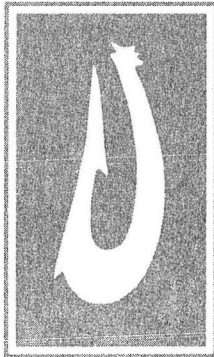


Lost in the Weeds

THEME AND VARIATION
IN POHNPEI POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY

Glenn Petersen



Occasional Paper 35

Center for Pacific Islands Studies
School of Hawaiian, Asian & Pacific Studies
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Preface</i> | v |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | vi |
| 1 <i>Introduction</i> | 1 |
| The Texts | 2 |
| "Lost in the Weeds" | 3 |
| The Southeast Bias | 5 |
| Pohnpei | 6 |
| A Note on Orthography | 7 |
| 2 <i>The Beginnings of Pohnpei</i> | 9 |
| Settlement and Construction | 10 |
| Naming | 12 |
| Pohnpei's First Inhabitants | 13 |
| Cannibalism and Fear of the Interior | 13 |
| Population Growth and Political Change | 14 |
| Some Contradictions | 15 |
| 3 <i>The Construction of Nan Madol</i> | 17 |
| The Pali Stories | 17 |
| Olsihpa and Olsohpa | 19 |
| The Search for a Site | 20 |
| Construction Begins | 21 |
| The Occupation of Nan Madol | 21 |
| The Political Implications of Nan Madol | 23 |
| 4 <i>The Rise of the Sau Deleurs</i> | 26 |
| The Region Known as Deleur | 26 |
| The Sau Deleur Dynasty | 27 |
| Tales of the Sau Deleurs | 28 |
| Ambivalence | 30 |
| The Fall of the Sau Deleurs | 31 |
| 5 <i>Isokelekel</i> | 34 |
| The Coming of Isokelekel | 34 |
| Isokelekel Encounters Opposition in U | 35 |
| Isokelekel Invades Madolenihmw, Not Pohnpei | 36 |
| Lepen Moar | 37 |
| The Battle Is Joined | 38 |
| The Beginning of a New Era | 39 |

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 6 | <i>The Modern Era</i> | 41 |
| | Constituting the New Political System | 41 |
| | Local Chiefdoms and New Freedom | 44 |
| | Isokelekel's Successors | 48 |
| | Intervention of the Gods | 49 |
| | Pohnpei's Oedipal Theme | 51 |
| | The New Title System | 51 |
| | The Nahmwarki Era | 53 |
| 7 | <i>Other Recurring Themes</i> | 55 |
| | Chiefs, Work, and Success | 55 |
| | Circling the Island--From West to East | 56 |
| | Precedence of the Chiefdoms | 58 |
| | Katau | 59 |
| | Nan Madol | 60 |
| | The Meaning of Nan Madol | 64 |
| 8 | <i>The Language of Politics</i> | 66 |
| | <i>Mwohnsapw</i> | 66 |
| | <i>Kaun</i> | 69 |
| | <i>Soupeidi</i> | 70 |
| | Nahmwarki | 71 |
| | <i>Soumas</i> | 72 |
| | Problems of Translation | 74 |
| 9 | <i>Conclusion</i> | 77 |
| | <i>Notes</i> | 79 |
| | <i>References</i> | 83 |

Map of Pohnpei

viii

Preface

When I began this essay I meant it to be a chapter in another book. I intended to demonstrate that opposition to political centralization is a fundamental theme in Pohnpei mythology. This would in turn allow me to establish once and for all that these myths do not attribute construction of the vast architectural complex at Nan Madol to the legendary Sau Deleur dynasty (which represents the one episode of centralization in Pohnpei oral traditions).

I avoided reliance upon a biased sample of the traditional oral histories that record this mythology by using all the major available Pohnpei-language texts, along with their translations. I also made use of English-language translations of two texts not available in their original Pohnpei-language versions. In addition I have extensive notes from the many discussions and conversations I have had with Pohnpei historians between 1974 and 1987.

As I wrote, however, I realized that I was in a position to do something that has never been undertaken. Despite the extraordinary amount of material available, we have never had a concordance of these texts--though Fischer, Riesenbergh, and Whiting (1977), in their annotations to Luelen Bernart's book, do compare his text with other versions. In attempting to produce a concordance and to integrate into it my own interpretive commentaries, I soon discovered that what started as a chapter had ballooned into a monograph.

My intentions changed as well. This work is now aimed at demonstrating the striking lack of agreement among the various historical and mythological texts. Although it is possible to generate broad outlines of the stories these texts chronicle, not one of the accounts hews closely to a general script. Repeatedly, we encounter thorough-going contradictions in matters that are usually taken to be fundamental to Pohnpei oral history.

Instead, we find that certain themes--rather than specific events--are consistently emphasized. Some of these are fundamental to modern Pohnpei social and political life. As we shall see, questions of political centralization run throughout these tales, from the earliest days into the present; they remain crucial to any understanding of contemporary Pohnpei relations with the modern Micronesian nation-state, the Federated States of Micronesia.

This is, then, a study of theme and variation. It demonstrates, I believe, that no single source can be used to speak authoritatively about what happened in Pohnpei traditional history. We find that details of any event in any given account will be contradicted by details in some other account. This means not only that attempts to explain the archaeology of Pohnpei through reference to specific versions are doomed to failure, but that any structural analysis of Pohnpei mythology that fails to integrate all these multiple viewpoints cannot succeed.

Acknowledgments

This work is, in a sense, a homage to those perspicacious Pohnpei historians whose foresight led them to dictate or write down the texts that it explores, and to the European and American scholars who recorded, translated, and edited their efforts.

Paul Hambruch, in a relatively brief period, recorded an incredible number of tales, from a large number of Pohnpei sources, with marvelous accuracy. Two Pohnpei historians, Silten and Luelen, kept careful notebooks in order to ensure that Pohnpei's history would not die with them (a reasonable fear given traditional Pohnpei restrictions on the communication of esoteric knowledge). John Fischer, Saul Riesenber, and Marjorie Whiting devoted years to editing and annotating Luelen's book. Masao Hadley elaborated on Luelen's pioneering work, and Paul Ehrlich has likewise expended great efforts to translate and edit Hadley's contribution.

It would be impossible to explore the extraordinary complexity of Pohnpei mythology and tradition without the efforts of all these historians. They have served their clan ancestors, including Clio, well.

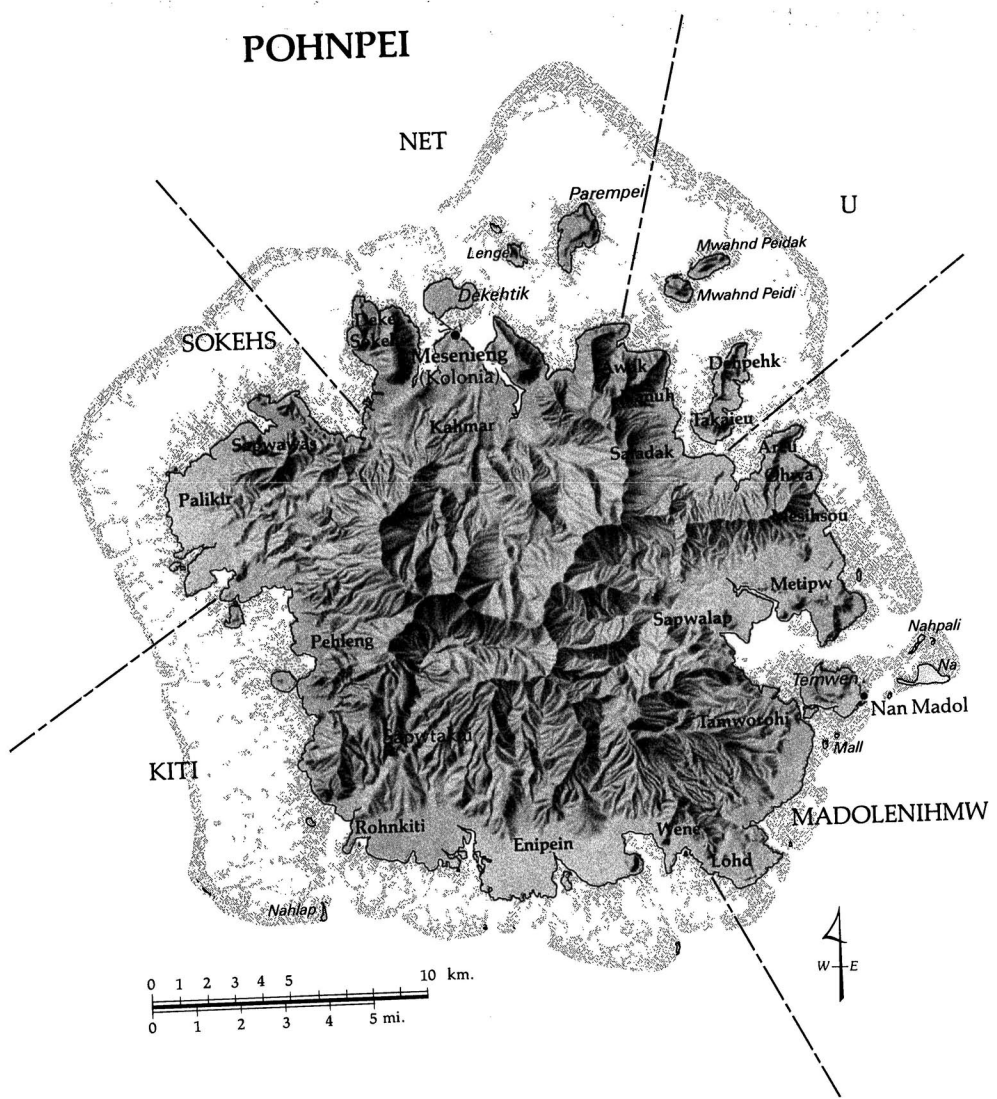
My own efforts to learn about the uses of Pohnpei history have depended largely upon instruction from my Awak and U teachers, Damian Primo, the late Ignasio Primo, the late Mikel Panuelo, and Ioakim David. The latter scholar first piqued my interest with his tales of a character called Pali, and has in the ensuing years told me much about U visions of Pohnpei's history. Many others have helped me with specific questions of meaning and interpretation.

Ever since I began working on the island my grasp of its lore has been influenced by three other scholars similarly in thrall to Pohnpei's mystique: Paul Ehrlich, Alan Burdick, and David Hanlon. I expect that all three shall find flaws; I leave it to them to decide whether they are intentional or not. I wish particularly to thank Rufino Mauricio, who read this in manuscript form. His insightful commentary and pertinent suggestions have steered me clear of a number of pitfalls.

The Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawaii graciously provided me with their translation of Hambruch. Paul Ehrlich gave me an early draft of his Hadley translation. Simone Fischer kindly permitted me to make use of the Silten manuscript and Richard Marksbury, Saul Riesenber, and Harvard University's Tozzer Library helped me obtain it.

The interpretations I offer are based on field research conducted on Pohnpei in 1974-1975, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1987. This work has been funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the PSC-CUNY Faculty Research Program of the City University of New York, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this work to Alice Dewey, who first taught me that there are no wrong or right versions of oral traditions and myths--there are only versions. Professor Dewey contributed immeasurably to the success of my first work on Pohnpei, and I have never been able to thank her properly. I hope this will count toward balancing my debt.



Introduction

Thanks to the foresight of both Pohnpei historians and German and American ethnographers, a great deal of Pohnpei oral tradition, mythology, and history has been collected in Pohnpei-language texts. Much of this describes the history of Pohnpei political life. Indeed, politics is a preeminent theme in Pohnpei traditions (or so it seems to me).

At the core of these tales lie two overlapping cycles. The first is the creation story; the second, of epic dimensions, is about the construction of Nan Madol (a vast complex of artificial islets and monumental architecture), the rise of the tyrannical Sau Deleur dynasty, and its eventual overthrow by the culture-hero Isokelekel. Together, these two cycles set out the themes basic to Pohnpei notions of government and chronicle events that are supposed to have brought about, ultimately, the island's present-day system of chieftainship.

Some of these accounts possess extraordinary detail, others are vague or confusing. When those with specific detail are contrasted with other, less explicit versions, they seem immediate and compelling. It is tempting to reconstruct Pohnpei's past along the lines laid out in them. In some cases this can be done: Paul Ehrlich (1978) and David Hanlon (1988) have shown us that Pohnpei descriptions of nineteenth and early twentieth century events can often be corroborated by European historical records.

If, however, we look at an event as recent even as the 1910 Sokehs Rebellion, we find that fundamentally different explanations of what happened, and why it happened, have been offered every few decades since it took place (Petersen 1985, 17-19). Pohnpei oral traditions can in some instances serve as guides to history, but this does not mean that they necessarily provide an accurate window on the past.¹

I believe that these traditions actually tell us more about the present. In this I follow an old tradition in the social sciences, crafted by Emil Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Max Weber. These tales are "charters" for modern institutions--"Just So Stories," as Rudyard Kipling called them. They can be used either to justify the status quo or to bolster demands to return to some hypothetical status quo ante.

My intentions in writing this essay are twofold. First, I seek to uncover the basic, underlying themes the several versions share in common, and thereby elucidate Pohnpei political theory. Second, I intend to demonstrate that variation among the versions is so great that individual accounts and texts

cannot be used to reconstruct the past: there is much too little agreement among them for us to be sure that anything they describe actually took place.

The Texts

I have available to me three primary Pohnpei-language sources and English-language translations of two other sources.

Foremost are the hundreds of texts Paul Hambruch recorded in 1910. His transcriptions and German translations appear in his three-volume work, published between 1932 and 1936. I am aware of two English-language translations of Hambruch's work, one undertaken for the military during World War Two at Yale University (and now at the Human Relations Area Files in New Haven), the other done by Ruth Runeborg and Elizabeth Murphy in the early 1980s at the University of Hawaii's Pacific Islands Studies Program (now the Center for Pacific Islands Studies). This latter translation (which was undertaken in much more scholarly circumstances) provides the English texts I cite throughout this work, with a few exceptions where I have offered emendations. A copy is available in the Pacific Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Luelen Bernart (1866-1946), a distinguished Pohnpei leader, recorded myths and aspects of modern history. His notebook was translated, edited, and annotated by John Fischer, Saul Riesenberg, and Marjorie Whiting, and published in 1977. A few copies of Luelen's original manuscript exist and thus provide us access to Luelen's own Pohnpei-language text; again, I have emended a very few passages of the translation.

In 1981 Masao Hadley, perhaps the best-known living Pohnpei historian (*soupoad*), dictated a long account of Nan Madol and associated myths to Paul Ehrlich, who then translated this into English. This project was sponsored by the Historic Preservation Office, a government bureau. I worked with Ehrlich's first draft; subsequently he has produced a revised version (which incorporates minor changes suggested by me and which I use here). However, the original draft is still the most widely available, and my references are to it, not the later version. Because Hadley has worked extensively with archaeologists, they are familiar with and often draw upon his accounts. (I believe a Japanese translation of this text exists as well.)

In the 1920s a Pohnpei man named Silten, brother of a Madolenihmw Nahnken, wrote his own account of the island's history. In 1951, John Fischer was able to borrow this manuscript long enough to translate it into English. Fischer's translation (which runs to thirty-one pages, while the original had forty) is now at Harvard's Tozzer Library.

In 1975 I found in the Pohnpei Tourist Information Office a set of typewritten, English-language manuscripts entitled "Origins of Ponape," with no attribution. My own transcription of these, which is only partial, is eleven pages long. I thought at the time that these were products of a cooperative historical project sponsored by the government's old-age program, but

internal evidence now inclines me to think that Masao Hadley played a dominant role in writing them.

These are the five primary sources upon which I draw. They cover a seventy-year timespan, from 1910 to 1981. The earliest texts come from informants born in the first half of the nineteenth century, not long after Europeans had begun stopping at Pohnpei. The latest were recorded under the sponsorship of the American government.

Other texts are to be found in the notes of Saul Riesenbergr and John Fischer, in miscellaneous materials in the Community College of Micronesia and University of Hawaii libraries' Pacific Collections, and in the writings of scholars, including Fischer, Riesenbergr, Ehrlich, William McGarry, David Hanlon, and Suzanne Falgout. The young Pohnpei scholar Rufino Mauricio has been working on these texts as well and is beginning to provide some extremely important commentaries on them.

I have myself recorded very few texts, preferring instead to pay attention to the actual references made to these myths and legends in conversations, and to ask the ordinary people of Pohnpei (as well as notable historians) about aspects of them. My special knowledge, then, is of how this material is *used* by them. But I was also attracted to this material because of specific conversations I had with two Pohnpei historians, Ioakim David and Masao Hadley. I discuss these in the contexts of the relevant texts and traditions.

"Lost in the Weeds"

When the people of Pohnpei themselves work at sorting out the evidence of multiple historical versions, they say that the truth is *Nan tehlik* 'Lost in the weeds' like a coconut that has fallen into the underbrush at the foot of the tree.

Running throughout all these texts are explicit evocations of the fundamental Pohnpei emphasis on secrecy, dissimulation, and the exercise of tight controls over knowledge (Petersen 1982, 7-10; McGarry 1972, 45-53). Luellen, for example, writes, "And it is twisted, what I am saying" (Bernart 1977, 141, 142, 154; Hambruch 1936*b*, 313, 330; Silten 1, 6; Hadley 1981, 1). Important elements are deliberately left out of every version and inaccuracies are sometimes inserted. It is in the very nature of Pohnpei historiography that no complete historical text can be generated.

This creates a particular difficulty for Western scholars, who are trained to evaluate and set against one another what are essentially competing versions. On Pohnpei these multiple renditions are not, strictly speaking, viewed as competitors. It is true that the nature of Pohnpei competitiveness in general, and, in particular, the place of historical knowledge in the suite of skills a successful man must possess or command, mean that the extent or depth of an individual's knowledge does play a role in the drama of Pohnpei public life.

(Indeed, *oarelepe* 'to give the general idea of' and *oaritikih* 'to give a detailed account of' are intrinsic elements of form in Pohnpei tale-telling.)

It is quite out of Pohnpei character (though it does sometimes happen) to openly challenge variant historical accounts. This means that obtaining a complete and agreed upon, and therefore canonical, version of any tale is antithetical to the content and method of Pohnpei oral history. Because the original data themselves cannot be organized in this fashion, it would be unfaithful to the data for Western scholars to establish a generally accepted or received version that is agreed upon for analytical purposes.

We must approach the corpus of texts as precisely that: a body of materials to be studied and used in its entirety. It is inappropriate to claim flatly that according to Pohnpei oral history ABC or XYZ took place. Because there are versions describing BCD, or BXZ, or ZYX, we must acknowledge and use them, rather than reduce them to some general account that lacks all specifics and thus real interest and immediacy.

Instead, I have searched for themes that are repeated in many versions, and point out themes underlying issues that are still meaningful for the modern people of Pohnpei who remember and tell these stories. In a few cases I try to link together the storyteller, the context of the telling, and the particular version told. The tales come, after all, from individuals who have histories and outlooks and agendas of their own (Hymes 1985), and who tell them in contexts determined by their own contemporary lives.

At the very beginning of this introduction I spoke of Pohnpei oral tradition, mythology, and history. Much has been made of the differences between these genres (eg, Croce 1921, 27-50; Susman 1984, 8-10). For some purposes I might well choose to employ these distinctions, but in the present context I do not. I am approaching these texts as the meditations of modern Pohnpei on the island's past, and therefore take them all as rough equivalents. I use the terms *tradition*, *legend*, *tale*, *story*, *myth*, and *history* interchangeably.

My approach is idiosyncratic and deliberately avoids classic modes of structural analysis. Such analyses tend (and perhaps need) to select a single "developed" version as canonical and then treat it as fully representative of an entire cultural repertoire. Marvin Harris has effectively demonstrated that if we are to understand a myth's place within a culture, we must look at multiple versions of it and set each of them within its broader social context (1979, 202-215).

What I have to offer is my own interpretation of these texts. It is currently fashionable to speak of interpretation as "interpretive anthropology" or "hermeneutics," when in fact we are doing what scholars have always done. In the classic *What Is History?* E. H. Carr answers his own question with the observation that it "is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts." "As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and perhaps partly unconscious

historian and his facts." "As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and perhaps partly unconscious changes through the reciprocal action of one or the other" (1961, 35).

"History," he says, "means interpretation" (ibid, 26).

Clifford Geertz speaks of the "hermeneutic circle, . . . central to ethnographic interpretation." This he describes as a process of "hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them"--"an advancing spiral of general observations and specific remarks" (1983, 69). This procedure does not differ significantly from Carr's "history," or so it seems to me.

My approach to these texts proceeds in much the same manner described by Carr and Geertz. I work back and forth between the facts and my interpretation of them. The individual facts derive their relevance or importance from their place in the overall account; the overall account is built upon the marshaled data.

In the only other substantial study of Pohnpei myth, Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting sought to find or create agreement among all the various renderings of these stories (1977). My approach is diametrically opposed; instead of trying to reconcile the wildly different versions, I celebrate their differences. I believe that only by appreciating them in all their myriad variety can we comprehend the vitality of these traditions. It is precisely because these tales remain so central to contemporary Pohnpei sociopolitical life that people continue to insist upon telling them from their own perspectives.

The Southeast Bias

It is perhaps unfortunate (and certainly worth noting) that there is a strong southeast (southern Madolenihmw--eastern Kiti) bias in the collection of written texts available to us. Lewis and Ricardo Kehoe, who were Hambruch's prime informants, came from this area, as did Silten. Luelen, too, was from the southeast, a point which Luelen's editors touch upon (Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting 1977, 2-3). Masao Hadley, in the introduction to his account (1981, 1-2), acknowledges that he learned his basic history from his "grandfather" (great uncle in European terminology) Luelen, and received from him the right to use the legends recorded in his book. What we have available, then, is a very localized set of Pohnpei histories.

Some of the most striking variants come from informants who live or lived in the north and northwest of Pohnpei (eg, Ioakim David of U); they offer decidedly different views of what took place in Pohnpei history, why it took place, and why it is significant. These are not aberrant, but rather, legitimately varying viewpoints. Ioakim's conspicuously variant accounts of Pohnpei's creation and Nan Madol's construction first whetted my appetite for the paper chase, as it were.

Pohnpei

There now exists an ample literature about the island, its people, culture, language, and history. General introductions can be found in Riesenberg (1968), Petersen (1982), Rehg (1981), Hanlon (1988), and Bath (1984). For the reader with little or no knowledge of the island and its people, the following outline should provide a basic perspective.

Pohnpei lies 7 degrees north of the equator, at 158 degrees east longitude. It is a high island, the product of an ancient volcano. Its interior mountains rise to about 2500 feet. The total land area is approximately 130 square miles, nearly all of it rugged and densely vegetated. Rainfall averages nearly 200 inches per year at the weather station, which is situated in a relatively dry part of the island.

Pohnpei is one of the Eastern Caroline Islands. Two atolls, And and Pakin, lie outside its barrier reef and numerous small islands lie between the reef and the shore. Other atolls lie to the east, south, and west. Although the distances between them are sometimes great, a continuous chain of islands runs from the Ralik and Ratak archipelagoes in the Marshall Islands, south to Kiribati (the Gilbert Islands), and west through the Carolines to Belau, a distance of nearly 3000 miles. Although many languages are spoken, and distinct cultures and societies have evolved, similarities of tradition and historical ties exist that make "Micronesia" something more real than a mere ethnological convention. As we shall see, the people of Ulithi, far to the west, tell stories that invoke specific locations on Pohnpei.

Eastern Micronesia appears to have been settled initially some two to three thousand years ago, probably by voyagers from the south--that is, somewhere among the islands now known as the Bismarck Archipelago, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Closely related languages known as "Nuclear Micronesian" are spoken as far west as Ulithi, Ngulu, and the outlying atolls in the Belau area, suggesting a path of migration from east to west. Its position suggests that, along with Kosrae to the east, Pohnpei is among the earliest settled of these islands. Recent radiocarbon dating places the initial occupation of Pohnpei at the end of the first millennium BC, though earlier dates may yet be forthcoming.

The people of Pohnpei are farmers and fishers. They have developed a complex set of tree and root crops and a sophisticated technology for exploiting the reefs and lagoon. By the time the first Europeans arrived, in the mid-nineteenth century, they were no longer a deep-seafaring people, having created an ample and stable source of subsistence on their island.

Pohnpei still retains fundamental elements of its political economy from the last century, though significant changes have been wrought in it. The island is divided into a number of autonomous paramount chiefdoms (*wehi*), each of which in turn comprises a series of local chiefdoms (*kousapw*). Since the late nineteenth century, the number of paramount chiefdoms has been frozen at five: Madolenihmw, U, Kiti, Net, and Sokehs.

The larger chiefdoms have a system of government consisting of two parallel lines of ranked titles, headed by a Nahnmwarki and a Nahken; the smaller chiefdoms are ordered in a somewhat similar fashion. Through a combination of genealogical status and political action, men work their way up through these lines of titles, seeking to become chiefs. Feasting activity, in which vast amounts of food and other goods are produced and redistributed, plays a central role in organizing this political economy.

During a long period, probably extending over many centuries, the people of Pohnpei created a series of artificial islets on the tidal flats and fringing reef off eastern Madolenihmw. On some of these they erected large basalt structures, several of them reaching monumental proportions. This architectural complex, known as Nan Madol, extends over nearly one-third of a square mile (0.75 square kilometer) and is a truly impressive sight. It has long attracted the interest of archaeologists and prehistorians and provoked much conjecture and argument.

European and American whaling ships and traders began calling at Pohnpei in the 1830s, soon after it was first charted. American missionaries followed in the 1850s. Spain garrisoned Pohnpei in the 1880s, and the island was subsequently claimed and administered by Germany, Japan, and the United States. The Germans instituted major changes in land tenure and the Japanese brought large-scale agriculture and World War Two. The people of Pohnpei have readily adopted much that has been introduced to their island, but have clung tenaciously to a sense of cultural pride and dignity, and continue to insist on their right to reclaim self-government.

The island's current population is between 25,000 and 30,000, many of whom are immigrants from the surrounding atolls. Pohnpei and these atolls constitute Pohnpei state, within the Federated States of Micronesia; this national government has an ambiguous relationship with the United States. American trusteeship over the islands has not been formally terminated, but the political system slated to replace it, Free Association, has already been implemented. The people of Pohnpei state now elect local magistrates and councils, a governor and legislature, and delegates to the national congress.

Change can be seen everywhere in modern Pohnpei. But as the traditions I explore here demonstrate, the people of Pohnpei assume that flux has characterized life on the island throughout its history. I believe that these myths, histories, and legends embody a view of political organization that underpins Pohnpei hopes for regaining full, local autonomy and a return to local principles of good government.

A Note on Orthography

The people of Pohnpei learned to read and write in the mid-nineteenth century, and the population is now almost completely literate in the Pohnpei language. A standard orthography was developed in the 1950s and refined in the 1970s. However, differences arising from local dialectical variations,

religious affiliations and experiences, and the revolving impact of four colonial administrations have left a legacy of widely varying spelling systems.

After much consideration, I have decided to standardize the spelling in all the texts I employ here. This is, I think, the only way to make my references to the Pohnpei-language texts comprehensible to the reader who is not steeped in the history of the texts and Pohnpei linguistics. Scholars who wish to study the originals should turn to the Hambruch volumes or the Pohnpei Historic Preservation Office.

Guides to the pronunciation of the Pohnpei language may be found in Rehg and Sohl's *Ponapean-English Dictionary* (1979, xix-xx) and in Hanlon (1988, xxviii).

Vowels are roughly equivalent to those in Spanish, except for the diphthong *oa*, which is pronounced as the diphthong in the English *thought*.

Long vowels are marked by an *h*, as in *Pohnpei*.

The Pohnpei *d* is pronounced much like an unaspirated English *t*.

The Pohnpei *t* is pronounced approximately as *tch*, as in the English *match*.

The Pohnpei *ng* is soft, as in the English *sing*.

The Beginnings of Pohnpei

The first episode in Pohnpei traditional histories, like all the later events, has many variants. Some storytellers even relate--or at least allude to--several versions of the creation mythology. Most renditions describe a canoe voyage on the open sea; a piece of coral rock, so small that it passes between the canoe and its outrigger, is encountered jutting up out of the water; a stone platform or altar (*pehi*) is constructed atop the rock and the island is built upon this (*pohn pehi*), whence comes the name Pohnpei.

In Hambruch's Text No. 1 (dictated by Lewis and Ricardo Kehoe), a man and a woman voyaging from Waiso came upon the rock, returned home for a basket of soil, and then began a series of attempts, ultimately successful, to build the island (Hambruch 1932, 333). In Text No. 211 (Nanapas en Kiti), a crew of men and women sailed from Meselang (Mesenleng) via Waiso. They were searching for a land called Pohnpei, and, after a series of adventures, first an oracle and later a woman sitting on the sea directed them to the rock, where one woman disembarked while the canoe returned to Waiso (Hambruch 1936b, 218-219).

In Hambruch's Text No. 262 (Soulik en Sokele), two men set out from Katau in search of land.¹ After traversing the seas for a time they stopped to rest, and a rock emerged suddenly out of the sea. They fetched soil from Katau and raised up a mountain, dividing it into eight pieces, some of which were used to create the mountains of Katau and Yap (Hambruch 1936a, 163-164). According to Text No. D24 (Kaneki en Tomwaroi), Pohnpei was originally a flat island (apparently an atoll). First four women and then three men came and built Pohnpei upon it (*ibid*, 163). In Text No. D26 (Noahs en Sokehs), a woman and her son were in a canoe seeking a new land. While they slept, their canoe grounded on a large rock. A god, Dau Katau, looked down from heaven, saw what was happening, and broke the rock into eight pieces, one of which became Pohnpei (*ibid*, 162-163). Hambruch also recounts a tale recorded by Girschner in which four women sailed from the south, first on a voyage of discovery and then on a voyage of settlement (*ibid*, 165).

The Silten manuscript includes two separate accounts of Pohnpei's origins. In one a group of men and women voyaging from the south discovered the tiny rock that was to become Pohnpei. They brought mana, which came from the lightning, and one of their company, the woman Limetu,

began populating the island.² In the other a group of master builders from Downwind (west) built Pohnpei atop a reef (Silten, 11, 3).

In Luelen Bernart's account, a crew of seven men and nine women, led by the man Sapkini, set off to find the edge of the world (ie, the point where the earth's surface intersects with the canopy of heaven). An oracle directs them to a reef, Pohnnamweias, where a bit of coral projects above the sea, upon which they begin construction (Bernart 1977, 798).

In the anonymous text, the events are essentially the same as those in Luelen's version, but the voyagers leave from a place called Sekeren Wai 'Foreign Shore' or Sapw en Eir 'Southern Land' and are sent in search of a distant land by a "supernatural force" (Origins, 1).³ This version notes that "there are several versions of the origin of Pohnpei. This is just one of them."

Masao Hadley's history of the island ignores this initial stage altogether and begins with the construction of Nan Madol.

Here we have ten variant accounts of Pohnpei's origins, from nine separate sources.⁴ They differ in many specifics: (a) who the people voyaging were; (b) how many of them there were; (c) where they were traveling from; (d) where they were heading to; (e) why they were voyaging; (f) what they carried with them; (g) what they encountered along the way; (h) what they found at the site that was ultimately to become Pohnpei; (i) what happened when they arrived; and (j) the role of divine or spiritual intervention.

The only points on which there is complete agreement are that the island was constructed (i.e., there was an act or acts of creation) and that it involved people who traveled to the construction site from elsewhere. Most versions also have canoe voyagers encountering a coral rock jutting up from a reef. An oracle, usually an octopus, appears in several accounts.

So little is agreed upon in these texts that I can locate only two shared, underlying themes in Pohnpei notions about their earliest history and origins. First, their own being and essence are irrevocably tied to interactions with the rest of the world (and about this they seem ambivalent, as we shall see). Second, in concert with these outside influences, they--and not abstract forces or deities--have made their own land, and their own history.

In turning to events that Pohnpei chronologies reckon much more recent than the creation, I shall draw from the precedent established in these origin myths. In every case, the diversity of these multiple, crosscutting, and contradictory traditions makes it impossible to single out any "canonical" text--there are only variations.

Settlement and Construction

In the interests of both clarity and efficiency, I forgo outlining in full each version of the events that followed the island's initial discovery and creation and focus instead on theme and variation.

After the stage of initial discovery (if the encounter with the rock can be called a discovery), most versions describe an era of construction, develop-

ment, and population increase. Many of these accounts also detail a series of voyages from abroad that brought food crops, fire, clothing, tools, and shelter to Pohnpei.

Some versions stress that the battering of the sea almost destroyed early attempts to fashion the island. The barrier reef and coastal band of mangrove swamp which now encircle the island were built up as a means of stabilizing it. In one account a mangrove seed floats to the island (Silten, 3). In another four women transport stones that they then place upon the atoll which preceded the modern island (Hambruch 1936a, 163). In some cases construction was undertaken by "master builders" (Silten, 3-6) and in others by mortals (Origins, 2). In some versions work on the island was completed when giants used their bodies to create the reef, shore, and island (Hambruch 1936a, 163). Maukuk, one of the giants cited in Hambruch's Text No. D24 (ibid), is often spoken of in modern Awak, where his petrified head is said to have formed the ridge known as Tamwatamw 'Forehead' which separates its Upper and Lower (eastern and western) halves.⁵

The struggle against the sea, which was finally concluded after much travail, ingenuity, and supernatural assistance, foreshadows events that play a part in the later construction of Nan Madol. In both the former and latter episodes, after having their initial efforts destroyed by the battering of the waves, the builders persevere and meet with ultimate success. In Silten's account the original work at Nan Madol is in fact begun contemporaneously with the construction of the island. Mangroves brought in from Upwind and Downwind Yap and Katau to stabilize the island are also planted outside the walls of what is to become Nan Madol (Silten, 4).

Silten (5) tells us that the same group of master builders who initially constructed Pohnpei also planted trees for food, medicine, and "work," and began erecting the first houses. Luelen, on the other hand, describes a series of voyages that brought all these items to Pohnpei from afar (Bernart 1977, 10-15). In one Hambruch text, a Pohnpei man goes in deliberate search of building materials and brings back ivory nut palm from Katau, used to this day for roof thatching (Hambruch 1936b, 320).

In any case, the stories consistently report that all the basic necessities of life--the things that separate the people of Pohnpei from beasts--were brought to the island from abroad, either by voyagers from elsewhere, by their own adventurers, or by the master builders Silten says came to Pohnpei from the west. Other tales recount continuing contact with outsiders. Hambruch's Text No. 13, for example, tells of flying people who came from the west to eat Pohnpei's bananas (Hambruch 1936b, 194). The impact of these visits by outsiders was recorded in the earliest name given to that part of the island now known as Sokehs: Pwapwalik, which means that it was the area where foreign (*liki*) languages (*pwapwa*) were spoken by foreign peoples.

Once, when I asked Damian Primo about Sokehs' reputation as a haven for foreigners, he replied that the reputation did not apply solely to Sokehs. All Pohnpei has had visitors from abroad, he said, and welcomed the things

they brought from distant places. The emphasis given by these early tales to Pohnpei's reliance on the outer world resonates in modern Pohnpei. The people see interaction with the rest of the world as fundamental to their own existence. They are not, however, entirely comfortable with this.

Over the years I have heard a few sporadic references to an obscure appellation for Pohnpei: "Sapw Sarawi" 'Sacred Land'.⁶ In the old days, before the arrival of the Europeans, Pohnpei was potent enough to make itself invisible--hidden in a great mass of clouds--to anyone sailing past it on the open seas. In the Silten manuscript we are told that another name for Pohnpei is "Sapw Sarawi," that it was created by, and therefore has, mana, and that one proof of this mana is the clouds that obscure it from view (Silten, 3, 7).⁷

This passage reflects a deep ambivalence, which appears again and again in the texts, toward the outer world. The impact of foreign influences is repeatedly set against the island's (and its people's) ability to resist and control it. This theme runs through the mythology of Pohnpei's earliest days and into the history of the colonial era.

Naming

Several other minor themes in these accounts will be relevant later on. One is the importance of naming. Luellen recorded a comprehensive list of the kinds of things that are named on Pohnpei. It includes

names of the sections [*kousapw*], names of people, names of the large trees and small trees, . . . and mountains and creeks and valleys, the seas and the islands, and the rivers and streams and the currents of the sea that make the tides. . . . Now, all these names originate from actions and times and work. These three things are the source of all the names. (Bernart 1977, 26)

Silten, too, wrote of naming. Each of the acts of creation he describes is accompanied by an act of naming. First, the master builders make, and then the sacred men and the wise men name. Peaks and cliffs, streams and rivulets, rocks and trees, each in turn is given a name (Silten, 5-6).

In 1983, when David Hanlon spoke with a Kiti man about the history of Pohnpei Hanlon was then writing, the man asked him if he intended to include in it the history of the reef, mountains, hills, rivers, streams, boulders, and rocks as well (Hanlon 1988, xxi). Every bit of Pohnpei is named and each name bears a history. These names connect the people of modern Pohnpei with the creation. Knowledge of the names of hills and rivers and channels remains esoteric and closely shielded today; the confusion inherent in the multiple versions of the origin myths can in part be traced to attempts to safeguard the power that inheres in these names.

Pohnpei's First Inhabitants

There are many references to nonhuman (or subhuman) inhabitants of Pohnpei. Silten listed four kinds of people who came from "Under-the-Earth": Kohna (or Kauna), Lipopohniwel, Liet, Sokele (Silten, 10).

The Sokele were (or are--some suggest they still live on Pohnpei) mischievous dwarves. The broad channel (*dau*) to the east of Kolonia Town, now spanned by a sturdy concrete bridge, is known as the Dau Sokele. Among the many stories told about them is one that describes the role they played in establishing the irreverent attitudes (*mwoumwouden Awak*) toward respect behavior (*wahu*) attributed to the people of Awak.

Cannibalism and Fear of the Interior

More notable were the Liet: ugly, lazy cannibals. The notion of cannibalism troubles the Pohnpei, as it does most peoples. People on Pohnpei today say (and there are earlier ethnohistoric reports) that their ancestors would ritually eat the hearts of fallen enemies (Riesenberg 1968, 88). But their concern about cannibalism has to do with the consumption of human flesh as a food source. One or more of the Sau Deleus, who appear in the oral traditions of a later period in Pohnpei history, were reputed to have been cannibals.

The cannibal Liet appear in tales of the very early era. In some cases they are described as the children of ordinary people, born without supernatural powers (Origins, 4). Luelen describes them as mutations ("*kiewek*"; see Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting 1977, 11) who originated from among the women, and ate their siblings, their parents, and their own children (Bernart 1977, 12). Silten says they were cruel and infamous and ate the wives and children of the early human settlers on Pohnpei (Silten, 10). He also suggests that they interbred with their human captives, and then ate their own children; other sources report them eating their own family members (*ibid*; Origins, 4).

Cannibalism appears in another theme that runs through much of Pohnpei oral tradition: a dichotomy between the interior of the island and the shore. Silten repeatedly emphasizes that the evil autochthons of Pohnpei, those he calls the people from under the earth, lived in the interior (or "in the center of Ponape") and attacked the people who settled along the shore (Silten, 10, 12).

In describing the history of Pohnpei's Soun Kawad clan, the Pohnpei anthropologist Rufino Mauricio puts together a cluster of repellant traits attributed to its founders: "The ancestral members of this clan are characterized as *inland dwellers*, rat eaters, and an endogamous group who violated many incest taboos" (Mauricio 1987, 65; my emphasis).

In pointing to the Pohnpei dichotomy between *nansapw* (loosely, "cultivated land") and *nanwel* (loosely, "forested area" or "jungle"), Akitoshi Shimizu notes that the *nanwel* is generally the area outside human authority, lying in the interior where the spirits ("*eni*") dwell. He tells us that when the

people of Pohnpei are in this latter province they refrain from calling to each other by name or title, so that the spirits will not learn them (Shimizu 1982, 169-170). Here we see an intersection between two of these themes, the importance of names and the dangers of the interior.

The antipathy the people of Pohnpei feel for the interior, and for the cannibal traits associated with it, appears again and again in the tales of Nan Madol and the Sau Deleurs. It is a theme, as Shimizu stresses, that continues to play a role in organizing modern Pohnpei life.

It is possible that this abhorrence of the interior, or as Silten puts it, "the center of Ponape," foreshadows yet another crucial theme. As we shall see, Pohnpei oral traditions lay considerable emphasis on opposition to political centralization. The Pohnpei attribute evil qualities to both the Sau Deleurs, who oversaw the legendary centralized polity based at Nan Madol, and to these repugnant demi-human dwellers in the center of the island. Even at this early stage in the island's mythohistory we find hints of the centrifugal political tendencies that characterize so much of Pohnpei cultural and social life.

Population Growth and Political Change

Population growth is another theme running through these tales from the early period. Reproduction and population increase ("*kaparapar*") are described in all Pohnpei clan origin myths (Mauricio 1987, 49). In Hambruch's Text No. 1 (the basic creation story dictated by the Kehoe brothers), population growth is stressed (Hambruch 1932, 334-335), and the theme is repeated by Silten (11-12), Luelen (Bernart 1977, 16, 65), and Masao Hadley (1981, 3). My anonymous text reports that the early period was a time when people were concerned with survival and increasing their population (Origins, 1).

Indigenous Pohnpei notions of political dynamics very clearly explain changes in the makeup and organization of polities as products of population growth. The process continues to function today (Petersen 1982), and this corpus of tales from the early period demonstrates that it is deeply embedded in Pohnpei political consciousness.

My anonymous text refers to this early period as the "time of the common people." It asserts that the people of Pohnpei had no central leader, only the heads of families, though there were also "a few strong and/or cruel men who wielded power through fear." Nor was there any respect language ("*meing*"), because no high-titled local rulers had as yet been recognized (Origins, 1-2).

Masao Hadley calls this era the "Age of People" ("*Mwehin Aramas*"). He reports that the people had no great leaders ("*kaun lapalap*"), only a few kinds of minor leaders ("*kaun tikitik*"). In those days the people did not work together well, he says, and disputes sometimes broke out because there was no great leader above the heads of the local descent groups--no one who could establish a single notion of justice (or rule of law) (Hadley 1981, 3).

Luelen wrote that although the land became more populous, the people had no leader ("*kaun*"), no nobles ("*soupeidi*"), and no major chiefdoms ("*wehi*") (Bernart 1977, 16). There were "no differences in rank for they had no ceremonies" (ibid, 65). (The phrase "no differences in rank" is written as "*sohte wahu*" in the original Pohnpei text. *Wahu* is usually translated as "honor" or "respect," but in this case I believe that it refers to the entire Pohnpei political system as a whole and that the translation captures his meaning.)

Luelen says at one point that the people of this era were poor (ibid, 65), but elsewhere says they did not have to work hard (ibid, 26). In Hambruch's Text No. 1 we are told that even though the people were not skilled, they still prospered (1932, 334). Because productive work plays such a critical role in the Pohnpei polity (Petersen 1984; Shimizu 1982, 158, 185), these two passages are, in fact, examples of political commentary. Although they reflect the common assumption that together, Pohnpei custom and the island's fertility ensure the agricultural abundance intrinsic to life there, they also refer to an era before the rise of competitive farming (i.e., before any system of rank other than lineage headship had evolved).

Pohnpei had regional subdivisions in those days, but these named areas did not have the status of *wehi* 'sovereign territories'. The names were geographical, not political.⁸ At one time the region roughly corresponding to modern Madolenihmw was known as Kohpwa Leli. Kiti was Kohpwa Lehng, and Sokehs was Pwapwalik. There are differing sets of names, but this tripartite division of ancient Pohnpei seems generally agreed upon.

Some Contradictions

I offer one final observation about these accounts from the early era. Like all Pohnpei sources, they sometimes contain internal contradictions. Although Luelen claims in his Chapter 8 that there were neither rulers nor nobles in those days, in Chapter 7 he speaks of the flower garlands ("*mwaramwar*") placed on a person's head in order to bestow upon them a title ("*mwar*") (Bernart 1977, 16). The existence of titles does not, then, necessarily imply that there were rulers.

My anonymous text says that there were only heads of families and no high-titled local rulers, but simultaneously notes that "Sau" was the highest title in Deleur (Origins, 1-2). It goes on to describe a type of shell tool known as a *pilik*, then notes that people who worked for the Nahnmwarki were also called *pilik* (ibid, 3). In their annotations to Luelen's account, Fischer, Riesenbergs, and Whiting note that he sometimes uses the term *Nahnmwarki* anachronistically (1977, 85), because it can mean the head of any independent state (not just a modern paramount chiefdom), but Luelen also employs it in his discussion of an era when, he tells us, there were no local rulers at all.

I repeat, these texts not only disagree with one another, they sometimes lack internal agreement and coherence. Their importance lies in the themes they recount, not in isolated bits and pieces of information.

The Construction of Nan Madol

We come now to the beginning of the cycle of myths most often told in modern Pohnpei, and which, perhaps, hold the most meaning for modern Pohnpei political life. This is the cycle running from the construction of the artificial islets and monumental architecture known as Nan Madol, through the rise of the Sau Deleurs, who ruled over all of Pohnpei, to the story of Isokelekel, who overthrew the last Sau Deleur and became the first Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw, thereby establishing the modern Pohnpei polity.

There has been a tendency to reduce the elements of this cycle to a bare outline, in which two brothers, Osihpa and Osohpa, are responsible for most of the construction, with one of them eventually becoming the first Sau Deleur (Athens 1983; Hanlon 1988, 9-13; Jencks 1970). But such schemata do not do justice to the variety of tales that deal with this era. As with the creation myths, there are far too many variants to be reduced into a single coherent account.

The Pali Stories

My interest in this topic stems in part from having heard tales about a character (or characters) named Pali. These do not appear in the Luelen and Masao Hadley collections and are invariably excluded from consideration when scholars discuss the origins of Nan Madol. Yet Ioakim David of U has told me, over a span of fifteen years, a number of stories about Pali's role in the construction of Nan Madol. When his accounts are juxtaposed with some of Silten's stories and some of Hambruch's texts, it becomes clear that we have a strong variant tradition in which the design for and building of Nan Madol began well before Osihpa and Osohpa appeared on the scene.¹

Pali and its cognates are widespread Central Carolinean terms for navigator or sailing master (Hambruch 1936a, 156; Lessa 1961, 27). A character called Pali appears in a number of Hambruch's texts. He is described as a man who travels widely, led by his curiosity to visit all parts of the world (Hambruch 1936b, 216-217). In Text No. 27 the Pohnpei people give him the name Pali--"*wehwe saun ko wai*" ("meaning a master or expert of the foreign world") because of the expertise he acquires in his travels (ibid, 410).

In Awak, stories are still told about Pali, particularly about his failed attempt to travel to the edge of the earth and enter the heavens. This tale

appears in detail in Hambruch's Text No. 6, where it is noted that ever since then the people of Pohnpei have known that the world is flat (ibid, 216-217).

Warren Kehoe (who was known to Hambruch as Ricardo) told John Fischer of a Pali who traveled widely (personal communication). He explained that "Pali" was like a title; when one Pali died another would succeed him. He lived on Mal island, near Nan Madol. Ioakim David similarly explains that there were many Palis, though they are all spoken of as if they were one. (The Sau Deleurs, who appear shortly thereafter in Pohnpei history, are spoken of in the same way. These seem to be the first examples of inherited titles important enough to eclipse the individuals who held them.)

According to Ioakim, Pali came from the east or the south. On different occasions he has suggested the Marshall Islands, the South Pacific, and Katau. Ioakim describes Pali as an "engineer" who developed a "master plan" (he used the English terms, in otherwise Pohnpei-language discussions, in both cases) for Pohnpei. (Silten [6] called his master builders "professors.")²

As Ioakim understands Pali's master plan, it included both the initial construction of Pohnpei and the later building of Nan Madol: Nan Madol was a planned part of Pohnpei from the very inception of the island in this account. Olsihpa and Olsohpa did not plan or build Nan Madol, he says. They came later, after Pali. On another occasion, however, he tacked, suggesting that although they did work on the construction of Pohnpei, they were not involved in the building of Nan Madol.

He has also told me that Nan Madol was planned by a group of people who developed a "*pali*," a "master plan." They came from "the outside," four men and two women, and from this experience comes the phrase "*Kapara inen Katau*," which refers to the dangers of Pohnpei's being taken over by outsiders (a recurring theme, as we have seen).³

Though Silten makes no mention of the name Pali, his account coincides neatly with Ioakim's and those in Hambruch's texts. Pali was reckoned as a voyager with much expertise. Silten speaks of the "master builders" as wise men. In his account, unnamed voyagers settled on the outer (seaward) edge of the area known as Deleur in what is present-day Madolenihmw. They built a town, Nan Madol, on the reef Sounahleng, founding it with mana. "Other voyagers came and helped populate this town. . . . Two men also came from Downwind. The name of one was Olsohpa and the other Olsihpa" (Silten, 13-14).

Silten is quite explicit. After searching out a site for (in which to locate) their mana, the pair "returned to the Southeast, near this shining town. This place was good for the seat of their mana to be there for it faced Upwind Katau" (ibid, 15). Olsohpa and Olsihpa then engage in supernatural activities to *extend* the construction there, but it is clear in this version that these two brothers came along well after work at Nan Madol had begun.

All these accounts suggest that Pali predates Olsihpa and Olsohpa. It may well be that the Pali tales themselves represent a cycle of myths from an earlier period. Good comparative evidence exists for this.

On Ulithi atoll, far to the west of Pohnpei, where *pelü* means "navigator," William Lessa recorded a tale he entitles " 'Pälülop' and his Family" (1961, 27-34). It concerns "the family of deities that brought the arts of canoe building and navigation into the world," telling specifically of Pälülop, "whose name means 'great canoe captain' or 'great navigator'--a supernatural sky-being from whom this knowledge eventually descended to earth through one of his sons" (ibid, 27). Much of this tale, astoundingly enough, is set on an islet known as Umal or Mal, lying off Pohnpei, where Pälülop's family establishes itself after leaving heaven (Läng). This is precisely the speck of land Warren Kehoe identifies as Pali's home.

In his comparative analysis of this tale, Lessa draws on several versions from Yap about a character known there as Peloolap, with the same Pohnpei setting, and a version from Lamotrek that is set on Pulap atoll. In one of the Yapese tales, the "southern version," Peloolap is originally a chief on Mal who makes his way to heaven (ibid, 99-103; Muller 1918, 744-770). Lessa expresses his own surprise that there is no similar tale from Pohnpei (1961, 105).

If, however, we substitute the Pohnpei Pali's reputation as architect of the island's "master plan" for the Ulithi Pälülop's status as a "great navigator," recognizing the differing cultural significance of the two types of activity, we find a deep, underlying connection between the two. It would appear that the Pohnpei Pali's role in the creation of the island and planning for Nan Madol reflect an older, early Carolinian tradition, still remembered in the western islands, and that Olsihpa and Olsohpa represent a later, specifically Pohnpei overlay. Their western origins may well serve to compensate for the eastern genesis of Isokelekel, a Pohnpei culture-hero, a matter to which I shall return.

Silten repeatedly tells us that these early settlers/builders feared the beings who inhabited the interior of the island. The Kohna, Sokele, and Liet, as well as "real people" lived in the areas of Madolenihmw now known as Lehdau and Enimwahn, while in Lepinsed lived "great deities of the sea." Because they feared these "people," the voyagers who built Nan Madol settled on Temwen, the offshore island against which the complex abuts. Even as new settlers came and joined them, and their numbers increased, they continued to be "constantly afraid of the people of the center of Pohnpei." And when Olsohpa and Olsihpa searched for a site for their own work, they abandoned a spot in the northeast "because the two were afraid of the people of the mountains and river people" (Silten, 13-15).

Olsihpa and Olsohpa

We can now turn to the more widely known accounts of Olsihpa and Olsohpa, who are most often cited as the builders of Nan Madol. There is little agreement about who these two were, and whence they came. They are sometimes called boys (Hambruch 1936b, 61), but are also described as "mature" (Origins, 4). Most accounts speak of them as voyagers from

Downwind (west) Katau, but Luelen also describes them as coming from Yap (Bernart 1977, 28). One contemporary Madolenihmw man told me that they were probably from Japan, as evidenced by their great skills. Hambruch's Text No. 5, however, describes them as "*me kin kosang ni sahpw en Sokehs*" ("coming from Sokehs"), which uses the form "*kin*" to suggest that they were natives of or had long resided in Sokehs (Hambruch 1936b, 61).

They are said variously to have traveled to Pohnpei in a single large canoe, as part of a fleet, or riding on a sandspit (Bernart 1977, 28). Masao Hadley says they were skilled in all things (1981, 3), and my anonymous text says they were "quite knowledgeable in the ways of travelling to different places" (Origins, 4). These attributes evoke the descriptions of Pali, the knowledgeable traveler. Hadley has them arriving on the third of the early voyages to Pohnpei (1981, 3), while Luelen places them on the seventh voyage (Bernart 1977, 27).⁴ Hadley, echoing Hambruch's Text No. 5, says they lived in Sokehs for a "very long time" (1981, 3), while Luelen has them quickly heading off to Net (Bernart 1977, 28).

The Search for a Site

Accounts of Olsihpa and Olsohpa tend to agree that they were seeking a suitable site in which to worship or practice certain rituals. They began their attempts to construct a place of worship along the Sokehs shore, but found the waves and currents too strong and so began a wider search. Various accounts name spots in modern Sokehs, Net, U, and Madolenihmw: Seupai, Ihpwal, Timwenpwel, Tipwendongalap, Likin Mwel, Wenik Peidak, and Alokapw (Hadley 1981, 4; Bernart 1977, 28; Origins, 4-5; P. Ehrlich, personal communication).

They ultimately discover a suitable site at a spot on the reef in Madolenihmw, off the seaward edge of Temwen island, variously called Sounahleng, Nan Koapwoaramen, and Mesenlehng (Hadley 1981, 4; Hambruch 1936b, 63; Origins, 5). Its suitability is either accounted for by the much smaller waves, which made construction possible (Hambruch 1936b, 63), or because it was appropriate for Olsihpa's and Olsohpa's mana because it faced Upwind Katau (although they were themselves from Downwind) (Silten, 15). My anonymous text explains that "the people were not looking for areas of land, flat areas seemingly good for agriculture or building houses. They sought a special place in the ocean" (Origins, 6-7).

It is worth noting that these accounts show a rare consistency about the direction of Olsihpa's and Olsohpa's journey: they travel clockwise around the island from the west along the north coast to the eastern shore. All subsequent references to circuits around the island, described in various texts and in a range of contexts, proceed in this same direction, even those actually originating in the east.⁵

One passage in Masao Hadley's original Pohnpei-language text offers an interesting linguistic note to this search. He describes Olsihpa and Olsohpa

climbing a mountain. They spot Sounahleng and decide that it is a likely place for their project, descend from the peak, and rejoin their companions. The group then proceeds to Sounahleng and picks a specific site.

In this Pohnpei-language text, the pronoun in this passage is "*ira*," the second-person dual form of *they*, until they have descended from the mountain and rejoined their companions. From this point onward the pronoun is "*irail*," the second-person plural form of *they*. While Olsihpa and Olsihpa do the searching, the construction process itself is consistently spoken of as a group activity, not the work of just two men (Hadley 1981, 4). The relevance of this will appear shortly.

Construction Begins

The actual construction work on Nan Madol entailed both manual labor and the use of magic or sorcery, according to most sources. Olsihpa and Olsihpa flew large stones to the site from several points around the island. People in Awak today point to several large, broken basalt blocks which reportedly fell from the sky as they flew on their way from Sokehs to Nan Madol, landing partway up the Awak valley.

According to Masao Hadley, and in contrast to Hambruch's Text No. 5 (1936b, 63), the waves and currents at the site were still too strong for the work to proceed. Kideu Menien arrived from Sokehs riding a basalt rock and, using it for a foundation, wove a spell that settled a wall strong enough to withstand the sea (Hadley 1981, 5). Silten tells us magic fixed the stones into place on the walls (Silten, 15), but Hadley explains that putting the large stones on top of the highest walls was done partly with magic ("*ahmara*," still used today in order to lighten heavy loads) and partly by a few very large and strong people who lived on Pohnpei in those days (Hadley 1981, 6).

I have heard many people of modern Pohnpei speak about the task of building Nan Madol. They can understand how their ancestors might have used rafts and inclined planes to move the stones into place, but by and large, they say, there was much greater mana in those days, and stronger magic. Their ancestors used the magic to do the heavy work, they assure me, not mechanical devices.

After the larger stones were laid in place, Masao Hadley tells us, the foundations of the islets were filled in with smaller coral and basalt rocks (1981, 6). My anonymous text explains that the area of modern Madolenihmw running from Enimwahn to Lepinsed--several miles of shoreline on either side of Nan Madol--has the fewest rocks of any place on Pohnpei: they all went into the site (Origins, 5).

The Occupation of Nan Madol

We must now confront one of the more puzzling aspects of Nan Madol's history. In the Pali stories and the Silten manuscript, Nan Madol has a

complex history and multiple purposes. Luellen and Masao Hadley, on the other hand, initially describe it as being built as a center for worship. Yet, as we read their full accounts, and those in Hambruch and my anonymous text, we are told that a wide range of activities took place there. Though the majority of the islets are called *pehi*, indicating that they played a role in worship, we also read of soldiers' quarters (Hadley 1981, 73), of a "palace" (Hambruch 1936b, 13), places to prepare food (Hadley 1981, 70), and a place of refuge or deliberation (Bernart 1977, 28), among other things. According to my anonymous text, "In the plan for this city, each island's responsibility was unique. There was no island without its special task" (Origins, 5).

Nan Madol's roles appear, then, to have been both religious and political from the outset, and indeed, the two spheres are inseparable in this context. Both Masao Hadley and my anonymous text speak of the site's central or "Great Ritual" ("*Pwong Lapalap*") (cf, the "*pwung en sahpw*" mentioned in Hambruch 1936b, 62) as worship of Nahnisohsapw 'Honored Spirit of the Land'. This spirit is described as being embodied in an eel known as Nan Samohl, which was also called the "Great Spirit" (Origins, 7; Hadley 1981, 13).⁶ A detailed description of the ritual is also given in Hambruch's Text No. 101 (dictated by Nanpei en Madolenimw). There, however, it is the turtle fed to the eel, rather than the eel itself, that is known as Nanusunsap (Nahnisohsapw) (Hambruch 1936b, 92-95).

The chronology of these accounts is extremely confusing. Hadley writes, at a point even before Olsihpa and Olsopha have begun searching for a suitable site, that they wanted to build a place of worship for this Nahnisohsapw, in order to sanctify and empower ("*kasarawi oh kamanahla*") the spirit so that it might become the leader ("*kaun lapalap*") of all Pohnpei (Hadley 1981, 4). After construction was completed, Hadley writes, "the ceremony was the basis of the honor and authority of the high chiefs, so that they could rule the people and the products of the land" ("*Ih kaudok wet me wahu oh manaman en Soupeidi tepsangie, pwe irail en kakaun tohn sahpw oh audepen sahpw*") (1981, 13).

At a later point, during the reign of the Sau Deleurs, Hadley tells us, the priests who conducted these ceremonies began using a turtle in the worship, feeding its stomach to the eel (1981, 14-17).

Luellen also mentions the ceremonies at Nan Madol, but only in passing. In their annotations, Fischer, Riesenbergh, and Whiting point to the problematical semantics involved in interpreting this worship. In these ceremonies, the sacred eel was fed a turtle. The Pohnpei term for turtle, *wehi*, is the same as the term for major or sovereign political divisions, *wehi*. They report that one of their informants (Kesner, who is now known as Masao Hadley) "says that the meaning 'state' derives from that of 'turtle', the turtle ceremonies having apparently been central and critical to political cohesion and development" (1977, 74).

At another point, Luellen mentions that the people of Kiti began to worship the turtle at the time when Pohnpei divided and became several

"states" ("*wehi*") (1977, 165). Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting write: "The implication is strong here that turtle worship began only after the overthrow of the last Lord of Deleur [Sau Deleur] by Isokelekel and the breaking up of Ponape into several states" (1977, 129).

To summarize, Masao Hadley traces the political meaning of the eel worship to a period before the beginnings of Nan Madol, and places the introduction of the turtle ceremonies during the following Sau Deleur period. Luelen is interpreted by his editors as implying that this ceremony began after the demise of the Sau Deleurs and the end of Nan Madol's central place in Pohnpei's political life. Obviously, we cannot rely on the variant traditions of the myths themselves to establish the chronology of these events.

The Political Implications of Nan Madol

While the chronology of the ceremonies conducted at Nan Madol is confusing, the sequence of political developments accompanying its construction may well be beyond comprehension. The utterly contradictory character of these oral traditions played a role in prompting me to write this essay, and in a sense they serve as the axis upon which it turns.

On the one hand, Masao Hadley explains that from the very start Olsihpa and Olsopha wanted this place of worship to honor a spirit that would become the leader of all Pohnpei (1981, 4). Asking the people of Pohnpei to assist them, the brothers "told the people that if the work was successful and completed it would do something very important for Pohnpei" (ibid, 6).

According to my anonymous text,

Nan Madol was built as site of worship for or of Nahnisohnsapw.

Nahnisohnsapw: 'Isoh' means an important ruler, or respect for him.

'Isohnsapw' means "a high ruler of the land" was already recognized. An important ruler who was cruel or demanded tribute would not be respected, for a form of worship was about to arise, and customs governing all features of life would come from it. Thus when the worship of Nahnisohnsapw was about to begin, it began to rule the lives of many people. Important rulers were already in existence, and the whole kingdom came under the influence of the special customs deriving from this form of worship. (Origins, 6)

This notion of a political system that organizes proper care for the people under a just ruler reappears in Hadley's justifications for the rise of both the Sau Deleurs and the Nahnmwarkis (1981, 9, 47). It reflects an underlying assumption about the priority of political ideas over the actualities of practice. Yet many traditions suggest that events unfolded in a quite different manner.

The anonymous text, which says explicitly that " 'a high ruler of the land' was already recognized," later explains that "local rulers were not yet known on Pohnpei," "that titles as such did not yet exist," and that it was not until much later that "the chiefs and those responsible for the work were recognized" (Origins, 8).

This confirms what I have learned from Ioakim David, among others, who maintains that the construction of Nan Madol was a group effort. There was no ruler in charge of the work. At that time, he says, there were no high-ranking people, no Nahnmwarkis ("*sohte soupeidi, sohte Nahnmwarki*"). Only the elders of the kinship groups ("*meseni en keinek*"). Was the work done under a system of democracy? Yes, he says.

Ioakim (and others including the Nahnmwarki of U) stresses that the rise of the original Sau Deleurs came after the construction of Nan Madol. He explains that the first Sau Deleur came from outside Pohnpei, after the work was well underway. He may have had some influence on the architecture, Ioakim allows, suggesting that the original Sau Deleur might have come from Egypt, because Nan Madol exhibits similarities to the pyramids. (Silten [6] suggested that the master builders who created Pohnpei were from Asia.)

The notion that the work was done willingly and cooperatively, rather than under orders from a ruler, can be found in the other texts as well. Olsihpa and Olsohpa determine that the work is more than they and their companions can manage. So they decide to make a request ("*pekpek ehu*") of all the Pohnpei people: "that they adopt a proper disposition, cooperate with them, assist, and take responsibility for carrying out this work" ("*irail en lamalam mwahu oh miniminiong irail oh iang sewese oh pwukoaki wiada doadoahk wet*"). Their request met with success because the people "greeted the news joyfully and joined together to assist with the work" ("*ni arail rongehr apw pereniki oh pokonpenehr oh ieng sewesedahr doadoahk wet*") (Hadley 1981, 6).

Luelen is quite explicit about how this work proceeded:

They started their work and it was going to succeed. They gathered all the people of Ponape together, to come and assist them in their work so it might succeed. And the whole of Ponape joined them in pursuing their work.

Now the people of all Ponape were happy and assembled to help them with their work. (Bernart 1977, 28)

The word translated as "gathered" appears in Luelen's original text as "*ki pana*" (*kihpen*e in standard orthography). David Hanlon suggests that this implies an element of coercion on Olsihpa's and Olsohpa's part (Hanlon 1988, 9; Athens and Hanlon 1986). All but one of the people of Pohnpei I have asked about this have replied that in the present context the proper translation is simply "gathered." Given the appearance of "assist" ("*jauaja*"/"*sewese*") twice in this passage, along with "joined" and "assembled" ("*iang*") and "happy" ("*peren*"), I can see no reason to impute an element of force into "*kihpen*e."

Finally, we encounter a shared notion that the rise of a leader or ruler on Pohnpei came about as a direct *product* of the work at Nan Madol. Luelen tells us that after Nan Madol was built the land became "large and populous." Olsihpa died and Olsohpa "became their ruler [*kaun*]. Everyone obeyed him, for they were used to his voice from the time when they cooperated in the

work of the town" (Bernart 1977, 33). He further states the first high titles ("*mwar me kalaimwun*") date "from the time of that man who first came to rule [*kaunda*]" Ponape" (ibid, 36).

My anonymous text explains that chiefs and those responsible for the work were recognized afterward, and that "the titles were derived from the work responsibilities of the men . . . , for their titles were the names of the responsibilities they bore" (Origins, 8).

Masao Hadley says "The Ponapeans respected and regarded Olsohpa because they had become accustomed to hearing his voice and his advice concerning the great work. They respected him and regarded him seriously. Olsohpa came to appear as a great leader [*kaun lapalapmen*]" (1981, 7-8).

Silten, whose version has the work underway before the arrival of Olsohpa and Olsihpa, also places the first leader before this time. The new country was built, he says, and the town was named Nan Madol. "This town was glorious indeed and honored. They founded it with their mana. They elevated a man to rule them. His name was Mwohnmwehi" (Silten, 14). Mwohnmwehi is the name usually given to the first Sau Deleur.

In Pohnpei mythology and tradition, Nan Madol is integrally and intimately connected with the idea of a single, powerful ruler of all Pohnpei. But the fact is that we can say little more about Nan Madol's status than this, because the variant traditions offer such contradictory accounts of the connection's substance. Some of these texts tell us Nan Madol was built as a means of establishing a single rule on Pohnpei, and others say the rise of such a ruler was the result of the construction activity itself.

Nan Madol's enormous, awe-inspiring, megalithic presence is a concrete reality that cannot be overlooked or denied. Obviously, a great deal of labor and organization went into its construction. But the stories about it cannot be taken as accurate accounts of what took place there. Rather, they must be read as statements about the sociopolitical ideas of the people who tell them, that is, the modern Pohnpei. Likewise, stories about the Sau Deleurs, who are said to have lived there, and Isokelekel, who is reputed to have overthrown the Sau Deleurs, must be approached in the same fashion.

There is a tendency for those who study Pohnpei prehistory to merge stories of the powerful Sau Deleur dynasty with the building of Nan Madol.⁷ I used to do this myself, until I visited Pahn Kedira, the legendary home of the Sau Deleurs, with Masao Hadley. In asking him a question, I spoke of the time when the Sau Deleurs built Nan Madol. "Oh no," he replied, "the Sau Deleurs did not build Nan Madol. Olsihpa and Olsohpa did."

The Rise of the Sau Deleurs

The Region Known as Deleur

The initial appearance of the term *Deleur* is fraught with contraries. Silten seems to suggest that the term predates Nan Madol. He says that Deleur is a country on the east side of Pohnpei, "good and glorious to live in. It has channels to the sea, there are many little islands on the exterior. The sun shines on it first and also the moon." He names three "towns" within Deleur: Enimwahn, Lehdau, and Lepinsed (Silten, 13). Taken at their broadest extent, these three regions comprise what is basically modern Madolenihmw, implying that Deleur and Madolenihmw are one.

Silten continues, "Some voyagers came to Ponape and came on to this country, for they wanted to live there. They settled in the outer part of the district (eg, Temwen, etc) and made their groups of houses there (such places as Nan Madol) . . . for they wanted to war against the country of Deleur" (ibid, 13-14).¹

When work at Nan Madol was completed, there was a meeting of "the heads of the towns and the people . . . and the rulers of the rivers and the sacred men" who "decided they would war against the country of Deleur and seized the country of Deleur. They then joined together these two countries into one country which was called Sounahleng [Reef of Heaven]. They then gave their leader the title of Master of Deleur [Sau Deleur] for he had seized the country of Deleur" (ibid, 15).

The anonymous text, on the other hand, reports that "This beautiful city was called Madolenihmw. While it was under construction, and even when it was finished, the name given to the foundation of the work on this city was called Deleur" (Origins, 5).

Masao Hadley writes that after the death of Olsohpa, a number of sacred or holy men met and sanctified Nan Madol and also the Island of Temwen "and gave it the name 'Deleur'. They also bestowed a chiefly title Sau Deleur upon a man in whom they had faith" (1981, 9).

These texts, not surprisingly, seem at odds with the information provided to Saxe, Allenson, and Loughbridge, who were told that Deleur was one of four *wehi* in what is now Madolenihmw: Enimwahn, Lehdau, Lepinsed, and Deleur (1980, 92). Saxe, Allenson, and Loughbridge "tend to view Nan Madol Central as a creation of Deleur, whose corals and highest ranks, and clans come from Metipw [an area within Deleur]," and believe "the emerging

boundaries of Greater Nan Madol were the boundaries of the old *wehi* named Deleur, whose rulers, the *Saudeleur*, are credited with the construction of "Nan Madol Central" (ibid, 19). Saxe, Allenson, and Loughbridge continue:

It is, in analog to Washington, D.C., a capital city (*nunwei*) built where none existed before; probably built with labor and materials from the different *wehi* of Ponape, to symbolize the centralization of power embodied in the unification and subordination of previously independent polities. A single administrative center, located at Pwonopwun en Deleur, of Deleur coral, to symbolize the new supremacy of the apex of the pyramid, the *Saudeleur*. (Ibid, 93)

Long experience tells me that there is nothing unusual about one source describing Deleur as encompassing three other named territories and a second source ranking it as a fourth entity beside the first three. But there seems to be no written text crediting the Sau Deleurs with the construction of Nan Madol. Even the relation of Deleur to Nan Madol is uncertain.

Such great confusion reigns because the myths and traditions are nearly unanimous in associating the Sau Deleurs with Nan Madol, particularly the islet known as Pahn Kedira. And the Sau Deleurs are of overwhelming significance in present day explanations of modern Pohnpei political institutions. There are, furthermore, a great many texts dealing with the Sau Deleurs, at least partly because there are supposed to have been many members of the dynasty. But, I repeat, none of the texts suggests that there even was a Sau Deleur, nor any of the political centralization with which they are identified, until after Nan Madol was built.

The Sau Deleur Dynasty

Many who study Pohnpei--and perhaps some people of Pohnpei as well--share a tendency to combine all the various accounts of the Sau Deleurs into one monolithic character. Although off-hand references to the Sau Deleurs in modern Pohnpei are meant to evoke the dynasty's reputation for arbitrary cruelty and greed, the texts themselves offer us a much more varied view of these legendary characters.

Although many sources do not specifically enumerate the Sau Deleurs, we do find statements that there were seven, eight, twelve, and sixteen of them (the multiples of four are notable, because it is a number with powerful magical and supernatural connotations on Pohnpei) (Whiting 1954, 4-5; Warren Kehoe via J. L. Fischer, personal communication; Hambruch 1936b, 82; Jencks 1970, 7).

We find repeated references to the personal characteristics of the earliest Sau Deleurs. Luelen, for example, lists their names along with brief notes about them:

1. Monmuei [Mwonomwei]²--this man followed Olsohpa.
2. Inenenmuei [Inenen Mwehi]--this man was very respected.

3. Jakonmwei [Sakon Mwehi]--this man was haughty and presumptuous.
4. Jaraitinjap [Sareid en Sahpw]--this man had magic power.
5. Raipuinlang [Raipwenleng]--this man was rich.
6. Raipuinloko [Raipwenlako]--this man ate the flesh of people.
7. Jau-temoi [Saudemwohi]--he was the man who sank in the time of war [a reference to his demise, see below]. (Bernart 1977, 37)

Masao Hadley does not provide a simple listing, but from his text we can glean the following (Hadley 1981, 9-41):

1. Mwonomwei-- these first two "were very generous
2. Inenenmwehi-- to all the people of Pohnpei."
3. Sakon Mwehi--"very cruel," and "had a very high opinion of himself, he said he had no peer."
4. Sareid en Sahpw--he "had much mana because everything he said succeeded."
5. Raipwenleng--"very wealthy," he possessed "many kinds of mats, many woven belts, much sennit, and over forty wives . . . , many beautiful kinds of jewelry."
6. Raipwenlako--"used to eat human flesh."
7. Ket Paramok
8. Saudemwohi--"cruel to the people and also the spirits."

Hadley also recounts tales about a number of other Sau Deleurs "whose titles are not clear" (ibid, 27). Warren Kehoe told John Fischer that the eighth and last Sau Deleur's name was Pereidensapw (personal communication).

Tales of the Sau Deleurs

The individual characters of the Sau Deleurs are described in more detail in some of the various tales about them. A few of them are spoken of with admiration and respect, others with fear and loathing. We find in accounts of the Sau Deleurs a good example of a political system--the centralized rule that characterizes this period--being criticized while the individuals who participate in it are distinguished from the system itself.

Certain themes, some of them crosscutting, appear repeatedly in these tales. They demonstrate the complex characters attributed to the Sau Deleurs.

One extremely common theme is the Sau Deleurs' demands for tribute. These are often summed up in the persona of the Sau Deleur known as Sakon Mwehi. *Sakon* or *soakon* is often translated in this context as "cruel," but as Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting point out, the word "can have good connotations as well as bad. It is considered admirable for a male of high rank to be somewhat *sakon*, i.e., 'forceful', 'bold', 'aggressive'" (1977, 30).

Undoubtedly, Sakon Mwehi's most famous, or infamous, trait was his insistence that people not eat so much as a head louse without paying tribute

(giving a portion) to the Sau Deleur (Hadley 1977, 19; Hambruch 1932, 335).³ A wide range of other texts give other examples of their demands for tribute (Hambruch 1936*b*, 125, 350, 370; Origins, 9-10; Silten, 16-17).

A number of stories, attributed to various and usually unnamed Sau Deleurs, tell of the difficult tasks they would assign to the people, sometimes as punishment meted out to those who failed to pay tribute. Many of these stories are about a quest for a mythical bird, Derepeiso or Tiripeiso, which various people are sent off to obtain for the Sau Deleur. In one text the Sau Deleur is happy when he receives a feather from the bird (Hambruch 1936*b*, 382), in another he dies when he gets only the feather (Hambruch 1936*a*, 219), and in a third the clan spirit of the man sent on the quest brings about the supernatural doom that ends the Sau Deleur's reign (Hadley 1981, 39; Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting 1977, 34).

The Sau Deleurs, for all the power ascribed to them, are by no means invincible. In several stories a Sau Deleur is killed and in at least two he is killed and brought back to life (Hadley 1981, 32; Hambruch 1936*b*, 219-220, 288, 383). One cycle of tales recounts the successful opposition of the Lepen Palikir, the leader of the area known as Palikir, in what is present-day Sokehs.

The Sau Deleur orders Lepen Palikir to come pay him homage. Lepen Palikir, whose existential status in these tales is unclear, has the appearance of a large rooster. Lepen Palikir goes to Nan Madol and, according to most accounts, kills the Sau Deleur for failing to respect him (Hadley 1981, 27; Hambruch 1936*b*, 169-173). One notable facet of this tale is that it is sometimes cited as evidence that the Sau Deleurs never entirely dominated Pohnpei: Palikir was always autonomous. A similar argument is sometimes made in Kiti: because the Wene high priest Soukise was autonomous, Kiti was never entirely under the Sau Deleurs (Fischer, personal communication).

Another theme woven through these tales has to do with the problem of cannibalism. Although at least one Sau Deleur, Raipwenloko, was reputed to have been a cannibal himself, there are in fact texts that describe the Sau Deleurs as playing an important part in ridding Pohnpei of the cannibal Liet. Most of these entail an individual Sau Deleur who either marries a Liet, has a daughter who is Liet, or both. The Liet child eats the Sau Deleur's son and the Sau Deleur then exiles all the Liet from Pohnpei (Silten, 16; Hadley 1981, 28).

In Hambruch's Text No. 80*b*, Ricardo Kehoe says that the Liet were banished to "Peidi," which, he says, foreigners know as the Solomon Islands or New Britain. Their population increased and they are still there, eating people (1936*b*, 271-273). This text sheds a little light on an event that took place in the mid-1970s, when a patrol boat from the newly independent nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG) visited Pohnpei on a goodwill mission. A Pohnpei man asked a PNG sailor if the people of New Guinea still eat humans. The sailor calmly replied, "Not as many as we used to."⁴

Hambruch also records texts that recount the tale of two boys trading their mother to the Sau Deleur for some dog meat. Their mother is a turtle

("wehi") (Hambruch 1936a, 165; 1936b, 345). Elsewhere, this basic story is used as an explanation for the beginning of the turtle ceremonies that are sometimes linked to origins of the political entities known as *wehi*.

Ambivalence

Ambivalence toward the Sau Deleur dynasty as a whole runs through these stories and is summed up by Luelen: "some of them were good, some of them were bad, some of them were oppressive and cruel and bad" (Bernart 1977, 73). Luelen writes that the Sau Deleur "was not controlled because there was no one whom he was under" (ibid, 71). This phrase echoes one that I have often heard in modern Pohnpei, an assertion of individual autonomy: *I (Ke) sohte kak mihmi pahn ohl* 'I (You) can't be under anyone'.

Silten tells us the Sau Deleur "became respected in all parts of the center of Ponape and in all places near the shore, because he had grown rich, had mana, and his weapons had grown numerous and were widely recognized in Ponape, and he was bold. . . . The reputation of Sau Deleur was respected all around, such as his mana, his imperiousness, and his boldness" (Silten, 16-17). A clue to ambivalent Pohnpei attitudes toward the Sau Deleurs appears in this passage. They were respected in all parts of the center of the island. The people of the interior of the island had long been feared as cannibals, we read in a number of texts, and it is one of the Sau Deleurs who rids the island of them. The strength and boldness attributed to the Sau Deleurs, as Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting note, is something to be respected as well as feared.

What many of these tales appear to chronicle is a shift in attitudes. The Sau Deleurs began as founders of an era that brought (or was intended to bring) good to Pohnpei. Their rule evolved out of ceremonies conducted at Nan Madol, that were supposed to benefit the people of Pohnpei. But in time they grew cruel and avaricious.

Although the modern Pohnpei political system is generally attributed to Isokelekel, who was to overthrow the last Sau Deleur, Masao Hadley's text tells us that many of the specific respect forms incorporated in this system were actually devised during the Sau Deleur era. He describes the services ("*uhpa*") that were known in the broadest sense as offerings or "first fruits" ("*nopwei*"); these are largely the same categories of foods and feasts that still mark the yearly agricultural cycle on Pohnpei (Hadley 1981, 10-12; Shimizu 1982).

The first fruits and respect forms originated during the reign of the first Sau Deleur, but only in outline. More specific details were developed during the time of his successor. It was during his reign that "the mana and honor of all things came into being, because the work of each of Nan Madol's islands had been assigned" ("*manaman oh waun sohng koaros mielahr, pwe soandi en doadoahngkan ni ehu ehu dekehn Nan Madol mieiehr touwe*") (Hadley 1981, 12).

But in time "Sau Deleur gained supremacy over all the little towns on Ponape and all the great people and all the small islands around Ponape. They were all under him and he made them his servants and ordered them around very much" (Silten, 17). "Sau Deleur was strong and powerful because he could fight spirits" (Origins, 10).

Masao Hadley finally sums up the era of the Sau Deleurs: "Ponape experienced great hardship. . . . It was a frightening and unhappy period because everything was difficult" (1981, 38). There was, he says, "no freedom for the people" ("*sohte saledek en aramas*") (ibid). I want to emphasize this last phrase because the term *saledek* 'freedom' is one that appears at several other historical junctures. The modern Pohnpei quest for it has deep roots and legendary antecedents.

The Fall of the Sau Deleurs

The fall of the Sau Deleurs is well known in its simple outline form. A Pohnpei deity, Nansapwe 'Thunder', commits adultery with the Sau Deleur's wife. The Sau Deleur captures and imprisons him. Nansapwe escapes to Upwind Katau and impregnates an elderly clanswoman. She gives birth to Isokelekel, who eventually sails to Pohnpei. He overthrows the last Sau Deleur and becomes the first Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw, thereby establishing the modern Pohnpei political system.

Even in its simplest form, this tale gives rise to an important question. Should Isokelekel be viewed as a foreigner who conquers Pohnpei, or is he better understood as symbolizing an indigenous Pohnpei revolt against the Sau Deleurs? When I initially learned this story, and understood it in the outline form I just described, I debated this dichotomy in my own mind and decided in favor of the latter perspective: the Isokelekel story is about the Pohnpei ridding themselves of an unwanted political system. My decision was based primarily on intuition. Having studied the texts in detail, I now think my intuition was essentially right, but there is so much more to the story that I now attribute my accuracy to luck rather than insight.

In outline, it certainly appears as if the last Sau Deleur's fall is the result of his treatment of Nansapwe. But, as usual, a number of texts tell quite a different story. The hard times of the Sau Deleur era were not limited to the people of Pohnpei themselves, according to these texts. Pohnpei's gods were experiencing similar hardships.

As Masao Hadley tells it, the last Sau Deleur was not only cruel to the people, but "also to the spirits. This is why the people and the spirits of the clans hated him and brought retribution [*kariahla*] upon him" (1981, 41). A priest or diviner named Saum warned the Sau Deleur of his impending downfall, and for this the Sau Deleur insulted him. "This sort of behavior toward high-ranking people, priests, and spirits as well as everyone else cursed the Sau Deleurs' reign and brought it to an end" (ibid, 40). This episode is also recounted in Hambruch's Text No. 205 (1936b, 319).

According to Luelen, the Sau Deleur "did not respect [*wahui*] any of the high gods. This is why the gods took away his honour and he became doomed by all of them. They hated him. There was no one against whom he did not do something wrong" (Bernart 1977, 71).

Silten describes the impending doom in great detail, titling one section of his manuscript "The Cursing of the Sau Deleurs" and the next "The Second Dooming of Sau Deleur." "The high gods, some high men, some sacred men, some great animals, some lesser animals--it is they who doomed Sau Deleur" (Silten, 19). After mentioning in passing the insult to Saum and the demands placed on Lepen Moar, he says, "It was these kinds of demands about which the high gods of Ponape and the high men of Ponape, and the sacred men of Ponape and the spirit mediums got angry and brought by magic the destruction of Ponape" (ibid, 20).

The role played by a man holding the title Lepen Moar is touched upon in many accounts. Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting (1977, 33-34) discuss these variants at length in their annotations to Luelen's book. Luelen tells us that the god Sahngoro deliberately tricked Lepen Moar so that the Sau Deleur would think him guilty of failing to provide first fruits from a banana planting; the Sau Deleur assigned Lepen Moar a difficult task as punishment and thereby set him, his clansmates, and their clan goddess Inas against the Sau Deleur, and in alliance with Sahngoro (Bernart 1977, 170).

Silten's account is similar to Luelen's. After completing the task set by the Sau Deleur, Lepen Moar confers with the god Nansapwe and they "brought back to Sau Deleur a curse." A clansman of Lepen Moar (unnamed but apparently the prophet Saum), insulted by a gift from the Sau Deleur, then sent to Katau for Nansapwe to "come quickly . . . for Ponape has been enslaved" (Silten, 20-21).

The cycle of myths that tell of Isokelekel's father, Nansapwe, and his flight from Pohnpei to Katau, of Isokelekel's birth, his voyage to Pohnpei, and his victory over the Sau Deleur are presaged by an apparently general agreement between the people of Pohnpei and their gods to destroy the Sau Deleur. Isokelekel's representation as a foreigner, then, is not of unusual significance. Initiation of important events in Pohnpei mythology is often ascribed to outsiders.

When Nansapwe arrives in Katau, according to several accounts, he specifies that the son who is to be born of his incestuous union with an Under-the-Breadfruit-Tree clanswoman will avenge or revenge him back on Pohnpei (Hadley 1981, 42; Hambruch 1936*b*, 65). Nearly all versions report that the woman was well beyond child-bearing age and that Nansapwe impregnated her with a squirt from a lemon. Various texts make it clear that Isokelekel's birth was miraculous: he was the son of Pohnpei's god of thunder and a semidivine spirit in his own right.

Despite general agreement on outlines of the Isokelekel story, several extremely variant traditions describe the Sau Deleurs' downfall with no reference at all to Isokelekel or his father. Hambruch's Text No. 87 (dictated

by a "boy" named Emilio) tells of two brothers in Madolenihmw, Saumenpuei Lapalap and Saumenpuei Tikitik, who are assigned difficult tasks by the Sau Deleur and angered because they receive no food from him. They leave Pohnpei, and one dies while the other arrives in Upwind Katau, where he is raised by a man and woman. After many adventures, which prove he has superhuman strength and abilities, he returns to Pohnpei. There he kills the Sau Deleur and takes his place at Pahn Kedira, the seat of the Sau Deleures' rule ("*uhd sapwenikila Pahnkedira*") (Hambruch 1936b, 385-392).

This same storyteller also recited a version in which a boy goes to heaven, confronts the god Luhk Nansapwe, who discovers the boy has mana and names him Luhk en Lehng (Luhk of Heaven). In the remainder of the tale, it is Luhk en Lehng, rather than Nansapwe, who runs afoul of the Sau Deleur, flees to Katau, and impregnates an Under-the-Breadfruit-Tree clan woman, who bears Isokelekel (ibid, 74-75).

Silten tells a story in which two brothers come from abroad in search of their father, Lepen Deungehn, who had been killed by the Sau Deleur. The brothers reclaim his body and along with it they take away all the Sau Deleur's supernatural powers. The people became dissatisfied "because the Sau Deleur was acting as imperious as ever but had no power to justify and back up his acts" (Silten, 17-18).⁵

Isokelekel

The Coming of Isokelekel

According to Hambruch's Text No. 96, Isokelekel learned that his destiny was to avenge the Sau Deleur's assault upon his father while he was still in the womb (Hambruch 1936*b*, 75). Masao Hadley reports that even as a child Isokelekel was different from others because he was empowered ("*kamanamanda*") and born in order to do something important (1981, 42). The anonymous text says he and his childhood friends danced in order to prepare themselves for battle (Origins, 10).

In another Hambruch text, however, Isokelekel is out fishing and comes upon Pohnpei by chance. After learning about the island, he returned to Katau and had his friends build a large canoe, without telling them what it was for (1936*b*, 67). Several accounts report that Isokelekel made two deliberate voyages to Pohnpei, emphasizing that on his first trip he was scared off when he mistook large palms on the hillsides for giants (*ibid*, 69; Hadley 1981, 42).

As Isokelekel is leaving on his final expedition to invade Pohnpei, two versions report a very unusual event. During the launching of the great canoe built for this voyage, a man is sacrificed and, in one variant, cut into pieces (Origins, 11; Hambruch 1936*b*, 69). Although such human sacrifices are frequently reported in ancient Polynesia, this is the only example of it I have encountered in the Pohnpei sphere.

Many versions speak of a single canoe large enough to carry the 333 men who accompanied Isokelekel (Hadley 1981, 42), but Luellen mentions a fleet of canoes (Bernart 1977, 73). The number 333 appears in almost every account.

Isokelekel's route is subject to enormous variation in the many texts. Fischer, Riesenbergr, and Whiting point out that there are traditions of him stopping throughout the Eastern Carolines on his way to Pohnpei (1977, 64). They cite Losap in the Mortlocks (cf. Severance 1975, 4), Truk (cf. Bollig 1927, 228), Pingelap, and Kosrae. Hambruch also mentions Ngatik (1936*a*, 1). (Lessa recounts a Ulithian tale about a Katau invasion of Pohnpei, though neither Isokelekel nor the Sau Deleur appear, and the people of Pohnpei successfully repel the attack [1980, 127-131].)

Most texts portray Isokelekel stopping for a time on And atoll, which lies a few miles off the western shore of Kiti and has always been culturally and socially a part of Pohnpei proper. Isokelekel is told variously by his mother, a

bird at sea, and through a divination to visit And before proceeding on to Pohnpei (Hambruch 1936b, 76; Hadley 1981, 43). While on And, Isokelekel learned details about Pohnpei to prepare for his invasion; many texts say that Isokelekel learned from women he slept with, particularly an elderly one (Hadley 1981, 43; Silten, 21; Hambruch 1936b, 71).

Many texts report that on leaving And Isokelekel sailed first to Kiti and then around the island in the clockwise direction that all important voyages seem to take. According to Hambruch's Text No. 204, he was instructed to do this by one of the women on And (1936b, 71). In Palikir, he is offered a partially eaten breadfruit pudding (*lihli*), an event which charts a well-known Pohnpei epigram: *Sapwen luh Pohnpei* 'Land of leftovers, Pohnpei' (ibid, 71, 77; Silten, 22-23). While this seems to be a minor episode, it appears in many versions and has been accorded great significance. Traditionally, the people of Pohnpei are enjoined from offering anyone of high rank partially eaten food or leftovers. The violation of this stricture here is in fact one of a series of episodes in which Isokelekel encounters local opposition before he even arrives at Nan Madol.

In this case, I think, we see a charter for Pohnpei ambivalence about rank: *Sapwen luh Pohnpei* provides a precedent for anyone wishing to humble the mighty by offering a less than perfect portion. It happened to Isokelekel, first of the modern high chiefs. Pohnpei insistence on personal autonomy prevails over the demands of rank. In other cases, stories concerning Isokelekel's progress around the island serve as precedents for insistence upon the primacy of local, rather than personal, autonomy. I am most familiar with instances from Awak and U.

Isokelekel Encounters Opposition in U

In several texts there is brief mention of Isokelekel's passage through what is now U. In a Hambruch text a lone man unsuccessfully challenges Isokelekel, firing an arrow at him (1936b, 72). Silten tells of "a man on a point of land who called to the ship. The ship kept running out and a man appeared to the ship and revealed to them the appearance of many men and also the appearance of many personal ornaments, but no, only one person was in that place. The ship then ran out from him" (Silten, 23). This rather obscure passage is in fact the only written account I have ever seen that reports on an event celebrated in U and especially in Awak as *Uh likin pein Awak*. The large schoolhouse built in Awak in the mid-1970s is known officially as the *Uh likin pein Awak* School and when it was first opened it had its title painted boldly on the side of the building facing the road.

According to Awak versions of the tale recited to me by various people, a spirit ("*eni aramas*") saw Isokelekel's canoe approaching in the early dawn, when everyone else was asleep. He leapt upon a rock jutting out of the water just outside ("*likin*") Awak's official altar ("*pein Awak*"). He stood up ("*Uh*") there performing a war dance, jumped down behind the rock and changed his

skirt, leapt back up and danced, jumped down and changed, and so on and so on. The invaders thought they were seeing members of an assembled army performing one by one and decided they had lost the element of surprise. They sailed away to invade elsewhere.¹

The region has other stories about driving off this invasion as well. One of them, "*Pidek en Dolen Wenik*," has a similar theme and was chosen as the title of the Awak/U dance troop that represented Pohnpei and the Federated States of Micronesia at the Pacific Arts Festival in Tahiti in 1985. These stories (which I have heard many times), along with the use of identifying phrases from them, suggest that Awak has a certain ambivalence about Isokelekel. The people of Awak and U celebrate the role they played in keeping him out. Traces of this ambivalence show elsewhere on Pohnpei, too.

Isokelekel Invades Madolenihmw, Not Pohnpei

In three separate Hambruch texts we find statements to the effect that Isokelekel's dealings were with Madolenihmw, not Pohnpei. In Text No. 3, Isokelekel fights the Sau Deleur and then takes possession of ("*sapwenikilar*") Madolenihmw (not Pohnpei) (Hambruch 1936*b*, 67). In Text No. 327, a history of the Liarkatau clan, Isokelekel comes to Pohnpei in order to make war on ("*mahwiniong*") Madolenihmw (ibid, 1936*a*, 64). In a Naniahk clan history, Text No. 333, he again comes to make war on ("*mahwiniong*") Madolenihmw (ibid, 67). In his summary of the Isokelekel myth cycle, Hambruch himself suggests that "it is actually the family history of the Under-the-Breadfruit-Tree clan," rather than a general history of the island (1936*b*, 79).

I shall return to this point later, but I want to note here the importance of understanding that Pohnpei political philosophy is grounded in the preeminence of local communities. Even the culture-hero is viewed with a certain distance. His war, some say, was with a particular community, not with the Pohnpei people at large.

Whatever his accomplishments, Isokelekel will never be fully recognized as a symbol of all Pohnpei. The American mythology of George Washington and Abe Lincoln, unifying their nation, is the antithesis of what this political viewpoint celebrates. This becomes even more evident when we consider Pohnpei political life in the 1980s, with its motto, "Divided We Stand" (Petersen 1985, 1986).

Another element of Pohnpei ambivalence can be seen in accounts of the treatment accorded Isokelekel when he finally arrives at Nan Madol. As Silten tells it, even though the people of Pohnpei did not know what Isokelekel had planned, the Sau Deleur involuntarily shivered when the stranger landed. This premonition notwithstanding, the Sau Deleur has his people feed the new arrivals in a true Pohnpei show of hospitality (Silten, 23). In Hambruch's Text No. 96, the Sau Deleur realizes that the invader has come to wreak vengeance for his own treatment of Isokelekel's father

(Hambruch 1936*b*, 78). In several Hambruch texts and in Masao Hadley's version, the Sau Deleur views the newcomers as his own charges, yet again he insists that they be treated with great care (Hadley 1981, 43; Hambruch 1932, 337; 1936*b*, 73).

Both the Sau Deleur's people and the invaders endeavor to figure out who leads the opposite side, and considerable subterfuge is employed, unsuccessfully, to hide the rank of the leaders (Hambruch 1936*b*, 73; Hadley 1981, 43-44). Lepen Moar, in particular, tries to discern the invaders' leader, and feels great respect for Isokelekel when he does find him out. In turn, Isokelekel warns his party to keep a close eye on Lepen Moar because he has uncovered their secret (Hadley 1981, 43).

Lepen Moar

According to most texts, Lepen Moar played a key role in the battle between Isokelekel and the Sau Deleur. But there is little agreement on just what this role was. As I have already noted, Lepen Moar appears in a number of texts as an aide to the Sau Deleur. (In many other texts the Sau Deleur's key aide is Sou Kampul.) He is sent by the Sau Deleur to prepare food for the invaders when they first arrive, but fails to do so (Hambruch 1936*b*, 72-73; Hadley 1981, 43).

In Silten's and Luelen's texts, however, the first Lepen Moar does not receive his title until after Isokelekel's victory. As they tell it, the man who is to become Lepen Moar hit Isokelekel in the face with a stone. Isokelekel called out to his comrades, "Note that man and do not kill him, for he is my true brother, for he has ruined my good looks with that stone and hurt my face" (Silten, 24; Bernart 1977, 76).

Masao Hadley attributes this stone-throwing incident to one of Lepen Moar's men, Daukir, and has Isokelekel saying to him, "Thank you friend, for wounding me, for I had not known that a war was going on, but now I do" (1981, 45). Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting tell us that Kesner (Masao Hadley) quoted Isokelekel as saying, "Thank you, until I did not know we were fighting, it seemed more like playing" (1977, 70). In any case, we see a characteristic show of Pohnpei bravado, as Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting note (*ibid*).

In the Hadley text it is the reinforcements Lepen Moar marshals that halt the initial rout of the Pohnpei forces, and we hear no more of him after Isokelekel's victory (1981, 76). Silten, on the other hand, has Isokelekel rewarding the man in the stone-throwing incident by bestowing the title Lepen Moar on him, and having him "take over Senipein" (Silten, 24-25), while Luelen says he "became a favourite of Isokelekel and held the districts of Sapwalap and Senipein in fief under him" (Bernart 1977, 76).²

These are obviously contradictory accounts and I note them here because variant descriptions of the role played by the Lepen Moar, and in his subsequent status, may well reflect modern interests and political events. The

Lepen Moar title is of enormous significance in modern Pohnpei. In Madolenihmw, where the current titleholder is reckoned to be the successor of the character who appears in these accounts, the Lepen Moar is accorded almost the same status (though not the same role) as the paramount chief. At feasts he occupies a seat alongside the paramount chief, and to my knowledge is the only person in the chiefdom other than the paramount chief himself who can be addressed as *mwohnsapw* in the paramount's presence.³

The Lepen Moar title in U has been the subject of considerable political turmoil in recent decades. I discuss the details elsewhere (Petersen 1982, 26, 55). In short, the title has been the "tandem title" of the Soulik of Awak. As Awak was integrated into U in the early twentieth century, however, and its chief lost his autonomous status, there was a growing feeling in the rest of U, if not in Awak itself, that possession of the Lepen Moar title gave the Soulik too much status. It has subsequently become the highest *koanoat* 'honorary' title in U, but people in the Upper Awak chiefdom, successors of the original Awak line, maintain that the title is rightfully theirs, not the paramount chiefdom's.

Although the primary significance of the Isokelekel myth cycle is its chartering of the paramount chieftainships, it bears precedents for many other political questions in modern Pohnpei. The variant traditions represent a range of positions and interests within modern Pohnpei politics, as well as differing literary and aesthetic approaches and sensibilities.

The Battle Is Joined

The battle between Isokelekel and the Sau Deleur is quite dramatic.⁴ As both Luelen and Silten tell it, the conflict grew out of a fight that erupted between the children of the two sides, who had been playing together; the adult men then get involved and the battle is joined (Bernart 1977, 74; Silten, 24). In Masao Hadley's account, the battle is precipitated when one of Isokelekel's lieutenants, Nanparadak, and one of the Sau Deleur's lieutenants, Pwekin Deleur, escalate from squirting water at each other to throwing stones. When Pwekin Deleur is hurt by a stone, "the Ponapeans became angry and this was when a fight began between the Ponapeans and the people of Katau" (Hadley 1981, 44). In Hambruch's Text No. 96, it is the Sau Deleur who starts the fight, after he realizes just who Isokelekel is (Hambruch 1936*b*, 78). Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting discuss these as well as several other variant accounts of the battle's beginnings (1977, 60-61).

At first, according to most texts (though not Luelen's), the invading party is ascendant, driving the Sau Deleur's forces inland or into the mountains (ibid, 44; Hambruch 1932, 337). Then the momentum reversed and Isokelekel's men began to retreat. Luelen says "the Ponapeans were stronger and braver for there were some men among them who were strong and reckless," although he also reports that "the foreigners were more clever in fighting" (Bernart 1977, 75). Masao Hadley explains that the shift came "when

Lepen Moar joined the Sau Deleur's side" (1981, 44). The contrast between the characteristics ascribed to the groups reflects two contrasting personal styles, both of which are admired in modern Pohnpei.

Both Silten and Luelen call the Sau Deleur's forces "the Ponapeans" (Silten, 24; Bernart 1977, 77). David Hanlon has described the Sau Deleur era on Pohnpei as a time of foreign rule (1988, 9, 15), but these texts do not treat them as foreigners. Nor are they, by the same token, called people of Madolenihmw--they are Pohnpei.

In one of the best known incidents of the entire battle the retreat is halted, and the day is won for Isokelekel when one of his lieutenants spears his own foot, anchoring it to the ground, thereby rallying his men and turning the tide for good. Luelen says this was Nanparadak (Bernart 1977, 75); Hadley says it was Nahnisen, "Isokelekel's premier warrior" (1981, 45); Silten leaves him unnamed (Silten, 24-25). In Hambruch's Text No. 204, it is Isokelekel who throws the spear through Nahnisen's foot (1936b, 74).⁵ The identity of this hero remains a subject of genuine debate in modern Pohnpei: a high-ranking official of the national government once raised the issue with me as we sat in the coffee shop of a New York City hotel.

Masao Hadley tells us that when Nahnisen turned the battle in Isokelekel's favor he said to the retreating fighters, "Nobody is lower than a man who moves" ("*Sohte me kin pahsang mwahn en keipa*"). This phrase resonates with the modern Pohnpei assertion of autonomy, "I can't be under anyone" ("*I sohte kek mihmi pahn oh!*").

Ultimately, the Sau Deleur is defeated. In some texts he is captured and slain (Hambruch 1932, 337; 1936b, 78; Silten, 25). In others, he flees into the interior, dives into a stream, is transformed into a fish, and survives in this form today (Hambruch 1936b, 74; Bernart 1977, 76-77; Hadley 1981, 45). In any case, the victors return to Nan Madol and occupy it.

According to Hambruch's Text No. 1, Isokelekel then comes into possession of ("*uhd sapwenekila*") Madolenihmw (1932, 337). Luelen says "Isokelekel conquered the east side of Ponape and ruled [*kakaunda*] them" (Bernart 1977, 77). In Silten's version "All the soldiers returned to the seat of the ruler and settled there and took possession of Ponape" (Silten, 25).

In this same Hambruch text, Isokelekel becomes Nahnmwarki 'paramount chief' immediately following the demise of the Sau Deleur (1932, 337). Masao Hadley, however, says that Isokelekel's people went to Pahn Kedira and stayed there, but Isokelekel "had not yet become a great leader [*kaun lapalap*]"; "Isokelekel now resided at Pahn Kedira, but he was not yet Nahnmwarki at that time" (1981, 45-46).

The Beginning of a New Era

With the fall of the last Sau Deleur and the rise of Isokelekel, the people of Pohnpei mark the beginning of the modern era. In Luelen's words, "Ponape

was lost to the foreigners [*mehn wai*]. A new age started the third age, a new age" (Bernart 1977, 77).

Luelen says he was born in 1866, a time when Pohnpei was still quite free of foreign domination. He was a young adult when the Spanish laid claim to his island, and he lived through the German and Japanese eras, into the first years of American rule. The term translated as "foreigners" appears in the original Pohnpei text as "*mehn wai*," which in modern Pohnpei means both "foreigner" in general and "American" in particular.

It strikes me as significant that he chose to speak of Isokelekel as "*mehn wai*" at a time when the term resonated with the colonial impact on Pohnpei. He also begins his first chapter on the arrival of Europeans (whom he refers to as "*aramas en wai*," which has the same meaning as "*mehn wai*") by calling it the "third period" (1977, 104). The political order of traditional Pohnpei (what the Pohnpei might call the legacy of Isokelekel) at the beginning of the contact and colonial periods was, for Luelen at least, no less a product of outside involvement than the ensuing political changes instituted during the colonial years. And the beginnings of both eras were in some way merged in his mind, because he calls them both the "third period." (The first period is the era of the creation stories; the second is the era of the building of Nan Madol and the reign of the Sau Deleurs.) I have no idea why he made the error, but I consider it more than *just* a mistake.

The Modern Era

Many texts talk about the profound changes that took place in all aspects of Pohnpei life following Isokelekel's victory. They explain the modern political system in terms of a series of decisions made deliberately at that time. A number of crucial passages are difficult to interpret; this is probably because these historians were talking about the apparent contradictions of the society in which they had grown up. It is often easier to speak simply about something that no longer exists (and that one has not experienced) than about the complex realities of one's own daily life.

Constituting the New Political System

The Sau Deleurs' fall ushered in a period of great political change. Perhaps the most widely told tale from this transitional interval is the story of a canoe that appears suspended in the air in Erika, an area of Net. According to both Luelen's and Masao Hadley's accounts, the modern Nahmwarki title, which I translate as "paramount chief," was bestowed for the very first time following a series of mystical events there.

A tree being felled for a canoe would not drop after it had been chopped through. Soukise, who is generally described as the High Priest of Wene (McCormick 1982, 38), and the Soulik of And (the atoll off Pohnpei's southwest coast) cut the tree again with an adze. Instead of toppling to the earth, however, it floated up into heaven.

After a time (Hadley says long afterwards), a canoe (hewn from the tree) appears, floating in the air above Temwen Island, on the edge of Nan Madol. It is occupied by beings who appear to be spirits, including Luhk, a god. Soukise and the Soulik of And come and engage in discussions with the occupants of the canoe (Bernart 1977, 80-81; Hadley 1981, 46-47).

In Luelen's account "they all had a discussion as to what would be done in Ponape at this time, as to ruling Ponape." After the canoe returned to heaven "decisions about the land were made, and the founding of lands and the rulers of the petty states [*wehi*] and the conferring of titles was also performed--the title of those in charge and also their work for them" (Bernart 1977, 81).

As Hadley tells it, Soukise and the Soulik brought with them the flower garland of the type worn only by the highest-ranking chiefs ("*nihn*"). After talking with the occupants of the canoe, they send for Isokelekel. The two men place the garland upon his head, crowning him Nahmwarki (Hadley 1981, 47).

Although the differences between these two texts are small, they are nonetheless significant. In the Hadley text, the two Pohnpei men bring the garland of authority with them before they ever consult with gods and spirits in the canoe, suggesting that the idea of elevating a paramount chief is theirs. In the Luelen text, Pohnpei's future is decided in discussions between the people of Pohnpei and their gods and tutelary spirits.

In their annotations to Luelen's account, Fischer, Riesenbergr, and Whiting note several quite variant versions. Oliver Nanpei told Saul Riesenbergr that

Isokelekel, apparently on his own initiative, called Soulik en And to his capital at Pahn Kedira and conferred with him about the appointment of rulers; Soulik en And then installed the "four kings of Ponape," selecting them from relatives of Isokelekel in consultation with him; these were the chiefs of (1) Wene (Soukise), (2) U, Net, and Sokehs combined (Isokelekel's son), (3) Kiti, exclusive of Wene, and (4) Madolenihmw (Isipau, the title of address for the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw). (1977, 72,)

Girschner collected a version of this tale, recounted in Hambruch, in which a spirit named Painidzo guides the canoe to earth. The Soulik of And is called to the canoe to render advice, and is "made paramount ruler of Ponape in place of the Sau Deleur" (Hambruch 1936*b*, 214). Hambruch's Text No. 7 (dictated by Lewis Kehoe) tells a version that shares many of these details but makes no mention of Isokelekel, the Soulik of And, or any of the political discussions described elsewhere (*ibid*, 222-223).

Silten makes no mention at all of the canoe episode and offers a very different account of how the reorganization of the Pohnpei polity proceeded. "The Commander" (as Silten calls Isokelekel)

sent to Ponape for the rulers of the towns, the high men of the districts, the high men of the great islands around Ponape and all the people to come, for the ruler(s?) of the countries of Ponape should come to him. Some men then set forth from all the countries of Ponape and from all the lesser districts of Ponape and great islands near Ponape. It was they who knew about what was right for Ponape and what was to be done in Ponape. They came to the Commander who had seized Ponape who was staying in the seat of the ruler, for he would inform them that he would rule Ponape. He then appointed some men to rule the five centers of land which form Ponape. They then assembled and came to him. He told them, "Ponape will not be the same as in the former regime which had only one ruler. Here is what I will do to Ponape, for I think that this is what will be good for Ponape." The Ponapeans then rejoiced at the Commander's kindness to Ponape, and presented some men to join him in making the rules for Ponape. (Silten, 25-26)

He sent for some men to come for he would give them titles so that they might have charge of the countries under him. Four men came to him and

he elevated some Mwarikehtik (the lowest title on the n.mw. line). The Commander was Marikehtik [standard orthography Mwarkietik] of Matolenim. His son was Mwarikehtik of U. (also) the Mwarekehtik of Kiti, Lepen Net, Wasai of Sokehs. (Note: only the one in Uh was his son). People assembled here from all Ponape. They heard of Mwarekehtiks. They wondered (saying) "That fellow will be (Nahn) Mwarki. And such was the elevation of the (holders of) these titles. It was these men who were elevated to join the Commander in ruling Ponape. Here are the names of the countries in the period when the Commander seized Ponape: I Matolenim, II Uh, III Kiti, IV Net, V Sokehs. (Ibid, 26-27)

Ponape became gentler. The clans on Ponape grew numerous. (Ibid, 27)

Here are the supreme titles (the great titles outside the true district titles): Matolenim--Wasa Lapalap (this is only properly used for n.mw. of Matolenim); Uh--Sangoro (they started to use 'nahn mwarki' in German times); Kiti--Rohsa (this should not be given to anyone else. They gave it to Oliver Nanpei but this was wrong); Net--Pwoudo; Sokas--Iso Eni. (Ibid, 28; all punctuation, spelling, and parentheses as in Fischer's transcription.)

In this version the new plans for Pohnpei are devised by the island's assembled leaders, without the aid of spirits. Emphasis is placed on the increased number of "rulers." Under the Sau Deleur there was only one; in the new order there will be five. In the same way that the people of Pohnpei were told that the building of Nan Madol would benefit them, they hear that this new polity "will be good for Ponape." And in the same pattern, they rejoice at the new beginning.

Silten speaks of five "countries" and includes Net among these, ranking it ahead of Sokehs, an order which apparently did not actually come about until after Sokehs failed in its rebellion against the Germans. Luellen lists only Madolenihmw, Kiti, and U during this era (Bernart 1977, 88-89). Hadley mentions only Madolenihmw, Kiti, and Sokehs during Isokelekel's lifetime, explaining that Upwind Wenik separated from Madolenihmw and became U during the reign of Isokelekel's nephew (1981, 55-56). Hambruch's Text No. 1 says there were four Nahnmwarkis in this era (1932, 338).

Lorens, Silten's sister's son, makes the curious comment in these annotations that U did not begin to use the term *Nahnmwarki* until German times; in European historical documents, reference to the Nahnmwarki of U appears as early as the 1830s (O'Connell 1972, 123).

In Masao Hadley's account Isokelekel "continued in the way things were done in the Sau Deleur period. After a time, certain things occurred concerning respect [*wahu*] which were different." At this point he decides that Sou Kiti should become Nahnmwarki of Kiti and Luen en Solehdi Nahnmwarki of Sokehs.¹ "He did this in order to make it easier to care [*apwalpen*] for the people throughout Ponape" (1981, 47).

Isokelekel also designed the first modern ceremonial house ("*nahs*") and established the "ladder" of ranked titles ("*dakehn mwarakei*") and responsibilities that now lead up to the paramount chieftainship (ibid, 47-48).

Local Chiefdoms and New Freedom

This new era is characterized by the growth of local chiefdoms (*kousapw*) and the assertion of local autonomy which these chiefdoms both embody and symbolize. The centralized reign of the Sau Deleurs was replaced not simply with a series of paramount chiefdoms, but by the local communities that are nowadays the fundamental building blocks of Pohnpei political life. These traditions charter the local chiefdoms at least as much as they do the paramount chiefs.

So better times now existed in Ponape because Isokelekel permitted the freedom [*saledek*] of each family to enjoy the places where they lived and worked. Many families did their work and farmed in each place. They did more farming and they worked together and often became a single community. Through these activities the people combined their lands into a section [*kawada sahpwoko wiahla kousapw ehu*] in order to work together as one in serving [*uhpahiong*] the Nahnmwarki.

This was why the large divisions [*irair laud*] which existed in the kingdoms [*wehi*] during the Sau Deleur period changed. In these large divisions small sections [*kousapw tikitik*] now existed as they do today. The names of sections and the section chiefs [*kaun en kousapw*] also existed. They were responsible for the sections, for the people, and for the movement of tribute [*uhpa*] to the high chiefs [*soupeidi*]. (Hadley 1981, 49)

There is much of significance in these passages. We see complementary notions of care and service: Isokelekel institutes the new system in order to make it easier to care for the people. The people come together in a local chiefdom (*kousapw* 'section') in order to facilitate serving the chiefs.

The phrasing used to describe this coming together, in which the people combine their land into a local chiefdom (*kawada sahpwoko wiahla kousapw ehu*), is particularly noteworthy because the Pohnpei folk etymology of the word for local chiefdom--*kousapw*--is just the phrase used here: *kawada sahpw*.

This is the first time in these chronologies that we encounter a direct discussion of these very basic, modern Pohnpei political units known as *kousapw*. Up until this point, groups figuring in these tales have ordinarily been clans or localized matrilineages (*keinek*). In this text we see the initial evolution of groups that stress their local character rather than ties of matrilineal descent. In fact, any changes these groups may have actually made by more probably in the realm of ideology than in actual composition (Petersen 1982, 18-21).

Hadley's remarks on the life of local groups are more detailed than Silten's, but Silten shares this new interest in the *kousapw*: he speaks of a great convocation--of those who knew what was right for Pohnpei--that included not only the "high men," but men "from all the lesser districts of Ponape and the great islands near Ponape." These lesser districts are apparently the *kousapw*. As we shall see shortly, Luellen gives even more attention to the *kousapw*.

We are encountering a major change in the Pohnpei polity. It is often overlooked because of Isokelekel's much grander role, but it may prove to be of more fundamental importance than the shift from Sau Deleur to Nahmwarki.

In the Hadley text, the local chiefs ("*kaun en kousapw*") are responsible for the movement of goods to the paramount chiefs. Many in modern Pohnpei argue that there is in fact--or should be--no direct relation between the people of a local chiefdom and the paramount chief. Their allegiance and responsibility are to the local chief, whose task it is to then deal with the high chief. This passage describes the evolution of just such a relationship.

Finally, we are told that Isokelekel permitted the freedom ("*saledek*") of each family. Hambruch translated his Text No. 1 as reporting that after Isokelekel's ascension to the title Nahmwarki, it was "thus the Ponape people were set free [*maiauda*]" (1932, 338).² I have heard modern Pohnpei use the term *saledek* to speak of their desire for political change, too, and again I stress that the concept flows as an undercurrent throughout Pohnpei mythology.

Luellen's Chapter 59, "About Ponape after Isokelekel had conquered Madolenihmw," begins, "All the people were free [*saledek*] to do their own will" (Bernart 1977, 99). As we have seen, the Sau Deleur era is portrayed in ambivalent terms, but its end was ordained when the evil of the Sau Deleurs became intolerable. The new order--that which Riesenbergl calls the "native polity" and I call the modern polity--is defined at its outset by the *freedom* it brings.

Like Hadley, Luellen underpins his description of this new system with a discussion of the local chiefdoms. I quote this chapter in its entirety because more than any other passage in the book it is *the* oral tradition that describes the founding of the modern Pohnpei way of life.

1. All the people were free to do their own will, for the ruler of the state [*kaun en wehi*] gave them permission for all their wishes, and the little people [*aramas tikitik*] used to hunt around by themselves for good places to live in. And some of them were fortunate and others not--they were badly settled. And in the great sections [*kousapw laud*] it was like this. The Madolenihmw subdivisions: the sections [*kousapw*] clung together and made one cooperative group of sections in a state [*minimin en kousapw nan ehu wehi*]. Here are those which had an inclusive name [*ahd laud*]: Madolenihmw: Enimwahn, Lehdau, Senipein, and Lepinsed; and Kiti:

Onolehng, Kapilehng, and Pelehng; Sokehs: Pikiniap, Likinlamalam, and Net. And there was also Upwind Wenik, etc.

2. Now as for all the citizens of the various states [*tohn wehi*] of Ponape, the ruler of the state [*kaun en wehi*] had all the people as his subjects [*nainiki*] and assigned them [*nehk ong*] their places of residence. And some of them were industrious in work; they would of themselves go around looking for places with soil good for agriculture or coconuts, a place with a good site. They would then clear it off and plant all kinds of food plants there and some kinds of flowers that are fragrant and beautiful. Now work like this was called "fruit of the fingernails" or "fruit of the shell knife," and land like this would constitute a family inheritance [*sohso en peneinei*], and would be inherited continuously.

3. There were changes in land like this, if they sold it or committed a great sin and were expelled from it under the authority of the nobles [*pakasarala sang pahn manaman en soupeidiko*], or were defeated when enemies conquered the land. There were certain times when industrious families did much work; their lands greatly increased, and their work came together and constituted a small section [*kisin kousapw*] in the large sections [*kousapw laudo*].

4. Now this kind of section [*kousapw*] was called a "lineage section" [*kousapw en keinek*] and it would just keep on going. And such was the relation of the Ponapeans to their land. But their cultivation was not great (enough) for them to live together there, for here is the way they thought: the people of olden times used to cherish their boys more than girls.

5. Their men children were cherished for the day of war and the day that they would fight another person who was their opponent. Now in the work of the people when they were working for their ruler [*kaun*], at this time the ruler would take note of how each one's work was. And he would know that among these is the one who always behaves well. And he would promote [*kesepwil*] him so that he might in turn become a section chief [*kaun en kousapw*].

6. But the nobles proper [*uhdahn soupeidi*] and noble children [*serihso*] would according to the procedures of their families [*peneinei*], promote [*kesepwil*] their lineage mates [*keinek kan*] from among the ranked series [*ireirokdi*] in their families who would constitute the state title-holders [*mwar en wehi kan*] (Bernart 1977, 99-100).

An extraordinary amount of Pohnpei history is packed into these six paragraphs, more than I can treat in detail here. At present, I want merely to point to some of the relevant themes.

In both paragraphs 1 and 2 we are told that people go in search of good land, and paragraphs 2 and 3 emphasize the industriousness certain families showed in planting their land. Pohnpei oral traditions repeatedly stress the important role of active participation in history. In the same way that the

island itself was built up through hard work and Nan Madol was constructed according to plan, modern Pohnpei was shaped by the industry of its farmers.

The term translated as "family," "*peneinei*," is an ambiguous one, but given its juxtaposition to the more specific "*keinek*," which has matrilineal connotations, it appears to refer to extended, bilateral families. In speech, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, at other times in contrast to one another; I cannot be sure which Luelen intends. In this context, however, it seems that he is speaking of an extended family living together on a piece of land that would today be called a *peleisapw* (literally, a "piece of land"). But the overall meaning seems clear: extended households controlled and passed on from one generation to the next, as an inheritance, the land on which they worked.

If such a group expanded in size, through the success of their labors, they might constitute a *kousapw*, the small political territory that is usually translated as section, but which I call a "local chiefdom." I eschew the term *section* because it implies that it is a subdivision of a paramount chiefdom, and that the whole of which it is a section--the paramount chiefdom--is prior to it. But as this passage suggests, and as my understanding of Pohnpei politics has come to insist to me, the existential status of a local chiefdom does not necessarily depend on its being a subdivision of a paramount chiefdom. In the native Pohnpei view, it comes into existence when a group of people works together to create it. This is what Luelen describes, and it is also what Masao Hadley writes: "the people combined their lands into a *kousapw*" ("*kawada sahpwoko wiahla kousapw eh*"). That is, the *kousapw* are constituted not through an act of division but through a coming together.

Because so much of modern Pohnpei political life hinges upon processes of decentralization and fissioning ("One man cannot rule a thousand"; "Divided we stand"), it is crucial that we locate the point at which unity is celebrated: in the voluntary coming together of people to create the local chiefdoms.

Other acts of union are also described. Luelen speaks in paragraph 1 of communities banding together to make a cooperative group of local chiefdoms within a paramount chiefdom, and in paragraph 3 he speaks of small "*kousapw*" joining together to constitute a large "*kousapw*." I assume that in both cases he is speaking of the same thing: a number of local communities within a region form an entity that is called by the name of the region, (eg, Lehdau and Awak).

One of the more vexing complexities of the Pohnpei political lexicon is the absence of any discrete term for these entities. Here Luelen calls them "large *kousapw*"; I have often heard them spoken of as *wehi*, a term which nowadays generally refers to the paramount chiefdoms. Masao Hadley refers to them as "*irair laud*," which Ehrlich translates as "large divisions." This is not a standard term for these geographical units--it could equally refer to the major sections of a narrative or large portions of food distributed to groups for later subdivision.

Again, I stress that this passage is problematic because it is written as a charter for modern history and all the ambiguities of modern Pohnpei life are written into it.

Luelen also describes for us the beginning of a system of succession in local chiefdoms. Promotion comes about as a result of hard work. Again, there is striking complexity here. On the one hand, he tells us that families hold onto their land, even as it evolves into a local chiefdom. On the other, he speaks of the "ruler" noting the performance of individuals and promoting them to a chieftainship on this basis. Although this may sound contradictory, it does in fact capture the crosscutting requirements for political office in local chiefdoms: in order to become a chief, a man must have ties to the lineage that traditionally controls the chiefdom, and he must "behave well" (ie, be a productive farmer and active participant in community life).

Finally, in paragraphs 5 and 6 Luelen makes reference to the distinction between two quite different sorts of titles, a distinction that is sometimes lost precisely because of confusion brought about when local chiefdoms are viewed as "sections" of paramount chiefdoms and therefore smaller copies of them. Local chiefdoms function quite differently than the paramountcies, and, despite the formal characteristics they share, access to political titles within the two types of chiefdoms is channeled through different routes.

Isokelekel's Successors

It is surprising, given the enormous social upheaval associated with Isokelekel, that several texts tell us he died shortly after his victory. It is even more surprising when we recall that he is ordinarily portrayed as a young man at the time of his invasion of Pohnpei.³ In Hambruch's Text No. 334, Isokelekel's demise comes almost immediately after he "arranged everything so that all were satisfied" and Hadley tells us his "period was not particularly long" (Hambruch 1936*b*, 83; Hadley 1981, 49).

In both of these accounts, Isokelekel gazed into a pool of water and saw in the reflection that his hair was turning--or had turned--white. "Then he was ashamed before his people" (Hambruch 1936*b*, 83). Hadley says he had a heavy heart, and told Nahnisen, his aide, "my body has become old and my duty has been done. I do not wish to fall to my enemies when I am old" (Hadley 1981, 49). This reminds me of modern Pohnpei men who dye their hair black to hide the gray--the concern about showing old age remains a part of male Pohnpei culture.

His concern with masculinity seems also to have played a role in the manner in which he killed himself: he tied his penis to the bent tip of a palm tree and then released the tree, which ripped his penis off (Hambruch 1936*b*, 83). Both Luelen and Hadley mention that a subterfuge was employed when Isokelekel was buried. While a burial ritual was held for him at the Nan Madol islet called Pehi en Kitel, it is said the remains were sunk elsewhere (Hadley 1981, 50; Bernart 1977, 143).

At some point, a complex series of events result in the creation of the new title, Nahnken. In the modern polity, the Nahnken serves opposite the Nahnmwarki, at the head of a line of titles paralleling the ranked series leading to the Nahnmwarki. John Fischer has called the basic myth that describes these events a "Ponapean Oedipal Myth" (1966). Fischer, Riesenbergh, and Whiting refer to eight versions of it (1977, 76).

In outline the tale runs as follows: A Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw tells his pregnant wife to kill the child she is expecting if it is a boy. A boy is born and is secretly given to a man who raises him. One day the boy is out fishing when the Nahnmwarki's canoe passes by. He climbs up onto the canoe and engages in generally disrespectful behavior toward his father, who recognizes that the boy is his son. He bestows the title Nahnken on him and brings him back to Nan Madol. The boy is seduced by his father's sister, who bears him children. The children offend their father, who leaves Madolenihmw and travels to Wenik (now U), where he becomes its first Nahnmwarki, establishing its ceremonial precedence as second to Madolenihmw.

Luelen says this Nahnmwarki was Isokelekel himself (Bernart 1977, 85). Masao Hadley says that it was Luhk en Mwehi Mour, Isokelekel's nephew (1981, 51). Two Hambruch texts, Nos. 46 and 95, which tell the story at length, do not name the Nahnmwarki (1936b, 321-331).

The disrespect shown the Nahnmwarki by his son serves as a charter for the liberties now accorded the sons of chiefs. The marriage between the boy and his father's sister, Hadley says, came about because the high-ranking people ("*soupeidi*") did not want to share their honor ("*wahu*") (1981, 54).

Hadley and Luelen say that the Nahnken became angry and left Madolenihmw when he was hit in the face while his sons were playing with reed darts (ibid, 55; Bernart 1977, 87). In both the Hambruch texts, however, he is upset when his children disturb the sennit he had been twisting (1936b, 324, 328). Some or all of the children follow him as he heads for Wenik. He sends them back, telling them that they shall succeed to the Nahnmwarki title in Madolenihmw.

According to Hadley the three eldest sons chase after their father, and it is they who become the next three Nahnmwarkis of Madolenihmw (1981, 55). In one of the Hambruch texts it is the youngest son who sets out after the father, and who becomes the next Nahnmwarki; in the other, it is the eldest son. In this latter text we also learn that after their deaths the Nahnmwarki's twelve sons "ruled in the heavens" (Hambruch 1936b, 324, 329). Hadley, too, places the three brothers in heaven--when they speak they become the thunder ("*nansapwe*") (1981, 56).

Intervention of the Gods

This latter detail reminds us of the semidivine origins of the Madolenihmw Nahnmwarkis. It is the Pohnpei thunder god Nansapwe who travels to Katau and there fathers Isokelekel, the first Nahnmwarki, and we are now told that

three of his successors returned to the heavens, where they are again the thunder. This calls for a short digression concerning divinity and chieftainship on Pohnpei.

Ward Goodenough has argued that Katau (Kachaw in Trukese) "refers to the sky world" rather than to Kosrae (with which European scholars have associated it) or any other earthly place. To claim ancestry from Katau is to claim spirit ancestors, he continues, which explains "why those who wish to bolster their political power with magical power, which itself derives from the spirit world, should claim ancestry from Kachaw. It follows, moreover, that those who held powerful chiefly titles should, themselves, be treated in legend as *enuuyaramas* [Pohnpei *eni aramas* 'spirits']" (Goodenough 1986, 559).

The names of a number of gods run through this entire cycle of myth. Nansapwe, whose name means "thunder" in modern Pohnpei, initiates the downfall of the Sau Deleur. In Hambruch's Text No. 1, the post-Sau Deleur era is typified by worship of Nansapwe, along with other gods, one of whom is named Dau Katau. Fischer, Riesenbergh, and Whiting point out that many Pohnpei equate Nansapwe and Dau Katau. Hambruch says

old priests explain that all gods, e.g., the god of thunder, Nansapwe, and Dau Katau, a god of fertility, are only designations for the different activities of the one highest being. All manifestations in nature such as thunder, lightning, and growth are Luhk, and they equate this Luhk quite obviously with the highest being...and in old legends they also substitute Luhk for Nansapwe or Dau Katau. (1936a, 97-98)

Further along, he writes that the rain god, Dau Katau, created Nansapwe, but that on And atoll Nansapwe is considered the same as Dau Katau. "Dau Katau supervises all deities" (ibid, 99). The early missionary John Gulick (who visited the island briefly when his brother Luther first took up residence there) says that after explaining the purpose of their mission to the Nahnken of Kiti, the chief told them to pray to Dau Katau, asking the god to enlighten his mind (A. Gulick 1932, 93).

Other gods figure in the Isokelekel cycle as well. Silten and Luelen say it was Ninikapw who freed Nansapwe when he was being held captive by the Sau Deleur (Silten, 20; Bernart 1977, 71). Fischer, Riesenbergh, and Whiting suggest that Ninikapw is an alternate name for the god Isohpau (1977, 178). Sahngoro, another god, plots with Nansapwe against the Sau Deleur and works to bring about his downfall (Silten, 20; Bernart 1977, 170).

According to Silten, immediately after the island was built up from the sea and first charged with mana, it was inhabited by none other than Nansapwe, Sahngoro, Luhk, and Olapahd (trickster god of the Central Carolines) (Silten, 8-9; cf, Bernart 1977, 91). And in one Hambruch text, Dau Katau was looking down from heaven as the very first canoe grounded itself on the small bit of coral that would become the island of Pohnpei (1936a, 162).

Nansapwe, in one manifestation or another, was clearly a primary deity at the time Europeans arrived on Pohnpei. Isohpahu is the *pelikilik* 'alternative'

or 'tandem title' of the Nahnmwarki in modern Madolenihmw. Sahngoro is the tandem title of the U Nahnmwarki.⁴ These tandem titles evoke the spiritual status of ancestral figures who founded the paramount chieftainships and underpin the sacred character of those who now hold the titles. They also link modern Pohnpei to its earliest foundations.

Pohnpei's Oedipal Theme

Another element in the texts that describe the inauguration of the Nahnken title deserves attention. In the "Oedipal" story, the father orders his wife to kill the child if it is a boy. This "is a recurring theme in Ponapean literature," according to Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting, who cite a number of their own texts as well as many of Hambruch's texts. The fathers in these tales include a Nahnmwarki, a Sau Deleur, one of the manifestations of the god Luhk, an aide to the Sau Deleur known as Kirou Mair, the Lepen Net, and even a breadfruit tree (Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting 1977, 77; Hambruch 1936*b*, 201, 367, 370, 374, 392).

It appears that the father-son tension figuring in explanations of the relationship between the Nahnmwarki and the Nahnken is deeply embedded in Pohnpei culture and should not be taken as a literal historical account. Given the fundamental notion that the Nahnmwarki is expected to care for his people, and they to serve him, it is not surprising that he is looked upon as a father figure and that such psychocultural dimensions are folded into oral traditions detailing the origins of the office. This is precisely why Fischer terms this an Oedipal tale (1966), and it explains Masao Hadley's description of the Nahnken's role: "He was responsible for protecting those who committed sins against the Nahnmwarki. . . . [T]his is why from that day forward the people have had faith in the Nahnken and considered him strong because he was their life giver (saver) under the Nahnmwarki" (1981, 53).

The New Title System

Before bringing this discussion of the Isokelekel era to a close, I want to point briefly to several other relevant elements of the oral traditions. In Masao Hadley's text there is marked attention given not simply to the origin of the Nahnmwarki and Nahnken titles, but to the development of the entire system of titles and responsibilities. Earlier, I noted the emphasis placed on the relationship between work and names; now we see that stress is placed on the relationship between work and titles.

As Hadley explains the "ladder of titles," the men in it held titles because "they were responsible for the preparation of food both outside the ceremonial house and inside These men were responsible for certain kinds of work, as were the priests at that time" (Hadley 1981, 48). In Silten's account, the high titleholders "would handle the country's business" (Silten,

28). After listing the highest titles, Luelen says there were "other titles, which originated from their work" (Bernart 1977, 90).

In particular, the Dauk--the third-ranking title in the Nahnmwarki series--"usually directed the activities of preparing the food," while Noahs and Nahnawa (fourth and fifth titles) "usually joined the priests, the group which kept away all harmful magic [*kau*]" (ibid). In the reign of Isokelekel's successor, the Dauk also replaced the high priest Nahnapas and presided at Nan Madol's turtle ceremonies (ibid, 56).

In Madolenihmw, the Wasahi (the second-ranking title) directed the work of three other titleholders (who were outside the ranked series leading to the paramount chieftainship), Kiroun en Lehdau, Lap en Wapar, and Kulap. These men were "responsible for guarding the Nahnmwarki whenever he traveled about" (ibid, 48).

It is worth noting here that the Nahnmwarkis, and this would appear to include Isokelekel, were not immune from harm. They had to be protected from magic by the priests, and from physical dangers by a corps of aides. Despite the chiefs' divine attributes, they stood in danger from mere mortals. Masao Hadley describes a man known as *Pilik* who performed magic ("*winani*") "on the chiefs' food ("*koanoat en soupeidi*") all the time in order to protect the chiefs from spiritual retribution ("*riala*") and all kinds of magic ("*kau*")" (1981, 12). Similar precautions are taken by chiefs in modern Pohnpei.

Luelen also provides a more general description of changes taking place in that era. The people were not industrious in their work, and food was scarce. But, he says, it was better than it had been and the population increased. There were not so many cannibals or giants (though most accounts celebrate the Sau Deleurs for driving the cannibals out). And in this era the number of words in the language increased; more specifically "the differences among the people increased" and the respect form of the Pohnpei language ("*meing*") developed: there were forms for the highest-ranking people ("*soupeidi*"), for an intermediate grade, and for the "people" (Bernart 1977, 77).

Despite the picture painted in these texts, which show the rise of the modern title system during Isokelekel's lifetime, and in the reign of the Madolenihmw Nahnmwarki who succeeded him, there are people in other parts of Pohnpei whose sense of status is not bound up in the history of Madolenihmw and who maintain that following the fall of the Sau Deleur, Pohnpei returned to relatively egalitarian conditions. They suggest that the rise of Nahnmwarkis was a much later phenomenon. "*Nahnmwarki me kapw!*" ("The Nahnmwarkis are new!"), a high-ranking local chief once said to me. No matter how much detail we find, nor how much agreement might appear in the major texts, there is always a dissenting, variant voice or two.

The Nahnmwarki Era

Masao Hadley's text provides considerable detail about the Madolenihmw Nahnmwarkis who succeeded Isokelekel. Many of the tales he recounts appear elsewhere, especially in Hambruch's texts, but are not attributed to specific individuals or time periods.

Hadley tells us that the reign of the second Nahnmwarki was a long one. He was succeeded in turn by each of three of his sister's sons (who became the thunder)--the children of his own son, the first Nahnken. In the time of the next Nahnmwarki a great typhoon hit Pohnpei and did such great damage to the food crops that it was followed by a famine ("*lehk*") (Hadley 1981, 56). This famine is mentioned in Hambruch's Text No. 1 as well (1932, 339-340), and it figures in several important Awak traditions. It is the only famine I have ever seen alluded to in these texts and is one more demonstration of the island's extraordinary fertility: in general, the hardships in Pohnpei history are brought about by people, not nature.⁵

According to Hadley the ninth Nahnmwarki demoted the Nahnken and elevated one of his own sons to the position, giving rise to an epithet, "*Keredi karada*," which alludes to the sliding down and climbing up of titleholders (1981, 57). (That is, the ordained sequence of ranked titles tends to be ignored when promotions actually take place.) Madolenihmw (and occasionally other paramount chiefdoms) is referred to as *Sapwen keredi karada* 'Place of sliding down and climbing up'. By invoking this tradition, politically motivated departures from the formally stated system of title succession are justified as being nonetheless "traditional."

This same paramount chief is said to have killed the new Nahnken when some of the chiefdom's people sided with the son against his father in a dispute. To avenge him, the Nahnken's mother then killed her husband (Bernart 1977, 57-58).

The tenth Nahnmwarki was reputed to have had forty wives. The eleventh was supposed to have been very wealthy, possessing large amounts of jewelry, coconuts, sennit, weapons, canoes, servants, and much preserved breadfruit. The twelfth chief was brave and promiscuous ("like a male dog"). His successor was Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw when the first Europeans arrived on Pohnpei (ibid, 58-59).

I recount these details because the attributes of the individual Madolenihmw Nahnmwarkis, when viewed as a whole, bear a striking similarity to those of the Sau Deleurs. Some were good, some bad, some brave, some wealthy. And they markedly resemble the Pohnpei deities Silten describes: "They were cruel and some of them were charitable. They were also wise. . . . [T]hey were mana and charitable. At times they could also get angry and kill people" (Silten, 9).

When we juxtapose these themes, and see them repeated, we must realize that that is just what they are: themes. They represent attempts to make these leaders human--each has some basic human characteristics--and together they

capture the universe of Pohnpei personal styles. But we should not take this detail as evidence that the accounts are accurate. Rhys Carpenter warns that "the more an oral poet seems to know about a distant event the less he really knows about it and the more certainly he is inventing" (1946, 32).⁶

Other Recurring Themes

As one explores this corpus of materials, a number of minor motifs seem to weave their way through. They are small, almost offhand bits of information when they appear at any given point, but taken as elements of the whole, they tell us about themes important to Pohnpei history.

Chiefs, Work, and Success

In modern Pohnpei, hard work and productivity, particularly in agricultural pursuits, are highly respected and deemed essential to male political success (Shimizu 1982, 189; Petersen 1984). Industriousness (*pwerisek*) is so fundamental to proper adult comportment that even after most men achieve chieftainship they and their wives continue to farm and to contribute the fruits of their labor to feasts, including those ostensibly meant to pay tribute to them, that is, the annual honor feasts (*kamadipw en wahu*, *kamadipw en kousapw*). It is notable, then, that many of these texts mention in passing that one high-ranking figure or another was at work when an episode took place.

In a number of texts the Sau Deleurs appear out working on the land. In Hambruch's Text No. 99 the Sau Deleur cuts his finger while he is farming ("*wie doadoahk en sapwasapw*"); in Text No. 32 the Sau Deleur and his wife work on their farm ("*wie sapwasapw nansapw*") until they are tired (Hambruch 1936b, 383, 254-255). Masao Hadley describes the spot on Pahn Kedira (the Sau Deleur's residence in Nan Madol) where the Sau Deleur planted taro and sugarcane on his own farm plot ("*sapwellime mwetwel*") (1981, 83).

Another Hambruch text, No. 77, portrays a Nahnken and his wife going to work at a spot far from their home; and elsewhere the Lepen Palikir, who is called a chief of the highest order ("*mwohnsapw lapalap*"), is described clearing his land and cultivating it ("*wie sapwasapw o mwetemwet*") (Hambruch 1936b, 169-170).

As a product of his or her hard work, an individual had possessions. The Pohnpei term for "wealthy" or "rich," *kepwehpwe*, is a duplicated, adjectival form of the word for "thing" or "possession" (*kepwe*) (Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting 1977, 37). And the term for the things that determine or establish one's wealth is *tehtehn peh*, which might be literally translated as the "sweet-smelling product of one's hands": possessions are assumed to be the products of one's own labor.

Hadley says the eleventh Madolenihmw Nahnwarki was celebrated for his wealth, which included large numbers or amounts of coconuts, preserved breadfruit, and sennit (Hadley 1981, 58). A Hambruch text, No. 49, explains that possessing one hundred coconuts or five dogs made a person rich and admired (1936a, 169).

Especially interesting in this regard is a series of tales Hambruch collected from an informant called Aundol en Aru, who is also identified as Wilhelm Helgenberger. In them some of these recurring themes intersect: cannibalism, wealth, and succession to leadership.

In Text No. 321, a boy kills a cannibal ("*liet*") couple; the people confer together and have the boy become their leader ("*nahnmwarkila sapwo*"). In Text No. 319, a boy kills two cannibal women and becomes chief of the land ("*mwohnsapwela sapwo*"). In Text No. 317, there are two cannibal sisters; one eats both her sister's daughters and her sister; the sister cuts her way out, kills the one who had eaten her, and has more children; they take control of ("*sapwenikila*") the land of Auetik (Hambruch 1936b, 238-243).

In Text No. 105, a boy kills a spirit and takes four women from him; a chief ("*mwohnsapw*") wants one of the women, and the boy sends him on a wild goose chase; the chief perishes and the boy becomes chief ("*mwohnsapwela sapwo*"). In Text No. 318, a boy steals magic money ("*mwohni*") from a spirit; he challenges the Nahnwarki--they'll count their money and if the boy has more, he'll be Nahnwarki; he has money beyond counting and he becomes the Nahnwarki ("*Nahnmwarkila sapwo*"); he is wealthier than all the chiefs of the land ("*kepwehpwe mehlel sang koaros mwohnsapwo en sapwo*") (ibid, 279-284).

We see here, in this one young man's mind, two routes to becoming a chief: bravery and wealth. Those who rid Pohnpei of cannibals are celebrated. Someone who possesses great wealth can become a great leader. We also see his expectation that leadership is something that is achieved--even if through routes provided by fantasy--rather than ascribed.

Rufino Mauricio argues that this set of tales is largely lifted from European folk themes and reflects a highly idiosyncratic emphasis on Western conceptions of success (personal communication). He is probably correct, and I respect his judgment. Although the heroic killing of cannibals is in keeping with genuine Pohnpei concerns, the magical source of money clearly runs counter to traditional Pohnpei associations of wealth and status with personal industriousness.

Circling the Island--From West to East

Earlier, I noted in passing that a number of accounts describe journeys around the island, and that in all of them the voyages proceed in a clockwise direction from west through north to east. Travel from one side of the island to another is almost always described as taking place by canoe, around the circumference of the island. (Given Pohnpei's rugged topography, this is

indeed the way most travel takes place.) In addition to the classic accounts of Olsihpa's and Olsohpa's and Isokelekel's progressions from Sokehs to Madolenihmw, there are at least three more of this sort of episode in the texts.

In Hambruch's Text No. 294, a man from Eir (a legendary land to the south of Pohnpei) traveled first to Nan Paniop in Palikir, then to Kamar in Net, on through Awak, and finally to Madolenihmw, having adventures along the way (including naming the place known as Likin Pein Awak). In Text No. 327, the Liarkatau clan's origin myth, the boy Nanwai, nephew of Isokelekel's lieutenant Nanparadak, accompanies Isokelekel from Katau to Pohnpei. He leaves Pahn Kedira (in Nan Madol) in search of strong kava and sails around the island, ultimately arriving in Alokapw, in northern Madolenihmw, where the Pohnpei people, who did not like him, drowned him at sea (Hambruch 1936a, 63, 1936b, 376-377).

Luelen tells a story from the "the first period" (ie, before the building of Nan Madol) about the Lepen Wenik, who lived in Downwind Wenik (approximately the area that is modern Net, and termed a "*wehi*" in this account). He wanted to travel to Kiti and sailed as far as Madolenihmw. There he found his way blocked by land (the barrier reef becomes a fringing reef in southern Madolenihmw and it is nearly impossible to navigate inside the reef). After halting his trip for a time he returned home. Apparently he engaged in other activities, because Luelen says "there is no time to tell the various other things he did. What I am saying is twisted. Let those who know set it straight later" (Bernart 1977, 142).

We find in this passage an interesting explanation for the direction of these journeys. The fringing reef in southern Madolenihmw creates conditions known as the Lepen Sed 'Half Sea' which make navigation inside the reef extremely difficult. It is much more practical to approach the Nan Madol site from the north; to travel from west to east, then, requires a clockwise route. (In the Liarkatau myth, however, Nanwai circumnavigates the island by traveling south from Nan Madol--it is certainly possible to go outside the reef at this point.)

There are several sorts of things portrayed in these tales. In the two major myth cycles, we have foreigners coming to transform Pohnpei. In the Nan Madol cycle, Olsihpa and Olsohpa are on Pohnpei to establish a new system of worship, and in doing so found the Sau Deleur dynasty. Isokelekel has come to overthrow that dynasty.

Symbolic opposition is provided by having Olsihpa and Olsohpa come from the western spirit-world, or "sky-world" (Downwind Katau), while Isokelekel comes from the eastern spirit-world (Upwind Katau) (Goodenough 1986, 557). Because the Olsihpa and Olsohpa tales appear to be a more recent overlay, replacing the older Pali myths, it may well be that they are given western roots to offset Isokelekel's eastern origin. Likewise, there is a series of tales that chronicle the downfall of the Sau Deleurs without reference to Isokelekel. It is possible that the mythology surrounding

Isokelekel evolved in tandem with the Olsihpa and Olsohpa stories, and that the entire cycle is of relatively recent vintage.

Silten tells us that the Nan Madol site was chosen in part because it faced the sunrise. Nan Madol's demise coincides with (and was initiated by) Isokelekel's victory over Olsihpa's and Olsohpa's descendants and successors, the Sau Deleurs. Originally identified with the sun, Nan Madol may have been given a western genesis (ie, Ohsipa's and Ohsopa's homeland) in the newer myth cycle after its ritual status was superseded by a more recent solar symbol, Isokelekel (who was born in the east).

In two of the other cases the travelers who make this clockwise journey are also foreigners, one from the "South" and the other a companion of Isokelekel. The Lepen Wenik story is deliberately obscure.

My own interpretation is as follows: From the very beginning, Pohnpei history emphasizes the impact of the outside world. Truly significant events originate there. But Nan Madol and its site are tremendously important to everything that happens on Pohnpei as well. "The sun shines on it first and also the moon. Many good breezes blow there. . . . This place was very good for the seat of their mana to be there for it faced Upwind Katau" (Silten, 13, 15).

In order to have an impact on Pohnpei, outsiders must get to the Nan Madol site. But in order for the Pohnpei to exercise their own control over this impact, the foreigners must first be transformed by the island itself. So they arrive in the west and travel upwind toward Nan Madol, making stops along the way and having various adventures. By the time they reach the Nan Madol site, they are in what is known to some as a "liminal" or marginal state. They are no longer fully foreign, having passed through half or more of the island. They are of course not fully of Pohnpei, having foreign origins. In this state they set off a chain of events that the Pohnpei can direct, even while the impetus lies elsewhere.

The clockwise direction of travel may be a simple matter of practical seamanship. As I pointed out, almost all travel on Pohnpei is waterborne, and it is a great deal easier to approach Nan Madol from the north than the south. Travelers headed for the east coast would reasonably be expected to take a clockwise course, through the north. I am, however, quite willing to hear alternative explanations.

Precedence of the Chiefdoms

A theme that crops up in relation to these texts, though there are few references to it in the texts themselves, has to do with variant traditions about the ritual precedence of the chiefdoms. The Isokelekel story establishes the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw--Isokelekel's successor--as first among equals. U is reckoned to be second in precedence because the first Madolenihmw Nahnken broke away and founded it. In Luelen's ranking, Kiti, Sokehs, and

Net follow (Bernart 1977, 166-167). In Silten's, Net precedes Sokehs (Silten, 27).

There is considerable sentiment in Kiti that it should properly have precedence over U. John Fischer once told me he had heard Kiti people claiming that Kiti maintained a marked degree of autonomy even under the Sau Deleus, and that it should therefore outrank U. In the annotations to Luellen's book Fischer reports that a Kiti informant told him Kiti split off from Madolenihmw "immediately after Isokelekel's conquest, and was therefore older than U but ranked below U ceremonially because of the ties of the U and Madolenihmw rulers. Sokehs is evidently also older than U" (Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting 1977, 76-77).

Suzanne Falgout reports that her Kiti informants emphatically state that the rule of Soukise (the Wene high priest) dates back to the time before the Sau Deleur, and that one informant stresses the important role played by the Soukise in initiating Isokelekel's conquest. In return for the part he played in establishing the new political system, Soukise became the high priest of all Pohnpei (McCormick 1982, 36-38). Luellen writes that Soukise was the high priest of Pohnpei, and that all the people "used to obtain permission for everything" from him (Bernart 1977, 92).

The English ethnologist F. W. Christian tells of visiting Au, the "headman" of Marau, in Palikir--"one fine old heathen who really knows something that the white man hasn't taught him [and] worth a dozen paltering mediocrities who have forgotten their own history and swamped their identity." According to Au,

many years ago, the supreme power over the four tribes of the island was held by Sokehs, until a Pehleing chief, appropriately named Soupeioasoahs, roused the people from their apathy. Kiti then began to be an independent power and the obstinate rival of her northern neighbor Madolenihmw. Some while after, on the north side, a portion of the Sokehs folk broke away, forming the independent fifth tribe of Net, which seems to occupy in Ponapean politics the same place as the little republic of San Marino in those of Italy. (Christian 1899, 211-212)

Each region has its own stories and its own claims to precedence.

Katau

In the same vein--that is, a theme running through commentaries on the texts rather than an element in them--is the question of Katau, a problem Ward Goodenough has explored in detail (1986). Pohnpei myth speaks of both Upwind (east) and Downwind (west) Katau. For the last century scholars have associated Upwind Katau, rather uncritically, with Kosrae. Goodenough has demonstrated the unlikelihood of this, based on many factors, including the apparent absence of Kosrae's location from contact-era Carolines' navigation lore, the Kosraens' lack of open-ocean sailing skills, and the lack of

noticeable Kosraen influence on the Pohnpei language. He also points out that a range of traditions identify Upwind Katau with the Marshalls and Kiribati (the Gilberts).

Stories about Katau (Kachaw or Achaw) abound in Truk and the Central Carolines, as well, and using these and linguistic reconstructions from the Proto-Oceanic (the assumed ancestor of eastern and central Micronesian, Polynesian, and some Melanesian languages), Goodenough proposes that the word *katau* signifies the bridging effect of the sky that vaults overhead. Katau as a place really refers, then, to the "sky world." This is the world beyond the horizon, an abode of spirit-beings and gods. When asserting that ancestral or legendary figures were spirits, therefore, they are represented as having come from the spirit world: Katau.

Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting cite a number of Pohnpei informants who claim that Upwind Katau was in the Marshalls or Kiribati (1977, 63). Ioakim David tells me that Upwind Katau includes both Kosrae and the Marshalls. I recall that once while Ioakim was explaining this to me, a Pohnpei friend listening to our discussion protested. He did not want to believe that any of the figures identified with Upwind Katau, including Pali and Isokelekel, could be Kosraen.

Rufino Mauricio, who has studied Pohnpei's clan origin myths with great care, suggests that they offer what is probably a quite reliable picture of the outer island world of the southwest Pacific ocean. If Goodenough's notion that the word *katau* connotes a bridge is accurate, then Katau is likely to be a reference to the bridging effect of the island crossroads that Pohnpei and the islands east of it play (Mauricio nd).

Given the evidence mustered by Goodenough and others, I am inclined to believe that "Katau," as it appears in specific myths, is indeed a reference to a mythological place, and that voyagers who come to Pohnpei from "Katau," for whatever their many reasons, are equally mythological figures. I am especially skeptical about the Kosraen origins of Isokelekel, and indeed about the possibility that the modern political system is the product of a foreign invasion. Much of Pohnpei social and cultural life has been shaped by contact with the outside world, but that does not mean that it has been imposed by foreigners.

Nan Madol

Paul Hambruch said that of all impressions one might gain of Pohnpei, Nan Madol is the most enduring. He also described it as "a puzzle whose solution has become ever more difficult and will perhaps never be completely revealed" (1936b, 3). This may be equally true for Nan Madol's place in Pohnpei oral traditions, where its creation plays such a pivotal position.

According to these traditions, work on the site marks the beginning of the period that separates the era of creation from modern times. The traditions consistently speak of Nan Madol in reverent terms, as do most modern-day

Pohnpei, and stress that it was built in order to enhance the spiritual well-being of the island and its people.

At the same time, however, the construction of Nan Madol led eventually, and perhaps inevitably, to the rise of the Sau Deleur dynasty and thus to a time of great tribulation for the people. The lesson is not lost on today's Pohnpei: I believe this entire cycle of myths provides them with a guide to decision making and action, and has done so throughout the colonial era. Each colonial power has, in its turn, announced to the Pohnpei that it has come to introduce a new order that will immeasurably improve their lives. They have heard such tales before.

In my opinion, this corpus of traditions contains within it a Pohnpei perspective on government--a set of philosophical observations about the proper ordering of society. It is for just this reason that I stress the importance of giving equal consideration to all the many variant traditions. They represent a sort of dialogue (or "discourse" in the current phraseology) among the various Pohnpei historians about what happened in history--about which causes led to what results.

There is, of course, considerable disagreement among them, as there should be in a living tradition. But it seems to me that one area in which we find substantial agreement is the character of labor that went into the building of Nan Madol. There seems to be general agreement, for instance, that the heaviest work was done by magic--that is, the heavy basalt stone was flown into place.

Most accounts also tell of the people being called together to work on the project, to collect, for instance, the smaller stones and coral rubble that were used to fill in the islets once they had been defined by the walls of heavy basalt. And there is, again, agreement that this work was done in a spirit of cooperation. The people were asked to help, on the grounds that the completed project would bring them a better life. And so they did.

There is little--perhaps no--evidence, as I read these texts, that the people were coerced or forced into working on the construction of Nan Madol. Many of the texts are explicit in stating that there were no chiefs in those days, only the elders of the lineages. And several of the texts are also explicit in their portrayal of causality. The rise of the first leader came as a product of the work done during the construction: "The Ponapeans respected and regarded Olsohpa because they had become accustomed to hearing his voice and his advice concerning the great work. . . . Olsohpa took on the appearance of a great leader" (Hadley 1981, 8).

I am not suggesting that this is what must have happened. I am merely stressing that the texts themselves are clear about this process. They cannot be used to argue that Nan Madol was built by a labor force under the control of some centralized authority. I have spoken about this with the Pohnpei historians whose judgment I have come most to respect. They agree: the labor that built Nan Madol was essentially egalitarian in its organization. There

were, according to Pohnpei traditions, no powerful leaders capable of ordering people to do the work.

If archaeologists or prehistorians want to argue that Nan Madol provides evidence of a centralized polity or authority structure, they must rely on other evidence, not Pohnpei oral traditions. But ethnohistorical accounts do not support this view either. I have treated the mythological materials at length here; let me turn briefly to ethnohistory.

The power or coercive ability of Pohnpei chiefs in the early contact period (the 1830s through the 1850s) was at best ambiguous. Certainly some of these leaders were forceful individuals, but the evidence does not support any contention that either basic Pohnpei culture or social organization created a context in which people could be physically forced to do work they did not wish to do (Petersen 1990). Yet Luther Gulick, in his paper on Pohnpei's "ruins," describes at great length the large-scale stonework being done in the 1850s (1857, 59-60).

Gulick said the people of Pohnpei "are, most emphatically, to this day, a stone-laying people." To illustrate his point, he described two buildings "erected within the last three years." One was 40 feet by 60 feet, on a foundation 4 feet high. The second had a base 30 feet by 100 feet, 8 feet high, and atop that a solid platform 20 feet by 30 feet by 8 feet. The first was "erected by" the Kiti Nahnken, the second "built by" the Madolenihmw Nahnmwarki (ibid, 59). He also reported that several years earlier the Sokehs people measured the size of what had been "a large feast house" on one of the Nan Madol islets, then returned to Sokehs and built their own "of exactly the same size" (ibid, 60).

Gulick quoted his colleague Edward Doane on the labor that went into building the foundation of his home in Sokehs:

I was not a little interested with the earnestness with which they worked. Surely, if there were fifteen or twenty thousand natives on the island, they could accomplish any piece of work they undertook. The way in which especially the stones, very large ones, were laid hold of and brought to the place suggested to my mind a sufficient explanation of the structure of the large ruins on this island. Supposing at some past time the population may have been 20,000, and this large number controlled by religious zeal, and powerful, ambitious chiefs, I think, from the way the natives to-day took hold of the large stones requiring five or six men to carry one, the work on these ruins can be readily accounted for. All that is needed is some powerful will to command. (Ibid, 59)

We find here, in much the same way that we see in the Pohnpei texts, a degree of contradiction. Gulick describes the leaders of Madolenihmw, Kiti, and Sokehs mobilizing large work forces to build public structures, yet Doane has to hypothesize the existence of powerful, ambitious chiefs with the powerful will to command. The missionaries themselves were not sure how

much power the nineteenth century chiefs had, but they had no doubts about the ability of the Pohnpei to erect these structures.

There was also confusion about why the structures were built. Gulick said Pohnpei was "covered with curious stone structures," lying "in all possible locations," of many shapes and sizes, and "of various ages" (ibid, 57-58). He observed that "it might well be conjectured that such a stone-laying people, might employ stones for various different objects on an island where this material so abounds--and the differing appearances of the ruins confirm the idea" (ibid, 60). Yet he also emphasized the religious character of most of the structures. His colleague William Sturges disputed those who "have supposed these walls were for defense." Rather, he maintained, "the whole would seem to be of use in the religious rites of the present natives" (ibid, 59).

Gulick reported that Nan Madol itself remained the premier religious site on Pohnpei, "the head quarters of the whole island. More important ceremonies are performed here than any where else and many of the performances in other places have some relevance to those here" (ibid, 60). "Till within the memory of some living in 1852, the whole of this locale was densely populated, with the exception of the most sacred spots, and no mangroves were allowed to intrude" (ibid, 58).

Hambruch remarked that while the "most magnificent, complete and carefully built structures" are at Nan Madol, "they are not the only ones. Not without justification do the people of the Carolines call island Fanupei--'land of the stone enclosures'." But he held that many of the structures were meant as fortifications and that in some cases "religious sites and fortifications are joined together" (1936*b*, 96). Both Hambruch (ibid, 104) and Christian (1899, 214) remarked on the ability of latter-day Pohnpei to build fortifications during their revolts against the Spanish and German colonial administrations.

Christian noted the similarity between fortifications built in the 1890s and the ancient stonework at Sapwtakai, in Kiti: the positions were "laid out on pretty much the same pattern, the Ponapeans in ancient and modern times being no mean proficients in fortification and the art of war" (ibid). Sapwtakai itself is widely reported to have been built on the model of Nan Madol (Hambruch 1936*b*, 3, 65; Hadley 1981, 73; Christian 1899, 217).

The evidence suggests to me that the people of Pohnpei were fully capable of organizing large-scale construction of stoneworks well into the twentieth century, and that their ability to mobilize this labor was not directly dependent upon any short-term changes in their political organization. They had always built stone structures and Nan Madol represents the apex of this activity, rather than a significant departure from their basic way of life.

There is a pattern, still common in present-day Pohnpei, of building an entirely new structure and abandoning an old one, instead of repairing or rebuilding the older edifice. I know men who have built four or five houses on a single piece of land during the course of their lifetimes. And the Gulick brothers described this happening in the 1850s.

John described the home of the Madolenihmw Nahnmwarki in 1852. It was approximately 15 feet by 20 feet, on an 8 feet high stone base, "crowded and littered" inside. Nearby was a "feasthouse," which he guessed to be "over 60 feet long. It is, however, an old one & in a dilapidated condition" (A. Gulick 1932, 89). Luther describes the Nahnmwarki's new feasthouse, built at about the same time (L. Gulick 1857, 59). The large number of large structures on Pohnpei does not tell us much about how many people were involved in building them over how long a period, and cannot be used in and of itself as evidence of any particular kind of social or political organization.

Most people of Pohnpei assert that Nan Madol was built cooperatively, and the historical evidence from the nineteenth century certainly suggests that their ancestors could have done so. Whether they did in fact work in this manner is a different matter, and in this context, one about which I am not prepared to offer an opinion. I remain puzzled about the organization of labor that built Nan Madol even as I grow more certain about its meaning.

The Meaning of Nan Madol

Some versions of this mythology connect the beginnings of Nan Madol to the creation of Pohnpei itself, others set the two sequences quite apart. Yet there seems to be general agreement that construction was initially perceived as a positive step that changed the order of things.

If there is a coherence in this mythology (and I am not entirely sure that there is), it lies in an opposition between the center of the island and Nan Madol's location in offshore waters. These tales consistently portray the ancestors of today's Pohnpei people as afraid of the cannibalistic autochthons who inhabit the island's interior.

It appears to me that construction of Nan Madol, whether part of the initial plan or a later development, was meant to shift the island's "center of gravity," as it were, away from the geographical center and out to the island's eastern shore, where it faced the sunrise. The tales convey a sense of people acting together to rid themselves of a threat perceived in the interior.

At the outset, Nan Madol represented a glorious new beginning. Then in turn it became too centralized, thereby constituting a new threat. The culture-hero Isokelekel was thus called upon to overthrow the tyrant and decentralize the polity.

Although historical evidence tells us that Nan Madol continued to serve as a ritual site well into the early years of the European-contact era, both history and mythology tell us that it had lost any ongoing political status it might have had. It has since served as a reminder of the evils of centralization.

If scholars can find in Pohnpei mythology an explanation of Nan Madol's construction, it lies in this basic fear of centralization. This fear is manifest in tales of the Sau Deleurs, but it can also be teased out of accounts about the earlier phase. The people worked to shift the island's spiritual axis away from the interior and out to the shore.

This did not, however, destroy the power of the island's geographical center: we are still told that "Pohnpei is a holy (or magical) land." But it diluted this power enough to render the island free of its troubling monsters. When this led in turn to a new centralization--political this time--yet another new order was instituted.

This perhaps explains the continuing spiritual significance of Nan Madol. The complex has no current political status on Pohnpei, though it serves to remind people of the evils of political centralization. But in some manner it remains as a spiritual force that continues to decentralize or tame the power of the island itself.

The Language of Politics

One topic remains. Quite aside from everything else we can glean from them, these texts also afford us a glimpse of how political terms are used in the Pohnpei language. We have examples from 1910 (Hambruch), the 1930s (Luelen, Bernart), and 1981 (Masao Hadley). I am not referring to language as a whole, nor to the respect language (*meing*) in particular, but to the political vocabulary--the words used to speak of rank, authority, and political geography.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's work on language is sometimes summarized in the phrase "Meaning is use." He wrote in *Philosophical Investigations*, "For a large class of cases--though not for all--in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its bearer" (1953, 20). With this idea in mind, I have tried to keep track of how political terms are used in these texts.

As I survey my data, the frequency with which two problematic words--*mwohnsapw* and *kaun*--appear immediately calls for attention. Neither is a term likely to appear in general descriptions of the Pohnpei polity.

Mwohnsapw

The Rehg and Sohl dictionary capitalizes *Mwohnsapw*, as it does titles (eg, Nahmwarki, Soulik), treating it as a proper noun. As the word is used in many of these texts, however, it is not a proper noun--it is often modified--and I shall treat it accordingly. The dictionary translates *mwohnsapw* as "Lord, chief of the highest order."

Sahpw in general means "land," but in context it can also mean "place," or "country" in the English-language sense of a nation or state. *Mwowe* (which combines with *en* 'of' as *mwohn*) means "ahead of" or "before"; as a verb it means "to offer as a first fruit." *Mwohniki* means "to consider most important," and it is perhaps worth noting that the English word *money* has become the Pohnpei word *mwohni* (which some Pohnpei would say is an apt description of its place in the English-speaking world's pantheon).

Mwohnsapw thus translates as something on the order of "first of the land," which is how Riesenbergl glosses it. As he notes, the term is "used in different ways," and the list of definitions he obtained is quite confusing and contradictory (1968, 17). This accurately reflects, I think, the fundamental problem of pursuing definitions rather than examining usage.

In his account of Pohnpei in the early 1830s, the Irish castaway James O'Connell consistently employed the term "*moonjob*," which was his transcription of *mwohnsapw*, to describe "chiefs and their blood connections" (1972, 121). Interestingly, the term does not appear in Andrew Cheyne's glossary (1971, 175-179), though his residence on Pohnpei began less than a decade after O'Connell's departure.

In the Pohnpei-language texts *mwohnsapw* appears to be the noun most commonly used to refer to high-ranking leaders, and it is often translated as "chief," but it is used in other ways as well. There is certainly no single English word that conveys its various and complex meanings, and because a range of other Pohnpei-language terms also get translated as "chief," this term is not an appropriate gloss.

One of my primary reasons for writing this section has to do with the ways the term is translated in the various texts. For example, the word "*mwohnsapw*" appears in Hambruch's Text No. 1, where it is translated into German as "*Grosshäuptling*" and thence into English as "great chief" (1932, 335). In a description of the Spanish era "*mwohnsapw*" is translated into German as "*Häuptling*" and into English as "chief" (ibid, 260). In Luelen "*mwohnsapw*" is in some places translated as "ruler" and elsewhere as "First of the Land" (Bernart 1977, 53, 39). Fischer employs "first of the land" in his translation of Silten's manuscript (Silten, 14). In Paul Ehrlich's translation of Masao Hadley's text "*mwohnsapw*" is consistently rendered as "high chief," but so is the term "*soupeidi*" (Hadley 1981, 9, 11). For storytelling purposes, these translations are quite adequate. But their inconsistency confounds any comparative attempt to describe the Pohnpei polity.

The term refers to many different types of people, and to at least one god. The Sau Deleur is frequently termed a "*mwohnsapw*" (Hambruch 1932, 335; Bernart 1977, 39; Hadley 1981, 9). So are Nahnmwarkis (Hambruch 1932, 264-265; Bernart 1977, 85; Hadley 1981, 56) and at least one Nahnken (Hambruch 1936b, 261). The Lepen Palikir, leader of a semi-autonomous area of Sokehs, is referred to as "*mwohnsapw*" in texts dictated to Hambruch by several different informants (ibid, 169, 251).

In Hambruch's Text No. 316, a woman becomes the "*li mwohnsapw*" ("female *mwohnsapw*") of And, the atoll off southwestern Kiti (ibid, 243). And in his Text No. 13 there is a place ("*sapwehu*") in the interior known as Meir. The "*mwohnsapw*" who possesses ("*sapweniki*") it is Kirou Meir (ibid, 194). In his Text No. 106 there is a "*mwohnsapw*" who is never specifically identified (ibid, 407)--he is simply *mwohnsapw*.

A foreign leader might also be called a *mwohnsapw*. In Hambruch's Text No. 73, the leader of Yap is referred to as "*mwohnsapw en sapwo*" (ibid, 228). Furthermore, in Luelen's account of the Sau Deleur-Isokelekel cycle, he speaks of the god Nansapwe, who is fleeing to Katau, as "*mwohnsapw*" (Bernart 1977, 73). And in Hambruch's Text No. 1 we are told that when a "*mwohnsapw*" dies his spirit goes to the sky to reside with Nansapwe (1932, 338).

In several cases *mwohnsapw* is applied to an entire clan. In Hambruch's Text No. 46 we learn that it is the custom that one clan provides the Nahmwarki and that this clan is called "*mwohnsapw*" (Hambruch 1936b, 324). In Text No. 96 we read of the demise of the Sau Deleurs and their Great Clan (Dipwelap), "which had been *mwohnsapw* in the past" (ibid, 79).

In a number of texts dictated by Wilhelm Helgenberger (Aundol en Aru), the hero of the story ultimately "*mwohnsapwela sapwo*" ("became the *mwohnsapw* of the place") (ibid, 241, 281), a process paralleled in other of his tales by "*Nahmwarkiela sapwo*" ("became the Nahmwarki of the place") (ibid, 284).

It also appears that there were several kinds or grades of *mwohnsapw*. In a number of Hambruch texts, again dictated by different informants, we find mention of "*mwohnsapw tikitik*"--that is, a small or minor *mwohnsapw* (1932, 338; 1936a, 54; 1936b, 103, 324). The adjectives *tikitik* ("small" or "minor") and *lapalap* ("large" or "great") are reflexes of similar terms in the reconstructed Eastern Oceanic language that was antecedent to modern Nuclear (eastern) Micronesian languages (Petersen 1990). Both words are used to modify status terminology in the Pohnpei political ranking system.

In the past, *mwohnsapw* referred to or denoted a wide range of statuses. Usage in these texts suggests that the idea of high rank cuts across the Sau Deleur-Isokelekel divide, and that it has never been restricted to the Nahmwarki or members of the Nahmwarki's line of titles, as has sometimes been argued (Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting 1977, 122; Riesenber 1968, 17-18). In general, glosses like "great chief" or "high chief" make sense, but in specific contexts, and especially when modified by "minor," this translation does not work.

Modern usage does not shed much light on the older meanings of the term. At present it is used primarily to address or to refer to the Nahmwarkis. But I have also heard it used to address (and in reference to) holders of several extremely high titles that lie outside the two main lines of titles: specifically Rohsa (Kiti), Lepen Moar (Madolenihmw), and Kiroun Lehdau (Madolenihmw). I have been told that at least in the case of Kiroun Lehdau, *mwohnsapw* may not be used when he is in the presence of the Nahmwarki. The term may sometimes also be applied to holders of the highest *koanoat* titles, the line of honorary titles controlled by each Nahmwarki.

One high-ranking U leader used to greet me habitually as "*mwohnsapwakan*" (the plural form, which is the proper way to address an extremely high-ranking person such as a *mwohnsapw*). I took this as light-hearted teasing until I once tried greeting a Pohnpei friend in like manner. His highly disturbed response (he feared spiritual retribution, *riala*) was enough to convince me that the term still bears its old spiritual connotations, even if it is no longer as widely used as it once was.

Kaun

A second term that appears with a frequency belying its relative obscurity in general accounts of the Pohnpei polity is *kaun*. It is used as both a verb and a noun, in much the same fashion as the English verb *to lead* becomes the noun *leader*, and these terms reflect *kaun*'s basic meanings. Its broader senses are illustrated by Rehg and Sohl: "noun. Ruler, boss, leader, director. transitive verb; To boss, to rule, to lead, to direct."

The one political usage that has received some discussion is *kaun en kousapw*, leaders of the political communities that I call "local chiefdoms." Riesenbergs notes that "most informants use the terms *kaun* and *soumas* interchangeably" and reports some contradictory discussions about possible distinctions between them (1968, 32-33).

In these texts, however, it is clear that the term applies to every possible political status. According to one text, at the time of creation the original canoe voyage that came to raise the island up out of the sea had as its "*kaun*" a man known as Sapwikini (Hambruch 1936b, 219). According to another, during the period that followed the Pohnpei people had no "great *kaun*" ("*kaun lapalap*"), only "minor *kaun*" ("*kaun tikitik*"). These were the "lineage *kaun*" ("*kaun en keinek*") (Hadley 1981, 3).

Olsihpa and Olsohpa planned to construct a place of worship--Nan Madol--in order to create a "great *kaun* of all Pohnpei" ("*kaun lapalap en sahpwen Pohnpeiuh*") (ibid, 4). In time Olsohpa came to be their "*kaun*" or to appear as a "great *kaun*" ("*kaun lapalap*") (Bernart 1977, 31; Hadley 1981, 7-8), though Hadley also tells us that the first Sau Deleur was the first "great *kaun*" ("*kaun lapalap*") (1981, 9). Immediately following the Sau Deleur's defeat, Isokelekel occupied Pahn Kedira, his predecessor's seat, but had not yet become a "great *kaun*" ("*kaun lapalap*") (ibid, 45).

In the present (ie, post-Isokelekel) era, the Nahnmwarkis are referred to as "*kaun*" or "*kaun en wehi*" (which Fischer, Riesenbergs, and Whiting translate as "ruler of the state") (Bernart 1977, 146, 150, 99). Luelen also speaks of both "great" and "minor" *kaun* ("*kaun lapalap*," "*kaun tikitik*") (ibid, 147). And when the Catholic missionaries arrived in the late nineteenth century, their faith was adopted by both "great" and "minor" *kaun* ("*kaun lapalap o kaun tikitik*") (Hambruch 1932, 254).

Although these examples demonstrate that *kaun* can apply to the highest chiefs, the term is also used to speak of other sorts of leaders. Hadley at one point refers to the "*kaun en soupeidi*," which Ehrlich translates as "leader of the high chiefs" (1981, 72). Luelen speaks of a meeting of the people with the "*kaun en kousapw*," the "local chief" in my terminology, to plan a battle (Bernart 1977, 150). In Hambruch's Text No. 175a, we are told of a "*kaun*" or "*soumas*" of dance, who leads instruction in the dance (Hambruch 1936a, 201). And we also find in Hambruch a rare case in which *kaun* and *soumas* are differentiated. During the period of Catholic conversion, when tensions were running high between Kiti and Madolenihmw, the Kiti Nahnmwarki

summoned all his *soumas* and his *kaun en kousapw* and all the people" ("*kapokonpene ar soumasakan koaros o kaun en kousapwakan o aramas me tikitingkan koaros*") (1932, 260).

When *kaun* is employed as a verb (sometimes in the form *kaunda*) we find a similar range of usage. In the origin myth of the Dipwinpehpe clan, the early members of the clan increased in population (a fundamental element of this class of myth) and then raised up ("*kasapwilada*") one of their number so that he could "*kaunda*" them (the German has "chose one of them, who commanded them") (Hambruch 1936a, 39). Olsihpa and Olsohpa "*kaun*" the voyage that first brought them to Pohnpei (Bernart 1977, 27).

Luelen tells us that after the local chiefdoms ("*kousapw*") were established in the reign of the Sau Deleur, the Sau Deleurs "*kakaun*" (translated as "ruled") them (Bernart 1977, 36-37). During this era the ceremonies at Nan Madol served as the basis of the "honor" ("*wahu*") and mana of the "*soupeidi*" so that they could "*kakaun*" the people ("*tohn sahpw*") (Hadley 1981, 13). The holder of the title Sau Pohn Dowas "*kaunda*" the great edifice at Nan Dowas (ibid, 72). And the Lepen Moar either "*kaunda*" two "*wehi*," "*kakaun*" Sapwalap (Bernart 1977, 170, 41), or "*kaunda*" Senipein (Hambruch 1936b, 348).

After conquering "the east side of Ponape," Isokelekel "*kakaun*" them (Bernart 1977, 77). And Luelen names those who "*kaunda*" the "*wehi*," the small "*wehi*" ("*kisin wehi tikitik*"), and the large "*kousapw*" ("*kousapw me laud*") in the division of land that followed the coming of the new order (ibid, 88-89).

One of the most interesting uses of the term comes from a tale told in Hambruch's Text No. 74, which is set in an unspecified era. After some rather violent competition between two characters, Lap en Deleur and Sau en Pok, the latter dies and the former takes possession of the land ("*sapweniki*") and "*kaunda*" all his clansmates ("*sauikan koaros*") (1936b, 294). Here we find a distinction made between controlling land and leading people, a dichotomy that is not often made clear in other texts.

The meaning and use of *mwohnsapw* and *kaun* intersect at points: some of the same legendary characters, occupying the same roles, are called by both terms. But *kaun* is a more broadly applied term; it is used to speak of a wide range of leadership roles. *Mwohnsapw* is more restricted; it refers to the most exalted leaders. *Mwohnsapw* is paralleled by two other, better-known words: *soupeidi* and *Nahnmwarki*. *Kaun* is paralleled by one other, *soumas*. The meanings of these better-known terms are no less complex, however.

Soupeidi

Rehg and Sohl translate *soupeidi* simply: "Title holder in the Nahnmwarki line." Riesenbergh recognizes that the matter is considerably more complicated. While acknowledging that "the line headed by the Nahnmwarki . . . is commonly referred to as the *pali soupeidi*," he also specifies that "the word *soupeidi* does not have the meaning of" Nahnmwarki (1968, 16-17).

A literal translation of *soupeidi* is "those who face downwards," and refers to feasthouse etiquette: certain of the highest-ranking people in attendance at any ceremonial gathering sit upon the raised platforms that line three sides of the building; they look downwards at the rest of those present, who occupy places on the dirt floor. Because the group of people facing downwards at any given feast is likely to be a unique assemblage, given the dynamics of Pohnpei social life, the literal meaning of the term does not in fact specify those to whom it realistically applies. Furthermore, some of those universally referred to as *soupeidi* are required to work on the dirt floor or even outside the feasthouse.

Riesenberg notes that in Luther Gulick's 1850s vocabulary *mwohnsapw* is defined as "chief of the highest order . . . : synonym of *soupeidi*" and *soupeidi* as "a chief (in some tribes a chief that in others would be called *mwohnsapw*)" (Riesenberg 1968, 18; Gulick 1872). This, I think, is an excellent example of the sort of free variation that characterizes much of the usage of these terms.

The texts seem to agree that there were no *soupeidi* in the earliest era. The term's first appearance in both Luelen's and Masao Hadley's accounts comes during the construction of Nan Madol. The massive Nan Dowas edifice is built to be a "place of deliberation for the *soupeidi*" (Bernart 1977, 28) or "the residence of the *soupeidi* (Hadley 1981, 7).¹

In explaining the development of the system of first fruits during the beginning of the Sau Deleur era, Hadley speaks of the offerings brought to the "*soupeidi*" (translated as "highest-ranking chiefs" or "high chiefs") (ibid, 11). In the tale in which the Lepen Moar is sent on a difficult quest for the Derepeiso bird, we are told that this marked "the beginning of the *soupeidi* saying things to their people because of their anger" (Bernart 1977, 43).

After Isokelekel has arrived at Nan Madol, the Sau Deleur orders Lepen Moar to find out if the voyagers from Upwind Katau have "*soupeidi*" (Hambruch 1936b, 73), but the foreigners practiced subterfuge to hide their leader: "Isokelekel hid from them. No one could know that he was a *soupeidi*. If they were going to be seated formally Isokelekel would sit on the floor of the feasthouse among the common people [*aramas mwahl*]" (Bernart 1977, 75).

As with the term *mwohnsapw*, *soupeidi* is sometimes modified. It thus appears as "*soupeidi tikitik*" ("minor *soupeidi*") in an anonymous Hambruch text describing the Spanish reign. In this context, however, these "minor *soupeidi*" are ranked between the "*soumas[es]*" of Pohnpei and the people, making it unclear to whom the text refers (Hambruch 1932, 255).

Nahnmwarki

Compared to these other terms, *Nahnmwarki* is relatively unambiguous. It is a specific title, the highest in each of the five present-day paramount chiefdoms, and I ordinarily translate it as "paramount chief." It has been in the past and is still occasionally translated as "king." Indeed, modern Pohnpei

people often call kings of foreign countries "Nahmwarki," and in fact sometimes use the term loosely to speak of any ruler (Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting 1977, 128).

Luelen, for instance, in his discussion of the Kiti high priest Soukise, says he "was the great *kaun* [*kaun lapalap*] before there was a Nahmwarki in the *wehi* of Kiti." A few sentences later he refers to the home of the Kiti "Nahmwarki," while still clearly referring to the Soukise (Bernart 1977, 165). And in the same anachronistic vein he refers to the Soukise as "Nahmwarki" when describing the subterfuge used to hide his death (ibid, 94).

Masao Hadley tells the story of a boy named Semen Pwei Tikitik who leaves Pohnpei after a falling out with the Sau Deleur and drifts on a raft of coconuts to an unnamed land. There he finds that the political system is divided into two sides (not unlike the system that would subsequently develop on Pohnpei): the side of the Nahmwarki and the side of the warriors ("*pali en sounpei*") (1981, 33).

In one of the numerous tales about the cannibal Liet which formerly inhabited Pohnpei, Hambruch's Text No. 53 (dictated by Lewis Kehoe) tells us that a "Nahmwarki" who lived on Pohnpei in the past, "named Sau Deleur," drove them from the island (1936a, 123). And in the Wilhelm Helgenberger tales I mentioned above, there are several cases where a young man manages to become the leader; he either "*mwohnsapwela*" or "*nahmwarkiala sapwo*" ("became the Nahmwarki of the place") (1936b, 240, 284).

So again we see that a term which seems quite specific can in fact be applied in a wide variety of cases. Nahmwarki is a specific title in modern Pohnpei, but it can also refer to almost any high-ranking leader.

Soumas

Another term that at first glance seems specific, *soumas*, is used with similar freedom in the texts. Rehg and Sohl define it as: "Chief of a section of land [*kousapw*]; member of the clan of the Nahmwarki or Nahnken." In my own experience, in present-day, everyday use, it tends to mean the former.

In Hambruch's Text No.1, a history which leads from the creation story directly to the Sau Deleur era, skipping the building of Nan Madol, we are told that in that era there were no Nahmwarkis, only "lineage *soumas*" ("*soumas en keinek*") and a "*mwohnsapw*" titled Sau Deleur (1932, 335).

In one version of the Derepeiso bird story, the Lepen Moar, who is sent in search of the bird, is referred to as a "*soumas*" (1936b, 348). Nahnisen, one of Isokelekel's lieutenants, is called his "*soumas*" (Hadley 1981, 42). And I have already noted a reference to the "*soumas*" of a dance performance (Hambruch 1936a, 201).

In one of the anonymous texts collected by Hambruch describing the era of Spanish administration, we are told that there are five "*soumas*" on Pohnpei. Of the five, three--the Nahmwarki of Kiti, the Wasahi of Sokehs,

and the Lepen Net--converted to Catholicism. The reference is clearly to the five paramount chiefs (1932, 258-259). In this same text we also find mention of "great and minor *soumas*" ("*soumas laud o me tikitik*") (ibid, 255, 260).

The term *soumas* is also used in places to refer to positions in the colonial administrations. When the people of Pohnpei were conscripted by the Spanish for public works projects, those who supervised their own people, under the eyes of the Spanish and Filipino overseers, were referred to as "*soumas*" (ibid, 231-232). And when a group of Pohnpei people revolted against the Spanish, they killed the governor and his "*soumas*," that is, his "lieutenants" (Bernart 1977, 120). In the same way that a foreign leader might be termed a Nahmwarkior *mwohnsapw*, lower level leaders can be called *soumas*.

These five terms, *mwohnsapw*, *kaun*, *soupeidi*, *Nahmwarki*, and *soumas*, are crosscutting, ambiguous, and multivalent. Taken out of context, none of them can be used to demonstrate anything specific about the Pohnpei polity. In context, they demonstrate that the Pohnpei do not rigidly categorize their system of political statuses and rank when they speak; this is, I believe, an accurate reflection of the reality of Pohnpei political life. There is nothing rigid, nor hardly even fixed about it.

It does seem that even though each of these terms can be and is used to specify almost every political status at one point or another in the texts, the overall system of terminology indicates three categories. The relations of these categories to actual social life has to be teased out of the data.

In the pivotal position are local chiefs. They lead the people of their communities and in turn acknowledge the superior spiritual status of the high chiefs. Recognizing the existence of three categories does not mean, however, that I would describe the Pohnpei political system as having three levels.

At any given time, in any given historical community, there may have been two, three, four, or perhaps even five levels. And while these may have functioned in one realm (eg, the political), they may well not have existed in other realms (eg, the economic or religious) (Petersen 1990). Given the character of Pohnpei culture history, and that of Eastern Oceanic societies in general, I doubt that there has ever been a time when the Pohnpei did not distinguish leaders of some kind. Even the oral traditions of the earliest era specify that the lineages had leaders, whether they were called *meseni* 'elders', *kaun*, or *soumas*.

Speaking as an ethnographer, I can acknowledge the existence of these abstract organizational categories. But I remain unable to say with any precision what actually constitutes them, because they cannot be observed in the flow of daily social life. There are multiple, overlapping lines of titles, and they provide many--probably most--individuals with several titles, requiring a cognitive calculus of rank so specific to each occasion and context that no single equation can determine relative status.

A person with a high-ranking *wehi* title and a low-ranking *kousapw* title (or vice versa) may simultaneously be of higher and lower status than someone else. The composition of the entire group of title-holders present at any given moment, or the purpose of the gathering, may determine which rank is of most significance in *that context*. Or the personal character of the individual may outweigh (or devalue) the nominal status of his or her titles.

Consequently, the simple fact that there are three categories of rank tells us almost nothing about actual political relationships. The ranked series of titles, the different kinds and classes of titles, and individual personalities all work to create a social reality that is infinitely more complex than abstract categorization can describe. These categories of rank engender a continuum of hierarchy and status in which the variations are vague and perhaps infinite; they are neither precise nor enumerable.

Problems of Translation

I want finally to point to some of the linguistic problems that arise when translations are relied upon. I am not suggesting that translations be avoided, but rather that those who depend upon them realize how misleading they can be. Evidence mustered to demonstrate some point or other about the Pohnpei polity is easily skewed by the process of translation. Reference to the original Pohnpei texts is not always possible, and may in fact be impossible for those doing broad comparative work, but it does serve to clarify much otherwise confusing or misleading terminology.

For example, in the Hambruch texts, which are of great value because of their age, their variety, their numbers, and because they sometimes provide multiple versions of tales, we find at several points in the German translations the term "*mein Herr*" or "*Herr*." In at least two cases this is a German gloss of the Pohnpei "*maing*" (Hambruch 1936b, 280, 339). *Maing* is a polite form of address which might appropriately be glossed in English as "sir" or "madame" (which is how Rehg and Sohl translate it). As such, the German, in context, is appropriate. The problem lies in the fact that in the English translation *Herr* and *mein Herr* become "Master" and "my master." These are certainly adequate translations from German to English, but they significantly distort the original Pohnpei, and in doing so give a political cast to what were in the original texts simple acts of courtesy.

In the third case, Text No. 254, a man named Sismankon comes into possession of a piece of land ("*sapwenikila sapwpwoat*"). In the German this appears as "*wurde nun der Herr des Platzes*" and is translated into English as "became ruler of the place" (ibid, 315). Again, there is in each sequential translation a minor shift in meaning. The cumulative effect leads to a very clear political statement in the English version that was never intended in the original Pohnpei text.²

The political shadings of the translations can be found in many other situations as well. Requests frequently get translated as commands, simple

speech as orders. A "mwohnsapw" uses a polite form ("*nda i en kang*") to tell a man to eat. This is sequentially translated as "*befahl*" and "command" (Hambruch 1936b, 408). The Nahmwarki of Kiti says ("*masani*") to his assembled "*soumas*" that he wants them to take care ("*I men kumwail en apwalih*") of the foreigners during a struggle with Madolenihmw. This becomes "*befahl*" and "command" (Hambruch 1932, 260). In time of war the *soupeidi* "*masani ong*" ("say to") the "*soumas*" to prepare. This is "*befehlen*" and "order" in translation (Hambruch 1936a, 349). In a discussion of feasthouses, we learn that this is where the people can meet the Nahmwarki and hear what he says ("*masani*") to them. Once more we find "*Befehle*" and "hear what orders he gives them" (ibid, 302).

As individual cases, none of these is particularly significant. But a pattern is built up through the course of the entire corpus of texts, and we eventually come to expect a Pohnpei leader to order his people about, when in fact the texts merely describe him speaking to them.

To offer one last example, we find significantly different shadings given to the same term depending on who is doing the translating. The word *iang* "(which Rehg and Sohl gloss as "To accompany, to participate") can be used to refer to "companions." In Hambruch's Text No. 65, "*iang en Sau Deleur*" is translated as "the people of Sau Deleur" (1936b, 172). When a similar term ("*iangahng isoh kan*") is applied to those accompanying a man called Kirou Meir in Luelen's text (Bernart 1977, 51), Fischer, Riesenber, and Whiting translate it as "courtiers," and say in a note that more literally it means "royal companions" (1977, 42).

According to Milford Wolpoff, "The data do not speak for themselves. I have been in rooms with data and listened very carefully. They never said a word" (1975, 15). Neither do the words in these texts speak for themselves.

They *can* be looked upon as evidence of an enormous amount of stratification and emphasis on political rank in Pohnpei social life. And indeed they have. The indigenous polity of Pohnpei is sometimes reckoned as one of the most highly stratified in Oceania. If one uses the language of these texts in a simple cumulative fashion, it is difficult to deny that there is a great deal of distinction between ranks and grades and classes.

But as I have attempted to demonstrate, the crosscutting references and ambiguities serve to cancel out the impact of the terminology. The net result of all the talk about rank is an extraordinary vagueness. The language of the texts reflects the ambiguity of the stories themselves.

Nothing is certain, nothing sure. There is rank, but it cannot be pinned down. In a process known as eating one's cake and having it too, the people of Pohnpei simultaneously provide themselves with the benefits of rank--prestige, security, and communion with the spirit world (in no particular order)--and the pleasures of egalitarian, individual autonomy. They have order and system when they need it, anarchy when they do not.

This unusual polity has served the Pohnpei well, and shall continue to do so. But it drives scholars crazy, and it will continue to do so if they insist on pinning it down. The Pohnpei polity, as I believe these texts show, can only be grasped when one stops trying to break it down into its constituent elements: the whole is not simply more than the sum of its parts, it is something quite different.

Conclusion

The search for a "usable past" is not a novel idea. Van Wyck Brooks (1918) wanted American intellectuals to create one. Warren Susman explores some of their attempts to do so, noting that the tendency is perhaps universal.

Every intellectual finds himself committed to at least some philosophy of history--some notion of the operation of history as process--and generally also to some particular analysis of the past of his own nation or the world that he frequently makes the basis of the analysis he develops of the current situation in which he finds himself. (1984, 27)

History has its uses, and this includes myth, legend, and all the varieties of oral tradition. Pohnpei views of the past are also analyses of the present, "an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr 1961, 35).

We have seen how some Pohnpei historians portray their island's past, and how certain themes thread their way through unfolding historical eras to inform the present. But we have also had to recognize that each storyteller has his or her own version, suiting his or her own situation in the unfolding of modern-day social life.

It is for this reason that my conclusions challenge the widespread notion that "in primitive cultures," myth "resolves psychological dilemmas and provides answers for the unknown or unknowable" (Stiebing 1987, 4). The overwhelming divergence of the views chronicled in this corpus of texts fundamentally denies the proposition that they serve to provide "simple, clear-cut answers" (Bainbridge 1988, 1048). Everything upon which they touch is debatable, contestable, and ultimately unresolvable.¹

Despite this--and, indeed, because of it--these tales record real history. That is, in Benedetto Croce's sense that "history is the story of liberty" (1941), we find here the story of a people actively engaged in shaping their own destiny. At every turn the ancestors of modern Pohnpei's people meet with difficulty and opposition. Their plans and programs are side-tracked or subverted by ogres and tyrants. But they never desist in their efforts, *and they prevail*.

For this reason, I believe that these tales are best understood by turning to Alasdair MacIntyre's proposition that "a myth is essentially a belief about the future which embodies the deepest inclinations of some particular social group." He borrows from Georges Sorel the notion that "myths must be judged as a means of acting upon the present" (MacIntyre 1967, 437).

The grand, overriding theme of this history, rising up through the welter of contradictory details and ultimately expressing the deepest inclinations of the Pohnpei people, is that of local autonomy. Great leaders and complex political systems come and go. But local communities, whether they be organized as kinship groups or chiefdoms, persist. True cultural continuity can be found in Pohnpei resistance to political centralization, and the perpetual re-creation of self-respect and shared dignity.

The Pohnpei have an unusual, and sometimes unhappy, relationship with the Federated States of Micronesia national government (Petersen 1986). Long experience has taught them that claims of a better life, coming at the cost of local autonomy, are not likely to bear fruit. Rather, theirs is a history that celebrates this autonomy, and aids them in acting upon the present. They, of course, know this very well. For the rest of us, these texts tell the tale, and we would do well to heed them.

Notes

Note to Chapter 1

1. William Lessa draws similar conclusions from his studies of Ulithi traditions, which share much in common with those of Pohnpei.

It cannot be said that Ulithian tales are an adequate source on which to rely for a reconstruction of the native culture. . . . Nor can they be regarded, except for a few tentative accounts, as reliable records of historical events.... If major episodes disappear without leaving a trace in contemporary tales, there is even less reason to believe that the trivial ones will have been preserved, at least in recognizable form. (1966, 49)

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Though Katau, or Upwind Katau (Katau Peidak), has long been identified by scholars as Kosrae, Ward Goodenough (1986) argues (correctly, I think) that it is not an earthly place, but refers instead to the spirit or "sky world." Mauricio (nd) suggests that it may be located in both this and the spirit world. I discuss this issue in more detail in chapter 7.

2. In Fischer's translation this appears as "supernatural power," which is his gloss of the Pohnpei term *manaman*, a cognate of the better-known Melanesian and Polynesian term *mana*. Throughout this work I substitute *mana* for *manaman*.

3. The pagination I cite for this anonymous text is from my own transcription of it.

4. The annotations to Luelen mention thirteen versions of this creation myth (Fischer, Riesenberg, and Whiting 1977, 1).

5. I am known in Awak by my title "Souwel en Tamw," which refers to the ridge called Tamwatamw. I might well have missed this reference to Maukuk, had I not known his story because of my personal tie to it.

6. Hanlon says "*Pohnpei sapw sarawi ehu*, 'Pohnpei is a holy land', is the first statement Pohnpeians make about their island" (1988, 4). This has not been my experience.

7. Riesenberg (1975) tells of a legendary atoll in the Western Carolines that disappears beneath the sea whenever Europeans draw near. I believe that this story reflects the same apprehensive theme as Pohnpei's hiding in the clouds.

8. *Wehi* has many meanings, the most common of which in contemporary Pohnpei is the entity I call "paramount chiefdom." For historical purposes, however, it is better to translate the term as "sovereign territory," because the paramount chiefdoms are relatively recent in origin (Petersen 1982, 24).

Notes to Chapter 3

1. In the annotations to Luelen's book, Fischer, Riesenberger, and Whiting note that the Silten manuscript reports a significantly different history of the early work at Nan Madol (1977, 18, 24). I first learned of the Silten manuscript's existence from this note.

2. Expropriation of English terms is by no means new on Pohnpei. Furnas tells of a British yachtsman (apparently C. F. Ward [1875]) who visited the Carolines in the 1870s. "He was annoyed to find the natives of Ponape talking English full of such Americanisms as 'I guess' and 'fixing' things" (1947, 210). In the early 1850s the first Protestant missionaries on Pohnpei complained that even the children greeted them saying, "Hello, Jack. Give us a chew of tobacco" (Hezel 1983, 146).

3. Mauricio points out that one subclan of the Under-the-Breadfruit-Tree Clan, the Upwudenmei, is also known as "Inehn Katau" (personal communication). The phrase *Kapara inehn Katau* can be translated as "To produce more Ihehn Katau," a possible reference to the large numbers of Under-the-Breadfruit-Tree Clan members on Pohnpei, and an exhortation to beware of them.

4. Goodenough cites this seventh voyage as if it were an agreed upon element of the mythology (1986, 553). It is not.

5. Marshall Sahlins has shown the significance of the clockwise direction in which ritual celebrations for the god Lono proceeded around the island of Hawaii (1981, 17-22). The consistency of this clockwise direction on Pohnpei may also be significant--I shall return to the topic.

6. The term *Enilap* 'Great Spirit' was proposed as a substitute for "God" in the Pohnpei State Constitution, during the 1983 Constitutional Convention. The document was drafted first in the Pohnpei language and some felt that *Koht*, the common term for God, was not truly a Pohnpei term. There was debate about whether the ancient *Enilap* was the equivalent of the Christian God. *Koht* was finally settled upon.

7. Athens, for instance, speaks as if traditions attributed the construction of Nan Madol to the legendary power of the Sau Deleurs. "Oral accounts identify Nan Madol as the center of a polity ruled by a paramount chief who bore the title of Sau Deleur. . . . The authority of the Sau Deleurs was absolute" (1983, 52). "The labor involved in Nan Madol's construction is indeed staggering. Oral accounts leave no doubt as to the social differentiation that existed between the ruler and the ruled. The power to command the labor obviously existed" (ibid, 59-60).

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Fischer notes that there is an ambiguity in the Pohnpei version: "*likin wehi* can mean 'outside the country' or 'the exterior part of the country'" (in Silten, 14).

2. The first spelling is Luelen's, the second is from Ehrlich's transcription of Masao Hadley, using the standard orthography.

3. When grooming hair, the people of Pohnpei kill lice by eating them.

4. It is possible, I suppose, that this is an apocryphal story, but I heard it only a day or two after it is alleged to have happened, and this inclines me to think that it actually did take place.

5. The passage in quotation marks is from Lohrens, Silten's sister's son, who helped Fischer translate the manuscript.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Cheyne tells us that in his time--the 1840s--Pohnpei men wore multiple layers of palm-leaf skirts (1971, 184-185), which explains the reference to quick changes. I recall reading as a child about similar bluffing strategies in both Chinese folklore and the lore of the American Civil War.

2. In the original Pohnpei text this appears as "*paki i uein Janipan o Japalap*," which I would translate as "requested the *wehi* of Senipein and Sapwalap."

3. I discuss the term *mwohnsapw* at length below.

4. Kenneth Burke's analysis of a body of Mediterranean "combat myths" outlines a dramatic sequence almost identical to that of the Isokelekel-Sau Deleur struggle (1966). I discuss this in another work (1987).

5. Hambruch's German text describes it thus; the original Pohnpei text is unclear to me.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. In Ehrlich's translation, it is Lempwei en Sok who becomes the Nahmwarki of Sokehs.

2. Rehg and Sohl (1979) translate *maiauda* as "to be free from encumbrances".

3. Goodenough writes, "It is unclear . . . whether the Isokelekel who overthrew the last Sau Deleur was the same Isokelekel who immigrated to Ponape or whether he was the last of a line of holders of that title, the immigrant having been the first of that line. Indeed, the traditions indicate that Isokelekel was allowed to settle in Ponape, and that he and his followers were already resident there before he overthrew the Sau Deleur" (1986, 556). This is an idiosyncratic reading on Goodenough's part. I have found no hint that the Isokelekel who defeated the Sau Deleur was any other than the one who sailed from Katau.

4. Linguistic evidence suggests that Sahngoro is a cognate of the great Polynesian god Tangaroa (Goodenough 1986, 563).

5. In 1905 a typhoon did tremendous damage to Pohnpei; this event is still spoken of, but not as a famine time. The hardships of the World War Two

era, too, are often spoken of, but I have never heard it referred to as a time of *lehk*.

6. M. I. Finley, arguing in this same vein, reminds us that the French *Song of Roland* substitutes 400,000 Saracens for a band of Basque raiders (1965, 42). This is a common problem in the analysis of epic history.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. This passage appears in the original Pohnpei-language text, but is missing from Ehrlich's English translation, at least in the version I obtained in the early 1980s. "What I say is twisted."

2. I am not criticizing either Hambruch's German translations or Runeborg's and Murphy's English translation. Both are of consistently high quality. But a degree of skewing is inherent in the shift through three languages, and this ultimately produces evidence where none originally existed.

Note to Chapter 9

1. This is no less so for American history than it is for Pohnpei traditions (Robertson 1980).

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