weaker person. Ultimately, the unethical principle of "might is right" was viewed from the domain of religion as a principle that should not be applied in the running of the kingdom. Ethics was the foundation of the formation of the kingdom's socio-political structure.

According to the above discussion, politics was deeply rooted in the realms of religion and ethics. Ethics and politics were both set in the sky by the god himself. As the people of Tonga respected religion with ultimate awe and reverence, politics was in a safe domain as their belief protected them from going against the political formation. In other words, they could not deny the validity of their own belief. Therefore, the origination of the kingdom was bound to last because it did not go against the belief of the people but was built on the basis of the belief system of the people at large.

The last important factor to bring to the fore is the structure of economics. In order for any political system to work, it must have the power to control the economic system. Failure to have such power will bring political chaos to that system. It is like a body that has no blood: It will die.

When ʻAhoʻeitu was sent down to earth as king to the people of Tonga, he was sent with legal authority to rule over the land. He was inaugurated to be the representative of Hikuleʻo (the god of fertility) on earth. Such empowerment was done in the name of religion. ʻAhoʻeitu was not only empowered to rule over the people, but also to rule over the very entity of the land that was indispensable to survive in a feudal society. The land not only stood as the sole means for economic survival but also spelled out the magnitude of the power of the person who had it.

The kingdom of ‘Aho‘eitu was bound to survive for a long, long time, and the interplay of the three important factors—religion, economy, and politics—was crucial to this formation of politics in Tonga. Lest we forget, it must also be mentioned that ethics played an important role in the formation of politics in Tonga through these myths.

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Preserving Traditional Place Names in Palau

Meked Besebes and Lynda D. Tellames

Obil meai iiang,
a kededul di milrael el mei,
ma beluu a diak el ngii aikang,
ma chutem a diak el ngii aikang,
leng di ralm ma bad el ngeasek a merreder ra chutem iiang.

(We both came to this place with nothing.
The land and the rocks are not ours.
We are not the rightful owners of them.
It's only the water and
the rock that own the land.)

—*Chesols*, a Palauan chant

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is to discuss the importance of preserving traditional place names in Palau. Place names embody rich knowledge of migration and settlement patterns. Knowledge of these place names is significant in passing down oral histories, events, and valuable cultural lessons to people and children. The essential structural aspects of Palauan social and political organization were charted in the mythological prehistoric era of Palau; thus, the discussion of these elements must begin there.

Creation of Palau Island: The Legend of Uab

Uchelianged created a land called Lukes, between the islands of Peleliu and Angaur. A clam (*kim*) living on Lukes gave birth to Latmikaik, who, in turn, gave birth to a fish. After some time the land became too crowded, so Uchelianged told the people of Lukes to collect matter from the surface of the water to create an island now known as Angaur. Angaur is considered to be an ancient place with pelagic water surrounding it. Place naming began at Lukes when the clam gave birth to Latmikaik. Angaur, then, was the second place to give names. It became so populous and overcrowded that the people living in Angaur divided the island into hamlets and named them.

Latmikaik gave birth to a child, Uab. Day by day, this magical child grew rapidly, as did his appetite. Uab's mother sought assistance from the villagers to fulfill her child's hunger, but, in fear for their own lives, the people set Uab afire. Leaping high up in agony, his body crashed northward and fell apart, with the various parts forming the Palauan archipelago. The large island of Babeldaob[1] is the trunk of Uab's body. It is said the people of Ngarchelong Village (on the northern tip of Babeldaob Island) have a lot of intelligence because Ngarchelong is one part of Uab's head. Aimeliik is formed of Uab's lower abdomen and legs, pulled up in kicking anger.

Division of Polity: Milad and Her Children[2]

The legend of Milad (a female demigod) began when the seven Tekiimelab (demigods) were searching the land for the eye of Temedokl (a one-eyed god). They came upon a woman, Dirrabkau, who was boiling taro, and asked her to cook their fish for their evening meal. With her ingenuity, Dirrabkau cooked the fish and inserted them in the cooked taro, thus making taro fish sandwiches. The Tekiimelab took their food and left. Upon finding out the ingenuity of Dirrabkau's taro fish, they went back and told her of a great flood that would be coming and instructed her to tell her son, Ngiselacheos, to lash a big bamboo raft in preparation. When the floods came, she was prepared, but, as the water rose, her hair caught on a tree and she drowned. The Tekiimelab found her body and breathed life into her nostrils, at which point she became Milad, meaning "was dead."

1. Babeldaob is the largest island in the Palau archipelago; ten out of sixteen states of Palau are on Babeldaob.
2. DeVerne R. Smith, *Palau Ethnography Volume 2: Recommendations for the Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources in Palau* (San Francisco: Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation, U.S. National Park Service, 1997), 8.

According to Palauan legend, the goddess Milad gave birth to four children: Imeungs, the oldest son; Olekeok, the second son; Ngerbuns, the third child and only daughter; and Sureor, the youngest son. After giving birth, she went to the top of a hill called Ometochel and threw four small islands in front of her children as their markers. She threw Ngemolei in front of Imeungs, Ngerutoi in front of Olekeok, Okerduul in front of Ngerbuns, and Ngetmeduch in front of Sureor. These four children of Milad form the four corner posts of Palauan society.

TRADITIONAL PALAUAN VILLAGE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A Palauan Chant:

At the gathering of Keremong they speculate its origin
Like two ridges that have one origin; it splits at the end
Look to the cloudy west coast, look to the white reefy east coast
When we go and come back there is only original path.[3]

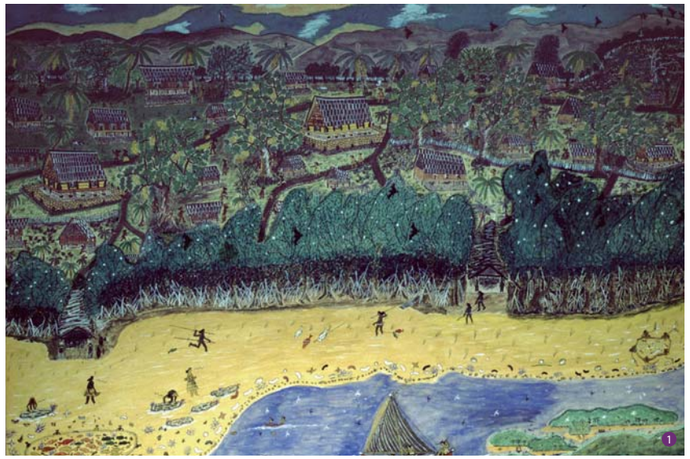
The main point of the above chant is to assure one another that there is no way that these two can be permanently separated or disconnected from each other. They are from the same mother after all. Their journeys in life will not separate them—they will always be brothers. This chant may be performed at funerals or other occasions as a reminder of clan or family relationships. It demonstrates the hereditary strength one has following his maternal clan and the village from which he comes.

A native-born Palauan is affiliated with his mother's clan; this affiliation is stronger than his association with his father's clan.[4] A person's connection to a village is important to Palauan cultural identity as it helps manifest community ties, social status, and kinship and provides a sense of belonging. Place names, chiefly titles, names mentioned in migration legends, and alliances between individuals or villages from the prehistoric era remain central modes of linking people today.

The traditional landscape of Palau encompasses the traditional village as well as other features that serve specific purposes in Palau's worldview (Figure 1). A traditional village is organized according to

3. Palauan version: *Me teko l kidebeiara keremong, el di melechedeche ngii, aika eru lke del ngurd, el dita uchul e mo ketouch ra rsel, msechetau l keiukl ema, cheleua nga ra desbedall, ma debo me deluu te, ngdi ta uchul a rael iiang.* This chant is about two brothers from Keremong, a clan in Ngkeklau-Ngaraard State, who went their separate ways. They left their village together: one went to the east (*Desbedall*), and one went to the west (*Kiukl*) of Babeldaob, along ridges that separate but connect back into one.
4. *Kotel* refers to one's home village following maternal lineage. One's home village is a strong identifier, and one is a strong member of his or her mother's clan and village. Thus, it can be an insult to say something about one's mother, her clan, or her home village. When a Palauan passes away, he or she must be buried in his or her mother's home place.

the dual social organization of people and chiefs.[5] Typical villages have ten clans and are equally divided in half, organized under the two high clans; each clan has a house lot in each village. Title and clan names are derived from their specific land names.[6] A place name is a marker to identify and locate in detail a specific history and its associated people and places. Most have stories associated with each place name. Villages that have had previous relationships share places with the same or similar names, but there are stories that can explain the connection between these places.



5. The dual organization in Palau is called *bita el blai me a bita el blai* (two half clans), through which all clans are divided under one of the two high clans in the village.
6. For example, the second ranking clan in Mengellang–Ngarchelong is Imei, which is also the house/land name; thus, the male chiefly title is *Adelbai ra Imei*, and the female title is *Eblil ra Imei* .
7. Palauan version: *Diluches a nguu ra Ongeroell ma Ngedebuul ma; Dimes a nguu er a Morotai e me nguu a Meriil; Se Edeaur ma Odesangel ma Erenguul ma; Ngerbuns ma Imeungs; Kerradel ma Rteluul; A mo modak e di Belau di imo el beluu; Me bol ta rengud a dodengesii tia el Belau rekid.*

Preserving Traditional Village Place Names

A Palauan Song:

North takes from Ongereoll and Ngedebuul;
South takes from Morotai toward Meriil;
There is Edeaur and Odesangel and Erenguul
Ngerbuns and Imeungs
Kerradel and Rteluul
Combined together make up one Belau
Let us join in one spirit and praise our Belau. [7]

1 Traditional Palauan village by Charlie Gibbons. © 1973. Belau National Museum

The above song is about associated villages in the western half of Palau. While the music remains the same, a singer may replace names in the lyrics with different village names that have linkage. A similar song is sung in Ngaraard Village that states its boundaries with nearby villages. There are sixteen states (formerly village districts) in Palau, each with hamlets and places that were specially named. Following are traditional names and short descriptions of the sixteen states that were formerly village districts of Palau.[8]

Ngedebuul (Kayangel)[9]

Ngedebuul is taken from the word *ulebdebuul*, referring to the washed-up driftwood and other drifting materials in the oral history of Dirrabakerus. Dirrabakerus was an elderly woman who lived in Aimeliik with her husband Tkedelukl and two sons, Kautechang and Techatiei. One day, Dirrabakerus was exiled and dumped at sea by her husband. With her, she carried some wood ashes and a branch of a hibiscus tree. While drifting at sea, Dirrabakerus threw the ashes in the water so she could stand and rest when she got tired of swimming. When she ran out of ashes, she planted the branch of the hibiscus tree she had carried with her. That piece of hibiscus is now a sacred tree covering almost all of the southern part of the island. During Milad's time, the name became Ngcheangel, sometimes referred to today as Kayangel. It is believed that the name Ngcheangel was changed to Kayangel to make it easier for Westerners, but the name Ngcheangel is still used by some Palauans.

8. Palau Society of Historians, Rechuodel Volume I (Koror, Palau: Division of Cultural Affairs, Historical Preservation Office, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, 1995), 13-14.
9. Names in parentheses are contemporary state names under their constitutions.

2 Meduu el Bai (*bai* and stone platform in Kayangel State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Rteluul (Ngarchelong)

Before the polity of the giant Uab, Ngarchelong was called Rteluul. The name Rteluul is referred to as the old name for Mengellang and Ngriil. Mengellang was Rteluul re Bab and Ngriil was Rteluul re Eou. When Uab died and fell down, his upper torso became the big island of Babeldaob, and his head became Rteluul. Thus, the old name for Ngarchelong was Euid el Llomes. Being the head, it had the seven facial features: two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, and a mouth. These seven facial features are referred to as *euid el llomes*. *Euid* means seven and *llomes* means intelligence; therefore, "euid el llomes" literally means "seven intelligences."

Kerradel (Ngaraard)

The old name for Ngaraard was Kerradel, and it was traditionally divided into two halves: three hamlets (Chol, Ngkeklau, and Chelab) on the east coast were called Ngaraard, and two hamlets on the west coast (Ngebuked and Ulimang) were called Ngebubs, meaning these two villages came to the surface from underwater. Later, the chiefs from all five villages from east and west met and agreed to merge the villages together and become one state with five hamlets called Kerradel, which means that they would all unite with respect for one another as they merged everyone from the east and west coasts with strengthened ties among all the villages.

3 Badrulchau (stone monoliths at Ngarchelong State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

4 Chetoikechang (dock/causeway in Ngaraard State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Kiueluul (Ngiwal)

Kiueluul is derived from the word *kelulau* (whispered policies). A snake god whispered the secret strategies for governing into the ears of local chiefs. In each village he chose a place for whispering. When he came to Ngiwal they thus made their stone platform there and named it Ongeluluul. This name came to being after the goddesses held their meeting, whispering secretly how they would select and distribute the policies for the chiefs.

5 Sualel a Iluochel[10] (stone basket of Iluochel in Ngiwal State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Olekeok (Melekeok)

Olekeok was one of Milad's four children. Olekeok is derived from the word *tekeok,* which means "one who is proud of oneself." Because of his mischievous behavior, Milad sent Olekeok to the eastern coast of Babeldaob, crowning him to have paramount order of the eastern village in Palau. Melekeok is the home of Reklai.[11]

6 Bai Melekeong[12] (traditional chiefs' meeting house in Melekeok State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Oldiais (Ngchesar)

Oldiais refers to joy among the villagers in this state. People respect and rely on one another (*kaudiais*), and they exchange information on everything concerning their village.

10. See "Mesei: Taro Field Landscapes in Palau" in this publication for significance of Iluochel in Palau taro culture.
11. There are two traditional paramount chiefs of Palau, Reklai in Melekeok and Ibedul in Koror.
12. See "Palauan Bai (Meeting House): Parts and Depictions as a Pictorial Representation of Palau" in this publication.

Ongedechuul (Ngardmau)

Ongedechuul means "one who is clever or ingenious." This village became Ongedechuul because the people who settled there came from different places, yet they were clever enough to transcend their differences and work to form one polity. During the German administration, the name Ongedechuul was replaced with Ngardmau.

Imeungs (Ngeremlengui)

The old name for Ngeremlengui was Imeungs (Chim er a Iusech), the oldest and unwearied son of Milad. His mother kept him beside her and tasked him to look after his siblings. Imeungs is the region symbolizing the eldest of Milad's children, and the site contains

13. See "Palau Knowledge of the Sea" in this publication for description and significance of klekat.

7 Iliud er a Mesiual (platform for making smoke signals [*klekat*][13] in Ngchesar). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

8 Olketokel er a Udoud el Bad (stone table for money presentation in Ngardmau). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

ancient knowledge of Palau. This is because it holds within it the site Ii er a Ngebesek (also known as Milad's Cave), where Milad was revived after the flood and where she gave birth to her four children, as well as several other sites associated with Milad and the early settlements of Palau.

Ngerdubech (Ngatpang)

In the oral tradition of Palau, Ngerdubech was an ancient village descended down from heaven at the center of Babeldaob/Ochallechutem. The village of Ngerdubech and its associated village of Ngimis hold important places in Palau and are closely connected with traditional religious beliefs.

9 Elsechei-Blil a Blebaol (pedestal for displaying enemy's decapitated head in Ngeremlengui). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

10 Ngersois (bathing pool in Ngatpang). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Ngerbuns (Aimeliik)

Aimeliik is one of the four children of Milad and the only daughter, and, as such, the traditional villages here play an important role in the Palauan society. The old name for Aimeliik was Ngerbuns. This was derived from the word *bunt* (to pull hair up, twist, and tie in a knot) as she was the only daughter and would have her hair long and tied in a knot. In addition, specific village histories are often tied to movements of people from other areas in Palau to and from this state.

Belias (Airai)

Belias is derived from the word *belsechakl* or *mla obasech,* which means there is unity in their villages and they are now recognized as one polity. Irrai (more commonly known as Ordomel) is recognized as the chief village. Originally, Irrai was the name of this village district only, but somehow it came to be more and more identified with the whole state in general. Ordomel is defined as "handle" (as in the handle of an axe) and "principle village in district." Many informants explained the reason behind the dual meaning by using a metaphor with an axe handle, in that it is the foundation that provides the strength for the whole, or the guiding component of the whole.

11 Oublallang er a Ngermeloched (terraces in Aimeliik). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Sureor (Koror)

Sureor was the youngest of the four children of the goddess Milad and thus occupies an important position in traditional belief. He was very energetic and feral, and so his mother, Milad, shoved him off to the south and named him Sureor. Koror also is the home of Ibedul, the paramount chief overseeing the western states of Palau.

Odesangel (Peleliu)

Odesangel is derived from the word *omsangel* (money bank). It is said that this state was the main depository for all Palauan money coming in and out of Palau.

12 Chades er a Mechorei (bai platform and stone causeway in Airai State). © Bureau of Arts and Culture
13 Tekeok-Imid (stone monolith in Ngermid, Koror). © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Edeaur (Angaur)

Edeaur derives from the word *edei,* meaning "three," as in the three villages (Ngermasech, Ngebeanged, and Ngerbelau) that make up this island. The legend of Uab originates in Edeaur; thus, Edeaur has migration stories related to many areas in Palau.

Dongosar (Sonsorol)

Dongosar literally translates as "place where there are hard currents." The name was given by the people who first settled on the island, who experienced strong currents that made it extremely hard to sail.

14 Olsechall er a Ruchel (stone platform in Angaur). © Bureau of Arts and Culture
15 Burial ground in Sonsorol State. © Bureau of Arts and Culture

Hatohobei (Hatohobei)

Hatohobei Island is one of the southwest islands of Palau. It has maintained its traditional name, which is now the official name written in its constitution.

TRANSMISSION, CONTINUITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Traditional place names are passed down by oral repetitions and experiences. Like other traditional knowledge, learned place names are passed down from parent to child.[14] This transmission traditionally took place at home and was reinforced in the community. Children were encouraged to perform small tasks assigned to them. As they reached the age of maturity, they were required to join the small clubs in the community, in this way exposing themselves to different skills and types of knowledge appropriate for their respective age.

Women and men passed down important skills to young children. Taro cultivation, for example, is a major component of a Palauan woman's world; thus, young girls begin to learn different features of taro fields by accompanying their mothers and performing simple tasks assigned to them. In the same way, a man will begin bringing his son fishing, teaching him different landmarks and names in the reef.

Many traditional villages retain their significance as ancestral homes for relocated communities and are much alive in contemporary Palauan culture. They are part of their birth certificates in a Palauan sense of establishing lineage with members of their clans and villages. Clans retain their association with individual structures in villages by continuing to use traditional burial platforms to this day. People claim their ancestral lands and continue to go to their villages to gather foodstuffs planted by their ancestors and cultivate taro fields handed down over the generations.

Efforts are being made by various cultural institutions and civil societies to preserve and promote Palauan traditional names. The Palau Bureau of Arts and Culture and Historical Preservation Office are mandated under public law to record tangible and intangible

14. Palau Society of Historians, "The Traditional Education System of Palau" (Koror: Bureau of Arts and Culture, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, 2006).

properties of the Republic of Palau. Reports and educational materials are published and disseminated to schools, libraries, state offices, and related offices. The Ministry of Education also has a Palauan Studies curriculum that teaches significant cultural values and principles from grades one to twelve. In most cases, reports and publications by the Bureau of Arts and Culture are used by educators to teach Palauan cultural practices and values. The Oral History and Ethnography section of the Bureau of Arts and Culture is currently finalizing a project on Palauan traditional place names that will be distributed to schools for education and preservation purposes.

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The Art of Communication in Yap, FSM: Traditional Forms of Respectful Interactions

Stefan M. Krause

I believe the most beautiful thing about our culture is respect.

—Elizabeth Ribilyan[1]

INTRODUCTION

All cultures have unique and interesting ways of communicating and transmitting knowledge and information important to members of their societies. This is especially true in Yap State of the Federated States of Micronesia, where traditional communication forms have endured for ages and support a society in which respectful interactions and peaceful relations are paramount. On islands such as those of Yap, crucial resources such as land, food, and water are scarce, and the ways residents cope with these limitations all connect to culturally transmitted understandings of how to cooperate and respect one another at all times.

According to Yap State Senator Ted Rutun, one of the reasons Yap has such a distinct and fascinating communication system is its reliance on non-written forms of transmitting information. Rutun notes, "That is why we do activities like *mitmit*.[2] That is why we have performing arts—just to convey the same things that you could do verbally."[3] In this way, ceremonies, rituals, and performances are thus the traditional mediums of mass communication on Yap. They give audiences information meaningful to the society, often conveying messages of respect, cooperation, and social order. On an individual and family level, these values are communicated in a more personal way. Stories, sayings, proverbs, and even the manner and style of non-verbal expressions and behavior are vital tools used by families and individuals to communicate important lessons on how to properly become and be Yapese.

These ways of communicating wisdom on getting along and cooperating with each other in order to survive may have indeed been more relevant in the past. But their endurance is evidence that respect can still be a highly valued social norm—one for which the world can perhaps look to Yap as an example. This chapter will therefore briefly highlight many of the important and interesting methods of Yapese communication that help to transmit traditional knowledge and wisdom on how life should be lived on a small, remote island in the Pacific.

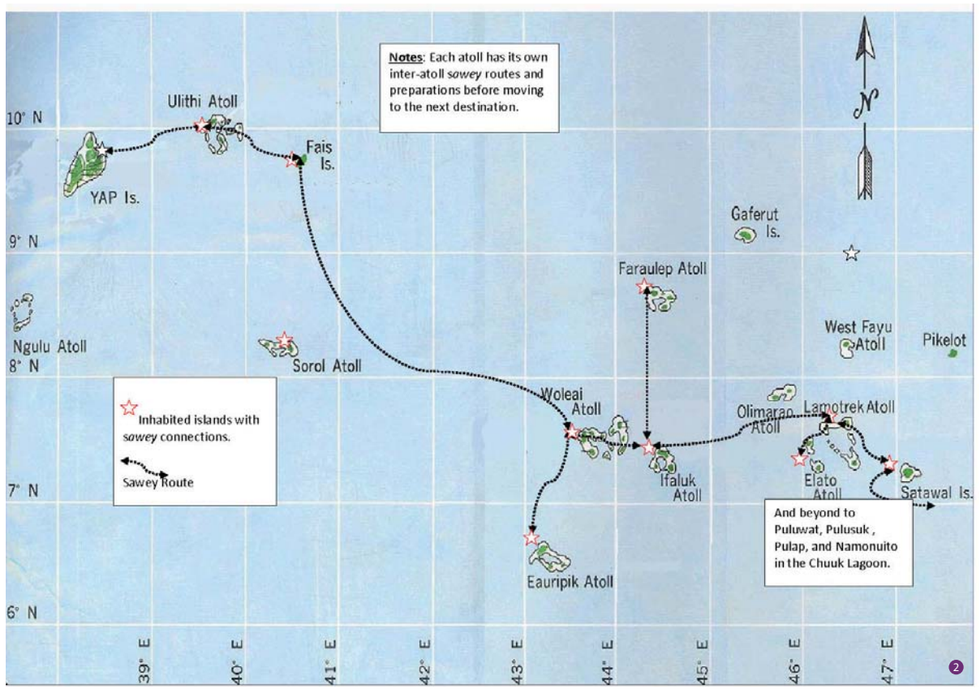
1. Elizabeth Ribilyan, personal interview with author, 24 February 2014. Elizabeth Ribilyan is a long-time education specialist in Yap with a keen interest in Yapese language and communication.
2. As will be explained in more detail below, a *mitmit* is a very important social gathering of related villages where numerous vital interactions occur.
3. Ted Rutun, personal interview with author, 19 February 2014.

ISLAND-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS

One of the most interesting expressions of communication in Yap involves the highly complex and sophisticated protocols involved

1 The Munguy men's house in Dugor, Yap. Traditionally, men's and women's houses have been the main places where oral traditions were passed on to newer generations. Stories, legends, and words of wisdom were often heard in them, and they were important (and still are to a smaller degree) places where Yapese culture was communicated. © Stefan M. Krause

in formal interactions between villages. This remarkable system ties distinct villages and their people together in ways that reflect both the social organization uniting discrete communities on the islands and the respectful inter-village processes helping to ensure stability. These ties also extend out to Yap's many surrounding smaller islands. As an example, many with knowledge about the state have likely heard stories of the *sawey*—a system of reciprocity, respect and obligations between the Outer Islands of Yap and a few coastal villages in the municipality of Gagil. To put it simply, the sawey is basically a formal relationship between the resource-poor Outer Islands of Yap and their Main Island benefactors from the municipality of Gagil. While less observed nowadays, it involves protocols of obligation and respect between both groups that are described metaphorically by the Yapese as a "parent-child" relationship. As in a family, the "parents" from Gagil are obligated to give needed resources to their "children" from the Outer Islands, who in turn must observe certain respect and tribute protocols.



2 Map showing Yap State, including the Outer Islands and the sawey system network. © Yap State Historic Preservation Office

These protocols include the formal channels of communication through which a procession of canoes with prestigious gifts would begin from the furthest Outer Islands and stop at each island on the way, where a new group of chiefs and navigators would take the lead. Eventually, the leaders from the closest Outer Island (Ulithi) would then be responsible to guide the procession into the lagoons of Yap and to Gagil with all the accumulated tribute to be given to specific chiefs from Gagil. While the "parent-child" metaphor may seem oppressive or patronizing to non-Yapese, it is not understood that way in Yap. Custom holds that the villagers from Gagil *must* give shelter or whatever essential items are requested to their Outer Island "relatives" even to the detriment of their immediate families. As such, the sawey can thus be seen as a formal relationship that in practice benefits both groups—not just the "parents" from Gagil. In times of famine or other natural disasters, for instance, the sawey ensures that Outer Islanders can look to their "relatives" for assistance.

As with the sawey, the inter-village communications on the Main Islands of Yap are complex and meaningful.[4] According to the 2010 Census, the Main Island group of Yap is home to over seven thousand residents living in over a hundred different villages. While developed in ancient times when the population was far greater and the resources and territory much more strained, Yap's traditional

4. For a comprehensive look at the network of relationships between villages and the overall social organization of Yap, please see Sherwood G. Lingenfelter's *Yap, Political Leadership and Culture Change in an Island Society,* University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1975.

3 Stone path in Amin, Yap. This is one of the hundreds of beautifully constructed stone paths that weave throughout the Main Islands of Yap. The stone paths facilitate networks of communication between villages and are the traditional "roads" used by everyone. As such, they also have protocols that need to be followed when traveling on them. If in another village, for instance, you must carry a small twig or branch in your hand to communicate you are on a peaceful journey. You should not make loud noises, eat, whistle, or do anything disrespectful, and when traveling in groups, you must walk in a single-file line. © Yap State Historic Preservation Office

political structure is still extremely complex and retains built-in customs that continue to keep order and peaceful relations among the villages. On a broad level, these customs include the proper way to send messages between villages and the formal interactions that occur in meetings between allied villages. A great example of both of these traditions in action was the recent 2014 mitmit ceremony in the village of Ngolog.

THE MITMIT

The *mitmit* is a public event that carries and communicates important Yapese meanings. As Senator Rutun explained in the opening paragraphs, it can also convey information to all in a non-written way. In early 2014, the village of Ngolog hosted its first mitmit in almost a century. Its revival was important to Yapese for numerous reasons, including the opportunity it provided to display Yapese custom and tradition to newer generations who had never witnessed such a ceremony before. In the past, mitmits were ceremonies that brought together allied villages in formal settings where leaders met and discussed important matters concerning their alliances. The recent mitmit in Ngolog did this as well. Sensing tradition and custom in Yap were fading, including knowledge about village alliances and chiefly titles, the organization and performance of the ceremony communicated the correct ways for certain villages to relate and interact with each other as well as important information on the traditional leadership structure of the culture.[5] Being from a lower ranking village herself, Elizabeth Ribilyan explains as follows:[6]

> The Yapese cultural system is complex and complicated. Like a spider's web, with the many important positions, titles, ranks, and commoners, everyone is connected to one another in some way, somehow. As in a company, there's the CEO and the many managers and supervisors. In Yap, there are high chiefs; there are the three pillars [paramount chiefs] and each community has its own chief; [this is similar] to the managers of the various divisions in a company.

During the planning and preparation of the mitmit, traditional inter-village communication activated and networks between

5. While it is true that a unique village ranking system does exist in Yap, many Yapese (including those who are among low-ranking villages) wish to make clear that their society is not a true "caste system" as it has been portrayed by many outsiders in the past. Applying this non-Yapese term to such a complex and uniquely Yapese system of relations is wrong in their eyes. As Ribilyan's perspective describes, in Yap, ranking is like a division of labor in a company. Unlike caste systems, ranks are not determined by birth and blood, but rather by the village or estate from which they are associated. The system is also dynamic and flexible because the land holds the true power and people can leave their villages and marry or become adopted into higher ranking ones.
6. Ribilyan, personal interview, 2014.

4 Presentation of traditional Yapese money to village chiefs during a historic mitmit in Ngolog Village, Yap. The circulation of these valuable cultural items communicates and reaffirms the traditional ties between villages and chiefs. © Stefan M. Krause

villages came alive. As with the sawey, interactions between villages on the Main Islands must follow a certain path according to their relationships. The northernmost municipalities of Rumung and Maap, for instance, were contacted through village channels that must always pass through Gagil first. In the weeks leading up to the ceremony, all the attendees of the mitmit then collected tribute goods and traditional money that would eventually be presented to the Paramount Chief in Ngolog. On the day of the mitmit, chiefs and villagers from Rumung then began a procession with their tribute goods that stopped first in Maap, then in Gagil, and eventually in the municipality of Rull, where Ngolog is located.[7] At each stop, the chiefs met and discussed their roles and what was expected of attendees.

Once all the affiliated villages had gathered at Ngolog, traditional patterns of interactions between them took on an even more formal structure. Each village in attendance, for instance, had its particular place to sit, and inside the large community house, chiefs and other titled members had their positions as well. Once all were settled, the events included traditional dances, circulation of traditional money, feasting, and formal dialogue among the leaders meant to reaffirm the customary relationships between villages. And of course, there was the exchange of numerous pieces of stone money that would eventually find resting areas in Ngolog's "stone money bank."[8] Through ceremony and ritual, participants and observers alike experienced and acted out customs. The mitmit can thus be seen as an important medium of communication through which tradition survives in Yap. For most this was a new experience, and participation

7. A separate group of allied villages from other municipalities also attended and proceeded along their own customary routes.
8. Stone money banks (*malal*) are locations around community houses and other places where the large stone-disc currency is placed and remains. While ownership may change when the stone money (*rei*) is exchanged for various purposes, their location for the most part does not. In most cases, the "banks" are found in the long areas between stone platforms that also serve as dancing grounds during festivities and ceremonial events such as the mitmit.

5 Yapese youth participating in a reenactment of the transportation of stone money that was quarried 400 miles away in Palau and brought to Yap on traditional voyaging canoes. Taken during the 2013 Yap Day Festival, demonstrations such as this communicate Yap's history and traditions to all. © Brad Holland

6 Yapese youth participating in a coconut husking demonstration during the 2013 Yap Day Festival held at Yap's Living History Museum. © Brad Holland

in the events helped to reestablish traditions that many may have forgotten.

TRADITIONAL YAPESE DANCE

While Yap is best known for its stone money, the culture is also famous for spectacular dances its villages perform on various occasions, including the recent mitmit and the annual celebrations of Yap Day, the Canoe Festival, and Yapese Homecoming. Women, men, and children from villages often practice for weeks or even months to perfect dances that include wonderfully sung songs and highly choreographed, stylistic movements. These dances communicate multiple messages to onlookers. The songs' stories can tell everyone about famous historic events, the relationships between villages, and important legends or stories, and oftentimes, they commemorate and honor the suffering and sacrifices of ancestors. Senator Rutun states:[9]

> The information that you need to preserve, you put into the dance. That information may have to do with the relationship between your village and another village. Information that goes into the dancing chant may have to do with a time when disaster struck so that people would know, future generations would know that in such a time a war was waged on the village—the village was attacked. Or a storm hit the village and killed so many people. Or something that is more celebrated like the arrival of something good—is it the stone money from Palau, or when they got a necklace [highly valued traditional money] from somewhere? The way they went through obtaining those things would be detailed in the dance. There is a dance now called "Paliker, Paliker" which is the name of the capital of the FSM. There is this old man from Maap that choreographed this dance. And you know when you go through this dance you would think that this old man was sitting at the negotiating table. Because in it, when you go through the dance, you would understand how the first Compact came about.[10] So instead of reading a book, it's an oral history that was about the creation of this nation.

Along with being a traditional form to communicate history, some dances and chants are also ceremoniously performed to address

9. Rutun, personal interview, 2014.
10. Senator Rutun is speaking here of the very historic period of negotiations that occurred between the FSM and the United States of America that resulted in the Compact of Free Association between the two nations.

present concerns. One such dance is the *tayor,* a standing dance in which women of the village ask chiefs and others present for certain needed items. These items are then always presented. According to Yap State Historic Preservation Officer Francis Reg,[11] the tayor has recently been seen again more and more than it had in the recent past. This is because traditional leaders requested it become a regular part of ceremonies such as Yap Day since it is such an important symbol of the culture's values of sharing and reciprocity.

It is important to point out that traditional Yapese dances are also more than vehicles to convey messages. Senator Rutun mentions that many are unaware, for instance, of the sacred association that links humans and the spirit world.[12] One way this hallowed relationship is symbolized is when villages "hang-up" dances—a ritual in which dances are ceremoniously "retired" for periods of time. It is believed that the dances come from the spirits and should be returned to them at certain points since they belong in the sacred realm. As Senator Rutun notes:[13]

> Some people think that they are hanging [the dance] up just to lay to rest for a while. But that is not the case. It is like to put it up in heaven, to give it back to the gods. Because dances are something that belongs to the gods. Dances are for the gods. That

11. Francis Reg, personal communication with author, 12 March 2014.
12. Rutun, personal interview, 2014.
13. Ibid.

7 Yapese women prepare for a dance during the 2013 Yap Day Festival. Beautiful dances such as these are accompanied by songs or chants that communicate important messages to onlookers. © Brad Holland

is why here, you don't smile. You have to be expressionless. And this goes a long way, being expressionless here. You don't smile, and people say, 'how come they are not smiling.' Because you are doing something for the gods [….] So [we] put the dance up [because] it's a sacred, almost a forbidden thing to leave it here on earth. So you just have to put it back up to keep it holy, to keep it sacred.

8

9

THE WISDOM OF RESPECT

"*Generous is to generous and mean is to mean. Others will be generous to you if you are generous and will be mean to you if you are mean.*" –Yapese Proverb[14]

These words of wisdom communicate to Yapese a moral lesson found in most cultures around the world—one known to many as the "Golden Rule" of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In Yap, this ethic is extremely important and underlies the fundamental values of respect and reciprocity that have been taught to so many through oral traditions. Indeed, the Yapese have a rich collection of traditional sayings that, through the use of metaphors and other forms of speech, communicate a common set of ideals essential to survive on their small island. Along with the village-to-village forms of communication already discussed, Yapese "words of wisdom" and common sayings are mediums of cultural transmission that are spoken daily in various more personal settings. Additional examples are provided below:

14. This English version is a translation from the Yapese: *Ulwon ea gool ea gool ea ma pulwon ea kaan ea kaan, faqan raquum gool ngewuug, ma raquug gool ngewuum. Faqan raquum kaan ngewuug, maa raquug kaan ngewuum.* Proverb and translation provided by Elizabeth Ribilyan, interview, 24 February 2014.

8 Yapese women's bamboo dance during 2013 Yap Day Festival. © Brad Holland

9 Yapese women's sitting dance during 2013 Yap Day Festival. Through participation and watching others, Yapese children are taught an important tradition. © Brad Holland

"*Te gich bo Yalus*" – "Not us, but the spirit"[15]

This saying, heard on some of the Outer Islands of Yap, is used to deflect praise from others so as not to appear boastful. If, for example, a fisherman returns with a large catch he is sharing with others, when praised for his generosity and hard work in providing for them, he would say this to take the spotlight off himself by giving all the credit to the "spirit" or god that provided the bounty. Boastfulness is looked down upon in Yap, and sayings such as these help to ensure others that no members become too prideful or think they are above anyone else. According to Leo Pugram, a retired Yapese educator, village chief, and elder as well as one of the foremost living experts on Yapese language, "When you are humble, the people will lift you up. When you are boastful, they will bring you down."[16] Legends bear this reality out as stories abound with chiefs who became too powerful and were killed by villagers, some of whom conspired with enemies against the misguided leaders. In general, today, it is rare to see Yapese displaying high status or wealth or especially to hear Yapese boasting.

"*Bay ea lawan' u way*" – "Wisdom is [still] in the basket"

Almost every Yapese carries a handheld woven basket at all times. Since it holds many of their essential items, this basket is so important (especially for men) that it is often called a "second home." One such item found inside is betel nut, which, as on many Pacific islands, is a highly valued and culturally significant local resource and is chewed often. This saying, "bay ea lawan' u way," is meant to convey the advice that whenever a problem seems difficult to solve, one should take a minute to chew a betel nut and think about it

15. This saying and its description were given by Chief George Hofalui from the Lothow, Ulithi (an Outer Island of Yap) to Danny A. Matheblemal (staff member of the Yap State Historic Preservation Office).

16. Leo Pugram, personal interview with author, 14 February 2014.

10

11

10 Yapese children preparing for a traditional women's sitting dance during the 2013 Yap Day Festival. © Brad Holland

11 Yapese women and men prepare for the bamboo dance during the 2013 Yap Day Festival. © Brad Holland

more. The calming effect of the betel nut will help in providing the focus needed to make a wise decision. When it comes to decision making in Yap, such careful consideration and consensus-making are the norm. According to preeminent Micronesian scholar Father Francis Hezel, "A betel-nut break [also provides] a check against impulsive speech. Nothing is so detrimental to the peace and climate of respect as an ill-considered remark."[17] When groups come to an impasse and cannot agree, seeking wisdom in the basket by sharing a chew often leads to progress.

"*Kammagar*" – "You are tired"

All the values of respect, cooperation, and politeness discussed in this chapter are embodied in one of the most often heard terms in Yap: *kammagar*. Meant to express thanks, the term literally translates to "you are tired." Beyond a simple "thank you," it is also a greeting that conveys an understanding and appreciation for the tiring effort someone may have taken to perform a task or walk a long way to be somewhere. In the past, for instance, Yapese would travel long distances by foot to meet each other using one of hundreds of the islands' beautiful stone paths. Because they were probably tired after such journeys, "kammagar" was the polite way of thanking them

17. Francis Hezel, personal communication with author, 2014.

12 "Wisdom is in the basket": A traditional men's basket in Yap that holds many essential items. © Stefan M. Krause

for their sacrifice. By saying "thank you," the Yapese are thus also thanking guests for their presence. It is a symbolic gesture of respect that illustrates the lengths Yapese go to in being polite to others.

Thoughtful, considerate, and respectful communication is extremely important in Yap. In most social settings, words are always chosen very carefully and spoken with the utmost care not to offend. Politeness is indeed the norm. To illustrate this point, Yapese youth Kalahao Fillmed provides the following often-heard saying that conveys it is just as important to speak in a polite way as it is to speak polite words:[18] "If you whisper, people will strain their ears to listen, but if you shout people will shut their ears in annoyance."[19]

As a long-time educator and someone who has worked decades studying Yapese oral histories, Peter Reuchugrad, a Yapese elder, knows a great deal about his culture. When speaking of the Yapese virtues of constant politeness and respect, Reuchugrad explains it well:[20]

> You have to be polite. So you have to use polite terms. Whether you are a man or a woman or older, you have to show respect by speaking politely. Saying *sirow* (excuse me), and thank you and bowing, not using so many facial expressions, not getting mad, not saying sarcastic words, no joking to older people, stuff

18. Kalahao Fillmed, personal communication with author, 14 February 2014.
19. The Yapese version is, "*Gara um kathkath ma ra'i chela'n e girdii ko nen ni gabe yog, ma gar um tolul ma dariy bae' ni ba'adag ni nge motoyil ngom ya gabe amith nag lan tel rad. Ere kayog e gorrong mag moding nigem ma ra adag e giddi' ni fulweg lingum.*"
20. Peter Reuchugrad, personal interview with author, 20 February 2014.

13 Stone money bank (left), dancing grounds (center), and community house (background right) in Kaday Village, Weloy Municipality, Yap. © Brad Holland
14 Henry Fanaglubuw sitting next to stone money in front of Kaday Village's community meeting house in Weloy Municipality, Yap. © Brad Holland

like that. I guess politeness is the main thing here. Politeness and respect. If you remain polite, show respect, people will show respect to you, people will like you. I think that is important. You have to make people like you.

15

When asked why this respect and politeness is so important in Yap, Reuchugrad further states:[21]

> Well, because we like to be liked. I guess that is the most important thing. And because we have so many relatives and respect is a big part of it. And because of the relationship between families and between villages, between municipalities...you have to be liked. I guess the word 'love' can be used too.

Finally, Senator Rutun echoes the above by pointing out how living on an isolated island such as Yap is like being on a small boat in the middle of the ocean with people you have to get along with.[22] Getting along with, loving, and respecting one another makes life's journey easier and benefits everyone. On Yap, the traditional mediums of expression and communication developed with this wisdom in mind. One might say that this wisdom proves more and more important as the world becomes ever more interconnected, making clear that we are all passengers on the same boat. Metaphorically speaking, the boat may indeed be getting bigger, but this just means that so, too, is the importance of cooperation and respect.

21. Ibid.

22. Rutun, personal interview, 2014.

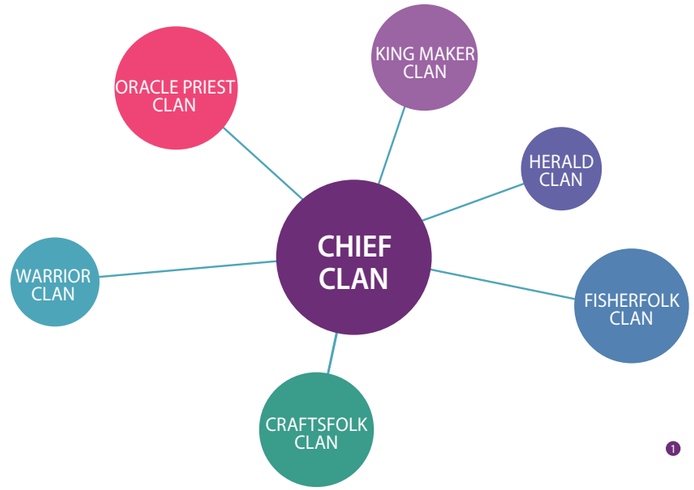
15 Yapese educator Elizabeth Ribilyan shares her knowledge of the unique and interesting forms of Yapese communication. © Stefan M. Krause

Verata Traditional Envoys and the Importance of Representation

Simione Sevudredre

Vaka e vidi na ivi matua
(Crunchy like chestnuts ready for harvest)
—A Fijian saying often uttered by the Mataki

The traditional structure of the indigenous people of Fiji can be broadly described as comprising chiefs, heralds, warriors, kingmakers, fisher folk, crafts folk and oracle priests. This structural arrangement can be loosely found in traditional village settings. The term "loosely" is used here in the sense that some tribes have all these traditional roles living in the same village, whereas in some other areas, the clans can be in different villages. For instance, a village located some distance away from the sea may have the chiefs, heralds, and priests in one locality while the fisher folk are situated on the coast and the warrior clan is located further away up in the hinterland. Though the reasons for these separations may vary, these clans of people still identify themselves in relation to their roles with the chief, who is at the figurative center as illustrated in Figure ①.



① Generic traditional iTaukei society.

Governance in the indigenous Fijian landscape can best be described as consisting of numerous autochthonous chiefdoms. Traditionally, no overall chief holds total jurisdiction over the indigenous traditional governance, even though there have been claims in the past by one or two. One such claim arose prior to Fiji's colonial period, when the Bau warlord, Cakobau, became a self-styled king when his precession *matanitu* or government was established in Levuka,[1] the first capital of Fiji.

The term "generic" is used in the caption for the illustration above because there are instances of clans that were remnants from the ancient warring days and have become subsumed under a dominant group, existing as retinue and retainers of the ruling chiefly clan in the process. "Generic" also fits because some of these components may exist in one village with the other clans clustered in another village.

TRADITIONAL HERALDS AND CHIEFS

In the chief's clan, the selection of one to ascribe into leadership follows established protocols and traditions. The process is usually carried out by the traditional king makers (as in Figure ①) in consultation with the chief's clan. Variations differ across Fiji, but the usual characteristic is the collective consultation and consensus among key clans and their elders. Once the chief has undergone the

1. The town of Levuka is now inscribed in the UNESCO world heritage list.

traditional investiture ceremonies, he or she also assumes a whole retinue of retainers. Unlike leadership in the traditional Western monarchy, chiefs are traditionally referred to by elders or kingmakers as *gone* (pronounced NGAW-nay), which literally translates as "child." Symbolically, in terms of traditional seniority in indigenous understanding, chiefs are not of the same stock as the aboriginal people over whom they rule.[2] Because chiefs were believed to be living embodiments of the unseen deities, they were above talking, at least to the other classes. This is where the role of the traditional herald comes into play. The herald's position is as mediator between the chief and the people and vice versa.

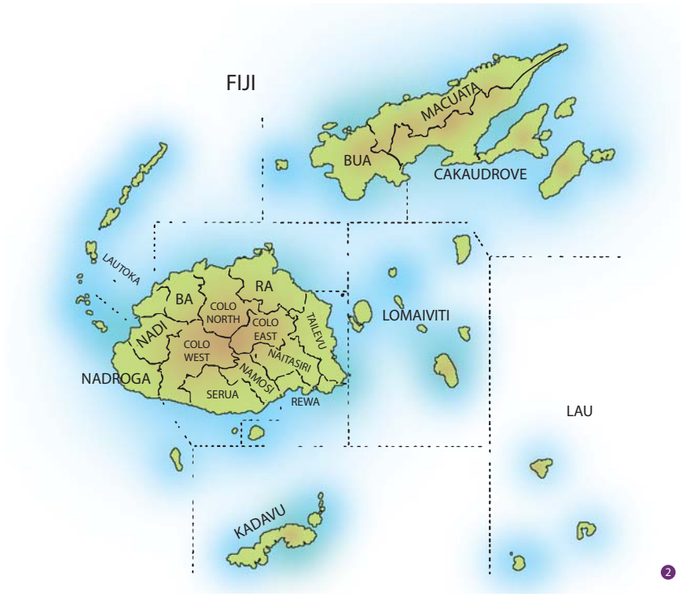
Heralds are appointed to their positions when groups disperse and relocate away from their ancestral places, and this position is transmitted down the generations. The *matanivanua*[3] is the official herald of a chief and is also the master of ceremonies. When a *solevu*[4] takes place, it is the herald who superintends. At a kava drinking ceremony,[5] he always drinks immediately after the chief and directs the order of the ceremony throughout. In addition to his other duties, he is the proper channel or medium through which a message is conveyed from the chief to the people or vice versa. No one has free access to the chief as a herald and certainly no one else may speak with boldness. This is the special privilege of the herald, his role and responsibility. For all intents and purposes, he is the chief's aide-de-camp.

TRADITIONAL ENVOYS IN VERATA

The traditional envoy role is of a higher class of traditional heralds. Envoys are called Mataki along with the addition of the name of the place to which they are accredited; thus, Mataki Bau is the envoy to Bau,[6] or Mataki Verata is the envoy for the high chief of Verata.[7] Tradition has it that the concept had its early origins at the height of the Verata kingdom's era,[8] a period said to have already been established by 1000 CE. Suffice it to say, these roles or offices are invariably kin-determined, i.e., the envoys are kin to the people of the places to which they are accredited, and it is this fact of kinship that ensures them a friendly reception. It is not unusual to find the office or role of the traditional herald and traditional envoy belonging to the same landowning unit but to different extended family units.

2. Marshal Sahlins, "The Stranger-King: Or Dumezil Among the Fijians," *The Journal of Pacific History* 10, 3 (July, 1981): 112.
3. Literally "face of the land," referring to traditional heralds, mediators/spokesmen between chiefs and the people.
4. A traditional state occasion in which exchanges in food and traditional artifacts are done between two or more traditionally related clans, tribes, or states.
5. The traditional ceremony accorded with the drinking of kava (*Piper methysticum*).
6. A traditional state on mainland Eastern Vitilevu deriving its name from its island capital of the same name, whose realms began in the mid-1800s.
7. An ancient traditional state in Fiji that derives its name from its principal seat of power on mainland Eastern Vitilevu.
8. This era was by tradition a time when Verata was the only major traditional chiefdom to exist, a chiefdom whose territory spanned from the interior of mainland Vitilevu to include the Vitilevu eastern coast, across the islands in the Lomaiviti province, and encompassing the whole of Vanualevu, the second mainland. It is from this era when tradition holds that many chiefly households and people migrated from Verata to settle all over Eastern Fiji.

Verata's seat of leadership is located in the village of Ucunivanua in Tailevu Province. At its prime, though, the kingdom spanned from tribes in the hinterland of mainland Vitilevu to the islands in today's Lomaiviti province, Taveuni and Laucala islands in northern Fiji, as well as most of Vanualevu, the second mainland.



Oral traditions about Verata tell of a famed ancestral hero called Tuivanuakula who left Verata and assumed the new title Kubunavanua[9] to symbolize his charisma and powerful warrior skills. Kubunavanua went to Totoya and Moala islands in today's Lau group in Fiji, and his descendants became chiefs. Kubunavanua then assumed lordship of Burotu, a place famed for its trade in red feathers of the *kula*, or collared lory (*Phygis solitaries*).[10] Oral traditions tell of Burotu sinking due to some calamity, but by then its fame and its warriors had spanned the Western Pacific. It is interesting to note that in Tonga, all the paths that the souls of the dead chiefs followed were called *hala ki pulotu* (similar to the Fijian *sala ki Burotu*, meaning the path to Burotu), and these paths all reached the coast facing east toward Fiji. Burotu grew more in fame as the land where everything was red (*kula*), hence it became known as Burotukula, the offshoot of Verata warrior prince Tui Vanuakula.[11]

9. Literally, "The Land Flees" or "Land is Conquered."
10. Dick Watling, *Mai Veikau. Tales of Fijian Wildlife* (Suva: Environmental Consultants Ltd, 1986), 60.
11. Paul Geraghty, "Pulotu, Polynesian Homeland," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 102, 4 (1993): 343-384.

❷ Map of Fiji showing provinces.

Verata was once a thriving metropolis, and its influence was regularly strengthened through its annual traditional tributary and trade routes. It was from this that the role of the envoys featured prominently. They were established along key points on the Verata trade route and were called *matakiverata*, a compound word comprising three terms: *mata* (eyes or face), *ki* (to), and *Verata* (referring to the principal seat of power that is Verata). The role of the matakiverata was mainly as ambassadors of the Verata interests and as official homes-away-from-home of the Verata chiefs or people whenever they visited. While traditional visits to Verata and its usual social intercourse would be facilitated by the traditional herald on the home front, whenever the matakiverata presented himself at Verata, he directly presented himself to the Verata chiefs and did not follow traditional protocol. These traditional envoys were at the frontiers brokering traditional trade and diplomacy of and for Verata.

A clan assumes the role of matakiverata characterized by these three points:

1) The role of the envoy is looked upon as higher in degree than that of the *matanivanua* (traditional herald). The envoy may also be referred to as the *matanivanua turaga* (chiefly herald);
2) The role is hereditary, following paternal lineage;
3) The functions of the matakiverata are exercised on occasions during traditional ceremonies or in meetings between tribes. In such events, the envoy acts as the master of ceremonies. If the chief wishes to convey a message to a fellow chief, the matakiverata is the bearer of the message. Likewise, on the arrival of an envoy from another district, it is the matakiverata who receives the visiting envoy, conveys his message to the chief, and afterwards, if the chief wishes, escorts the visiting envoy to the chief's court.[12]

It isn't uncommon to hear Verata chiefs and matakiverata referring to each other as *vuvale*, meaning "of the same family," thus reinforcing the notion that matakiverata may probably have once been members of the Verata nobility strategically placed along the Verata tributary routes and frontiers. It is not unusual for those playing the role of matakiverata to also assume the traditional herald role in the micro

12. G. A. F. W. Beauclerc, "Fijian Heralds and Envoys," *Transactions of the Fijian Society* (1956): 10.

context of their respective villages. This varies according to location, but fellow matakiverata share a deep bond whenever they meet and address each other using the title with their respective clan name as the suffix. For instance, a matakiverata from the Dere clan, a village in northern Tailevu Province, and a fellow matakiverata from the Nailagolaba clan, at the southern tip of Tailevu Province, would greet each other as such:[13]

> Matakiverata from Dere: *Bula vinaka Mataki mai Nailagolaba* (Good day to you envoy from the Nailagolaba clan)
>
> Matakiverata from Nailagolaba: *Bula vinaka Mataki mai Dere* (Good day to you envoy from the Dere clan)

As with the Verata chiefs, the home of a matakiverata is the sanctuary of a visiting matakiverata from any other clan. Ordinary people from Verata also share the sanctuary of the matakiverata in a similar manner.

When Bau enters Verata, the clan of matakibau alone prepares a feast and presents it to the visitors. This is followed by the chief of Verata preparing a feast and presenting it to the visiting party. In the case of a ceremony taking place, a portion of the feast presented will be set apart first of all for the mataki. In the case of the ordinary matanivanua, that course of action is not pursued.

The key characteristic of the matakis' traditional knowledge is that they are repositories of genealogy, stories, legends, and traditions about the Verata chiefs. This knowledge is not open to other clans, but is closed knowledge that demonstrates the legacy of the Verata chiefs and how the Verata chiefs and people are related to other chiefs and people who originally dispersed from Verata. In the days prior to the arrival of Christianity, when warfare was common, these stories told how the matakiverata distinguished friend from foe.

To demonstrate, one such legend is retold here showing a traditional Verata connection with one of the paramount titles in Fiji, the Rokotui Dreketi of the Burebasaga confederacy. The whole indigenous governance in Fiji comes under three major

13. A common greeting between heralds.

confederacies: Kubuna, Burebasaga, and Tovata. The paramount head of Kubuna, which has been left vacant since 1989, is the warlord of Bau Island. Kubuna comprises the provinces of Tailevu, Ra, Naitasiri, and Lomaiviti and parts of Ba Province. Burebasaga comprises the provinces of Rewa, Beqa, Kadavu, Nadroga, Navosa, and the remainder of Ba Province. Tovata comprises Vanualevu and the Lau group of islands.

Rewa is the principal village in the Burebasaga confederacy, and according to a Verata oral tradition, the founding chief of Rewa, who established the Burebasaga confederacy, originated from Verata. Here is a legend transmitted within the matakiverata that tells of the link between the chief of Verata and the paramount chief of Rewa, the Rokotui Dreketi:

> Rokomoutu is the ancestor of the Verata people. His older sister is Buisavulu. Rokomoutu's three younger brothers are Romelāsiga, Tuinayavu, and Daunisai. Rokomoutu's title is 'O Koya na Ratu mai Verata' or 'Ratu' for short. Romelāsiga's is 'Rokoratu.' One day Romelāsiga decides to seek land on his own and asks permission from his older brother Rokomoutu. Romelāsiga then sails down the eastern coast of Vitilevu in his canoe hewn from the namako tree. He settles at a place that has uneven terrain. Upon hearing Romelāsiga's final settlement, Rokomoutu visits him there and notices the uneven terrain. He asks Romelāsiga whether this really was his final choice. Romelāsiga is convinced without a doubt that the choice was final. Rokomoutu returns to Verata and directs all the women in Verata to fill earth into baskets so as to fill up the uneven terrain. When this is done, Rokomoutu remarks to his younger brother that he is king over land that was carried on the backs of Verata women. The indigenous word *dreketi* means "something that is carried on one's back." The word for king or chief is *tui*. Romelāsiga is overlord of his new place. The words *tui dreketi* mean "king of the carried," so Romelāsiga changes his title from Rokoratu and becomes Rokotui Dreketi, now the paramount title of the Burebasaga confederacy.

In analysis, legends and myths are coded stories that, though they may seem incredible, are ways our ancestors creatively preserved

facts pertaining to governance, links, and relationships. Whether the women of Verata actually carried baskets is irrelevant. The crucial issue is that the chiefly households of the Verata and Rewa chiefs are traditionally related. This is further demonstrated in the existence of *yavu*[14] in the old site where Rokomoutu and his siblings settled. People and chiefs who originate from Verata are known by the name of their yavu. The Rokotui Dreketi's yavu in the old Verata site still exists and is called Burebasaga. Moreover, the Rokotui Dreketi's traditional envoy also exists in Verata. His house is called Namanā,[15] and he is called Mataki Burebasaga (envoy to Burebasaga).

Though many more stories exist, the legend retold above is a representative example of an open story[16] from within the matakiverata.

14. House mound in a village site upon which one builds one's residence.
15. *Manā* (stress on the second syllable) is commonly known as the swamp or mud lobster and is found mostly in Rewa province.
16. In the traditional knowledge system, there are stories and knowledge that can be shared openly and those to be kept closed from non-clan members.

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Traditional Knowledge and Sung Tales in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Don Niles

During a pikono *performance, people don't speak as in ordinary conversation… it is like singing, but the melody and voice are different… It's a difficult thing.*

–Kenny Yuwi Kendoli[1]

TELLING STORIES

People everywhere enjoy telling and listening to stories.[2] Good storytellers draw in their audiences with their skillful uses of language, often turning the mundane into something that vividly captivates the imaginations of listeners and holds them throughout the telling of the tales.

Throughout a large part of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, some highly skilled storytellers create their tales in performances that transcend the style of everyday narratives through a masterful combination of poetry and melody. Although each language group in this region has its own term for such stories, interdisciplinary researchers working in this region have come to call them "sung tales," "chanted tales," or "ballads" in English. While the Highlands region is home to some languages spoken by relatively large numbers of people, there is still considerable diversity throughout.

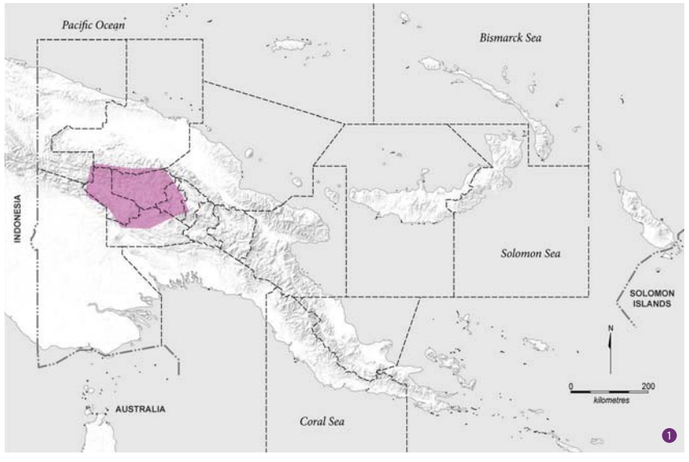
1. Kenny Yuwi Kendoli, "Yuma *Pikono,*" in *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context,* ed. Alan Rumsey and Don Niles (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 42.

2. In addition to the performers I have been privileged to work with, I would like to thank Alan Rumsey for his constant enthusiasm and encouragement to pursue the study of sung tales. I also appreciate the comments and suggestions of the reviewers and editors of this volume.

This article concerns such performances and the efforts of performers and researchers to collaborate on the documentation and promotion of sung tales. It also describes how some examples of this genre, traditionally known and appreciated by necessarily small groups of people at any one time, have become popular over a much wider region and have begun to be appreciated and acknowledged well beyond the regions in which they have been performed. This has been brought about through access by performers to new methods of dissemination as well as through new interest in such performances.

SUNG TALES IN THE HIGHLANDS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The area in which sung tales are performed stretches over parts of four provinces in the central mountain region of Papua New Guinea, from west to east: the Hela, Enga, Southern Highlands, and Western Highlands provinces (Figure 1). Based upon our present knowledge, it appears sung tales are performed by speakers of at least sixteen different languages. Sung tales are excellent examples of a genre that may purport to primarily entertain yet is also rich in traditional knowledge and highly valued by listeners.



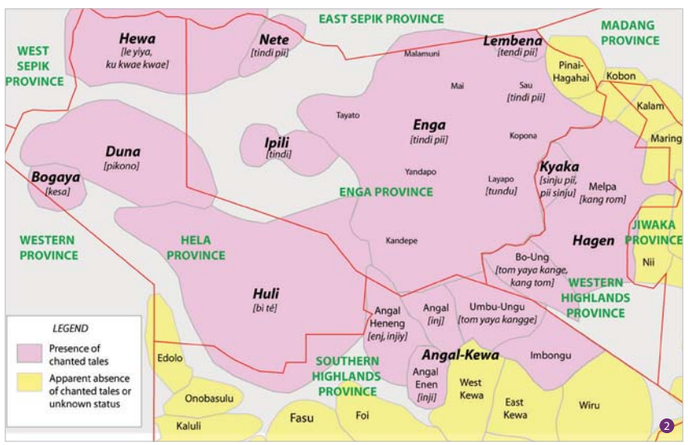
1 The provinces of Papua New Guinea. The purple area shows where sung tales are performed. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

Across this region, what constitutes a sung tale varies significantly, but a number of characteristics are shared. Sung tales are primarily a type of entertainment to be enjoyed by all. The tales may also be educational or even related to aspects of bachelor initiation, as explained below, but they do not concern esoteric knowledge.

A performance usually takes place at night, by a seated individual, often indoors. No dance or instruments accompany the telling of such stories. Competent performers are rare and are valued members of their communities. Performers of sung tales in Papua New Guinea are often men, but in some areas women may also be prominent and highly regarded. These performers learn to perform from listening to others and practicing much to develop their skills.

The performer "sings" the text of the tale using a melody and distinct phrasing that are very different from normal speech. Often it appears that the melody resembles that of genres more readily identifiable as songs. In the sung tales of some areas, syllables or words that are not part of normal speech, called "vocables," may be added in performance.

Seldom is a special term used to indicate the genre here called "sung tales." Instead, the general vernacular word for "story" is used, although such a word includes narratives told in a normal speaking voice as well. Figure ② shows the distribution of sung tales in relation



② Map showing the language areas in which sung tales are performed in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

to languages spoken in this part of the Highlands. Where known, the vernacular name is listed in brackets beneath the language name.

Storytellers poetically create their tales in performance. Although the stories may be well known to listeners and can often be told in normal speech as well, frequent use is made of poetic expressions (Figure ③), archaic language, and various types of parallelism to attract listeners. This is a highly valued skill that few can master, and the performer is usually paid at the performance's conclusion.

While the above characteristics are typical of performances throughout the region, other aspects are more variable. The audience may be all male, all female, or a mixture. Listeners may interject verbal responses of a single syllable or more extensive questions or comments during the performance, or they may be totally silent, focusing intently on the performance itself. Vocables may be almost totally absent from a performance, occur only at line endings, or be quite frequent throughout the text.

The performance of a sung tale lasts from a few minutes to several hours, depending upon the tradition concerned. Plots of sung tales and the main characters vary significantly, but there is very often a journey involved, during which many obstacles must be overcome. In areas in the western part of the distribution region, such as the Duna or Yuna, boys may be nurtured by a female spirit in the form

③ Highland vistas are often poetically celebrated in sung tales. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

of a beautiful young woman in their encounters with "cannibal giants," the first human-like beings to inhabit the earth. In this area, the performance of sung tales (*pikono*) was previously associated with bachelor cults, a ritual complex in which boys were secluded and initiated into secrets regarding growth and attraction. They were guided by ritual specialists, who were considered the "husbands" of the female spirit. When such bachelor cults were functioning, the cult was one of the main settings for the performance of pikono, and the main characters were initiates in the cult, aided by the female spirit, just as actual initiates were aided by her "husbands."[3]

Further to the east, the journey undertaken is frequently that of a young man leaving home to court a young woman in a distant place. During the return trip to bring her home for marriage, they also encounter many challenges to this plan.

The stories are often highly entertaining. Josep Haip's amusing *enj* from the Karinj (Angal Heneng) area in Southern Highlands Province (Figure 11) includes his gestures highlighting a story about a man equipped with an outrageously elongated penis that eventually is cut down to manageable size.[4] Pita Tapuli (Figure 12) eloquently presented a Huli *bì té* concerning a handsome young man who outwits a cannibalistic male ogre and in the end ascends to the paradise-like sky world with the help of a beautiful sky woman.

3. Cf. Kirsty Gillespie and Lila San Roque, "Music and Language in Duna *Pikono*," in *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*, ed. Alan Rumsey and Don Niles (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 49–64; Kendoli, "Yuna *Pikono*"; Stewart and Strathern, "Duna *Pikono*."

4. Hans Reithofer, "Skywalkers and Cannibals: Chanted Tales among the Angal," in *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*, ed. Alan Rumsey and Don Niles (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 230.

4 Paulus Konts, one of the most talented performers of sung tales in the Ku Waru (Bo-Ung) area of Western Highlands, in 2004. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

5 Paulus Konts (*left*) and Paul Pepa, dressed for courting, at the opening of the sung tales workshop held in 2004. Konts learned Pepa's performance style from listening to him on the radio. They met for the first time at this workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

5. *Kange* refers to a type of story in which the narrated world is quite different from that of the narrator and audience. Such stories are usually told in a style similar to everyday speaking. *Tom* appears to be associated with ideas of "praise," "being loud," or "singling out." *Yaya* also seems to be associated with such a meaning, although it is also akin to some of the vocables used in performances of sung tales in the region. The Melpa name for sung tales is *kang rom*, a form obviously related to the Ku Waru form but lacking the *yaya* component. Source: Don Niles, "Structuring Sound and Movement: Music and Dance in the Mount Hagen Area" (PhD dissertation, Anthropology and Sociology, University of Papua New Guinea, 2011), 220–21.

6. Don Niles, "Metric Melodies and the Performance of Sung Tales in the Hagen Area," in *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form,Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*, ed. Alan Rumsey and Don Niles (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 294–96.

7. Terrance Borchard and Philip Gibbs, "Parallelism and Poetics in *Tindi* Narratives Sung in the Ipili Language," in *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*, ed. Alan Rumsey and Don Niles (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 173.

While plots tend to concentrate on long-established themes and characters, some composers/performers place characters in more contemporary settings, for example a journey from the highlands to the coast to bring back betel nut and sell it for great profit at a large gold mine. Composer/performer Paulus Konts from the Ku Waru (Bo-Ung) area of Western Highlands Province (Figures 4 and 13) casts himself as the main character of his story. In his *tom yaya kange*[5] sung tale, Peter Kerua (Figure 14) describes a more topical issue: the history of the tribal fighting that plagued his part of the Nebilyer Valley in Western Highlands Province for a number of years.[6]

One candidate in the national elections commissioned a particularly well-known performer, Paul Pepa (Figure 7), to compose a sung tale describing the candidate's journey to forge political alliances and gather support. Sung tales and their performance styles have also been used in some areas to present the Christian gospel or parts of the liturgy.

One of the important poetic features of sung tales is parallelism—that is, the repetition of a line of text with changes to some of the words. For example, compare the following pair of lines from a *tindi* performance in the Ipili language:[7]

iyu tunduni mindi yane okona mee keyea-ko
iyu yuu pokoli mindi yane okona mee keyea-ko

he climbed way up on a mountain that was there
he climbed way up on a ridge that was there

6 Alan Rumsey, the workshops' principal organizer, speaking to Paul Pepa during a coffee break in 2004. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

7 Paul Pepa, dressed for courting, ready to demonstrate his performance of Melpa *kang rom* at the 2004 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea

8 Teya Hiyawi, from the Duna (Yuna)-speaking area, performed *pikono* at the 2004 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

Or in the following lines from a Karinj or Angal Heneng *enj*:[8]

ten konwi saim umu tas ii hama-on pirisa la
ol konwi saim san ii hama-on pirisa la
nonak mari umu nonak ii hama-on pirisa la

the women [covered up] the pigs' faeces on the dance ground
the men [covered up] the dog's faeces on the dance ground
the mothers [covered up] the children's faeces on the dance ground

Performances frequently involve the repetition of certain formulaic phrases, allowing the performer to frame parts of the narrative but also take time to think through upcoming parts of the performance. While a general story may be repeated in different performances, no rendition is ever a precise repeat of a previous one because the details are all improvised.

Paul Pepa (c. 1959–2005) (Figures 5 through 7) was one of the best-known performers of sung tales, or *kang rom*, as they are known in his Melpa language, spoken by about 130,000 people in Western Highlands Province.[9] In 1980 he recorded one of his performances at the local radio station, Radio Western Highlands. While the performance of sung tales is traditionally only heard by a small group

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of people who happen to be gathered near a performer, the repeated broadcast of Pepa's performance in the 1980s presented his *kang rom* to a much larger number of listeners than had ever heard him before. He has also inspired a number of other singers to perform sung tales

8. Reithofer, "Skywalkers and Cannibals," 233. *Enj* is the general name for a type of story, similar to those described for Ku Waru *kange*. Most *enj* are told in a normal speaking voice.
9. For much more about Paul Pepa and his performances, see Niles, "Metric Melodies," 275–92; Niles, "Structuring Sound," 225–35.

9 Ru Kundil is not a performer, but a respected elder known for his knowledge of Melpa traditions. At the 2006 workshop, he offered insights into differences between past and present performing traditions of *kang rom* sung tales. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

10 Richard Alo offers his interpretive skills concerning Duna (Yuna) *pikono* at the 2006 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

in the same language or a closely related one. An excellent example is Paulus Konts (Figure 5), who learned, imitated, and now excels at performing sung tales in his own language, where they are called *tom yaya kange*.

Pepa's 1980 recording begins with an *amb kenan*[10] courting song—an unusual device, but perhaps fitting as a preface to his performance of the story of the man Miti Krai and the woman Ambra Rangmba, one of the most well-known tales in the Melpa-speaking region. Miti Krai and Ambra Rangmba are prototypes of a couple who marry because of personal preferences, despite the odds against them, yet who pay the consequences for doing so. Although Pepa's listeners are probably very familiar with this story, his command of the language, genre, and presentation is still regarded as masterful.

His *kang rom* begins as follows:[11]

1a. *mukl* *miti wö krai mel ni* *mukl miti rona murum a* *kopanda tömbön pint ngurum a*	**1a.** the man named Krai from Miti mountain lived on top of Miti mountain like a *tömbön* spear moving forward
1b. *el nöngön gu purum a* *pilin kumb pa nitim o* *könin kumb pa nitim a* *kae wamb kae namen a*	**1b.** like a *nöngön* arrow with blunt barbs "let's hear about it and see," they said "who are these nice people?"
2a. *nimba kumb kelipa purum a* *moklopa rang köndöröm mel o* *ambra okupuna kuta pint ka* *ndip to nonom kant o,*	**2a.** he said and finished his talk on top of the mountain he looked to the east to the sweet potato plantation of Ambra valley "I see a fire is coming up"
2b. *en mel nant nitim a* *könimb ama mbi nitim o* *tepam nga kang ni nto* *i kapulka wuu nitim o 6*	**2b.** "what's happening there? I must go and see" his father said "it's fine with me"

10. *Amb* literally means "woman, female," while *kenan* is a generic term for "song/dance"; hence, *amb kenan* are "songs/dances for women" (Niles, "Structuring Sound," 158).
11. Niles, "Metric Melodies," 285–86. Translated by Gomb Minimbi.

3a. *pilin kumb pa nitim a*
na mam nga ambokla ni nto
nam mba köndöröm konil o
pein piliken en nitim o

3a. "let's hear about it," he said
his mother said
"none of us ever go to that place
where do you want to go?"

3b. *nimba kumb kelipa purum o*
tepam nga kang ni nto,
i kapulka uis nitim a
kuntin nga wakl nökl o …

3b. she said and finished her talk
but his father said
"it's fine with me"
his *kuntin* stone axe …

Distinctive of the style of performance in this region, a melodic fragment is used to present the first four lines of the text (1a). The same melodic fragment is repeated for the second half-verse, but with some of its pitches shifted downwards (1b). Hence, the two half-melodies combine to produce one full melodic statement. Note that each line of Melpa text often ends in an extended *a* or *o*. These vocables do not add meaning to the story, but are necessary to fill out the lines of text to fit the melody. Such use of vocables is typical of Melpa song performances as well. The same two half-melodies are repeated over and over to present all 780 lines of text of the entire story in about sixteen minutes. Pepa's performance of the sung tale has a pulse of about 268 beats per minute—a very fast pace that challenges the creativity and endurance of the performer as well as the listening capabilities of the audience. Although recorded

11 Josep Haip from the Karinj (Angal Heneng) area performing an *enj* at the 2006 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

12 Pita Tapuli performed a Huli *bì té* at the 2006 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

almost thirty-five years ago, Pepa's performance continues to enthrall listeners because of his excellent poetic command of the language, very fast rendition, and superb overall presentation.

Gaining even a preliminary understanding of such a complex form has required the collaboration of performers, listeners, and specialists in fields such as linguistics, folklore, ethnomusicology, and anthropology. The more carefully we consider such performances, the greater our respect becomes for the practitioners. They must draw upon their intimate and thorough knowledge of various traditions, vocabulary, musical structure, and narrative development to present a performance that is appealing to everyone. Certainly they entertain, but they also educate listeners about important cultural aspects.

While some researchers have considered specific aspects of sung tales since their first published reference in the mid- to late 1960s, more focused, comparative research has only occurred much more recently. In particular, from 2003 to 2006, funding was received from the Australian Research Council to examine this genre more closely. Alan Rumsey (Figures 6 and 18 through 20) of Australian National University was the principal investigator for this project, which became an international collaboration

13 Paulus Konts after an exhausting performance of Ku Waru (Bo-Ung) *tom yaya kange* during the 2006 workshop. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

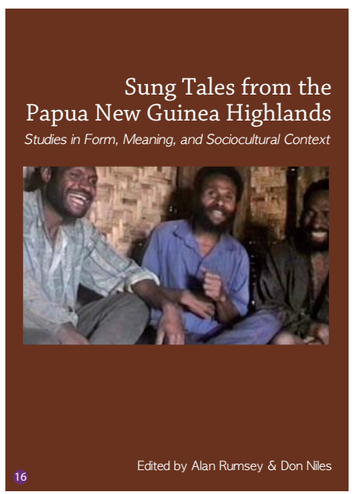
14 Peter Kerua's performance of Ku Waru (Bo-Ung) *tom yaya kange* at the 2006 workshop featured a different but related style to that of Paulus Konts. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

between researchers, authors, and performers from Papua New Guinea, Australia, USA, Germany, Malaysia, and New Zealand.

WORKSHOPS ON SUNG TALES

Two workshops have been held on the subject of sung tales, acknowledging the particular importance of the project and encouraging an appreciation of sung tales across the region. One took place in 2004 at the University of Goroka (Figures 5 through 8) and a second in 2006 at Kefamo, both in Eastern Highlands Province (Figures 9 through 15). Participants included established researchers, beginning students, performers, knowledgeable elders, linguists, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and historians, all intimately involved in various aspects of the research project.

Academic presentations and discussions on various aspects of sung tales were held in both English and Tok Pisin, the most widely spoken language in the country, so that everyone could benefit and participate as much as possible. There were also frequent performances of sung tales. In many cases this was the first opportunity for performers and researchers to learn about sung tales from outside their own regions of focus. Everyone was thrilled to work with intense consideration of the genre, which is traditionally little known or understood beyond a very limited area.



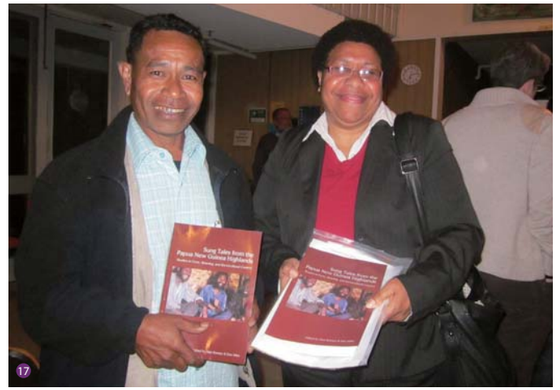
15 Participants at the 2006 workshop upon departure. Sitting/kneeling (*left to right*): Paulus Konts, Andrew Noma, Howard Halu, Alois Along, Joe Rex, Alan Rumsey, Richard Alo, Pita Tapuli, and Wapi Onga. Standing (*left to right*): Lewa Onga (baby), John Onga, Ru Kundil, Chris Haskett, Lila San Roque, Gomb Minimbi, Kirsty Gillespie, Snow Ru, Gabe C. J. Lomas, Philip Gibbs, Kenny Yuwi Kendoli, Hans Reithofer, Nick Modjeska, Nicole Haley, Josep Haip, Oliver Wilson, Ben Hall, Wan Minimbi, Don Niles, Peter Kerua, and Michael Sollis. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

16 Cover of the book *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands* (2011). © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

BOOK PUBLICATION

The workshops proved enlightening and stimulating for all participants. While the Australian Research Council project officially ended in 2006, it was strongly felt that the work on this subject must be more widely known. Because of their intimate performance setting, sung tales within Papua New Guinea are not known or appreciated very widely. Furthermore, sung tales have some similarities with other, more well-known epic storytelling traditions throughout diverse parts of the world, such as ancient Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Turkmenistan, Russia, Mongolia, Mali, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Korea.[12] Such reasons encouraged participants to find a way to further promote this genre. Work then began on preparing an edited volume on sung tales for eventual publication. The published volume appeared in 2011, with the title *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*, edited by Rumsey and Niles (Figure 16).[13]

12. See, for example: Karl Reichl, ed., *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music* (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 2000).



13. As an ANU E Press publication, the book is available as a printed book or for free download from the Internet: http://epress.anu.edu.au/sung_tales_citation.html. Also online are a supplementary PDF file, twenty-two audio files, and a short video. These materials provide multimedia access to many of the performances discussed in the article.

This publication was launched at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia, in 2011 (Figures 17 through 18) and at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in 2012 (Figures 19 through 20). These launches represent the importance of and interest in sung tales both internationally and locally. Perhaps as recognition of this international collaboration, particularly between Papua New Guinea and Australia, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Hon. Peter O'Neill, presented

17 Dr. Iinus digim'rina from the University of Papua New Guinea and Mrs. Jacinta Warakai-Manua from the Papua New Guinea High Commission at the book launch in Canberra, Australia, on 28 September 2011. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

18 Alan Rumsey (*right*) talking to one of the contributors, Gabe C. J. Lomas, and his wife at the Canberra book launch. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

a copy of the book to the Governor General of Australia, Her Excellency Ms. Quentin Bryce, when they met during an official visit late in 2011. While participants in the performances, research, workshops, and publications on sung tales are thrilled to have been able to share this wonderful tradition, there is much more to learn.

This study has focused on one particular type of oral tradition in Papua New Guinea. Although found in only one part of the country, it is performed by speakers of a number of different languages. Performers must be experts in many aspects of culture, but, in particular, they must be poets, entertaining listeners. Through the collaboration of performers, other cultural experts, and researchers, something of the special nature of this tradition has been learned, written about, and made available to anyone interested.

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However, it is also vitally important for younger people to develop the extraordinary skills necessary to ensure that sung tales continue to enchant generations in the future, skills that require outstanding ability as poets and musicians coupled with considerable stamina. In particular, such performers need to entertain and educate those who are fortunate enough to hear their tales.

19 The Papua New Guinea book launch took place on 8 August 2012. Attendees (*left to right*): Alan Rumsey (co-editor and researcher, Australian National University), Kirsty Gillespie (contributor, University of Queensland), Bernard Minol (official book launcher, University of Papua New Guinea), and Don Niles (co-editor and researcher, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies). © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

20 Alan Rumsey (*left*) with Gomb Minimbi, one of the expert translators who assisted in the sung tales project, at the 2012 book launch. © Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies

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Customary Law Is a Living Law

Steven Winduo

Customary law is a living law. It has a direct connection to the people.

—Mange Matui[1]

INTRODUCTION

Without customary law, our society would not have survived more than 50,000 years. Customary law has enabled our multicultural environment to structure, organize, and maintain itself through the test of time. The Underlying Law Act (2000) defines customary law as "the customs and usages of the indigenous inhabitants of the country existing in relation to the matter in question at the time when and the place in relation to which the matter arises, regardless of whether or not the custom or usage has existed from time immemorial."[2]

Customary law has been the source of strength, power, vitality, and inspiration to the people of Papua New Guinea since before the arrival of Europeans on its shores. With the arrival of Europeans came new laws, customs, norms, ways of life, and social-political order. These began a process of colonization that saw the replacement, alienation, and erasure of Papua New Guinea's native customary law. This essay seeks to recognize customary law, give it the privilege it deserves, and illustrate its connection to the people of the land.

1. Mange Matui (lecturer in law of jurisprudence at the University of Papua New Guinea), personal communication with author, 16 July 2013.
2. Underlying Law Act 2000 (No 13 of 2000).

PAPUA NEW GUINEAN WAYS

In the Preamble of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, it is clear that Papua New Guinean ways are privileged. In his book, *Foundations for Nationhood*, Bernard Mullu Narokobi elucidates the basic principle behind this goal, that Papua New Guineans are a people, a race, and a nation with worthwhile pursuits in the cultural ways that define them: "An emphasis on Papua New Guinean ways seeks to give encouragement to the discovering genius of our people."[3] Custom is recognized as one of the laws of the country under the Constitution. As Mange Matui, a lecturer focusing on law of jurisprudence at the University of Papua New Guinea, states, "Therefore, custom is the state law," which means, "Customary laws and the state laws both apply at the same time and control behaviors of a person in the society."[4]

The Constitution encourages us to develop ourselves through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social, political, and economic organization. What it appeals to is that in whatever way we do things and engage ourselves we must first look at what we already possess as our innate characteristics or abilities as a people with a long, deep ancestral foundation in this land. In our endeavors, we must keep in mind the following goals and principles:[5]

> The cultural, communal and ethnic diversity of our people is recognized as positive strength. There should be fostered a respect and appreciation for traditional ways of life and culture—including language—in all their richness and variety and a willingness to apply these ways dynamically and creatively for the tasks of development.

In 1983, the Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea published *Customary Law in Papua New Guinea: A Melanesian View*, edited by Richard Scaglion.[6] This publication was based on research data assembled on customary law practices in Papua New Guinea.

3. Bernard Mullu Narokobi, *Foundations for Nationhood* (Port Moresby: UPNG Press, 2010), 35.
4. Mange Matui, *The Handbook on Papua New Guinea Laws* (Port Moresby: UPNG Press, 2012), 1.
5. Narokobi, *Foundations for Nationhood*, 33.
6. Richard Scaglion (ed.), *Customary Law in Papua New Guinea: A Melanesian View* (Port Moresby: Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea, 1983).

University of Papua New Guinea student researchers worked in their home areas over their long vacations in either 1979-80 or 1980-81 and had this research published. For the first time, it became possible for students in different provinces to collect materials with relevance to customary law. The documentation project has proven that, if given the opportunity, our customary laws can help people see the importance of cultural mapping and documentation.

CUSTOM AND LAW IN MELANESIA

The more pronounced discussion on law and custom is in Narokobi's *Lo Bilong Yumi Yet: Law and Custom in Melanesia* (1989).[7] A starting point in his discussion is the general consideration of law in most Melanesian communities. Narokobi writes, "In discussing law in classical Melanesian, we are concerned about the ways of the people in their total environment, both physical and meta-physical, tangible and intangible, concrete and abstract."[8]

7. Bernard Mullu Narokobi, *Law Bilong Yumi Yet: Law and Custom in Melanesia* (Goroka and Suva: The Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service and the University of the South Pacific, 1989).

8. Ibid. 14.

1 Custom of bridal payments among the Nagum Boikens. © Steven Winduo

The discussion that Narokobi is making here arrests the notions we hold about law and its application in the conventional sense of the term. Narokobi cautions us from taking such a path in placing law in classical Melanesian societies:[9]

> But if the law is used to refer to 'specific social technique' which consists of the bringing about of the desired social conduct of man through the threat of a measure of coercion which is to be applied in case of contrary conduct, then we would prefer not to use the term 'law' and instead use the English approximations of fashion or the way of doing certain things to represent the law.

As a foundation, our laws must have a set of carefully described rules and key starting points for the proper conduct and way of doing things in society.

In his view, Narokobi leads us to regard law in Melanesian societies in a very specific way. He argues, "Law in modern states is seen as coercive power. It suggests punishment with a corollary of a promise of a reward. Good is rewarded with a place in heaven while evil is punished with damnation in hell."[10]

Law is understood here in the sense of doing and living life in the right way, within the bounds of what constitutes "good" rather than that which would lead to "bad" or negative characteristics. In typical Melanesian societies existence of law means that behavior, attitude, and manner are curtailed within the limits that define such qualities as being acceptable, ethical, and, above all, respectful of others. Narokobi discusses the burden of law in Melanesian societies as follows: "Melanesian societies existed without an independent idea of law or rule of law. Coercion or consequence flowing from human conduct were independent and ancillary to the inevitability of human survival without law."[11] Melanesian societies have their own ways of rewarding good and punishing evil without the need for modern law. Yet formal notions of law or justice regulate all modern states. Without them, societies face anarchy, complete chaos, and perpetual collapse.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. 15.

UNVEILING THE CURSE

For close to fifty years I lived with a family curse, the same curse affecting other siblings in my family. This curse was made through the utterance of a great maternal uncle (*wawo*, in Nagum Boiken language). The maternal uncles are the most powerful people in a person's life. Whatever they say or do affects one's life forever. Never make the maternal uncles curse you.

I did, or inadvertently did, by ignoring the concern of my great maternal uncle (my mother's eldest first cousin) that I did not compensate him for saving my life close to fifty years before.

I was about a year old when I crawled into the men's latrine pit. At that time my mother was with her parents in their hamlet known as Jonkwinumbo, within the greater sphere of the Kubalia village known as Ulighembi, perched atop the Prince Alexander Mountain Ranges of the East Sepik Province.

Florian Lihofi, my great maternal uncle and a venerated elder in my village, saved me from dying in the latrine pit. That day someone cried out that a child had crawled into the latrine. A woman cried in vain for someone to help rescue the child. Lihofi ran as quickly as he could

2 Settling a customary conflict in Ulighembi Village, East Sepik Province. © Steven Winduo

to the men's latrine, jumped into the shit-filled pit, and pulled me out before I sank into it. He jumped out, dashed to Yalim, the nearest river, and washed me clean from the shit and all the worms that covered my skin. Without his timely rescue, I would have been dead.

Uncle Lihofi saved my life. All this happened to me at an age when I remembered nothing. I have no memory of it. Even the story itself seemed unreal to me. Within me I know that such a thing happened, but the memory of it was never there for me to make sense of it.

As it turned out, since that moment I have journeyed out of the jungle hamlet into the modern cities of neon lights and skyscrapers, living a life of respect and meaning, earning a good salary, and enjoying a good life. It turned out the child saved had done well in life. It so happened that I have become what I am today, someone whom the world knows and appreciates.

It turned out I did not fail on my path to my goals. It turned out I did not become a drug addict, a criminal, a loser, or a bad person in society. It turned out I was not one of those people struggling in life. It turned out I was not someone who brought disrepute to my family, clan, tribe, or community. The life I had was and is full of blessings. I had completed all the degrees I needed in my field, had gotten married, and had raised children, grandchildren, a home, and all the material needs in life. The life I have now is full of rich and inspiring moments that I sometimes share with others in my life.

In spite of all these, though, I had to deal with the one person living a ghostly life within my conscience. That person was Lihofi. He complained that I had to compensate him for saving me. He heard of my visiting Wewak every now and then, but I failed to pay him my respects and compensate him for my life.

His utterances became a curse over my life and that of my younger siblings. On the day I cleared my mother's name after her passing, only one demand was left unattended to because I had refused to pay compensation to my great maternal uncle. My argument was that it was his duty as my maternal uncle (*wawo*) to do all he could to see me grow up, even at the cost of his own life. I reasoned that as a

result of that cultural expectation there was no need to compensate my wawo for what he had done.

I was wrong. My refusal enraged Lihofi to the point of becoming incensed. His utterance became a curse on all of my mother's children. We began to experience all kinds of misfortunes and missed opportunities. Many times we found our lives taking the wrong turns and moving away from the correct paths. Some of us felt that Lihofi was unreasonable in cursing everyone. The cultural reasoning, though, is that as the first born child of my mother, I shouldered the blame that affected others behind me by birth.

I took the opportunity on 16 February 2014 to lift the veil or curse on me and my family. Before my arrival in Ulighembi, I had sent word to my great uncle Lihofi that I would compensate him for what he had done to save my life less than fifty years before. I arrived in Ulighembi from Wewak on the date mentioned with a truck-load of family members and relatives. We sorted out the money at my paternal uncle's hamlet, where my paternal/maternal uncles (*wawo/ngus*) and brothers/cousins (*niumi/mandes*) also contributed toward the compensation, which was described as a "soap and towel" to wash himself clean from the shit and filth that had covered him when he had saved my life from the latrine in Jonkwinumbo Hamlet.

The event took place at my great uncle's hamlet and ceremonial ground, known as Helisoho, along the Sepik Highway. Speeches were made to explain the event, and as tradition dictates, all sides were in agreement with the compensation. We shook hands before Lihofi spit-sprayed all my family members with the secret bark he had brought out for the occasion. He was sorry for cursing us and hoped that our paths would become clear from then onward.

I am taking the time to explain this event and its significance because so many times we forget to honor our tradition and customary obligations. Our people still live the way our ancestors lived thousands of years ago. Our traditions will continue to be part of our lives.

CONTEMPORARY MELANESIAN JURISPRUDENCE

The challenge Narokobi issues in his work is for the indigenous jurists and scholars to construct a contemporary Melanesian jurisprudence. How is this possible? What are the elements that are intrinsic to such a construction? Is it possible to identify concepts of law in Melanesian societies that are clear foundations for the development of a Melanesian jurisprudence? The challenges Narokobi makes are important in our considerations. "Contemporary Melanesian jurisprudence," according to Narokobi, "is neither the 'pure' classical Melanesian jurisprudence, nor an adoption of an Anglo-Australian jurisprudence. It is a combination of the classical and the contemporary or the new ideas, whatever their sources or origins."[12] It is a consistent occurrence and observation of rules that are universal in nature among the Melanesians. Sometimes classical Melanesian jurisprudence exists in the primordial past without making sense to the present. Yet that same law is conceptualized in new ways, taking on board the new and old, the introduced and the practiced jurisprudence that insists on serving as the basis of a new Melanesian jurisprudence.

Narokobi proceeds to the consideration of the cultural basis for Melanesian jurisprudence. The following socio-cultural units form the basis of "law" in non-Melanesian terms: "There must be a community of people living within a reasonably well-defined territory,"[13] where there is a sense of common identity and recognition. In other words: "Various elements of social units form the basis for recognizing common origins, sharing of common values, and usually (not always) sharing a common language and space."[14]

CUSTOMARY LAW IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Many Papua New Guinean societies share similarities and common perspectives of what law is in Melanesia. One of the conclusions derived from the research on customary law in Papua New Guinea is that broad similarities exist in procedure rather than substantive law. As Scaglion notes, "The specifics of land law vary widely from culture to culture."[15] Land is communally owned and there is

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. 18.
14. Ibid.
15. Scaglion, *Customary Law in Papua New Guinea.*

rarely total alienation of land, especially where usufruct rights are concerned,[16] which "may be granted in virtual perpetuity as long as users hold to the original terms of agreement. . . . In general, multiple rights in land are recognized in customary law: firewood gathering rights, fishing or hunting rights, rights of thoroughfare, etc."[17] Land rights remain with each family, clan, or tribe. Each community agrees on who owns the land, uses it, and has access to it in whatever activities are carried out on the land.

CUSTOMARY LAW IN NAGUM BOIKEN SOCIETIES

The Nagum Boiken societies in the Wewak-Kubalia area of East Sepik Province have their own customs that form the foundation of traditional laws known as indigenous jurisprudence. Our discussion takes the model that Raymond Kamanabi developed to document customary law practice among the Amahop (Balif) Arapesh of East Sepik Province.[18] The broad areas of discussion include land, ownership and property, authority and power, ritual life, sex and prohibited relationships, family law, housing and residence, social obligations, and dispute settlement.

Land

Among the Nagum Boikens, land is the source of strength and vitality in the lives of those who live on it. Land ownership remains with each family and clan. Land is owned under the lineage line: "There is no individual ownership except in the case where a man had cleared away a section of the land for the first time without the help from other relatives."[19] There is of course joint ownership of other pieces of land under various lineages or communal affiliations: "The latter actually applies to land communally owned such as hunting grounds, for instance."[20]

16. "Usufruct," in Roman law, means the right of using and taking the fruits of something belonging to another. It was understood to be given for the life of the receiver, the usufructuary, unless a shorter period was expressed, and then it was to be restored to the owner in as good condition as when it was given except for ordinary wear and tear. See Mick Woodley (ed.), *Osborn's Concise Law Dictionary*, 11th edition (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 2009), 427.
17. Ibid. viii.
18. Raymond Kamanabi, "Amahop (Balif) Arapesh, East Sepik," in *Customary Law in Papua New Guinea: A Melanesian View*, Richard Scaglion (ed.) (Port Moresby: Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea, 1989), 8-23.
19. Richard Scaglion, "Seasonal Patterns in Western Abelam Conflict Management Practices," PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1976: 9-13.
20. Ibid.

In the land tenure system among the Nagum Boikens, permission must be sought and granted from the head of the family before anyone carries out activities on the land: "Customary laws govern the ownership and use of customary land in the country. The land is communally owned by a clan or a tribe, but individual members of these groups have right of use. After their use, the land goes back to the ownership of the group."[21]

Ownership and Property

Like the Arapesh, the Nagum Boikens consider "exclusive rights to ownership and use of songs and names" as belonging "to the lineage or clan concerned," with permission sought before any performance: "Names here do not mean the names of individuals, but rather the names of clans—for instance, the wama clan (or *pisin*), *wama* meaning the white cockatoo."[22] The Nagum Boikens are also particular with names of individuals, especially in selecting and naming children

21. Matui, *Handbook on Papua New Guinea Laws*, 44.
22. Kamanabi, "Amahop (Balif) Arapesh, East Sepik," 10-11.

3 It is customary for boys and men to make *sago* (palm starch) on traditional Nagum Boiken land. © Steven Winduo

within the family line. When disagreements on naming rights occur, the name in question is immediately withdrawn. When a name is given by someone outside of the family line, a certain payment is executed at the time of naming. Without observing such practices, the turn of events in the lives of all those concerned can have tragic endings or misfortunes.

In terms of personal and family property, there are general rules to follow. Personal items such as clothes, gardening tools, weapons, and personal hygiene products remain the same in many Melanesian societies. In terms of ownership of items with family value and properties belonging to the family, a certain degree of communal sharing is involved: "The land owning groups also have economic rights such as spiritual rights and cultural rights."[23]

Power and Authority

The construction of power and authority in Nagum Boiken societies is complex and abstract in a lot of senses. In terms of law and its application in the interplay of power and authority, the Nagum Boikens observe the same general trends as many Melanesian societies. Leadership in the Arapesh societies is "in the hands of influential big men and not all the big men . . . succession to leadership is one of achievement and it is not ascribed."[24]

Each of the specific areas in ritual life such as *holombo* (initiation), *piangangi* (menstruation), pregnancy and childbirth (*yali le* and *nien hala*), sorcery and witchcraft, death, hunting, and deviance has specific laws that define what to do and what not to do and direct people to follow a certain path and way of participation. The laws of the Nagum Boikens are lodged within their own cultural institution such that even modern ways have a hard time disrupting the continuity of much of the ritual life in the village environments.

Family Law

Even in the areas of sex and prohibited relationships, the Nagum Boikens are very specific and strict on observation of rules of conduct and ways in which men and women, boys and girls, uncles and aunts, father and daughters, and mothers and sons relate to each other, talk to each other, and position themselves in regards to each other. Similarly, issues of family law in Nagum Boiken societies are determined through the process of observing the culturally accepted rules of conduct and managing family life. The Nagum Boikens are very clear and specific about issues such as age and parental consent when it comes to marriage, bride-wealth, dissolution of marriage, sexual rights, polygamy and polyandry, and adoption.

23. Matui, *Handbook on Papua New Guinea Laws,* 44.
24. Kamanabi, "Amahop (Balif) Arapesh, East Sepik," 12.

4 Settling a customary obligation between a powerful village elder, Florian Lihofi, and the author in Ulighembi Village, Kubalia District, East Sepik Province. © Steven Winduo

CO-EXISTENCE OF LAWS

In general, customary law co-exists with introduced Western law, but these are often not compatible: "Western law is generally seen as autonomous, separate to other areas of life. Traditional Melanesia,

on the other hand, took an all-encompassing view of life. Law or custom was simply the way things worked and was dictated by the environment, the elders, and the spirits. That is, "law and moral religion and spirituality, economics, politics and government were practiced as a single system."[25] In the Melanesian worldview, customary law plays a central role in keeping the system together and functional in all societies. Without customary law, Melanesian systems of organization and structured relations would be impossible.

CONCLUSION

Our discussion of customary law as a living law with a direct connection to the people is short to the point of including a few areas of interest at this time. Much research is needed to cover all aspects of customary law as it applies to our case in Papua New Guinea. The importance of customary law is expressed in the Constitution, given statutory recognition in the Underlying Law Act and the Customary Law Act of Papua New Guinea.

25. Owen Cox, *Papua New Guinea Laws and Legal System* (Port Moresby: Pacific Adventist University, 2004), 18.

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Heliaki: The Symbolic Depiction of Life and Living in Tonga

Afuha'amango and Ongo'alupe Taumoepeau

Uisa e huelo Kamo e la'a
'O folatefua he fala 'o Ata
Lea e tangata'i he Vai ko Puna
Matapa 'o Nakau He kolofonua

Mahiki e maama 'i Matangimalie
Mata mahina 'i he 'otu palanite
Niu Sauele 'i 'Aositelelia
'Univesiti he 'otu matiketika

(Oh the Ray flickering, the sun beckons
Thus calls the assembly at the Fala 'o Ata
(the sandy beach at Kolovai village)
The man of Vai ko Puna speaks
The Gate of Nakau, the fortress

The light ascended in Matangimalie
Viewing the moonrise amongst other planets
New South Wales, in Australia
Amongst the scholars of the university)[1]

Editor's Note: Queen Salote Tupou III of Tonga (1900-1965) was not only a beloved monarch but a gifted and celebrated composer and poet of over one hundred songs, lullabies, laments, and dances. The poetry of the late Queen Salote discussed here is from the memory of the authors, who, like many Tongans, are intimately acquainted with the oral tradition and can quote long pieces from memory. However, published sources of Queen Salote's works can be found in the footnote below for comparison.[2]

1. "Hiva 'o 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata." *Heliaki,* or indirect expression, is used in this composition. The song was composed in the late 1990s by Rev. Dr 'Ahio (now the president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, a chief too, and the head of the Ha'a Ngata). 'Ahio composed this song to celebrate Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, who had at the time almost completed his second MA degree in international relations at Bonn University, Australia. The Prince is now the current king of Tonga. It is very important here that in the Tongan tradition, a commoner cannot compose a *ta'anga* or song to praise the royalties. It has to be a chief. The knowledge of the history, important places to the royalties, and royal connections to others are with the chiefs only.
2. See *Salote Tupou Queen of Tonga III, Songs & Poems of Queen Salote*, translated by Melenaite Taumoefolau, edited by Elizabeth Wood-Ellem (Nuku'alofa: Vava'u Press, 2004) and Adrienne Kaeppler, *Poetry in Motion: Studies of Tongan Dance* (Nuku'alofa: Vava'u Press and EWC PIDP, 1993).

INTRODUCTION

Heliaki, a prominent feature of most Tongan literary compositions, is more than mere metaphorical allusion and evasiveness; it is the figurative code for the Tongan natural propensity for indirectness, their espousal of societal mores of self-effacement and subjugation to their superiors, and their obvious scorn for self-assertion and forwardness. Indirectness typifies relationships in Tonga between the rulers and the ruled, between elders and their juniors, and between people of authority and those they lead. It contributes to the perpetuation of the hierarchical society and scoffs at directness as self-aggrandizement and disdain. Heliaki, therefore, at its basis, is considered the symbolic depiction of life and living in Tonga.

HELIAKI IN ITS NASCENCY

Unbeknownst to all, the birth of the first Tu'i Tonga (TT, King of Tonga), 'Aho'eitu, was instantaneously coupled with the birth of the rhetorical heliaki, the archetypal depiction of how Tongans related to their king, whose personage was deified and revered as having descended from Tangaloa, God of the Skies. The sacredness of this celestial personage preempted any direct reference to his exalted being. Mere mortals, obeying mandates of society, could not look at his countenance, nor touch him, nor address him directly. Any contact with this demigod mandatorily had to be done through intermediaries, the Falefa clan, or specially designated spokesmen for the kings who descended together with 'Aho'eitu from the heavens. Thus began the priming of evasiveness and indirectness as the underpinnings binding all facets of Tonga's social interactions and relationships throughout the ages. As denoted in the late Queen Salote Tupou III's *lakalaka* composition,[3] "Takafalu" (Behind Royalty):

Ne kamata 'ia 'Aho'eitú (It began with 'Aho'eitu)
Afe he tuliki Fonuamotú (Turning at the bend to Fonuamotu)
Tu'u mo e tapa 'i 'Ahaú (Conjoining the edge at 'Ahau)
Piliote 'i Pangai e fa'ú (At Pangai, halting all designs)

Some of the most vivid examples of heliaki as embodiment of

3. *Lakalaka* is a choreographed poem performed by rows of dancers whose choreographed movements accompany the sung lyrics of the poem.

the relationship between royalty and their subjects are lucidly illustrated in the stories of Momo, 10th Tu'i Tonga, and his son and successor, Tu'i Tātui, 11th Tui Tonga. Legends tell of a request from Momo to a wealthy man of great wisdom, substance, and influence, Lo'au, Tu'i Ha'amea (King of Ha'amea), presumably a foreigner, for a *konga pulopula* (piece of yam seedling) to propagate. In reply, Lo'au stated, *"Kuo fena e ta'ú. Ke i mula e ta'ú."* ("The harvest is sprouted. The harvest is premature.") Then came Momo's proverbial pronouncement, *"Fena pe ka ko Nua."* ("Although sprouted, it is Nua.") In this sense, Nua as a heliaki refers indirectly to the young girl, who has "sprouted" (i.e, already been with child) as being still "fresh" and attractive. Language of the yam cycle is used as a heliaki to refer to the delicacy of a young woman's fertility.

This legendary exchange between Momo and Lo'au embodies the quintessence of the heliaki, the coding of language to avoid directness and effrontery. That is, while Momo superficially appeared to be asking for a piece of seedling, he was in truth seeking a consort from the daughters of Lo'au. Lo'au's reply also is typical of Tongans' self-denigration and humility before their monarch. When stating, "The harvest has sprouted. The harvest is premature," Lo'au was not simply clothing the facts in figurative language, that his eldest daughter had already "sprouted" (having previously given birth to a child) and that his younger daughter was still too young; he was, in addition, symbolically denying that any daughters of his were worthy of His Majesty.

Momo's epiphanic retort, "Although sprouted, it is Nua," attests to his great wisdom as a leader who apparently prized the value of the potential relationship with Nua more than any concern for his own pride or self-gratification. This was poignant, especially because in Tongan society women's virginity was highly prized and one of the most sought-after virtues in a potential wife. It could be deduced from this story that Momo's quest for Nua was a strategic move to create an alliance with one of the most powerful men in the kingdom so as to strengthen his sovereignty. In addition, he undoubtedly desired royal scions who would inherit their grandfather's prowess, wisdom, and valor, which indeed came to fruition when Nua gave birth to his son. Tu'i Tātui, the 11th

Tu'i Tonga, was extolled throughout the ages for his extraordinary achievements, such as can still be witnessed to this day in the Ha'amonga 'a Maui trilithon, Tonga's Stonehenge.[4]

Traditionally, marriages in Tonga, especially among royalty and nobility, were designed to form unions that would add the greatest possible value in terms of power, position, and wealth, thus emboldening the social status of those involved. In the case of Tu'i Tātui, it is said his kinsfolk, when presenting anything before him, would do so seated on the ground a distance away with burdens on their shoulders; they would then inch forward in their sitting positions with their backs to the king, denoting their respect and deference to their monarch. This practice of keeping distance, not addressing royal personages directly, showed submission and acquiescence and would become encoded as heliaki when their stories were recounted through the arts.

HELIAKI EMBLAZONED IN TONGAN FOLKLORE

A classic example of how heliaki is emblazoned in Tongan folklore is the story of how the shell of the mythical Sangone, a turtle reputedly of divine origin belonging to the royal family, was finally recovered after having disappeared for decades. In brief, oral history tells that Sangone was stolen by Samoans, who killed the turtle, ate it, and buried the shell at the bottom of a Samoan mountain range. This incident was witnessed by a young man, Lāfai, who was cursed by the perpetrators to remain dwarfish until the shell of Sangone was discovered. Lāfai, who became known as Lāfaipana (Lāfai the Dwarf), thus remained small in stature yet surpassed all his compatriots in years. It so happened, however, that Fasi'apule, half-brother of Tu'i Tātui, was sent on a quest to find what had happened to Sangone. This he accomplished through what became known in Tongan oral traditions as the "Kisu Kava mei Ha'amoa" (Kava Riddles from Samoa). Fasi'apule, well-versed in Tongan heliaki, asked of the bewildered Samoans several items that no one could tell except for the ancient Lāfaipana, who had kept the secret of Sangone's demise to himself for fear of death. Each of Fasi'apule's riddles shown below is a classic example of heliaki in daily use:

4. The Ha'amonga 'a Maui is a large stone trilithon similarly consisting of three large coral slabs in a post-lintel style of construction. The Ha'amonga 'a Maui is a significant site of cultural heritage in relation to the ancient Tu'i Tonga.

Fūfū mo kokohu (dust rising from clapping cupped hands): scraped kava stem left long in the attic that emits dust when retrieved.
Kau pōngia ʻi vao (bunch fainting in the bush): an over-ripe bunch of plantains still hanging on the plant in the bush.
Lou tāngía mo kokī (leaf that saps and screeches): young shoots of the taro leaves that sap and make a screeching sound when picked.
Kapakau tatangi (singing wings): a young, wild chicken whose wings whistle when fluttering.
Ngulungulu mo tokoto (growling while at rest): a giant pig that can no longer walk and just lies around waiting for its turn to be of use.

What is of even greater significance than the ingenuity exhibited in the coding of the language, however, is the depth of meaning and value infused in the allusions. *Kava teletele* (scraped kava stem), for instance, is usually what the nobility would present at kava ceremonies. This is emblematic of the reciprocal relationships expected between the nobility and their people, between king and subjects, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and so on. Of similar value also is the symbolism involved in the references made to food items in this context, for it is mostly through food Tongans display their respect and generosity. Expatriates often are baffled by the magnanimity, or as some would say, profligacy, but when Tongans make food presentations, the consideration is not for what is needed. Instead, the size of the presentation is symbolic of the love, respect, and high regard the givers have for those receiving. Hence, the taro leaves, chicken, and plantain in Fasi'apule's heliaki could not be fully appreciated without full knowledge and understanding of the cultural values and relational underpinnings couched in these otherwise very plain and common words.

ASCENSION OF THE QUEEN OF HELIAKI

Her Majesty, the late Queen Salote Tupou III, stands unrivaled to this day as the Master of the Art of Heliaki. Her compositions are distinguished by the depth and breadth of her knowledge and understanding of Tongan history, culture, and traditions and how ingeniously she interweaved these into the compacted heliaki rhetoric of her compositions. In her classic *lakalaka* (Tonga's grand

performance and part of the world's recognized intangible cultural heritage), a composition re-enacting the story of Sangone, she ostensibly begged Lāfai as follows:

Lāfai Pana ē peʻi mohe a (Oh, Lāfai Pana, rest in peace)
Ka e tuku mai ā siʻota faiva (Gift me our trades, the arts)
Keu lau folahaka he ʻahó ni (I will today talk choreography and perform)
Ke meʻite ai e muʻa taloni (To entertain those at the throne)

This purported request by her late Majesty for the "gift of the arts" was her indirect way of signifying the confidence that she could then assume the role of "Master of the Heliaki," a title presumably attributed to Lāfaipana, the dwarf featured in the story of Sangone. In the friendly repartee between Fasi'apule and Lāfai recounted earlier, it appeared Lāfai won the heliaki contest. It is said that in response to Fasi'apule's requests, Lāfai demanded a *pununga ke fakamāfana ai ʻa ʻene lupe* (a nest where his pigeon could be warmed), as that would be his last night alive. Once Sangone's shell was uncovered, he would die. Fasi'apule and his retinue, thinking Lāfai needed a warm bed for the night, presented him with a bed of mats and a huge roll of tapa cloth as covering. Lāfai snickered inwardly as what he was asking for was a young lady for him to sleep with as that night would be his last. Thus, Lāfai won.

Nonetheless, according to oral traditions, Sangone's shell was retrieved and Lāfai was buried where Sangone's shell had been hidden for years. Sangone's shell was gathered up and wrapped in a finely woven *kie* (Samoan fine mat), which is still kept at the royal palace to this day and referred to simply as *Hau ʻo Momo* (Momo's Tribute). This was simply one of the many gifts Fasi'apule and his entourage brought back from Samoa as peace offerings for the death of Sangone.

Unlike Lāfai, however, whose use of heliaki seemed restricted to poetry and stylized oratory, her late Majesty delved into the art of choreography and performance as well. As a *punake* (poet, choreographer, and musician rolled into one), her use of heliaki was pronounced. She insisted the text, choreography, and music always be harmoniously fused to create the exhilarating impact Tongans proudly refer to as *tau e langi* (that reaches the sky). Her late Majesty was famed

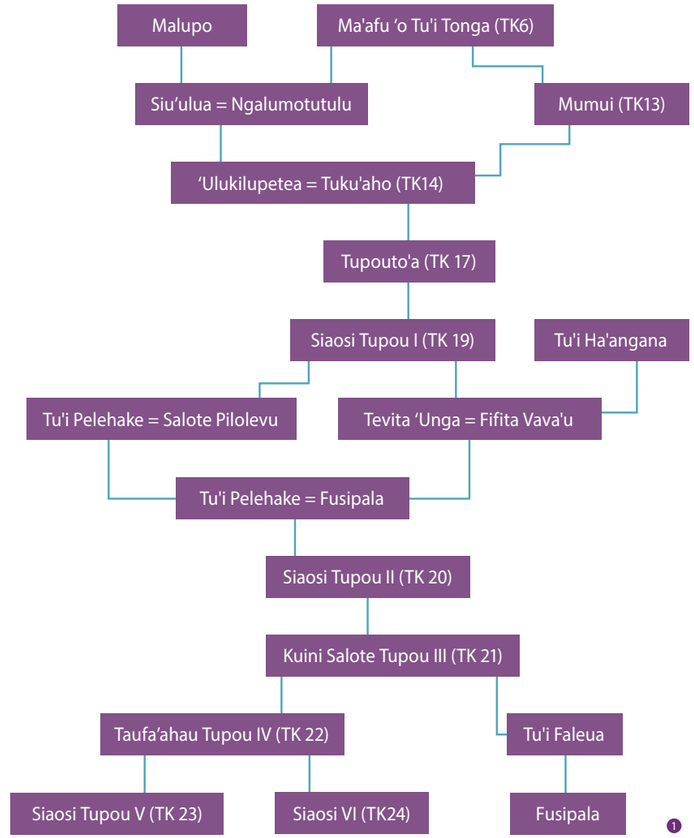
for her insistence on the mellifluous blending of the lyrics with the melody and the choreography. Indeed, she would not commission any of her compositions to be performed unless she was pleased that the lyrics, melody, and choreography had been seamlessly integrated. Hereunder are presented a few short examples of the masterful use of heliaki by her late Majesty.

In a special lullaby composed for Princess Fusipala Tauki'onetuku, daughter of the late Prince Tu'ipelehake, the late queen declared:

> *Va'inga he 'ulu toa 'o Lea'aetohí* (Frolicking among the pine trees at Lea'aetohi)
> *'Eva loto Hā'ano mo e Vao Falahola* (Traversing central Ha'ano and the grove of red pandanus)
> *Fēfē si'i maile hako 'ihe Halatoa* (What of the maile blooming at Halatoa [pine- flanked road])

In these lines, the late queen adroitly uses heliaki to trace the royal pedigree of Princess Fusipala. That she "frolics among the pine trees at Lea'aetohi" is indication she is a lady of Lea'aetohi, the estate opposite the royal palace at Pangai, Ha'apai. That she is descended from Tu'i Ha'angana (King of the Ha'angana clan), Paramount Chief of Hā'ano, is made evident in the statement "traversing central Hā'ano and the grove of small fragrant red pandanus." However, the following discussion is centered on the third line, "What of the maile blooming at Halatoa (pine-flanked road)," an indirect reference to 'Uiha, residence of 'Malupō', Paramount Chief of 'Uiha and an ancestor of Princess Fusipala. This ancestral line is outlined in Figure ①.

As depicted, Fusipala's relationship to Malupō spans eleven generations and involves nine kings of the Tu'i Kanokupolu line, many nobles, and various other chiefs and prominent figures. This crucial part of Tonga's history is artfully wrapped in a single line of heliaki that the late queen had unequivocally intended for the instruction and learning of her people.

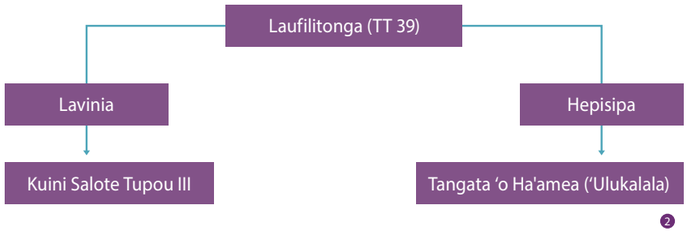


Her late Majesty's desire to instruct all, both Tongans and expatriates, of Tonga's history, relationships, and cultural heritage was again made explicit in her lamentations at the passing of 'Ulukālala Ha'amea, as follows:

> *Ha'amea ē teu lea* (Alas, Ha'amea, I will speak)
> *Ke ma'u ha 'ilo 'a e solá* (That the stranger may take heed)
> *Mo e to'utupu 'o e kuongá* (And Tonga's young perceive)
> *He'eta fetaulaki he tapá* (How at the edge we meet)

① Genealogy of Fusipala as a descendant of Malupō, Paramount Chief of 'Uiha.

The "edge"' referenced above by her late Majesty is Laufilitonga, the thirty-ninth and last of the Tu'i Tonga royal line. Her late Majesty and 'Ulukalala Ha'amea both descended from two daughters of Laufilitonga, as shown in Figure ②:



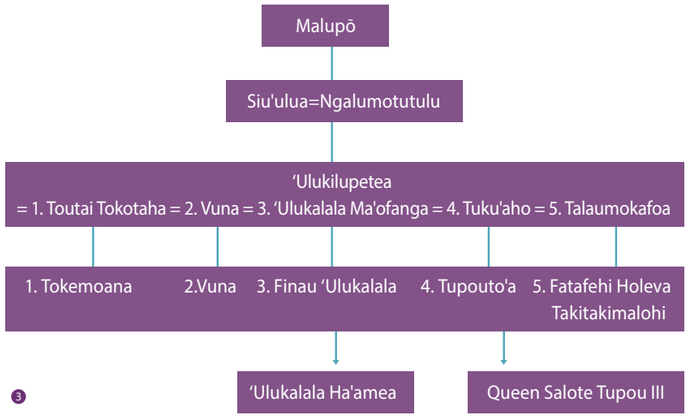
② Later in this same lamentation, her extreme dexterity at encapsulating history and delineating relationships in heliaki is vividly displayed in the following lines:

> *Ta afe atu 'i 'Uihá* (Let us turn to 'Uiha)
> *Veimapu mo Faime'alava* (Veimapu and Faime'alava)
> *Ke ke mu'omu'a ki he Tou'á* (You will lead to the Tou'a [Seat of the Kava mixers])
> *Kau muimui ki he Olovahá* (I will follow to the "Olovaha" [Royal Seat of the Honored Guest])

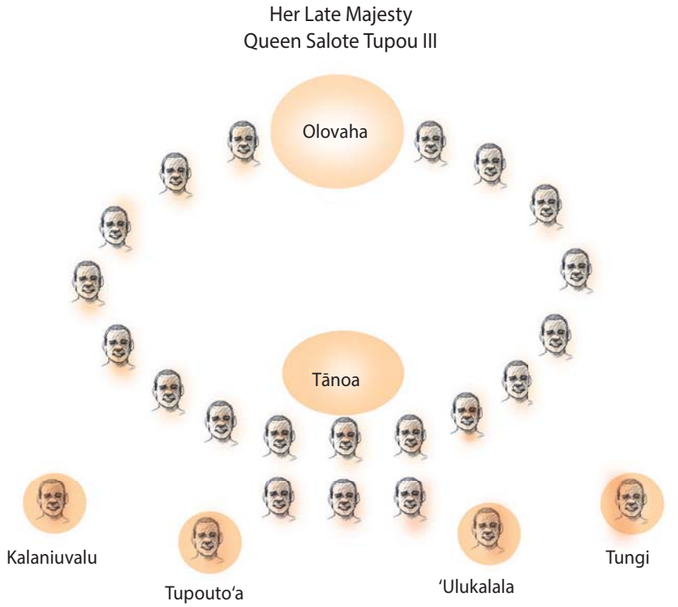
Far from being whimsical, the late queen's entreaty that they "turn on the shores of 'Uiha" seems a deliberate strategy to divulge how she and 'Ulukalala relate to each other in terms of their 'Uiha origin. Both are descendants of 'Ulukilupetea, granddaughter of Malupō, Paramount Chief of 'Uiha. The story of 'Ulukilupetea, nicknamed "Keteni Tabua" (Ivory Womb), is one of the most distinctive in Tonga's history because 'Ulukilupetea had given birth to five different royal personages, planting seeds in all three royal lineages and bequeathing a legacy unmatched in recorded history. However, an entire book could be written on that story alone or typically on any few lines of heliaki by the late Queen Salote Tupou III, because in each line is embedded a cornucopia of history, tales, filial relationships and propriety, and instructions in matters of protocol, customs, traditions, and culture.

② How the late Queen Salote III meets Tangata o Ha'amea at the "Edge."

As portrayed in Figure ③, 'Ulukalala is the descendant of an elder sibling to the one from which the late queen was descended. Hence, he will "lead," but he'll head straight to his seat beyond the Tou'a (Seat of the Kava Mixers) while the queen will "follow" because she is descended from a younger sibling. However, since she is the highest sovereign being, she will head directly to the Olovaha (Royal Seat of the Honored Guest). Figure ④ is a depiction of where the late queen would be seated at the head or Olovaha as Royal Guest of Honor and where 'Ulukalala would be positioned beyond the Tou'a. Quite shrewdly, the late queen exhibited both acuity and subtlety in these brief lines of heliaki, briefly acknowledging 'Ulukalala's seniority in their 'Uiha connection, but then immediately asserting her own superiority because ultimately all submit to the queen.



③ Her Majesty, the late Queen Salote's, and 'Ulukalala's origin in 'Uiha.



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While heliaki is manifested in references to chiefly garlands, landmarks, royal residences, and so forth, something of even greater significance is worth mentioning at this point. One of the renowned *punake* in Tonga, the late Ma'umatāpule, asserted heliaki evoked deep patriotism and a sense of pride, especially during occasions of *fetau* (oratorical ripostes). At such times, every punake traditionally contested his superiority, until her late Majesty emerged; then, all conceded she was "Master of the Heliaki" because of the extent of her knowledge and understanding and the depth of her passion for Tonga, its history, and its cultural heritage.[5]

HELIAKI AS DEPICTION OF THE NEW MORAL CODES

Following the advent of Christianity in Tonga, according to a renowned punake, the late Semisi 'Iongi, heliaki was used to depict the new dress and moral codes, especially for women, promulgated by the missionaries and enforced by the Tongan government under its newly developed constitution. The creation of a *ta'anga* (literary composition) then became likened to the dressing of a woman. The body needed to be fully clothed, with covering from neck to ankles, leaving the beholder to wonder, to yearn, and to conjecture as to what lay beneath. Any embellishment needed to be of the right mix and proportion. Mere ostentation without depth was scorned as gaudiness. Care was taken that language and diction be fragrant and non-repellent, like scented oil, the daily emollient for young Tongan ladies. Ornamental overlays, like the *ta'ovala* (mat worn around the waist as outer skirt), were crucial to add depth and to avoid being readily exposed. The ultimate aim was to clothe a woman with dignity and respect, rendering her highly desirable yet almost inaccessible. Similarly, heliaki was used to produce the same effects, tantalizing yet challenging, with meaning so deeply entrenched it would require real effort to unravel all of the inherent nuances. Like nudity for women, compositions that lay bare the facts are traditionally despised as not worthy of public observance.[6]

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated, heliaki came naturally to the Tongan because it was part and partial of his cultural molding. Indirectness was his cultural inheritance, bequeathed to him by generations of his forbearers since antiquity. Evasiveness was key for maintaining social equilibrium and integrity. To be direct was to become an outcast, an alien in his homeland. To state one's worth bluntly, though honestly, was impudent, and to assume equality with others of higher rank was to commit personal affront. Humility, contrastingly, is publicly demonstrated through self-denial and self-debasement in acknowledgement of the superior rank of others more highly placed in society. Heliaki, then, was the conduit through which Tongans could express themselves appropriately, implicitly exposing their deeply held feelings and beliefs without the risk of insolence and social suicide.

5. M. Matapule, interviewed by V.A. Taumopeau, 3 August 1989.

6. S.'Iongi, interviewed by V.A. Taumoepeau, 23 June 1984.

4 Depiction of Royal Kava Circle.

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Sakau: Gift of Gods and Root of Pohnpei

Bill Jaynes

Sakau is always something that all Pohnpeians understand. It has its own power, and it is highly respected by those that most people respect.

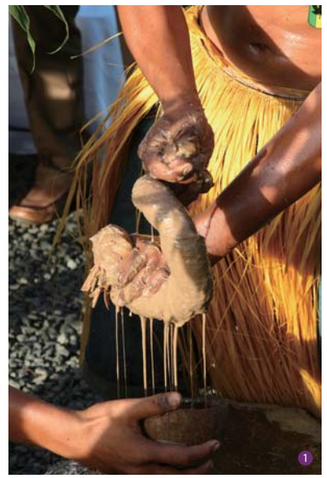
—The Nahnken of Nett[1]

INTRODUCTION

Nothing is as symbolic of the traditional culture of Pohnpei as *sakau*, or *kava*, as it is known in many parts of Polynesia. The coconut shell cup from which sakau is drunk appears on the state flag and on the official seal of the governor of Pohnpei. Islanders from the other three states of the Federated States of Micronesia, not to mention Pohnpeians themselves, will universally identify sakau use as the distinguishing feature and centerpiece of life in Pohnpei.

Pohnpeian sakau is prepared from the roots of the kava plant (*Piper methysticum*), a relative of the plant found in New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The plant was once widely used throughout Polynesia—especially Tonga, Hawaii, and Fiji—as a ceremonial drink, just as it still is on Pohnpei. The drink, prepared from the crushed roots of the plant pounded and squeezed through hibiscus bark, is sipped from a coconut half-shell. The kava lactones in the roots provide a relaxing narcotic effect on the body while leaving thought processes crystal clear.

1. Michael J. Balick and Roberta A. Lee, *The Ethnobotany of Pohnpei—Plants, People and Island Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 175.



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2. "On the Sakau Trail," College of Micronesia, http://www.comfsm.fm/socscie/sakautrail.htm.
3. Ibid.
4. Rufino Mauricio, personal communication with author, 6 April 2014.
5. L. Bernart, *The Book of Luelen*, trans. and ed. by J. L. Fischer, S.H. Riesenberg, and M.G. Whiting, Pacific History Series No. 8 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), quoted in Michael J. Balick and Roberta A. Lee, *The Ethnobotany of Pohnpei—Plants*, People *and Island Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 170-172.

Genetic evidence suggests that sakau may have been introduced directly from Vanuatu or indirectly via the Admiralty Islands perhaps a thousand years ago.[2] Whatever the case, Pohnpeian oral tradition maintains that sakau was used at first "only for the spirits."[3]

"We do not know exactly how sakau was used," says Dr. Rufino Mauricio, a trained archaeologist and scholar in the prehistory of his island, "but we know for sure, from the archaeological records, that sakau was used in Pohnpei a thousand years ago…for ritual or religious purposes in the past." In light of Pohnpei's oral tradition, he continues, "we can safely state that sakau was a gift from the spirits and it was initially used to symbolize humans' relationship with their gods."[4] This same oral tradition suggests that sakau was at first used only to honor Pohnpei's high chiefs, who were believed to be the representatives of these gods.

MYTHICAL ORIGINS

A plant that could work such wonders on the human body and play such an integral role in the cultural life of the people could only have been of divine origin, Pohnpeian folklore suggests. Sakau was clearly a gift of the gods, one to be used for much more than personal enjoyment. One version of the legend regarding the origin of sakau is recorded by Luelen Bernart in a published journal that he wrote.

On a visit to earth, Luhk, one of the most prominent sky gods, encountered an old man by the name of Wideningar and offered him the gift of sakau, as recounted in the following text from the journal:[5]

> *In the beginning there was a man . . . named Wideningar . . . He was a master prayer. He used to pray to Luhk, the god of the Luhk Clan. This man was a very old man. He was no longer able to walk about, for he was blind. . . .*
>
> *Now Wideningar used always to lie on his mat, for he was an old man. Now one day he was lying on the mat and he heard what seemed to be a person stepping on his taboo place [the pile of coconuts], for he used to make offerings to Luhk. He then asked his identity, saying, "Are you man or god?"*

1 Squeezing *sakau* through the bark of a hibiscus tree. © Bill Jaynes

Luhk called out, "I am Luhk. You are to come with me."

Wideningar replied, "I am an old man and can no longer see things and can no longer walk about, for I am weak."

But Luhk called to him a second time, saying to him, "Stretch out your hand to me that I may get you."

He then stretched out his hand to Luhk, and Luhk then took it and helped the man stand up. And when his hand touched Luhk's hand he became strong and could see things. . . .

The two then went on to Kinakapw and spent the night on the shore. [They] then walked up to Enimwahn, and then the two men went on out to Na. They walked on out to the south of Na. The two men then went on until they got to a place named Pejiko. They then met a married couple there, Jau-nok and Kat-nok. The woman was preparing a likpuake. This is an ornament for a man's breast. The woman then conceived a liking for Luhk and gave away the likpuake as a love gift, giving it to Luhk.

Luhk repaid her with skin from [Wideningar's] heel, and told this woman to take it and bury it in the earth, for it would sprout and form a plant. Supposedly if people would drink its juice, they would become intoxicated with it and it would change their life.

The man now went back. Luhk took Wideningar back to his original home in Wenik, in the section of Mallenuht. Various people used to watch and be amazed at how the rats would go and eat at the base of the clump of the plant, and how, after they had eaten the plant, they would get weak as if they were sick from it. They were no longer able to run about, but would simply crawl about on the ground and then go to sleep, and that was that.

Now the people of the land tried eating some of the roots of the plant [sakau], and all those who tried it became intoxicated from it. They therefore named the plant "intoxication" because people ate it and became light-headed from it.

The people of heaven were looking down on the earth, and they saw how the people of that land would consume the kava [sakau] and would become intoxicated from it. Accordingly, one day two of them descended to investigate what the plant was like. They descended to Pejiko to ascertain the nature of kava.

The two of them stole a cutting of kava. They took it up to heaven and they gave it to Nanitenlaṅ [Lord of the Eels of Heaven] and to Nanitenpatanlaṅ [Lord of the Eels of Patanlaṅ]. The two of them took it and planted it in Diwienleng [Garden Plot of Heaven], a garden plot which was in Pwetenleng [a place in heaven where Luhk sometimes lived]. The two planted it on that day and had a feast with it on the same day. When they were pounding it on that day, a joint of kava bounced out as they prepared the kava and fell down on Mallenuht, at Wideningar's place, and sprouted there.

This was the beginning of the kava plant multiplying in Pohnpei.

2 Traditional Pohnpeian attire. © Bill Jaynes

Sakau may have originally been a gift of the gods, according to the legend, but the gods found the drink so delightful that they brought all of Pohnpei's sakau back to heaven with them, leaving Pohnpei with none.

A later legend states that sakau was re-introduced by a Pohnpeian who traveled to Kosrae, where she took part in a sakau ceremony. The legend says that during the ceremony she slipped a piece of the root into her vagina and smuggled it back to Pohnpei, where she replanted it. Locals say that the legend accounts for the olfactory difference between the sakau currently grown in Kosrae and the sakau grown in Pohnpei.

3 Preparing *sakau* roots for pounding on the flat stone known as a *peitehl*. © Bill Jaynes

From its earliest origins, then, sakau was a singular expression of the exchange between the gods and the people of Pohnpei.

PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF SAKAU

Pohnpeian sakau is a large shrub with heart-shaped leaves and knobby stems. The roots of the plant are lopped off, laid on a large rock, and pounded to a fine consistency. The pounded roots are then sprinkled with water, wrapped in the bark of the hibiscus plant, and squeezed into coconut cups before the drink is passed around in a tightly regulated order to those at a gathering.

The preparation of sakau, as much as the ritualized drinking from the cup, is conducted in a formal ceremonial fashion. Every step of the process, conducted only by men, is done with deliberation. The group of men will first judiciously select the plant that is to be used for the sakau ceremony, harvesting the plant with care to ensure that the roots remain intact.

Various individuals have their own specific duties in the preparation of the sakau ceremony. First, the foliage must be trimmed from the plant in a traditionally prescribed way. The roots that will later be pounded to make the bitter, potent drink are removed and cleaned. Next, the large, flat stone on which the sakau is to be pounded (*peitehl*) is cleaned, and four taro leaves (*pwoaikoar*) are placed around the stone in order to catch pieces of sakau that might fall during the preparation. Those who are to pound the sakau position themselves at the stone with their feet underneath the large taro leaves. Meanwhile, others bring branches of the hibiscus tree and strip away the bark that will be used for squeezing the sakau.

In larger formal ceremonies, several stones may be used for pounding sakau, with each peitehl manned by four people who pound the roots with round basalt stones (*moahl*). The pounding begins slowly and rhythmically, with the tempo of the pounding changing as the process continues. One man provides the cadence for pounding by calling out the various steps in the preparation of the sakau, in effect acting as the conductor for the musical pounding ceremony. As the

pounding comes to a conclusion, the tempo increases, the rhythm grows more complex, and the meeting house suddenly falls silent. The liquid is then strained through the hibiscus bark strips into the coconut half-shell before it is ready to be consumed.

Dr. Mauricio describes the rounds of sakau drinking and their regional difference and significance as follows:[6]

> Madolenihmw, U, Nett, and Sokehs all have only four cups offered during the sakau ceremony. Only Kitti has five cups because it recognizes women as deserving of being part of that important ritual. The reason for the four cups follows the same significance of having to complete a cycle in the local medicine practice. The distribution of the first four cups is related to the importance of the hierarchy of social status; currently the first cup is given to the Nahnmwarki, second to Nahnken, third to Liken/Nahnalek, and fourth goes back to the Nahnmwarki. During the formal seating in a nahs, the Nahnmwarki always sits up front against a post known as Keidu. The Pohnpeians believe that when he sits at the post he represents the high spirit. Thus, the religious significance of the sakau ceremony today remains as in the past. The change is that we have a human representative of the gods.

Only after the first four ritual cups would the coconut shell cup be offered to the others in the meeting house. This would generally be done in order of rank.

6. Mauricio, personal communication, 2014.

4 *Sakau* roots on the peitehl. © Bill Jaynes

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SAKAU AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR MAINTAINING THE SOCIAL ORDER

Just as sakau was an occasion for recognizing the power of the gods in the life of the society, it was an expression of the respect due to those persons who, by virtue of their chiefly titles, represented them on earth. As a matter of fact, the use of sakau could be viewed as reinforcing the most basic foundation of the society itself.

In *The Ethnobotany of Pohnpei*, Balick and Lee put it as follows:[7]

> On Pohnpei, *wahu* (respect or honor) is the historic and contemporary foundation that defines its culture, society, and people. Wahu, in large measure, is structured, maintained, and mediated by sakau, based on the people's reverence for and ritual use of this plant. Sakau is ultimate respect, higher than the highest paramount or oratory chief or any other living being in the society—and even higher than the most important of the ancestral spirits, both good and evil. Sakau towers above them all, in a way that brings peace and community to the island, holding the cultural traditions together in the face of overwhelming and destabilizing economic and geopolitical forces that emanate from 'beyond the reef'—the local term for the rest of the world.[8]

7. Balick and Lee, *The Ethnobotany of Pohnpei*, 165.

8. It is the practice of the quoted text's authors to give copyright to the holders of knowledge, which in this case is the Mwoalen Wahu Ileilehn Pohnpei, the organization of traditional leaders.

5 *Sakau* pounders keep their feet beneath taro leaves. © Bill Jaynes

6 *Sakau* pounding begins to a steady rhythm. © Bill Jaynes

7 *Sakau* being pounded with *moahl* (pounding stone). © Bill Jaynes

To understand the importance of sakau in maintaining the "peace and community" on the island while asserting the wahu (respect) that defines the culture and holds it together, we can look at a few of the circumstances in which sakau was used and continues to be used today. The following are situations based on a list compiled by Mauricio.[9]

- *Sakau en Tomw* is a ceremony used for atonement and/or formal apologies for having offended a chief. The offense caused to the chief usually is brought about by the disruption of peace when one family wrongs another. Hence, peace is restored not simply by a formal apology or reconciliation between the two parties, but only when the offending family apologizes to the chief.

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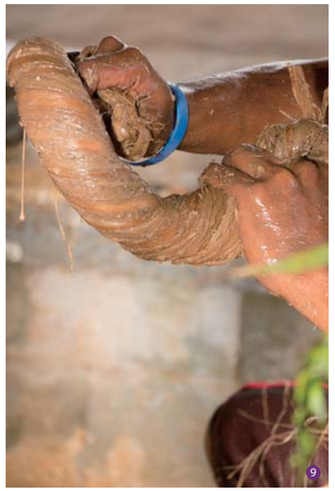

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- *Sakau en Pahnta* is the offering of sakau made when the family of a young man goes to the family of the intended bride to request her hand in marriage. Dr. Mauricio said that this ceremony serves as a means of protection against inadvertent violation of the taboos that prohibit marriage between families too closely related.[10] In addition, the sakau functions as a respectful request for the blessing of the young woman's family on the union. It is also a celebration of the tight unity that will bind the two families in the future.

9. Mauricio, personal communication, 2014.
10. Ibid.

8 The pounded *sakau* is wrapped in hibiscus bark. © Bill Jaynes
9 Squeezing the *sakau* and hibiscus bark into a coconut cup. © Bill Jaynes
10 Traditional Pohnpeian stick dancers. © Bill Jaynes

- *Sakau en Enihtik* is the sakau ceremony used when an individual who is sick requests local medicine from another. This is practiced widely on Pohnpei even today. In the offering of sakau, the supplicant is showing respect for the traditional practitioner even as he throws himself on the mercy of the latter.

- *Sakau en Olu* is the offering of sakau used as atonement to offended spirits. Illness, mental and physical health disabilities, and other setbacks are still believed by some to have been induced by offended deities. In the presentation of sakau, the afflicted person is acknowledging the respect due to the offended spirit.

The traditional use of sakau, then, would seem to emphasize the importance of respect in restoring the right order to the world. It also recognizes the key role that the spirit world plays in human affairs. The conventions surrounding the use of sakau also suggest that respect for the authority of chiefs is a primary consideration in its use. Finally, it binds people together in unity, even when one party has offended another. All these are essential cultural elements in Pohnpeian society.

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11 Carrying harvested *sakau* to a cultural day ceremony. © Bill Jaynes
12 Carrying a basalt pounding stone (*moahl*) to a *nahs* (meeting house) during a cultural day celebration. © Bill Jaynes
13 Children in traditional attire. © Bill Jaynes

SECULARIZATION OF SAKAU TODAY

At some point in the past, sakau use, which had once been reserved for the most ceremonial functions in the presence of a paramount chief, became available to Pohnpeians as a recreational drink. Common people began pounding sakau in their own meeting houses, usually dispensing with the formalities that marked its use in the old days. Steps for preparation of sakau for everyday use at the homestead might be carried out by a single individual if necessary. It was probably at that time, too, that the thickness of the *peitehl* (pounding stone) changed. The stones in use today are thin and resound like a bell when sakau is pounded on them—an open invitation to all within hearing distance to join the party.

With the opening of Pohnpei's first sakau bar in 1970, another step in the secularization of sakau was taken. At the bars, sakau was poured out of large bottles and served in stryofoam cups to patrons who sat at picnic tables and paid a set fee per cup. There was no attempt to retain the traditional meetinghouse setting, the chime of the pounding, or any of the other features that had once been so linked with sakau on the island.

Has the recreational use of sakau weakened its traditional importance in the culture? Some argue that cultural erosion brought about by Western education combined with the commercialization of sakau has culminated in a "rootless" Pohnpei, whose people have forgotten the mystical plant's purportedly "divine" origins. Many traditionalists say that each cup of sakau that is consumed by recreational users undermines the memory of the cultural importance of the traditional sakau in Pohnpei.

Dr. Mauricio argues otherwise. "The democratization of sakau, I think, has not weakened the traditional importance of sakau. It has, however, added a new and universal dimension of culture to sakau."[11] He might have added that the consumption of sakau—whether from a bottle or from the stone, whether at a *nahs* (meeting house) or at a sakau bar—is always a social affair. It remains a time for reconciliation and peaceful harmony. Disharmony simply does not occur and fights do not break out where sakau is consumed.

Moreover, many of the traditional manners in which sakau was used still occur today, despite the widespread use of sakau for recreational purposes. The Naniken of Nett summed up eloquently and succinctly the importance of sakau in an interview conducted ten years ago:[12]

> Sakau is always something that all Pohnpeians understand. It has its own power, and it is highly respected by those that most people respect. It is frequently used between human beings, families, leaders, clans, in all matters: happy families, sad families, a family that needs help, a family that loses a loved one, a family that will bring in somebody from other families. You use sakau to go and ask for a girl. You use sakau when you are giving thanks to somebody who helped you, who helped you in medicine . . . you share sakau with your friends. Sometimes enemies must use sakau to create a different relationship. And you use sakau when you ask for land, the right to use land. You use sakau for funerals and for four seasons of harvesting [feasts] based on what we have on the land. You bring it for the Nahnmwarki and the Nahnken, who are the most responsible for the people within their kingdoms, for anything — solving their needs, answering their questions, helping in their situations.

11. Ibid.
12. Balick and Lee, *Ethnobotany of Pohnpei*, 175.

14 *Sakau* plants lined up for a large ceremony in Madolenihmw. © Bill Jaynes

15 Four men pounding *sakau* during a traditional ceremony. © Bill Jaynes

16 Squeezing the slimy *sakau* liquid into a coconut cup. © Bill Jaynes

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2 Relationships and Social Cohesion

Whether we call it clan, kin, family, tribe, or community, there are multiple ways of knowing and identifying ourselves in the Pacific. A few of these ways are captured here. This section explores how social relationships and their hierarchies within the Pacific islands are vital ways of understanding intangible cultural heritage. Social and spiritual rituals, religious ceremonies, and various other cultural practices reflect how Pacific islanders prioritize social cohesion as a pathway to sustainable prosperity, ensuring the transformation of skills, knowledge, and wisdom for survival.

The themes in this section are pivotal to ICH because relationships represent an important organizing principle of life among Pacific islanders and determine how intangible heritage can be safeguarded. Relationships are marked in ceremonial events and rituals such as the communal harvest of *balolo* in Fiji and other ceremonies such as the *bel kol* in PNG. Likewise, the *omengat*, the first-birth ceremony in Palau, brings unrelated clans and families together and is central to family ties and social cohesion. The essays on these and other topics collected in this section illustrate that Pacific islanders take care to mark and honor relationships important to them, as these relationships ensure family, clan, and tribal ties and help to achieve enhanced social cohesion and sustainability.

The Harvest of Balolo: A Fijian Delicacy

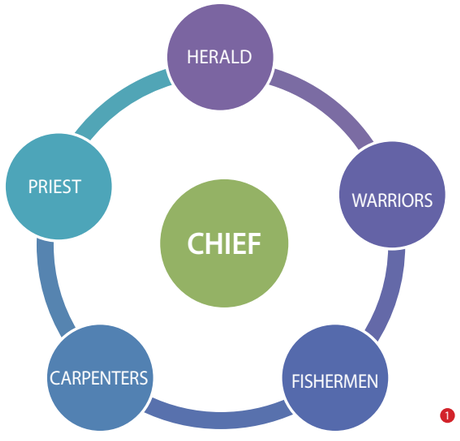
Aca Mataitini

Balolo ni vakananananu[1]
(Wishful thinking)

—Traditional Fijian proverb

INTRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL MARINE HARVESTERS IN FIJI

Indigenous people in Fiji belong to clans that are affiliated with different tribes and groups within societies. Each clan is tasked with a traditional role and function that serve the chief and the society within the jurisdiction of that chief. The following illustration shows the various main clans and their roles.



1. "Wishful thinking," just as someone would wish for balolo when he or she had missed the balolo harvest.

1 Traditional system diagram. © Aca Mataitini

The gathering of marine resources for consumption and other sea-related activities are such functions that will be referred to in this paper as the functions of the fisherman clan. The act of gathering fish and other marine organisms, if not otherwise stated, will be referred to as "fishing." Known in Fijian as *gonedau*, the fisherman clan is led by a chief fisherman, called the *tunidau*. Members of the fisherman clan are then usually divided into two sub-clans:

- the fishermen, the *dauniqoli*
- the seafearers, the *daunisoko*

While the dauniqoli look after marine resources for consumption, the daunisoko look after sea travel, once on traditional canoes but today on any sea vessel. Both clans are known to be fearless and possess a lot of courage. Because of their obligations, the gonedau would live close to the chief in villages. By tradition, the gonedau clan members are not land owners but are allocated land by the chief's clan for planting. The gonedau are expected to know everything about the sea and marine matters. As such, they are knowledgeable about the fish seasons and weather patterns and changes. For the fishermen, their preparation is always very thorough as they follow traditional protocol and procedure.

The fishermen will go out fishing only if it is sanctioned by the chief. A ceremonial presentation of dried kava roots has to be presented to the chief fisherman for a successful fishing expedition. For important traditional fishing trips, customary protocol related to fishing is usually observed for four nights before the actual expedition. After the expedition, a traditional ceremony is accorded to the fishermen as a token of appreciation. The ceremonial whale's tooth, called *tabua*, is presented to the fishermen, followed by a kava ritual and a feast. These are prepared by the chief, thanking them for the task completed.

Fishing is carried out in a variety of ways in Fijian islands. Traditional fishermen know the fishing grounds in their respective communities and the best fishing methods that would be applicable. Some fishing techniques are communally owned and inherited while some are

individually inherited. Fishing practices abound, and because they are traditional ways of knowing, proper protocol is observed when information on such knowledge is sought.

FISHING IN VUNA, TAVEUNI

Shark fishing, locally known as *qiri qio*, is carried out on the island of Taveuni in Cakaudrove Province[2] only when a new chief of Vuna is to be installed.[3] There is also the *yavirau*, which is practiced in most parts of Fiji and uses vines and coconut leaves woven into a big circle and placed in the coastal area in between tides to trap fish. Turtle fishing, locally known as *qoli vonu*, is practiced by the people of Nukui in the Rewa Province and by the people of Qoma in Tailevu. Tuna fishing, known as *qoli yatu*, is a heritage knowledge of the people of Vuna in Taveuni, as is ray fishing, known as *sua vai*, to the people of Kaba in Tailevu. The knowledge of the harvesting of sea worms, locally known as *balolo*, will be defined in this article.

Fijians have an awareness that if traditional fishing protocol and procedures are not followed, a lot of disappointment and dangers will be encountered during a fishing expedition. The harvest may be minimal or none at all. This being the case, the clan will make sure that no stones are left unturned as they proceed with their task. The outcome is a result of either a successful or failed traditional process and harvest. A positive result consolidates the chiefs' standings in their own societies, thus ensuring their stronghold, prosperity, and *mana* (effect of power). Failure on a task initiated by a chief and carried out in the name of a chief will likewise diminish his/her reputation.

Balolo in Fiji is harvested annually and only in the months of October and November. There are only certain spots where balolo can be harvested, and while in some years there are good harvests, in others it is not so good. Harvests in October are usually smaller ones while those in November are bigger. The iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture reported in 2012 that balolo was harvested in most of the usual spots in Fiji. Before a harvest, however, important considerations will need to be followed as balolo is considered a gift of the gods. It is a very rare food commodity with an extraordinary harvesting method. Scientifically, balolo is "a worm (*Eunice viridis*) that burrows in the coral reefs of various Pacific islands and swarms in vast numbers at the surface of the sea for breeding a little before the last quarter of the moon in October and November when they are gathered as highly esteemed food."[4] In fact, the "worm's posterior segments detach themselves and swim to the surface where the reproductive cells are released into the sea."[5]

As food, balolo is classed as a delicacy in most parts of the Fijian islands. It is, however, an acquired taste. It can be served raw, boiled, fried, or baked in a traditional earthen oven.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: BALOLO HARVESTING IN VUNA

The Kanacea society[6] now resides in Vuna, Taveuni, although they are the original inhabitants of Kanacea Island, an island of the northern Lau group that used to be included in Cakaudrove Province under the reign of Ratu Golea Lalabalavu, the Tui Cakau of the time. When Tongan King Ma'afu's men declared war on Tui Cakau in the 1850s,[7] the people of Kanacea Island were among those that did not support Tui Cakau. This gesture of defiance infuriated Tui Cakau, so he had the people of Kanacea banished and their island sold off. At first, they were taken to Somosomo as slaves to await the cannibal pot of the Tui Cakau. While awaiting their fate, they were subjected to extreme punishment and hardship. Fortunately for them, the Tui Vuna, a close ally of Tui Cakau, asked that he be allowed to take the people of Kanacea to Vuna.

2. There are fourteen provinces in Fiji, Cakaudrove being one of them. Each province can be classed as a chiefdom and has one overall chief who is addressed in a special way. Tui Cakau is the address of the overall chief of Cakaudrove.
3. Ratu Suliano Manawalala, personal communication with author, 2014.
4. *Merriam-Webster.com*, s.v. "palolo." Accessed 28 September 2014. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/palolo.
5. *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. "palolo worm." Accessed 28 September 2014. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/palolo-worm.
6. Used loosely here to refer to the clans and their members who affiliate with the tribal unit called Kanacea.
7. History notes Wainiqolo, one of Tongan King Maafu's leading warriors, declaring war on Tui Cakau to capture Wairiki, a stronghold of Tui Cakau in Taveuni. Wainiqolo was killed in the event and his army defeated.

2 Taveuni Island (red circle), Kanacea Island (red box).

Tui Cakau complied with Tui Vuna's request, suggesting that they could be his firewood gatherers. Tui Vuna gave them a piece of land where they could live and plant, and they called it Kanacea as well. At first, they were not readily welcomed in Vuna as it seemed to the Vuna locals that their space was being invaded. Nevertheless, inter-marriages took place and new relationships were forged.

The Kanacea tribe comprises three clans—namely, Nabau, Soso, and Lomanikoro. Their chief, Tui Kanacea, belongs to the chiefly Nabau clan. Kanacea Village is separated from the other Vuna village of Nakorovou by a landmark of fruit trees. When a daughter of the chief of the chiefly clan in the Vuna tribe, Yavusaratu, marries a boy from the Lomanikoro clan of Kanacea, it is said that she takes with her as a marriage gift the traditional wisdom of harvesting balolo to the Lomanikoro clan of Kanacea.

In other circumstances, a woman of noble birth would be allocated a piece of land by her clan that she could use for planting.[8] Instead of giving land, the people of Yavusaratu of Vuna society gave the gift of balolo harvesting, hence the beginning of the Lomanikoro clan of Kanacea as traditional balolo harvesters.

THE PROTOCOL OF BALOLO HARVEST

The process and ritual of balolo harvest in Vuna is unique, reflecting the relationship and connectedness of two clans who are related by kin, the sub-clan[9] Nakabu of the chiefly Yavusaratu clan of the Vuna society, and the sub-clan Ligaulevu of the Lomanikoro clan in the Kanacea society. Nakabu will be shown or see the sign of the balolo first. This will be in the form of a school of little red fish. The school can only be seen by Nakabu members in the women's sea bathing pool; then it will be seen in the men's bathing pool. As to why this is so, the clan members say that it has always been like this.[10]

The Sighting of the Red Fish

When the new moon appears in October or November, a woman will go to the women's bathing pool at about 20:00. If the school of little red fish is sighted, there will be a balolo harvest.[11] When sighted,

8. The customary right of use is also accorded to her male children; ownership, however, remains with the original clan.
9. "Sub-clan" is used here to refer to the Fijian *itokatoka*, which is usually an extended family unit within a clan. There may be two or three subclans within a clan.
10. Fieldwork notes, January 2014.
11. Explanation by Seteo Raitau, an elder of Nakabu, during fieldwork.

the Nakabu sub-clan elders will visit the Ligaulevu sub-clan elders with a presentation of kava to formally inform them that the sign of the balolo, the school of red fish, has been sighted. Visiting the pool and observing the school of red fish will continue for seven nights for signs of the rising of the balolo. The preparation for the harvest of balolo begins from this meeting.

Preparation Week

A kava ritual starts off the process whereby members of the Ligaulevu clan will volunteer to be part of the one-week ritual of pre-balolo harvest. During the preparation week, the volunteers, both men and women, will live together in a retreat house. During the week, equipment for harvesting will be collected and made to specifications.

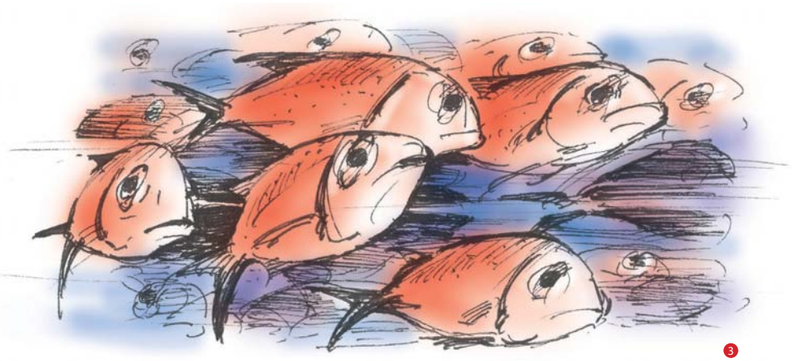
A significant part of the week is also spent on mental and spiritual strengthening following tradition and certain religious practices. Prayer service is held every evening and in the early hours of the morning, followed by a kava ceremony. The week-long retreat is a closed session where all discussions and activities are centered on balolo harvesting. Because it is a one-time harvest per year, preparations are thorough; the balolo may not appear if things are not done properly. Joseva Seitaba of the Ligaulevu sub-clan stated that they have learned from past experiences of how and why things did not turn out right for them.[12] On the same note, Waisiki Masirewa, a seventy-year-old elder of Kanacea, has witnessed the effects of the good and bad preparations.[13] It is also highlighted that the one-week retreat is not an easy one as there is intense preparation besides the fact that they would have to put aside all their other obligations. Furthermore, they would need to prepare psychologically to be in the water for about five hours in the early morning of harvesting day. They would go in with water at shoulder level, and when they finally finished, water would be at ankle level.

The Second Sign for Harvest

On the seventh day, at about eight in the evening, the elders of Nakabu who are tasked with the role of sighting the red fish will

12. Joseva Seitaba, personal communication with author, 2014.
13. Waisiki Masirewa, personal communication with author, 2014.

make their way to the bathing pool, hopefully for the last time. If the little red fish have turned thin, about half their normal sizes, this is the sign confirming that balolo will appear or rise up in the early hours of the morning. Once the transformation is witnessed, they will make their way to visit sub-clan Ligaulevu members and inform them of the development.



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The Sea Snake and Mullet

The actual harvest begins after the visit mentioned above. It begins with a prayer followed by the kava ritual. After that, an announcement is made to the people of Vuna by the village headman that the harvest will be carried out in the morning and that everyone is asked to refrain from going out to watch the harvest.

Every step is strictly followed for a productive harvest. In a harvest some years back, the balolo disappeared when the protocol was breached. Seitaba reported that the whole process had been reiterated to them by one of their late elders.[14] The seriousness of it all is like preparing for battle, as the ritual is physically and mentally exhausting. There is silence from when they leave their retreat house to go to the sea, and the account noted that to keep silent in a group for about four hours is a huge task. They communicate using hand or body signals.

When they reach the beach called Tabatabace, three of them will be sent out with their torches to the rock where balolo is to be

14. Seitaba, personal communication, 2014.

3 School of fish.

expected for another sign. Instead of the school of little red fish, two different species of fish are expected. A *dadakulaci*, or sea snake, and a *kanace*, mullet, should be circling the rock. In Fijian, the two fishes are referred to as the *ulu ni balolo*, literally meaning "head of the balolo." This is a harbinger to a good harvest.

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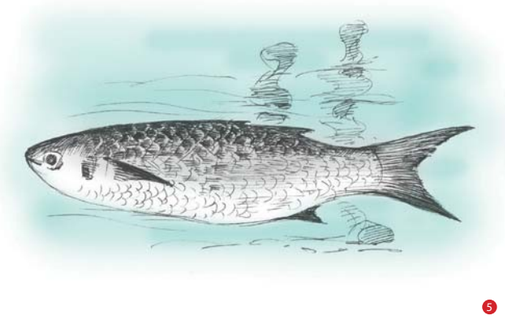

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The three men, along with three others for assistance, will try to lead the two fish to the spot where the balolo will appear. This process is quite daunting since it takes about three hours. From the balolo rock to the balolo spot is about twenty-five meters. Their patience and endurance will be tested here. As the two fish approach the balolo spot, the men will slowly be making their exits. When the fish make their way into the area in between the three stones, they will disappear.

The Harvest

The fish disappearing is the last sign the men wait for. They will feel the balolo swirl up from the bottom and then spread themselves out. The harvest begins. The men will need to be fast, before the sun rises. Using their equipment, balolo is transferred to large containers on the shore, with the transferring always done with the men facing the sea.

As they continue the harvest, one of the men will go to the highest spot in the village and call out that the balolo is being harvested, "*Sa suvi na balolo*!" Upon hearing the announcement, the villagers have the approval to go and harvest their own balolo along the village seafront. As soon as the sun rises, the balolo dissolve into the water.

4 *Dadakulaci* (sea snake). 5 *Kanace* (mullet fish).

A Shower of Rain

Rain usually falls at the end of the morning's harvest for about one to five minutes. This signifies the end of the harvest. If there is no rain, the balolo will swirl up again the next morning and be available for harvesting, although this is rare. People are advised to refrain from eating fish for three days after balolo, as it is the time in which fish can be poisonous from eating dead balolo.

Thanksgiving

Once the harvest process is completed, a prayer of thanksgiving is offered, and the men make their way to the retreat house. The rest of the clan members will be waiting for them. After a prayer, a kava ritual is performed before they partake in a hot and hearty breakfast.

The Distribution

Balolo is then distributed according to traditional hierarchy for who the recipients of a first harvest are. The first distribution is accorded to the chief of the kingmaker[15] clan of Nakorovou Village, Navesi Province. In his role as the provincial ambassador of Cakaudrove, he will deliver the first balolo harvest to the paramount chief of the province, the Tui Cakau. Distribution to the clan chiefs will follow, and then each household will be given their portion.

All recipients are expected to give something back in appreciation of the balolo. The distribution of balolo marks the end of a harvest.

6 The balolo. © iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture

INDIGENOUS WISDOM IN THE HARVEST OF BALOLO

The process of sighting the balolo, along with its harvest and distribution in Vuna, involves the community, where the harvesting sub-clan depends on another sub-clan to first sight the signals. The rest of the clans and sub-clans in the two tribes are then expected to respect their privacy as they retreat to the preparation house for one week. Everyone else then allows the two sub-clans to go about their preparations and responsibilities without disturbance. The end result is that everyone, including their paramount chief, Tui Cakau, gets a share of the delicacy.

Some involved issues are too complicated to explain because they involve natural marine creatures, something human beings would not normally have control over. The types of creatures identified are very familiar to the sub-clans involved both in Vuna and Kanacea. Their observations of the creatures' sizes, textures, movements, appearance, and disappearance illustrate a knowledge passed down through the ages. The recounting of detail in the number and times of day and the preparations undertaken would be knowledge only known to them. Even if another person from outside the clan wished to take part in the sightings and harvesting, it would be a breach of protocol. This is an excellent depiction of traditional heritage wisdom that is owned by the two sub-clans.

The school of little red fish appearing only in the women's bathing pool must somehow have its root in the fact that it is the women from Nakabu sub-clan, of the Yavusaratu clan of Vuna, that are married to the Ligaulevu sub-clan, the Lomanikoro clan of Kanacea. Hence, the school of little red fish will be sighted at the women's pool and by the Vuna sub-clan as the "gift" from Vuna. It will then be the task of the Kanacea clan to harvest the balolo. According to Waisiki Masirewa, an elder of the Yavusa of Kanacea, the sea and women have a very close connection.[16] Likewise, Iosefo Sauto, a member of the Tui Lomani clan of the Yavusa, says that balolo is attracted to women: thus the inhabitation for seven nights in the women's pool.[17]

All the activities, from those at the women's pool to the other side of the coast, where the balolo rock is and where the sea snake and the mullet appear, are inexplicable. The village elders also could not explain the reason a mullet would be found together with a sea snake or vice versa. That they would disappear when they entered the harvest spot after taking their time is equally cryptic, as when they do, the balolo appears in a flash, swirling and spreading its outreach.

One cannot help but notice a straight line stretching from the harvest spot to the balolo rock and an underground reef called Navesi. From the underground reef, there is a forty-five degree angle

15. "Kingmaker" refers to the clan that decides who the high chief will be and traditionaly installs him or her.

16. Masirewa, personal communication, 2014.

17. Iosefo Sauto, personal communication with author, 2014.

to the women's bathing pool. This, along with the new moon in October or November counting as the first night, harvesting in the early hours of the morning before sunrise, and a short shower of rain following the harvest, are astonishing coincidences.

CONCLUSION

The heritage wisdom described above on how the people of Vuna and Kanacea relate to natural resources is evident in the harvest of balolo and has no doubt been learned over time. Masirewa reiterated that it is imperative that the protocols of the given gift are respected and followed. The Chief of Kanacea, Ratu Solomone Regu, said that his society is fortunate to be bestowed this unique gift from the gods.[18] At 83, he has witnessed the passion with which the Ligaulevu elders have carried out this special task. He advises the current clan members to continue and uphold the tradition.

It is noted that Ligaulevu and Nakabu are not fisherman clans, but are chiefly clans. The fisherman clans in the two societies do not take part in balolo harvesting, although they do practice their own fisherman responsibilities and functions in their respective societies, as in the practice of *qiri qio* (shark calling) and *qoli yatu* (tuna fishing), which also have traditional protocol. Balolo harvesting in Taveuni is a gift between chiefly clans, and it has remained so until today. Joseva Seitaba of Ligaulevu vows that they will keep the tradition alive by involving their young people in the harvest, making them aware of its importance and historical background.[19]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people, to whom the author conveys appreciation, are acknowledged as knowledge bearers of the harvest of balolo: Iosefo Sauto, member of the Tui Lomani clan of the Yavusa of Vuna and fieldwork guide; Seteo Raitau, the Nakabu elder who gave information on how the balolo head is viewed and also how the protocol is followed; Joseva Seitaba, the Ligaulevu elder who gave detailed information on the protocol of the balolo harvest; Waisiki Masirewa, a Yavusa of Kanacea elder who had witnessed a lot of harvests and corrected some information that was given; Ratu Solomone Regu, Chief of Kanacea, who acknowledges the balolo harvest is a blessing for his tribe that must be sustained; Samuela Tui, an elder of the traditional fishing clan who gave a brief account of the qiri qio and the qoli yatu, two other traditional wisdom subjects in Vuna; Iowani Tavata, village headman and tribal spokesman who allowed the author access to the people; Samuela Tui and family, host for the one-week research; and the Vusaratu, Navesi, and Lomanikoro clans for their generosity and support.

18. Ratu Solomone Regu, personal communication with author, 2014.
19. Seitaba, personal interview, 2014.

The Unique Intergenerational Family System of Tako and Lavo

Vilimaina Navila

Buki vinaka tiko na druadrua ni veiwekani.
(Let's tie firmly the cords of our relationship.)
—A Fijian saying

INTRODUCTION

Fiji's indigenous population is rich in relationships, and the nature of these relationships prescribes the behavior of their participants. There are kin relationships denoting linear family representations, brothers for example, and those that link between the generations, as in the grandaunt and grandniece relationship. This paper focuses on a different kind of relationship: a traditional connectedness that is represented across communities characterized by only two references, *tako* and *lavo*. iTaukei[1] Fijians value this kind of relationship deeply along with the tangible and intangible aspects that signify and consolidate these affiliations.

1. Indigenous Fijians; a term adopted by the Fiji Cabinet in 2010 as the Fijian Affairs Decree replaced the word Fijian or indigenous Fijian with the word *iTaukei* in all written laws and official documentation when referring to the original and native settlers of Fiji.

Traditional tribal relationships hold a special place among the indigenous people of Fiji. Each type of relationship is a way participants address and refer to each other. When related tribal participants meet, what they say and how they behave is determined by the type of relationship that connects them. Some provinces or tribes within them are traditionally related to others. Their interconnectedness is rooted in their histories.

TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are marked by the linguistic and non-linguistic elements that signify and define the type of relationship. In a *tauvu* relationship, followers take part in playing jokes on each other and tease each other in attempts to always bring down or shame the other person. The people of the province of Kadavu are in tauvu relationships with the people of the provinces of Ra and Nadroga. The people of Ra are also tauvu with the people of Bua, and those of Lau are tauvu with the people of Rewa. These are broad categories of the people in tauvu relationships, as some can claim that it exists only with people from a clan or village and not with the whole province. The relationships have extended over time to include everyone from the respective province. Our traditional stories explain that the original tauvu were "cross-cousins" from the places concerned. For example, a prominent person from a village in Ra and one from a place in Bua may have been cross-cousins. From such a beginning, their families, fellow villagers, and other people of the province would relate in befitting ways to their tauvu counterparts from Bua.

In contrast, utmost respect is observed in a relationship called *mataqali*. Oral history recites the belief that ancestral gods in the provinces of Lomaiviti and Tailevu were siblings, although this does not necessarily mean that they were actually brothers and sisters. Over the course of history, the people of these provinces have had a special brotherly bond characterized by formally expressed greetings uttered in respectful tones. The use of reverence in formal tones of address, as in using the plural pronouns *kemuni* and *o ni*,[2] for example, is used in conversations that denote respect.

2. *O kemuni* is the independent pronoun indicating "you" plural; *o ni* marks a plural subject.

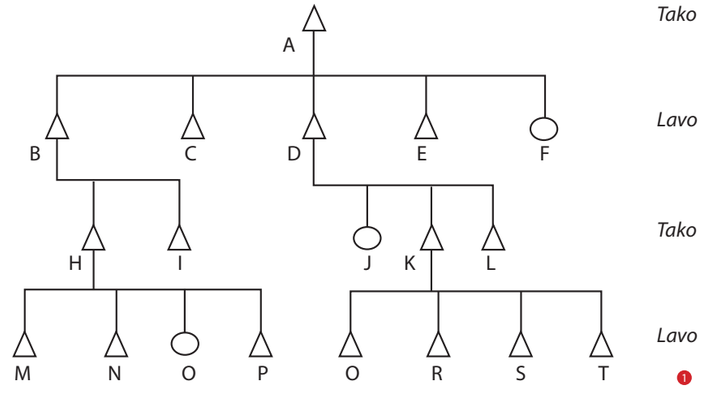
The traditional reference of *naita* is used by the people of various districts within the same province whose ancestral spirits were believed to be cross-cousins. *Naita* is short for *naitabani*, which means "to double up," or to double the effort in whatever they are doing. The festive spirit of competition filled with jokes and laughter is shared when people from these villages or districts mingle. For example, people with naitabani ties are those from the districts of Taivugalei and Wainibuka, both of Tailevu Province.

The *yanu* relationship exists between the original inhabitants of the smaller islands. It is believed that their ancestral gods came from the smaller outer islands. The term *yanu* is short for *yanuyanu*, which means "island." As a type of relationship connecting people from the smaller islands, "yanu," as a term of address, means "of island origin." An example would be the people of the Lau group of islands and those from the Kadavu islands addressing each other as "yanu." These societal relationships have strengthened the traditional foundation of solidarity in communal living from the past to the present.

TAKO-LAVO

Tako and *lavo* is a unique affiliation because, like the other traditional ties described above, not all indigenous Fijians are represented in *tako-lavo* relationships. Only the people who originate from the highland tribes of Vitilevu[3] and their descendants are its proponents. The only deciding factor to whether one is tako or lavo is one's father. Should a father be a lavo, his children will be tako, his grandchildren lavo, his great-grandchildren tako, and so on as the cycle continues over the generations. Having defined themselves, all the tako from all the villages and clans in the highland tribes are specially connected to each other, sharing an affiliation due to their being tako. They remain so to infinity, referring to each other as "tako." Likewise, all the lavo across the tribes and across generations belong to the other affiliation and refer to each other as "lavo." In this relationship, tako means "older" and lavo "younger." The relationship existing in the generations is illustrated in the following diagram.

3. The main and largest island in Fiji.



In this diagram, adapted from Ravuvu,[4] A, H, I, J, K, and L are tako and will address each other as "tako." On the other hand, B, C, D, E, F, M, N, O, P, O, R, S, and T are lavo and will address each other as "lavo." In this type of tribal relationship, all the tako in alternate generations are *veitacini*, or siblings; all the lavo in alternate generations are also veitacini. However, in between generations, the tako and lavo relate to each other as parent and child.

The first European observers were quick to notice that the societies of central Vitilevu present a number of specific features, one of which concerns the tako-lavo kinship terminology and family link. In relation to this, Batimudramudra reaffirmed by stating that tako-lavo has been a traditional blood relationship from our ancestors.[5] Nicole reported a pan-Colo[6] unity being concentrated due to the easy access in the interior highlands of Vitilevu,[7] where they travel by foot or on horseback across and along the *tualeita* (mountain ranges), compared to the coastal communities who navigate along the coast. Capell & Lester also added that in Namosi, the terms "tako" and "lavo" were also used to describe a significant bond in the way people addressed one another.[8] The tako-lavo division is found again in Namataku in Western Vitilevu, where the society is divided into two ranks or rows, with either one division or the next a lavo generation. If a man is tako, his son is lavo, and vice versa. Seruvakula also validated the vitality of *solesolevaki*,[9] or a communal gathering where competition for success mixed with merrymaking takes place between the lavo and tako members of the tribe. Hocart also adds that the tako-

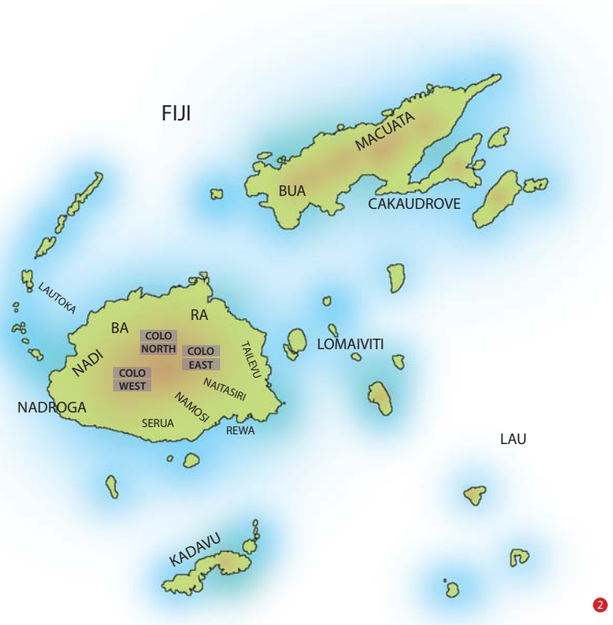
4. Asesela Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 345.
5. I. Batimudramudra, "Notes on 'Na Veiwekani in Nalawa, Ra," iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture, 1984.
6. Literally, *colo* means "up above"; in the Fijian context, it refers to the highlands.
7. Robert Nicole, *Disturbing History: Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji*, 2011: 23.
8. Arthur Capell & R. H. Lester, "Local Divisions and Movements in Fiji," *Oceania* 12.1 (September 1941): 194-196.
9. Semi Seruvakula, *Bula Vakavanua*, (2000): 15.

1 Generation relationship between *tako* and *lavo*.

lavo distinction came into effect in games or collaborative work in which each category competed with the other.[10] These generational distinctions continue to be important for the people of Nasau and Nalawa in the Ra province as well. Tinai asserts that the addressing of one another as "tako" or "lavo" usually solves disputes quickly and calmly; it also uplifts the soul and weaves a strong bond when this pampering name-calling is used.[11] *Takokai* and *lavokai*, adding the suffix *–kai*, meaning "of same origin," accentuates the closeness in the relationship.

MAP OF THE FIJI ISLANDS DENOTING COLO EAST, COLO WEST, AND COLO NORTH

The following map denotes the demarcation of the landowning tribes in what used to be labeled Colo North, Colo West, and Colo East. In the new provincial boundaries, the three Colo communities are straddled by the provinces of Ra, Naitasiri, Namosi, and Navosa.



2 Map of the Fiji Islands denoting Colo East, Colo West, and Colo North.

10. A. M. Hocart, "Alternate Generations in Fiji," Vol. 31, 1931: 223.

11. M. Tinai, personal communication with author, 2014.

COLO WEST DISTRICTS	COLO NORTH DISTRICTS	COLO EAST DISTRICTS
Magadro	Nadrau	Muaira
Namataku	Navatusila	Soloira
Conua	Nasau	Nagonenicolo
Korolevuiwai	Nabobuca	Nadaravakawalu
Koroinasau	Naqaliyatina	Matailobau
Mavua	Tavua	Waima
Naqalimare	Savatu	Noimalu
Noloto		
Nasikawa		
Noikoro		
Bemana		

Table 1: Districts with Tako-Lavo relationships.[12]

THE DYNAMIC CONNECTION

This unique relationship, marked by a spirit of cooperation filled with the atmosphere of merrymaking and competition, is the dynamic force behind the tako-lavo relationship. A jubilant crowd would gather for a common purpose, and their most obvious system for grouping themselves would be the tako and lavo groups. For example, a fundraising activity was held wherein the two parties competed in raising money for the purchase of a village water tank to be installed in the community hall. This was a whole-day affair of merry-making and spirited competition. The lavo team eventually won the fundraising drive, and the tako team, because they collected less money, was tasked with providing dinner and kava for both parties.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TAKO-LAVO FAMILY SYSTEM

The essence of this unique tribal relationship is dynamic and ought to be maintained for cultural sustainability. Participants in the tako-lavo relationship not only identify with fellow tako or lavo and behave accordingly, but also care and look out for each other, affiliate with each other, and compete against the opposite affiliation. All the

12. Source: iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission.

knowledge behind this is acquired from being part of the tako-lavo communities they originate from in the highland of Ra (excluding the coastal communities) as well as parts of Naitasiri, Namosi, Nadroga, and Navosa. With the pressing challenges being brought about by modern lifestyles and related relationships—for example by school associations, religious groupings, or professional bodies—it is important that traditional relationships and their expected norms of behavior be maintained not only in the relevant communities but also in documentation.[13] The custom of relating to others as tako or lavo should ideally start within communities and homes to demonstrate to younger generations a beneficial experience that will generate pride in being a part of a traditional community and culture, an aspect of Colo culture that is beginning to lose its frequency among young people in the urban areas.

CONCLUSION

Traditional indigenous wisdom in iTaukei relationships is cherished in the Fijian context as these relationships are ancestral legacies transmitted through generations. This sense of identity is unique throughout the Fiji Islands, preserved and disseminated from the past to the present, and ought to be maintained for the future generations. As stated above, the bond between our ancestral gods being brothers and sisters or cross-cousins was and is the basis of the provincial ties and has shaped the behavior of the Fijian tribal traditional relationships.

13. A. Tagitagivanua, personal communication with author, Suva, April 2014.

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Pregnancy and Birth Practices in Palau

Meked Besebes and Josepha Kintoki

A chedalkikii, A chedalkikii,
A chedil a di koiei ma ngalek a di koiei!
(Praise! Praise! The mother lives and the child lives!)

—A Palauan saying

This paper focuses on traditions related to a woman's pregnancy and healing after childbirth in Palau. This healing process is an essential part of a woman's reproduction and life cycle. Great emphasis on and development of rituals were created to ensure women's childbearing and rearing capability. Processes and details in carrying out this ceremony establish connections among family and clan members for the new mother and her husband. It is a celebration of the success and joy of the first child to a new family.

HEALING PROCESS AFTER CHILDBIRTH IN PALAU

The Legend of Mengidabrutkoel and the Origin of the First Natural Childbirth

The legend of Mengidabrutkoel is associated with the first natural birthing process in Palau. In olden times, pregnancy was considered a tragedy for the pregnant mother as the practice of delivering a child was through cutting of the stomach; in most cases, the mother's life was lost in the process. When the spider demigod Mengidabrutkoel fell in love with and impregnated a young woman from Ngiwal, he asked his mother to show him a way to save both his wife and child. His demigod mother showed him the process of natural childbirth. When Mengidabrutkeol's wife was ready to give birth, he instructed her as his mother had. When the woman's family heard the child cry, they thought the worst for their daughter. However, Mengidabrutkeol opened the house and presented the baby and his mother, both alive. The family rejoiced and wailed with joyous noise, saying, "*A chedalkikii, A chedalkikii, A chedil a di koiei ma ngalek a di koiei!*" This means, "Praise! Praise! The mother lives and the child lives." It is believed to be at the advent of this revelation of natural birthing that the ceremonies of *omesurech* and *omengat*[1] began to be practiced in Palau.[2]

MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

Marriage is the beginning of the traditional economical exchange system in Palau. The traditional institution of marriage binds two families and several clans together into this exchange system, better known as the *omeluchel* system.[3] A pregnant woman will adhere to cultural beliefs pertaining to the system, which her mother and other kinswomen closely monitor. Listed below are the traditional rules concerning pregnancy.

- Walking or working under the rain will bring unfavorable weather and heavy rain during the woman's hot bath.
- Standing in the evening sun's rays just before sunset during a woman's pregnancy will cause the baby to be bothered by the sun and have a tendency to cry most of the time.
- The pregnant woman should not break a spider web when going for a walk; otherwise, her labor and delivery will be difficult.
- She should avoid walking beside sacred areas (*tungel*), or the baby will have deformities.
- She should not be startled by an astonishing or frightening sight because she will deliver a baby with something on his body resembling the startling sight.
- The woman must avoid eating food with a strong smell.
- She should not covet another's food or crops, nor take them, because she will deliver a baby who will grow to have an abnormally strong desire to take or steal others' food and crops.
- Eating fruit bat during pregnancy will cause the placenta to move back into the uterus after delivery.

1. *Omesurech* is a hot bath. *Omengat* refers to the steaming done with medicinal plants and the first child ceremony that follows the hot bath.
2. Palau Society of Historians, *Traditions of Pregnancy and Birth* (Koror: Division of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, 1998), 18-19.
3. The *omeluchel* system is based on goods exchanged for other goods or services between a woman and her brother's wife. Traditional and contemporary marriages in Palau continue to carry similar traits of this system.

- The pregnant woman should not walk alone on the road. There must be a companion to watch and guide her so that she does not do restricted or prohibited things during her pregnancy.[4]

OMESURECH–HOT BATH

Preparation for the first-child ceremony begins with the hot bath. Days before the process begins, word is passed to appropriate relatives of the woman regarding the bath. Female kin of the *mlechell* (new mother going under the hot bath) also notify the man's parents of the bath's beginning and of the potential day of the omengat. All preparation for the hot bath and omengat are taken care of by the mlechell's parents, family, and clan relatives.

The hot bath may begin one or two months after the birth of the child. Dirrengechel Sariang Timulch, a 76-year-old traditional medicine practitioner from Aimeliik State, has been giving the hot bath to first-time mothers since she was 30 years old. She explains two divisions of omesurech in Palau,[5] one that follows the days allotted for the mlechell's clan and another used by followers of Modekngei.[6] This healing process of omesurech consists of a hot bath, drinking herbal medicine, and a final steam. Before the hot bath begins, the mother is told the basic protocols she has to follow.

During the bath, the mother removes all her clothes and enters the hot bath area, which consists of a bamboo floor. She sits on the *ulitech* (woven coconut sitting mat), and turmeric oil is applied all over her body. Turmeric oil aids in removing dark areas of the skin as well as protecting the skin from the hot bath water.

Sitting with her legs stretched out, she waits for the *mesurech* (skilled woman giving/performing the hot bath) to begin the process. An *osurech* (large boiling pot containing medicinal plants) is situated near the mesurech, who ladles the hot water into a small holding container and selects a few leaves to be used during the omesurech. The leaves are dipped in the water and are quickly slapped onto the woman's body. Depending on the particular training, different omesurech practices may vary; however, the hot bath usually begins from the head to the abdomen and down to the feet. A typical omesurech happens twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, for the allotted number of days set forth by the family. The following table shows two major divisions of hot bath practices and the types of plants involved.

1

2

4. Palau Society of Historians, *Traditions of Pregnancy and Birth*, Koror: Division of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, 1998: 1-2.
5. Dirrengechel Saraing Timulch, personal interview with author, 9 September, 2014.
6. Modekngei is an indigenous religion in which believers use indigenous medicinal plants for general ailments, sicknesses, and other major illnesses.

	House/Clan Days	Modekngei Days
Number of days for omesurech	1st Clan – 10 Days[7] 2nd Clan – 9 Days 3rd Clan – 8 Days 4th Clan – 7 Days	4 Days
Type of plant used in the omesurech	Leaves of the rebotel plant (*Syzgium samarangense*)	Leaves of kemokem (*Derris trifoliate Lour.*), kesiil (*Eugenia reinwardtiana*), kisakes (*Millettia pinnata*), ongael chelangel (*Pouteria obovata*)
Number of days of omatek[8]	None, as the last day of omesurech precedes the presentation day.	5 Days
Type of plants used for herbal shower during omatek	None	Kemokem, kesiil, kisakes
Boiled medicine to be drunk during omesurech	Leaves of the rebotel plant	Ongael (*Phaleria nisidai*)
Type of plant collected for *dechedechomel*[9]	Ulekelakel, chebludes, kerdeu, beraber, tiel a uek, malchianged (*Citrus aurantiiflia*), chiuetekill (*Lophopyxis maingaya*)	Ulekelakel, chebludes, kerdeu, beraber, tiel a uek, malchianged, chiuetekill
Type of plants collected for omengat, final steaming in *bliukel*[10]	Redechel ongor (*Pandanus tectorius Parkinson ex Du Roi*), bachiei, keskus er a bleuu (*Cymbopogon citratus*), keskus er a ked, sau, kukiut (*Cassytha filiformis L.*), kobesos, eamel, kertaku (*Decaspermum parviflorum*), cheskiik (*Eurya japonica Thunb*), ochod	Redechel ongor, bachiei, keskus er a bleuu, keskus er a ked, sau, kukiut, kobesos, eamel, kertaku, cheskiik, ochod

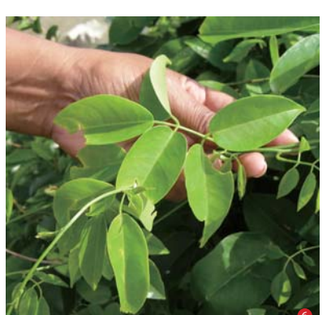
Table 1: Two major divisions of hot bath practices depicted by Dirrengechel Sariang Timulch.[11]

7. Clans 6 to 10 will follow days according to clan division in the village; for example, Clan 6 may use the number of days allotted to Clan 1 according to its association in the village organization.
8. *Omatek* is a period after the omesurech when the mlechell continues to rub oil on her body and shower with medicinal plants.
9. *Dechedechomel* are various plants chewed and swallowed with water. Traditionally, dechedechomel are eaten while bathing early in the morning in a cold-water bathing pool.
10. *Bliukel* is a steam hut that the man prepares for the steaming of the mlechell.
11. Dirrengechel Saraing Timulch, personal interview, 2014.

For the duration of omesurech, the mlechell showers with the hot bath water and remains adorned with the turmeric oil, constantly applying it as needed. Her mother, sister, and female kin attend to her and her baby. Omesurech is a healing process, and once a woman begins, her body enters a healing stage and must therefore be cared for until the end. In practicality, this hot bath is to help get rid of stretch marks and other skin discoloration around the neck and underarm that may have been a result of the pregnancy.

1 Traditional medicine healer giving a hot bath to a new mother. © Kelly Marsh

2 Bamboo floor where the *omesurech* takes place. © Omtilou Iyar

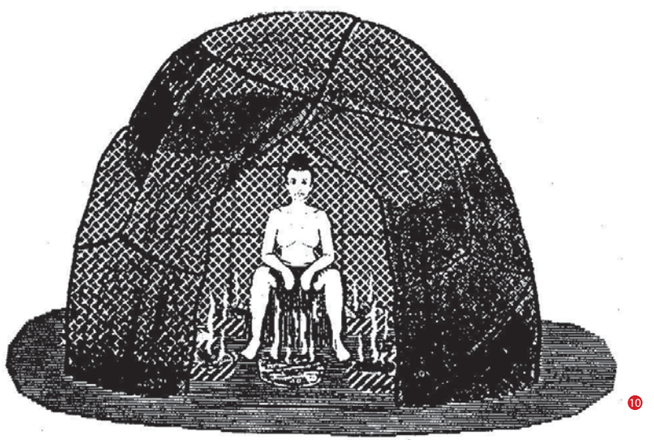


OMENGAT–FINAL STEAMING

Omengat is the steaming of the new mother and is the last stage of this healing process. In preparation for the omengat, the mesurech goes out to different areas to collect leaves, herbs, and flowers to be boiled for steaming purposes (see Table 1). During the omengat, a hollow stool is prepared for the mother to sit on. The *bliukel* (steam hut) is covered completely to keep the heat from escaping the hut. While sitting on a toilet-like bench (*osekoakl*), a basin with the hot medicinal water is placed under her, allowing a refreshing aromatic steam to enter the woman's private area and thus continue the healing that began during the omesurech. A basket of boiled giant taro (*brak*) will also be placed around the mlechell inside the bliukel.

Omatek is the time between the last day of a woman's omesurech and the day of the omengat ceremony. This is mostly practiced among those following the Modekngei hot bath rituals. During the omatek period, which consists of five days, the woman continues to be lathered with the turmeric oil and bathe herself with osurech of

3 Fresh leaves of important medicinal plant collected for the *osurech*. © Lynda D. Tellames
4 Boiling pot of medicinal plant ready for the *omesurech*. © Lynda D. Tellames
5 *Kisakes*. © Meked Besebes
6 *Kemokem*. © Meked Besebes
7 *Meliik*. © Meked Besebes
8 *Bachiei*. © Meked Besebes



kemokem, kesiil, and kisakes. She refrains from doing any hard work or leaving the house. After omesurech and omatek are complete, the final stage is omengat, which entails the steaming and presentation of the new mother.[12]

Omengat el Ralm–Unwed Mother's First Childbirth

All women who give birth to their first children undergo the whole process from omesurech to omengat, but the final presentation will be determined by whether each woman is married. An unwed mother who gives birth to her first child is cared for by her father or her maternal uncle. She is entitled to the same treatment as a married woman, but she is not to be adorned for a presentation ceremony. She does not go out to be viewed by the public, and all expenses of her omesurech are absorbed by the woman's father and her maternal uncle.

Umbilical Cord and Naming

There are two cultural practices to ensure prosperous futures for newborn children. First is the careful treatment of the umbilical cord when it falls off. When the umbilical cord falls off the baby's navel, the parents keep it in a safe place. If the child is a boy, the umbilical cord is firmly placed in the deep spot at the base of two coconut fronds, usually at their clan's house. This signifies that he will be good, skillful, and courageous in all of the arts of men. If the child is a girl,

12. Traditionally, a woman following the clan-day style of hot bath does not practice omatek; however, she continues to lather her skin with turmeric oil and drink herbal medicine for up to six to ten months. If an omengat occurs in another house, she will enter the bluikel for a second time and be presented again (*mekesebech*). Thereafter, she will eat her final medicine, called *osaur*, which symbolizes the end of all restriction for an omechell.

9 *Bluikel,* steam hut, for *omengat,* final steaming. © Lynda D. Tellames
10 Illustration showing a woman inside a *bluikel.* © Bureau of Arts and Culture

the cord is placed between the leaves of a taro plant, which signifies she will be lucky and diligent in her womanly arts. Other families will bury the umbilical cord in varying places under a stone in the middle of the *lkul a dui mesei*.[13] Secondly, the naming of a baby after someone in the family or clan who was skillful and knowledgeable is highly practiced to ensure a prosperous future for the child. This naming of a newborn is the responsibility of the father, who chooses a name from his family or clan.

Mesurech–Art of Healing

The *mesurech*, as a knowledgeable woman skilled in giving the hot bath, goes out for *mengerker* (gathering different plants and herbs used in the hot bath). The art of giving the hot bath is a specialized skill that not all women can obtain. Wise women who know the art of the hot bath usually observe among their families or clans to identify young women who have the interest and show natural strength and mobility to execute the proper way of healing the body. Another factor used to distinguish a potential mesurech is the woman's ability to withstand the heat and aromatic fragrance of the herbal medicine used. It may take years for an apprentice to accompany the mesurech, watching, preparing, and practicing, before she obtains all the proper skills to carry out the art of omesurech by herself. In addition, proper training in collecting the right medicinal herbs and plants, observing nature and weather, and using skills beyond the five senses is needed in becoming a successful mesurech.

Food Preparation

On the days leading up to the presentation of the new mother, a home transforms into an educational institution of Palauan traditional knowledge and basic norms. Other skills such as coconut basket weaving are also taught, and the baskets woven serve as food containers.

Crops such as taro, giant taro, and tapioca play a central role during omesurech and omengat. Food preparation involves the family, clan, and sometimes the village. Women work cooperatively to make *billum* (boiled, grated tapioca). In addition, taro is prepared to be boiled. Fish and pig are traditionally prepared by the men. Men go out fishing days prior to the ceremony, and a pig is killed and cooked to be served with other food. All this preparation culminates on the morning of the omengat. Female kin and several *buch el sechal*[14] work in cooperation to pack lunch plates to be distributed to villagers and other relatives attending the omengat.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13. *Lkul a dui* is an allocated taro field for a clan; thus, the wife of a chief tends and harvests this taro field for her husband's taro consumption and other clan-related customs. See "Taro Field Landscape" in this publication for a description of lkul a dui.

11 Young girl learning to weave coconut leaves for decoration. © Meked Besebes


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A significant aspect of Palauan cultural principles displayed during the omesurech and omengat is reciprocity of goods, services, and wealth between families and clans. The act of coming together as a clan and village to prepare food creates a platform where women and men share ideas, stories, and best practices for accomplishing tasks such as billum making or boiling hard taro. It is on these kinds of occasions that young women and men begin to learn their roles in their families and clans. More importantly, they learn new skills with the guidance of a trusted adult or elder such as taro preparation or skillfully dissecting a whole pig into different parts.

14. *Buch el sechal* is a female spouse who provide food and services to their husbands' families in customs and other related obligations.

12 Reef fish caught days before are cleaned and prepared for the *omengat*. © Meked Besebes

13 Pig preparation. © Omtilou Iyar

14 Pig head and other parts inserted into coconut basket. © Meked Besebes

15 *Billum* is grated tapioca wrapped in coconut leaves and boiled. It is common to see billum hanged as such during Palauan customs like omengat. © Meked Besebes

16 Taro preparation. © Bureau of Arts and Culture

17 Lobster caught on the near shore reef adds to the buffet set for the husband's relatives. © Meked Besebes

18 Fruit centerpiece. © Lynda D. Tellames

OMENGAT E MO TUOBED[15]–MARRIED WOMAN'S FIRST-CHILD CEREMONY

A certain level of preparation and dialogue goes on between the mlechell's family and her husband's family. Traditionally, the first child ceremony happens after a marriage exchange; however, the culture allows that the marriage exchange take place during this time as well. The mlechell's maternal uncle plays a greater role in terms of food preparation and all major logistics of the ceremony. The maternal uncle is responsible for preparing the *ngader*, food consisting of crops, meat, and other prepared meals that will be presented to the husband's family. These foods may be presented before or during the ceremony.

On the day of the ceremony, the mlechell begins her day by entering the bliukel to complete the final stage of omesurech, which is the omengat. Afterward, she takes a shower, during which she is allowed to use soap to clean her body. She then comes back to the house to get ready for her final presentation. In the meantime, her family, clan, and in some cases the village are busy packing food, decorating, and welcoming members of their family and clan to the house. The mlechell's mother continues to care for the baby while her father lightly supervises, being mindful not to step in on the responsibilities of the mlechell's maternal uncles (*okdemelel*). Young children run around playing and carrying out minor tasks while young girls serve drinks, showing excitement for what everything has culminated into.

Excitement runs high in the air as the husband's family begins to arrive, occupying the neatly arranged chairs, at which time they are greeted with a feast filled with the best food that the land can produce. As the day progresses, a meeting between the mlechell and her husband's family takes place to exchange money, which typically covers the *bus* (money for marriage) and *buuldiil* (money for the maternal uncle for taking care of her from pregnancy until the omesurech).

Kinswomen gather inside the house to get the mlechell ready. A traditional skirt that bears the family color is used for her final presentation. A *btek* (woven pandanus belt) is lashed around her stomach. While her aunts prepare the finest adornment for her hair and other body ornaments, her younger sister and female cousins, who have not gone through the process, watch ardently, questioning and showing excitement, for they know that their own times will come. When she is finally ready, word is passed to the mlechell's husband's relatives that she is ready. A senior family or clan member of her husband comes to cover her neck with valuable Palauan money.[16] This money will be returned to the family afterwards.

15. The first-child ceremony takes place only when the first child is born. The woman may go through the hot bath and steaming for her subsequent children for healing purposes but is not presented as in the first.

16. Dirrengechel Sariang Timulch explains that the purpose of covering the mlechell's neck with Palauan money is to show that she is married and is accepted to her husband's family.

19 Coconut basket filled with taro and other goods. © Sylvia Kloulubak

20 Plastic tub filled with consumer goods. © Bureau of Arts and Culture

21 Highly valued food piled up on a *boks,* food pedestal, presented to the husband's family. © Sylvia Kloulubak

22 *Toluk,* turtle shell money, and US currency exchanged for food during the first-child ceremony. © Sylvia Kloulubak

When all formalities of the day have finished, the mlechell is led out of the house. Two women escort her to her final presentation. Typically, a significant paternal aunt will hold her elbow while another aunt will place the *telutau* (woven coconut frond) in front of her to walk on. She is presented on a stage that has been decorated. This presentation is to show her body, which has been healed, and to celebrate her health. More importantly, it's a depiction of her family and clan's deep affection for the new mother and the newborn child. The careful attention to detail, time, and effort spent in this healing process are what the mlechell's family want to display to the husband's family. In carrying out their respective roles, members of the family and clan strengthen the unity among themselves as well as with the husband's family and clan.

23 The healing mother with her son. © Meked Besebes
24 Female relatives adorning the new mother with traditional attire and body ornaments from her clan. © Meked Besebes
25 Mother escorted by female relatives; she wears her husband's Palauan bead money around her neck. © Meked Besebes

While standing, the mlechell has one hand underneath her breast, crossing to hold her opposite elbow, which is protruding upward. Containers filled with medicinal plants are placed in front of her. A significant woman from her husband's family will perform the last process of omesurech by splashing the mlechell's feet with medicinal plants. Her husband's female kin begin dancing toward her, singing, "*A chedalkikii, A chedalkikii, A chedil a di koiei ma ngalk a di koiei*." They then continue to sing this joyous song and other songs to welcome the mlechell into their family and to celebrate her health and the life of the newborn child.

This ceremony is a true celebration of life, for it unites people and enhances cultural roles among men, women, families, and clans. Other variations of childbirth exist in Palau; for example, the presentation of the first child ceremony in Angaur consists of the woman climbing scaffolding to take a seat higher than everyone else. The Palau first-child ceremony continues to be practiced in Palau as well as in communities of Palauans residing in Guam, Saipan, and the United States.

26 *Telutau,* woven coconut frond. © Bureau of Arts and Culture
27 The *mlechell's* sister lays down a *telutau* for the *mlechell* to walk on. © Sylvia Kloulubak
28 Walking on a *telutau.* © Sylvia Kloulubak

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FIRST CHILD (*MOWA DIIYE*) TRADITION ON SONSOROL ISLAND[17]

Acknowledgement and Preparation

After missing menstruation for a month and knowing that she is pregnant, the daughter will inform her mother. Her mother will then inform her other daughters, her sisters, her own mother, and her aunts, as well as the pregnant daughter's father. Thus informed, they begin the process of collecting the daughter's leftovers and all her food scraps. The daughter's husband and his father will husk the daughter's coconut drink but will not throw the husks just anywhere, for this is taboo. They will collect and store them all in a separate place all on their own, separate from other people's trash.

17. Sonsorol Island is one of the sixteen states of Palau.

29 Containers filled with medicinal plants in front of the *mlechell*. © Lynda D. Tellames

30, 31 The *mlechell* encircled by her husband's relatives, singing and dancing to welcome her and the baby into their family. © Lynda D. Tellames

Josepha Kintoki states that the new pregnant woman will be made to sit and learn things she needs to follow for the duration of her pregnancy:[18]

- The pregnant daughter will not be expected to do much work; she will not lift anything heavy, for it may cause miscarriage.
- She will not walk far from home or outside the village, for people watching her may gossip about her out of spite.
- She will not touch ugly birds, lest her child be born with unhealthy skin.
- She will not hold the head of a turtle, lest her child be born blind.
- She will not hold a fruit bat, lest her child be born with ears like the fruit bat's, having a smaller dimple within the ear.
- She will not take a bath after sunset, lest her child grow up with night blindness.
- She will not hide tobacco or anything else, lest her child be born with dark spots on his/her body.

Meals and Meal Preparation and Taboos

The pregnant daughter will not drink the last drops of the coconut juice or the fresh tuba juice, and she will not eat leftovers. The first servings go to her, though. She will eat pounded *moruye* (taro corm) and drink coconut juice or fresh tuba juice. She will eat only fresh foods and drink plenty of coconut juice so that her child will be born with a clean body.

She is not allowed to eat with her girlfriends or be tempted to eat stolen food or improperly acquired foodstuffs, lest her child be born ugly and with a bad personality. She will not drink coconuts that are not matured, lest she have a miscarriage. This may cause her to have other miscarriages. She will not drink from a deformed coconut (*riyapin*), lest her child be born ugly. She will not drink from coconuts that are *sibwerihotu* (two coconuts from the same spikelet in a bunch) nor eat banana fruits that are conjoined, lest she have twins. She will not eat shoreline birds or some types of tern (*bwirih* and *keingaw*), lest her child be born with foolish and senseless characteristics (*ranimoru*) that will develop into mental illness when the child grows older. Furthermore, she will not eat fish that looks thin and sharp, lest her child grow up with a bad temper.

18. Josepha Kintoki, personal interview by Lina Kintoki (translated by Laura Ierago Miles), 11 August 2014.

In the sixth month of pregnancy, the pregnant daughter will not lie on her back, lest her unborn child sink into her backbone, causing a difficult delivery. In the seventh and eighth month of pregnancy, the daughter's sisters and aunts will weave a small mat for the child out of small and soft pandanus leaves as well as a *yep*, a skirt of pandanus leaves, for the pregnant daughter. If she has another extra skirt, she will keep it for the child to use at birth. In the ninth month, when the pregnant daughter begins having labor pains, her mother will inform her sisters and her daughters-in-law. The daughter's mother will take her pregnant daughter to the *ipporu* (menstruation and delivery hut) together with a midwife (*suyawaur*, literally meaning "easy exit"). The midwife will be responsible for the delivery.

Labor and Birth

At birth, if the newborn does not breathe, its nose will be sucked on or it will be lifted up and spanked under its feet for it to cry before it is put in the new mother's arms. The umbilical cord will then be tied with a fiber of coconut husk, and a shell will be used to cut it. The female in-laws will have cooked porridge made of the young white coconut meat brought to the new mother at the ipporu.

The midwife will massage the new mother to deliver the afterbirth (*hiiye niweisi*) if it fails to come out with the child at birth. After all is done with the new mother, the midwife will gather all scraps from delivery, including the afterbirth, and bury them at a *hapiri imweri ipporu* (a space nearby the ipporu where all scraps from ipporu are buried).

The new mother's mother (new grandmother) will take the newborn, lay it on her legs, and bathe it. After that she will rub coconut oil on the newborn's body to keep it warm, after which she will lay the baby first on the mother's yep and next on the new mother so that the new mother can nurse the baby.

Postpartum, Baths, and Herbal Medicines

After the delivery, the new mother will wear a woven belt made of banana fiber (*somisomi*) around her belly with the belly button

pushed in and tucked under the belt. This is done to prevent *diiya mouraho,* meaning big or sagging belly. It is now taboo for her to touch her own hair, lest her hair start falling out. She will instead have a *sitabo* (a sailfish bone or a small twig) adorn her hair for her to use to scratch her head. She will not walk in a drizzling rain. She will bathe in the ocean every morning before sunrise and every evening before sunset. After every morning and evening ocean bath, she will return to the ipporu to have her herbal sitz bath. Her mother would have prepared an herbal sitz bath consisting of warmed leaves of *nnotu* (beach naupaka; *Scaevola taccada*), laying them in taro leaves (*moruye*) on top of a woven mat made of coconut fronds. After each sitz bath she will rub coconut oil on her body to keep warm.

After one month of living at the ipporu, the new mother and newborn will move to a *bungutohow* (small room outside of the main house built specifically for the mother and newborn).[19] The new mother will continue her ocean bath, but after each bath she will bathe in herbal medicine called *halafilefi*, literally meaning "to bring back to its normal size." This consists of the leaves and bark of specific trees boiled in water and prepared for the new mother's bath.

A move from ipporu to bungutohow normally occurs at the new moon; if a woman was admitted to ipporu at the new moon, she will exit and move to the bungutohow at the next new moon. If a woman is admitted after the new moon, such as at the quarter moon, she will have to stay past the next new moon to meet the number of days required before her move to the bungutohow. However, even at this stage, if someone is heard yelling out the words, "*E ringa malama dairi bongi*!" ("The moon appears in the western skies!") only then can the new mother move on to the bungutohow. The day of her move, the midwife will accompany her to her ocean bath. At this time, the midwife will wash the new mother's hair and rub fresh coconut milk onto her hair and her body. After this, the new mother will be led to the ipporu to do her herbal sitz bath before the move to the bungutohow.

The door to the bungutohow is restricted to only the new mother's mother (new grandmother) and the midwife. This door is called the *famosou* door, the opening from which the newborn's soiled clothes and bath water are tossed out.

19. Josepha Kintoki, personal interview, 2014.

After two months at the bungutohow, they then move to the *immarap* (main family house). At the immarap, the new mother cannot touch other women's or children's heads because she is considered *lei reduweisi*, a woman with a child she is still caring for. During her year at the immarap, the new mother continues to be fed well so that she keeps a healthy weight because she is still nursing her baby. If she doesn't eat well, she may lose her appetite and lose weight; she may then develop a postpartum ailment called *letatorahi*, meaning "postpartum loss of appetite."

Family Relationship (*Hautout*)

When the new mother and baby move to the immarap, the in-laws bring fish and coconuts for drinking to the new mother's residence while her family provides the starches such as baked and pounded taro. This process symbolizes a closer relationship between the two families. Members would give respect to each other for the rest of their lives.

BIRTH PRACTICES IN HATOHOBEI ISLAND[20]

When a young woman misses her menstruation, she tells her mother. A certain level of care is given to the new mother. Her father and mother bring special food such as taro for her to eat. A special mat is designated for the young mother, and she is instructed to sleep in the same position and not to maneuver from one side to another, for it will cause difficulty during childbirth. Specific advice is given to the mother for her and the baby's wellness. Her mat will not be folded when she gets up, and no one is allowed to walk over her. She should eat properly, without walking around or eating while standing, and she should return home before sundown. After childbirth, her mother prepares for her an herbal bath with leaves of rebotel (*Syzgium samarangense*) plants. The new mother would give herself the herbal bath with rebotel leaves. This is to help cleanse her body from impurities and discharge associated with any pregnancy.

20. Kuterdis Lorenzo, Regina Andrew, and Sisma Andrew, interview with author in Hatohobei State in Palau's Southwest Islands, 22 July 2014.

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Bel Kol Ceremony of the Yangoru

Naomi Faik-Simet

This is a historical event for me as I look forward to reconcile with my in-law and his children, as they are my sister's children. I have to do this to be free from it… blood is thicker than water.

—Joseph Rhumbuku Faik[1]

INTRODUCTION

Peace ceremonies are known locally as *bel kol* ceremonies, with the Tok Pisin term "bel kol" literally meaning "belly cold"; this describes a tense situation that is cooled down with some payment for the purpose of making peace. These ceremonies are important forms of Papua New Guinea's intangible cultural heritage that promote social cohesion and unity among disputing families and groups through the use of traditional knowledge—that is, heritage that has been passed down through generations and has been the key element used in solving issues between opposing groups.

This paper discusses how peace and reconciliation ceremonies are undertaken in Yangoru, East Sepik Province, in Papua New Guinea and gives an account of a ceremony that took place in Kwaghuie Village on 23 December 2013. It describes the processes involved and further portrays the challenges and successes of such a ceremony in promoting peace in the community.

1. Joseph Faik, personal interview with author, 22 December 2013, Tuomilik Hamlet, Kwaghuie Village, Yangoru, East Sepik Province.

SETTING

Yangoru is located in the Prince Alexander Range, situated in the foothills of Mount Turu. People there speak the Yangoru dialect of the Boiken language. It is a society known for its highly socio-political beliefs and traditions. According to ethnographic accounts by Gesch[2] and Roscoe,[3] the Yangoru Boiken have a long history of contact with the outside world. The first visitors were Divine Word Missionaries who came in 1912 and were later followed by many similar evangelizing tours that saw the establishment of a permanent mission presence in 1948. By the 1930s, labor recruiters and administrative patrols had begun to appear. These contacts had significant effects on Yangoru ritual and cultural life.

Due to its long history of contact with the Western world, many of its traditions have been affected as a result of the decline in some ritual practices, such as the separate male and female initiation ceremonies. Mortuary and peace ceremonies, however, are still being practiced today. In spite of the changes that have occurred in this region, the people are deeply rooted in their belief systems and strive to maintain their traditional ways of doing things, which has kept their culture alive for generations.

CONFLICT SITUATION

On Thursday, 9 November 2011, Allan Naemon, age 38, was murdered in Kwaghuie Village in the Yangoru area by Jacob Faik, who was in his mid-thirties and was Allan's close maternal relative. Allan was the son of Jacob's paternal aunt. This event was devastating for both families. It was described as the worst incident to have ever happened in the history of Kwaghuie. After the murder, all the houses and property belonging to the Faik family were destroyed and burnt down (Figure 1). Being the daughter of the head of the Faik family, Joseph Faik, we were directly affected by this situation. Jacob is the son of my father's deceased elder brother and was, therefore, held responsible for the offense caused by his nephew. This tense situation continued to affect the lives of others and the community at large. It also resulted in the displacement of families. This became an ongoing problem in the community as the deceased's relatives

2. Patrick F. Gesch, "Initiative and Initiation. A Cargo Cult-type Movement in the Sepik against Its Background in Traditional Village Religion," *Studia Instituti Anthropos* 33 (St. Augustin, Germany: Anthropos-Institut, 1985).

3. Paul B. Roscoe, "'In the Shadow of the Tambaran': Female Initiation among the Ndu of the Sepik Basin," In *Gender Rituals*, ed. Nancy C. Lutkehaus and Paul B. Roscoe (New York: Routledge, 1995): 55 – 81.

demanded some form of compensation from the family of the accused in order to have the situation resolved and restore any peace in the community.

PEACE PROCESS

Over one-and-a-half years after the incident, community leaders decided to have peace talks with the family of the victim to resolve the matter. These talks started in June 2013 and continued through to November of the same year. The advice of village elders was sought as to how the peace ceremony should be undertaken. Usually, only men with traditional knowledge are qualified to be mediators at such ceremonies. They are the people who will deliver the *palpal* (a Tok Pisin term that means peace) to the grieving family. A special kind of language is used during the ceremony that must be learned by the mediator over many years. Today, younger male leaders such as village ward councilors are learning the processes of holding peace talks from the elders.

Given the highly socio-political status of the Yangoru people, whose land and belief system are passed down through the patrilineal line, women are seldom given the opportunity to be mediators. However, in some situations, women were used as *palpal*. The term "palpal" is derived from a plant (also known as *balbal* in Tok Pisin) that is also

1 Remnants of the destroyed Tuomilik Hamlet, the residence of the Faik family. © Naomi Faik-Simet

used as a symbol of peace in Yangoru. This was used in the ceremony held in Kwaghuie Village in December 2013.

ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE FOR PEACE

As in many conflict situations, the process of obtaining knowledge for peace is quite challenging. In this instance, the Naemon family (the family of the deceased) of the Mereghombi clan demanded a sum of PGK 65,000 payment in compensation from the Faik family of the Nemenduon clan. This payment was to be made before any peace could be reached by both parties.

The knowledgeable elders whose advice was sought on how to carry out the peace process included Pieri Nahula from Baimuru Village (Figure ②), Johnny Sausengu from Simbomie Village, and Joseph Yehilemo from Karapia Village (Figure ③). These men were not from Kwaghuie Village and remained neutral throughout the discussions. This is usually the case when deciding who should be involved as mediators. It gets complicated when peace mediators are selected from the same village where the problem exists. It was decided finally that given the time frame in which the incident had occurred (over two years prior), the Faik family would host the bel kol ceremony and not compensate the grieving family, as the person who committed the offense was being held in custody. To pay compensation would be in contempt of the court proceedings. This had to be agreed upon by the Naemon family, who finally accepted the decision and paved the way for the bel kol ceremony to take place.

2 Pieri Nahula (*left*), a peace mediator, provided advice on the peace process. This meeting took place in Tuomilik Hamlet. © Naomi Faik-Simet

3 Another peace mediator, Joseph Yehilemo, and wife, Julie Yehilemo, in Karapia Village. © Naomi Faik-Simet

PEACE ELEMENTS

Prior to the ceremony, the Faik family, led by Joseph Faik, was tasked to organize contributions in the form of money to give as palpal to the grieving family. The money had to be accompanied by traditional money known as *kol*. A key feature and symbol of peace is this kol, which must be included in any ceremony in Yangoru. The value of the kol ranges between PGK 1,000 and 5,000 per item. It is a valuable possession to many families in Yangoru that can also be used for bride price (payment for a bride) and initiation or death ceremonies. Many have successfully used this form of traditional item to resolve conflicts at the village level. This practice has been going on for generations and proves to be the essence of any peace ceremony.

The kol used for the ceremony was priced at PGK 4,000 and was made possible by cash contributions from other family and clan members (Figure 4). Careful instructions were issued by the elderly men that only a particular kol accepted by the head of the grieving family could be purchased. This had to be followed to avoid the embarrassment of the grieving family rejecting the kol during the ceremony. This has happened in many peace ceremonies in the past, so purchasing the kol had to be done with the consent of the head of the victim's family. In this case, Peter Naemon, the father of the deceased, accepted the kol before its purchase. Having accomplished this, a date was set for other cash contributions to come forth from members of the village community.

4 Yangoru traditional money, known as *kol*. © Naomi Faik-Simet

THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF COMMUNICATING MESSAGES

Messages to notify others in the village about the date for contributions were sent out by beating a wooden slit-drum, known in Tok Pisin as *garamut*. This distinctive system of communication is still maintained in Yangoru. Because it can be heard over long distances, it enables the coded messages about ceremonies to be conveyed to a much wider community, enabling the maximum participation from all families concerned (Figure 5). Upon receiving these messages, families gathered at the house of the accused's family to begin the contribution process (Figure 6).

5 Sending coded messages through the *garamut*. © Naomi Faik-Simet

In such a situation, families gain support from kinship and clan relations, which extend to include their in-laws. Other concerned members of the community also participate through their contributions. A record of the contributions is usually kept by the head of the family to enable future assistance to those who have contributed (Figure 7). Contributions are seen as creating reciprocal relations through which one becomes indebted to others who may require assistance when organizing their own ceremonies. In total, the Faik family collected PGK 14,797 by Sunday, 22 December 2013. Having accomplished this, the family was then ready to undertake the peace ceremony.

6 Family members gather for the contribution process in Tuomilik Hamlet. © Naomi Faik-Simet

7 Joseph Faik keeping a record of the contributions. © Naomi Faik-Simet

SOME CHALLENGES

Just a few days before the staging of the ceremony, the village councilor announced to the community that the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Yangoru–Sausia Electorate would be present to officiate the ceremony. This then raised concerns of the local people to better plan the ceremony. The councilor, Robert Willie, took charge of the planning of the program of the ceremony and also decided on the participants for the occasion. This arrangement then conflicted with the accused family's initial plan of having a ceremony free of political influence. It so happened that the MP canceled his plans to attend the peace ceremony at the last minute, thus raising a lot of uncertainty among the people. Nevertheless, just a day before the set date, the family of the accused made final preparations to host the ceremony.

These are some of the challenges that local people are faced with every day when ceremonial activities get muddled up with political motives. It is wise for many families to take ownership of their own ceremonies, using knowledgeable people to plan and execute them rather than allowing politicians to interfere in such activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The ceremony that took place between the two families was a bel kol ceremony, performed to cool down the tense situation. It did not compensate for the life of the deceased, but rather was seen as a first step to ensure peace in the community.

Before staging the ceremony, relatives of the accused gathered in Tuomilik Hamlet to finalize the contributions. The occasion also allowed for late contributions from others who wanted to participate in the peace process (Figures 8 and 9). Contributions from individuals and families indicated their support to see peace prevail.

Other preparations that day included the display of plants symbolizing peace and a notice board publicizing the occasion (Figure 10). The plants displayed included palpal (symbolizing peace) and the cocoa plant (symbolizing wealth). By displaying these plants, the Faik family expressed their sincerity in apologizing to the victim's family over the incident that had kept them apart for two years. As the victim was a blood relative of the Faik family and was seen as a source of generating income for the family, the incident shattered all forms of financial support for his family. For this reason, this situation was represented by the cocoa plant, which is known for its cash value.

8 Family members from Kwaghuie Village making cash contributions. © Naomi Faik-Simet

9 Family members from Karapia Village contributing cash towards the peace ceremony. © Naomi Faik-Simet

10 Symbolic plants: the *palpal* (*left*), symbolizing peace, and cocoa (*right*), symbolizing wealth. The bucket at the center holds the cash contributions. © Naomi Faik-Simet

ORATORY PERFORMANCE

Oratory, in this case, is a form of performance that is part of Yangoru culture passed down across generations and is a key ingredient in peace ceremonies. An important aspect of the preparations was the speech made by the leader of the Nemenduon clan to which the accused family belongs. He emphasized solidarity in maintaining peace among the family (Figure 11).

Another powerful speech made was by Johnny Sausengu, who spoke on behalf of the Faik family and addressed the past activities that the family had been successful in hosting. He emphasized the importance of staging the bel kol ceremony so that the younger generations could witness the importance of making peace (Figure 12). Other speeches that accompanied contributions stressed the need to maintain and support family relations in such difficult situations.

11 Head of the Nemenduon clan making his speech during the contributions. © Naomi Faik-Simet

12 Johnny Sausengu making his speech. © Naomi Faik-Simet

Following the speeches was the display of money on a bamboo stick, known locally as a *nok*. In any ceremonial activity in Yangoru, it is a traditional rule that money be displayed publicly on a nok for the others to see the full amount accumulated by the family (Figure 13). This nok is then carried in a procession led by the accused family to the place of the grieving family. In this case, the nok was held by the daughter of the head of the family, Joseph Faik. She led the procession to Kungere Hamlet, where the peace ceremony took place. She was accompanied by other family members who held the other items, such as the palpal plant and the traditional kol money.

PEACE CEREMONY

The peace ceremony was staged in Kungere Hamlet and attracted people from all four local-level government areas in East Yangoru. It was a historical event for many who attended, as it involved close family members on opposing sides. Relatives of the deceased gathered to witness the ceremony as many were unsure whether

13 Traditional *nok* used to display money. © Naomi Faik-Simet

the payment would be accepted by the grieving family. Before any speech took place, the master of ceremonies placed the bel kol items in the center of the *kumaingie* (main arena where the ceremony took place) for others to see (Figure 14).

The ceremony began with an introductory speech by the ward member from Karapia Village, who gave a brief description of the tragic incident in 2011. He then stressed the importance of peace between the two families as this situation had affected the lives of many others in the community. After this he asked the father and brother of the deceased to come forward and receive the bel kol money. This was the moment everyone had been waiting for —the grieving family coming forward to receive the peace items from the accused's family. The ward member then asked both families to shake hands in agreement to show that there was now peace between the families (Figure 15).

14 *Bel kol* items placed on the *kumaingie* before the ceremony took place. © Naomi Faik-Simet

This concluded the bel kol ceremony. Both parties were satisfied and could interact more freely with each other and continue their normal lives in the community. It was important, especially for the younger generation of both families, to witness this event and have a sense of appreciation for ceremonies that promote peace in society.

CONCLUSION

The bel kol ceremony held between the Faik and Naemon families was not to compensate the life of the deceased but was a first step towards completing the peace process. This is how such ceremonies are conducted in Papua New Guinea, and especially in Yangoru. Such occasions are important in maintaining and strengthening family relations and also in enabling normalcy and continuity of life in the community.

15 Peace ceremony accomplished—the two conflicting families shaking hands in agreement for peace. © Naomi Faik-Simet

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Namata: Ritual Seclusion among the Tolai of New Britain

Jacob Simet

So too in tribal societies the ties of kinship between individuals come out most dramatically in the focal points of a person's life—birth, initiation, feasts, marriage, death. The action group that mobilizes around a person in support, celebration, or mourning is in almost all societies crystallized from networks of the individual's relatives and in-laws.

—Robert M. Keesing[1]

INTRODUCTION

Namata, as a body of knowledge, is a ritual sequence that is practiced by the Tolai of New Britain. Despite over 140 years of contact with the outside world, this ritual sequence is very much an important part of the cultural life of the Tolai. The sequence comprises three main segments, with each segment markedly separate from the others; however, the whole sequence is known as namata. The three segments of the sequence are *wuwuai warwaba* (to throw into hiding), *paraparau* (seclusion), *and namata* (emergence).

The namata ritual sequence is a public statement about a young man leaving childhood and entering into adulthood, and in this sense it is a rite of passage. On the other hand, the ritual process is also about raising *tabu* (shell-money) for the expressed purpose of paying bride-price for the young man. At the same time, it is an occasion for a family to amass tabu for themselves, in which sense it is seen as a commercial venture. However, over and above the issues of raising tabu for marriage and/or amassing tabu as family wealth, a lot of the rituals of wuwuai warwaba, paraparau, and namata have a great deal to do with matters of kinship.

1. Robert M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), 218.

The various rituals in the three stages specifically require the participation and performance of and by certain people who stand in particular relationships to the key players of the ceremonies. Even the materials and symbols used in the ceremonies have to be of particular relation to the key persons, whether these be the boys or their parents. In the end they are about checking, rekindling, and reinforcing kinship relations.

1 Coils of *tabu* being displayed on bamboo cross-bars before ritual use. © Jacob Simet

All of the above can be reasons for the organizing and staging of a namata ritual sequence. Sometimes one or two of these reasons are emphasized more than others. Tabu is the traditional Tolai medium of exchange still being used today, and it occupies a central position in the cultural life of the people.

Knowledge of namata is generally held by all the men and boys. However, some parts of this knowledge are held by certain men only, in that class of knowledge that may be known as esoteric or restricted knowledge. This knowledge is held by a man or group of men on behalf of a family or clan and is not freely available to all. The way in which this knowledge system is maintained by families and individuals is consistent with certain rules and guidelines.

THE NAMATA SEQUENCE

Before contact with the outside world, the ritual sequence would take at least three months. In recent times, this period has been reduced to between one week and two weeks. The reduction in the duration was mainly due to the time pressures on young men undergoing this ritual, such as those of school and work.

The ritual sequence starts with the wuwuai warwaba, followed by the paraparau, and lastly, the namata.

Wuwuai Warwaba (To Throw into Hiding)

The rite of wuwuai warwaba is a small occasion attended by close relatives and friends of a young man. It often takes place at the young man's parents' house at about 19:00. It involves the *warkinim* (capture) of the young man, who is then taken into seclusion somewhere in the bush. After this small ceremony, the young man is accompanied into seclusion by a group of boys, mostly his friends and some senior male relatives.

An important part of this rite is the payment of tabu by the boy's parents to those who will accompany him in the place of seclusion. This is followed by a tribute payment in tabu, known as *warlapang*. This is a ritual payment found in many other ceremonial activities of the Tolai and involves the payment of pieces of tabu by all to the host or sponsor of a ceremony. This is one of the ways to raise tabu for an individual or family. In the namata sequence, this is the first occasion for raising tabu.

Paraparau (Seclusion)

Paraparau is the period of seclusion undergone by the young man. This can take between one and two weeks. While in the past the place of seclusion could be anywhere in the bush, today this is mostly at the *taraiu* (*tubuan* sanctuary).[2] What happens in the sanctuary during the period of seclusion is not for public knowledge. The men and boys are not allowed to talk about what may have happened in seclusion to anyone in the village. After the seclusion period, the men and boys emerge in the namata ceremony. A case study will be presented here to discuss the namata rite.

The case study to be presented is one that was staged by ToDi Turagil for his two sons, David and Tobual, from 15 to 19 September 2013. While this is normally done for one young man only, some parents do opt to have more than one son undergo this process at the same time, as ToDi decided to do this time.

Namata (Emergence)

After three days of seclusion in the bush, the two young men and their companions emerge in the village for the namata. In the case of ToDi's sons, this was on 19 September 2013.

2. The *tubuan* is the representation of a spirit, which can be an ancestral spirit or a spirit of the wild. In some cases the spirit becomes the deity of the clan.

2 *Warlapang* (tribute payment to tubuan). © Jacob Simet

On the night before the day of emergence, the boys and other young men bring a number of items into the village. This happens under the cover of darkness, around 1:00. The main three items brought into the village are the *tulu*,[3] *balau*,[4] and the posts for the *pal na mama rikai*.[5] These items are placed in a designated place near ToDi's house.

On the night before the day of the namata, a lot of activity occurs in the place of seclusion. All the men and young boys are busy putting the final touches on the above-listed items. Apart from these items, there is the important house-top, the pal na mama rikai. This is the centerpiece of the emergence ceremony. The men and young boys are also busy preparing their costumes for the next day while, at the same time, the women and girls are busy in the village, mostly preparing the food but also setting the stage for the next day's ceremony.

After completing the food and other preparations, the women and girls go to sleep. The men in the place of seclusion, however, do not sleep. Instead, they stay awake until after midnight, when they will bring the above-mentioned items into the village. When they are ready to proceed into the village, someone starts up the *konga* (bull-roarer). This makes a weird sound in the quiet of the night and is said to be the spirit of the namata entering the village. On hearing this sound, those women and girls who are not yet asleep must go into their houses, lest they might set eyes on the spirit.

Accompanied by the sound of the konga, the men and young boys stealthily move into the village. It is important that they do not make any noise while doing this, so that the only sound that the women and girls can hear is that of the konga. This is so they will believe it was the spirit coming into the village and not any humans. Thus, when they wake in the morning and see the things that were erected in the night, they will attribute them to the spirit that entered the village in the night.

On reaching a designated area in ToDi's yard, the men and young boys erect the tulu, the balau and the posts for the pal na mama rikai. Again they do this in silence, still playing on the idea that the spirit has entered the village. During this time the konga is silent. On completion of the tasks, the konga starts up again, and the men and young boys head for the place of seclusion the same way they have come. On reaching their destination, they stay awake for the rest of the night, mostly completing some of the preparations for the next day.

3. The *tulu* is a thirty- to forty-meter-long bamboo pole that is elaborately decorated with other plant material and colorful birds' feathers. A clan has its own tulu. The decoration on a tulu gives it its identity and separates it from other tulu that may belong to other clans.
4. *Balau* are mere saplings that have been decorated for the ocassion by putting them over a fire. This gives a black-and-white curvilinear look on the saplings. They are planted in the ground around the tulu.
5. The *pal na mama rikai* is the model house that becomes the centerpiece of the namata.

The items erected near ToDi's house will be a sight for the women to behold when they wake up in the morning. The tulu is a very long length of bamboo, about fifty feet high. It is planted into the ground, in the center of the ceremonial ground prepared for the next day's activities. It is elaborately decorated with all kinds of items, including ferns and an assortment of bird feathers. The important part of this structure is the last two meters, which is even more elaborately decorated.

Around the base of the tulu, a number of stakes are planted in a circle. These are a set of balau that are larger in size than some of the other ones in the outer circle. Close to the base of the tulu, the posts for the pal na mama rikai are also erected, positioned to hold the pal na mama rikai when it is brought in the next day. An outer circle of smaller balau is created around these erected items and is decorated with *wup* (bird feathers). This is then the stage for the namata of the next day.

3 The ceremonial ground set for the next day with *tulu* and *balau*. © Jacob Simet.

On waking up in the morning, the women and girls notice the new structures but keep their distance from them. It is not until well into the afternoon that the ceremony will start, so they will have to contain their curiosity and keep their distance for almost the whole day.

Toward the afternoon, people begin to trickle into the ceremonial ground. As a large number of the men and young boys are in the place of seclusion, a majority of those who are gathering are women and girls. They are seated around the ceremonial ground, but still keep their distance.

After some time, a shrieking sound is heard in the distance from the direction of the place of seclusion. It is recognizably the konga of the previous night. This is the men now making their procession into the village and to the ceremonial ground for the ceremony. For the next few minutes, the konga still sounds in the distance, meaning that the party is moving very slowly. Slowly the party emerges at the end of the road leading up to ToDi's house and is now visible to the small expectant crowd. They appear like a mess of leaves at first sight. It is hard to see the men and the young boys as each of them is armed with branches of trees, with leaves covering the whole lot of them. As they move closer, some of them are visible, but the rest of them are still hidden from sight. In the middle and still hidden from sight is the pal na mama rikai that has the two young men, David and ToBual, still securely hidden by a ring of men and young boys with their branches. At this stage some of the women begin to wail, calling the names of people, mainly men, who have passed on in the past.

4 The men entering the village while keeping the boys in concealment. © Jacob Simet

On entering the ceremonial ground, the men remain standing with their branches still concealing the two young men and their pal na mama rikai. They remain standing to allow the house-top to be fitted onto the posts that had been erected the night before. Once successfully fitted, the men drop their branches and sit down, revealing the two young men and their pal na mama rikai. In an instant, a horde of women storm the house-top and start ripping off little parcels that are suspended under it. These are eggs that came in with the house. These women are mostly of ToDi's clan and stand as aunts to the two young men. The eggs signify the first presents to them from the two young men, as this will be one of the main responsibilities later in life.

5 David and ToBual emerging from the *pal na mama rikai* . © Jacob Simet

After the men have sat down, the women go into action with the *warlapang*. This is the distribution of *buai* (betelnut) to all.

Soon after the warlapang, a silence seems to grip the crowd, during which people can only whisper to each other. The silence is one of expectation as if something is about to happen. All eyes are fixed on the pal na mama rikai that has been brought in by the men. People are keen to know who this particular design belongs to—whether it has been passed down through a clan or is a new design that might be up for sale at the end of the ceremony. Unfortunately, this

particular house belonged to ToDi's father's clan and could not be put up for sale. It has been used by ToDi's family for a fee in tabu. At this point, the maternal relatives of the two boys throw fifty fathoms of tabu on top of the house as a payment for the person who designed and built the house. This payment is known as *u mawoko* and *wamong*.

ToDi explains that the house design belonged to the *tubuan* IaRigoi.[6] This tubuan belonged to his wife Margaret's clan, to which the two boys also belonged. In this sense, then, Margaret was the heir of the knowledge of this item; however, due to the fact that only males can control ritual knowledge, she could not be a custodian of this knowledge. Her two sons, however, are now in a position to acquire this knowledge and be custodians over it on behalf of the clan.

6. ToDi Turagil, personal interview with author, 2014.

6 The *pal na mama rikai* depicting the motif of the *tubuan* IaRigoi. © Jacob Simet
7 Margaret, heir to the house design but not custodian of the knowledge. © Jacob Simet

The *tubuan* is a masked figure that is an important ritual object of the Tolai (Figure ⑧). It is the spiritual representation of an ancestor or deity of the clan, so every clan has a tubuan which is clearly distinguished from other clan tubuan. The motif of the clan tubuan can be replicated on other ritual objects for use by the clan only and no others, as in the case of the pal na mama rikai in Figure ⑨. The center figure atop the pal na mama rikai is a miniature replica of the clan tubuan IaRigoi,[7] while the two figures on either side are *dukduk* (children) of that tubuan.

The tubuan is an institution that has a body of knowledge in itself, which includes its design, its magic, and its set of guidelines. This knowledge is in the custody of a senior member of the clan, one who is a member of the tubuan society. The tubuan IaRigoi was managed by ToWarpiam, a senior member of Margaret's clan. ToWarpiam died in 2008, but before he died, he had handed over much of the knowledge of the tubuan to other members of his clan.

Wauleau Victor, a first cousin to ToDi, was not a member of Margaret and ToWarpiam's clan, but he acquired knowledge of this design from the latter. After ToWarpiam passed the knowledge to him, Wauleau actually saw this clan's pal na mama rikai on display in a clan ceremony in 2012. This then completed his custodianship of the

7. The tubuan IaRigoi is the representation of a female ancestor of the clan of many generations earlier. Some say she might have been the first known ancestor of the clan.

8 The *tubuan,* from which the motif of the *pal na mama rikai* is taken. © Jacob Simet

knowledge. On this occasion, it was Wauleau who then built the pal na mama rikai. It was his hope that after the occasion the two boys would remember the clan design and be able to recreate it in the future.

The Tulu

The *tulu* is the long, pole-like structure that was erected in the middle of the ceremonial ground beside the pal na mama rikai. Like the model house, every clan has one of these that has a particular design. The tulu is also an important ritual object that is part of what we may call the "heirloom" of each clan. Again, the motif of this tulu is restricted for use in matters of the owning clan only and no others. ToDi explained that this tulu belonged to his clan and that he himself had taken custody of it in 2008 from one of his maternal uncles. This happened during the namata of one of his brother's sons.

9 Wauleau Victor, custodian of the knowledge of the *pal na mama rikai.* © Jacob Simet

The next rite is the *kutu tabu*, which is the payment of pieces of tabu to all the men and young boys who accompanied the two into seclusion. On this occasion, some of the elder men received longer lengths of tabu than the others. A number of elders were paid first, clearly meaning that these men were instrumental during the period of seclusion. Next were some adult men who also seemed to have had some important roles in the two boys' seclusion. Then came the rest of the men and the young boys, who got lesser amounts of tabu. All these payments were done by the two young men who had just come out of seclusion.

Aumana Iap

During the period of seclusion, the men and young boys who accompanied the two young men had taken care of them with food and other necessities. A common sight during the period of seclusion was the constant string of men and young boys bringing parcels and pots full of food into the seclusion area.

The food had been prepared by different families. It is said that, in the past, it was only the relatives and friends of the boys in seclusion who prepared and sent these foods into the seclusion areas. These days, however, everyone and anyone can prepare this food. This is because of the namata, in which lengths of tabu would be paid for this food. Thus, during the seclusion period, someone had to meticulously record the names of the families that had sent food into the bush.

10 The *tulu* of ToDi's clan. © Jacob Simet

11 ToDi, custodian of his clan's *tulu.* © Jacob Simet

On this day of namata, the records were taken out and the names of the persons or families were read out, following which lengths of tabu were paid to them. This was their payment for having prepared the food. On the occasion in question, the records showed that a total of fifty-six *iap* had been received during the seclusion period. As one fathom was paid for each, a total of fifty-six fathoms was paid for them by ToDi and Margaret.

Warlapang

The next and final rite of the namata is the *warlapang*. This rite is of the same name as the distribution of *buai* (betel nut) described earlier. This time, however, it involves the tribute payment of tabu by all and is probably the most important part of the ceremony.

Within a few moments, ToDi and Margaret emerge from the house with coils of tabu, which they then place on a mat in the middle of the ceremonial ground. ToDi has fifty fathoms while Margaret has another fifty fathoms, all of which they place together in one pile. This tabu is known as the *tabu na paplai lua* (tabu to lay down first).

On the announcement that it is now time for the warlapang, all move forward with varying lengths of tabu. They deposit these lengths on a mat that has been placed in the middle of the ceremonial ground in front of the pal na mama rikai. Soon there is a growing pile of tabu in the middle of the ground. By the time the crowd has all taken their seats again, there is a pile of tabu on the mat. Some men are called to come forward to organize it for counting. After it has been organized and counted, an announcement is made for all to know the total amount. On this day, it is announced that a total of 1,500 fathoms was collected, including the hundred placed by the parents. This was a good collection for ordinary parents such as ToDi and Margaret. On the other hand, wealthy people who have wider connections could fetch twice or even three times this amount.

After the namata, the tabu is put into baskets and taken away for storage in the boys' parents' house. Depending on the original intention of the venture, this tabu may be used very shortly as bride-price payments for the boys or may be rolled into coils known as

loloi, which are put into storage for many years and become part of the wealth of the family.

In the case of this particular namata, as the two boys were still too young to get married, the tabu collected on the day went into storage in the form of loloi and is still in that form today. For the moment, ToDi and Margaret have no immediate plans for the use of this tabu, so it will be part of the family wealth for some time.

In the end, the wuwuai warwaba, the paraparau, and the consequent namata had challenged ToDi's and Margaret's organizational skills and affordability in such ventures. Above this, the three series of rituals had tested their connectivity to their kinship links with their respective clans. If their links had not been strong, not many people would have turned up at the three occasions.

After the event, ToDi highlighted the absence of a number of people during all three occasions. He was particularly bitter about the absence of a number of persons whom he had relation to as brothers, through his father's line. At the same time he complained about the absence of some members of his own clan. Further, he also raised issue about the absence and lack of support from Margaret's clan, as they were important to his two sons' maturation and future life.

Overall, however, both ToDi and Margaret were happy with the way things had turned out. They were happy with the total tabu collection at the namata, but most importantly they were happy with the way many people had turned up at the three occasions. This confirmed that they had invested correctly in the maintenance of their kinship relations and that it had thus paid good results.

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3 Harvest and Landscapes

In this region of many "lands" surrounded by water, knowledge of the land and its harvests is tied closely to identity and heritage. This section's themes thus offer a closer look at how the knowledge of caring for the land and harvests is a way of feeling for the Pacific islanders. This ICH, in addition to coloring people's interactions on the land and carrying expressions of respect, is a means of ensuring sustainability and prosperity.

Pacific islanders depend largely on the land and their harvests from it for their survival, but these also hold deeper meaning for life. To the people of Vanuatu, for instance, *laplap soso'ur* is more than an edible delicacy: it is a feature of their cultural identity and a means to bring people together across societal levels. Similarly, in Palau, the *mesei* taro fields are valuable property, but they are also much more in that these pieces of land are deeply connected to the identity of the people, particularly women, and figure prominently in the colorful oral histories of the Palauans. Both of these cases, along with the other themes in this section, reflect the profound value of ICH related to the Pacific islands and their harvests.

Mesei: Taro Field Landscapes in Palau

Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg and Julita Tellei

A mesei a delal a telid.
(A taro field is the mother of life.)
—A Palauan proverb

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on *mesei,* cultivated taro fields, where *kukau* (*Colocasia esculenta*), also referred to as purple taro, is cultivated and grown. The field cultivation system is as old as the introduction of the kukau plant itself in Palau. According to Robert Bishop, kukau in Palau "dates back to the misty past." Bishop notes taro as "a prominent and identifying component of Palauan culture. The traditional system of utilizing wetlands to produce kukau is ancient, distinctive, rich, and varied. Palau has a reservoir of traditional knowledge, practices, and skills related to taro."[1] In the Palauan language while kukau refers to the purple taro corm, *dait* refers to the plant itself. References to *brak* (*Cytosperma taro*), also known as yellow taro, and *dechel* (wetland plantation) left for brak cultivation will also be made in this discussion as both types of taro and dechel are important components in the mesei field cultivation system.

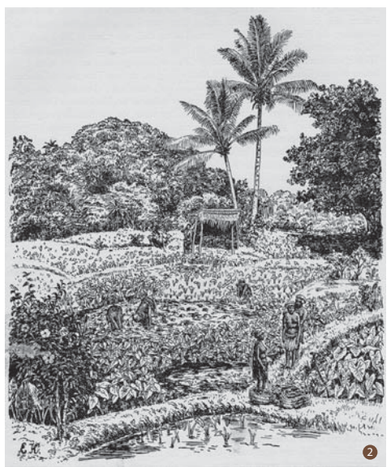
1. Robert Bishop, "Taro Cultivation and Value Adding in Palau," Third Taro Symposium, SPC-Fiji, 2001: 1.

A iukerelii…iang!
Me ngungiang el beluu a Idesei,
El di cheleblabel omouachel me a ralm a urrurt er ngii,
Te kmo ralm a urrurt er ngii me a kibora mesei,
Ea ki rodir a iaml leng telul obengakl,
Me a telau el chosm a disesei meng buulii…iang!
E lekong, o hui!

(In praise of the village of Idesei[2] with great streams
where clean water runs through,
They say clean water runs through to the mesei in
which to tend, one can
take the medicinal plants with fragrances for ear
ornaments, including shrubs.
Oh yes, that is how it goes!)

This chant, "Rebetii," signifies the responsibility and function of water, trees, shrubs, and grasses in the development of taro fields to ensure proper fertilization, crop production, and quality of taro corms ("meat" of the taro plant). Taro fields are the domain of Palauan women. As a matrilineal and at times matriarchal society, Palau's social and political structures revolve around women and their role in the nurturing of family, lineage, and clan.

2. *Idesei* is a watershed in Mengellakl, Ngarchelong.



1 *Mesei* showing taro in different stages of growth; *kllaeb*, small waterways between sections with newly planted taro plants with *dekedek*, mulch, *bong*, ditch, and *brak*, planted around *mesei*. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg
2 Women at work in the taro patch, a sketch by E. Krämer as she saw it in 1908. © Museum fuer Voelkerkunde Hamburg

Oral Histories Associated with Creation of Palau and Mesei Origin

Chants, stories, proverbs, genealogies, skills, and knowledge serve as vehicles for documenting taro fields' roles in the lives of the people. The following migration oral histories attest to the origin and sacredness of taro field cultivation as the life and breath of the Palauan people.

When Uab fell,[3] a female demigod emerged from the reefs of Ngarchelong. She was Dirramellomes (literally, "she of the light"), and she went around spreading the light to the whole of Belau (Palau). As she illuminated the whole island, she traveled, turning into a chicken at night and taking the form of a human being in daylight. Thus, they named her Dilidechuu, (literally, "she, a female"). Moving on, she reached Irrai (now Airai) and heard of a visiting party to Ngeaur (now Angaur). When it was time for the trip to Ngeaur, Dilidechuu desired to accompany the expedition and obtained permission to join the Ngeaur party.

While visiting Ngeaur, Dilidechuu married Olungiis. It was while Dilidechuu was in Ngeaur that she began to *meliuch* (meaning "to carve out of"), which was the beginning of mesei making. She was then renamed Iluochel (meaning "already carved open"), referring to her mesei-making activities.

Iluochel Migration Story

The following migration story was written in Palauan by Steven Umetaro and translated into English by Julita Tellei of the Palau Resource Institute.[4]

Ngeaur[5]

Iluochel's first mesei in Ngeaur was called Ngerechei (literally, "that of the reef flat") because she accessed Ngerechei through the reef flat. As she was still very young, she tended her mesei roughly, by *dibsechii*, literally "spearing the soil with a wooden stick and planting as if she were planting on dry land garden." Hence, the saying "we just do *omesalo-iaur*" means to just do as Iluochel did, a sort of hastily prepared gardening.

3. The legend of Uab appears in "Preserving Traditional Landscape of Palau" in this publication.
4. Steve Umetaro, "Belau: Uchelel Belau er a Uab el me er a Miladeldil (Palau: The Beginning of Palau from Uab to Miladeldil)," Koror: Department of Education, 1974.
5. See "Preserving Traditional Landscape of Palau" in this publication for traditional village names and contemporary names.

Beliliou

When she went to the Bkulabeluu of Beliliou, she just *miltechii chochil* (literally, "kicked her foot lopsidedly") to begin the mesei work, and that is why the mesei at Bkulabeluu are small and narrow. Upon approaching Ngesias Village, though, she was so energized that the lines for the *ulecharo*, *bluu*, and *urars* mesei divisions were well done in straight lines.

When she went to Ngerkeiukl, they snatched her *uosech* fruit, so she cursed them by saying, "Your taro fields will have small corms and you will have such big appetites!"

Then, on approaching Ngedbak, children were playing and she asked them to come and delouse her hair, *melais er a btelul*. After they deloused her hair, she said, "Thank you my children, take this *riaml* (football fruit) and plant it there, as this is good food for children. Let us go to the mountain, where I will fix your mesei." As they approached the mountain, she kicked the soil with one foot and said, "This is your mesei," and, taking her walking stick, she beat the side of the mesei and said, "and here is where you get your drinking water!"

While Iluochel was in Beliliou, she gave birth to Mengidabrudkoel and Tellames. They lived in Beliliou while she made mesei in Oreor.

Oreor

While in Oreor, she married a man she was not fond of. Hence, she would work in her mesei and take her time gathering leaves for fertilizer, doubling them in amount. Then she would plant even on the *cheliuis* (bordering mounds), even to the adjoining dry land. She kept herself busy so she would not go home early.

Ngeremlengui

Cultivating mesei throughout Palau, Iluochel came to Ngeremlengui and made Ngeruuchel. Ngeruuchel was the first mesei where she began applying *omesalo* techniques for mesei cultivation. Mesalo means taking softer soil and piling it to one side, making a hole in the mesei and putting fertilizer in the hole before covering it with the piled-up soil. This is why the mesei is named Ngeruuchel, which literally means "at the beginning."

Irrai

There is a bathing place for Iluochel located in Beluaruchel at the Ked of Irrai (in the hills of Ordomel in Irrai). The name of the bathing place is "Disechel a Iluochel"[6] (literally, "bathing place for Iluochel"). In Irrai, Iluochel again married someone she was not too fond of. Hence, working in her mesei, she enjoyed taking her time. When she was done, she would go to her bathing place and bathe, drying herself in the sun slowly so she did not have to go home early.

Ngchesar

Iluochel went to Ngeraus in Ngchesar. While there, she worked on the mesei in Iikrel a Rirs, which is a place between Ngeraus and Ngerwikl. The Ngeraus people went with her, so she showed them elements of mesei: she piled the soil to the side and put the leaves as fertilizer in the opening, using the piled-up soil to cover the fertilizer, smoothing the soil, and preparing for planting in a timely manner.

While in Ngeraus, the Rengara Ilulk (the Traditional Men's Club) were so enchanted with Iluochel they ended up raping her. She was so humiliated that she left, leaving only small dechel and mesei that produced limited yields of brak and kukau, leaving Ngeraus people with limited food supplies. There is a saying in Ngeraus, "*Ngkora omengal Rraus, el sosokod e dikeang*,"[7] meaning, "Like a meal at Ngeraus, just as we are appetized, the food runs out." A more contemporary use of this saying has evolved to situations where one has not gotten enough of a tasty dish and it is all gone.

Iluochel left Ngeraus to cultivate mesei in Ibleang. The mesei belonged to Iuelenguul lineage. It was the *lkul a dui* (lineage- or clan-owned taro field) of the fifth male title holder of Ngchesar, whose title was Bechab.[8] Lkul a dui is the mesei where the taro for the title holder of the lineage or clan is planted by his wife for his consumption and important events of the family, lineage, or clan. It was deemed as a standard mesei for *klechedaol*, the "inter-village feasts" in Ngchesar. It was just a small taro field, but when there were planned feasts for Ngchesar, the people would say, "Go and ask the old women, 'How are your taro fields? Can the taro fields feed the upcoming feast?'" It was said that when questioned, the old women would respond, "Wait until tomorrow! Wait until tomorrow!"

6. Rebechall Takeo Ngirmekur, Historian of Airai State, personal interview by Bureau of Arts & Culture staff, 2008. This interview confirmed the bathing place for Iluochel, which was not mentioned by Umetaro in his book.
7. Robert McKnight and Adalbert Obak, "Proverbs of Palau," *Journal of American Folklore* 81 (1968): 11.
8. Ngchesar and Ngiwal States Oral History Report, Vol. II, Bureau of Arts & Culture (2001): 6.

Whenever such occasion arose they would repeat the same. Hence, the feasts were never held. There is a proverb from Ngchesar, "*ngkor a mur re Ngchesar*,"[9] meaning "like a feast in Ngchesar." This alludes to the fact that the feasts were never held, and, as such, the saying now applies to the risk of procrastination.

Ngiwal

When Iluochel went to Ngermechau in Ngiwal, she again married a man whom she loved very much. Her desire to remain close to her husband made her mesei work hasty and rushed so she could go home to spend time with her husband. The corms of her kukau and brak were said to be very large and tasty. Upon leaving Ngiwal, Iluochel left her *sualo,* taro field basket, in the village of Ngermechau. The sualo turned into stone and still remains in Ngermechau as testimony of Iluochel's migration to the village.

Ngaraard

When Iluochel went to Ngaraard, she went to Choll. She again married Iechad of the House of Ngerbelang, a man who was originally from Ngcheangel (now Kayangel) but lived in Choll. She loved her husband so much that when she went working on her mesei, she would work hastily and carelessly, trying to rush back to the house to be with her husband. When tending her mesei in Ngerbelang, her drink was *mengur* (coconut). Hence, the mengur in Ngerbelang is very sweet. Her protein diet consisted of *rekung* (land crab). Hence, this is why the rekung in Ngerbelang are always fatty and tasty at all times. The mesei working stick for Iluochel was a piece of bamboo. Hence, bamboo in Ngerbelang is very strong.

Iluochel also went to make mesei on the other side of Choll in Ngaraard. Still, she wanted so much to spend time with her husband that she would hastily and carelessly work away to complete her work and return to her husband. Yet her mesei continued to be healthy, with very good taro roots. She continued her routine of tending her mesei and returning home hastily to her husband until, one day, while she was walking on the road, members of the local women's club of Ngerbelang managed to pull out some of her pubic hairs. She was so mad and offended that she laid a curse on the village by saying, "I shall kick the water source to the west side

9. McKnight and Obak, 10.

of the village and the village shall have lots of weeds all the time!"[10] It seems that today such are still the conditions that remain in Cholll, as the water source is in Keiukl (the west side) of the village and the grass grows back within three days of clearing.

Ngarchelong

The last mesei she made was in Ngarchelong. The name of the mesei was Ngerekei. When she finished making this mesei, she buried her *ngarek* (taro scraper) in the mesei, hence the name "Ngerekei."

Ngerekei Taro Field

While Iluochel was in Ngarchelong, she cultivated her mesei in Ollei and named it Ngerekei. When Iluochel was in Ollei she again married someone she did not care for. When she went to her taro field, she would take her time gathering leaves for fertilizer and fixing the soil deliberately and slowly, ensuring she would not go home so early. This is why Ngarchelong mesei have to be well tended, utilizing *omesalo* technique and using a lot of leaves and grass fertilizers to result in quality taro corms, unlike the mesei in Cholll and other places that can be fixed hastily, even carelessly, and yet still yield good taro. It is believed that the Ngerekei mesei is sacred, so it should be well tended all the time and should never be neglected. Walking past Ngerekei mesei, one must remain silent and not make noise.

The women who own the Ngerekei taro fields say that the actual place name of the taro field is Idelbechong; because Iluochel's taro scraper was broken there, they renamed it Ngerekei, the name being derived from "ngarek." There is a rock in the taro field against which Iluochell's ngarek was broken; the mesei cultivators stay away from this rock.

The First Feast in Palau

Iluochel was in Ollei when her husband Olungiis came to visit. While there, she began preparing for the marriage feast, so they went to get taro from Ngeaur and bring it to Ollei for the feast. After the feast, there were leftover *kukau* (purple taro corms) in Ollei, and they turned to stone; hence, one can still see the leftover kukau from Iluochel's *mur* (feast). This was the first mur in Palau.

10. Ikrederasirs Yuri Iderbei, personal interview by Bureau of Arts & Culture staff, translated by Palau Resource Institute, 2008.

3 Tangible symbol of Kukau el Bad at Iungel, Ollei. © Sylvia Kloulubak

Kukau el Bad—Stone Taro

The Kukau el Bad (literally, "Stone Taro") story is as follows. Iungel was the sentry of the place called Delbirt to the north. There is a place called Iungel el Oraterruul, a place for making fishing gear. This place was so named as it was the place to cut the plants used to make *ruul* (a type of fishing gear) for fishing in the old days. The place called Orraterruul is where over twenty rock icons stand while some are also on the ground and are referred to as Kukau el Bad. They are the kukau, taro of Belau, and the biggest of them all are said to be kukau from Ngcheangel and Ngeaur. Some people say they were remnants of the kukau brought for the feast of Iluochel.

Another version of a related story goes that when there is an increase of *uek* (purple swamp hen [*Porphyrio porphyria*]), which eat raw kukau in the mesei and deplete the harvest, or when there are diseased taro plants wrecking mesei in Ollei, the old women of Ollei will harvest a taro, one each from their mesei, and bring it to the Iungel.[11] Eating the roasted kukau and *ulechouch*, roasted coconuts, they keep a vigil to appease the gods. They make their offerings while sitting amid the Kukau el Bad, offering their prayers for fruitful and bountiful taro fields. When such offerings are made for a period of time, the uek disappear, as do taro diseases.

Ngot er a Iluochel—Iluochel's Mortar

During the Japanese time in Palau, when Hijikata was in Palau, he wrote that there used to be a large flat slab of stone in Mengellang, which used to be referred to as "Ngot er a Iluochel" (the flat mortar of the goddess Iluochel).[12] There are also very old women in Ngarchelong who remember that such a flat rock was located in Mengellang, but after World War II, the rock went missing, and no one seems to remember the location of the rock even today.

11. Orakidil Bieb Sato and Bedul Sato Remoket, personal interview by Bureau of Arts & Culture staff, translated by Palau Resource Institute, 2010.
12. Hisakatsu Hijikata, *Myths and Legends of Palau*, edited by Dr. Endo Hisashi, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 1996: 15.

4, 5 Body of Iluochel. © Sylvia Kloulubak

Bedengel a Iluochel—Iluochel's Remains

When Iluochel died, there was a symbol of her body left over on the Iungel of Ollei. This body of Iluochel is located on the edge of a place near the Kukau el Bad.

SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MESEI AND KUKAU

Chesols (chant)

Ditek el Dung er Uchob
Meng ng ditek el dung er Uchob el kngiluu
Er olngechel, El me mengedii er a chimak;
E otengelii er a Ulecharo, E orolii er a Bluu,
E orolii er a Uleboel, E a obels a ngourang ma renguk a mlengiulii…ang.[13]

(Oh my healthy taro plant which I gathered from afar and
brought close to my heart;
With my hands, I clustered it to my side;
and delivered it in the *Ulecharo*; and
guided it into the *Bluu*, then spread it through the *Uleboel*;
then the unfortunate taro
blight snatched it away from me!
My heart, my spirit have been obliterated from life.)

Mesei have always been valuable property for family, lineage, and clan. Traditionally, mesei were and are owned by *kebliil* (clans) and divided among families and lineages in the clans for use to grow foods for members as well as for *mur* (feasts) and *klechedaol* (inter-village festivals). Such value was accorded to mesei that they could only be transferred as *chelbechiil* (settlement for wife's services) and for *ududir* a *rengalek* (children's money) during *cheldecheduch* (settlement after a death of a spouse). Mesei could also be transferred as *ulsiungel* to someone who provided valuable services to family members of a clan. Hence the proverb, "*A Meselch a di ua a deruchellel a Udoud er a Kerresel a Reng*,"[14] which means, "Mesei possess the same value as the precious Palauan money."

The Palauan oral history migration movement of mesei is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage. Kukau (purple taro corm) is claimed to have originated in Southeast Asia and to have been dispersed to Oceania through the island of New Guinea many centuries ago. The crop has evolved as the cultures of the Pacific region peoples have evolved and has acquired considerable socio-cultural, natural, and economic importance for the Pacific peoples. Among the food crops in Palau, the reverence and prestige attached to taro play a highly significant role in cultural ceremonies, mitigation of environmental elements, and economic well-being of the people. The cultural significance of kukau as a prestigious food is derived from both its value as the only food stock to go with fish and the manner in which it was cultivated.

13. Ebil Kldil era Teblang Ongelakel Kuroda of Mengellakl, Ngarchelong, personal interview, Palau Resource Institute, April 2014.
14. The Palau Society of Historians, "Rechuodel," Vol. II, Division of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Community & Cultural Affairs (1996): 5.

Naming of Dung

Dung is another name for the taro plant. When a new dung is found and made public, one can be sure it has perhaps been with the finder for some time, a year or two at least. Most likely, she has grown it, observed it, cooked it, and tasted it. She has taken the suckers and increased her plants while observing, perhaps in the mesei, semi-wetland, and dry land. This enables her to identify the different characteristics of the new plant, such as the color of the stalks from the root of the plant to the base below the leaf, colors of the *kliul* (the inside center of the leaves), the edges of the leaves, and how the suckers come out: do they stick to the corm, or the base of the plant? Or do they shoot out, away from the mother plant? Does it tend to have more suckers or less? How long does it take to mature and be ready to harvest?

Once harvested, she will again take note of the corm and its shape. Is it more roundish, oblong, or lopsided? When cooked, does it tend to break open on its roundish side, and do the skins roll out or not? Is it a strong taro or mushy? How does it taste compared to other taro? What color is the cooked kukau: purple, yellowish, white, gray, or something else? All characteristics of the dung are observed.

Once the finder is ready to share, she does so with close relatives and friends. Usually, women do not want their names associated with taro plants, so they recommend a place name where the dung was found or physical appearance of the new taro.

6 Young woman harvesting taro corms in a *mesei* with ready-to-harvest taro plants in the background. © Brenda Tarimel

Lkul a dui is the foundation for the title of the lineage or clan mesei where kukau for the clan titleholder is cultivated by his wife for her husband's daily consumption. Lkul a dui mesei do not get passed on, but remain in the clan. Typically, each clan or lineage in Palau has a lkul a dui. The Palauan *omeluchel* system, cultural practice of reciprocal food and services exchange for money and other resources, is a strong practice that has potential implications for clan resources to "float away" (*obechakl*). Ensuring that there is a lineage-or clan-owned taro field ensures availability of taro for the title holder so that he does not eat off the resources (foods) from his in-laws. Such practice could potentially be another way for money and resources to flow from his clan to his wife's clan. An important identification of a lkul a dui taro field is a big, round basalt rock that is put in the middle of the field. The significance is that the title holder must be a strong, firm, and responsible leader.

Values of Mesei Cultivation

Many important Palauan values are required in the development of mesei cultivation systems. Before formal schools were introduced,

7 Ngesuas is a place in Ngchesechang Village of Airai. There was a land clearing including *mesei* and this taro plant was first seen there; hence, it is Ngesuas dung. This female and male taro plant, which is identified by the color of stalks, has strong corms, is resistant to taro blight, and is a favorite of *uek* (purple swamp hen). Ngesuas taro plants at Eleu Mesei in Iyebukel, Koror. © Sylvia Kloulubak

8 Lkul a dui er a Tmetbab of Ngerkesoaol, Koror. © Simeon Adelbai

9 Lkul a dui er a Etei of Mengellakl, Ngarchelong. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

mesei cultivation work was the school for female children and very young boys, the same way fishing and heavy building work were the training grounds for male children. Important values required for the art of taro field cultivation were planning and management, faithfulness, hard work, industriousness, perseverance, obedience, love, care, and common sense. These were highly regarded and guarded values as they were the values families desired to instill in their children.

Children and young women helped in the cultivation work of their mothers' mesei as they learned and were prepared for young adulthood and marriage. Sharing of information, history, proverbs, genealogies, stories, songs, humor, and characterizations of villages and village news were part of the mesei cultivation activities. Such were and still are the values that underscored the often acknowledged and quoted ancient Palauan proverb "a *mesei a delal a telid*,"[15] meaning "a taro field is the mother of life." In recent years, there are those who refrain from using this proverb as they contend that only God, a deity (*chelid*), the creator, could be afforded the title of being the "mother of our breath/life." However, the usage of the phrase "mother of our breath" is as a metaphor to express intensively the importance and the vital manner in which mesei were and still are valued today.

15. McKnight and Obak, 9.

10 Young boys helping mother on *mesei* chores. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

11 Young boy helping mother on taro cultivation. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

12 Mother teaching children to do *mesei* work. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

13 Children helping and learning *mesei* chores. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

A number of other colorful Palauan proverbs illustrate the essential nature of mesei to the Palaun people, such as the following:

- *A Mesei a uchul a deled*[16] means "Mesei is the base of our stomach." The stomach is where food settles in to make one feel full. This is another way of expressing the vital importance of mesei as the essence of our lives and our livelihood. Elders relate the proverb to the mesei known as lkul a dui.

- *A Mesei a uchul a teloched*[17] means "Mesei is the base of our meal." "Telooch" is the chewed food that is softened and ready to be swallowed. This is the root word of "teloched," an inclusive plural emphasizing that, collectively, mesei are places where taro is grown for basic sustenance of members of families, clans, and communities.

- *A chochid a mekleched*[18] means "Our feet are our mesei." This is what a person exclaims when she walks into a place where meals are served and one can partake of the meal. It can also be applied to resources and goods. It means your feet can be a source of food and resources for you. In contemporary Palau, this proverb is used and understood by many people.

- *A ilecha di telulechoid er a mesei*[19] means "It is only gossip of the mesei." There are still those stories that can only be told in the mesei (woman to woman) and nowhere else, which is where this saying comes from. It is a reference to something neither serious nor important, warranting immediate dismissal.

RULES AND PROCEDURES OF MESEI

There are rules and procedures for mesei work. Some are more general and others are specialized knowledge and skills possessed by a few and passed down from generation to generation. Where one should begin working in her mesei is determined by where the sun rises. How to approach her mesei to begin work is carefully determined according to the position of the mesei and with which corner of a mesei division is to begin. Planting season for others requires following the cycle of the moon or the ocean tides. Paying attention to restrictions of the day and night activities before plantings is important as well. It is important to follow certain procedures that apply when working in the mesei itself.

16. Dirrengechel Sariang Timulch, personal interview, Meyuns, Koror, 20 August, 2014.
17. Ibid.
18. This is a popular and well-known proverb that can be said to be in the public domain.
19. This is a popular and well-known proverb that can be said to be in the public domain.

There are women who possess the knowledge to plant taro for bountiful harvest and apply it to their mesei work. Specialized knowledge to minimize destruction of taro by the uek and taro diseases is supposedly possessed by certain women while there are others who are said to have ability to ward off black magic or destructive work from the mesei. Knowledge, practices, expressions, and indigenous skills of farmers are derived from many years of experience. Women learn through observation and practical experiences through family members and elders in the community.

Knowledge of lunar cycles served as the basis for fishing, farming, building, and other cultural practices, e.g., when breadfruit trees are in season, sea urchins are *melaok*, abundant and rich. Indigenous/traditional knowledge of taro field cultivation determines farmers' decisions and the methods they practice. Traditional knowledge and capabilities are the potential basis for sustainable taro field development. Rural communities have a very good understanding of their resources and often are adept at experimenting and adapting to changes over time. Such is the reason taro field cultivation has weathered the test of time in spite of the influence of four strong colonizing countries as well as globalization in recent years.

Traditionally, as a prestige crop, kukau was served at funerals of high-ranking clan title holders. It was the crop of choice for royalty, gift-giving, and traditional feasting (*mur*). It was also used for fulfillment of social obligations and exchange systems such as *ngader*, marriage ceremony food exchanges, *cheldecheduch*, marriage settlement after death of a spouse, *ocheraol* (house buying customs), and even tending to special visitors. Carefully prepared kukau are part of the service etiquette expected of the service provider.

Diaches[20] is a practice carried out during a funeral of a high-ranking chief of only the *kebekuul* titles. "Kebekuul" is a term used collectively for the top four ranking chiefs of a village. The fifth to the tenth titles are referred to collectively as *teleuechel dui*, each of which has a connection to one of the four kebekuul. Upon the death of a kebekuul title holder, a diaches is made up of choice taro plants harvested by an *ochell* (senior female family member closest to the deceased), from the lkul a dui mesei of the affected clan. At least two to four mature and choice kukau with stalks and leaves intact are cleaned, have their corms scraped, and are then tied together and anointed with turmeric oil and placed in a designated part of the *olbed* (stone platform). They symbolize the heart and soul of the deceased.

Preparation for burial requires the taking of the title ceremony, after which time the diaches is removed from its place by a designated close female relative dressed appropriately with a mat and wearing her hair down. She carries the diaches on her head (*meluchel*), and a designated male family member ceremonially removes the diaches and brings it back to its original place on the olbed. Positioned in a certain way, the diaches remains there until the third day of the mourning period, at which time the kukau are cooked and served to the mourning relatives. The *dait*, taro plants, from the diaches are then taken and planted in the lkul a dui mesei.

The preparation of diaches is another practice which elucidates the value of kukau as a prestige food and a valuable commodity and ties it to the deceased holder of one of the kebekuul titles in the village. In contemporary Palau, few people are familiar with the diaches practice and fewer people practice it.

20. The Palau Society of Historians, "Rechuodel" Vol II, 33-34.

14 High-ranking women of Koror attending a ceremonial feast for a high chief title-bearing ceremony being served specially prepared *belsiich*, pounded taro. © Belau National Museum

15 Women bringing carefully prepared taro for a special occasion in 1908. © Museum fuer Voelkerkunde Hamburg

16 Sketch of a *diaches* as it is ceremonially taken from the woman who was designated to handle the *diaches* for the deceased title holder. © Bureau of Arts and Culture

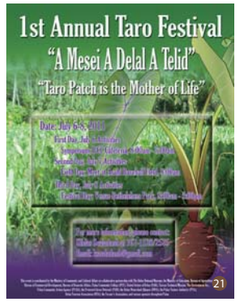
SOCIO-ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

Mesei and kukau are valuable to the social and economic well-being and development of a community. Traditionally, the economics of mesei relied fully on hard work and diligence of clan women and *buchelsechal,* spouses of senior male members of the clans. The wives tended the mesei diligently, ensuring to provide the best crop for senior matriarchs of the family's lineage and clans and for important events. In turn, the traditional exchange system dictated that wealth would flow from a woman's husband's family to her family and clan. Meanwhile, women's valuables, *toluk* (turtle shells), are exchanged between women only, a practice that still exists today.

17, 18 Women guarding displays of women's valuables at the 2010 Mechesil Belau, Palau Women's Conference. *Toluk*, Palauan women's money, is used in exchange for food and services provided by wives of men of the family, lineage, and clan. Woman displaying her *toluk* and other Palauan women's valuables such as tools for preparing taro for consumption: *ai* (pounder) and miniature *ngot* (mortar) for pounding taro. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

19 Woman preparing her taro corms and plants for sale at the market. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

20 Taro corms and plants prepared for sale at the market. © Sylvia Kloulubak



21

22


23

Omeluchel System

The Palauan omeluchel system is the traditional reciprocal exchange of foods and services between the family and clan of a married woman and her relatives and the family and clan of her husband and his relatives. It is the foundation of the traditional Palauan society.


24

Taro cultivation work is hard physical work. What helps women maintain their mesei is the usual age-old *omengerakl* (organized cooperative work). Self-imposed schedules are made that they all adhere to in order to help themselves till their mesei. It is hard work and is a spiritual experience at best.

21 Poster of the First Annual Taro Festival in Palau, 2011, indicating the growing renaissance of *mesei* cultivation by women as well as growing governmental support as part of cultural revival, economics, and preservation of healthy practices and food security. © Kiblas Soaladaob

22 Another manifestation of renaissance of *mesei* cultivation in Palau that even shows in cake decoration by young women for special occasions. © Phila R.R.M. Ymesei

23 Postage stamps unveiled commemorating the importance of taro and *mesei* cultivation during the First Palau Taro Festival in Palau in 2011. Painting showing mesei divisions as well as various taro varieties. © Samuel Adelbai

24 Showing already packed taro in baskets ready for customary exchange or for sale. This is a typical practice using biodegradable packing materials of woven coconut leaves and fibers to pack uncooked taro. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg


25

SOCIO-NATURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MESEI

Rebetii

O Soilong om dung el dait e kel kngikl el ngara meselch er a mengellakl/
Omko ko chesiuch e ke ririid er a Imadelbai e songe e ak di longelung
Klengelau er a demok mengechiku melai er kau;
E ngeral a ulemeob er kid el dim lo le cha ngemeled
Ma dorael a desa soad e do suud a delemeledii…ang.[21]

(O Soilong, if you were my healthy taro plant, I would have planted it in the taro field to pacify things, Or if you were my cherished tortoise shell money, which got lost, I would have cried so;
I would have cried and come to you for nourishments! For our creator already put in for us the preciousness of life! Hence as we depart and notice life desires, we can grab the plantings to plant.)

Physical Development of Mesei

The Art of Designing Mesei

Mesei cultivation systems are part of sustainable watershed systems that have provided a natural and acceptable way to maintain ecosystems and diversity. These natural watersheds were undisturbed for centuries except for mesei development. They functioned as natural filtering systems for streams, mangroves, estuaries, reef flats,

21. Ebil Kldil era Teblang Ongelakel Kuroda of Mengellakl, personal interview, Pulau Resource Institute, April 2014.

25 *Omengerakl*, a process through which women till each other's *mesei* by hand. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

and near-shore marine environments, resulting in a pristine marine environment until recent decades. These healthy ecosystems have provided sustainable natural habitats for fresh water shrimp, fish, lizards, reptiles, birds, and animals as well as insects and other plants.

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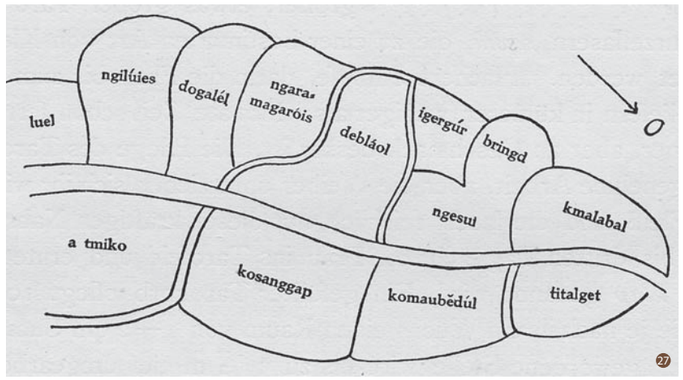

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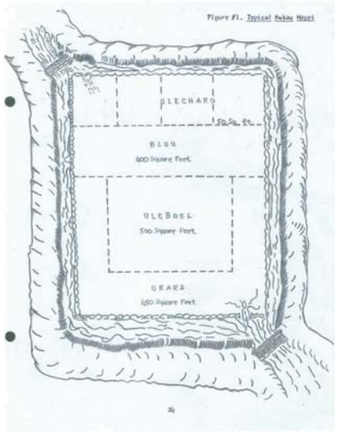
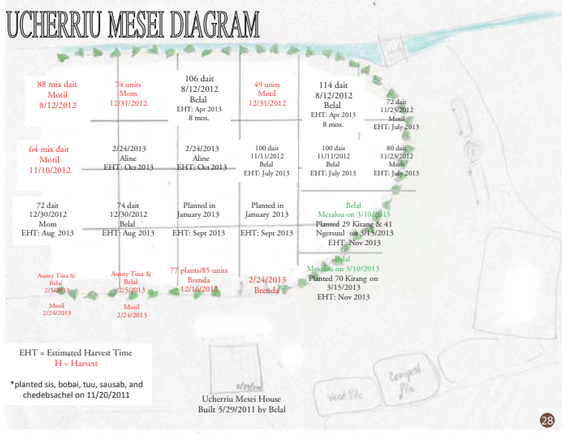
Uleboel, bluu, ulecharo, and *urars* are various components of mesei. More current practices utilize only the square-shaped *bluu*, small and large, although one could probably still find a few traditionalists who maintain the traditional types of divisions. *Orak* is another mesei division, although not indicated. It is said that typically orak was only found in high clans' taro patches as they used to have very large taro patches. It takes four *bluu*, or squares, to make one orak.





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26 *Omouachel*, large ditch or water way that is a source of irrigation for Mersak *mesei* in Mengellakl in Ngarchelong, Palau. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

27 *Mesei* designed by Dr. Augustin Krämer, *Results of the South Seas Expedition 1908-1910 Vol. III Ethnography* © Museum fuer Voelkerkunde Hamburg

28 Design from the 1960s and a modern design of a particular *mesei* according to how water flows from *omouachel* (large ditch or waterway) to *bong* (small water ways surrounding *mesei*) to *kllaeb* (small waterpath systems). © Belau National Musem (*left*) and Motil Timarong (*right*)

Cheliuis –A large *cheliuis* (soil embankment) typically acts as a boundary as well as a barrier to keep the floods and high waters from getting into the mesei. Between the mesei and the large cheliuis is a smaller soil mound or small cheliuis that is part of the mesei water irrigation system. A cheliuis may be opened to let water in or out depending on the weather conditions and need to balance the irrigation of the mesei.

Depending on the contour, shape, and size of the taro field, lines will be made to identify *ulecharo, urars, bluu, uleboel,* and *orak*. Once these divisions are delineated, *kllaeb* (literally, "small waterpath systems") dividing the various *mesei* sections are made for ease of regular mesei management and irrigation. As such, kllaeb are crucial for the life of mesei.

Other typical features of mesei systems are sturdy bridges, smaller bridges, as needed over the waterways or streams and small huts for shelter, resting, work tools, and cooking. Once mesei are made or re-cultivated, the rest of the work becomes routine and is never neglected. Mesei are designed to ensure that the flow of water properly follows the contour of the land in order to ensure constant flow of clean and

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fresh water into and out of the cultivated mesei. Types of mesei vary from village to village: *Chebulech* mesei are deep and tend to have very soft, watery soil. To till this type of mesei requires special techniques as one sinks up to upper thighs or even to the waist. *Metind a chetemel* mesei refers to mesei with drier and harder soil that tend to be shallower than the former. One can only sink up to the lower waist or upper thighs. *Meched el mesei* are much shallower, up to the knees or below the knees.

29, 30 Iyebukel *mesei* in Koror and Mengellakl *mesei* in Ngarchelong, indicating *bong* and *kllaeb*. © Sylvia Kloulubak (*left*) and Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg (*right*)

Tilling of mesei has somewhat evolved from the old days. There are cultivators today who still apply omesalo techniques; however, fewer cultivators apply this technique. A more popular technique only requires turning the soil, putting in mulching materials, covering the soil, and planting. Another frequently applied technique might be analogous to the old technique first introduced by the mesei goddess Iluochel, the *omesalo-iaur* technique—basically, spearing the soil which a pickaxe–like tool or sharp wood and planting. This only applies to mesei which are not too soft.

There are several steps families in Palau typically follow to convert natural wetlands such as *dechel* and *omeklochel* into mesei. Men help in all the heavy work in the making of or maintenance of mesei such as cutting down and removing large trunks and roots of trees. Once the period of rotting trees and grasses is reached, planting begins.

This is a time to plant *dait*, taro plantings of *Colocasia*. Depending on the variety of dait planted, taro can be harvested in anywhere from seven months to one year. After the first crop, the old people say, "*ng seruchel a mesei*": this is the time when the soil needs to be turned and another crop is planted again without putting in fertilizer, referred to as *olangebdechel* (the first harvest).

After seven months to one year, depending on taro variety, the olangebdechel is harvested. Typically, special people receive olangebdechel. At this time, it is necessary to divide the mesei into the various divisions as dictated by the needs of the family, clan, and community. Depending on the contour, shape, and size of the taro field, lines will be made to identify ulecharo, urars, bluu, ulleboel, and orak. These divisions are delineated with the *kllaeb* (small water path system) dividing the various sections, which are made for ease of regular tending of mesei. Kllaeb are a means for skilled maintenance of mesei and paths of water into and out of the various sections of the mesei by skilled cultivators. Once divided, it is up to the cultivator to *mesalo* (identify) and gather the desired *ramek* (fertilizer), preparing to *omesalo* (dig in soil), put in fertilizer, smooth the soil, and wait for the right time to plant. Gathering of materials and leaves for mulch is also planned before tasks are done. There is special timing to all of these various mesei tasks and functions before planting.[22]

Through observation and experience, girls and women learn from mothers, grandmothers, close relatives, and community people, and are therefore able to continue to cultivate their mesei. However, a Palauan woman also has the opportunity to experiment and develop her own techniques.

Transmission, Continuity, and Sustainability

Taro field cultivation continues to be the domain of Palauan women. Perhaps there was a time in the early 1970s to early 1980s that reduction of mesei farming occurred due to out-migration of young female students to attend off-island schools or training. They returned home with their degrees to hold wage jobs. In their marriageable years, young men and women married, began raising their families, and found themselves becoming part of the traditional exchange system within their families and clans. This propelled many to automatically begin to take part in traditional practices, including mesei cultivation and dry-land gardening. Most women who have been cultivating mesei or those who are starting mesei worked with their mothers and community elders to learn traditional ways of making mesei. Even unmarried women of age find themselves cultivating taro fields. With accessibility to remote villages as a result of the completion of the round-the-island Compact Road in Babeldaob (the big island), resurgence of mesei cultivation is on the rise.

22. The Palau Society of Historians, "Rechuodel" Vol. II, 5-6.

31 Lkul a dui er a Eteet Clan er Oreor (Koror, Palau). *Mechas* working in *chebulech*, a very deep and watery *mesei*. Cultivating this type of *mesei* takes special skills, so new *mesei* cultivators tend to avoid these. © Grace Yano

Several factors in the past two decades appear to contribute not only to transmission of skills but to continuity of taro field farming or mesei making as well as sustainability. A renaissance of Palauan culture due to tourism development and social and political consciousness development has helped cultural revival. The cultural renaissance has contributed to mesei making as well as environmental conservation and preservation. The general wealth of the nation, increasing per capita income, has helped women in taro field development due to increased income. Increased family income as well as easy access to hiring of foreign workers to help in domestic work, gardening, and mesei work will continue to increase mesei making and assure its sustainability.

32 Young professional women who have taken keen interest in *mesei* development and management for cultural preservation, healthy lifestyle, environmental mitigation measures, and income generation. © Brenda Tarimel

33 Community *mesei* workers discussing the day's work and planning for the next time. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

34 Clearing overgrown *dechel* into *mesei* for restoration and development. © Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg

The past two decades have seen Palau's increased economic development due to vigorous and rapid tourism development, which has rendered Palau a wealthier island nation compared to the 1970s, 1980s, and even early 1990s. As material wealth increases, the health sector in the nation has documented an alarming increase in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the nation. Hence, the health sector has increased its NCD reduction campaigns, resulting in health consciousness of the people, and has increased consumption of local foods. Although a firm study has not been conducted, sales of local produce, particularly kukau, brak, and vegetables, are on the rise, and this has created active demand for kukau and brak.

Sustainability of taro field development appears to be assured due to vigorous mesei making by many women and resource owners. The Bureau of Agriculture, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, the Palau Community College, Cooperative Research Extension, the Republic of China-Taiwan Technical Mission, and the Palau Community Action Agency have augmented vigorous aspects of research on taro propagation, taro field cultivation, and taro production, along with distribution of plants and provision of technical support to local farmers, thus substantially increasing taro field cultivation and production of types of taro, kukau, and brak.

Technical assistance in various aspects of taro field farming in mesei as well as on dry land has included technical assistance in soil testing, composting, and other processes that facilitate and enhance farming, all positive indicators of sustainability of taro field cultivation in Palau. Training on and facilitation of value-adding for taro corms, stalks, and leaves also add to the increased demands for cultivation and production of taro, not only in mesei but also on dry land.

Besides increased demand for and production of kukau, a notable increased demand for brak and also giant taro is hereby noted as well. It appears that for health reasons, demand for brak consumption is on the rise even for foods for funerals and other customs. Traditionally, this practice was not acceptable before the1990s.

The formation of the Palau-Taiwan Farmers' Association is a positive force which contributes to sustainability of mesei cultivation and

taro production as it provides marketing support for farmers. Other women's organizations have accelerated ways to help themselves revive, increase, and sustain their taro field cultivation efforts. Discussion of a formation of a Palau-wide Agriculture and Aquaculture Association has already commenced.

The latest efforts that appear to add support to sustainability of taro field cultivation are United Nations grants made available for mesei owners to revive mesei cultivation by utilizing traditional methods. Use of traditional methods of taro field cultivation helps limit use of imported fertilizers and thus ensures reduction of toxic chemicals from flowing into rivers and streams and to marine environments.

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- Mlechei Sabina Malsol of Ngerang, Melekeok, Palau

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Traditional Tongan Farming System: Past and Present

Finau Savelio Pole

Hina e mo Sinilau
Ui a mu'a ho'omo fanau
Ke faka'ali'ali e fa'ahita'u
Kuonga mu'a ia mo 'ene lau

(Oh! Hina and Sinilau
Please call in your children
For a display of the seasons
The olden days and their ways)[1]

—Manu Faupula

INTRODUCTION

The traditional farming system in Tonga can be described by a number of terms such as subsistence, shifting cultivation, fallow, and intercropping. Initially, traditional farming in Tonga was based on subsistence, meaning that farming was only for providing food for the family. However, history states that, eventually, traditional farming in Tonga evolved to be centered on yam production aimed at presentation to kings and nobles. There was no market element. This gradually changed over the years when semi-subsistence farming emerged, at which time, while the farmers still produced for family needs, the surplus did go to the market.

1. From the sung composition *Lau Mahina Faka-Tonga* (*The Traditional Tongan Calendar*) composed by the late Manu Faupula, a longtime head tutor of Queen Salote College until she retired. Translated by Mrs. Tapukitea L. Rokolekutu in 2014. This song metaphorically refers to the thirteen traditional Tongan months as the children of the legendary figures Hina and Sinilau. Each month is referred to as their children, and the song consists of thirteen stanzas, each representing a month.

Traditional Tongan Agriculture

The traditional Tongan farming system was quite unique in how it reflected social rank and social cohesion, which seem to have been more extensive than in other island countries. History tells us that true traditional Tongan agriculture was very much influenced by the kings and nobility and was centered on yam (*Dioscorea alata*) production. Yam was considered the noblest crop, produced mainly for presentation to kings and nobles and for traditional feasts and festivals, such as the annual festival called Inasi, the festival for presenting the first yam harvest to kings and nobles before common consumption. Thus, Tongan farming activities were first and foremost aimed at supplying and satisfying the kings' and nobles' needs, especially for the Inasi.

In this way, it can be seen that, up until a century and a half ago, Tongan agriculture was mainly centered on yam production.

An important component of the traditional Tongan farming system was shifting cultivation and fallowing. These were very important parts of the farming system because they show scientific reasoning in the farmers' practices. A farmer would move to a new area of land every year, preferably under forest cover, and grow a number of crops in different mixtures. After some years of harvesting these crops, the farmer would leave the first area fallow (uncultivated) for a maximum number of years to allow the area to undergo forest cover, thus allowing regeneration of nutrients in that area before farming there again. This is the practice known as shifting cultivation and fallowing.

The Tongan Calendar

Another significant element of traditional Tongan farming was use of the Tongan calendar, which was strongly related to many activities including farming and fishing. The Tongan calendar was very much associated with yam production, beginning from preparing and cutting planting materials and moving on to the time of planting, tuber initiation, climate, rainfall, harvest, and storage. The Tongan word *ta'u*, meaning "year," was also the term used for a crop of yam.

The Tongan calendar had thirteen months, each placing some significance in the moon phase, which was closely related to farming and fishing activities including yam production. It was known that it took twenty-eight days for the moon to travel around the world, so there were twenty-eight days per month in the Tongan calendar and, as such, thirteen months a year. Table1 gives full details of the Tongan calendar, explaining what each month means and its significance to various activities, including the yam production process. The Tongan calendar started from around late October to the first half of November.

TONGAN MONTH	APPROXIMATE START DATE	NOTABLE EVENTS
Lihamu'a	6 November	First month of the Tongan calendar, bringing warm weather. Plants start to produce buds and flowers in this month.
Lihamui	6 December	Much warmer weather, with fruit trees bearing fruits; enjoyed by birds.
Vaimu'a	16 January	Beginning of the rainy season; most welcomed by farmers.
Vaimui	15 February	Latter half of the rainy season, bringing wind and rain, which worries farmers because yam leaves have intertwined. Too much rain can cause fungal disease to the yam leaves, which can kill the plant.
Faka'afumo'ui	16 March	The coming of the cyclone season. Yam crops start producing secondary tubers, which are good planting materials.
Faka'afumate	15 April	Vegetative growth begins to stop producing new growth, including the yam crop. This indicates crop maturity and that harvest is coming.
Hilingakelekele	14 May	This is the harvest time for the yams. The name refers to the newly harvested yams with soil attached to the tubers, which are stored on wooden platforms.
Hilingamea'a	13 June	The farmer is proud to be feeding from his yam store by now.
'Ao'ao	12 July	For the yam crop, this month forbids any cutting of yam tubers for planting materials because the yam pieces will rot (*hau'aoa*). Thus, no cutting of planting materials occurs during this month.
Fu'ufu'unekinanga	10 August	Flushing of new growth in plants takes place, especially in early yam crops, which begin new vegetative growth.
'Uluenga	8 September	Early yam crop tubers develop; yam leaves yellow.
Tanumanga	8 October	This is the time when secondary yam tubers push their heads above ground, at which time the farmer covers them with soil.
'O'oamofangongo	Last half of October to first half of November	This is the month of food and water shortages; therefore, careful use of food and water is very important to avoid problems.

Table 1: The Tongan Traditional Calendar

TRADITIONAL FARMING SYSTEMS IN TONGA

Subsistence Shifting Cultivation Method

The farming system practiced in Tonga is what is commonly known today as subsistence shifting cultivation, using mixed cropping. This system was most commonly used in the past because there was low population density and abundant land available for farming. In this system, the farmer moved to a new piece of land every year, cleared it, and immediately began by planting a number of food crops, as these are the main steps of the cropping cycle. The first crops grown are yams, which are almost always intercropped with giant taro and bananas or plantains (*Musa spp.*). The first crop to be harvested is yam, which matures in less than a year. The other crops will remain in the soil for more than a year. The giant taro is harvested after one year while the plantains can remain in the soil for several years because they produce a number of ratoon crops that can be harvested more than once.[2]

2. A ratoon crop refers to a plantain or banana crop in which the same plant produces a number of suckers, resulting in multiple harvests from the same crop.

1 A mixed farming plot of giant taro, *Xanthosoma*, and bananas. © Koliniasi Fuko

2 A multiple cropping plot with giant taro, yams, and *Colocasia* taro. © Koliniasi Fuko

During the next year's planting season, the farmer moves to a new piece of land (preferably under forest cover), clears it by a slash and burn method, which is a process of cutting small trees and shrubs and burning them after a few days, and repeats the same activities as the previous year. In the meantime, after the crops from the previous plot are harvested, the area is left fallow for the maximum period possible. Initially, when this farming system was first practiced, this fallow period may have reached more than ten years, by which time the area would have become well covered with forest and ready for the next cropping cycle.

In this manner, the farmer moves to a new piece of land every year, and while this was the traditional farming system practiced for many years in Tonga, it was so demanding and wasteful of land resources

3 A mixed farming plot showing yam holes already being harvested. © Koliniasi Fuko

4 A traditional mixed farming system as seen today with yams already harvested. © Koliniasi Fuko

(especially forest, which was cut and had to re-grow) that eventually it had come to the point of exhausting the forests. Thus, today, very few farmers have access to any forest fallow area. Figure ⑤ shows a plot of forest fallow area found today, though it is very hard to find such areas, especially in Tongatapu, the largest island in Tonga. This is because the shifting cultivation practice moved to a new area covered with forest every year.

Slash and Burn Method

Usually, a crop rotation begins with the farmer selecting a new piece of family-owned land that has been inherited through generations. This area has typically been under forest cover for a number of years. The farmer clears the new land by slash and burn.

Although yam is the main crop in the crop rotation cycle, the first crops to be planted are giant taro and plantain or bananas, which are planted straight after clearing; in the meantime, the yam planting material is being pre-germinated before field planting. Before yams are planted in the field, holes are dug at specific spacing and dimensions. Spacing for yams is about 1.5 meters by 1.0 to 1.2 meters, with holes dug per plant at a depth of 1.0 to 1.2 meters. Thus, during the first year of rotation, the main crops in the field are yams, giant taro, and plantain or bananas. Some farmers prefer to plant a few more crops once these main crops are established, which may include corn, *bele* (an edible leaf plant), a few papaya trees, sugar cane, and so on according to the farmer's preference.

Yam is the first crop to be harvested at eight to ten months from planting. This early yam crop, which was planted between May and July, is ready for harvest between December and February. In preparation for the harvest, the yam crop is "killed" by removing

5, 6 Plots under forest fallow ready for clearing. © Koliniasi Fuko

the vegetative growth about four to six weeks before harvest. This is a traditional process of forcing the yam crop to mature before harvesting. The giant taro is harvested after twelve months, and the plantain can remain in the area for a number of years because harvesting can be repeated from ratoon crops. Thus, in the first cropping cycle, yams, giant taro, and plantain, being the main crops, remain in the area for different times. As the system develops, a greater variety of crops are planted in the cropping cycle.

When the yam is harvested, sweet potato is planted in the yam holes and harvested six months later. When giant taro is harvested twelve months after planting, *Xanthosoma* or *Colocasia esculenta* (*Colocasia* taro) can be planted to replace it. The last crop in the cycle, then, is cassava, which will remain in the soil for six to ten months (Figure 7).[3] During all this time, the plantain crop will still be producing at least one crop every year. When this cycle is completed, the area is then left fallow to allow regeneration of nutrients. It is noteworthy that cassava is the last crop in this cropping cycle before the land is left fallow because cassava is known to do better in less fertile soils than other food crops.

A Typical Crop Rotation Practiced in Tonga

7

CHANGE AND TRANSITION IN THE PRESENT FARMING SYSTEMS

From ancient times to present, farming has changed. Today, the agricultural systems reflect the changes of Tonga. A study of the types of farming systems practiced in Tonga recorded in the *Farm Management Handbook* recorded that the traditional agricultural systems of Tonga involved intercropping with various crop sequences and also incorporated fallow periods.[4] These systems developed to ensure a stable and productive environment on farms. This manual also listed a number of the types of farming systems found in Tonga, including:[5]

3. H.O. Fa'anunu, "Traditional Aspects of Root Crop Production in The Kingdom of Tonga" (paper for the SPC Root Crop Conference, Suva, Fiji, November 24–29, 1975).
4. *A Training Manual on Farm Management for Young Farmers of Tonga—A Farm Management Handbook* (2005), 1-15.
5. Ibid.

7 A typical five-to-six-year crop rotation generally practiced in Tonga, showing the types of crops grown and the length of time each crop stayed in the rotation.

1. Predominantly subsistence root crop-based farming system
2. Paper mulberry-based farming system—Figure 8
3. Predominantly commercial small crop-based farming system—Figure 9
4. Predominantly commercial vanilla-based farming system
5. Predominantly commercial squash-based farming system
6. Predominantly commercial kava and pineapple farming system
7. Predominantly commercial semi-intensive pig farming system

8

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In the past, the shifting cultivation sector of the Tongan farming system was very suitable because the farm sizes were small, and based on subsistence, and the population pressure on the land was low. However, with the increasing population and the introduction of cash crops for both local and export markets, farm sizes greatly increased and more areas opened for farming. Coupled with that was the rapid increase in population while the land area remained unchanged. This resulted in a gradual change in the shifting cultivation method. Farming was forced to be more permanent, with more crops being added to the cropping cycle and lasting for a longer period. The system has undergone major changes, such that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the subsistence and shifting elements of the system were no longer dominant. The system practiced then was known as "semi-permanent," in which the cash crop was slowly taking over the subsistence crops and the cropping was becoming more permanent. In addition, the fallow period became shorter, and thus, in most cases it was no longer possible for the fallow area to produce any forests.

8 A predominantly paper mulberry farming system. © Koliniasi Fuko

9 A predominantly commercial small crop farming system of *bele*, taro, and giant taro. © Koliniasi Fuko

Today, the fallow period has been kept to a minimum, with the danger of continuous cropping in many cases. It can be seen that in places where the problem of land shortage is very serious, farmers have introduced a minimum fallow period of only a few months, using legume species as the fallow crop. This has become common practice in many areas where, after continually cropping for a number of years, some legume seeds are sown in the area and plowed in after about three to four months, before the legume flowers, to ready the area for the next cropping cycle. Figure ⑩ shows a plot of legume bean fallow.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, modern farming systems recorded here differ greatly from the real Tongan traditional farming systems recorded earlier in this paper. This shows that most of the farming systems have lost the main characteristics of the traditional farming system, which are subsistence, shifting cultivation, fallowing, and focusing mainly on yam and mixed food crops. This also shows that the true traditional farming system in Tonga has lost its original characteristics and nature due to changes in different circumstances and more commercial crops being introduced into the farming system. Also, the shifting cultivation nature has been changed to more permanent cultivation. This is a real picture of the changes that have occurred in the Tongan traditional farming system, as reflected in the list of the types of farming systems recorded in the *Farm Management Manual* as shown above.[6]

6. Ibid.

⑩ Plots under legume bean fallow, ready to "plow in." © Koliniasi Fuko

Glossary

1. **Bele or Aibika (*Abelmoschus manihot*):** A very common green leaf vegetable consumed throughout the Pacific islands.
2. **Fallowing:** The period when a piece of land, after being cropped for a number of years, is left under grass or forest cover to return nutrients to the soil.
3. **Hau'aoa:** Rotting of yam planting materials when cut in August.
4. **Inasi:** Tongan traditional festival in which the first harvest of yam crop is presented to the king and nobles before it can be consumed by commoners.
5. **Intercropping:** A farming practice in which more than one crop is growing at the same time although crops are harvested at different times.
6. **Killing of yam crop:** Process of forcing yam crop to mature early by removing or cutting the vegetative growth about 4-6 weeks before harvest.
7. **Plow in:** Process of plowing an area under legume cover, to be used for cropping.
8. **Pre-germination:** A practice in yam production in which the yam tubers used for planting materials are cut and buried in a large hole outside of the yam plot to allow them to germinate before they are planted inside the yam plot.
9. **Ratoon crop:** Plantain or banana crop in which the same plant produces a number of suckers, resulting in multiple harvests from the same crop.
10. **Regeneration:** A process in which nutrients are returned to the soil when an area is left under fallow, using forest or legume cover.
11. **Semi-permanent:** Term used to describe a farming practice in which the farmer farms an area of land for a longer period of time instead of moving to a new area almost every year.
12. **Semi-subsistence farming:** System allowing the farmer to produce primarily for family needs, with any surplus going to market.
13. **Shifting cultivation:** Farming system allowing the farmer to move to a new piece of land every year, clear it, and plant a number of crops. In the next year, he moves to a new piece of land and repeats the same process again.
14. **Slash and burn:** A manual land-clearing process used by the farmer during shifting cultivation farming. This involves cutting of shrubs and small trees with bush knives and burning to clear the area for cropping.
15. **Subsistence farming:** Farming system in which the farmer produces crops only for family consumption.
16. **Ta'u:** Tongan term for "year," also referring to a crop of yam in farming terms.

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Laplap Soso'ur: Traditionally Grated and Baked Yam

Bergmans Iati

Partager le sosour c'est communier avec les vivants et les ancestres
(The sharing of sosour is a communion with the living and the ancestors)
—Vanuatuan oral tradition

Laplap is a Vanuatuan traditional baked delicacy scraped from cassava, taro, yam, and green banana combined with coconut milk, chicken, fish, and beef or pig meat. The whole is wrapped in large banana leaves, also locally called laplap leaves, and steamed in a traditional oven. There is a wide variety of laplap in Vanuatu. Indeed, the *laplap soso'ur*, originating from Malekula Island, presents a particular and unique feature determining both social and cultural identity considerations of Malampa's local population.

Laplap soso'ur's preparation process is so rich and complex that the know-how required to prepare such a meal deserves protection and promotion of its tangible and intangible heritage. Laplap soso'ur is an effective example depicting social cohesion involving a strong sense of conviviality and communion between the community members irrespective of their status or rank. The meal is shared during large family reunions, celebrations, and various diverse occasions.

Laplap soso'ur is facing the threat of disappearance as result of modern living styles. Indeed, subconsciously, everything today has to be done efficiently and effectively at a fast pace. Such attitude does not allow such time-intensive practices of taking time to spend with relatives to perform such community acts as cooking and baking the laplap soso'ur. This leads to a rapidly changing tangible environment and island lifestyle, and it certainly contributes to the erosion of the local tradition and culture. Youths in particular are influenced by foreign cultures and standards. In terms of cuisine, people increasingly rely on easily and rapidly cooked meals prepared in large saucepans. Moreover, massive rice consumption and other Western- and Asian-made products tend to inhibit Malekula inhabitants from regularly baking laplap soso'ur.

Vanuatu's integration into the global system and the advent of new lifestyles hamper the transmission of laplap soso'ur know-how. This has directly affected the capacity of the local youths to properly learn its preparation and understand its importance and significance in terms of cultural identity and social cohesion for the local communities on the island.

The promotion of this traditional meal necessitates a descriptive study of laplap soso'ur, including the complexity of its preparation, its social significance, and the threats hampering the indigenous mechanisms for knowledge transmission.

LAPLAP SOSO'UR: DESCRIPTION

Physical Aspect

Laplap soso'ur has a circular shape of about one-and-a-half meters in diameter and is about two to five centimeters thick at its edge. At the center, the thickness due to the accumulation of the scraped tuber can reach fifteen to twenty centimeters. The quality dough obtained from fresh scraped tubers is rolled out manually on laplap leaves and is distributed in such a manner that the central part is curved to form a slight bulge. Meat, two to four red-hot stones, island cabbage (*Abelmoschus manihot*), and seasoning are placed within the central area. The whole dish is then wrapped with and covered by laplap leaves and steamed in a traditional oven.

Ethnolinguistic Aspect

In local Northeast Malekula languages, *soso'ur* (or *hoho'ur*) means the act of "dipping food in sauce or water to savor it." The name given to this laplap perfectly describes the ancestral gestures, called "soso'ur," performed while eating it. This term is pronounced in most Melanesian languages by clearly distinguishing the *o* from the *u* in the second syllable. The designation of these delicacies in Austronesian languages enables us to locate their origin in relation to early settlements in the northeastern part of Malekula Island, though accurate archaeological studies are required to support our hypothesis. .

Special Characteristics of Laplap Soso'ur

Laplap soso'ur is distinguishable from other types of laplap throughout the Vanuatuan archipelago due to the abundant quantity of coconut milk used before and after baking it. Before the preparation of the actual laplap takes place, coconut milk is used for oiling the laplap leaves to avoid any adherence between the scraped tubers and the wrapping leaves once the baking process is complete. The laplap dough is then mixed with water and coconut milk in a receptacle before being laid out on the laplap or banana leaves used to wrap it. This mixture provides a delicate, tender texture and enhances the taste, releasing a unique, unrivaled flavor. Once baked, warm volcanic stones are doused with coconut milk and dispersed in the center with meat and island cabbage. A slight hole is then formed, into which coconut milk is also poured.

It must be acknowledged that the perpetuation of this particular local and traditional gastronomy item—prepared and consumed from the dawn of time until the recent postmodern era—enables depositaries of this intangible cultural heritage to know and experience wide varieties of laplap soso'ur recipes along with a wide diversity of flavors enhanced by the steam-baking process of such delicacies. Among different recipes, the "banana moon fish" recipe can be cited for its particular taste. In this context, it is also locally well-known that strong wild yams go very well with chicken while beef fits well with plantain bananas.

Consumption

While eating the laplap soso'ur, the guests sit around the delicacy. Tasting the laplap involves grabbing a small dough slice and dipping it in the central hole containing coconut milk, cabbage, and meat before eating it. The seating arrangement around the meal brings the guests closer together, allowing them to share a convivial moment in which elders transmit and exchange their knowledge with community youngsters. It is recommended to consume the laplap warm, with fresh coconut milk and steamed hot tubers to accentuate the unique aroma.

THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE PREPARATION PROCESS: AN ANCESTRAL SKILL

Laplap soso'ur's preparation requires various and multiple skills. Its complexity thus requires plenty of knowledge, particularly in achieving and executing the tasks involved in making a traditional oven, extracting coconut milk, and selecting ingredients such as meat, cabbage, and tubers. The amount of banana or laplap leaves used to wrap the delicacy will depend on the size and strength of the fire.

Selecting Dry Wood for the Fire

Traditionally, wood logs and branches used to cook, steam, and bake such a local meal are carefully chosen in terms of their function and capacity to burn and consume themselves and their ability to warm the volcanic stones up to a sufficient level to guarantee efficient baking. Hard woods are favored since upon reaching a certain temperature they produce hot embers that bring the volcanic stones to their incandescent point. Very often, softer branches are mixed with hard wood when the latter is scarce.

1 Peeling a yam tuber. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville 2 Yam pulp. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

Oven Temperature

The oven's temperature is estimated at about 800°C. Experimental archaeological research undertaken by Dr. Philippe Andrieux from Université de Paris II supported our analysis of these ovens. To accurately evaluate the oven's temperature, it is necessary to observe and study how both hard- and softwood behave while in contact with fire.[1]

The chemical composition of hard- and softwood used for steam-cooking the laplap enables the assessment of reactions occurring under specific fire conditions and, therefore, the temperature reached during this process. From the outset, as the temperature is below 100°C, the water stored within the wooden cells is expanding. Once the temperature reaches 100°C, the wood releases the water under its steamed form, which moistens the volcanic stones. Thick smoke is generated at this stage.

Upon reaching 180°C, the wood is subject to complete water evaporation while low-tar expands. At this stage, smoke decreases and flames arise from the stones laid on the now-burning wood logs. Additionally, the wood's hemi-cellulose, or, in other terms, the fibers constituting the external layers of the hardwood, is disintegrated by the fire.

Between 200°C and 280°C, the distillation and roasting (or torrefaction) of low-tar stored in the wood take place, thus releasing a strong odor of calcination. At this point, the temperature will continuously increase to reach the exothermic reaction point, at which time the energy stored in the wood is transferred toward the volcanic stones. This process brings the stones to incandescence. This energy transfer happens at temperatures between 280°C and 380°C.

1. Philippe Andrieux and Christiane Andrieux, *La Maîtrise du Vitrail: Création & Restauration,* Bordas Editions, 2001.

3 Preparation of *laplap* leaf. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

4 Vegetables and chicken as ingredients to flavor *laplap.* © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

The temperature reaches 500°C once the oven is cleared of all embers, and only a few flames are left rising because of residual hydrocarbon emanating from the remains. The oven is now ready to bake and awaits the laplap soso'ur. This baking process lasts at least one hour minimum.

Oven Preparation

Wood and stone arrangement has been developed over time so that enough air can circulate within and between and so that wood is effectively and properly consumed by fire. The baking site shall first be pre-leveled, or a thirty centimeter-deep hole could also be dug in order to place the volcanic stones within the selected area. The oven's diameter shall be of about two meters.

Shredded coconut shells, dry coconut coir (husk fibers), and a few coconut leaves are then thrown into the oven along with dry branches to start the fire. Thicker pieces of wood are then placed on the fire. From that moment, one hour is required to allow the stones to reach their incandescence point. Finally, the stones become red; embers have evaporated while the temperature is reaching almost 500°C.

According to local tradition, oven preparation can be done by men and/or women. As the oven is ready for baking, hot volcanic stones are removed, mostly by men, and the laplap is placed in the oven.

5 Coconut milk is added. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

6 The *laplap* covered with leaves and ready to be baked in a traditional oven. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

In traditional villages and communities, each household owns a permanent oven. In the capital city of Port Vila, though, few households own traditional ovens of such kind, and their use remains sparse since there currently is conflict between tradition and modernity. The cost for preparing a laplap soso'ur is quite expensive in town and requires at least four hours for collecting ingredients and baking. In Malekula villages, following local culinary practices, ovens are used one to four times a week. As of today, laplap or traditional ovens are less frequently used than they once were in the past.

Coconut Milk Preparation

Coconut milk preparation starts with the selection of coconuts. Experienced individuals are able to appraise coconut quality through shape and color. It is often the men who are in charge of the selection and the preparation of coconut milk.

Peeling a coconut is performed with a wooden tool. It consists of vertical stakes firmly fixed into the ground with a sharp-pointed tip. The gestures required to perform such an act must follow specific steps; otherwise, the peeling process might become an extremely difficult exercise. Today, the peeling of coconuts can also be done using a bush knife.

7 Baked meat and ingredients being watered one last time with coconut milk before eating. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

The bare coconut shell is then split by hitting specific spots. The coconut is known for bearing on one end "one mouth and two eyes." In order to crack the coconut, one must hit its side, which will result in a regular split of the shell. In the past, coconuts were cracked by using volcanic stones while today people tend to use the back of a knife. The grating of coconuts also follows specific standards in order to extract the juicy coconut flesh from the shell.

Extracting coconut milk is done by hand using a coconut-fiber filter. A proper mix ensures the quality and taste of the laplap. To extract enough concentrated milk for four persons, five coconuts must be grated. The pulp is only mixed with water and is then blended in a bowl before being squeezed to extract the coconut milk.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Laplap Soso'ur: Background

According to oral tradition, the laplap is said to have originally been brought from the northeastern part of Malekula Island. This traditional culinary practice has spread through many villages in the region. Along with dispersion through the local population from the northeastern part of Malekula, laplap soso'ur is now widely known in Port Vila, Luganville, and Noumea. In general, it is a much-appreciated delicacy, particularly by tourists and foreigners living in Vanuatu's urban centers.

8 Girls sitting around *laplap soso'ur* and eating. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

An Identity

Laplap soso'ur is a representative delicacy for the people of Malekula Island and Vanuatu. For almost every major event happening in local communities, laplap soso'ur is baked and shared among their members. Following traditional practices, laplap soso'ur is often offered to guests. This meal has important social significance in the eyes of the local inhabitants of Malekula Island.

ENDANGERED HERITAGE

The Limitation of Knowledge Transmission

Knowledge transmission for the preparation of laplap soso'ur is threatened today by the fact that the young generations are often forced to leave their home island to pursue their studies in the capital city; this restrains the number of youngsters available to catch the essence of the particular knowledge related to the preparation of laplap soso'ur.

On the other hand, the living conditions in the capital do not allow city dwellers to bake laplap. This lack of practice limits the younger generation from the effective learning of the skills required to prepare such a delicacy, which today still retains a high social significance.

Adoption of New Culinary Practices

New culinary practices involving the use of big saucepans and requiring sources of energy other than firewood have led the local population of Malekula to drastically reduce its laplap consumption. Apart from a few households today, laplap soso'ur consumption has almost disappeared in towns and urban areas. The complexity of the preparation explains this actual trend.

LAPLAP SOSO'UR'S HERITAGE: PROMOTION AND ENHANCEMENT

A Monographic Study

The protection, conservation, and promotion of laplap soso'ur require the development and analysis of a monographic study of this delicacy and all of its social and cultural implications. In order to do so, technical aspects in addition to aesthetics and social considerations must be revealed by the promotion of activities involving, for example, the participation of community members in general, irrespective of age, rank, or status, in which the members perform laplap preparation and experience the communion between themselves by sharing their stories and feedback. It is then hoped that such activity will bring sufficient awareness to generate a broad change of mind by becoming a true eye-opening event raising consciousness over the current threats laplap soso'ur and the heritage bound to it are facing today.

An Essential Ingredient of Laplap Soso'ur

The preservation and promotion of laplap soso'ur also imply the preservation and promotion of various yam species (*Dioscorea*) found in Vanuatu. Some of these species are harvested only once a year while others can be harvested throughout the year. An in-depth work involving this theme would, for example, oblige youngsters from Malekula to regain the associated competence and skills for cultivation of yams along with the understanding related to the use of the traditional calendar once used by their ancestors in more than fifty different vernacular local languages. This would allow them to rediscover and experience the meaning of the yam cycle based on their ancestral traditional moon calendar. A successful yam harvest is a pre-condition for performing major customary events on Malekula Island.

The study of yams can also lead toward an accurate classification of their species, which is closely linked with these traditional events. In this context, it is also required that elders and adults show youths the wide variety of yams available and how they are usually consumed.

A specific description and differentiation should be made in which "noble" yams (or "class one yams") can be identified as well as those selected for traditional or customary exchanges. Likewise, local and traditional tales, legends, and myths related to yams should be collected and analyzed to appreciate the symbolism and significance of this tuber cherished in Vanuatu and other parts of Melanesia.

Laplap Soso'ur Festival

A laplap soso'ur festival would be the most appropriate and efficient promotional tool to raise awareness toward the people of Malekula Island. This festival could be supported by educational institutions to facilitate knowledge transmission to the country's younger generations, particularly the youths from Malekula Island.

Cooperation among the Educational Institutions

It is also important that the National Tourism School, which includes within it a whole cuisine and culinary department, add to its program a traditional cooking class to train its students in the art of performing such meals as laplap soso'ur and many other traditional meals.

CONCLUSION

Laplap soso'ur is an integral part of Vanuatu's intangible heritage as it represents and symbolizes strong identity and social values in the eyes of Vanuatu's population, particularly those of Malekula Island. Its preparation involves the participation of both men and women. The know-how needed for its preparation is of great complexity and requires a high level of technicality not only held by one or two individuals, but by the group or community as a whole, reinforcing its status as an identity feature for Vanuatu. The oven and fire preparation consists of choosing the appropriate wood and volcanic stones as well as the skills to place these items properly in the oven. The coconut milk preparation starts with coconut selection, peeling, cracking, and grating while meeting the technical standards in order to produce the best quality coconut milk possible. Meat and tuber selection are made following their respective taste and flavor and how their aromas blend

with other ingredients while baked. The amount of banana or laplap leaves is determined by the oven's size as well as that of the dish itself. Laplap soso'ur plays an important social role in many traditional communities on Malekula Island. How laplap soso'ur is distributed determines the unity and harmony within a group or community. Getting together around laplap soso'ur reduces certain social barriers existing between individuals in a group. Discussions have no limit, which allows a certain level of freedom of speech. Moreover, the way people are sitting around the laplap shows a form of humility and respect much appreciated during these kinds of events.

Laplap soso'ur's endangered existence is directly linked to the lack of commitment in the transmission of the know-how required to perform such meals. The limitation is due as well to an increasing rural emigration often coupled with the lack of education facilities in their area of origin, thus forcing the youngsters to leave their home villages and home islands to settle in towns. This preservation and conservation issue should lead us toward the creation of an annual laplap soso'ur festival. This event shall be supported and organized by educational institutions located in the capital city in order to provide easy, complete, and comprehensive access to this traditional heritage for junior and senior secondary students. It is also highly recommended to give the opportunity to Malekula Island communities living in Port Vila to take part in such events.

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Nogoytam and Nelet: Disaster Preparedness

Bergmans Iati

Bien manger c'est déjà le début du bonheur
(Eating well is already the beginning of happiness)
—Vanuatuan oral tradition

Nogoytam and *nelet* are traditional meals from Torba Province, in the far northern area of Vanuatu. Torba is located at a tropical cyclone crossroads where five to six cyclones hit each year. Its people have lived for centuries on these islands in such auspicious environment and are well adapted to it.

Nogoytam and nelet are both delicacies made of cassava (*manioc*) and island cabbage or *malvaceae* (*Abelmoschus manihot*). The know-how required to prepare such dishes shows the ingenuity of the population as it was and still is able to extract and exploit the manioc and its multiple derivatives. This particular use of local manioc aims to avoid waste of food and related resources in order to preserve them, especially in times of natural disasters.

To prepare both nogoytam and nelet, we use manioc, whereas for *nogoytam laplap*, manioc resin is extracted, and for *nelet laplap*, manioc paste is used. However, as the resin is removed from the manioc, the latter has no more taste. That is why nelet laplap is then mixed and washed with caramelized coconut milk to provide it with a sweet and pleasant flavor.

This article will first introduce the different steps for preparing such traditional meals from Vanuatu's Northern Province. The second part of this reflection will outline the history of cassava, which constitutes the main ingredient of this delicacy. Drawing the historical patterns involved in the preparation of such meals seems necessary in order to best understand the migration flows in the Pacific region. This part also enhances the art of cultivating the land in Vanuatuan communities. While this heritage has been studied little, it is filled with abundant and sophisticated know-how on Vanuatu's natural resource governance. Finally, the article will propose a potential roadmap to help concerned stakeholders preserve and promote this Vanuatuan intangible cultural heritage.

PREPARATION STEPS FOR NOGOYTAM AND NELET

Nogoytam: Cassava Resin

The following descriptions of traditional dishes were obtained by observing students from Torba Province in the francophone high school of Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville.

The first step involves peeling and grating the cassava. The cassava is then squeezed to collect its juice, which is stored in a locally made container for half an hour. This period is necessary to produce a concentrated liquid or to produce a dough that will be sufficiently dense. While the juice is left aside, the cassava resin slowly drops to the bottom of the container. Finally, island cabbage is prepared and coconuts are grated. Once the preparation steps are complete, the cassava dough is then mixed with the island cabbage and coconut

1 Cassava plant leaf. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville 2 Peeling a cassava tuber. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

milk to achieve a fine, soft result. Grated coconuts are used to form a central circle in which laplap or banana leaves are spread. The leaves' veins are removed and will be used as ropes to wrap and fasten the meal, which will be thrown in the oven and covered with hot volcanic stones. The last step consists of covering the oven and stones with the remaining laplap leaves. The approximate time for steam cooking is thirty minutes.

Nogoytam is the fastest-cooking laplap. Generally, laplaps in Vanuatu are cooked for at least one hour in traditional ovens. A particular aspect of this laplap is the elastic texture of the dough. Kids today have given it the nickname "laplap chewing gum" due to the chewy sensation coming from the dough texture.

Nelet: Cassava Dough

Nelet is a specialty made from cassava dough whose resin has been used to prepare the nogoytam laplap. Many coconuts must be grated to extract sufficient amounts of coconut milk. The milk is then boiled and stirred until a caramelized sauce is produced, which is then left aside while the cassava preparation takes place.

Slices of cassava laplap are covered in *navenu* (*Macaranga spp.*) leaves and dropped into a saucepan for thirty minutes to one hour for baking. The leaves containing the laplap are then removed and pounded on a large wooden plate. called *natbe*, that has been specially made for the occasion. One or two persons pound the laplap with a *negelet*, a tool used to obtain a more elastic dough. The pounded laplap is laid on the natbe using coconut husks while pouring caramelized coconut milk over it. The nelet is then served in small slices to guests and members of the community.

3 Grating a cassava tuber. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville
4 Cassava paste wrapped in a leaf. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville
5 The pulp being boiled in a pot. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

Nelet brings in its preparation tangible culinary heritage from Torba Province. The natbe used is a locally-carved wooden plate of around one meter in diameter on which cassava dough is laid and on top of which two men use their negelets, measuring one-and-a-half meters long and around ten centimeters in diameter, to pound the laplap. Nelet's conception requires both men and women to take part in the preparation process. While performing their respective tasks, they share unique moments of communion. Children are present most of the time, but their role is limited to observing their parents and other adults.

Cassava and Intangible Heritage

Origin and History of Cassava's Domestication

According to Vincent Lebot,[1] cassava is the sixth most important crop globally after wheat, rice, maize, potato, and barley and is the main staple for more than 800 million people around the world, mostly in poor tropical countries. Lebot explains that the term "cassava" most likely derives from the Arawak word *casavi* or *cazabi,* which means "bread," with the term "manioc" having been derived from the Tupi *maniot*, later adapted to "manioc" by the French.[2] Lebot further underscores the importance of the crop as follows:[3]

Cassava plays an essential food security role because its matured edible roots can be left in the ground for up to 36 months. The crop, therefore, represents a household food bank that can be drawn upon when adverse climatic conditions limit the availability of other foods. The variety of foods that are made from the roots and nutritious leaves are reasons why cassava cultivation is expanding worldwide.

1. Vincent Lebot, *Tropical Root and Tuber Crops: Cassava, Sweet Potato, Yams and Aroids*, Oxfordshire: CAB International, 2009: 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

6 The paste is crushed using a pestle on a wooden tray. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville
7 Coconut milk cooked over low heat. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville
8 Skim milk is deposited on the dough in preparation for eating. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

Geographical origins of the crop are not universally agreed upon, nor are the circumstances surrounding its development. Use of the cassava, as well, is difficult to pinpoint in a historical and archaeological context. On this issue, Lebot explains as follows:[4]

> It is sometimes argued that sweet varieties of manioc that do not need special preparation were domesticated first. Present distribution of sweet and bitter cultivars shows that sweet types are predominant in the east of South America and especially in the Amazon while bitter types are more frequent in the West and in Central America and Mexico. In fact, sweet types are mostly cultivated where cassava is consumed as a vegetable and bitter types are cultivated where cassava is processed, but the situation is not clear cut.

Two varieties are cultivated for their roots: bitter cassava (*Manihot utilissima*) and soft cassava (*Manihot opi*). Soft cassava can be eaten once cooked, but bitter cassava, containing cyanides, requires a longer and more careful preparation. Cassava leaves are also consumed.

9

The Art of Gardening in Vanuatu

In Oceania, particularly in Vanuatu, gardens bear witness to an ancestral rural tradition in which culinary plants are at the same time essential resources, community symbols, and tradable goods.

4. Ibid., 3.

9 The cassava dough mixed with island cabbage and coconut milk to give more flavor to the *laplap*. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

Vanuatuans nurture a passion for their gardens, from which they collect, select, and diversify a vegetal heritage of great importance.

10

Cassava, which captures our attention here, has entered Vanuatu's culture very recently while yam, taro, and banana are among the most ancient tubers, leading the population to develop very sophisticated techniques to cultivate and harvest such crop species in sufficient amounts for their own subsistence. Cultivating their land is the central preoccupation of most Vanuatuans. Community life is regulated by the rule of custom, or *kastom*. Kastom utilizes earthen products and produce such as cassava to strengthen and build up links and sustainable networks among the tribes and villages.

The art of cultivation reflects the regard and respect given to a precise calendar or almanac. Weeding parcels of land to cultivate crops is usually done between September and October each year. In this time, the dry season is at its peak and the cleared plants can easily dry up in the sun and be burnt by the gardener. Once the garden has been cleared, the cultivation of foodstuffs, including taro, cassava, and yam, takes place during the same period, considered to be the summer in this particular region. In Vanuatu, cassava stems are cultivated in order to plant them. It is necessary to plough an area of sixty centimeters in diameter and to shape a short mound thirty centimeters high for each cassava stem. Planting cassava stem

10 The *nogoytam laplap* baked and ready to eat. © Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville

at this period of the year allows the ground to keep a certain level of temperature and to collect enough water during the upcoming rainy season for the stems to blossom.

This technique goes back as far as the Lapita era. Our ancestors used fire to clear their parcels of lands and to hunt. The environmental consequences of such practices still remain current today, as confirmed by some desert islands in Vanuatu and in the Pacific. Many animal species have already disappeared because of the constant use of fire by the first inhabitants and, later, the colonizers of the Vanuatuan islands.

NOGOYTAM AND NELET: PROMOTION AND AFFIRMATION OF CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Nogoytam and Nelet: Disaster Preparedness

Nogoytam and nelet are perfect examples of traditional knowledge that is reflective of a strong need for adaptation in a specific environment toward natural disasters and cataclysms. Both meals demonstrate the two-phased use of cassava. Nogoytam consists of extracting cassava resin; in other words, cassava dough is mixed with water in order to collect as much cassava juice as possible, which is then filtered and left aside for a while for the resin particles to drop down into the container. The resin is then mixed with island cabbage, and this mix is finally thrown into the laplap oven.

Cassava dough is filtered and used to bake the nelet laplap. As the dough has been filtered, it has lost its taste. It is therefore baked and pounded to create an elastic texture. The dough is then mixed with caramelized coconut milk in order to provide a sweeter flavor to the delicacy.

This meal has recently been prepared by youths from Torba Province as part of the cultural activities designed by the Lycée Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and the Vanuatu Cultural Center. The primary objective of the showcase was to transmit to the younger generation an ancestral foodway or knowledge. The Vanuatu Cultural Center has developed over the years a close partnership with educational

institutions throughout the country with the aim of promoting and documenting traditional knowledge to the younger generation. In the islands, the teaching of such traditional survival techniques has nowadays become a priority for educational curricula. The Vanuatu National Education Ministry's policy has ensured that traditional knowledge such as that discussed here is transmitted in the curriculum together with other Anglo-American knowledge. The idea is that such a balanced curriculum will ensure traditional knowledge is promoted to positively contribute to island community life in Vanuatu. Such a curriculum that is inclusive of local cultural knowledge and wisdom ensures the "colonial curriculum" is checked and given some degree of balance.

The Lycée Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and its partners, including the Vanuatu Cultural Center, the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, the National Council of Women, and the Ministry of Education, have put in place a cultural project of traditional knowledge transmission inserted into the secondary education curriculum as an arts and culture class. This activity has led the Lycée Louis-Antoine de Bougainville to search for men and women from each Vanuatuan province who are holders of such knowledge to transmit it to younger generations. Timetables are adapted to allow such classes and courses to take place, and the teaching corps assists speakers and panelists during the preparation and follow-up of such activities.

In 2013, the Lycée Louis-Antoine de Bougainville built a school center for cultural activities. A *farea* has been erected where secondary students learn to perform sand drawings and bake and cook traditional meals. The school calendar also allows one cultural day per year, at which time the students can be exposed to traditional aspects of their home islands. These events must also be the subject of written publications by the students themselves. By doing so, the students propose their own personal reflection over each event.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this work realized by the youths is to allow the young generation to envision the true value of their cultural

heritage. The project, which was initiated in local schools, is aimed at transmitting and affirming Vanuatu's intangible heritage for students. The engagement of all the partners, including the Vanuatu Cultural Center, in the promotion of such a project is truly promising.

The impact of such cultural activities in schools is a plain academic and social success. School management and teaching personnel note that the majority of youngsters have communication problems and have certain difficulties in expressing themselves, particularly in public situations. Thus, it should definitely be noted that such cultural events taking place in schools bring trust and confidence to the young generation. The youths, therefore, show better perspectives on life and better results at school.

Teaching traditional knowledge and cultural practices responds to a universal engagement made by the Vanuatu Cultural Center and its partners in preserving, promoting, and affirming Vanuatu's national cultural intangible heritage.

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4 Voyaging and Seascapes

To the Pacific islanders, the waters that separate them are also a factor that connects them. Bearing this in mind, the four themes in this section offer a glimpse into the need to hold mastery over the sea for survival—for the fish that sustain the people and for the creation of pathways to connect them. Through extensive interisland trade, the ocean pathways maintain and sustain relationships for political, social, educational, economic, and most of all, spiritual benefits.

In "Palauan Knowledge of the Sea," for example, we see how extensive methods and nuances of fishing and oceanic knowledge are part of both the livelihood and identity of Palauans. Similarly, by examining the Yapese knowledge related to canoes and ocean voyaging, we can see the effects and importance of inherited know-how on the connected lives of Micronesians through the ages and today. In these and all the themes in this section, we see how expressions by custodians of cultural know-how and development of sophisticated navigational systems have allowed Pacific islanders to travel safely and interact with the ocean and each other. Pacific navigation is perhaps one of the most singular human achievements of humanity.

Palau Knowledge of the Sea

Ann K. Singeo

Tekoi a ua edesaoch.
(Like the waves of the ocean, knowledge of the sea comes in various sizes and shapes, each headed in the same destination, but never will one wave overcome another.)[1]

—A Palauan proverb

The ocean has sustained Palauans' livelihood since the beginning of time. Understanding of the ocean means that they not only relate to its changes with the wind or tide, or even the moon, but can also smell and feel the change on their skin before or as it takes place. The collected information here is representative of knowledge from informants coming from various places in Palau, mostly Ngarchelong State. Even as they feel the tide coming in, they can recall that certain fish may be spawning at that very moment. This is what developed fishing knowledge entails. Palauans today still use legends to teach origins of knowledge such as fishing. Within the knowledge, behaviors or characteristics of marine species are identified and used to determine fish habitats and life cycles and oftentimes the name of the species.

1. This proverb is used among fishermen in Palau as a humble reminder that promotes respect of each other's knowledge of the ocean.

Fishing, like other indigenous knowledge, becomes a character of a village as the natural resources available to that very environment dictate the cultural practices to be mastered by those who belong to that village. Those with the vast and rich ocean resources have mastered the fishing knowledge more than others without the same ocean riches. Places in Palau known for having expanded ocean resources include Ngarchelong, Koror, and Peleliu.

In Palau, the ocean is for the men to master and manage. Although women participate in the gleaning or gathering of seafood in the shallow coastal areas, their trips to the sea are less frequent and more for the purpose of leisure and retreat. Still, their closeness to these particular habitats gives them direct interest and knowledge of its characteristics and connection to the larger fishery. For example, a female interviewee, Eunice Olsudong, notes, "Where there are less invertebrates and crustaceans, there's less fish."[2] Whether or not she understands the scientific correlation between the two, she still uses the invertebrates as an indicator for good fishing grounds.

TRADE WINDS

The trade wind is what separates the two main seasons of Palau—the rainy season and the dry season. Palau's indigenous language refers to the trade winds as *rak*. The term "rak" has also been adopted and used as "year." However, the reality is that a rak is merely six months of the year. From the month of November until April is one rak, of the Easterly Winds. Subsequently, from the month of May until October is the second rak, of the Westerly Winds. Because the Palauan calendar consists of the sun, the moon, and the winds, the same terms were adopted and used to translate the Western calendar. The translation is as follows: *sils* or sun—day; *buil* or moon—month; and *rak* or trade winds—year. For the purpose of this paper, we will be using the term "rak" in its original meaning of "trade winds."

During the Easterly Winds, or Rak er a Ongos, the climate is dry and very windy. It is also during Rak er a Ongos that typhoons are of greater possibility. Palau seldom gets typhoons compared to other island countries in the region, like the Philippines, which are only 400 miles from Palau. During this time the villagers of Palau on the

2. Eunice Olsudong, personal interview with author, 2014.

east coast of Babeldaob will rarely go out to sea and will practice the types of fishery that do not require use of boats, such as *kesokes*, or "gill net," and *bidekill*, or "throw net." Those on the west coast of Babeldaob do not necessarily receive the same intensity of winds and can still participate in alternative fisheries as they have a vast reef with diverse habitats. A Palauan saying is that villages in the west are *medinges el beluu*, or bountiful villages.

During the Westerly Winds, or Rak er a Ngebard, the climate is wet, but calm. Fishing conditions are favorable for most of Palau as the sea is calmer and cooler, both of which make for productive fishing. It is during these trade winds that trees are also flowering and fruiting, and Palauans would say that the trees are pregnant and the wind is being considerate not to shake up the trees too much or possibly cause interruption of maturing fruits.

Understanding of trade winds and seasons allows fishermen to predict the weather effectively and plan for appropriate fishery activities.

LUNAR CYCLE

The lunar cycle is critical knowledge for effective fishing. Knowing the relationship between the moon and the tide informs the fishermen of tide differentials and fish behavior as well. For instance, when the moon rises, low tide begins, and as it passes the center or directly over our heads, the tide begins to return, or high tide begins.

Fish life cycles are observed and identified against the lunar cycles as well. By this, the fishermen know exactly when and where to go out to get a certain species of fish. For instance, according to Rteruich Katsushi Skang from Ollei, Ngarchelong, regarding the life of a hump-head parrot fish, "They begin to gather during the seventh and eighth waning moon, travel out to aggregation channels by ninth waning moon to spawn, and return to their usual habitat."[3] Tino Kloulechad from Ollei, Ngarchelong says, "Every fish spawns every thirty days."[4] He explains that every fish species has a specific spawning day within the lunar cycle and will always return to that specific reef area to spawn every thirty days; for example, rabbit fish

3. Rteruich Katsushi Skang, personal interview with author, 2014.
4. Tino Kloulechad, personal interview with author, 2014.

spawn every sixth day after a new moon. Kloulechad also noted that most fish spawn during neap tide, referred to as *koseks a chei*.[5]

From the new moon to eighth moon is referred to as the "Western Moon" as the moon is first sighted in the evening in the western skies. It is also during this point in the lunar cycle that it is low tide during most of the morning and high tide in the early evening. From the ninth to the fifteenth the moon is bigger and brighter, and fishermen are getting good catches as fish are more active and their appetites are improved. The period after the full moon, lastly, is referred to as *kermerm*, or "loss of brightness."

HABITATS

The various habitats provide fishing grounds for the varied marine species, determining the type of fishing gear or techniques to be used. Beginning from the coastal area, the habitats vary depending on which part of the island one is situated. The east coast of Babeldaob is shallow and narrow while the west coast is deeper and has wider reefs. Legend has it that when the giant goddess fell down to create what became most of Palau today, she faced the west on her side and created the reefs of the west further out to protect her organs while the east is of her backbone and has the strength to handle the constant thrusting of waves rushing ashore. Below is a list of the habitats in the Palauan language from coastal to open sea.

- *Kebokeb*: This is the mangrove area along the beach, next to land. It is an area within which various marine species are collected such as mangrove crab and mangrove clams (*ngduul, dubuongel, delbekai, kdor*). Women collect clams while men trap or spear mangrove crabs.

- *Lalou*: A *lalou* is a mote or deeper waterway usually after the mangrove forests, underneath the mangrove tree branches and before the sea grass begins. This area is a passage for fish and provides a place for a certain art of fishing using spears while sitting on the tree branches.

5. Ibid.

- *Kerker*: This sea grass bed is where women collect seafood such as invertebrates and various types of clams, including fishing for small snappers. Men use throw nets and gill nets to fish for various types of fish, especially rabbit fish (*meas, kelsebuul*). Juvenile turtles and sharks also feed in this area.

- *Uet*: *Uet* (pronounced "wet") is the area within the inner reef that consists of swamp, sea grass areas, sand beds, and coral patches, where the tide never gets too low and provides for a rich biodiversity due to the varied habitat and food source for marine species. Within a uet, marine species to be found include invertebrates, clams, rabbit fish, parrot fish of many kinds, turtles, sharks, etc. Uet provide an important habitat for juvenile fish. They are areas where line fishing and spear-gun fishing are both used, along with fishing weirs or *beng* where stone walls are created to trap fish.

- *Rael sab*: *Rael sab* (called *rael mlai* in Desbedall) is a deeper area also within the lagoon with long sea grass and corals within the kerker where giant clams and larger fish are found. This is an ideal area for casting of small fishing lines, a fishing technique commonly practiced by women and men, particularly those from the east coast of Babeldaob.

- *Lemau*: *Lemau* are blue holes in the inner reef with large corals. "Lemau" comes from the word *mellemau*, meaning blue. This is rich fishing ground inhabited by larger fish and turtles. A spear gun is the gear mostly used in this area, including for bottom fishing.

- *Bkul a rsaol*: This is the sea crest that divides the fringing reef and the lagoon. This is where coral groups increase and long sea grass exists. It is a place for spear-gun fishing and some line fishing.

- *Rsaol*: This is the lagoon where bottom fishing is the main activity along with spear-gun fishing and turtle hunting.

- *Melkesokl*: *Melkesokl* are patch reefs and are mostly fished using bottom fishing and spear fishing.

- *Ellemoll*: The barrier reef where, during low tide, trochus is collected on the Oreall, or coral bed. Spear fishing is used here for fish trapped in pools, and even lobsters are caught here.

- *Ngeuaol*: This is the open sea, where trolling is mostly the way of fishing.

FISHING TECHNIQUES

The various fishing techniques are segregated between the male and female fishery techniques. Women's fishery, as mentioned previously, is concentrated in the shallow coastal areas, whereas men's fishery begins from the mangrove and extends all the way out to the deeper reef areas. Fishing techniques have pretty much maintained the same knowledge and application though the tools have changed.

The following descriptions provide explanations of the fishing techniques and the habitats to which they are applied.

- *Kereel*. Bottom fishing takes place in the lagoon all the way to the deep sea and targets reef fish that feed on worms and other small sea-bottom creatures including small fish, and, as such, will use tackle with a baited hook. Tools used for this type of fishing began with the use of line made from hibiscus tree bark and hooks made out of shells and wood. This type of fishing is also practiced by women within the shallow coastal sea grass. Women's fishery is not a responsibility or obligation toward the family food security but merely for recreational purpose. Today the fisherfolk have adopted newly introduced and more advanced materials such as malleable fishing lines and hooks (Figures ① and ②).

① Contemporary fishing line. © Ann K. Singeo

② Camp Ebiil participants with their catch from bottom-line fishing in Ngarchelong. Camp Ebiil is a local indigenous knowledge education for youth toward protection of Palau's culture/nature. © Bridget Adachi

Hooks and fish traps were designed with plants that are durable and resilient to moisture but with enough flexibility to be used as part of a design.

- *Chetakl*. Trolling is conducted in the open sea or deeper reef areas using stronger and heavier lines with artificial lure or fish bait (Figure ③). In other parts of Palau such as Hatohobei Island, the fishermen fly kites attached to their trolling lines as sails. Big migrant species of fish, such as wahoo, barracuda, tuna, sail fish, and other bill fish, are caught mostly during trolling activities. Fish life cycles are also used to determine the migration of such fish throughout the reefs of Palau. Lagoon birds such as the black noddy and white tern along with other lagoon birds are observed as indicators of fish schools targeted during trolling.

- *Balech*. Spear-gun fishing is a contemporary fishing practice adopted from the traditional diving and spearing of fish, or *merus a ngikel*. Today, with more advanced techniques and tools, the fishermen use spear guns that are designed with metal and rubber to create a trigger for faster and deadlier impaling (Figure ④).

3 Trolling line. © Ann K. Singeo

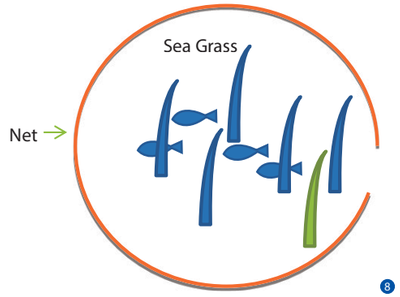
- *Burech*. Spears are used during net fishing and also during *tuich*, or night fishing, when tides are low. "Tuich" simply means "torch"; torches were used as lights to locate the fish to be speared (Figures ⑤ through ⑦). A spear is made with bamboo and wood from betel-nut tree trunks or other hard wood. Today they aremade with bamboo and metal, as shown in Figure ⑦.

4 Spear gun. © Ann K. Singeo

5 Traditional spear made from bamboo, coconut lash, and wood. © Belau National Museum

• *Net Fishing*. Gill net fishing is used for two types of fishing techniques. It is used during *omelebed* and *kesokes*. *Omelebed* is when the fishermen would use the net to round up the pools of coral where fish would likely be feeding during low tides (Figure ⑧). As the fish try to swim out they are caught in the net, and a spear is again used to get fish from the net. Once the fish school is spotted, the fishermen would take each end of the net and run toward the fish, eventually coming to make a circle with the net and the fish in the center. *Kesokes* is when the fishermen would set the net toward the end of high tide and in front of mangroves or sea grass where fish would rest at night in order to trap the fish on their way out with the low tide (Figure ⑨). Once the tide is low and the fish have been caught in the net, the men utilize the spear to get the fish from the net.

6 Boys participating in gill net fishing during Camp Ebiil. © Ann K. Singeo 7 Modern point of spear using steel. © Ann K. Singeo



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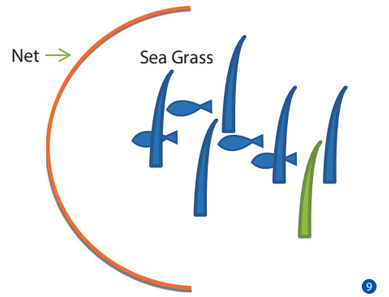

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Figures ⑩ and ⑪ show some of the participants of Camp Ebiil 2005 weaving a *ruul*, the traditional implement used for the above-mentioned fishing technique. Ruul is made using vines and palm leaves woven along the vine (*demailei* and *kebeas*).

10

11

12

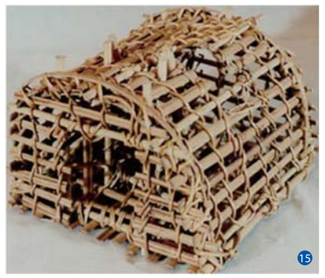
Bidekill, or throw net, is used to fish for rabbit fish (*meas*) and sardines (*mekebud*). Figure ⑫ shows Tino Kloulechad with his throw net on his way to fish in the nearby sea grass area. Rabbit fish spawn and spend most of their life spans in the sea grass area, where they are harvested by the fishermen using either throw net or gill net. Understanding of their behavior allows for the fishermen to successfully catch the fish at the right place and time. Rabbit fish harvesting is ideal in Koror and Airai, where the fish are at their biggest size by the time they travel to those two states of Palau.

Omodk a uesachel is a fishing technique hardly practiced by fishermen today except for a few. The target species is *chelauesachel*, or crawfish, which inhabits the sea grass area in a burrow in the sea

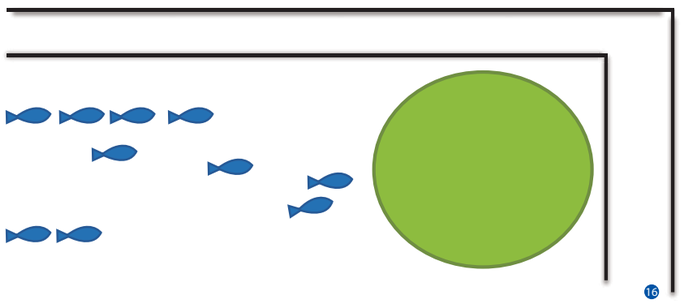
8 *Omelebed*. 9 *Kesokes*. 10, 11 Elder and campers making *ruul* during Camp Ebiil 2005. © Meked Besebes 12 *Bidekill*, throw net. © Ann K. Singeo

bed (Figures 13 and 14). The objective is to lure the crawfish with bait on a hook tied to the end of a stick that's long enough to reach into the burrow.

- *Omub.* Fish traps are also used in sea grass areas in pools or in the mangrove area, where fish would normally congregate and feed (Figure 15). The trap is made from roots of *raod* (*Rhizophora apiculate*), a mangrove tree. Traps are used for catching reef fish and mangrove crabs. Figure 15 shows the trap, or *bub*.



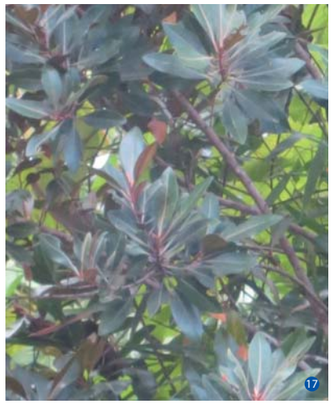
- *Beng*. *Beng*, or fish weir, is a stone wall built on the reef as a trap for fish. Fish are speared during low tides, when the fish are trapped after the tide goes out. Primary interviews identify remaining beng to exist in Ngeremlengui and Melekeok.[6] In Ngeremlengui, the beng is placed in the sea grass and coral bed in front of a village next to the channels, whereas in Melekeok it is placed at the front of the Barrier Reef. Figure 16 demonstrates the stone fish trap.

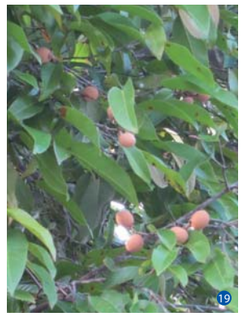


6. Peter Elechuus, personal interview with author, 2014.

13, 14 Fisherman showing his catch of *chelauesachel* (crawfish). © Meked Besebes
15 Traditional trap made from mangrove tree root (*raod*). © Belau National Museum
16 Diagram of traditional fishing weir, *beng*. © Ann K. Singeo

Plants traditionally for fishery include the previously mentioned vines and palm leaves and the following plants that are native to Palau's tropical forest: *chelangel* (*Pouteria obovata*), *kerdeu* (*Ixora casei*), *cheritem* (*Atuna racemosa*), and *tebechel* (*Rhizophora mucronata*). These plants show resilience to moisture and allow for needed flexibility. All are native to Palau and can be found in the upland forests and mangrove forests. Photographs of identified plants are shown in Figures 17 through 20.





Women's fishery, on the other hand, is concentrated within the coastal areas of the sea grass and mangroves. Collection of clams, shells, and sea cucumber (*Holothuroidea*) is their main fishery. Tools used for this fishery mainly involve knives and baskets. Baskets are made from coconut leaves right before going out and are usually still green, with ferns laid on the bottom to keep seafood from falling out and to tenderize the sea cucumber, which can be tough to chew on.

17 *Chelangel*, northern yellow boxwood (*Pouteria Obovata*). © Ann K. Singeo
18 *Kerdeu* (*Ixora casei*). © Ann K. Singeo
19 *Cheritem*, parinarium nut (*Atuna racemosa subsp. Racemosa*). © Ann K. Singeo
20 *Raod/Tebechel*, mangrove tree (*Rhizophora mucronata* Lam). © Ann K. Singeo

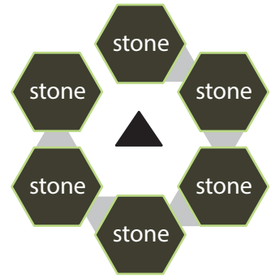
This fishery is conducted when it is low tide in the early morning and the sea cucumber vesicles are clean and without sand or other impurities. It is also during this time that they are fattier and tastier.

Women's fishery is a leisure activity that women participate in as friends or a group to catch up on things and eat lunch outdoors. It is not an obligation or responsibility as men's fishery is.

Finally, as a tradition, the elders in the community kept their eyes on those who went out to sea as a part of safety. As such, there were always elders who spent their days at the boat house or mooring

21 *Mengduul*, women's fishery, in the mangrove area. © Ann K. Singeo
22 *Ngimes* that women cut to remove the edible intestines when the species has released the sand from within the intestine. © Ann K. Singeo
23 *Olengimes*. Ulang Skang cutting a sea cucumber to get the intestine. © Ann K. Singeo

house to keep head counts of all fishermen or vessels that went out to sea. In instances when the fishermen needed to be called in to shore for emergency purposes, a *klekat,* or smoke signal point, would be lit to create a smoke signal to call the fishermen home. This practice is most recognized in Ngarchelong, where there are a total of five klekat, known corresponding to the various reef areas in the Northern Lagoon. There are no other klekat recorded for this purpose in other states. Individual klekat are designed with specific height and size to correspond to the specific reef's distance to land. For example, the further the reef, the bigger the platform. Figure (24) depicts the platform.



The circular stone platform surrounds a triangular stone in the center that allows for oxygen to enter the center of the fire. Wood and coconut leaves are placed within the platform's entirety in order to create the needed size of fire and smoke. Green leaves are placed on top to create thicker, darker smoke that can be recognized from a distance.

This is just some of the knowledge associated with Palauan fishery that a successful fisherman must accumulate over time as part of mastering the knowledge of the ocean. The knowledge continues to change with time and with new technology. While the tools and techniques advance, the foundations of mastering ocean knowledge as a successful fisherman remain the same.

Fishing knowledge currently remains a family heritage and is passed on from one generation to the next. However, the Ebiil Society is one organization in Palau that has been providing training programs on Palau's fishing knowledge since 2005. The organization is a civil

24 *Klekat*.

society organization, and the program is mainly organized during summer vacation and for specific school programs as requested.

Palau's knowledge of the sea incorporates understanding of our own environment and ecosystems, including conservation practices. These important values and principles are built into the practices, and as a person matures in his or her level of fishing skills, so does his or her sense of responsibility for resource management. In order for Palau to sustain this important knowledge of the sea, the development of such training programs must be included in the current education strategies.

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Lemaki, Traditional Builders

Niumaia Gucake

I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

—1 Kings 3:12

INTRODUCTION

The people of the Pacific are well known for their way of life, which is through traditional communal living. Some writers of Pacific history have described them as sailors, with their uniquely built canoes sailing from one island to another country. This is historically documented in the Lapita history. For the Pacific islands, including those in Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji, the spirit of sharing has always been part of tradition and life. This has sustained their relationship as Pacific neighbors until today.

Significantly, the traditional structures encompassing their ways of life and the environments they live in are interlinked with each other and their survival throughout generations. As communal dwellers, the people of the Pacific live in village communities. The urge to reinforce and strengthen their relationships as neighbors is an ongoing scenario. For Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa, there are also a lot of similarities in terms of language, food, and beliefs, utilizing and sharing the God-given talents they possess. For example, due to the importance of seafaring, the need for building big sail boats that can carry up to 200 people is an ongoing task. It also gives the boat builders a sense of pride for the talent that they have inherited.

In Fiji, the builders' clan is divided in two: carpenters and boat builders. They both have played an important role throughout the historical journeys of their people. In Fiji, they are known as the *mataisau* while in Lau they are the *lemaki*.

The clan's presence in Lau originated from the sea adventure of two Samoan brothers who ended up in Tonga. It so happened that they came across a sailing boat competition in which the King of Tonga had also competed but had never won. The adjustment made on the sailing boat by the brothers led to a win for the King's boat. As a reward, they were confirmed into the King's circle. One of their first missions after that was to accompany the King's herald to the Chief of Lau in the Fiji group to request a new sailing boat. The boat was constructed at Kabara because of the *vesi*[1] forests that exist there.

1. *Intsia bijuga, Caesalpiniaceae.*

1 Elenoa Gataialupe (interviewee). © Niumaia Gucake

2 Simione Kaulamatoa, current head of the Lemaki tribe. © Niumaia Gucake

The King of Lau was so impressed with the craftsmanship of the two that he requested to the King of Tonga for the brothers to remain in Lau and build a boat for him. Their descendants have been in Fiji ever since. After a *bure* (traditional Fijian house) building competition with the Jafau clan of Kabara[2] witnessed by the King of Lau, he decided that the Jafau would be his traditional boat builders while the Lemaki were to be his carpenters. The decision of the King of Lau to swap the roles of the two clans was based on one of the brother's criticisms of Jafau's bure that some of its structures were incomplete and not worthy of a King.

Elenoa Gataialupe, a third-generation grandchild of Ma'afu, who was the King of Lau at the time, related how in 1935 she had been part of a group of children tasked to carry stones from the beach to build the foundation of the church in Tubou.[3] The Tubou Methodist Church still stands today as a testimony to the intricate craftsmanship they possessed. To view the interior of it today, one can only wonder and marvel at the coconut sinnet designs displayed.

The church was built following traditional procedures and protocols. The elders stayed and drank kava[4] in a bure every day of the process. The foreman always consulted with them for every stage of construction. For every adjustment, decisions made were done in the bure. It was related by the current head of the Lemaki clan that they use this same process in every construction endorsed by the King.[5]

The same process and protocol is noted to have been used in a few other major buildings. It was used in the 1970s in Tubou to construct the Vatuwaqa Levu, the official residence of the King of Lau. However, before doing so, the late King of Lau, Ratu Sir Kamisese

2. Members of the Jafau clan of Kabara Island in the Lau group of islands are also renowned traditional builders and carvers.
3. Elenoa Gataialupe, personal communication with author, 2014.
4. A traditional drink made from the roots of the kava plant (*Piper methysticum*).
5. Simione Kaulamatoa, personal communication with author, 2014.

3 Church in Tubou, following traditional Tongan architecture. © Niumaia Gucake
4 Vatuwaqa Levu House, the traditional official residence of the late Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. © Niumaia Gucake
5 The traditional meeting house of the chiefly tribe at Tubou Village. © Niumaia Gucake

Mara, breached protocol by asking the Jafau, who are the traditional boat builders, to build Vatuwaqa Levu, the chiefly residence. This oversight angered the Lemaki clan, the traditional carpenters, who proclaimed that the Jafau clan would die one at a time before the building was completed and that the Vuanirewa clan would tire from providing feasts for the builders. Upon hearing this, the Jafau clan approached the Lemaki to seek traditional reconciliation by presenting kava and a whale's tooth (which is stringed and presented in certain traditional ceremonies). Fortunately, good sense prevailed, and the construction went ahead. A similar construction standing in Tubou today is the Methodist Church, built in 1992 for the annual Methodist Church Conference.

ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Indigenous Fijians believe that their structures and talents are God-given. They have a deep belief that God is the source of life, wellbeing, and talent; thus, the significance of protocol is paramount. The head of the Lemaki clan said that they can only function as carpenters when a King of Lau is in place, as in being traditionally installed.[6] With the death of the last King in 2004, they cannot be directed by any person in the family of the King of Lau to build or construct. They are subservient to the King; only upon his request would they receive chiefly blessings and the traditional knowledge to build a house or to carve. Therefore, confirming the title holder of the King of Lau, which is currently vacant, is important for the

6. Ibid.

6 Church in Tubou: an internal view of the traditional architecture. © Niumaia Gucake
7 Church in Tubou: traditional craftsmanship of the Lemaki tribe on the ceiling. © Niumaia Gucake

welfare of the Lemaki carpenter's clan as well as for that of all the indigenous communities in Fiji. Without a confirmed king, there will be neither blessings nor positive results. They believe that the success of their traditional role spiritually, socially, physically, and mentally depends entirely on the confirmation of the King of Lau.

Likewise for all traditional communities, the growth and success of their roles depends on the traditional confirmation of the chiefly titleholders within their jurisdiction. Once this is done, it gives the clan protection, blessings, good life, and success in a holistic environment.

The Tale of the Kanahē– from the Village of Loutōkaiano, Folaha, Tonga

As told to Siola'a Fakahau 'Aho

Fangota kihe kato ava
(Fishing with a bag that has holes in it)[1]

—Tongan proverb

Editor's Note:
This story was told to the author by Tupouleva, the Matapule of Folaha, Tongatapu, Tonga and Mr. Nimilote Leha, also of Folaha, Tongatapu, Tonga in 1960, and again by Mele Sinai Mone of Folaha, Tongatapu, Tonga Island in 1975.

INTRODUCTION

Tales and legends are not merely entertainment, but hold deep ecological knowledge about sustaining natural resources. The following tale has been passed down for many generations and conveys important knowledge about social relationships and respect for both the environment and the King. In the tale, two women who fish for the King compete over resources—a fish called *kanahē*. One woman finds an abundant supply hidden in a cave and keeps this knowledge to herself. When the other woman discovers her supply, she accesses the fish and accidentally leaves the entrance to the cave open, thus releasing all the fish and reducing the food supply. As a result of this, both women are transformed into stones that overlook the King's bay.

1. This proverb shows that while you can have all the skills and the right attitude, if you don't look after the basic needs, you will fail.

This story has been memorialized in songs, poetry, and place names that tell of the importance of sharing resources and sustainable environmental management. Today, the community of Folaha still observes the fishing *tapu* (prohibition) of this particular fish, which in the tale was depleted by the actions of the two women. This tale illustrates how food security was achieved and taught in ancient Tonga.

THE TALE OF THE KANAHĒ

There once was a Tongan King named Na'a'anamoana on the small island of Nuku, near the village of Nukuhetulu. He had two female servants named 'Ila and Hava. They were very loyal to him, especially when capturing and serving his meals. These two women were very beautiful and paid much attention to their duties to the King.

In the evening they would go into the water to capture fish. Hava would go west while 'Ila would swim down toward the small island of Kanatea, just near where Hava was fishing, so that Hava would think she was nearby.

'Ila would turn and swim east to do her fishing and eventually discovered the cave of the fish called kanahē (mullet), so every time they would go out to fish, 'Ila would always go to this cave to get all her fish. As they returned to the King's throne, called Matamoana, 'Ila would show off with her basket full of kanahē. When it came to Hava's basket, it would be but poor, with very few small kanahēs.

When the next day came, the same would happen. 'Ila would proudly present her basket full of kanahē while poor Hava stood and watched with sadness. So it came to Hava one day that she should follow 'Ila to know where she was getting all her fish. As they set off the next evening into the water, 'Ila poked her torch flame onto the spot where she usually fished in hopes that Hava would still think she was near while she swam towards Vai 'o Ika, the fish cave, not knowing that Hava was following right behind her.

As 'Ila neared her destination, Hava was close behind, keeping a distance so she would not be noticed. 'Ila opened the cave and caught her fish and then closed the opening and was on her way.

Hava was overjoyed as she opened the cave after ‘Ila left, happily taking all the fish she needed and setting out to return to the King. Hava was so excited that she carelessly forgot to close the opening of the fish cave.

As Hava returned with her basket full of fish, ‘Ila was surprised to see that their baskets had similar quantity and quality of fish. There were no words exchanged—just an eerie stare. A moment later, a loud rumbling sound was heard from the distance as a massive school of kanahē made its way from the cave.

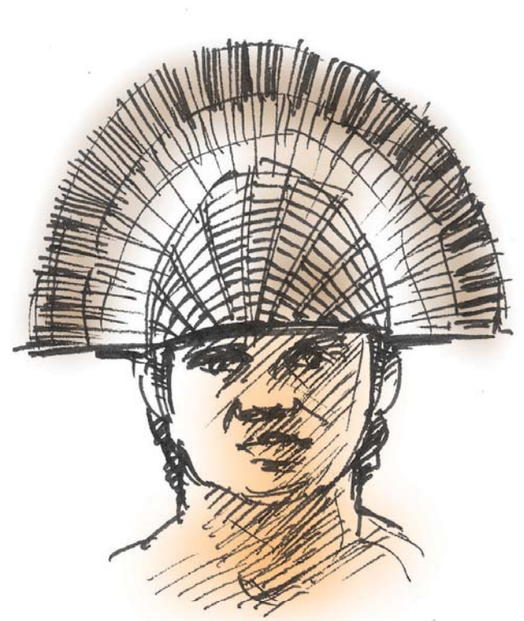
‘Ila knew immediately what had happened. They both ran into the water crying and pulled the edges of the land to close the cave, but it was too late: the fish made their way to deeper water as ‘Ila and Hava cried out “Kana hē!” meaning “the mullet is lost.”

“Kana hē, Kana hē!” they cried. Now all their fish had gone, and there was no way of getting them back. Poor Hava and ‘Ila would stand endlessly at the very spot they were in, sobbing, knowing they had lost all purpose to live now that their fish had gone. Both women turned into stone.

From then on, the two stone women stood facing the island of Mata'ano. In the early days, they were very visible to fishermen and swimmers. Over time, some constant bashing of tides and swimmers abusing the stones and debris caused some slight deformations. Sadly, today they have gone down into the waters and are no more to be seen. It is unfortunate, as these stones and the story of the kanahē

were once wonders of the village of Folaha, as was the Cave of the Kanahē.

In the plantation and water areas of Veito, Veipahu, and Vai Poaki stood the Bay of the King Lokofa in the island of Nuku. All around that area were pools of water. In the aftermath of Hava and ‘Ila stretching and pulling the lands trying to save their precious fish, they cry:



“*Send my love to Vai ‘o Ika, which is the Fish Cave.*
Vaipoaki and the bay of Lokofa,
Oh! Kanatea, Nukunuku land, and Fasia,
Please await them, as we are unable to withhold our precious fish.

We pulled Mataika to Haumaniu, our precious fish turn their back, we pulled Mata‘aho, which is an Island, but it was still, we pulled Fieto‘a, but our fish dodge north, Fautaaupe, get up! And await our precious fish while we wait as stones.”

Let it be known to Folaha, Tuvana, and Haʻaloka Matamoana his throne, and that is the story."

These are their cries heard from the lands as they cry "Kana hē" while pulling on the lands.

Today, as in the past, it is still *tapu* (prohibited) to fish for kanahē in June because that is when the kanahē are spawning and will travel from wherever they may be to gather in the bay. They travel down to the Bay of Lokofa and spawn there, where eventually the fish ask permission to enter into the waters of Vaipoaki and then turn and head toward Mataʻaho Island to the stones ʻIla and Hava as they make their way out back into deeper waters. When it is low tide, the tiny little fish are visible as they squirm about and look for deeper water.

Another story tells of King Naʻaʻanamoana, who had a daughter by the name of Veiongo, known as Vei. Her beauty was flawless and one of a kind, so they named the fish cave after her: Veiuu. The Bay of Veiuu now includes the places that surround the bay: Veito, Veipahu, Veisine, Veitongo, and Veimoho.

The beauty of Princess Veiongo was overheard in the islands of Samoa. When the Manaʻia from Samoa heard of her beauty, he decided to travel all the way to Tonga to see this beautiful princess.

Once he had completed his traditional ceremonial greetings and goodbyes, he departed. Upon departure, Princess Vei told the kanahē to guide the Manaʻia safely back to Samoa. The Manaʻia stood from the edges of Mataika across Nuku and saw the Princess crying. After seeing her cry, the Manaʻia said, "Nuku he Tutulu," which means, "Nuku is crying." That is how the village Nukuhetulu got its name.

Another story tells of a bay called Tokonofo, which was located in the middle of the village of Nukuhetulu. *Tokonofo* means "to sit and paddle." *Toko* means "a stick used for paddling" and *nofo* means "to sit or stay." When the King presented himself in this bay, it was prohibited for anyone aboard the canoes to stand taller than him. Thus, the passersby in canoes would have to sit and paddle, which was quite difficult.

Let the chiefs and the people of the land know that the kanahē plays in the ponds and bays, visible in the many waters of the land. This story tells of how the kanahē came to be known by its name and how other words got their names as well. For instance, Loutōkaiano means there were small plants resembling sugar cane, called *tō*, which grew in these pools of water and would only absorb these pool waters. Kai Ano means to eat from the pool, because there was no more free water streaming from the lands being pulled in Folahā. The places and locations of the story still stand even throughout these spawning times of the kanahē in June. No matter where these fish are in the world they have always asked for permission to leave back into the waters, and as the years have passed, they have always asked for permission before entering back to the waters.

Preserving the Enduring Knowledge of Traditional Navigation and Canoe Building in Yap, FSM

Stefan M. Krause

The best inspiration I got for Avatar 2 and 3 was dealing with the master navigator culture in Micronesia.

—James Cameron[1]

INTRODUCTION

The collection of high islands and atolls within the Caroline Island group of Micronesia is home to cultural traditions that have endured for thousands of years. One such form of wisdom that was no doubt necessary in ancient times was the suite of abilities required to sail across vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean on single-hulled outrigger voyaging canoes. The knowledge of what to do while on the open ocean was also complemented by the detailed mental blueprints and carving skills needed to build the handcrafted canoes that carried people and provisions safely from one island to the next when needed. So remarkable are these skills and the people that embody them that one of the most successful film producers in the world, James Cameron, has credited Micronesian master navigators[2] with providing a model from which to create an alien culture for his upcoming sequels to the highest grossing film of all time, *Avatar*.[3]

In today's world, it is a wonder that such knowledge still exists given the availability of new technologies such as GPS and older ones such as outboard engines and fiberglass boats. Despite these modern conveniences, though, the traditional knowledge surrounding navigation and canoe building does endure. It survives in an unbroken chain of cultural transmission between masters and apprentices that has taken place for centuries on the Outer Islands of Yap and Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia. This essay will give readers a glance at this knowledge, the people who hold it, and how it remains an important part of Micronesian identity for so many still.

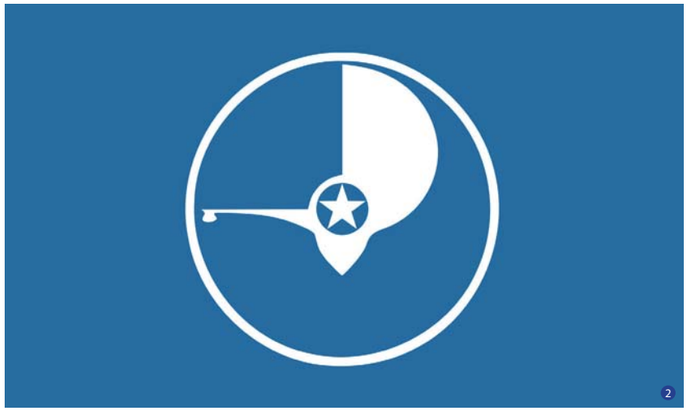
THE YAPESE EMPIRE

Yap State in the Federated States of Micronesia is known as "The Island of Stone Money" to most outsiders familiar with the tropical Pacific island group. This is because of the incredibly interesting system of stone disc currency that still exists today on the main islands of the state (Figure 1). Carved out of rocky hillsides in Palau three hundred miles southwest of Yap, one of the ways these often

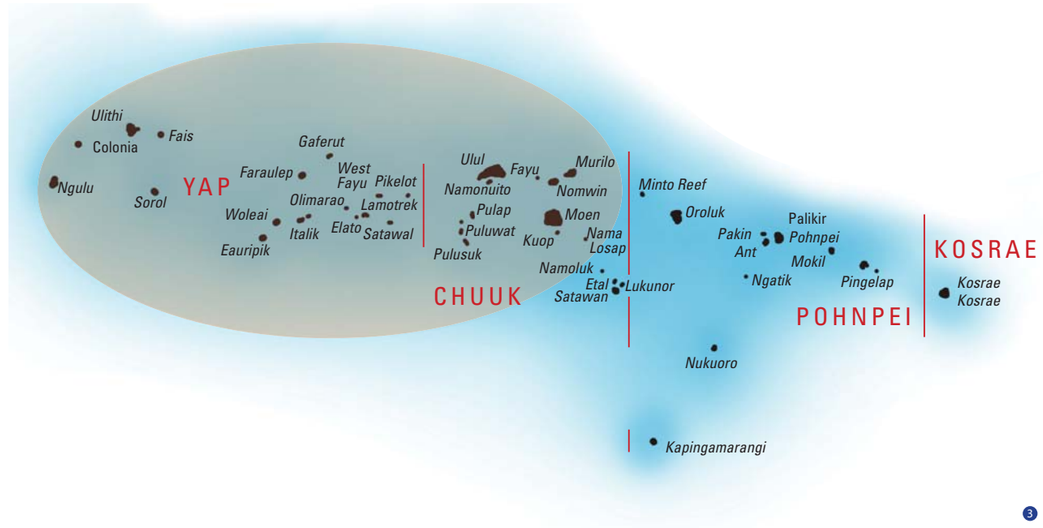
1. Rebecca Keegan, "James Cameron: 'Avatar' Sequels to Draw on 'Master Navigators,'" Hero Complex, *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2012, http://herocomplex.latimes.com/movies/james-cameron-avatar-sequels-to-draw-on-master-navigators/.
2. Cameron, an avid ocean explorer and researcher, has visited Micronesia several times for various philanthropic and scientific reasons, including an expedition to the bottom of the Marianas Trench, the deepest location on Earth. His time with master navigator Ali Haleyalur (who performed a traditional blessing three days before Cameron's solo seven-mile dive to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean) and others in the region no doubt fueled Cameron's imagination in such a way that his upcoming *Avatar* projects will feature a culture inspired to some degree by the Micronesian navigator culture touched upon here.
3. Ibid.

1 Yapese stone money on display after it was given to Ngolog Village in 2014 during a rare *mitmit* ceremony. © Stefan M. Krause

huge and very heavy stone discs gain their individual value in Yap is by the rich history each holds, including the perilous journey traveled over hundreds of miles of open ocean via bamboo rafts pulled by Yapese sailing canoes. Today, these two facets of Yapese cultural heritage—the stone money and the open-ocean navigation required to transport it—remain an integral part of the Yapese cultural identity. So important are these aspects of their heritage that each was symbolically inscribed onto the new Yapese state flag in 1980 shortly after the FSM officially gained sovereignty and became a nation (Figure 2).



Along with their main islands, the states of Yap and Chuuk in the FSM also include numerous dispersed outer islands that have jurisdictional ties to their high island state capitals today. As in the past, several of the islands on the present-day maritime border separating the FSM states of Chuuk and Yap still hold strong cultural ties to each other that are bound through a matrilineal clan-based system in which family members are dispersed throughout the island group. These ties were in turn part of the greater Yapese Empire that once stretched over seven hundred miles east from the main Yap islands. It was only during colonization and the introduction of formal boundaries and districts that a line was drawn separating many of these islands from each other (Figure 3).



Ethnographer Eric Metzgar has spent decades studying and learning Micronesian navigation and points out the irony that it was actually this division of state territories that may have helped save the traditional knowledge associated with long-distance oceanic navigation.[4] This is because with the new territorial boundaries, regular ship service connecting related islands did not occur. According to Metzgar, it is likely that navigators from islands such as Satawal and Lamotrek (both in Yap), Polowat (Chuuk), and others continued to practice and transmit their knowledge as they had in the past principally out of necessity—they needed to travel to neighboring islands for vital social and economic reasons.[5] These reasons could include visiting clan relatives during important periods or traveling to islands or other faraway spots in the ocean that have long held abundant stocks of fish or turtles. It was also important to be able to pick up and leave an island should a typhoon or other disaster wipe out resources there. All of these reasons combined created the rare situation in which modern technologies were not able to overcome traditional wisdom on how best to survive in certain environments. According to Eric Metzgar, a further condition that helped to keep this knowledge from disappearing may have been what is called the "indigenization" of the Outer Island religious community that emerged over the last several decades.[6] A new wave

4. Eric Metzgar, "Carolinian Voyaging in the New Millennium," *Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 5(1/2) (2006): 293-305.
5. Ibid.
6. Eric Metzgar, personal communication with author, 8 March, 2014.

2 The Yap state flag was created by artist John Gilinug and selected by Yapese citizens in 1980 as the official state flag. In it, one can see the important Yapese symbols of stone money, a voyaging canoe, and a star. According to the artist, the stone money symbolizes "tradition and custom." The canoe represents "the means and ways of accomplishment" (the way forward to achieve success), and the star is symbolic of a guidance toward the "state's determinations and goals." The color blue represents the ocean that surrounds the state, and the white symbolizes "peace and brotherhood." © Yap State Government

3 Map of the Federated States of Micronesia showing the outer islands of Yap and Chuuk states in the shaded area.

of Micronesian religious leaders on the islands provided a more flexible modernizing presence that did not discount the value and importance of traditional beliefs and knowledge—including those surrounding navigation. In today's world, it is indeed important to consider the value traditional knowledge can have in addressing modern concerns—something often discounted or at least overlooked by many.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN YAP

Like on so many islands in the Pacific, the period of colonization in Yap (sometimes referred to locally as *Wa'ab*) that occurred over the last couple of centuries took its toll on the abilities of Yapese to continue teaching and learning many of their various forms of traditional knowledge. This disruption in cultural transmission loomed larger on the main island group of Yap, where Germany, Spain, Japan, and eventually the United States each imposed their own cultural norms onto the traditional society to varying degrees. According to preeminent Micronesian scholar Father Francis Hezel, Yap's traditional practices began to fade away at an even more accelerated pace beginning around the 1960s for many reasons having to do with the process of modernization.[7]

The Outer Islands of Yap, however, were not as easily administered largely due to their inaccessibility. Because of this, the process of passing customs and culture on to newer generations faced fewer obstacles from external pressures. This helps explain why today traditional navigation and canoe building are mostly taught, learned, and practiced on the outer islands and not on Yap's main islands. Indeed, on the main islands of Yap, there is only one master canoe carver alive today who still builds canoes as was done by his main-island ancestors: Chief Bruno Tharngan. As far as navigational skills go, it is only the paliuw[8] of Yap and Chuuk's Outer Islands that still hold and protect this incredible body of knowledge.

7. Francis Hezel, personal communication with author, 23 July 2014.

8. According to Eric Metzgar (personal communication), *paliuw* is the designation given to navigators in most of Yap's Outer Islands except Satawal. In Satawal and the western islands of Chuuk State, the term is instead *palu*. So as not to confuse, the term paliuw will be used below to refer to both groups.

THE *PALIUW*

> ***"I was born into a family, a lineage of navigators. They are all master navigators. Their ancestors are all navigators also. So it is something that has been passed down from generation to generation."***
> -Ali Haleyalur, master navigator from Lamotrek Island, Yap State[9]

Ali Haleyalur from Lamotrek (Yap) is one of a few master navigators still practicing and teaching the ancient art of wayfinding (Figure 4). He has been on numerous journeys across the open ocean on various outrigger canoes such as the famous *Simion Hokule'a* (Figure 5). As indicated in the quote above, he is the latest in a long line of *paliuw* (navigators). He is also the son of a famous *paluelap* (grandmaster navigator) from Satawal and Lamotrek, the late Jesus Urupiy, who himself embarked on countless voyages throughout Micronesia. Indeed, Urupiy was instrumental in the efforts to preserve the traditional knowledge associated with Carolinian navigation when in 1990 he performed the *puwo* initiation ceremony for five apprentice *paliuw*, including his son, Ali. The last time the pwo was conducted prior to this was in the early 1950s, when the well-known navigator Mau Piailug from Satawal (Yap) was initiated. It is now up to Ali and a very small group of additional master navigators (including Urupiy's last remaining brother, Rapwi Alwaich) to continue to initiate

9. Ali Haleyalur, personal interview with author, 21 February 2014.

4 (*From top left clockwise*) Master Navigator Ali Haleyalur, Chief Bruno Tharngan, former Yap State Governor Vincent Figir, and master canoe carver Xavier Yarofaliyang. This photo was taken on Lamotrek (Yap) during the launching ceremony of the voyaging canoe known as the *Queen Veronica*. © Manuel Eloimai

5 The *Simion Hokule'a* in Guam, captained by Ali Haleyalur. The *Simion Hokule'a* joined the *Mathow Maram,* captained by Chief Bruno Thargnan, on a historic journey in 2010 from Lamotrek to Guam, and then on to Yap and Palau. As ethnographer Eric Metzgar notes, it was the first time in over a hundred years that this journey was taken. This picture was given to the captain of the canoe, Ali Haleyalur, by an unidentified tourist.

future generations of worthy navigators who are willing to undergo the intense training needed to captain sailing canoes across the dangerous open ocean without the use of modern instruments.

THE PWO AND THE ART OF WAYFINDING

The incredible suite of traditional knowledge that goes into understanding how to sail across hundreds of miles of open ocean is a collection of skills that is held and protected among the few remaining paliuw in Micronesia. Traditionally, paliuw learn this knowledge from fathers or uncles within their family and eventually, when ready, may pass through the pwo ceremony. This knowledge is a valuable gift given to them by their ancestors, and as such it is only taught and given to those deemed worthy. To do otherwise would not only dilute its value as a specialized knowledge in a society where such skills can be traded for other things (most importantly, food); by giving out this knowledge freely to all, it would also dishonor the ancestors and master navigators of an earlier age who knew how important it was to protect this special information since it is, in many ways, a magical gift from beyond the natural world.

Among the paliuw of Micronesia, wayfinding is a remarkable skill that draws on a fund of information held in the minds of the navigators. The stars, the ocean, the sea-life, the clouds, the winds, the currents, and the waves—all part of the physical environment around them on the open ocean—are each variables of which paliuw must master an understanding. As Father Hezel points out, "Gladwin[10] and others remind us that in dead reckoning, the method used by island navigators, such knowledge [as cloud formations, species of birds and their flight patterns, nuanced understanding of how colors (e.g., of the sea and the sky) change in the proximity of land] offers a clue as to the closeness and even direction of land."[11] Of course, this takes years and years of intense learning on the islands from their teachers and then, most importantly, practical experience at sea on the canoes. It is understood that if you do not learn everything there is to know, you will be risking not only your own life on the journeys but also those of your fellow crew.

10. For a comprehensive account of traditional navigation in Micronesia, see Thomas Gladwin's *East is a Big Bird: Navigation & Logic on Puluwat Atoll*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970. In it, Gladwin described this suite of knowledge needed as a way of "expanding the target."

11. Hezel, personal communication, 2014.

Part of the training on learning how to navigate is to memorize all the stars in the night sky and the locations where they rise and fall on the eastern and western horizons (Figure 6). Navigators must

also know the locations of all the islands in the region in relation to the stars that rise above each so that they can line up their headings according to the routes from one way-point to another, all of which they also memorize. Since it is rare, however, that a voyage will take a straight course at all times, this skill takes much more than knowing under which stars to orient their canoe. Currents, bad weather, and all sorts of other variables make it necessary to constantly determine the canoe's changing position in relation to its route and to recalculate the heading. Along with the stars, paliuw need to learn a whole host of other types of knowledge in order to ensure they stay on course. They are, therefore, taught how to read the waves, currents, sun, wind, and clouds in the daylight or whenever the stars are not visible. Lessons, experience, and practice, therefore, all combine to give the master navigators an incredibly perceptive ability to "feel" their way along their paths when needed. Oftentimes, paliuw will sit for hours in silence on the canoe "feeling" the waves,

6 Larry Raigetal of Waa'gey observes as a student demonstrates his knowledge of the star compass used by Yapese navigators. Each stone represents a star in the night sky that navigators must memorize. © Stefan M. Krause

winds, and currents in order to correctly adjust their headings. Given the enormous amount of information that must be processed at all times, it is truly remarkable how accurate non-instrument Carolinian navigation can be.

However, it is not only wayfinding that paliuw must master for survival on these journeys. They must also know other crucial things such as the magical chants and incantations needed to deal with adverse weather. They need to learn where certain forms of sea-life are to be found so they can use this information to determine the location of their canoes on the open ocean. They have to know how to repair canoes at sea and how to right canoes that may have capsized.[12] Similarly, they need to possess a keen understanding of local medicinal practices in case of injury or illness on board the canoe. Along with all this, master navigators must also be skilled leaders in order to deal with their crews and know how to manage them in times of crisis. If, for instance, one member becomes unruly and threatens the safety of the others, the paliuw must be able to take control of the situation; this could include using their skills of martial arts when needed to subdue the crew member. It is indeed remarkable to consider just how much knowledge, confidence, wisdom, and practical experience a master navigator needs to possess to ensure that perilous journeys have the best chances for safety and success.

YAPESE CANOES[13]

"The first canoe that came here to Yap we called thow'ab... they lowered it from heaven...and thow'ab means something like 'it came from Yap,' that's why they call it 'tho' 'wa'ab.'"

Chief Bruno Tharngan[14]

Before the introduction of boats and outboard motors to the islands, various different types of canoes were commonly found throughout Yap's main island group. There was a canoe named a *thow'ab* that was flatter and mainly used for transporting people and things throughout the calm canals and near-shore waters. This canoe was

12. A related skill is the ability to flip a canoe over in the event of a major storm or typhoon. Since the wooden vessels do not sink, the masts can be taken down and the canoe can be turned upside-down to provide protection during severe weather. Crew can take shelter underneath and inside the canoe where an air pocket is formed. Eric Metzgar (personal communication) notes that this a major advantage of the single outrigger canoe style found throughout the Carolines since it is not possible to do the same with the double-hulled canoes found elsewhere in the Pacific.
13. For a much more detailed and informative presentation of Micronesian canoe building traditions, please refer to "Sailing Canoe Building on Mwoakilloa Atoll" in this volume.
14. Bruno Tharngan, personal interview with author, 21 February 2014.

propelled by paddling or with long bamboo poles to push it through the shallows. As Chief Tharngan notes above, it is thought to be the first canoe that was built in Yap. There was also the *chugpin*, a more ornate and decorative canoe that could be sailed or paddled and was known for its white swan-neck carvings on the tips of both ends, from which dangled a string of shells. According to most accounts, the chugpin was a seasonal canoe that was used when fishing for flying fish around Yap's reefs. Then there was the *gawel*, a special paddling and sailing canoe that had at both tips a carved crescent-shaped feature with a bird in the middle that rotated to one of two positions—an open-facing position perpendicular to the canoe that indicated it was at war, and a closed position in line with the canoe that communicated it was on a peaceful mission. Finally, there was the *popow*, a voyaging canoe built with specifications that enabled it to sail long distances across dangerous seas (Figure 7).

7

15. While the *popow* and the *chugpin* are the only main-island style canoes found on Yap, the outer island communities on Yap's main islands have several canoes of their own. Many are smaller canoes not meant for voyaging. It should also be made clear that throughout the outer islands of both Yap and Chuuk states, canoe building (of various types) is still commonly practiced.

Until just recently, it was only the popow that could still be found on the Yap main islands.[15] In 2013, however, Chief Tharngan resurrected the chugpin (Figure 8) by using historical pictures to complement the little knowledge still heard in the oral histories about their design. It was the first time in decades that a chugpin sailed the waters of Yap. Chief Tharngan hopes to one day also revive the tho'wab and gawel

7 The *Laikiy*—a *popow* voyaging canoe built by Chief Bruno Tharngan. © Stefan M. Krause

as well with the help of the Yapese Traditional Navigation Society (TNS) (Figure 9).

SAILING AHEAD

A few decades ago, several master paliuw from the Outer Islands of Yap and Chuuk helped to usher in a period of revived interest in traditional navigation throughout the Pacific. Eric Metzgar notes that this revitalization movement can perhaps be traced to a handful of master paliuw such as Hipour and Ikuliman from Puluwat (Chuuk) and Repunglap and Repunglug from Satawal (Yap), who in the late 1960s and early 1970s began to once again "open" ancient sea routes used by their ancestors before them.[16] It was then the well-known navigator Mau Piailug from Satawal (Yap) continued the renaissance by completing numerous voyages throughout Micronesia and even helping to teach the ancient art of oceanic wayfinding to Hawaiians and other Polynesian cultures that had lost the traditional knowledge. As mentioned above, Chief Bruno Tharngan and TNS have taken the torch to carry forward a tradition of canoe building that had almost been lost completely in their society but that is now seeing a resurgence through efforts such as the annual Yapese Canoe Festival. What these knowledge-holders have in common is the recognition of the dangers of these traditions being lost forever and an understanding of the need to find new ways to teach their wisdom to newer generations.

16. Eric Metzgar, "Carolinian Voyaging Reinvigorated." IN *Vaka Moana: Voyages of the Ancestors*, ed. K. R. Howe (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 330-331.

8 Members of the Traditional Navigation Society launch the *chugpin* that Chief Bruno Tharngan built. This is the first time in many decades that a *chugpin* has been in Yap's waters. © Stefan M. Krause

9 Chief Bruno Tharngan, the only canoe builder from Yap's main islands, using his adze to carve one of his canoes. © Stefan M. Krause

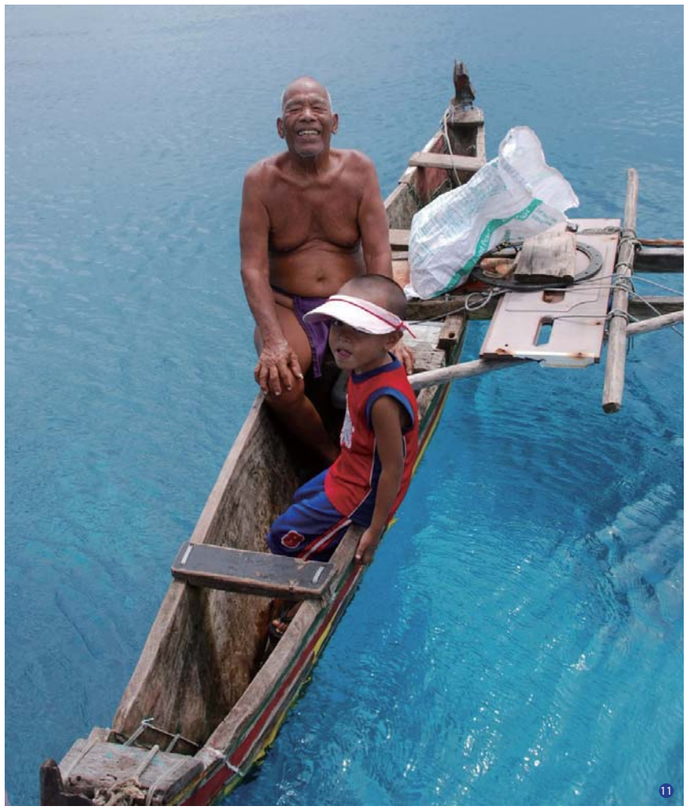
Along with those above, Larry Raigetal and his wife Regina are working with their community-based NGO, Waa'gey, in preserving canoe building and navigational traditions in Yap. One of Waa'gey's recent projects has been to hold workshops with students at Yap Catholic High School, who participate in building a small traditional Outer Island canoe as an after-school activity (Figure 10). According to volunteer teacher Patrick Kelly, interest has been high with the program as numerous students regularly choose to come and grab an adze and join in on carving supervised by Raigetal and several outer island navigators/canoe builders.[17] Learning from navigators such as Carlos Yarofaireg (who himself had passed through the *puwo* ceremony with Ali Haleyalur on Lamotrek in 1990 and had also captained numerous voyages) is a wonderful opportunity, and youth participants recognize the value of participating.

As 18-year-old high school student Eunice R. Yamada states, "I want to learn how so I can encourage youths to participate in learning the skills so that they wouldn't be lost. Because I know it is important for our culture to have it. It's our tradition."[18] Yamada comes from a family of Outer Island navigators and also notes, "I like working and building canoes and building houses because I want to follow my father's footsteps. My father is a master canoe carver and I want to be like him, I want to carve canoes."[19] Yamada also pointed out one of the most practical reasons why these traditions should still be passed on: fuel and fiberglass boats are expensive. Traditional canoe building and navigational knowledge offer a sustainable alternative to costly motorboats used for fishing and traveling to neighboring islands. This understanding of the economic benefits of preserving this important element of Yap's cultural heritage is a powerful argument that underscores the relationship between traditional knowledge and sustainable development practices not just in the Pacific, but around the world.

17. Patrick Kelly, personal interview with author, 27 February 2014.
18. Eunice R. Ramada, personal interview with author, 27 February 2014 .
19. Ibid.

10 Larry Raigetal and members of Waa'gey working with students at Yap Catholic High School who are learning the basics on how to carve a traditional Yapese canoe. © Stefan M. Krause

Raigetal often uses a navigational metaphor to help students such as Yamada understand the importance and necessity in continuing to teach and learn the traditional knowledge from the islands. He points out that cultural heritage preservation is vital to a society's development and that this awareness can be cultivated using an analogy to sailing under the stars. As Raigetal notes, "Before losing sight of the land of origin, the navigator must look back to know which star it will disappear under so he can determine the course for the land of destination—it is a critical celestial navigational reference."[20] He further makes this clear when speaking about how critical cultural preservation is: "In order for us to move forward, we must know from where we came. Thus, our culture, which is really our identity, is key for us to move forward."[21] Keeping an eye on their pasts, today's Yapese navigators and canoe builders are helping to steer a course to a better tomorrow.



11 Master navigator Rapwi Alwaich (brother of the late Uripey) and his grandson inside the lagoon of Puluwat (Chuuk). © Christine Wagner

20. Larry Raigetal, personal communication with author, 25 February, 2014.

21. Ibid.

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Sailing Canoe Building on Mwoakilloa Atoll

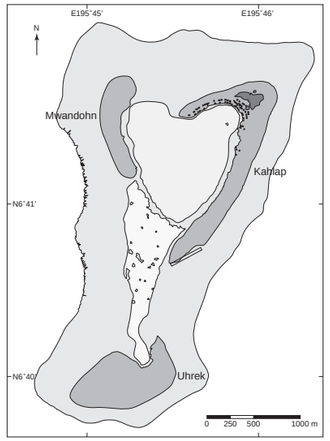
Takuya Nagaoka

Canoes are very important things to Mwoakillese people. Men used to have sailing canoe races as contests of manhood.[1]

—Boaz Poll

INTRODUCTION

The sailing canoe, which is a single outrigger canoe equipped with a triangular sail (Figure ①), is traditionally the only water craft for fishing, transporting, and voyaging on Mwoakilloa (formerly Mokil) Atoll,



a low coral atoll in the Eastern Caroline Islands (Figure ②). Before wooden boats became prevalent in the 1960s, canoes (*war*) held vital importance, and every extended family (*peneinei*) owned at least one sailing canoe and one paddling canoe.

1. Boaz Poll, personal interview with author, 18 June 2004.

① Sailing canoe (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka ② Mwoakilloa Atoll. © Takuya Nagaoka

Mwoakilloa is located at 6°40' north, 159°47' east, approximately 192 kilometers east of Pohnpei (formerly Ponape), presently comprising an outer island of Pohnpei State. The atoll is composed of three islets: Kahlap, Mwandohn, and Uhrek, making a total of 1.24 square meters of land. Presently on Mwoakilloa, the village is situated on the lagoon side of Kahlap Islet, where the main taro patches as well as other contemporary communal facilities such as the municipal office, elementary school, dispensary, and church are located (Figure ③).[2] The population of the atoll is around 110 while

many more Mwoakillese, between 1,700 and 1,800, currently live in a more urban setting on Pohnpei, the political and commercial center of the state, and around 20 percent of the total population lives in U.S. territories. The atoll is currently connected to Pohnpei by weekly flights and infrequent cargo-passenger ships.

The Mwoakillese people are spoken of as enterprising (*kapehl*). They are, for example, known to be skilled at fishing, carpentry, and cooking using modern methods as well as the traditional. This characteristic seems to be related to considerable cultural changes undergone since the nineteenth century, when early beachcombers had enormous influence on the small atoll population; for instance, only eighty-seven people lived on the island in 1853.[3] One beachcomber, for example, was observed by passing seamen as acting as chief and having considerable authority in 1854[4] and then as "King of the Island" in 1859.[5] One early missionary even reported that ship

2. Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka, "The Ethnomathematics of Mwoakilloa Atoll, Micronesia" (report prepared for the Pacific Resources for Education and Leaning, Hawaii, 2004, 3).

3. U.J. Andersson, "Eine Weltumsegelung mit der schwedischen Kriegs-fregatte 'Eugenie,' 1851-1853," trans. K.L. Kannegiesser (Leipzig: Karl Forch, 1854).

4. James E. Huxford, "Log of the Whaling Bark 'Ellen,' 1852-1856," Log 242, New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, 1856.

5. Harold Williams, *One Whaling Family* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), 98-101.

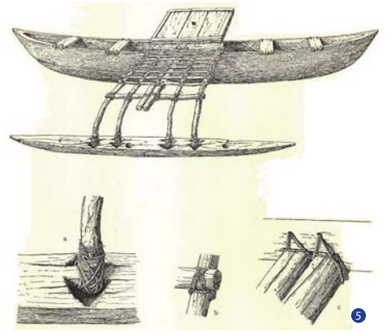
③ Modern village on the lagoon side of Kahlap Islet (2004). © Takuya Nagaoka

captains called the islanders the "most civilized appearing natives in all the Pacific" in 1873.[6]

As will be illustrated below, by adding new features, this enterprising spirit created a most developed canoe. On the other hand, the same spirit enabled the people to make a speedy transition to locally made wooden boats and imported boats after World War II.

HISTORY OF MWOAKILLESE SAILING CANOE

Oral traditions relate that the styles and building technology of the Mwoakillese canoes (Figures ④ and ⑤) originated in the Marshall



Islands,[7] as did several traits of Mwoakillese culture (e.g., material culture, customs,[8] fishing methods, food preparation, cultigens,[9] local medicines,[10] dances, tales,[11] and vocabulary[12]) through their long-term interactions from the prehistoric period to today.[13,14] As several basic Mwoakillese canoe part terms (e.g., hull, outrigger float, mast, upper boom, lower boom, and sheet) are obviously Pohnpeian words, the original Mwoakillese canoes were probably similar to Pohnpeian ones prior to the introduction of the Marshallese-type canoe. Contemporary elders describe these earlier Mwoakillese canoes as "not good; [they were] just like a dugout before, as they didn't know how to measure."[15] According to Bentzen,[16] the Marshallese-type canoe is said to have been introduced during Chief Lakaidak's reign around 1760. At that time the Mwoakillese had only a paddling canoe of their own, similar to the ones found on the atoll today.

6. "Micronesian Mission," *Missionary Herald*, August 1874, 249-256.
7. Anneliese Eilers, "Inseln um Ponape," In *Ergebnisse der Sudsee Expedition* 1908-1910, ed. Georg Thilenius (Hamburg: Friederichsen, De Gruyter, 1934), 385.
8. Joseph E. Weckler, "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines," Pt. 1. CIMA Report no. 11. Washington, D.C.: Pacific Science Board, National Research Council, 1949.
9. Conrad Bentzen, "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines," Pt. 2. CIMA Report no. 11. Washington, D.C.: Pacific Science Board, National Research Council, 1949.
10. Ibid, 179-182.
11. Takuya Nagaoka and Barbara Hicks, "*Oh Mehjwa*: Chants, Songs, Accounts, and Tales of Mwoakilloa Atoll, Micronesia," unpublished manuscript, last modified 2014.
12. Kenneth L. Rehg and Byron W. Bender, "Lexical Transfer from Marshallese to Mokilese: A Case of Intra-Micronesian Borrowing," *Oceanic Linguistics* 29(1) (1990): 1-26.
13. Weckler, "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines."
14. Saul H. Riesenberg, "Table of Voyages Affecting Micronesian Islands," *Oceanic* 36 (1965):155-170.
15. Makodo Daniel, 72 years old, from Mwoakilloa Atoll, personal interview with author, 27 February 2014.
16. Bentzen, "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines."

④ Sailing canoe in 1910. Source: Anneliese Eilers, "Inseln um Ponape," In *Ergebnisse der Sudsee Expedition 1908-1910*, edited by Georg Thilenius, (Hamburg: Friederichsen, De Gruyter, 1934), 2, B, 8 ,Tafel 3.

⑤ Paddling canoe in 1910. Source: Eilers, "Inseln um Ponape," 385, Abb. 256

Present sailing canoe building techniques were derived from the stranding of Marshallese, which occurred in 1865 according to historical records.[17,18] Contemporary elders credit a Marshallese man named Lapwaijong (Andrew), one of the castaways, with spreading canoe-building techniques. After the introduction of the Marshallese-type canoe, the Mwoakillese improved the structure of the original and refined the building technique throughout the historic period. Changes included the following:

- The hull was made shallower;
- The platform structure was simplified and strengthened;
- Attachment of the upper boom onto the boom step was simplified;
- The splash guards and decks were added to prevent water from flowing into the hull;
- Keel protectors were added to protect the bottom of the hull and the outrigger float; and
- The float ridge was added to make the attachment of secondary booms stronger.

The developmental process of a new Mwoakillese canoe was a simplification from the original Marshallese type and the creation of a structurally and stylistically superior canoe that was more suitable for the atoll environment (e.g., lack of lagoon passage). A few factors made this achievement possible. First, the introduction of Western iron tools (Figure ⑥) and materials (e.g., copper nails and milled

17. Jack A. Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 353.
18. Saul H. Riesenberg. "Table of Voyages Affecting Micronesian Islands," *Oceania* 36 (1965), 161-163.

⑥ Tools used for canoe building (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka

lumber) made advanced carpentry possible. Second, there were also new inventions suggested from the Euro-American sailing ships and whaling boats in the early historical times since many Mwoakillese men worked abroad. Third, the experience of building wooden ships and boats during the German and Japanese administrations on Nauru and Pohnpei helped them acquire highly developed carpentry skills.[19]

The art of canoe building was of great significance for men and was therefore passed down only within close relatives secretly due to the competitive nature of Mwoakillese society. According to the late Boaz Poll from Mwoakilloa Atoll, "People at that time were guarded and secretive of the art of measuring canoes. Until the 1930s, when they were making a canoe in a canoe house, they would hang up mats on all four sides to prevent people from seeing inside. In the evening, they would also wrap the canoe up in mats so nobody could see it."[20] However, when an association of Evangelical Protestant churches called Christian Endeavor was established on Mwoakilloa in 1920, the Mwoakillese people became more faithful and cooperative. Men began to allow others to watch their work, except for the most secretive part of making a sail as discussed in the next section. Contemporary elders explain this phenomenon by saying that people became enlightened (*marainla*), in contrast to their former uncivilized (*rosros*) spirit. Moreover, in the Japanese administration period, many men went to work in the Marshalls as sailors and acquired the knowledge on building canoes, especially on sails. The technique was passed on to relatives and friends so that by the beginning of World War II almost all families possessed it.

There used to be an annual New Year's sailing canoe race in which only newly built canoes could participate. It usually took an entire year to complete a canoe for the race, during which men competed ruthlessly. A large sail, for instance, was made for faster sailing especially for the race, although the upper and lower booms were cut shorter for daily use afterward. They used to build a racing canoe with a narrow and deep hull, which was not suitable for the open sea; however, due to the great labor and time invested, they later began to build an intermediate canoe suitable for both racing and fishing.[21]

19. Takuya Nagaoka, "Sailing Canoe Building Techniques on Mwoakilloa Atoll," unpublished manuscript, last modified 2014.
20. Poll, personal interview, 2004.
21. Bentzen, "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines," 78.

The New Year's sailing canoe race, which stopped during the war, was held again in 1947 following the return of many Mwoakillese men who had gone to Pohnpei for conscripted work during the Japanese administration. In 1948, most of the young men on the island joined the race, although fewer men participated after that. The last annual New Year's sailing race in which only new canoes could participate was held in the late 1950s. Later the rules were changed to allow any canoe to enter, and the race continued until the 1960s. The production of the sailing canoe declined during the 1950s while the production of local wooden boats increased. After the last large sailing canoe was built in 1964, only small ones and paddling canoes were built from time to time.

There are several complex and interrelated factors that led to the decline of sailing canoe production. First, the prevalence of wooden boats (Figure 7) and outboard motors in the 1960s drove the sailing

canoe from the mainstream. The wooden boat building technique was first learned by taking a foreign boat apart in the 1920s. The production of boats became prominent in the late 1960s, and its mass production for sale made the island the center of manufacture in the region until the mid-1980s. This greatly influenced the penetration of the money economy into the island society and diminished the degree of cooperation. The use of wooden boats, however, has declined since the early 1980s due to the popularity of imported fiberglass boats on both Pohnpei and Mwoakilloa. Second, young

7 Locally made wooden boat (2004). © Takuya Nagaoka

people simply lost interest in their traditional culture due to the rapid westernization after World War II. The enterprising nature of Mwoakillese people mentioned earlier spurred the decline of canoe production. Moreover, due to post-war migration of Mwoakillese people to Pohnpei, more of the men who engaged in wage working in Pohnpei were able to purchase expensive fiberglass boats and outboard engines. Thirdly, the sailing canoe building technique in Mwoakilloa is a highly developed and specialized skill that requires considerable time to acquire. Expectation for a high-standard product required from the community possibly discouraged youngsters from learning the technique. Lastly, the secrecy of the canoe-building technique made it difficult for some young men to access the skill due to lack of canoe builders among their relatives.

Today, only one paddling canoe is still in use while there is no sailing canoe left on the atoll. Only two canoe builders in their seventies are capable of constructing a sailing canoe, although many middle-aged to elderly men know some parts of canoe-building work.

SAILING CANOE BUILDING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

In pre-war Mwoakilloa, almost all the men knew how to build a sailing canoe, although the degree of skillfulness varied considerably among builders. The descendants of Lapwaijong, for instance, preserve rich knowledge of the original Marshallese canoe. Young men acquired general canoe-building skills such as carving and tying parts with coconut sennit twine through their participation in the canoe-building projects of others. More detailed and secretive aspects, such as measurements of hulls and sails, however, were learned from their close relatives such as fathers and uncles. Acquiring the building technique of the sailing canoe is difficult and was considered one of the criteria for manhood and, therefore, marriageability. At the marriage proposal, a proposing man used to be asked if he could make a paddle or bailer, implying a sailing canoe.

The accomplishment of building one's first sailing canoe was celebrated by the special launching ceremony called *wospwij*, as explained by the late Boaz Poll:

Long time ago, they decorated the new canoe by tying young coconut leaves. Later, after the modern goods became available, if his family was extremely happy that he was making his own sailing canoe and becoming a man, they would buy cloth for loincloth to give as presents to the women of the island. This cloth they would first tie to the ropes of the sail to decorate the canoe (Figure ⑧). Then the man would sail his new canoe around the lagoon, and when he came back in to Kahlap, all the women would run together to get their cloth.[22]

Building a canoe begins with the selection of a suitable breadfruit tree, the only kind of tree on the island for building the canoe hull. According to Mwoakilloa tradition, a dead breadfruit tree can be cut down anytime, but it is forbidden to cut down the living breadfruit tree from the time when the trees start to bear fruit to the end of the breadfruit season (*roak*). It is believed that breaking the taboo will bring a bad harvest of breadfruit, the most important crop on Mwoakilloa. It is, however, possible to cut down the living tree if it has been killed through burning during the prohibited period. By custom, the leftover chips from carving cannot be burnt.

People used shell adzes for canoe building before the introduction of metal implements in the nineteenth century. They burnt coconut leaves on a breadfruit log so that the hull could be carved more easily.

22. Poll, personal interview, 2004.

⑧ Hanging pieces of cloth for *wospwij* launching ceremony (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka

Because of the slow pace of the work, sprouts reportedly would grow out of both ends of the log. Pre-Christian rituals associated with canoe building are unknown to contemporary elders, and the work today begins with the Christian prayers.

The first parts of canoe building—cutting down a breadfruit tree for the hull (Figure 9), initial shaping (Figures 10 and 11), and hauling

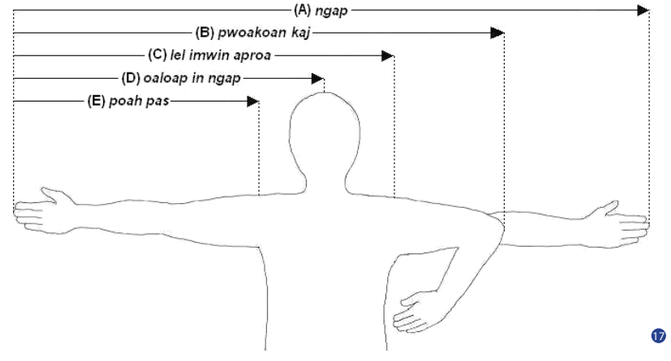
the hull to the lagoon—are cooperative work and take around two days. The owner of the new canoe will provide the food for helpers. In days past, when men pulled the hull to the lagoon, they sang a chant from the Mortlock Islands in Chuuk State, learned during the shipbuilding at Henry and Oliver Nanpei's shipyard on Ahnd Atoll in Pohnpei during the Japanese administration period. Next, soaking the hull in the sea for more than three weeks prevents the gunwale from warping. Finishing the hull (Figures 12 and 13) and preparing

all other canoe parts, such as the upper structure of the hull, keel protectors, decks, outrigger complex, platforms, and rigging, are the owner's responsibility. Although his close relatives usually help him, the work usually takes several months due to his other daily duties.

9 Cutting down a breadfruit tree for the hull (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
10 Shaping the outside of the hull (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
11 Hollowing out the hull (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
12 Shaving off the hull after soaking (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
13 Hollowing out the hull (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka

Lashing the outrigger complex (Figure 14) and platforms (Figure 15) to the hull is another cooperative effort, which is done by all the workers in a day. This process fits all the parts together and is the last stage before launching except for the painting, which is done by the owner. The final and the most esoteric task is the measurement of the sail. Although stretching out the sail material requires the help of many neighbors (Figure 16), all outside helpers are dismissed and only special persons, usually close relatives, are allowed to participate in the work from the process of sail design onward. To avoid others copying their sail design, some builders used to eat the pandanus leaf ruler to keep a secret of the measuring formula and would use a Western-style ruler, converting their pandanus leaf ruler system into inches.

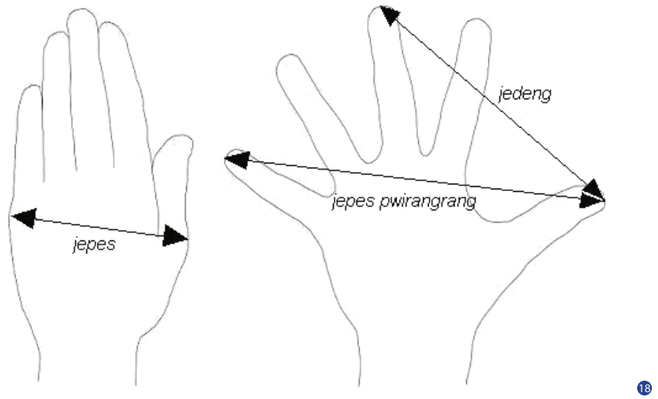
In canoe building, two methods of traditional linear measurement were used: the use of anatomical parts and the "halving system." Like other Micronesian islanders,[23] Mwoakillese people traditionally measure (*jong*) things using their body parts, particularly their hands and fingers. Various scales are used for measuring different sizes of objects by using their hands (Figure 17). The fathom (*ngap*) is the most basic unit of length, measuring the distance between the outstretched



23. William H. Alkire, "Systems of Measurement on Woleai Atoll, Caroline Islands," *Anthropos* 65 (1970), 1-73.

14 Lashing a secondary boom to the float ridge (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
15 Lashing a side rail (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
16 Stretching out the sail material before making the sail design (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka
17 Measurement with arms. © Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka

arms (Figure 17). Different units are used for measuring long canoe parts roughly. Measuring smaller things with the fingers is called *ngapen jaid* (literally, "fathom of finger"). There are three units in the *ngapen jaid* system (Figure 18). This method is used for measuring the



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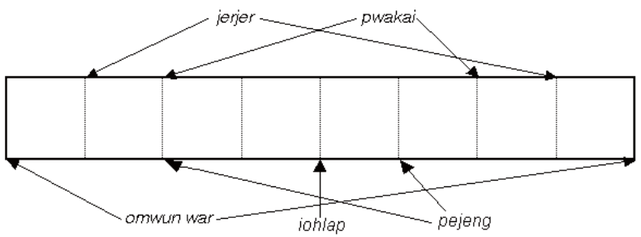
lengths of various canoe parts, such as the height of the hull, the lower boom, the three sides of the triangular sail, and the curved lines of the sail.

Another basic measuring technique, using the so-called halving system, includes halving and re-halving a certain length to divide it into equal lengths. After preliminary shaping of the breadfruit log for the hull, for example, the log is divided into eight equal lengths in order to draw the keel line (Figure 19). In addition, Mwoakillese



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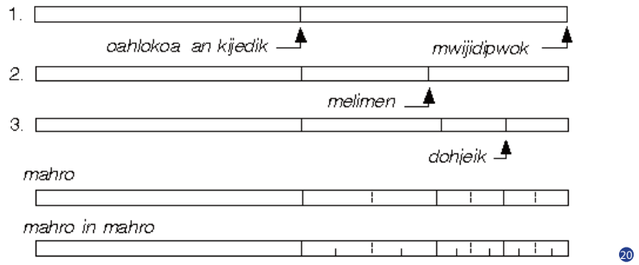
people traditionally use a ruler made from a pandanus leaf (*pis*), called a *pisen war* (literally, "pandanus leaf of canoe") for more detailed measurements of canoe parts. To make this ruler, a pandanus

18 Three kinds of measurement by hand, *ngapen jaid*. © Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka
19 The layout of measurements of a breadfruit tree log. © Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka

leaf is cut to an arbitrary length, such as one-fourth or one-eighth of



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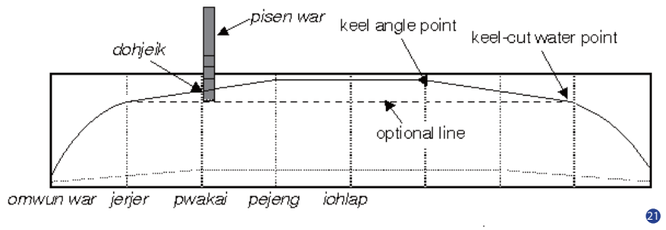
the hull length, and is halved and re-halved (Figure 20). The *pisen war* was used for measuring different parts of canoe: the slant of the keel line (Figure 21), the *ere* design (Figure 22), and the curved lines of the triangular sail (Figure 23).



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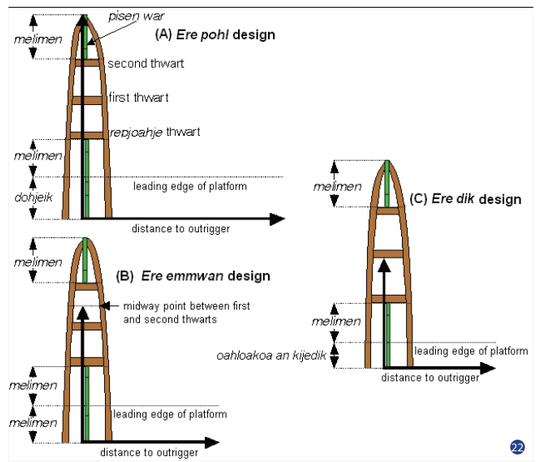

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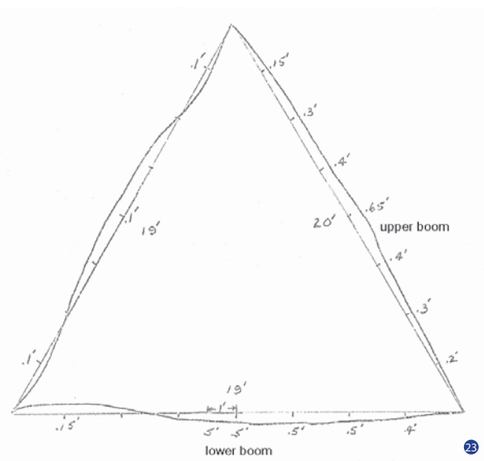

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20 The process of producing the pandanus leaf ruler (*pisen war*).© Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka
21 The measurement of the slant of the keel line on breadfruit tree log. The *dohjeik* design is used as an example. © Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka.
22 Three *ere* designs. In each design, the bold horizontal arrow and the vertical arrow perpendicular to it are equidistant. Dotted lines indicate important points of measurement. © Barbara Hicks and Takuya Nagaoka
23 Triangular sail, adapted from Conrad Bentzen's "Land and Livelihood on Mokil, an Atoll in the Eastern Carolines," 1949. The units are in feet.

After the completion of a new sailing canoe, the owner would ask a canoe expert to examine his canoe to ascertain that everything was in order before it was put out to use. This is called *likpwar*. The expert would check such things as the length of the mast and the lean of the hull, which were adjusted before he would "bathe" (*duhp*) the canoe:

> Mwoakillese men have to bathe new pieces of fishing equipment such as boats, canoes, spears, nets, hooks, or even lines. The man who has a new one of these needs a man lucky in fishing to join him in bathing it. The lucky fisherman will make the piece of equipment lucky. If, after a man bathes a piece of equipment, it still catches no fish, the next day, he may find someone else lucky to go out with him, so that the piece of equipment will be able to catch fish.[24]

On such an occasion, men sprinkled fish blood over their canoes to show their luck (*poaroan* or *marahra jedin*). Some fishermen never washed the blood off their canoe or boat so that they would not lose their luck. As is done for the first fruits of a new crop or new season, catch from the bathing was brought to the chief or church minister to be blessed. Traditionally, men needed to guard (*poaldi*) themselves and their fishing equipment from the influence of women. Violation of this taboo was believed to bring bad luck during their fishing trips. Therefore, women were excluded from riding on sailing canoes. Indeed, the work of sailing canoe building is largely done by men while women are only in charge of weaving pandanus leaf mat sails, making coconut sennit twine and rope (Figure 24), and preparing food for helpers.

In the annual New Year's sailing race, three components—canoe, sail, and sailing ability—determine the outcome of the race. While the skilled person can keep the wind in his sail and look for the next wind by looking at the surface of the sea, the unskilled person cannot keep the wind. A competent man also can disrupt the wind of the following leeward canoe by releasing the sheet and changing the air current. The disturbed wind makes the leeward canoe's sail slack, and the canoe slows down. Due to the intensity of the race, a fight might break out at its conclusion.

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24. Poll, personal interview, 2004.

24 Women beating soaked coconut husk to make coconut sennit twine (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka

25

CONCLUSION

A sailing canoe was a material symbol of men's skill and, therefore, their pride. Due to this importance, a canoe is included in the Mwoakilloa Municipal Government's official seal (Figure 25), along with the most prized fish, blackjack (*kehpwini*).[25] Significant social value and prestige were attached to the skills of canoe building. The late Boaz Poll stated that "men used to have sailing canoe races as contests of manhood."[26] Even today, for those who know their history, the Mwoakillese sailing canoe symbolizes the traditional standards of men: competitiveness (*aksuwahu*), cooperation (*minmin*), and hard work (*pworjek*).

With the passing in the last decade of the last several master canoe builders (*joupal*) who possessed genuine knowledge and skills in sailing and building, canoe building has entered a critical era for its survival. Some Mwoakillese men have talked about the necessity of reviving sailing canoes due to the recent rise in gasoline price and lack of canoes, both of which have reduced the number of men's fishing trips. There have been several attempts to revive the sailing canoe building on Mwoakilloa in the past two decades (Figure 26), although they achieved very limited success. Today, some members of a newly established organization of Mwoakillese elders known as the Mwoakilloa Senior Citizen Association discuss their strong interest

26

25. Blackjack is targeted at the most important communal fishing competition (*indenkamw*) of men held during the breadfruit season.

26. Poll, personal interview, 2004.

25 Official seal of the Mwoakilloa Municipal Government, which includes a canoe in the center. © Mwoakilloa Municipal Government

26 Three sailing canoe-building class instructors (with caps), the late Apiner Jim (1921-2006), the late Moses Henry (1920-2008), and the late Robert Joel (1922-1998) and the author (right) (1994). © Takuya Nagaoka

in a revival and are willing to pass down this dying art to succeeding generations without guarding their knowledge. The successful revival of sailing canoe building in the Marshalls[27] suggests the possibility of reviving Mwoakilloa canoe building. Limited time is left for the Mwoakillese people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The data for this article was obtained during the Mwoakillese sailing canoe-building class in 1994,[28] a Mwoakillese oral tradition documentation and publication project in 2004,[29] and supplemental research for this publication in 2014. The former two projects were funded by the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office's Federal Historic Preservation Fund grants, which were administered by the U.S. National Park Service. I would like to thank Francis Hezel, S.J. and Stefan Krause for proofreading my draft and would like to acknowledge many Mwoakillese elders, especially the late Apiner Jim, the late Moses Henry, the late Robert Joel, the late Boaz Poll, Bethwel Henry, Ichiro John, Makodo Daniel, and Danio Poll, who generously shared their knowledge with me.

Kalahngan en kamwai ohroj!

27. Joseph Genz, "Navigating the Revival of Voyaging in the Marshalls: Predicaments of Preservation and Possibilities of Collaboration," *The Contemporary Pacific*, 23 (1) (2011), 1-34.
28. Nagaoka, "Sailing Canoe Building Techniques on Mwoakilloa Atoll," 2014.
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5 Art and Technology

While the artistic heritage of the Pacific is no doubt rich and representative of its cultures, it is more than merely something to be gazed upon and admired. Rather, Pacific art is both functional and symbolic of deeper meanings. Items as commonplace as bows and arrows, masks, and meeting halls are tangible expressions of the spirit of a culture. The themes in the final section seek to represent this spirit. In examining the Tongan *kupesi* traditions, for example, we see how the symbolism contained within the art, beyond its outer function, is reflective of the indirect nature of Tongan culture and somewhat akin to the practice of using *heliaki* in speaking. Likewise, in learning the complex process of building Palauan *bai* meeting houses, we can see that the structures stand not only as important functional spaces but also as carriers of cultural motifs and legends passed down over time.

All these themes attest to the art and technology of the Pacific societies as not only reflecting aesthetics but also serving a function. Traditional technological know-how allows the Pacific islanders to use available resources to their best advantage. Architectural designs, motifs, lashings, knots, stone walls, and pavement ensure that structures withstand the test of time while also carrying vital symbolic knowledge.

Kupesi: A Creative Tradition of Tonga[1]

Tuna Kaimanu Tonga Fielakepa

I will string you pua garlands
To drown your homesick fears
And help you feel
The pulsating chord
The rhythm of our inheritance

—Konai Helu Thaman[2]

INTRODUCTION: THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Tongan children learn their culture through observing, listening, and doing. It was the obligation of the parents, the family, the extended family, and the community at large to ensure that every child had the opportunity to experience the culture. In the first half of the twentieth century, Tongans enjoyed a close-knit society bound by extended families in which everybody knew each other's business. In this intimate society, I learned the art of *ngatu* production. *Ngatu* is the Tongan name for *tapa*, or bark cloth. Ngatu is the end product of tapa production, so it is only called "ngatu" when the whole process is completed. Tongans regard ngatu as "ours" because it remains an integral part of our cultural heritage. While bark cloth production is known in Africa, South America, Malaysia, Indonesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, today there are three notable centers for its production in remote Oceania: Tonga (*ngatu*), Samoa (*siapo*), and Fiji (*masi*). These three neighboring island nations maintain close historical ties in trading and blood relations while their strong cultural heritages give them their unique identities.

1. The images in this article were provided by the author and printed here based on consultations with the country coordinator.
2. Konai Helu Thaman, "Part III," in *Langakali*, Suva, Fiji: MANA Publications, 1981.

The paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyri era*) produces the best quality of ngatu. There were two notable women who were very knowledgeable of Tongan culture, and both learned their skills from elderly ladies who were royal palace attendants. As young women they had learned much from their grandmothers about the rich cultural environment that surrounded them. The first woman, the late 'Olivia Kaho Mafile'o of Kolomotu'a, could recite any aspect of the Tongan culture, especially concerning the women's *koloa* (crafts). Over the years she imparted to me the hidden story behind ten out of the eleven traditional *kupesi* of Tonga described in this paper. The second woman, the late Tupou Kaho Fanua, who became a researcher and recorder for the Tonga Traditions Committee, confirmed 'Olivia's information with little variation.

Today 'Olivia's daughter (also Tupou's niece), 'Amilali Mafile'o Latu of Halaleva, who inherited that knowledge, is a researcher for the Tonga Traditions Committee. Siokapesi Tauali'i of Kolomotu'a was my friend, neighbor and mentor. She taught me about the many aspects of ngatu production as well. Siokapesi's daughter, Aola Tuituiohu, and granddaughter, Tonga-Ha'apai Fielea, both of Kolomotu'a, inherited Siokapesi's knowledge.

The *kupesi* is the stencil for printing designs onto the ngatu. The Tongan ngatu is the traditionally manufactured material onto which the kupesi designs are transferred. Instead of cutting the designs on plastic, the designs are embossed onto a double layer of *paongo* (pandanus) and *kaka* (the fibrous integument at the top of a coconut palm) with coconut coir (sennit rope made of coconut fiber) as sewing string. The kupesi is plastered onto the *papa koka'anga* (bench table for ngatu production).

The kupesi is a part of the tangible cultural heritage of Tonga, but it is the thought and the idea behind the kupesi that give life to the creative designs it reproduces. This is what makes it meaningful and interesting.

The Kupesi (Stencil)

There are three methods of making Tongan kupesi, all of which feature geometrical figures with abstract designs within.

- ***Kupesi Tongo.*** Designs are woven from strips of *tongo* (mangrove stems) using a string either of *fau* or *pulu* (coir), e.g., the motifs named Ve'etuli and Tatau Tuisipa.

- ***Kupesi Tui.*** Designs are made from coconut leaf midribs (*tu'aniu*) on a background of *paongo* (pandanus) lined with *kaka* (fibrous integument that wraps around a young coconut leaf), e.g., the motifs named Tokelau Feletoa and Kalou.

- ***Kupesi Fokotu'u (setup).*** Designs are set up a day before the production of a ngatu. Using the stalk of the coconut leaf, these designs are easier to set up than Kupesi Tongo or Kupesi Tui. However, the Kupesi Fokotu'u is not permanent. Examples are the motifs named Amoamo Kofe and Potuuamanuka.

In the past, traditional knowledge holders were reluctant to share their knowledge. Today, it is important that the origins of the traditional kupesi of Tonga are recorded so that they may be better understood and appreciated.

Over the years the Tongan people learned to manufacture *feta'aki* (unprinted white tapa). The white feta'aki was used at times of births, at puberty, and for medicinal dressings. They soon also discovered that dyes could be obtained from the bark, fruit, and leaves of trees as well as from the rich red clay (*umea*) that is found in Tonga. They developed the art of producing black soot from burning the candlenut kernels as dyes for the black tapa.

The beauty of the ngatu gave the women an incentive to design the kupesi stencils to decorate the material. The men had developed their own arts such as *lalava* (sennit lashings) of the rafters of the King's house, canoe building, and weapon and tool carving. Bamboo fences rich in designs were built around the dwellings of the king or chiefs. The men tattooed their bodies while the women made sweet-

scented oil to cover their skin, making it smooth and beautiful when they danced to the songs composed by the men. Decorated ngatu were presented for traditional obligations and used as clothing and blankets or for household requirements.

The ladies of the court had the time to observe the beauty of their land, both the natural world and the artifacts surrounding them. They designed the kupesi, and female attendants were selected to make the stencils from the raw materials of their environment.

Furthermore, Tongans admire the art of speaking and composing songs and poems. The use of indirect heliaki[3] discourse in language is an art, for it is regarded as rude and coarse to speak directly. Likewise, with the design and creation of the kupesi, its meaning was heliaki. The background of the kupesi urges its beholder to wonder what it means, why it was made, and for whom it was made. Tonga's ancestors placed much wisdom into the creation of their designs.

KOKA'ANGA

Koka'anga is the process of joining the feta'aki (white tapa cloth) and applying the kupesi (stencil). 'Uheina Tonga Tu'itavake of Kolofo'ou advised that the selection of the kupesi for a koka'anga was very important.[4] When 'Uheina asked me, "Why are you doing a koka'anga?" I replied that it was because the following year, there would be a royal celebration for the Queen's sixtieth birthday; requiring traditional presentations, and I wanted to prepare the *koloa* (crafts) well in advance.

'Uheina told me that the koka'anga for a royal celebration must befit the receiver. She advised that, as there was no Ve'etuli Kupesi[5] available, we should make a Pangaikafa Lautefuhi (100 length) and decorate it with a *matahihifi* (a design containing slanted lines as in a grid) and large *Fo'i Hea* (a design consisting of three black circles, representing the three lines of kings). In creating ngatu, various units of measure are used and are significant ceremonially, for certain lengths are appropriate only for royal or chiefly recipients. For example, a *langanga* is eighteen inches by eighteen feet. For smaller ngatu, a langanga could be fourteen inches by fourteen feet.

3. For a discussion of the practice of *heliaki*, see "Heliaki: The Symbolic Depiction of Life and Living in Tonga," in this volume.
4. 'Uheina Tonga Tu'itavake, personal communication with author, 1986.
5. Ve'etuli is a design based on the footprints that golden plovers make on the beach. It is an example of kupesi designs that are inspired from the natural world.

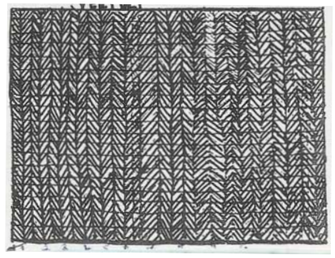
Therefore, each piece of ngatu is designed beforehand knowing which recipient it is intended for.

Tonga still has active artists who have mastered the making, repair, and duplication of kupesi along with the other aspects of ngatu production. Masters of the art who have passed away in recent times included the late Nauna Ma‘umalanga Fisi‘ihoi of Tatakamotonga, her mother, the late Kalolaine Ma‘umalanga, and her younger sister, ‘Atilila Ma‘umalanga Vuna of Haveluloto.

TRADITIONAL KUPESI OF TONGA

Kupesi, like many objects in Tonga, include a number of ranked and titled pieces.

Ve‘etuli (Kupesi Tongo)



The highest ranked kupesi originates from Tongatapu. The motif of this kupesi represents the concentrated imprint of the feet of the Tuli bird, confirming its ceaseless activity on sandy beaches. It is an uncommon migrant shore bird, its color all pale. Always in action, it does not waste time. This kupesi is ranked highly because, like the bird, it is rare.

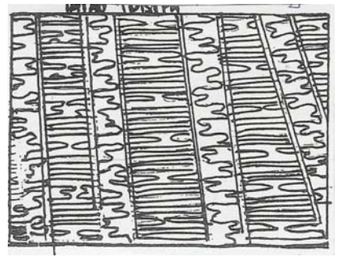
Knowledge owner: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o of Kolomotu‘a.

Pangaikafa (‘ila ‘aki ha Matahihifi moe Fo‘i Hea folahi)

The second-highest ranked kupesi originates from Tongatapu. The pattern is *kafa* (sennit) that is wound around the *papa koka‘anga* (table). It should be lightly rubbed with the dye so that the stripes stand out. The decoration of the Pangaikafa is the *kupesi matahihifi* (the slanted triangular shape) alternating with *fo‘i hea* (the dark circles representing a kind of local fruit and chiefly lineages). Thus, decorations are placed according to the men planting yams. The fo‘i hea completes the decoration. The “Pangai” in the name “Pangaikafa” is the King’s green, where he traditionally sits and meets his people. Likewise, the “hea” in the name “fo‘i hea” is a fruit from Holonga, Vava‘u.

Knowledge holder: ‘Uheina Tu‘itavake.

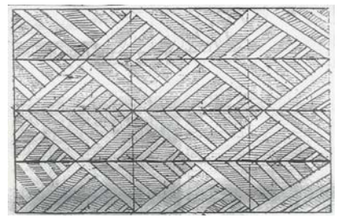
Tatautuisipa (Kupesi Tongo)



This kupesi originates from Tongatapu. “Tatau” means “partition” or “curtain.” It is made from the stem of the mangrove, which is split into fine strips. It is then woven with finely plaited *fau* into string, and then the string lashes the strips of the tongo, also creating a pattern. The strips are lashed diagonally, thus the name *sipa*. It is an imitation of the partition pattern.

Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

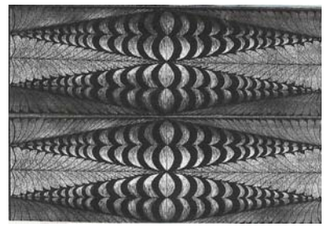
Amoamokofe (Kupesi Fokotu‘u)



This kupesi originating from Tongatapu is set up on the *papa koka‘anga* (table) the day before the koka’anga. The patterns are set up with the midrib of the green coconut frond (*palalafa*) and can be seen on the bamboo fences surrounding the home of the king or chief.

Knowledge holder: Siokapesi Tauali‘i, Kolomotu‘a.

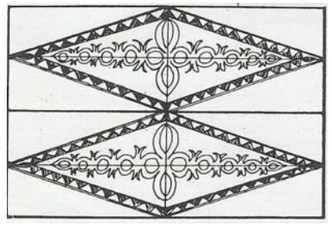
Tokelau Feletoa (Kupesi Tui)



This is a kupesi from ‘Ulukalala’s village of Feletoa at Vava‘u. The Tokelau Feletoa is said to be the flesh of the tuna fish when cut across the middle part. The pattern of the flesh is reflected.

Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

Kalou (Kupesi Tui)



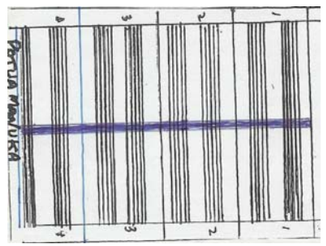
The Kalou is said to be the inside of the mapa fruit. The mapa plant is one of the known *kakala,* a collection of fragrant flowers that are woven together as a garland to mark a special occasion or for giving a gift to a special person. Kalou grows well at the villages of Pelehake and ‘Alaki, thus the name Vaomapa. The word “Kalou” is not a Tongan word, but a Fijian word meaning “God.” There is a tale of one of the Tu‘ipelehake’s sons who was exiled to Fiji, where the

kupesi must have been created so that he would not be forgotten. His descendants are in Nadroga, Fiji.

Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

Potuuamanuka (Kupesi Fokotu‘u)

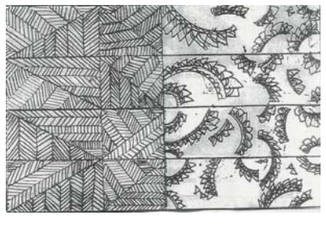
This is a black tapa kupesi originating from Tongatapu. This kupesi is set up on the table for ngatu production the day before the koka‘anga. The meaning of this kupesi is still being researched.



Knowledge holder (setup): Siokapesi Tauali‘i, Kolomotu‘a.

Longolongo (Kupesi Tui)

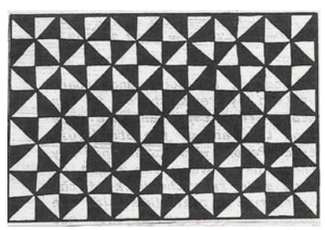
This originates from Tongatapu and is named after *longolongo*, an ornamental tree fern grown in Tonga to decorate homes. Every part of the longolongo is uniquely arranged: the young leaf, how it unfurls through different stages, the trunk, and patterns formed from where the leaves were attached. Even the fruit and how it is attached to the parent plant is included. This shows the wonder of creation.



Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

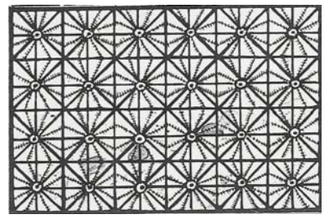
Manulua (Kupesi Tui)

This is an iconic Polynesian motif originating from Tongatapu. There are many interpretations of the Manulua, some saying it represents night and day.



However, the name means two birds back to back. This pattern is a mathematical figure that appeared in ancient architecture. There has been some discussion on the origins of this kupesi for copyright reasons, but to me this ancient traditional motif is one of the things that the women of Tonga should share in this small world of ours.

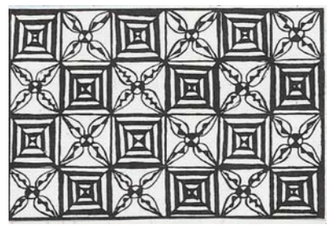
Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.



Aotapu (Kupesi Tui)

Originating from Tongatapu, the Aotapu is the sacred turban of the King decorated with the Langakali flower. It is a sweet-scented flower used for *sisi* (girdle) and *kahoa* (lei), and it also gives Tongan oil a sweet aroma. It is a royal flower, second only to the Heilala.

Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

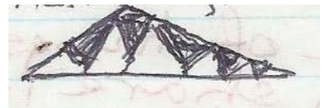


Fata ‘o Tu‘i Tonga (Kupesi Tui)

Originating from Tongatapu, the Fata ‘o Tu‘i Tonga is a very old kupesi. It originated from the Tufunga Lalava, the chiefly title bearer who practiced the art of *lalava* (ornamental lashing used for houses), used on the rafters of the Tu‘i Tonga’s house. This kupesi has changed over the years. The original was only the design in the first square, but today it is comprised of four symbols.

Knowledge holder: ‘Olivia Kaho Mafile‘o, Kolomotu‘a.

KUPESI DECORATIONS



Matahihifi

The *matahihifi* is often used to decorate a ngatu, e.g., Pangaikafa, as it is bare except for the beauty of the lalava on the papa koka‘anga (tapa production table) if the dye has been applied lightly.

Fo‘i Hea

Fo‘i hea (fruit of the hea tree) is applied on the Pangaikafa, or, alternatively, with the matahihifi, to represent how the men plant the yams. The Hea tree grows well in Holonga, Vava’u.

Fo‘i Hea Fuoiiki ‘e tolu

These three small hea fruits arranged in a triangle demonstrate how men plant their yams.

RITUALS INVOLVED IN NGATU PRODUCTION

In every stage of ngatu production there are rituals and techniques. Some have been forgotten while others are lightly adhered to. Personally, I quietly adhere to them, for I have in the past experienced ill luck. It was during the process to obtain black soot from the candlenut kernel, a process we had to do twice to have enough black soot for a koka'anga. The first time, I asked an elderly woman to do it. She kept the rituals right down to the small minute taboo. The second time, I thought another woman and I would perform it. We began the rituals, but halfway through, the heat in the little hut where the candlenut kernels had been burnt became unbearable, so I suggested that we move outside of the hut and that when the need arose for more candlenut kernels to be burnt someone could go in and do it. I broke the taboo, and the result was disastrous: although we obtained black soot, when we applied it, the soot did not produce the desired beautiful shining black color.

CHANGES IN NGATU PRODUCTION

From the second half of the twentieth century to date, Tonga has seen dramatic changes in the different aspects of the production of ngatu. The *hiapo* (paper mulberry) is planted commercially. The raw materials are now readily available in the local market. Ngatu is also produced commercially. A *lau nima* (fifty length) tapa is sold for $1,500 up to $2,000. Ngatu layers used to include two layers of *feta'aki* (unprinted white tapa), but today women have improvised with a facing or lining cloth for the under-layer of the feta'aki. Many linings are poor substitutes for the traditional feta'aki. Dyes are now imported from overseas, and the natural glue is now replaced by the use of flour mixed with cold water, which, unfortunately, encourages mites and insects to bore holes in the ngatu.

COMMEMORATIVE DESIGNS

Early kupesi presented abstract images, but in the early twentieth century symbolic kupesi were created to commemorate important events such as the centennial of the arrival of Christianity in Tonga. There is a kupesi that represents the planting of Norfolk pine trees

lining Tu'i Road from the palace to the royal tombs, and others commemorate the World War II effort of her late Majesty Queen Salote Tupou III when her people raised and donated funds to Great Britain to purchase warplanes. An airplane kupesi was made and printed on ngatu after the war.

Today some people produce tapa without kupesi, painting the whole ngatu brown and hand copying the kupesi motifs onto the ngatu. Because no new kupesi are being created, there is a danger that the old kupesi, if their use is not revived, will disappear and soon be forgotten.

CONCLUSION

Ngatu-making is a traditional manufacturing form that goes back before written history and is probably the oldest manufacturing industry in Tonga. Ngatu-making is an economic achievement in manufacturing sustainability—a traditional industry that has been led by women for centuries. Tongan ngatu is highly valued in Tongan culture and is recognized as a symbol of the importance of women.

Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga (The National Women's Council) has been active in training women in ngatu production and some in the skills of "ngatu craft" catering to tourists. There is a need to continue with this training, not only for the sustainability and continuity of the production of ngatu in all its traditional aspects but because it is vital to many families whose livelihoods depend on the sale of ngatu.

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Palauan Bai (Meeting House): Parts and Depictions as a Pictorial Representation of Palau

Patrick Tellei

Ng ko er a bermel a chelechelui!
(Like the chelechelui fish!)[1]

—A Palauan saying

INTRODUCTION

Of all the things that represent Palauan culture, the chief's hall, or community meeting hall, known as the *bai*, is the most iconic symbol and the most often photographed. The most visible parts are the *mad el bai*, which is the east-facing front, and the *but el bai*, the west-facing rear (Figures 1 and 2).

The Palauan bai is iconic not just because of its impressive structure, but because of what it has come to represent over hundreds of years in the eyes of sojourners and explorers who have come to Palau from centuries ago up until now. It is also very significant due to the way it is constructed, how it symbolizes the community, and the way the knowledge of how to build this impressive structure is passed from one generation to the next.

1. The *chelechelui* is known for its resistance against rotting. Once caught, it will remain fresh for a full day. Therefore, a *bai* is compared to a chelechelui as constructing a bai is an arduous task that requires persistence and resistance to overcome obstacles to complete the building.

1 Mad el Bai of Bai er a Klobak in Koror. © Patrick Tellei

2 But el Bai of Bai er a Klobak in Koror. © Patrick Tellei

The building of the bai requires a holistic knowledge of nature. It requires understanding of seasons, of plants and trees, of shrubs and weeds, of soil and its properties, and also of destructive insects and things that infest buildings, as well as of construction methods. One part is a skill and one is a technique. The tradition requires people that know how to build and others who know the ornamental designs (different specialists).

There are different kinds of bai. These are *bai er a klobak, bai er a cheldebechel*, *bai er a taoch*, and *bai er a chelid*. The most important, most significant, most elaborate, and most complete in terms of parts and ornamentation is the *bai er a klobak*, the seat of the council of chiefs of each village, such as Bai Melekeong in Melekeok, Bai er a Meketii in Koror, Bai er a Keai in Aimeliik, and Bai er a Ngara Irrai in Airai. The second most important bai in the community is for the secondary tier of chiefs, such as Ngaruchob of Melekeok and Ngaracheritem of Koror. These bai are called *chosobuulngau el bai*. The third tier of the bai is at the village level, such as Bai er a Oldesibel in

Ngerubesang, Melekeok; Bai er a Ilulk in Ngeraus, Ngchesar; Bai er a Tuich in Elab, Ngaraard; and Bai er a Mellabedch in Ngerusar, Airai.

The remaining bai such as the *tetib bai* and *bai el beluu* are used by women and all community members for many kinds of functions such as feasts, planning, meetings for fishing expeditions, meetings to plan dances, meetings to welcome guests from other villages, and, in contemporary times, meetings to receive leaders of the government to speak to the community. In contemporary communities of Palau, at the state and community level, there are centers built with national government funds that exist to serve the purposes of the last tier of bai, like the tetib bai, such as Ked Center in Airai, Oikull Center in Ngerikiil, Ngarachamayong Cultural Center in Koror, and the community center in Ngerchemai.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF BAI BUILDING

The holding of the knowledge of the traditional bai building was exclusive and proprietary in traditional Palau. After World War II, the only bai er a klobak that was still standing was Bai er a Ngara Irrai in Airai, which was built at the turn of the previous century, about 1890. The next bai to be built was Bai er a Ngesechel a Cherechar in 1968, at the Palau Museum in Koror under the direction of the Palau Museum (now Belau National Museum) authorities. It was built by Ngaratabelik, a men's group from Ngeremlengui. This bai was tragically destroyed by fire in 1978. The new Bai er a Ngesechel a Cherechar was rebuilt on the same site and completed in 1991 with funds appropriated by the Palau National Congress, Obiil er a Kelulau. In 2013, it was completely renovated by the young men's group Ngara Osichii of Ngerubesang, Melekeok.

About thirty years ago, there were very few left who held this knowledge, and Palauan elders realized that when the current generation of the bearers of the knowledge of how to build the bai died out, the skills would be lost for good. The bearers of knowledge are the people who direct the loggers, builders, carvers, and artisans in the construction and decoration of the bai. This knowledge was traditionally passed on through the generations (to children or siblings) as part of their inheritance. This process is called *oidel a chas*, meaning passing down knowledge from one generation to another.

The liberation of this thought process led to the building of the Bai Melekeong in about 1983 (the Melekeok council of chiefs' bai). It was the first one to be built in Melekeok since the last Bai Melekeong was dismantled and used for fortifications by a garrison of Japanese soldiers prior to the start of World War II. This was done at the time when people felt that the knowledge of building the grand bai had been lost. The completion of Bai Melekeong was a kind of renaissance and reassured the community that the knowledge, although scattered among so many different artisans and builders, was not lost. Thus, the building of Bai Melekeong served as an impetus to reawaken the tradition of bai building.

Traditionally, the people of capital villages such as Melekeok and Koror did not build bai (or canoes). Befitting their high status, they would order a bai, specify the size, and designate the *cheldebechel* who would build it. In fact, it was expected that they "spread the wealth" by paying other villages to carry out the building of these traditional structures. Melekeok could thus order and pay for a bai.

CONTEMPORARY BAI BUILDING

The building of this Bai Melekeong ushered in a new phase of bai building. First, the people of Melekeok would now build the bai instead of ordering it to be built. Also, instead of traditional bearers of knowledge working in isolation, the young people's groups were allowed to observe so they could absorb the knowledge, sometimes with no words to teach them, just watching and doing. Before long, Bai Melekeong was completed.

The Bai Melekeong structure was built next to the main road; it was milled, cut, marked, fit together, and carved with depictions there to allow maximum participation and observation by young and old, local residents and visitors alike, in anticipation of liberating and spreading this knowledge to the maximum number of people. Once it was fit together, a traditional approval feast was held that allowed the opportunity for the chiefs to review their soon-to-be-completed

bai, making comments or recommendations and giving their final approval. Afterward, it would be dismantled and manually carried a mile to the traditional location where Bai Melekeong had stood for centuries, the same site where the Ibedul of Koror, accompanied by Captain Wilson of the HMS *Antelope*, paid a visit in 1783 to the Reklai[2] of Melekeok and the Artingal community. On that spot, the new bai was reassembled (Figure 3).

While the bai was being assembled, news spread that the young men of Melekeok were building a traditional bai using traditional methods. Villages and states around Palau and their councils of chiefs began sending people, both to offer food tributes and, at the same time, to observe the construction and the renaissance being brought forth by the young men of Melekeok. A particular group of chiefs of Aimeliik, called Ngarkeai, paid a visit to Melekeok and were the first group to request the young men of Melekeok to build the chief's bai in Aimeliik, receiving approval, securing funds, and arranging for the construction. The chiefs of Melekeok graciously agreed to their request to be the next because the state of Aimeliik, or Ngerbuns (the traditional name of Aimeliik), is the sister of Melekeok, the only female child of the mythical Milad.[3] The other two children of Milad were sons, Imeyungs (Ngeremlengui) and Koror.

After the Aimeliik bai was successfully built in 1988 on the traditional Ngarkeai chiefs' platform (Figure 4), word further spread that there was a group of young men (Ngaramelangchad of Melekeok) capable of building traditional bai. The next request came to build one at Ngarachamayong Cultural Center in Central Koror through the Bilung (chief matriarch), Gloria Gibbons Salii of Koror, the head of Kerngab (female counterparts of the chiefs of Koror). She is also the head of Ngarachamayong Women's Group (a group of female elders representing all sixteen states in Palau). After the Bilung had taken the initiative to build the US$2.5 million contemporary cultural center, she realized this complex would not be complete without a bai er a klobak. She ordered the largest traditional council of chiefs' bai that exists in Palau today to be built. Since the bai would be built in Koror, she wanted it to be the largest, widest, longest, grandest, and most elaborately decorated bai to be built in modern times. Completed in 2007, it consists of ten sleepers called

2. There are two traditional paramount chiefs in Palau. The Reklai from Melekeok oversees the villages in the eastern district of Palau, and the Ibedul from Koror oversees the western district of Palau.
3. See the story of Milad in "Preserving Traditional Place Names of Palau," in this publication.

3 Bai Melekeong in Melekeok. © Carolyn Crockett and Bob Brooks
4 Bai er a Keai in Aimeliik. © Carolyn Crockett and Bob Brooks

bad, a kind of foundation beam (Figure 5). In comparison, the existing Bai er a Ngesechel a Cherechar at the National Museum in Koror, Bai Melekeong in Melekeok, Bai er a Keai in Aimeliik, and Bai er a Ngara Irrai in Airai all have eight sleepers. Not only that, the material used was a very tough and hard-to-work-with wood called *btaches ked*, which was made possible owing to sophisticated sawmilling equipment available now in Palau.

To describe all the ornamentation, depictions, and symbolism in the bai, we will use as an example those that can be found at the bai er a klobak that was constructed at the Ngarachamayong Cultural Center and also that of Bai Melekeong.

Bai Construction Methods

The method of construction is as follows. Each village has a village center where the bai is built. The stone piers upon which the sleepers rest rise from a stone platform in this village center (Figure 6). Resting on top of the ten sleepers are two longitudinal *uchutem* (Figure 7).

5 The ten sleepers (foundation beams) of Bai er a Klobak. © Patrick Tellei

The ends of the uchutem are connected across by beams called *kuoku* at both ends of the bai, *mad el bai* (front) and *but el bai* (rear). On top of the uchutem rest the *kboub* (walls) and *chad* (posts). "Chad" also means "person" or "man" in Palauan. The four corner posts of the bai are called *saus* (Figures 8 and 9).

At the Ngarachamayong bai er a klobak building site, there are twenty piers on the stone platform. The ten sleepers rest on top of these twenty piers, and the uchutem beam, in turn, rests on top of the sleepers. The ends of both beams are connected by kuoku. On top of the uchutem beams rest walls (kboub) connected to posts (chad). These chad are located at each side of a door. There are six entrances, so there are twelve chad. There are also four saus (Figure 9).

6 Stone platform at the village center with stone piers. © Patrick Tellei
7 Two longitudinal *uchutem* beams rest on top of the ten sleepers. © Patrick Tellei
8 The foundation sleepers rest on top of the stone piers. © Patrick Tellei
9 Corner post *saus* (on left corner) and *chad* posts resting on top of the longitudinal *uchutem* beams and the *kuoku* end beams. © Patrick Tellei

On top of the kboub, chad, and saus there are *tenons* (tongues that fit into mortise holes), and all are held together by *orsechokl* that are mortised and fit onto these tenons on top of the post. Fitted on top of the post is another beam called *ongrangre* (Figures 10 and 11).

At the front of the bai, the *iis* (threshold) is mortised and connects the two chad posts, and both rest on the kuoku (Figure 12). The two saus are mortised and fitted onto tenons and rest on the corner where the uchutem and kuoku beams meet. They are held in place lengthwise by the *orsechokl* (top plate) and crosswise by a part named *olik* with a lap joint (Figure 13).

The *ellabed* is mortised and fitted via tenons to the top of the sleeper beam, where it is held in place by a *rekoi*, a piece of wood with a curved-up end to hold a mat in place (Figures 10 and 11). It is also traditionally a place of sanctuary. If the bai is under attack and a man is afraid for his life, he can jump up to the rekoi for shelter there and his life will be spared. However, by so doing, he irrevocably abdicates his manhood and must wear a skirt and work in the taro patch with the other women for the rest of his life.

As mentioned, the rekoi is mortised to the ellabed post, and the end of the rekoi rests on the *ongrangre* (primary top plate) and is lashed to it. The *imuul* cross beam is mortised and sits on top of the ellabed (Figure 11). The bottom of the rafter sits at the back of the rekoi and extends all the way to the ridge on both sides. Both sides of the rafters meet at the middle right on top of the ridge (*buadel*) and form

10 *Ellabed* resting on bad and protruding through *rekoi*. © Patrick Tellei
11 Inside view of Bai Melekeong showing *rekoi, ellabed, imul*, and *delal a duus*.© Patrick Tellei
12 The *iis* (threshold) is framed on either side by doorposts called *chad*, and both rest on the *kuoku* beam. © Patrick Tellei
13 Showing *olik* on top of *ongrangre*. © Patrick Tellei

an X. The buadel is held in place by the *otekrikr* kingpost, which is mortised and fixed via tenons to the *olik* at the bottom and the buadel on top. The bottom of the X is the ridge. At the top of the X made by those two crisscrossing rafters is a piece of wood called *rael* that is defined as the path or way of the spirits.

In order to hold the rafters in place, a rope is wrapped from the bottom of the ridge all the way around a minimum of five times (from the buadel ridge over to the rael and down around the ridge again). In order to tighten the two parallel pieces of wood further together, another rope is wrapped around them, pulling the top and the bottom closer together; the term for this technique is *cheleas*. This is the same word that is used in the context of the Palauan family adoption tradition. When a couple adopts a child from another family, in order to create a closer relationship, tributes of fish or food are brought to them to further strengthen the ties, the way the rope tightens the rafters together in the bai.

There are three beams corresponding to each rafter, equaling the number of sleepers (for ten sleepers there are ten corresponding rafters). The lowest one, the *imuul*, is a beam mortised and fixed via tenon to the top of the rekoi. The rafter is lashed to the end of the imuul at both sides of the bai, as seen in Figure (11).

Both sides of this imuul beam are where the most significant legends and mythologies are told about each particular village that owns the bai, focusing on the exploits of the men, women, and leaders of the past. Thus, the stories carved at that level are of that significance: who said what, who won what, etc. Note that although the bottom beam holds all the significant stories of that capital village, they are ranked from east to west in order of importance. The most important ones start on the east beam (and are carved on both sides).

This beam reaches across the bai from one side to another. "Imuul" is defined as "going to the other side"—from an engineering standpoint it is balancing the load from one side of the sleeper to the other. From a traditional Palauan standpoint, it is the way by which the whispered counsels and traditional policies, rules, and regulations (*kelulau*) travel from one side of the bai to the other side.

The ten chiefs of the ten village clans within a *klobak* are divided into two opposing sides called *kaucherareu*. These chiefs always sit on opposite sides of the bai. This mutual opposition provides checks and balances in decision-making that are good for the community. The odd-numbered clans sit on one side headed by one chief while the even-numbered clans sit on the other side headed by the second chief. This is the heart of Palauan tradition: maintaining a balance. Everything has two sides.

The second beam, which is lashed at the midpoint of the rafters on both sides, is called *omkuuk*, which literally means "to spread." This beam holds all the weight of the roof and keeps all of the roof members from crashing into the center of gravity. On both sides of this beam are carved the stories of villages in alliance with the capital village that owns the bai, other lesser legends of the community and villages, and spillover from the first imuul beam (i.e., whatever major stories could not be accommodated there). "Omkuuk" also has another meaning: "to spread and make widely known." Some lesser-known stories of exploits that find themselves on the omkuuk, when told over and over again, will attain more importance and eventually move down to the lower beam.

Next, the highest beam, just below the *buadel* (ridge), is lashed likewise from one rafter to another and is called *reberball*. This means "to be seated at" (by the spirits). The carvings and depictions on this beam are anecdotes, clichés, old sayings, proverbs, and, at times, admonishments.

There are then four of the *delal a duus* (purlins), which literally means "the mother of all purlins" (longitudinal structural parts of the roof) (Figure (11)). The delal a duus is the principal purlin that is tied to the main rafters. These rafters, called *seches*, are tied to the delal a duus from the ongrangre all the way to the rael, the entire length of the bai. The delal a duus protrudes at both ends of the bai and holds the rafters and the *ongiau*, the fascia board that is decorated from the bottom to the top. The ongiau is decorated either with *belek* (spirit faces) in Koror or *dellerok* (money birds) in Melekeok (Figure (14)) Where the ongiau meet at the top, they are decorated with the god of construction, Chedechuul (Figure (15)). It is normally a face with

eyes, a nose, and a long beard wearing two *chelbucheb* money beads on each ear. The second set of duus is tied to the rafters and extends from beyond the ongrangre all the way to the rael.

The *osekidel*, which is made of bamboo, is tied to the purlin from the lowest duus all the way to the rael and criss-crossed at the top to form another X. The osekidel is where the thatched roof (hand-woven from coconut fronds) is tied in place; each piece of thatched roof is tied to three osekidel. On average, from the bottom to the top of one roof section, measuring five- to six-feet wide, there are 190 pieces of thatch. With fifteen of these sections on each side, on average a bai is composed of about seven to eight thousand thatched roof pieces.

Once all the thatched roof pieces are tied in place (each bai uses an average of 5,200 thatched roof pieces), it is time to install the *uchub*, the ridge cap. The word "uchub" comes from the Palauan word for compassion, *klechubechub*. The uchub is the top part that covers everything in the bai both physically and symbolically, protecting against wrongdoing and preventing water from coming inside. It takes over five hundred leaves to complete this crowning touch.

14 The *ongiau* (fascia board) is decorated with spirit faces (*bellek*) in Koror. © Patrick Tellei

15 The god of construction, Chedechuul. © Patrick Tellei

To install the uchub, a sharp piece of wood called *eliil*, usually made of mangrove root, is pushed through from one side of the roof to the other side, crossing in between the rael and buadel. The eliil sticks out on both sides of the roof and is sharpened on both edges to prevent the spirits that hover over the chiefs' bai from landing on it because they could get pierced (Figure 15). The eliil are installed at about five feet apart the entire length of the bai from *mad el bai* (front) to *but el bai* (rear). Two pieces of bamboo called *osarch* are tied at the bottom of the eliil on both sides, extending along the entire length of the bai. A crown of nipa leaves is then painstakingly mounted on top of the bai, inserted under the osarch by a man sitting on the ridge cap.

The final part of the bai to be completed is the *melech*, which in construction terminology means "cable end." In Palauan mythology, melech represents the evil spirit that needs to be driven out of the bai once it is completed in a ceremony that is called *osebekel a melech*.

As discussed, there are two facades of a bai, east and west. The face called "mad el bai" traditionally and constructively must face east. "Mad el bai" means the "face of the bai" (*mad*=face). It is bordered on both sides by *ongiau*, which are planks starting from the top of the *olik*, the heaviest beam, extending from one side of the bai to the other.

BAI MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

The cable end of the mad el bai is generally divided into six equal horizontal spaces, with the following symbols painted or depicted on them, normally in the following order. People seated in the bai need to know all this symbolism by heart.

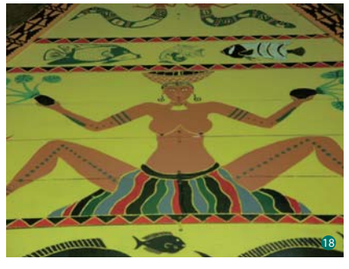
- *Chelebesoi* (Figure 16) is one of the most beautifully colored fish in the ocean and is depicted on the bai to symbolize beauty, good taste, and good life. It represents everything that is good that must come from the bai and be extended to the community.

16 *Chelebesoi*. © Patrick Tellei

• *Bechei* (Figure 17) is a worm-shaped figure with a human head, human hands, and a straight body, but it is depicted with visible internal organs that contain all symbols of Palauan money. Bechei is a symbol of prosperity and frugality, representing the wealth that needs to be collected for the community. There is only one body, one head, and two hands, so all the wealth needs to be distributed equally in unison.

• *Dilukai* (Figure 18) is a female figure seated with legs extended and open to display the genital area. There are many legends and stories about Dilukai. Some even say that Bechei was the brother of Dilukai, but she has come to represent fertility, continuity, growth, birth, sustenance, and life.

The display of the female genitals also refers to the customary death settlement of *cheldechduch*, representing the money that is paid to the male members of the wife's side of the family when she is either deceased or widowed. This payment, called *techel otungel*, is owed by the husband's relatives as compensation for the conjugal services performed during the marriage.



• *Mesekuuk* (surgeon fish) (Figure 19) are a type of reef fish that, in the face of danger from a predator, congregate together under a leader to form the shape of one big fish that cannot be eaten, chasing the predator away. Mesekuuk symbolizes doing things together in unison, having one voice, supporting a decision when it has been made, and getting along.

• *Terroi el beluu* (Figure 20) is a circular figurine with two human heads, two legs, and two arms. One of these figurines is encircled by *belsebasech*, a continuous triangular pattern. This has come to symbolize continuity, each triangle representing a different season for planting, harvesting, etc., and showing how the members of the community need to cooperate and work in unison.

• On the lowest plank is *chedeng* (Figure 21), the shark. The sharks are normally depicted on the bai facing each other with mouths open and bodies curved, ready to strike. In the Palauan community these facing sharks show that we may be in unison and try to get along and work together with our women, but one should not mistake that to mean that they can try to run over us: like sharks, we are ready at all times to attack if necessary.

The rest of the *ongiau* plank of the Bai ra Klobak in Koror is decorated with *klikmch*, consisting of multiple faces, eyes, noses, and ears all the way to the end (in Melekeok this part is decorated with a clam). "Klikmch" is defined as the smiling face. It symbolizes the face of humanity, Koror's willingness to host others, which is why the motto of Koror is "*Oreor a ourois er a rechad*."[4] The Koror war canoe is also named after the face, *oklikmch*. The last traditional war canoe carved for the Festival

4. This expression literally means Koror is deeply rooted in people. Koror's willingness to open its arms to migrants from within and outside Palau is a source of its wealth. It has allowed people, ideas, and economic ventures to prosper, adding to Koror's power and wealth.

17 *Bechei*. © Patrick Tellei
18 *Dilukai*. © Patrick Tellei
19 *Mesekuuk*. © Patrick Tellei
20 *Terroi el Beluu*. © Patrick Tellei
21 *Chedeng*. © Patrick Tellei

of Pacific Arts in 2004 was also named *Oklikmch* in a quest to maintain this state motto.

Ironically, one of the few coincidences in language history is an instance when the Palauan and English words have the same meaning. The west end of the bai is called "but el bai," which is the rear of the bai (in English, "butt"). This western façade has different legends of great significance to Koror, including those about the relationships between Koror and Peleliu and between Koror and the English.

These stories and symbols on the outside of the bai are for the public; the ones on the inside are only for the eyes of the chiefs.

There are many other symbols used as depictions in the bai, as follows.

• *Chedechuul* (Figure 22) is the god of construction, normally placed where the fascia boards meet at the top of the ridge line.

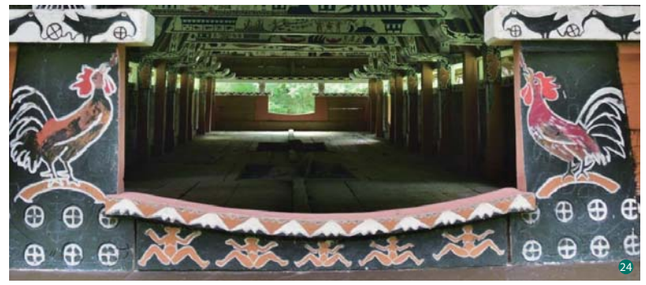
• *Orachel* were the the first bai builders; legend has it that they marked, assembled and built the original bai at the bottom of the ocean and then brought the knowledge to the people of Palau.

• *Klidm* is a smiling face that symbolizes strength in people, and it has come to represent the people of Koror, who have a motto that they welcome all the citizens of Palau.

• *Bellek* (Figure 23) is also a face, this time wearing money-bead earrings.

22 Chedechuul. © Patrick Tellei

• *Iis* (Figure 24) is the removable threshold placed at the entrance to the bai; "iis" also means "nose," as it is the center of the face. The iis is located under the *olik*, a low roof beam to make the entrance very short in order to force a physical show of deference and obedience from everyone who goes inside, as even proud people have to bend over to step inside and bow down when they enter the bai (see also Figure 12).



• *Cheldecheduch* (Figure 25) is a zigzag shape that symbolizes communication, as Palau's ancient people believed voices traveled in waves.

• *Udoud* (Figure 26) is a plus sign in a circle that represents chelbucheb, conveying the concepts of a monetary community, wealth, and economy.

23 *Bellek*. © Patrick Tellei 24 *Iis*. © Patrick Tellei 25 *Cheldecheduch*. © Patrick Tellei 26 *Udoud*. © Patrick Tellei

• *Olik*, the fruit bat, is also the name of the part of the bai that crosses the main entrance, upon which a large figure of an olik is carved on a very low entrance. The olik is the only animal that holds its head down when it rests, so it symbolizes humility, obedience, and deference; if you don't have any of these traits, you will be forced to emulate them when you enter since the entrance is low.

• *Mengidab* (Figure 27) is a spider usually carved on the *rekoi* plank, representing the legend of Mengidabrutkoel,[5] the mythical figure that taught the people of Palau the first natural childbirth. Before that, all children were born by Cesarean section, resulting in a high female mortality rate.

• *Malk* (Figure 28) is the rooster, a symbol of announcements of decisions from the bai to the community. It also symbolizes the value of starting on time and letting people know what you are going to do, like the rooster waking up and crowing in the morning. In the myth about bai building in Ngerchelong "Bai Rulchau", after the seventh crowing of the rooster, the sun came up, and the builders, who could only work at night, had to leave. Thus, the bai remains unfinished even today.

• *Dellerrok* is the money bird, the symbol of Melekeok that is mythically believed to excrete money from its body.

5. See "Traditional Childbirth Practices in Palau" in this publication for the story and significance of Mengidabrutkeol.

27 *Mengidab*. © Patrick Tellei

28 *Malk*. © Patrick Tellei

• *Kim* (clam) (Figure 30) is a symbol found in many different forms that illustrates the dualism in Palau, where there are two sides to everything and mutual opposition is central to traditional ways.

• *Besebes er a ngerot* (Figure 31) is a zigzag motif with leaves on top and a money symbol hanging on the apex of the zigzag. Ngerot is the mythical place where a father and son went fishing. The father told his son to collect rocks for fishing sinkers, but the son started playing and throwing the rocks. When they reached the beach and the sun rose, they found that the big stones left were money beads. This story illustrates how haste makes waste, and since wealth can depart in no time, one should pay attention.

• *Belsebasech* (Figure 32) is a zigzag design normally drawn in two colors, either black and red or black and yellow. It symbolizes continuity and is also the border when one wants to end a legend with "and so it ends."

• *Mesekuuk* is a symbol of unity and unison (surgeon fish).

• *Chedeng*, the shark, represents strength, ferocity, perseverance, and toughness.

29 *Dellerrok*. © Patrick Tellei

30 *Kim*. © Patrick Tellei

31 *Besebes er a ngerot*. © Patrick Tellei

32 *Belsebasech*. © Patrick Tellei

• *Kaeb, kabekel, brotong,* and *kaberruuch* (Figure 33) are the main Palauan canoes: *kaeb* is a fast sailing canoe; *kabekel* is a war canoe; *brotong* is a cargo canoe; and *kaberruuch*, also known as *omuadel,* is a fishing expedition canoe; Usually kaberruuch is a retired war canoe that had a poor showing in a war expedition or canoe race. In the old days, when a capital village lost a war canoe race, they would buy the winning canoe and send it to be a fishing canoe so it could never win again.

• *Chad* come in two kinds: *sechal*, which represent man, manhood, and things of a manly nature; and *redil*, which represent women, womanhood, and things of a feminine nature (Figure 34).

• *Blai* is a dwelling, the depiction of which reflects family, family life, and normalcy.

• *Beluu*, as used in depictions, is a contiguous land mass composed of ocean, mountain, flat land, and mangroves.

• *Iungs* literally means "islands," including small islets, atoll islands, and rock islands. Atoll islands are symbolized by a flat sandbar with coconut trees while a rock island is symbolized by a shape protruding from the ocean and colored green to indicate trees (not coconut palms).

33 *Kaeb*. © Patrick Tellei

34 *Chad—sechal and redil*. © Patrick Tellei

• *Dellomel* can be either *kukau* or *kerrekar.* Kukau is swamp taro that is the mainstay starch food in traditional and contemporary Palauan society. Kerrekar, on the other hand, are big trees such as breadfruit and the ukall tree used to build canoes, houses, and bai.

• *Sils*, or the sun, symbolizes heat, living, and the universe.

• *Ius*, the crocodile, represents catastrophes or danger from the past or lurking ahead.

TRANSMISSION AND CONTINUITY

In Palau, there is a saying: *Ng di tirke el bellemakl a imuchet a techerakl.* This saying refers to those who are quiet and have purposeful ability—those who can actually learn or complete a difficult task. Such characteristics are necessary for those involved in difficult undertakings like building of bai.

In traditional Palau, builders were a very specific group of people who hailed from various communities within specific villages. Some were experts in identifying trees, some were good in organizing groups to fell and cut down trees, and some were experts in mobilizing and transporting the wood from the forest to specified clearings. Some people were skilled in milling the wood, either with traditional tools or with introduced steel and metal tools. The master builders would prepare the building site, set layout lines, and provide all provisions for leveling all foundational parts of the bai.

This knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. In the case of Melekeok, the transfer of these psychomotor skills was made possible because of the actual building of Bai Melekeong, Bai er a Keai, and Bai er a Klobak at the Ngarachamayong Cultural Center. It would be very hard, if not impossible, to transfer these skills without the actual experience of bai building. Thanks to these construction projects, we are now at a stage at which the young people have all been exposed to aspects of bai building. The platform for learning has been opened to all.

In the past, it took lots of practice and actual construction of the bai to learn, sharpen, and apply skills, most often under a master-apprenticeship relationship. Today, in the case of the bai building tradition in Melekeok, all young people are invited and in fact encouraged to participate in all aspects of building a bai, from scouting a location to identifying trees, milling logs, carving, assembling, thatching, roofing, and cleaning the site. The traditional *omengermodel* (the traditional way for young people to acquire new knowledge and know-how from other sources other than those available to them) has become a norm in bai building.

While teaching the skills of bai building is a recommended course of action for maintaining this skill set, commissioning new bai is fundamental to this learning process. In addition to new bai, repairs of existing ones should be scheduled as regular activities of young people.

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Traditional Archery: An Intangible Cultural Element in Vanuatu's Landscape

Patrick Rory

Let's draw our bows back to the past to better reach toward our target in the future.

—Vanuatuan oral tradition

INTRODUCTION

This article aims at introducing the reader to the local art of archery as an ancestral resource management tool currently threatened by the constant pressure of modernity. The use of archery tends to be left behind in today's Vanuatuan households, and this study seeks to provide vital information on the training techniques used by the population and its ancestors. This article also aims at describing for educational purposes the ancestral methods of fabrication in order to promote the use of this particular knowledge, which tends to slowly disappear, as well as to reconcile tradition and modernity. As natural, animal, terrestrial, and marine resources are increasingly diminished, they are reaching, in some cases, the point of permanent extinction because of climate change, human development, and their consequences. It is, therefore, very much logical to take a look back in time to extract the ancient knowledge and techniques used and to apply them to appraisal of upcoming changes for the future. In this way, the Vanuatuan population shall be able to face the challenges involved with the current worldwide, regional, and national cultural erosion. Doing so requires understanding and identifying the threats, analyzing the traditional and cultural responses developed through the ages by the country's ancestors, and designing and promoting responses that fit best to tackle issues generated by challenges such as climate change and modernity.

The use of bows, spears, and traps to meet their alimentation needs led Vanuatu's ancestral populations to develop significant knowledge from generation to generation. The postmodern era, however, has seen drastic changes in the perception local people have in such tools, which are becoming scarce today. As Vanuatuan tradition trends toward slowly disappearing, it is the population's responsibility to preserve such knowledge and propose alternative means of transmission for future generations to come. As our traditions tend to disappear, it is Vanuatu's duty to transmit such vital information of the traditional archery to the future generation as well as to address its use for managing natural resources and, more particularly, its use on Malekula Island, one of the biggest islands in Vanuatu. This article will focus on the initiation into and training in the art of archery and the basic notions to create and construct bows and arrows. Moreover, the article will also propose approaches on how to cope with sustainable development, highlighting local traditional values in relation to the concerned traditional practice and providing alternatives to revitalize this cultural asset.

1 Vegetal materials for manufacturing bows and arrows shown at Freshwater Field, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

2 Teachers at Haningtone Bule starting the bow-making show. © Patrick Rory

BOWS AND ARROWS IN MANAGING LOCAL TRADITIONAL RESOURCES: AN ENDANGERED CULTURAL PRACTICE

An Adapted Animal Resource Management Tool

Bows are not only fierce weapons but also highly efficient fishing and hunting tools that greatly contribute to local resource management in day-to-day Melanesian life. They constitute a means of extracting the strict minimum to respond to the needs of the local population. When the sun sets, bows are used to hunt down flying foxes commonly consumed in local meals. Even during the day, as local people wander towards their respective gardens, bows become useful to catch pigeons and other bird species. Today, bows are rarely used to kill domestic pigs or chickens while, on the other hand, populations settled close to the reefs continue to use the bows as the tide rises to catch fish depending on the time of day, the season, and the taste of the fishermen. Sometimes the fishermen attract their prey by throwing in food such as papaya, ripe banana, coconuts, and worms. Bows constitute perfect tools to catch fish such as mullet fish, parrot fish, mackerel, picot fish, sole fish, and many other species. The time usually spent for such exercise is no more than an hour. As time goes on and tide comes in, the water depth is too important and the fish are spread over an area that becomes too big for the fishermen to efficiently cover, but at this stage the fishermen still can seek bigger catches using their spears. Spears are also used to hunt terrestrial animals such as wild pigs and bullocks.

Traditional Archery: An Endangered Cultural Practice

Bows and arrows reached Vanuatuan shores via the first human groups settling in the regions. For each clan and family of the country, these weapons were among the principal tools enabling these populations to survive until today, despite the fact that Europeans and the first Western settlers in the modern era took prohibitive measures against these weapons. In 1980, bows and arrows were the only arms and weapons used by Santo Nagriamel rebels, who were opposed to Vanuatu taking its independence under the circumstances of the time. In response to the movement, the first government of the Republic of Vanuatu called for Papua New Guinea's assistance, and a PNG Mobile Forces regiment was deployed to face the threat represented by these rebels. From then on, modernity and the constant social mutations have negatively impacted archery throughout Vanuatu, leading to bows and arrows becoming obsolete for the new generations.

Indeed it has become much easier and more fashionable to hunt with brand new muskets or to fish with brand new lines and hooks using modern lures or fishing nets to catch a greater amount of fish. This is how Vanuatu's halieutic resources have become victims of overfishing today and how some bird species have come close to extinction. As a consequence of these recent events, archery has slowly been abandoned by the population in general.

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1. Local archery and many other intangible heritage elements that were neglected could not escape the effects of modernity and its homogenizing policies, which are a constant threat to local cultures. Although it is located away from the Western world, since Queirós' discovery of the archipelago in 1606, the archipelago has been influenced by the hegemonic effects of Western civilization, which has transformed the local customary structures.

The Consequences of Abandoning Local Archery

The postmodern era has seen traditional practices left abandoned and neglected due to the loss of cultural benchmarks.[1] The practice of archery is becoming rare even in rural areas. The ancestral know-how and the cultural competencies linked with archery have become devalued. People are no longer able to identify the appropriate type of wood used to build bows, arrows, or other traditional tools used in everyday life. Such types of knowledge and identification have

3 Patrick Rory, a VITE trainer, planing a bow with a knife, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

4 Patrick Rory, a VITE trainer, cutting an arrow tip with a knife, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

further-reaching implications in terms of biodiversity heritage. In this regard, medicinal plants and trees used to construct houses and their identification also become valueless to an important part of the local population who are now accustomed to a Western and modern way of life. The main consequence is the total inefficiency and ineffectiveness to properly manage natural resources that are so important to preserving good living standards and such valuable assets to locals.

INITIATION TO LOCAL TRADITIONAL ARCHERY

Playful Learning of Archery

Once a child is able to walk, his parents and close relatives start his initiation into archery education in a playfully designed manner with small bows built with either coconut leaf nerves, bamboo, or wooden sticks cut from branches. Children then train themselves with small-sized arrows by shooting small targets such as lizards, insects, or crustaceans like crabs or shrimp. With more efficient equipment, they will start hunting fish and small birds in their direct environment.

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Customary Initiation in the Nakamal[2]

Following customary rules, the initiation to traditional archery is in direct relation with a rite of passage from childhood to the teenage years and thereon adulthood for young males in a *nakamal*. Such initiation is widely practiced in Melanesian culture and known as the "circumcision." Apart from the other activities performed in nakamals, the main one focusing on warlike education is local archery. The youngsters first watch their tutors constructing their bows and arrows. As these youngsters use their own bows, arrows eventually get lost in nature, so tutors constantly remain at their sides to cut some new ones for their protégés. Quite naturally, as the young archers gain experience, they seek more enhanced and better performing tools. Thus, they take over the making of their own bows and arrows and specialize themselves in the art of building such equipment.

2. A sacred house reserved for men where rites of passage take place.

Bows and Bow Manufacturing in Nakamals

Bows are carved from different kinds of local wood selected for their quality, flexibility, resistance, and capacity to propel projectiles with the maximum velocity over the farthest distance possible. The roots of mangrove trees are also used as well as Gaïac wood (acacia, *Acacia spirorbis*), known for being the hardest wood in Vanuatu. Wood selected to be used as bows is never straight as a ruler. It is often already curved. Mangrove trees and acacia roots naturally have geometrically curved forms, which brings even more complexity to the carver since he cannot carve the wood from the inner part but only from the outer part. When carving a bow, one must take into account the size, meaning the height and strength of the potential user. Some expect the size of the bow to be identical to their own height while others prefer it to be shorter.

First of all, the structural work involves the trimming of the specimen by using a machete to shape the bow. Then the craftsman planes the wood with a sharp knife. Once the bow reaches its optimum flexibility, the carver tests it by bending both extremities to check the quality and effectiveness of his work and to ensure no more additional planning is required. This step is crucial to assess the harmony and propelling forces balanced between the upper and lower side of the bow, which determine the accuracy of the bow to reach its target.

The next step involves the bending of the bow, where the bow is wrapped in leaves and steam-cooked for more or less ten minutes. The bow is turned regularly to avoid it catching fire. It is then removed from the fire for bending. Once done, the bow is drawn with a wire to perform the last tests. For more security, the bow can be cooked in green bamboo, especially if the bow is made of dry acacia roots. Finally, the last step consists of sanding the wood with ceremonial pig tusk ivory.

5 Children manipulating vegetal material to make bows and arrows, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

6 A teacher demonstrating how to use vegetal rope to make a bow. © Patrick Rory

Wiring/Rope Preparation

The bow wire is made of Burao (wild hibiscus) fibers or out of young Banyan root fibers. One must choose young Burao shoots, which are straight and healthy. Burao and Banyan fibers are extracted the same way by using a simple knife. Preparing the ropes or wires can be done in two different manners. For Burao roots, the fiber must be sun-dried for four hours minimum. Then the rope is fabricated by rubbing it against the thigh as Vanuatuan ancestors practiced ages ago.

Arrow Fabrication

Cane stems are often used to make arrows, along with twine and giant heart fern or iron spikes. Generally, cane stems are first fire-heated, straightened, cleaned, and prepared with a knife. If one receives an arrow for fishing, many spikes are affixed at the tip of the cane and fastened with twine. For birds, the spikes are replaced by an anvil-shaped extension aiming to knock the birds out.

7 Banyan roots, from which fiber is extracted to make the bow's wire. © Patrick Rory

Bows and Symbolism

Bows represent the perfect symbol for masculinity or the protective strength an adult man is supposed to show in order to preserve his family's interests, security and safety.[3] In the past, every man had to build his own bow and had to be able to use it efficiently to ensure his family's survival. One who does not have the sufficient competence and is not capable of building and using it is considered to be a woman or worth nothing. On Malekula Island, this tool bears an important meaning in the eyes of its population. In the southeastern part of the island, on the Mewun land, bows are subject to an ancestral cult. Their decorations and the association made with the valorous ancestors resting in the underworld show the extent to which this tool is of great significance for the people of this area.

THE VALUE, TRANSMISSION, AND PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ASSOCIATED WITH TRADITIONAL ARCHERY

Traditional Knowledge, Once Devalued

With the arrival of Europeans to the Pacific, customary land was plundered and local cultures undermined to the extent that they were denigrated by sailors, adventurers, and European missionaries, who believed all traditional practices led directly to hell. During colonial times, French language policies and Anglicization were implemented, almost leading to the death of local languages and cultures. Fortunately, the tides turned, and the country's independence has allowed us to reappropriate our cultural identity.

3. Behaviors considered typically male: In Northeast Malakula, every young man, especially in the part of the festive rituals closing his religious rite, a rite of passage from childhood to adult, has to exchange with his maternal uncle for the right to wear a *nambas*, which is a vegetal technique to cover the penis (i.e., a penis wrapper) and signifies the right to become a man. He will then present to the sacred uncles for this protocol to be approved by the "guardian spirits" of the maternal clan. To show his fighting ability, he must send his arrows using his bow to the top of the sacred banyan tree of Nasara. He has to succeed in planting arrows on the highest branches of the tree. After this show of force, he returns with gifts: a pig and the victuals. In the south of the island, male virility (manhood) is expressed through the ceremonial ritual of the awarding of a bow by a maternal uncle to his nephew at the wedding of the latter, which means that the groom has now become able to protect his family while ensuring food security through providing fish and various types of wildlife with his bow and arrows.

8 Children at Freshwater Field during a local archery show, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

9 Target shooting at Freshwater Field during a local archery show, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

Independent Education Politics

With the successive waves of globalization still breaking on our shores, our local cultures are still endangered insofar as modernity leads to the loss of cultural landmarks since the Vanuatuan education system has not allocated a budget to transmit local traditional activities. However, at the same time, despite being aware of the richness and diversity of local culture, the educational system has not sought to develop curricula to transmit this cultural information through the perspective of sustainable development. Aside from the independence leaders who sought to give Vanuatu a new cultural identity soon after independence, no other politicians have had the courage to state publicly that our traditions and customs are in danger and that our area is going through a cultural tsunami, which, if it continues, may take our souls to the depths of the abyss. Consequently, no one knows where to turn to safeguard our traditions.

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Blinded by the windfall gains that were dangled in front of us, we took a lot of time to recognize that cultures and traditions are the soul of our Melanesian nation. An attempt at a local archery project was implemented in 2007 as part of the Year of Customary Economy at the Teachers Training Institute of Vanuatu. It was intended for current and future teachers of the archipelago as a personal training module and staff development activity focused on indigenous knowledge and skills that all teachers should integrate to better fulfill their task of transmitting culture. Participants explored the local archery theme throughout the 2007 school year, and the project ultimately led to a fishing archery competition on Retoka Island. The project was the subject of a documentary produced by Television Blong Vanuatu. The participants have said that the project was beneficial to them in that the training enabled them to acquire knowledge, skills, and values associated with local archery and protecting the environment. Unfortunately, there has been no outside response to this project.

10 Target at Freshwater Field during a local archery show, Children's Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

11 Patrick Rory, VITE trainer, offering a bow and an arrow to Chief Kalkot Murmur of Mangaliliu during a bow and arrow fishing competition, Constitution Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

A Prosperous Socio-political Frame Despite Certain Structural Weaknesses

Global education reform has been at work since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Traditional activities and values are now being framed in a context of unification by harmonizing the education system inherited from the Franco-British Condominium that dates back to 2010. Politicians, scientists, Malvatumaori chiefs, educators, and all people in charge must now think ethically and take into account the cultural identity of Vanuatuan youth to offer a comprehensive education that includes a school space redesigned to accommodate indigenous cultural activities.

But the local archery appreciation and transmission project implemented in schools is at risk of failing once again as we tend to put the cart before the horse. As of now, no training program exists for teachers in charge of teaching language and culture, even if the "National Vanuatu Curriculum Referential" has been teaching culture and tradition in schools since 2010. Despite these precarious circumstances, the LAB high school has decided to integrate the transmission of local traditional knowledge in its academic program using a societal context, which is a step in the right direction. We hope that this academic establishment will rekindle interest in local archery in a durable way that encourages identity and socio-cultural development.

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12 VITE trainees posing in front of a fire on Naguswai Beach during a field trip in 2007. © Patrick Rory

13 VITE trainees posing in front of a fire on Mangaliliu Beach during a field trip in 2007. © Patrick Rory

CONCLUSION

This study has allowed us to define traditional use of the bow and arrow as a fishing and hunting tool inherited from the first ancestors of Vanuatu—a tool of endangered species resource management that is as important as the archipelago's local languages. This has allowed us to direct our attention to the appreciation and transmission of traditional knowledge associated with local archery. At the village and clan level, it is necessary to encourage the continuation of initiation to ancestral archery methods as this favors the transmission of a lot of knowledge and skills as well as related traditional values that contribute to the identity and socio-cultural development of youth. We have also envisaged the inclusion of local archery in schools as a cultural and sporting activity in a transmission and cultural appreciation context. Practitioner educational authorities must now work together to facilitate teaching. As of yet, teachers are not specially informed in the instruction of local cultural activities as they are trained in an exogenous culture.

14 Rosana Rosbong, a VITE trainee, posing with reef fish and crabs during a fishing competition with bows and arrows, Constitution Day, 2007. © Patrick Rory

15 VITE trainees dancing with bows, arrows, and spears at Mangaliliu Village. © Patrick Rory

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Nabobo-Baba, Unaisi (AEAIK; Fiji) Dr. Nabobo-Baba’s varied career as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher, and scholar spans twenty-eight years across Fiji and the wider Pacific region. She is currently Associate Professor in Education and Chair of the University of Guam’s Institutional Research Review Board (IRB). With a PhD in Indigenous Knowledge and Epistemology, Dr. Nabobo-Baba has authored over a hundred articles, books, and other professional development materials as well as reports, curriculum components, and peer-reviewed papers and presentations. Among these accomplishments, she has done reviews for five journals over the last ten years and is currently the editor for Micronesian Educator. Dr. Nabobo-Baba has won numerous educational and research awards both nationally and internationally for her involvement in being a national K-12 English examiner in Fiji, researching delivery of grants/international aid to Pacific schools, and, in particular, doing evaluative research on how donor monies drive curriculum content, examination, and other forms of educational assessment.

Nagaoka, Takuya (CA; FSM) Dr. Nagaoka is a Research Associate at The Paleological Association of Japan, Inc. and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland. After earning a bachelor degree in Archaeology at University of Hiroshima, his involvement in Pohnpei began with his JOCV volunteer service at the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office from 1991 to 1994. In addition to archaeological and ethnomusicological research, his efforts continued to preserve oral traditions in Pohnpei and Mwoakilloa during his postgraduate studies at University of Auckland, where he received a PhD degree in Anthropology in 2012, based on his

archaeological investigations in the Roviana region, Solomon Islands. In 2014, he took the initiative in founding the NGO, Pasifika Renaissance (serving as Representative Director), which endeavors to preserve and promote cultural and historical heritage in the Pacific islands to facilitate islanders' efforts toward the revival of their traditional cultures.

Navila, Vilimaina (CA; Fiji) Ms. Navila is pursuing doctoral studies and is part of the teaching faculty for the general course, Pacific Worlds, at the University of the South Pacific. She belongs to the chiefly clan of Nasau in Fiji's Ra Province. A secondary school teacher by profession, she has researched and presented on "Pacific consciousness advocacy with the motive of enhancing cultural sustainability to future Pacific leaders."

Nemani, Sipiriano (CA; Fiji) Mr. Nemani is currently the Principal Policy & Conventions Officer at the Department of Heritage and Arts in Fiji. An anthropologist by profession, he has researched and published in the areas of intangible cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural mapping. Mr. Sipiriano belongs to the traditional kingmakers or steward chief clan of the people of Nayavavasea in Bua Province.

Niles, Don (CA; PNG) Dr. Niles is the acting director and senior ethnomusicologist of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, where he has worked since 1979. He is interested in research and publications on all types of music and dance in Papua New Guinea, including traditional, popular, and Christian forms. The author/editor of numerous books, articles, and audiovisual publications on various aspects of music, dance, and archiving, Don also edits the Institute's music monograph series (*Apwitihire: Studies in Papua New Guinea Music*) and journal (Kulele: Occasional Papers in *Pacific Music and Dance*). He is Vice President of the International Council for Traditional Music and former editor of their journal, the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*.

Park, Seong-Yong (EB; Korea) Dr. Park is currently the Assistant Director-General of ICHCAP, Adjunct Professor of the School of Cultural Convergence at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, and Expert Advisor for the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea. He earned his PhD in Heritage Studies at the University of Queensland in Australia and is the author of *On Intangible Heritage Safeguarding Governance: An Asia-Pacific Context* (2013). He was a senior researcher at the College of Culture, Arts and Media at Griffith University in Australia from 2004 to 2006. He also participated as a government expert in the Intergovernmental Working Meetings of UNESCO during the drafting of the 2003 Convention and has conducted various research and policy-based projects in the cultural heritage field.

Pole, Finau Savelio (CA; Tonga) Mr. Pole resides in Longoteme, Tonga. He is the former Chief Agronomist of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (MAFF), where he worked for thirty years on crops research in MAFF's Research Division. He currently works as an agricultural consultant for regional organizations like the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Rehuher-Marugg, Faustina K. (AEAIK, CA; Palau) Ms. Rehuher-Marugg has more than three decades of experience in the development of Palauan arts, culture, and history. Her knowledge and skills in the fields of museology, anthropology, arts, natural history, and Pacific studies have contributed to the preservation, development, and promotion of Palau's natural, cultural, and historical heritage in the Pacific region. Ms. Rehuher-Marugg served as head of the Republic of Palau Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs from 2009 to 2012, following her tenure as director and curator of the Belau National Museum for over thirty years. She was a recipient of the Micronesian Area Research Center Award from the University of Guam for her research work in the region and served as a founder of numerous cultural bodies regionally and internationally. She has published and presented professional papers over a wide region and, as an artist, has documented Palau's oral history for many years.

Rory, Patrick (CA; Vanuatu) Mr. Rory has worked as a Francophone social sciences trainer at the Vanuatu Institute of Teachers Education since February 2014. He is interested in French literature, Oceanic linguistics, and Vanuatuan anthropology in general and has been the author of numerous educational resources published by the Vanuatu Curriculum Development Center since 1990. Mr. Rory also collaborates with the Vanuatu Kaljurol Senta in translating resources concerning oral literature from Bislama or English to French; for this institution, he also develops resources for teaching and learning *sandroing blong Vanuatu* to help promote this cultural heritage in schools. In 2013, his latest work, *L'Art de l'éphémère* was published by Editions VKS and Pacifique Dialogue and is available at http://vanuatuculturalcentre.vu/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Lart-de-l%C3%A9ph%C3%A9m%C3%A8re.pdf.

Sevudredre, Simione (CA; Fiji) Mr. Sevudredre hails from the Dere Clan in Fiji's Tailevu Province. While playing an active role in the revitalization of his people's cultural affairs, Mr. Sevudredre is also pursuing an MA in Pacific Studies from the University of the South Pacific, dealing with the integration of relevant iTaukei values and ethics into modern society. A secondary school teacher by profession, he has taught in various schools around Fiji, after which he joined Fiji Television, Ltd., producing a weekly documentary on indigenous intangible cultural heritage. He is currently the Senior Researcher in the area of language at the iTaukei Institute of Language & Culture under the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.

Simet, Jacob Lengangar (CA; PNG) Dr. Simet was born on Matupit Island in Papua New Guinea's East New Britain Province. He completed primary and secondary education in Rabaul. In 1975, he received a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Papua New Guinea,

going on to obtain a PhD from the Australian National University in Canberra. In 1986, Dr. Simet returned to PNG to become the Director of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. He joined the National Research Institute, and in 1993 he was appointed Executive Director of the National Cultural Commission, a position he still holds. Simet's involvement in intangible cultural heritage stems from his interest in and respect for his own Tolai cultural background. Over the years he has pursued the protection and safeguarding of the indigenous PNG cultures, holding the view that ICH developed over millennia and should be safeguarded for those who come after us.

Singeo, Ann Kloulechad (CA; Palau) Ms. Singeo holds an MA in Communication for Social Change from the University of Texas at El Paso. In addition to working within both Palau and the Pacific region as a consultant, a Palauan government representative, and a member of civil society organizations, she has published on Palauan culture and nature with UNESCO, EIU, and the Secretariat for the Pacific Communities. Singeo has twelve years' experience in Palau Public Health, where she served as Executive Director for Community Health, and is the former Chief of the Gender Division within the Ministry of Community and Culture. A strong gender equality advocate, she has actively advocated for women in Congress. Since her group began promoting women in politics, the number of women in Palau's upper house has increased from zero to three. She is also the founder and current director of Ebiil Society, a civil society organization for "education of indigenous knowledge towards environmental protection."

Takahashi, Akatsuki (EB; Samoa) Dr. Takahashi, with a BA in International Relations from Tsuda College, Tokyo; a Diploma in Education from the International Christian University, Tokyo; a PhD in Cultural Heritage Risk Management from Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, has been the Programme Specialist for Culture at the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States in Apia, Samoa, since January 2010. She is in charge of the Culture Programme for sixteen Member States and one Associate Member of UNESCO in the Pacific with a focus on promoting and implementing UNESCO Conventions in the field of heritage and creativity. Previously, she was at the Executive Office of the Culture Sector at UNESCO Headquarters (2001–2009), UNESCO Office in Beijing (April–July 2004), UNESCO Office in Venice (1998-2001), and the Secretariat for the World Decade for Cultural Development (1989–1998) at the Culture Sector of UNESCO Headquarters. Before joining UNESCO in 1989, she worked at the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (1986–1989) in Tokyo as a Programme Manager.

Tamata, Apolonia (EB, Fiji) Dr. Tamata is a linguist and achieved an MA in Linguistics from the University of Hawai'i and a PhD in Linguistics at the University of the South Pacific. She currently fills the position of Senior Culture and Heritage Specialist at the iTaukei Trust Fund Board in Fiji. She is a key player in the effort to promote Fijian language, culture, and heritage. An educator, researcher, and playwright, she has been a lecture in Pacific Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of the South Pacific and a researcher for the Fijian monolingual dictionary.

Taumoepeau, Viliami 'Unga Afuha'amango (CA; Tonga) Mr. Taumoepeau is a retired mathematics teacher and school administrator in the LDS Church Education System in Tonga, where he served as Academic Vice Principal, Principal, and Coordinator of Religious Studies. He was the first manager of the Tonga National Centre from 1988 to 1999. His great love of music, dancing, and the performing arts was fostered at the Polynesian Cultural Center, where he served as a theatre performer, tour supervisor, and village manager for ten years. Mr. Taumoepeau has distinguished himself as a *punake* (a poet, choreographer, and musician) in his own right and has been involved in various government and non-government initiatives for the preservation and perpetuation of Tongan culture and performing arts, especially the *lakalaka*. Educated at Brigham Young University-Hawaii, Viliami currently holds the traditional chiefly title 'Mohulamu Fua'amotu.'

Tellames, Lynda D. (CA; Palau) Ms. Tellames has been the staff historian at the Bureau of Arts and Culture/Palau Historical Preservation Office (BAC/HPO) under the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs for over twenty-two years. Ms. Tellames works closely with sixteen members of the Society of Historians representing each of the sixteen states of Palau. She collects and documents oral histories to ensure that traditional knowledge and skills are recorded for future generations. Ms. Tellames also produces and reviews written materials on Palauan traditional and customary practices, including traditional Palauan laws and their underlying principles.

Tellei, Julita (CA; Palau) Ms. Tellei is a retired health administrator and planner with twenty years of government service in the Palauan health sector. She is co-founder and director of the Palau Resource Institute (PRI), contributing to innovative and balanced development of Palau since 1990, as well as co-founder and former director of the Palau Conservation Society, a premier conservation organization in Palau and the region. She is an oral historian in Palauan culture, history, and tradition by interest, family, and clan affiliation, with twenty years' experience documenting alongside archaeologists. Ms. Tellei's current activities include membership in five regional women's organizations, participation in religious groups, and full immersion in family, lineage, and clan activities. She is involved in several projects with the Palau Resource Institute, including restoration and management of mesei/taro field resources, health-related social science research, and oral history documentation.

Tellei, Patrick (CA; Palau) Dr. Tellei has been the president of Palau Community College since 1999. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of San Diego. Dr. Tellei is the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Palau International Coral Reef Center, a position he held for thirteen years, going back to the center's creation. In terms of his experience with the Palauan *bai* about which he writes, under the tutelage of his late father, Adlebairureor Ubal Tellei, Dr. Tellei worked on the construction of Bai Melekeong in Melekeok in 1983 and Bai er a Keai in Aimeliik in 1988. He further worked at Bai er a Klobak in Koror in 2007 with his brother and helped to repair Bai er a Keai in Aimeliik together with NgaraOsichii, the young men's group of Ngerubesang, in 2010 and 2013.

Winduo, Steven Edmund (CA; PNG) Dr. Winduo, a Papua New Guinean writer/scholar, is a senior lecturer and the director of the Academic Audit Unit at the University of Papua New Guinea. He is a graduate of the same university as well as of the University of Canterbury and the University of Minnesota. Winduo held the Arthur Lynn Andrews Chair in Pacific and Asian Studies in the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawaii and was a visiting scholar at the East-West Center within the Pacific Islands Development Program. He served as a visiting professor in the University of Minnesota's Department of English, as a research scholar with the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Canterbury, and as the foundation director of Melanesian and Pacific Studies at the University of Papua New Guinea. Publications include: *Lomo'ha I am, in Spirit's Voice I Call* (1991), *Hembemba: Rivers of the Forest* (2000), *A Rower's Song* (2009), *Detwan How?* (2012), *The Unpainted Mask* (2010), and *Transitions and Transformations: Literature, Politics and Culture in PNG (2013)*

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