

INTRODUCTION

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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

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