

Notes on Clan Histories and Migration in Micronesia¹

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Abstract

Clan histories in Micronesia provide a rich source of indigenous information that helps us to explain and understand the movement and migration of islanders from the pre-historic to the present times. This information is usually kept, transmitted and when necessary disseminated by specialists and title-holders of clans as a means of explaining present day political and land-holding constellations. It is therefore of great importance to Micronesians and also provides insight into the settlement and “unsettlement” patterns of the Micronesian islands and shows how these islands were connected (or disconnected). Methodologically, the ethnographic data collected and presented will complement linguistic and archaeological findings in an attempt to expand the picture we have of settlement patterns in Micronesia. The focus here will be more on the Chuukic speaking people, their clan names and histories, which “constitute the largest region of cognate matrilineal or patrilineal clan names in Oceania” (Marck 2009: 1). The paper will also show - even beyond language boundaries - how some clans in Micronesia are connected through a common history and ancestry.

Introduction

This paper presents a first feeble step in an attempt to write an indigenous history of the people in Micronesia who are of Chuukic origin. As we unearth the roots of these clans, we will expose some of the routes they took as they populated their current homelands scattered over 2,200 km of open-ocean from the southern atolls of today’s Republic of Palau to Satowan Atoll in southern Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia. This can only be done in an exemplary fashion here, enough to uncover some of the guiding principles that drove the movement of these highly mobile people in the past.

Research for this project is in its beginning stages and was formally incepted in meetings and discussions with Francis Hezel SJ from the Micronesian Seminar and Augustine Kohler from the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office when I began work as the Consulting Cultural Anthropologist to the FSM in summer of 2009. The collection of data though actually began during my doctoral fieldwork in Chuuk and amongst Chuukese migrants to the USA between 2004-2007. It was through the study of adoption and the effects it had on the identity of informants that the importance of clan-membership and idealized blood ties as an underlying unifying psychological factor of persons in Micronesia emerged². Beyond the realm of the nuclear family and lineage providing individuals with a sense of security and belonging, the matri-clans of these highly mobile Chuukic speaking islanders were felt to provide this same sense of security and providence on a meta level, beyond just the local island or village of residence, uniting a network of persons over vast distances of open ocean. These people, when members of the same clan, all shared a common identity, an ideal sense of common origin and belonging together. This sense of belonging together has been perceived as being one of natural belonging and togetherness and is visibly demonstrated through the sharing, corporate holding, and use rights to the most important natural resources available such as land (islands) and reefs.

A brief illustration by Edwin Romolow, a Chuukese from Pwolowót Atoll will serve to illuminate this point:

A few years ago Edwin was accompanying the Sea Haven³ on a medical and supplies run to the remote islands between Chuuk and Yap. In the evening after a day of hard work of treating the sick on Falaalap Island on Woleai Atoll he suggested to the captain and their crew that they anchor off *his place* at an uninhabited island in Woleai Atoll (*Rawír*), which is located about 700 km west of *Pwolowót*, Edwin's home island. There they were able to relax and enjoy the fruits and serenity of the island. But towards sun-down they were surprisingly met and intimidated by a woman who approached them angrily and accused them of intruding on her property, asking who had given them the permission to just get off there?!

Edwin said he remained calm amid the accusations of trespassing and theft and when she was done with her accusations met her with a smile, "because I knew she was just testing me to see whether or not I knew my rights and linkages to the land or not" (Edwin Romolow). These linkages are established and maintained in kinship ties and Edwin went on to explain to the woman how they were related to each other by common descent and were both members of the same clan (*Pwéél*). Then all of a sudden the woman started laughing heartily and confirmed that she was just trying to test Edwin's knowledge of their kinship affiliation and their shared rights to land use and ownership on *Rawír* Island on the Atoll of Woleai. The intimidated bystanders who did not quite understand what was going on were then relieved when they learned, that the angry woman was only trying to play a practical joke on Edwin.⁴

It therefore comes as no surprise that Petersen concludes that "[f]undamental patterns of social organization, in particular the dispersed matrilineal clans with their localized, landowning lineages nested within them, are characteristic [...] of all these Micronesian peoples" (2009: 19). Petersen continues to say "by virtue of their unchallengeable membership in a lineage within a clan, individuals are free to move elsewhere [...] and claim as their birthright access to the land and labor of their fellow clan mates there" (2009: 22). This system of political and social organization is based on reciprocity and the obligation of clan mates to aid each other. With the ever-present potential for disaster through typhoons, any one group of persons may need to fall back on these lineage and clan connections for survival. For to arrive on an island without these kin connections, a person or group of persons might easily find itself as "supplicants" and "its members may be put to work in an inferior status, as quasi servants" (Petersen 2009: 22; Adams and Gibbons 1997: 37-38 and Smith 1983 for Palau).

Within Micronesia, linguists sometimes speak of the Chuukic continuum because the languages spoken on the southernmost atolls of the Republic of Palau (Tobi and Sonsorol) in the west and on to Yap and Chuuk in the east all belong to the Chuukic (formerly Trukic) family, which "range[s] from Tobi [Hatohobei], at about 131 degrees east longitude, across

approximately 1600 miles of the Pacific Ocean to Lukunor [the most southern island in the Mortlocks group], at about 154 degrees east longitude” (Jackson 1983:1; see also Bellwood 1979: 130; Metzgar 1991: 40ff). Today, artificially drawn political boundaries established during colonial times place Tobi in the Republic of Palau. Other islands such as Fais or the atolls of Ulithi, Ifaluk, Woleai, Lamotrek and Satowal are part of the State of Yap, Chuuk State’s westerly neighbor and one of the four states comprising the Federated States of Micronesia. In the past, pre-colonial times, there was frequent commerce and even ongoing warfare between the different Chuukic communities (Girschner 1912; Jackson 1983: 7; Gladwin 1970; Quakenbush 1968; Metzgar 1991: 43; Burrows and Spiro 1953). Because the Chuukic clans “constitute the largest region of cognate matrilineal or patrilineal clan names in Oceania” (Marck 2009: 1) spanning over 2,200 km of open ocean, their clan histories are a good vantage point for understanding movement patterns of people within and perhaps beyond Micronesia in prehistoric and pre-colonial times.

The Historicity of Data and Dates

Before we can move to the different indigenous historical accounts, the clan histories, genealogies, chants, songs, legends, and clans’ “lore of the land” we need to discuss the credibility of these varying bodies of data and their usefulness as historically relevant and containing accurate information. In this context, most historians when dealing with oral societies easily speak of mythohistory. While to a great extent the “myth” factor may be prevalent in a multitude of accounts such as in legends, we must be careful to consider the genres of the oral accounts being transmitted and collected. We do not want to prematurely discredit what information people have passed down from generation to generation in regard to their own history and events that have shaped the social structure of an island community to this day. There are many accounts from different sources of monumental events that took place on certain islands at one period in time. And by comparing these accounts and analyzing (sometimes competing) variation we can come to conclusions of historical value. In fact, the variation we sometimes find gives testimony to the historicity of such events. Where we do encounter difficulties is in the establishment of an exact linear time line of historical events. This is where the genealogies islanders have recorded and passed on to anthropologists and the courts become indispensable. They are usually accompanied by notes, on major events that took place during a named ancestor’s lifetime and allow for quite reliable information pertaining to the past 200-300 years. At this time the data I have been able to acquire is still much too fragmentary.⁵ So with the constrictions of space here, I will limit myself to some notes on clan histories and present some of the external and internal factors guiding this select number of clans’ routes of interisland travel and dispersion. Additional bodies of data resulting from research compiled by archaeologists, linguists, cultural anthropologists, historians, and other researchers in the region have been consulted for supporting purposes but are not the main focus (Kirch 2000; Rainbird 2004; Käser 1989; Reh 1995; Jackson and Marck 1991; Hezel 1983).

But probably the largest amount of data and bodies of knowledge that could advance and support our efforts here are most likely found in the archives of the courts. The Chuuk State Supreme Court (CSSC) probably holds the most valuable and complete collection of

ethnographic data on the lore of clans, their name changes, lore of the land with accounts of how the islands were populated, how a certain clan established ownership and title to land and who the people were that first settled in a certain place. It is in the courthouse that many of the major land disputes in post-war Chuuk have been dealt with and documented.⁶ Because in such disputes, both parties will usually bring in the *Itang* (“political priest”) and other specialists to testify to their own version of the history of the land and the attached titles of persons controlling the lands from past to present. For this purpose the CSSC had in place some judges who themselves have been or were specialists of the *Itang* lore and had to evaluate and discern between competing traditions.⁷ Goodenough (2002: 290-320; footnote 5) coins the *Itang* as “political priests” because they served in roles as religious as well as political leaders with specialized social and cultural knowledge directly under or alongside the chiefs who also heeded their advice and employed their skills as war strategists. Becoming an *Itang* involved a lifetime process of learning and memorizing specialized knowledge including genealogies, histories of clans and their land-holdings and land transactions over a number of generations. This body of knowledge was seen as most crucial to negotiations of peace and war, of maintaining and justifying networks of power and ownership of what people cherished the most: their own land, their clans substance and source of identity. Up until today, this type of knowledge was usually transferred to well trusted and gifted younger kin only. With the rise of the courts and their role in solving disputes in post war Micronesia, these clan histories, along with other bodies of knowledge, made it from private oral to public written record and will hopefully serve the purpose of reconstructing in part an indigenous history of the Chuukic speaking people.

Clan Histories

The story of Chuukic speaking persons’ clan histories is on the most part a story of mobility, of settlement and resettlement and of establishing a “home” or place one belongs to. Now one could infer from that, that this is proof that the population of the Chuukic speaking islands is of a rather recent date. For some clans, this may be true, but for others the powers of nature and human crisis of war have been what has driven people from one place to the next and kept people moving. This principle applies more to the general population of islanders inhabiting the small atolls compared to those residing on higher islands where more land was available. Being a seafaring people of course, mobility was inherent in everyday livelihood and sustenance. It was guided by a cultural principle: “Men move and women stay” which is one powerful explanation why they are socially organized and linked through clans that all trace their origin to a female ancestress.⁸ Altogether, the reasons for variation in clan names are plentiful and we will turn to some explanations below.

1. Explaining Variation of Clan Names: Some Examples

As a linguist, Jeff Marck (2009) looks at the antiquity of some clan names belonging to the Chuukic continuum. He explains their meaning and traces them back to Austronesian root words thereby analyzing the shift in speech and pronunciation. Very helpful are his select list of clan names and their dispersal from west to east. While this work presents a fundamental achievement it does have some limitations as it lacks the sufficient inclusion of the historical narrative of the clans themselves, including their own accounts of their origin and dispersal. It therefore overlooks how some clans and their names he discusses as independent clans are actually considered to be sub-clans of others' and at one point in time emerged from another clan. Many of these name changes took place when people moved from one locality to another, which is why the linguistic data must be complemented through added ethnographic evidence. As an anthropologist I have begun the task of collecting these narratives related to the name changes. Let me give one example here that shows how the reconstruction of proto Micronesian forms of clan names and their present day dispersal to select islands or atolls alone does not suffice to reconstruct a settlement pattern.

1.1. *Méngúnúfach*, *Pwee* and *Wuwáánikar*

Marck's short exposition on the clan called *Méngúnúfach* might be taken as a first example. Marck (2009: 2; 3; 15) lists the clan name of *Méngúnúfach*⁹ as originating in the west, "because sources ... to the east mention knowledge of the clan coming from the west and because the clan is very rare around the [Chuuk] lagoon and not reported at all in the Mortlocks, Unon or Murillo." He concludes that, "this is another clan name that we posit to have originated in the atolls of what is now Yap State (2009: 15)." This assumption stands in contrast to the narrative accounts of my informants from Pwolowót Atoll where the name occurs, the Chuuk Lagoon where it is very rare, and the Mortlock Islands (from west to east) where the name does not occur. All informants have been in agreement that the clan *Méngúnúfach* originally came out of (*pwuk seni*) or is the same as *Pwee* in the Chuuk Lagoon, which is called *Wuwáánikar* in the Mortlock islands.¹⁰ In Chuukese, *pwee* is a general term referring to divination and fortune telling, while *Méngúnúfach* refers to one of a number of kinds of knot divination practiced, the counting of Pandanus leaf-ribs. In analogy, my informants, especially those from *Pwee*, have argued that *Méngúnúfach* is a kind of *Pwee*, and hence a part of *Pwee*. To them it explains why *Pwee* as such does not exist as a clan name on the islands west of the Chuuk Lagoon, including those belonging to Yap State. In this specific case my time limitations did not suffice to meet with the specialist or senior informants who were able and willing to share in greater detail the reasons behind this name variation of *Pwee* and *Méngúnúfach*, and why they are considered to be one and the same. As in the past, there still are specialists in Chuuk who can readily present these accounts of their own and other people's clan history. Younger clan members, though they might be knowledgeable as well in their own clan history, might, out of modesty and respect towards their elders be reluctant to convey this information to others, and especially to non-kin. They consider themselves to be unauthorized to speak on behalf of their clan.

Based on the distribution of *Wuwáánikar* Marck “suggests a clan originating in Chuuk Lagoon or the Mortlocks that never extended into the central and western Chuukic atolls“ (2009: 22). Going only by the clan name itself this assumption is correct but it still renders an incomplete and limited perception of the clan itself and its members’ self-perception of being the same as *Méngúnúfach* in the central and western Chuukic atolls or *Pwee* in the Chuuk Lagoon. I was able to collect two versions of the same account from Gideon (*1931), probably the eldest member of *Wuwáánikar* from the island of Woneyopw who has been residing in Hawaii for some time already. He recalled listening to chiefs from Peniyesene and his own clan, explain, that *Wuwáánikar* originated in Peniyesene on Wééné on Mt. Wiitipwen. The founding ancestress was a small girl who was found lying there under a bush called *karapwen*, which bore fruit (*wuwáán karapwen*) at the time. Hence the name “fruit of the *karapwen* ¹¹, the latter part of the word (*apwen*) being omitted in the clan name. The first version of the account insists she was born of the bush itself as she lay there when she was found “as if”- she had been brought forth by the bush itself.¹² The second variant explains she was dropped there by a *pwá/pwé* Mortlockese for “fruit bat” or *péwúte* (Chuukese) and would have been from the *Pwee* clan.

Finally, it would not surprise me, if in the case discussed above on *Méngúnúfach*, *Pwee* and *Wuwáánikar*; information were to surface that might explain the unity between the first two as deriving from a “promised brother or sister relationship”¹³ with ensuing marriage relationships or from a past time incorporation of members from one clan into the other (*ácheenonga eman*), either through adoption (*mwúúmwú*) or incorporation after having been lost at sea and then returning back home with the knowledge of who had cared for the drifters and had become a fellow kinsman.

1.2. Incorporation and Ex-corporation: Drifters, Refugees of War and Adoption

If they were not killed, drifters or refugees of war usually ended up as slaves (*chóón amanaw*) or lower class members of a lineage and clan. Smith (1983) explains for Palau how up until today people in a clan might keep exact record of a person’s direct line of descent and will prevent the descendant of a drifter that was once included into their clan from outside to assume a position of leadership. After the death of a clan head for example, people will meet to discuss who will fill in the new position of leadership. It is in these kinds of contexts that a person’s origin from a drifter some 200 years ago might prevent that person from taking an exposed position of leadership within a clan or lineage.

In Chuuk, as in all of Micronesia, people too were incorporated into another clan or lineage of a clan (*ácheenonga emén*). One example we will give here is the clan of *Tuumw* in the Mortlock Islands, southeast of the Chuuk Lagoon. On one island i.e., members of this clan were incorporated into the *Sópwunupi* clan and have since then continued under the new, more prestigious name.¹⁴ Upon learning the history of *Tuumw*, this name change does become understandable. The name *Tuumw* comes from the verb *tumwuri* (“to suck and lick off”) and was given to a lady that drifted from Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands to the island of Satowan. The people there made a sport of watching the hungry and deprived lady lick off the breadfruit and taro remnants sticking to the pounding board (*nnúf*), which was probably the only food the

people would supply her with. Drifters of this sort were usually brought to the chiefs as slaves, became impregnated by the chiefs and then their offspring too would serve the chiefly lineage.

Likewise, refugees of war or even a good friend might also be incorporated into a new lineage and clan. Out of fear for one's life people have often taken on a new clan name in public while maintaining the knowledge of their true origin amongst themselves (i.e. *Imwó* becoming *Chééchchiya* "mangrove leaf" on Wuumaan Island)¹⁵. Others might have chosen a new name to purposefully disassociate themselves with their clan of origin after a dispute led them to leave their place of origin (i.e. *Sowufáár* from Feefen becomes *Sápenó* "to face away from" (Goodenough/Sugita 1980: 144) on Wútéét Island).¹⁶

Other names of clans that Marck lists clearly give evidence that they were originally offspring of another clan but were renamed according to where the chiefs settled them upon arrival to their new place or island of residence. Therefore we find names such as "clan from the outside," "clan from the middle of the island," "clan from the windward side" (2009: 4). Oftentimes these clans will pass on amongst themselves what clan they actually originated from before they were forced to relocate.

A Chuukese man I talked to for example explained to me one day that he had relatives on Yap proper from a very high "caste." When I asked him how that was so he explained that generations ago, some of his ancestors had drifted from Chuuk to Yap (proper). All of them eventually returned to their home island in Chuuk except for one man who had decided to remain. He was adopted by a Yapese man of high status and kept the memory of his origins alive within his lineage. Before the Chuukese man visited Yap in the 1980s on a government business trip one of his elders told him about this part of their family history and also gave the man the name of a person to look up in Yap should he ever encounter difficulties. When he did encounter problems because of his – from Yapese perspective – inferior Chuukese origin, he remembered the words of his elders and looked up the man they had advised him to see. He did, and when the people saw who was associating with this foreign Chuukese, his problems immediately ended because he too was all of a sudden viewed as belonging to the family of the well-respected Yapese man.¹⁷

Mailo

The most prominent and politically impacting example of a Chuukese drifter occurred in the late 19th century. It is the clan history of the well-known chief Petrus Mailo, one of the most respected chiefs in Chuuk as well as in Micronesia in the post war Trust Territory period. His father was a drifter from American Samoa, Ma'ilo Sa'ina, married to the queen of American Samoa. He was picked up by a Spanish ship and then got off at Satowan Island in the Mortlocks.¹⁸ There he was adopted into a lineage and clan. Tékúraar, one of the chiefs of Wééné fighting for supremacy over the island at the time, heard of Ma'ilo's big and strong build and that he knew how to fight so he "then asked him to be his general. Then he [Ma'ilo among others] fought for Tékúraar... and called his adopted relatives from the Mortlocks to help Tékúraar in the war on Wééné. That is how he won Wééné and became the high chief of Wééné" (Jack, a descendant of Tékúraar).¹⁹ Ma'ilo Sa'ina married Tékúraar's eldest daughter²⁰ and had two sons, Albert and Petrus. Albert transferred the chiefly title (to be the mouth of the land - *awen fénú*) to

his younger brother Petrus. When Wééné was established as the Capital Island under the American administration after WWII, Petrus Mailo advanced to become a kind of paramount chief of Chuuk, or the speaker of the council of chiefs. He also allotted pieces of land to the Satowanese and other Mortlockese who were in need of a place to stay as they moved onto the capital island for educational and employment purposes in the 1950s and 60s. In the late 1990s and in 2002 the Chuukese descendants of Tékúraar were surprised by a visit from American Samoa of chief Ma'ilo's Sa'ina's descendents. They expressed their appreciation of the care and hospitality Ma'ilo had received there to the great grandsons of Tékúraar: Dr. Gerhard Aten, the first Chuukese medical doctor and his younger brother, the late Erhard Aten, who was the first elected governor of the State of Chuuk. At this "family" get-together the two parties discussed the explosive situation in Hawaii between Samoans and Chuukese emigrants where "my dad stepped in recently in conflicts in Hawaii because he is recognized by both sides... He will go back this April [2007] to tell them to stop fighting because we are brothers and sisters in blood! [patrilineal siblings]" (Jack). This is only one example of how a relationship that began with an adopted drifter over 100 years ago had a positive political and economical impact fifty years later for the migrating Mortlockese flooding Wééné in the late 1950s and 1960s up into the present, in peacemaking efforts between the diaspora of Chuukese and Samoans residing in Hawaii.

1.3. Inappropriate Relationships: The Case of *Maasané* (Tear-Filled Eyes)

One of the most common reasons for clan name variation might be found in illegitimate sexual relationships resulting in "bad pregnancies" (*pwoopwo mwmwáán*). To cover up the shame and yet at the same time reveal one's continued affection towards the fellow clan and family members involved in an incestuous relationship people were usually expelled from their immediate community and continued under a new name. Some of these names might be derivatives of their clan of origin, and, if of a more recent date be limited to one locale or island region. Hence we find names such as *Sóórilúk* "Sóór from the windward side of the island," "from the heart of *Sóór*" or "tear filled eyes" (*Maasané*)²¹.

Goodenough (2002: 123-132) devotes a chapter to Chuukese legends related to the origin of man and the major clans in Chuukese oral history (*wuruwo*). While many founding ancestors of clans are commonly associated and traced back to certain ancestral gods and goddesses, there are accounts that deviate from the legendary, mythohistorical pattern such as the three listed above that seem to be better grounded in what we might consider to be historical rather than mythical accounts. Goodenough, for example, cites Krämer (1932) regarding the origin of the Chuukese clan of *Maasané*. *Maasané*, Krämer reports, originated from a man and a woman from the clan of *Sóór* (2002: 130 foot note 3; cf. Krämer 1932: 348 footnote 2). Until today this piece of information, is confirmed by people of *Sóór* and *Maasané*. After I read those lines I often wondered how that could be, given the restrictions on same clan marriages and sexual relations which are traditionally considered as being taboo. In my inquiries into adoption and secrecy during my doctoral research the following account on the origin of *Maasané* surfaced.

The information I gathered regarding the origin of *Maasané* supported Krämer's finding in that *Maasané* was founded by a young man and woman from the same clan of *Sóór*, who had unknowingly to both of them, engaged in a sexual relationship upon which the woman became

pregnant. When the couple indicated their love and intent to get married and the news became public they were confronted with the truth that they were actually one *fituk*, one flesh, brother and sister born of the same mother, but that they had been given up in adoption when they were young. The adoption had been kept a secret. Upon hearing of their breaking of the incest taboo the couple and their lineage mates from *Sóór* wept together in agony over these tragic events. The couple then left their home island²² and together formed a new clan, which they called *Maasané* “tear-filled-eyes” in reference to the weeping of the young founding couple of the clan. This is an example why adoptive children should find out their true identity in adolescence to prevent these things from happening. Today, this story of the origin of a clan may still be embarrassing for clan members to publicly speak about, as it is a shameful story of how a clan came into existence and hence would not be included in public discourse. Members of competing clans may use this information to mock *chóón Maasané*, the people of *Maasané* clan, which is probably why the story is not told.²³ Additionally, I have learned from younger Chuukese from the *Maasané* clan that in public discourse people of their clan are taunted as being good-looking and lustful (*mwocheniya*). Upon learning of the origin of his clan one of my younger sources said that now he finally understood why this attribute of lustfulness was associated with his clan.

1.4. *Tipakuwa*

Some clans, and one in particular, is quite unique in that it has firmly held on to its original name despite the fact that it was a new and foreign clan to the Caroline and Marshall Islands: The clan of the “Shark” (*Tipakuwa*). *Tipakuwa* is said to have originated from Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands and today is widespread on atolls in the Marshall Islands, in Pohnpei (Kiti and Sokehs) and its outer lying atolls such as Sapwuafik/Ngatik, including the Polynesian outliers of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi. The oral history of *Tipakuwa* explains this phenomenon. It is told, that *Tipakuwa*’s founding ancestress was expelled by the chiefs from her native island of Tarawa along with her daughters and fellow clan mates for the ongoing trouble she was causing the community there. Her bad tongue and character were said to be the cause of too much trouble in her island community. The woman swore revenge and part of that vengeance was the plan to establish her clan as a powerhouse in the region by spreading her descendants to as many islands and places as possible. And she was successful. Over the course of her remaining lifetime, the woman first sailed to the Marshall Islands (two atolls there), then on to Pingelap, Mwokil, Pohnpei (Kiti), Sapwuafik/Ngatik, Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi. At most places she only remained for a year or two.²⁴ Before moving on the woman left behind one of her daughters to be adopted by members of the families that had cared for the migrants. Some of these daughters were born to her in the course of her wanderings from associating with men of her host community. Being matrilineal communities, her daughters would go on to inherit land, get married, and multiply and in the long run secure their clan’s existence on these scattered islands. Today, the offspring of *Tipakuwa* have probably become one of the most widespread clans linking the Marshall Islands with Pohnpei and its surrounding atolls. On some islands such as on Sapwuafik, *Tipakuwa* is one of the most populous clans. In the 1970s one of the expelled *Tipakuwa* woman’s offspring even became the Nahnmwarki of Sokehs (through the Sapwuafik line) on the island of Pohnpei. What is significant about *Tipakuwa* is that its members never

changed but rather held on to their clan name, despite the fact that the clan has members dispersed in communities speaking seven different languages.²⁵ Rather than eventually being incorporated into other clans on their new island of residence or using a translation or transliteration of their clan name “shark” into the language on the island of residence they chose to keep their foreign sounding name and to maintain their independent identity.

1.5. Historical Links between Pohnpeian and Chuukese Clans

Some clans, such as *Pwee* from Feefen, claim that they originated in Chuuk. One could argue, that such a clan may have been a branch or an offshoot of a preexisting clan that in one point in time would have to have arrived and first settled in Chuuk. Or, we could simply attribute this to the fact that a clan such as *Pwee* may have belonged to a very early group of people who settled the islands prior to the arrival of a new “wave” of immigrants. One such example is of particular significance, and possibly a key to understanding the most recent major influx or movement of people to Chuuk (lagoon) in particular within the past 700 - 500 years (see Goodenough 2002: 295; King and Parker 1984; Marck 2009).

According to the limited archaeological evidence we have for the Chuuk Lagoon so much can be said that there seems to be evidence of a marked increase in population around 1300-1500 and the establishment of a cult site on Tonaachaw mountain on the island of Wééné (King and Parker 1984)²⁶. This information seems to coincide with the *Itang* lore surrounding the origin of the two major alliances found in the Chuuk Lagoon upon western contact, the *Máchweyi Chchún* and the *Máchwewen Sópwunupi* “District of the Sacred Stone Structure” (Goodenough 2002: 294). According to the *itang* lore of these clans, the former defines itself as being the female with the latter being described as the male counterpart to the former. The history of the *Máchweyi Chchún* talks of them being the ones whose clans originated and literally “sprang up” in Chuuk and later gave the *Sópwunupi* alliance women when they first arrived in the Chuuk Lagoon from afar. The lore of member clans of the *Sópwunupi* alliance confirms this. They refer to Katchaw (Kosrae) and even recount places and place names in Kosrae and Pohnpei as their places of origin.²⁷ They recount the routes their ancestors traveled on their easterly journey prior to settling in the Chuuk Lagoon. They speak of the desolate and primitive state of life they found prevalent amongst the original inhabitants in the Chuuk Lagoon and proudly claim that they introduced civilization and raised the standard of living. There are accounts of chiefs and *Itang* from Chuuk originating from clans that trace their ancestry from Kosrae through Pohnpei and then on to Chuuk. Upon their first trip to Pohnpei in the 1960s and 1970s some Chuukese chiefs and *Itang* were able to identify and locate sacred places, including burial sites unknown to Pohnpeians despite the fact that neither they - or any one of their recent ancestors - had ever been to Pohnpei, nor had they studied any maps prior to their first visit on the island. They also were reported to have had specific knowledge of Nan Madol and some of its islets, something even some Yapese traditional “historians” might have knowledge of despite never having been there.²⁸ In addition, there are striking similarities found between title names, names of historical persons in the district of Wene in Pohnpei and the *Sópwunupi* clan in the Chuuk Lagoon and on Wééné Island in particular (Goodenough 2002: 295). According to Hanlon (1988: 4) Pohnpei means “On the Sacred Stone Structure” while the term *Sópwunupi* in Chuukese can refer to “District of the

Sacred Stone Structure” (Goodenough 2002: 294) but could also be derived and read as “Lord of Pohnpei.” In both readings though, the immediate connection to Pohnpei is more than evident. Our findings above, the archaeological as well as the linguistic and ethnographic data readily suggest that a larger group of people arrived in Chuuk from Pohnpei about the time of the downfall of the Saudeleurs in Pohnpei. Additional support can also be found in clan names themselves belonging to the *Sópwunupi* alliance. For one, when canoes arrived on a distant shore, the first question the new arrivals were asked is where they came from and what their clan affiliation was. In an event as impacting as the overthrow of the Saudeleurs in Pohnpei it is very likely that a large number of men from the Saudeleur Dynasty fled the island of Pohnpei. Women and children could be left behind, as they were less likely to be killed. Also, there are no accounts in Pohnpei that indicate that Isokelekel, the leader of the rebellion against the Saudeleur Dynasty, actually killed the Saudeleur king. The easiest and swiftest direction of departure in a desperate attempt to flee after this battle would have been to the west, making use of the trade winds that would have taken the refugees of war towards the islands in and around the Chuuk Lagoon. Upon their arrival in Chuuk they would have been asked about their origin and clan affiliation and would have stated that they are the “Lords of Pohnpei” (*Sópwunupi/Sówupwunupi*)²⁹ or “clans/persons of Pohnpei.” And, having fled without their wives and women they would have been in need of obtaining them from the local resident population – as the *itang* lore from Chuuk mentioned above states. Normally, when foreign vessels arrived on an island the resident population would often seek a way to kill the male new arrivals. If there were too many of them, as could have easily been the case here, one would have abstained from such action. Finally, the clan of the Saudeleur dynasty in Pohnpei is *Tipwinpahnmay* “Under the Breadfruit Tree,” which also exists as *Fáánimaay* “Under the Breadfruit Tree” in the islands surrounding the Chuuk Lagoon (see also Marck 2009: 4) and is considered to be identical with *Sópwunupi*.

In sum, there seems to be convincing evidence of the roots and routes people of Chuukic origin sailed when they settled and resettled this scattered region of islands we today term as Micronesia. Much of this evidence and culture-historical heritage is still hidden from the public eye. It has been transmitted and kept by a people residing on islands scattered across more than 2,000 km of open-ocean in an east-westerly direction. With the inception of independence in 1986 allowing for people of Chuukic origin to reside permanently in the United States the distances between pockets of islander populations of Chuukic origin have grown and are now spanned from Palau in the west to the east coast of the United States of America, some 12,000 km apart. Here, some of the keepers of this island cultural and historical heritage reside today making its recovery and documentation a more than challenging, but necessary task.

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Notes

¹ Some of the data collection for the writing of this article was financed in part with Historic Preservation Funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The contents and opinions of this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.

² This of course is not a new or recent discovery, but it stands in contrast to Schneider (1984) and the views some of his followers in kinship studies (e.g. Carucci 2008) have been developing when they argue that kinship studies and research in the study of kinship and adoption has been overly focused on western notions of “blood ties“ and biogenetic connections of persons. They have thereby downplayed the central importance and primacy islanders have traditionally placed on their shared clan membership (descent from a common ancestor). For a discussion of these views see Marshall 2008; Rauchholz 2008; 2009; Goodenough 2001; Feinberg and Ottenheimer 2001.

³ Clinical boat operated by the Protestant Pacific Missionary Aviation (PMA) based on Pohnpei, FSM. PMA was founded in the mid 1970s and also maintains a small fleet of aircraft that offer medical evacuations and airline services to the remote islands in the FSM.

⁴ See Rauchholz 2009. On Tobi (Hatohobei) in the Republic of Palau one Chuukic clan claims its origin from Woleai Atoll (Peter Black, personal communication 2011) while other members of Chuukic clans from Woleai have settled in Saipan and even on Kapingamarangi after having drifted there around 1800 (Emory 1965: 51-52). The latter was a canoe of at least four men some of which intermarried in Kapingamarangi while others supposedly left the island again. In any case the distance between Woleai and Kapingamarangi is ca. 1,750 km in south easterly direction, between Woleai and Tobi ca. 2,000 km in south westerly direction, and from Woleai to Saipan about 1,200km almost due north (east). At the same time, the distances measured between the outermost points of known Woleaian residents, the Tobi-Saipan-Kapingamarangi triangle with Woleai situated roughly in the middle are astonishing. The distance from Tobi to Saipan measures some 2,500 km, from Saipan to Kapingamarangi about 2,250 km and from Kapingamarangi to Tobi about 3,000 km. The actual sailing distance in a canoe would be more of course considering its dependence on the wind, waves, ocean currents and the route to be traveled. Such a trip would take the canoes up north to Palau and Yap, then across the Caroline archipelago heading eastward to Chuuk before sailing in south easterly direction through the Mortlock islands and Nukuoro before finally arriving in Kapingamarangi, Pohnpei. It must also be added that according to Rapwi, Master Navigator from Pwolowót (personal communication 2010) that Tobi and Sonsorol Atolls were the most south-westerly points of reference within the Chuukic speaking family and navigational framework.

⁵ Goodenough makes mention that “in 1947, I was able to obtain from Efot, then recognized as the person most versed in *itang* on Romónum, the genealogies of all Romónum’s people’s back several generations of dead, an inventory of land holdings, and the history of transactions relating to those holdings for a similar period of time“ (2002: 318). L. Nason (personal communication 2006) collected the same kind of information from the chief of Ettal Atoll during his fieldwork there in the 1960s. But he was given the information under the condition of not sharing it with others or publicizing it. Nevertheless, there is more information available, especially in the archives of the Chuuk State Supreme Court and the success of this larger project will depend on getting permission to access some of that material as well as the field notes of earlier ethnographers in the region to complement my own data.

⁶ Unfortunately, access to these documents is hardly possible even though they constitute an official public record.

⁷ The *Itang* were also specialized in manipulating or developing their own etymologies of words and historical events to their own benefit. It may often take a well-trained *Itang*, linguist or cultural anthropologist to discern between competing theories and histories (Goodenough 2002).

⁸ Numerous proverbs, songs, chants, and tales make reference to this thereby justifying the existence of this cultural theme.

⁹ My spelling of Chuukese terms follows the Chuukese-English Dictionary by Goodenough/Sugita 1980. On the islands to the west of the Chuuk Lagoon, variations in pronunciation and spelling of *Méngúnúfach* occur (see Marck 2009: 2-3; 15).

¹⁰ According to Girschner (1912) who gives a list with a ranking of clans on Namoluk Atoll, *Wuwáánikar* was reported as being a more recent clan that had migrated to the Mortlocks (Namoluk Island) from the Chuuk Lagoon. There, it was seen as an offshoot of *Pwee* and originating on the island of Wééné in a village called Peniyesene and more specifically on the mountain *Wiitipwen* (see Goodenough 2002: 126; and the map of Wééné 128). *Wuwáánikar* was a clan name not widespread in the Chuuk Lagoon and limited to Peniyesene before its members began to migrate to Namoluk and then further spread to other islands in the Mortlock group. In the 1960s many Mortlockese relocated to the Chuuk Lagoon's district center of Wééné, which is why today *Wuwáánikar* also has a strong presence there with the present governor of Chuuk State being one of its most prominent members.

¹¹ The Chuukese-English and English-Chuukese dictionaries do not list the word *karapwen* and my informants who I met in Hawaii were unable to show me a species of the plant or explain exactly what type of bush the *karapwen* is.

¹² Similar accounts are widespread of adults finding a child (hidden) in a taro plant, on an uninhabited islet etc. and then taking them in as their own, knowing, they may have been abandoned by their parents for numerous reasons (i.e. fleeing from a war, famine etc.).

¹³ A “promised brother“ or “sister“ relationship is a form of friendship that takes on the characteristics and form of a relationship between (biological) siblings. To solidify such a relationship with permanence, young men might promise to wed their future children to each other. For a detailed treatment of this whole topic see Marshall 1977 and 1983.

¹⁴ On other islands, members of *Tuumw* might still go under that name. But they will keep in mind the links and associate themselves with the clan on Wééné (also *Sópwunupi*) for example that gave them land when their ancestors first settled there.

¹⁵ A number of clans rallied together in their efforts to eradicate the chiefly *Imwó* clan. One woman was later found in the mangrove swamp of a neighboring island. Because she lay there like a dead mangrove leaf drifting in the swamp and at first assumed to have been dead, she was named accordingly. Another source (Chitaro Nika, chief of Fanaanú in a conversation with Seturo Paul) claimed this lady was actually from *Achaw* and had drifted into the Chuuk Lagoon from the outer islands (Rauchholz 2004-2010).

¹⁶ In the case of *Sápenó*, a woman from the island of Feefen sent her daughter down the mountain to her brother (uncle of the girl) who was cooking breadfruit chunks (*tipen maay*) in the lineage's hearth (*fanang*) asking for some food. The breadfruit was not ready yet and the daughter then misconveyed the response of her uncle. Rather than explaining to her mother the food was not yet fully cooked as her uncle had instructed, she simply told her mother “you cannot eat the breadfruit they prepared.” Infuriated, she “went out, got a few copras [coconuts] and tied them together as a life jacket to swim in the water until she reached Wútéét at Monowe district. A man found her there in the mangroves and informed the district chief who asked the man to bring the lady to him. The chief then asked her where she came from and “Feefen” was her answer. When the chief asked her clan she said *Sápenó*, because she had chosen to turn her back on her birth clan of *Sowufár*, which she felt had just rejected her.

¹⁷ In this case as in many similar ones people may not talk about these connections lest they lose status and respect.

¹⁸ Here there is some variation of how he eventually arrived at Satowan. Other accounts say he was the offspring of a group of Samoans that drifted ashore with their canoes on Satowan. According to this account, the men were all killed and Mailo was the son of one of the female survivors who either was already pregnant or became impregnated on Satowan.

¹⁹ This is one of those cases that gives evidence to Goodenough's remarks of how castaways in many Pacific islands, including those in Micronesia, have been "taken in by the local community, have exploited some skill or special piece of knowledge from their original home in order to make a place for themselves and have something of value to pass on to their children" (2002:71-72). If the drifters had nothing of special value to give, they and their descendants may still today be second class citizens within their adopted lineage (Smith 1983 on Palau) or their clan may still today be lowest in rank on the island of residence with little or no full title to land they may have been residing on for generations. Today, in the Chuuk State Supreme Court (CSSC), the descendants of landowners and titleholders will refer to the *ómwmwót* system, when their title to land is legally challenged as demonstrated in a recent court battle over land title on the island of Pwene between the *Pwee* clan and other clans.

²⁰ "Daughter" here is most likely "niece," the eldest sister's eldest daughter, because titles are passed down through the matrilineage. Ma'ilo's son was Petrus Mailo, who later became the high chief of Wééné after his elder brother Albert transferred the title to him.

²¹ *Maasané* in the Mortlock Islands is pronounced as *Maasalé*.

²² Loosópw Atoll in the Upper Mortlocks is considered to be the place of origin of *Maasané*.

²³ We must also always consider the possibility that *Itang* ("political priests") from competing clans might also make up such stories, but in this case I consider it unlikely because my sources also included well-respected persons from the *Maasané* clan.

²⁴ Some descendants say she had to move after a year or two precisely because her bad character would not have permitted her to stay for a longer period of time – anywhere.

²⁵ This fact does lend support to the vengeance theory, meaning that the woman made the active effort to instill in her daughters their original identity despite the possible disadvantages a foreign name may have initially brought upon her offspring.

²⁶ For this whole section see also Goodenough 2002:290-320.

²⁷ Goodenough (2002:292; and 1986) states that "[A]fter European contact, Achaw [Katchaw] came to be erroneously equated with Kosrae in the eastern Caroline Islands, but before that it was a place in the sky." I would argue that it could have been both. In the traditional worldview of Micronesians, all physical places have their non-physical counterparts in the spirit-like world called *náán* (see also Goodenough 2002: 83-90 and Käser 1977). They exist together in parallel worlds. The spirit-like Katchaw has a physical representation in the island or place called Katchaw and vice versa. The spirit-like doubles of deceased persons from Katchaw (physical) would travel to their place or Katchaw (of origin) in the non-physical or spirit-like world. Also, Goodenough (2002: 125) cites a legend of origin that explains how the children of Achaw were defeated in a war and fled to Chuuk.

²⁸ In one instance, a Yapese oral historian was brought in to Pohnpei, I was told, to help solve a dispute based on his knowledge of Pohnpeian oral history of a certain locality. This account though needs further verification.

²⁹ Kenneth Rehg (personal communication 2010) mentioned that while *saaw/sów* is usually rendered as "Lord," *sów* in Pohnpeian can also mean "clan."