

VI. Pending Issues & Urgent Needs

A complete mapping of Palau's intangible cultural heritage and the development of a plan as a result of the mapping is necessary for appropriate actions in safeguarding the countries heritage.

Traditional Performance Art

Although performance arts are witnessed during ceremonies or National cultural events, the art is not regularly taught to the younger generation and remain vulnerable with time and social change. Younger Palauans have the ability to choreograph contemporary Palauan dance at any moment given compared to the traditional Palauan dance where without the elder members, such a dance is difficult to organize. The older dance and chants are not commonly known to the adult generation and is at risk of being lost completely. Belau National Museum and Bureau of Arts and Culture hold collection of many of the chants and dances on audio, video, and digital recordings necessary for strengthening and promotion of the heritage. Palauan performance art is not taught in any formalized institution, instead it is only taught when and during cultural events requiring presentation from the various States of Palau. At current there is very little choreograph of Palauan dance and chants. Even for those few who do choreograph chants and dance, the sophistication in lyrics is quite lacking in comparison to those from the earlier times.

1. Chants of various types
Esols, Delang, Rebetii, Kerrekord, Kesekes, Beritotou, Boid, Omengerdakl
Digital recordings and documentation by Barbara Smith and Yamaguchi exist in the Belau National Museum.
2. Dances of various types for both male and female:
Video recordings of the various cultural events exist in the Bureau of Arts and Culture collection

Male

- *Ruk- Ruk* or male dance is the name of the art of entertainment in which there are four segments to the complete art (Society of Historians 2002).
 - *Ongurs*- Entry segment
 - *Kedul a Ruk/ Dereder er a Ruk*- Performance description segment
 - *Oruidel / Delal a Ruk*- Main performance, describing a historical event provoking a village performance art
 - *Etakl el tet*- Closing performance
- *Oeang*- *Oeang* is not for entertainment as it is a war preparation dance

Female

- *Ngloik*- A female performance dance with 4 components as well (Society of Historians 2002).
- *Ocharo*- Entry segment
- *Delala Ngloik or Ulerratel*- Main performance describing historical event or a symbol of village pride
- *Lild/ Bruchel*- Description and praise for the current celebration or event at which their participating
- *Ocharo*- Exit segment, where they dance their way out the stage
- *Osako*- A female greeting dance between Klechedaol or village allies ceremony or event, where visiting group upon arrival will dance their way into the village and the host will greet them with a receiving dance.
- *Beruadel*- Seated performance dance exchange between Klechedaol or village allies.



Ocharo- entry segment to women's dance;
Source: Lorenza Ise



Delal a Ngloik or Ulleratel- main performance
describing a historical event or village pride
Source: Blekuu Sebal



main performance
Source: Lorenza Ise



Lild/Bruchel- description and praise for the current
celebration or event of participation
Source: Blekuu Sbal

3. Traditional Performance Art Accessories/ ornaments

Most of the listed ornament and accessories exist in the Belau National Museum in material, process documentation, digital photo, and at times video.

- Paddle
- Body Decorations and Art using turmeric
- Fiber or grass skirts designs for individual clans
- Beattlenut bag for male dancers for a particular part of the dance
- Various types of belt designs for women fiber or grass skirts

4. Indigenous Architecture / Designs

- *Bai*- Meeting house for the Chiefs, village center. There are at current only 5 traditional architectural designs of Chief Houses existing in Palau. The Bai served as the central public decision making house, where the villagers would gather for public events, and also served as a treasure house for the villages' valued heritage of oral history and sacred stones or symbols.
- *Diangel*- Boat house, carving house, fishing gear house
- Men would gather at the Diangel to plan fishing trips, to carve while awaiting returning fishers, plan community work, work on canoes, and share ocean stories.
- *Blai*- Traditional dwelling, design and planning has been replaced by western designs and lack the planning that incorporates the harmonizing or Earth's energy within the floor plan.
- *Mlai*- Canoes of all types used for traveling, for fishing, for cargo, for war, and for racing. The art of canoe building is almost gone with the advancement of motor boat use in Palau. Along with the art of canoe building, the art of sailing and navigating is barely in existence. At current the only canoes in existence are either models or remnants of cultural events.

5. Traditional Games

- *Kedam*- Kite flying is no longer a village event and kite enthusiasm purchase from stores. Kite making together with the flying competition was a complete heritage of its own that has been eliminated from today's sporting event.
- *Omlutek*- Outrigger racing was last witnessed in the 60's and has been replaced by motor boat speed racing.

There are multiple reasons for Palau's intangible cultural heritage threat of disappearing or being endangered. Aside from the social changes influencing behaviors and practices of cultures, the knowledge is not being passed on in any formal manner. While the social events which required frequent use of the knowledge have diminished, the current school systems have not integrated cultural heritage knowledge and practices in institutions that may help to ensure its continuity. As such any plans or policies to ensure continuity of the heritage is lacking. Except for a few policies here and there regarding its documentation and protection very little is in place for its promotion and continuity in Palau's society. In order for Palau to take on the preservation of its cultural heritage into the next generation it must prioritize its promotion and education by developing National policies that will provide means to institutionalizing its passage. This means that a complete mapping of its intangible cultural heritage must be conducted in order to identify its current situation and prioritize its actions based on the level of need. For instance, those which have become endangered, at risk of becoming endangered, and those maintained that need protection. This is an area that will require Palau to seek assistance from the international community for safeguarding cultural heritage and education for assistance in financial and technical resources needed for ensuring the complete situation analysis and in developing a plan to ensure safeguarding and promotion of its heritage. This will ensure the continuity of Palau's culture, its integrity, and the identity of the people in the global community. The collection of the pictures below shows the cultural materials as a result of an intangible cultural heritage, or as materials used as part of a cultural expression within an intangible cultural heritage.



Palauan bead money container
Source: Belau National Museum



Wooden Bowl for Medicine
Source: Belau National Museum



Wooden drink container
Source: Belau National Museum



Wooden Platter with Shells
Source: Belau National Museum



Dilukai, Human figures
Source: Belau National Museum

The above pictorial samples of Palau's carving exist mainly within the elder members of society or few individuals who are self-taught and rely on its sales for income. The art of carving within the younger generation is barely covering the full extent of Palau's wood carving and largely concentrated in story board carvings which were introduced by Japanese artists, namely Hizikata Hishikatsu, which was adopted from the Bai or Chiefs House beam carving as historical documentation for the villages.

Below picture set shows architectural designs of certain public structures of which the knowledge is at an endangered level and will require aggressive approach to saving it from disappearing. At this point only one man's groups from Melekeok State, namely Ngaramecherocher remain to practice the knowledge in Palau.



Diangel or Boat House
in Ollei, Ngarchelong
Source: Ebiil Society
and Belau National



Bai er a Ngesechel a
Cherchar, Belau
National Museum
Source: Ann Singeo



Inside the Bai or Chiefs House
Source: Ann Singeo



Outrigger Canoe from Sonsorol
Source: Ann Singeo

Below set of pictures show a traditional men's dance and the various component to the attire worn during performance. The traditional dance is referred to as "Ruk," in the section of the narrative on performance art. The art is rarely witnessed today partly due to limited knowledge holders or experts, lack of education medium, and lack of promotion. As such the integrity of the art is endangered as many of those performed are merely for tourist shows and without much regard to the arts complete representation, sophistication, and in maintaining its integrity.



Men's Dance
Source: Joyce Beouch



Bamboo Lime Container
Source: Belau National Museum



Beattlenut Bag
Source: Belau National Museum

The above picture of bamboo lime container and the beattlenut bag are used as accessories for the last segment the men's dance. The last segment is hardly performed within the complete performance set these days, and the lime container used as accessory is also an extinct material only existing as part of Belau National Museum's collection. "Etakl el tet," as explained in the previous description is where the men would hold their beattlenut bag on one hand and the bamboo lime holder on the other as performance accessories.

The next set of pictures show the various weaving existing within Palauan culture. Although weaving as knowledge is maintained in our society, many of the designs for the various usages are at risk of being lost as much transformation is taken place adopting to outside influence and less utilization within the livelihood. Belau National Museum led a project on the documentation and training of weaving several years back but, had to discontinue after funds were exhausted. Past effort has been made to include into school settings, but without much success towards continuity.



Baskets made of coconut leaf fronds
Source: Ann Singeo



Baskets made from coconut leaf
Source: Ann Singeo



Pillow made from pandanus leaf
Source: Belau National Museum



Blanket woven with pandanus leaf
Source: Belau National Museum



Mat woven with coconut leaf
Source: Ann Singeo



Fish Trap woven with mangrove roots
Source: Belau National Museum

The next collection of pictures shows various components to the maternal and child healing and celebration cultural practice referred to as “Ngasech.” This is one practice that still holds strong, but can be compromised with the threat of changing natural habitats as development takes precedence. As mentioned earlier it is a lineage property and passes on to the next generation through women only, as a women’s wellness knowledge. The pictures reflect the various ways the knowledge is expressed by different lineages.



New mother preparing for the celebration ceremony
Source: Ann Singeo



New Mother walks out to the center for the celebration to begin
Source: Ann Singeo

Medicinal Preparation



Training a young apprentice,
Tasia Llecholech
(Knowledge holder,
84 yrs)
Source: Ann Singeo



Various
medicinal plants
Source: Ann Singeo



Boiling herbal medicine for treatment of a mother
Source: Ann Singeo



Ground turmeric
Source: Ann Singeo



Boiling turmeric with coconut oil
Source: Ann Singeo



Medicinal Leaf and coconut shell scooper
Source: Ann Singeo



Hot bath process
Source: Ann Singeo



Hot bath with herbal medicine process
Source: Ann Singeo



Mother and child in beattlenut leaf pouch after hot bath

Source: Ann Singeo

The practice of mother and child -healing and celebration is perhaps one of the intangible cultural heritages that has continued and survived through several colonialism and today's western influence. While others may argue that the practice has changed drastically, this is mostly witnessed at the superficial level particularly during the celebration. What was once a private and sacred moment for the mother and child has transformed into a huge celebration for the community and to the traditional women this is taboo. On the other, inter sacredness remains within the treatment and healing process as a secret heritage

safeguarded by the lineage. Palauan women who live abroad in other countries of the world, remain to honor the practice as a women prestige and continue to return home for the treatment after child birth elsewhere. While the medicine and the celebration captures most of what may seem to represent the practice and knowledge, it is the bonding and caretaking between the women members of the family that provides for the support a new mother needs as part of her psychological and spiritual healing. While mothers go through the healing process others provide care of her baby and relieve her from any work for the duration of the treatment which can last up to 2 weeks or longer, depending on the family. Female members of her family will remain with her for as long as she needs the support. These are the unspoken and unrecognized value to the practice that continue to create special bond between women in families and protect women from postnatal traumas experienced after giving birth in places where women give birth alone.

Sports and Games

Palauan sport and games is another area where we have completely lost the practices and most of the knowledge is left to a few. Without the necessary effort to preserve the knowledge through promotion, and with the influence of the Olympics and international sports federations dictating the types of sports to train young people in, Palau will surely lose the knowledge. From interviews with local experts and knowledge holders, two of the major traditional sports which are no longer witnessed in Palau are kite flying and outrigger sailing competitions.

These competitions were big events in communities that could last for long period, especially kite flying that are known to last for at least a month at a time. Women and men would harvest and prepare food for the event. Taro would be buried in the grounds for preservation of freshness, while fish is smoked so the entire community can participate without having to go back to harvesting and fishing. Below are pictures of the cultural materials used for the mentioned sporting games.

Outrigger competition would be held between villages and could also last for many days. Feasts are also prepared and dances performed during the evenings as part of the event. On a smaller scale, outrigger racing was a young men's sport that could be playfully conducted at any time while men sit at the "Diangel," or

boat house as spectators to spontaneous races. The competition also provided showcasing of the carvers with the engineering accuracy for speed and beauty.



Square kite made of leaf and bamboo
Source: Belau National Museum



Diamond shape kite made of leaf and bamboo
Source: Belau National Museum



String made from coconut fiber
Source: Belau National Museum