

I . Background

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is composed of four individual states: Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae. Each of these states has unique characteristics. While the national government of the FSM oversees the relationship of the four states with the international community, it does not directly govern the individual states, instead it only provides advice. The result is that each state is its own autonomous entity that should be viewed individually.

The modern political boundaries between these states, however, were not developed strictly according to traditional boundaries. The result is that in some cases such as between Yap and Chuuk, the modern political boundaries appears to be quite arbitrary. The islands of Satawal, Puluwat, and Pulap lie on opposite sides of that political boundary but are culturally linked. In other cases, such as the outer islands of Pohnpei, the atolls of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi are Polynesian outliers with unique characteristics compared to the atolls of Mwokil and Pingelap.

Nevertheless, all Pacific Islands show some similar characteristics. All at one time used sailing canoes though the exact construction may differ according to specifics such as how the outrigger is connected to the canoe they all follow a similar basic design across Micronesia. The first and greatest challenge, then, of any attempt at a comprehensive field survey of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the FSM is to break the larger region of many tiny islands into individual cultural regions in order to define the particular examples of ICH within those regions and to understand how these cultural regions align to the political states.

Island Regions

The island of Yap shows greater similarity to the neighboring island nation of Palau than it does to any other island in the FSM. For example, a trans-boundary World Heritage nomination is currently being developed between the two islands for the stone money found on Yap and the quarries from which it was carved on Palau. Both islands are believed to have been settled 3500 years ago, as were

their northern neighboring islands of the Marianas based on language similarities (Intoh 1997). However, all of the islands to the east of Yap were not settled until 1600 years later according to current radiocarbon dates for Pohnpei (Athens 1990a, Galipaud 2001) and Kosrae (Athens 1990b, 1995). For many hundreds of miles all of these islands are low-lying atolls which were not inhabitable until the time of their settlement 1900 years ago due to changes in sea-level. Over time these atolls were incorporated into the traditional political system of Yap in the form of the Sawei exchange network. This history created the distinct cultures that are now found between Yap and its outer islands.

The volcanic islands of Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae were also not settled until 1900 years ago. While these islands would have been habitable before this time it seems that it was only after the settlement of the surrounding atolls, which served as stepping stone islands, that the islands were first discovered and colonized by Pacific Islanders. While, the initial colonizing population has been archaeologically identified as being similar to those people that settled the atolls over the following centuries the islands have developed their own unique cultures over time and have experienced even greater change in recent history.

Pohnpei and Kosrae appear to have once been linked together by a common traditional political system accounting for the common monumental architectural seen on both islands at Nan Madol on Pohnpei and Lelu on Kosrae. These two sites show great similarities. They are both ceremonial centers where religious rituals took place. They are fortified cities where the high-ranked people of the island lived including the single paramount chief the Saudeleur in Pohnpei and the Tokosra in Kosrae. Both islands show an ancient use of the plant *Piper methysticum*, called sakau in Pohnpei, once called seka in Kosrae, and known as kava throughout Polynesia. However, the site of Nan Madol was abandoned roughly 500 years ago when it was conquered by the mythical figure Isokelekel and replaced by a more decentralized two-chief system that exists today with the Nahmwarki and Nahnken. In contrast, Lelu was still alive when Europeans first arrived in the 1820s and the Tokosra system was only abandoned in the late 1930s. However, the effect of the 1850s smallpox epidemic which killed over 90% of the population and the subsequent missionization in the following decades had the greatest effect on the traditional culture of Kosrae. Today, no one drinks seka and some even claim that it was never drunk by ancient Kosraeans, while it is still consumed in Pohnpei with strict ritual protocol.

Languages

The full extent of cultural diversity throughout the FSM is best understood from the language diversification. The majority of languages, with Yapese being the

only exception, fall into the nuclear Micronesian subgroup. Each specific language represents a unique culture, while the those languages that show greater relationships represent cultures from similar ancestral groups that have similar cultural traits that can be grouped together. The greatest shared relationship is held by outer islands who maintained greater contact among themselves over time. Therefore while each of these outer islands may be viewed as individual cultures it is more pragmatic to address them as a group as described above.

Many of these languages specifically those found on the outer islands have less than 1,000 speakers. In July 2013, the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages held a workshop in Pohnpei covering various technologies with which the endangered languages of the FSM could be recorded. Nine talking dictionaries were created during the workshop with 12,000 lexical entries covering the languages of Pohnpei, Pingelap, Kapingamarangi, Nukuoro, Namoluk (dialect of the Mortlocks), Yap, Mwoakilloa, and Kosrae. Additionally, the team visited Mwoakilloa Atoll and conducted interviews about oral history, traditional foodways, fishing, canoe building and navigation. Mwoakilloa has a population of roughly 100 people making its language extremely vulnerable.

What is the Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage?

It is important to recognize what the value of intangible cultural heritage is and that such values may differ between the local people who are said to own it and the world which serves to benefit from it. For the local population of these islands ICH represents their identity. For the people of Kosrae their identity is in large part defined by their relationship to the Church that has developed over the past 140 years, a fact that is shared by many Pacific Islands. However, the world community would likely not value this heritage as unique and it is certainly not in danger of being lost.

The world community is far more likely to value the ICH that can be linked to the ancient traditional culture before the influence of Europeans. This unique heritage that developed in semi-isolation has in many instances been lost or effected by the successive influences of Europeans common in the Micronesian region including the Germans, Japanese, and American occupations. However, such heritage that has persisted has only done so because of a deep-rooted attachment by the modern people. For Kosrae this would include ritual surrounding fafa pounding which the Kosraean people also find highly-valuable to their identity. This survey will therefore focus on ICH that is valued by both the local and world populations in order to limit the scope of the survey.

The End of the Compact of Free Association

The financial component of the Compact of Free Association between the FSM and the United States of America is scheduled to end in 2023. Currently, the majority of government funding for the FSM depends on the Compact. Between that time and the present the financial allotment will gradually decrease, placing an increasing level of pressure upon the FSM to find new forms of revenue. Tourism has been proposed as the most viable sector for the FSM to expand its growth. The wealth of unique ICH in FSM offers a resource by which to promote future tourism opportunities.

However, the fragile state of the FSM under the threat of the loss of its major funding source makes it vulnerable to large tourism companies that would seek to take advantage of it. Already, proposals by large tourism companies have been proposed which would minimize the profits being shared with FSM states and maximize the exploitation of the FSM's unique intangible cultural heritage. Further, the alternatives proposed for tourism within the FSM are few. It is important to find ways to safeguard the ICH of FSM before these large tourism companies take advantage of what has been passed down for generations. The effect of large-scale tourism may be seen in Guam where performances of local dances have been largely abandoned in favor of Polynesian style dances based on the preference of the Japanese tourist market.

The necessary alternative is for sustainable tourism to be developed which allows the local population to define their own Intangible Cultural Heritage and perform and retain it on their own terms. But what is 'sustainable tourism'? In many cases it is characterized by a smaller number of tourists per year, roughly 50,000 for the entire nation as opposed to numbers in the millions. It is characterized by a specific type of tourist who is respectful of the culture and who is willing to learn and follow cultural protocol. It is characterized by tourists who recognize exhibitions of ICH as part of a modern, living culture rather than a performance solely for their entertainment. However, the regulations necessary to ensure that tourism remains sustainable are harder to define - a challenge that UNESCO and the FSM will face in the coming years.

ICH in the Strategic Development Plan

Strategic Development plans have been completed for the FSM national government, Pohnpei, and Kosrae. These development plans set goals for the development of the state and national economies in preparation for the end of the financial component of the Compact of Free Association.

The Pohnpei Strategic Development Plan places particular importance on the development of heritage tourism under the “World Park” model which views Pohnpei as a living park in which its natural and cultural resources should be protected and shared with the world. It focuses on a sustainable level of development on a smaller scale so as to protect the cultural traditions.

The FSM Strategic Development Plan provides a thorough review of the tourist numbers for the nation. The number of tourist across the nation has not exceeded 20,000 and struggled to stay at this level and has generally fallen while tourist numbers elsewhere in the Pacific are rising. Thus, a poor global economy can not be blamed.

The estimated hotel capacity at 65% occupancy would allow for 42,000 visitors and so the shortfall can neither be blamed on a lack of hotel space. The potential for tourism is great within the FSM. It has rich marine and terrestrial environments as well as historical and cultural features found no where else. It is clear that the lack of tourism is due to the under-development of its potential.

In all strategic development plans for the FSM tourism is a major sector to be developed. The inventory of ICH may be utilized as a marketing tool for this development while at the same time helping to ensure its protection. Thus, the continued protection of ICH should be seen as a means of promoting tourism and the economy rather than a hindrance. The development of performances and events for the tourist sector should be accompanied by ICH inventories to prove the sustainability of the investor, much in the same way that historic preservation laws require the cultural resources to be documented before building projects commence by section 106 standards.

Cultural Events

Event	Description	Coordinating Agency
Yap Day	traditional dances, and displays of skills	Yap HPO and Yap Visitor’s Bureau
Canoe Festival	canoe races and parades	Yap HPO and Yap Visitor’s Bureau
Chuuk Cultural Day	traditional dances, and displays of handicrafts	

Event	Description	Coordinating Agency
Pohnpei Cultural Day	traditional dances, and displays of handicrafts	Pohnpei HPO and Pohnpei Visitor's Bureau
Kosrae Cultural Fair	parade of floats displaying traditional villages, traditional farmers competition	Kosrae HPO and Kosrae Visitor's Bureau
Festival of Pacific Arts	cultural event for over 20 different island nations occurring every 4 years	National Archives, Culture, and Historic Preservation Office (NACH)
Micronesian and FSM Games	competitions of traditional skills and displays of traditional culture in opening ceremonies	

Each of the states has an annual cultural day that is largely coordinated by the state's historic preservation office and the state visitor's bureau. These events generally occur over a two day period and include traditional performances of songs and dance in traditional dress, displays of traditional skills, handicrafts, and artifacts. These cultural day festivals have a long history and are well integrated into the annual events. Generally, these cultural days take one to two months of preparation by the different performing groups to ensure their event occurs without fail. They are exciting events for the local participants and the tourists fortunate enough to be there at the time, though advertising of the event outside the island is very limited.

Yap has recently created an additional cultural event, a canoe festival that concentrates more specifically on its heritage of canoe sailing. The incorporation of this additional event shows movement in a positive direction towards creating more displays of intangible cultural heritage.

The Micronesian and FSM Games include competitions in traditional sports such as spearfishing, canoe racing, coconut husking, tree climbing, and other such events. The games are also accompanied by opening ceremonies in which displays of the traditional culture play a large role. Smaller competitions may also

occur on individual islands at different times of the year. Like the cultural day events these games require one or two months of training beforehand.

The FSM did not participate in the 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara and maintains only irregular participation in the festival. The cost of travel is a major impediment to participation as is the diversity of culture within the FSM. With so many potential groups capable of representing the FSM it is difficult to choose one particular group and exclude another, an act that would show disrespect to whoever was excluded. The cost of supporting groups from every island then becomes very expensive. It is perhaps more feasible for each individual state to represent themselves and avoid the all or nothing conundrum. The next Pacific Arts Festival will be held in Guam in 2016 much closer to the FSM which should reduce the cost of travel and allow for greater participation.

Government and Community Groups and Programs

Program	Description	state
Wa`agey	traditional sailing club	Yap
Living History Museum	traditional village for community events	Yap
Island Food Community of Pohnpei	supports the continued use of traditional foods to preserve a healthy diet	Pohnpei
Kapingamarangi wood carvers	handicrafts manufacture	Pohnpei
Micronesian Seminar at Xavier High School	library of Micronesian history	Chuuk
Kosrae Museum	Museum of historic artifacts	Kosrae

The table above includes only a sample of the major programs engaged in the preservation of culture. Smaller organizations may be added to this including women's groups, youth groups, and senior citizens groups that are found on each of the main islands and many of the outer islands. Women's groups commonly help to produce traditional clothing, especially in Yap. Senior citizens groups are often gone to for information on oral history. Youth groups often perform the dances. On outer islands such groups may exist informally. Therefore a complete list would be extensive.

From the table above though one will see that on Yap and Kosrae currently maintain museums, though the Micronesian Seminar may be seen as a sort of museum for Chuuk. Lacking then is a state museum for Pohnpei, which once existed but was dismantled during the creation of the tuna commission, and a national museum. The creation of a national museum in Palikir, Pohnpei near to the national College of Micronesia campus is advisable. The materials formerly held in the Pohnpei state museum, formerly known as the Lidorkini museum, could be moved to these facilities. If the facilities could provide the modern standard for curation artifacts from over-seas museums could be repatriated once the necessary legislation had been passed. Draft legislation created by the UN exists to help expedite this process.