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The Failure to Objectify Culture: A Lack of Nationalism in the Federated States of Micronesia

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It is widely observed that political leaders promote national consciousness and unity by the rhetoric of national cultures and symbolic activities including sports events and commemoration of independence of the states. This is a process of cultural objectification in which people are made to reflect upon their cultures and identify themselves with those cultures. In the case of the FSM (Federated States of Micronesia), however, such politicians' attempts have led to unintended consequences: instead of national unity, they are fostering local and ethnic consciousness and thus division among the nation. The FSM consists of four states, each of which is inhabited by a number of linguistic groups and local communities. Being acutely aware of the absence of national unity, politicians are trying to counteract this situation through various occasions such as FSM Games and Yap Day. FSM Games is a sports event where people from the whole country participate. Yap Day is an event where various cultural activities are conducted on the island of Yap. These two events were intended to promote nationalism by political leaders. However, contrary to the leaders' intentions, the events have contributed to the process of objectification of local and ethnic cultures and the intensification of local identity. Firstly, this is because there is virtually no culture that the leaders can utilize for representing the whole country. This is reflected in their favorite expression "Our culture lacks substantial content." Secondly, this is attributable to the fact that the competition involved in these events tends to heighten awareness of local differences rather than similarities among the participants. This study of the difficulties in promoting nationalism and cultural objectification in the FSM concludes that a lack of nationalism among the common people prevents political leaders from forging a united, national culture.

Keywords: cultural objectification; the Federated States of Micronesia; nationalism; the discourses of political leaders; unintended consequences

The study of national identity and nation making¹⁾ has been a central concern of the newly independent former colonial states in the Pacific, especially in Melanesia and Polynesia. On the subject of Micronesia, however, research on nation making is tenuous and scarce.

Ever since the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) became independent 18 years ago, national unity has been a central issue in the country's politics. There have been many discussions

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about 'the lack of national unity' within the FSM among scholars not only in the field of anthropology but also in other fields such as history and political science,²⁾ as well as claims that national and state governments have not made any effort to create unity within the FSM. In sum, scholars believe that nationalism in the FSM is still just in its infancy.

Culture has normally been perceived by both politicians and social scientists as one of the most important vehicles for nation making. National culture, shaped in a nationalistic framework, has especially taken up great space in the discussion of the process behind nation making (cf. Deklin, 1992; LiPuma, 1997; Ravuvu, 1992). In the case of the FSM, where nationalism and national culture are still in the making, however, the invention of national culture has not yet led to nationalism. That is, there is not a general sense of unity or oneness among the people. Moreover, because the FSM is a multi-ethnic country, it would cause political leaders more problems than it would solve to choose one local culture out of many to represent the culture of the entire nation. Thus, the case of the FSM shows that culture alone does not create a nation-state.

Beyond mere cultural diversity, linguistical diversity also interferes with national unity. In the FSM, people routinely speak three, four or more languages. Residents in a village, or even within a single household, do not all speak the same languages, and—most interesting from Western perspective—people do not recognize their multilingualism. Therefore, for the present, in the FSM, no one is attempting to set up one language as a national language. However, English (the residue of America's colonization) is the only common language available when a Micronesian wishes to communicate with another Micronesian who speaks a different language. Sensibly enough, mainstream scholarship sees language as a key component of national culture and identity. Based on this, scholars see that the FSM is a culturally and linguistically diverse society, and they conclude that these cultural and linguistic barriers are the key hindrances preventing political leaders from forging a national unity. In such a multi-lingual, multi-cultural society, however, the actual implementation and entrenchment of political discourse by elites also have to be taken into account. These elites must be reckoned as the primary sources of any national framework.

This article draws on specific ethnographic cases within the FSM in the Oceanian region. To understand the process of nation making in the FSM, it is necessary to employ an ethnographic approach because ethnography can reveal the lack of nationalism among the people and also reveal the leaders' attempts to produce a culture in order to create national unity among the people. I believe that the leaders of the FSM are now making efforts to develop a new kind of nationalism and nation-state that can produce its own culturally and historically specific trajectory. In my view, federal as well as state government leaders are trying to forge a kind of unity, not only among the FSM, but also within each state in order to integrate diverse people. Yet, the national government has been considered to be marginal, not only by the four states' leaders, but also by the population.

Moreover, the national government has been unable to hold on to its power, that is, to establish itself as the predominant governmental actor in the FSM's cultural affairs. Thus, the failure to create a culture has been the failure of political leaders to lead.

This essay examines the discourses of political leaders that use ideas of culture to promote unity through the 3rd FSM Games and the 34th Yap Day and it analyzes ways in which the people express their disconnect from such goals. The study recognizes that the elites' first nationalist task is to create culture, and seeks the root causes of the FSM leaders' failure to succeed in this task of objectifying culture. The study concludes that the failure to produce a culture (therefore, the failure to invent and objectify a national culture) is not the cause of the FSM's lack of nationalism, but rather the reverse: a lack of nationalism among the people hinders political leaders from producing a united, national culture.

Some Salient Features of the FSM

In order to discuss the reason why nationalism in the FSM was not fostered, and why it did not spread, this section examines certain significant features of the FSM. One significant feature of the FSM, as mentioned above, is its cultural and linguistic diversity. The country consists of a large number of ethnically and linguistically different groups scattered across hundreds of islands, which is the main reason why scholars are skeptical about the development of nationalism in the country. Colonization bound these groups together within an administrative boundary and, to some extent, intensified contacts between islanders. Colonialism in the FSM, however, was by no means homogeneous. The area was occupied successively by Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States. This cultural diversity of the islanders themselves across both time and space fundamentally formed the postcolonial state and nationalism in the FSM. Nevertheless, despite these differences of culture, most politicians and intellectuals in the country agree publicly that the people share a certain cultural similarity.

By 1991, the FSM, a new country that gained independence in 1986, had received diplomatic recognition from the international community, and had become a member state of the United Nations. Its political and economic position, however, is unique because of the Compact of Free Association that the FSM has with the United States of America. The Compact recognizes the FSM's sovereignty and its right to complete control over all domestic internal matters. However, the Compact maintains U.S. control over the FSM regarding matters of defense and denies military use of the area to other powers. Furthermore, the United States has granted over \$1.4 billion in aid to the FSM over a period of fifteen years (Pinsker, 1997a).

Moreover, the FSM consists of four states, Yap, Chuuk (formerly Truk), Pohnpei (formerly

Ponape), and Kosrae (formerly Kusaie). Each state has its own unique, diverse cultures and languages, and certain states try to bridge these internal differences (Haglelgam, 1992). However, cultural competition among the members of each community rather than within a collective national culture is common. Therefore, I claim that the failure to create national culture within the FSM is neither an accident nor the result of bureaucratic mismanagement. Rather, as we will see in examining the leaders' discourses, attempts to capture or preserve a total culture must fail —because the objectifying approach to culture implicit in and fundamental to such attempts inevitably fragments the cultural totality sought. Thus the dream of a policy designed to foster a cultural totality has led to failure, because of the fragmentary culture that exists in each province. Because of this complexity, the goal of unifying the various islands while respecting their cultural differences is spelled out in the “Preamble to the Constitution of the Federated States of Micronesia,”

To make one nation of many islands, we respect the diversity of our cultures. Our differences enrich us. The seas bring us together, they do not separate us. Our islands sustain us, our island nation enlarges us and makes us stronger.

As a result, since independence one of the crucial issues has been the accomplishment of a sense of nationalism. In other words, the FSM as a nation had to be created from scratch. Although Benedict Anderson makes it clear that the nation is an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983), a cultural entity that does not possess substantive content, in the case of the FSM, recognizing a “nation” as an “imagined community” is essential to the process of nation making. At the time of nation making, it is a matter of great importance to identify and define the national culture. However, since a national culture has not yet been created, political leaders' propaganda for national unity has been the lone starting point from which to build a nation.

The Failure to Forge a National Culture

Over the last decade, in the histories of the British monarchy, of contemporary Quebec, of the Pacific Islands countries, and of many fourth world areas, there has been much discussion of the “inventions” of culture or tradition, not only among anthropologists, but also among historians and political scientists. These contributors treat the notion of “nation” as a cultural invention. In 1983, the influential collection edited by Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, was published. Some of the contributors often equated invention with inauthenticity. For instance, Hugh Trevor-Roper, a historian, mentions that the Highland tradition of Scotland did not exist in ancient times but was invented during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in what I have

called objectified forms, though he himself does not use the word ‘objectification’ (Trevor-Roper, 1983). Following this volume, many Pacific scholars emphasize that culture is inevitably “tailored and embellished in the process of transmission,” and “the process of cultural transmission described here is dynamic, creative—and real” (Linnekin, 1990: 161; cf. Jolly, 1992). These scholars “have thus naturalized the artifice of invention”(Thomas, 1992: 213; cf. Handler and Linnekin, 1984: 278). In 1997, Robert J. Foster edited a volume of works examining the process of nation making in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Foster, 1997). In this pathbreaking volume, Edward LiPuma argues that national culture has been invented in the South Pacific (LiPuma, 1997: 56-60). In general, a particular culture is predicated on the existence of a particular human group and vice versa. Therefore, the assertion of cultural particularity is another way of declaring the existence of a unique collectivity. In the logic of nationalism, however, a nation cannot contain within itself another nation, or any total culture other than its own. All subcultural differences within a nation are said to be overridden by the salience of the primary national culture.

However, in the case of the FSM, as we have seen, neither national culture nor national unity has been created, but leaders have respected cultural uniqueness within each community.

The President’s Inauguration and the Objectification of Culture

This section discusses cultural objectification by the president. To forge a national culture, culture must inevitably be objectified. As LiPuma puts it, “[f]or the emerging nation-state, invention of national culture is the most visible form of objectification; inculcation of an embodied sense of national identity becomes central to the very construction of the subject” (LiPuma, 1997: 37). In this article, I do not claim to be able to present an account of culture, but will focus instead on cultural objectification in relation to the interpretation of discourses. The idea of cultural objectification here is drawn from Bernard Cohn, who has written of Western-educated intellectuals in India. As Cohn puts it:

The Indian intellectuals of Bengal in the nineteenth century and then the whole Western educated class of Indians in the twentieth century have objectified their culture. They in some sense have made it into a ‘thing’; they can stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity (Cohn 1987: 228-229).

In this article, I adopt Cohn’s definition of the word ‘cultural objectification’ because the fundamental notion that I would like to relay is that of seeing culture as a ‘thing’ that belongs to the people as national part or property.

Although leaders in the FSM have long recognized its diverse cultures and respected the value of this diversity, they, nevertheless, expect cultural unity to prevail, and think of the FSM as a total society—a territorially bounded unit. In the political context, the FSM is one nation. If one looks for national integration in the FSM, one has to look for it in the government offices. Yet there is no consensus as to what constitutes the FSM's national culture. On the contrary, cultures at the community level are still being vigorously promoted by each community. For example, Yap Day is celebrated by Yap State annually as a legal holiday of Yap State, a holiday prescribed by law. Here is a tangible symbolization of their culture, conservatively defined, that hundreds of people can witness. Moreover, both in Pohnpei and in overseas Pohnpeian communities (for example, in Kansas city, the United States), Pohnpei's Liberation day is celebrated on September 11. Yet the FSM's independence day is not celebrated at the national level. People's loyalties revolve around communities or kin-based relationships. Therefore, in order to create a coherent national identity, the message of nationalism and the development of a national culture must penetrate among the people of the country.

However, because the various cultures differ, and because many are discontented economically because of the way compact money allocations have failed to penetrate the vast rural areas, certain kinds of secessionism persist. I am not necessarily talking about organized sociopolitical resistance toward this penetration in the form of cultural or traditional groups and/or communities. Rather, I would like to emphasize the efforts of political leaders, efforts that no ideology in itself can break down or transform, because ideology itself is only part of what it takes to create a nation.

Leo A. Falcam, the fifth President of the FSM, addressed its unique culture in his inauguration on July 21, 1999:

In speaking of our unique cultural identity, it is well to pause for a moment and focus on its meaning. What is culture? Is it the contents of a museum, to be visited and viewed with nostalgia and curiosity? No, museums have their place, because the objects of our historic past are evidence of our heritage, but ours must remain a living culture. It lies in the unique ways that we relate to each other. It lies in our family structures, and in the customary ways of decision-making and settling disagreements. It lies in our languages, our legends and our songs. It lies in the things we celebrate and the things we mourn. Perhaps most of all, it lies in our own unique values. We value our land. It is scarce and precious. We value our ocean. It sustains and protects us, and binds us together. We value the quiet enjoyment of our lives. For us, the "island way" is and should remain the best way. *That* is culture-our culture.

This statement makes it clear that the president has objectified their culture. In discussing their culture, people speak usually of tradition, custom, and the typical way of behaving, "island

way". "We are different because we have a different culture," many Micronesians have told me. In my view, each culture indeed differs from that of the surrounding provinces, but they are also similar to them in many respects. The differences are relative, not absolute; for example, compared to the culture of Pohnpei proper, the culture of Sapwuahfik, an outer island of Pohnpei, would appear quite similar from an outsider's point of view. Yet Sapwuahfik people claim a distinctive character for their community in the context of other Eastern Caroline populations, paying special attention to relations with their nearest and most important neighbor, Pohnpei. Thus Sapwuahfik people objectify their own culture in order to assert their local cultural uniqueness. For the people of Sapwuahfik, the Pohnpei/Sapwuahfik distinction serves as the key component by which they define themselves. But when the president objectifies local culture, he utilizes these unlikely sources for nationalism.

The 3rd FSM Games and Elite Discourse

This section investigates the process by which the 3rd Federated States of Micronesia Games (FSM Games), held in July 2001, was utilized by politicians' discourse to initiate nation making.

After independence, a mostly urban and U.S. educated elite, among them many politicians and teachers, recognized the need to promote national unity in order to integrate linguistically and culturally the new nation's people. These efforts at unity have been carried out primarily by a handful of political elites who continue to play a pivotal role in espousing national unity through various programs. Among these programs, sports are considered to be particularly important. Nationalism in the political domain, however, was not created at all by the common people.

In his outstanding work *Games and Empires*, Allen Guttmann searches for the process driving the worldwide diffusion of sports (Guttmann, 1994). In the FSM, as in the rest of the world, sports are becoming ever more popular. In Yap, for example, the Yap Sports Council, the Yap State Education Enterprises Department and the Division of Youth Services have worked together in order to spread interest and participation in sports not only among young people, but also among adults. It seems that their efforts are paying off because we see basketball courts and teens playing basketball everyday and everywhere. In addition, there are now many leagues for games such as softball, volleyball, and soccer. For example, nine men's teams and eight women's teams constitute the Yap softball leagues.

In 1995, the government decided to establish the National Sports Championships. So far three championships have been held, and I had an opportunity to observe the most recent one in July 2001. It is remarkable that at the opening ceremony one government official after another, including President Leo A. Falcam, emphasized the importance of national unity, of nationalism.

Let us now return to a sports event and how the elites' discourse dealt with it. The FSM Games which I observed were held in Yap over a period of nine days from July 22nd to 31st 2001,³⁾ with 800 participants including athletes, coaches and officials. The decision to hold the national championships was made during the tenure of the 3rd president, Baily Olter. The first FSM Games were held in Pohnpei with over 900 participants in June 1995. Two years later, in July 1997, the second FSM Games were held in Kosrae with over 1,000 participants. Although the FSM Games were initially scheduled to be held every two years, after a meeting of athletes in Kosrae, it was decided that the Games would take place every four years. As a result of this decision, the nation will be provided a major sporting event each year: 1) the FSM Games held within the federation; 2) the Micronesian Games held in the former trust territories such as Palau, Saipan, Guam, the Marshalls and so on; 3) the South Pacific Games held on South Pacific islands such as Fiji and Tonga, and; 4) the Olympic Games.

The discourses of national unity that are woven throughout the FSM Games depend on a sense of crisis over the lack of national unity within the federation. Examples abound. Five days before the FSM Games, I interviewed Yap State lieutenant governor Andrew Yatilman. Yatilman, co-chairman of the third FSM Games, talked about how state and national governments have expended large amounts of money on the event, and emphasized that "one of the purposes [of the FSM Games] is to strengthen unity within the FSM through sports competitions." The holding of this sporting event was proposed by the federal legislature, and the FSMNOC [Federated States of Micronesia National Olympic Committee]. The third FSM Games Organizing Committee was set up with Robert Ruecho, the speaker of the Yap legislature, and Andrew Yatilman, lieutenant governor of Yap State as co-chairmen. The Sports Council in each state selected athletes, and both federal and state governments allocated large amounts of funds to the sports competitions. All these facts show that both national and state governments took the lead in organizing the event.

Jack Fritz, the Speaker of Congress of the FSM, provided the following message in the program for the third FSM Games.⁴⁾

The FSM Congress salutes your diligent efforts and commitments toward the games which promote our unity and cooperation. As we deliberate upon the elements of the 3rd FSM Games, let us not forget the need to strive for unity, peace and liberty that are the building blocks of our nation. Let us exercise our sovereignty among ourselves and among countries of common mission. Through the games, we will enhance our personal and interpersonal qualities, which will bring forth our uniqueness and self-worth, make us a nation of people. We are Micronesians by heritage....

It seems that Fritz, in this statement, intends to have the peoples of the FSM reaffirm that

they are members of one nation. Such a reaffirmation of unity would have been timely because the national government's weakness had been demonstrated both by its inability to keep the four states together and by growing criticism of this inability.

Moreover Leo Falcam, the president of the FSM, remarked that "Yap [State] and a nation, all of us, can take great pride that a world class sports facility and complex now exists within our nation," referring to a gymnasium and athletic field constructed for the event, and he goes on to express the relationship between sport and nation as follows:

I'll say that there is no more important topic for us than building and strengthening our nation.... I believe sports we pursue here and at other games are much more value than just fun and exciting.... Unity among young athletes translates very importantly into the building of our national unity, both now and in the future and into our achievement of a more effective interaction with the outside world.
...
And so in this sense, the efforts and achievements of our athletes are not just about individual or team rights. They are about the building of progress through greater efforts by our citizens and communities, and they are about all regional citizens bringing us to greater unity as a nation.

The speech expounds on the idea that where personal friendship among young athletes turns to political togetherness, the highest goal of unity has been achieved. Specifically, it argues that friendship stitches together diverse individuals and communities and becomes the national ideal.

These views, as stated by politicians, are predicated on the recognition that the people of the FSM value cultural diversity above unity. In addition, the climate of emphasizing cultural uniqueness in their local communities during the last decades, seems to have grown more and more powerful, paralleling today's discourse on multiculturalism. Multiculturalism would domesticate internal diversity by rendering all ethnic claims equally relevant. Under such multiculturalism, the people in the FSM yearn neither for national nor for regional hegemony. On the contrary, the core value endorsed by the people is antihegemonic. It represents very fragile bonds. In addition, leaders fear what they perceive as an increasing invasion of American culture as conveyed by the mass media. In other words, the leaders of national and state governments intend to promote national unity among the people through events like the FSM Games because they feel a sense of crisis because national unity within the federation is not enough for integration. These statements were broadcast on both radio and T.V. not only in Yap state but also throughout the federation.

Popular Responses to the Event

The low level of national awareness among the different cultural groups in the FSM is

remarkable. Therefore it is not enough to examine discourses of political leaders, but one also has to analyze the reaction of the people. For instance, how did people respond to the event? Were they involved in it in the ways their leaders intended? Or did they show completely different reactions than their leaders intended?

In order to research the responses of the people, I asked the women who work for the hotel where I stayed about their reactions to the FSM Games. At that time, they responded that they were not interested in the Games, because they were busy about their tasks, or said that on account of the FSM Games they had to work harder because the number of guests had increased. An acquaintance of mine, who is 79 years old, said, "In the FSM Games, athletes only run, the loser is pitiful. On that point dance is good [because there are no losers or winners]." Furthermore, a high-school student told me, "Going to the Games is an assignment set by my school."

There is a further problem connected to the Games that is faced by the people. During the event, athletes and coaches from each State stayed at lodgings designated by Yap State, and were given assistance and ate meals prepared by villagers. Each house in a village was assigned to do the preparation for meals. For example, they were told to prepare enough chicken for dinner and enough boiled eggs for breakfast for ten people. Although funds for the procurement of meat and fish were provided by the state government, local foods, such as taro and coconuts were provided free of charge by the villagers. As a result, it seems that common people showed little interest in the Games themselves, because preparing the meals was a burden on them. Many people told me that preparing meals was quite a job. In fact, one of my friends, who works for PREL (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning), explained, "I had planned to go to [the FSM Games], but I won't be able to, because I have to prepare meals for athletes."

One of the hotel workers I mentioned seemed fairly interested in the games because she said, "The lieutenant governor's son, who is a participant in both the long jump and the high jump for Yap State, will compete with his uncle (his real mother's younger brother), who is a representative of Chuuk State. That is interesting, isn't it?" It should be noted, however, that she said this despite the fact that, when I asked her a general question, she answered "I am not interested in the Games." In addition, another woman who works at the front desk of the hotel showed up with her relatives to cheer on a softball game because other relatives were participating in the game. However, when I had asked her, "Are you interested in the Games?", she had replied incuriously "Sort of." When the sound of the play-by-play accounts heard from cars in town reached my ears, there were actually various reactions to the Games. That is, there were people who have said that the Yap men's softball team lost a game because some of the athletes had been on a drinking spree the evening before, or others who said that in spite of their geographical advantage at spear-fishing, the Yap team ended up in third place because the Pohnpeian athletes, who dove into the

water ahead of them, had caught the majority of the fish.

It is interesting to note what actually happened at the FSM Games. At noon on the first day of the Games, Joel Fladay, the honorary mayor of Rull, the village which took care of the Yap athletes, gave a pep talk at Ganelay School, where the athletes were lodged. At the beginning of the ceremony, the athletes and other participants were grouped together in huts or classrooms because it was raining. Around ten people, including the lieutenant governor and chief of Rull, were invited. Although the pep talk was interrupted temporarily by the rain, four of the invited guests expressed words of encouragement, the athletes received leis, which were hung around their necks, and the ceremony ended successfully. After lunch, the athletes and coaches went on three school buses to the Yap Sports Complex where the opening ceremony was held.

The opening ceremony for the third FSM Games, held at the Yap Sports Complex, which was newly constructed for the Games, commenced at six p.m. on Sunday the 22nd of July. Outside the ground, the Yap Police Drill Team and athletes from four states, games officials and games committee members and volunteers stood by to form the entry parade. The spectator seats were filled by a large number of spectators. First, the high-ranking officials from the four states and other nations were introduced and ushered to their seats. Then, lead by the drill team, the entry parade followed, with Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap, the host, in that order. Each delegation was led by a Yap boy and girl in traditional dress carrying a banner with the state name and a star athlete carrying the state flag. After one lap around the track, each delegation stood in line facing the grandstand. After the singing of the national anthem and opening remarks by several guests, the keynote address was given by Leo Falcom, president of the FSM. The lighting of the torch was the next part of the ceremony. Four outstanding athletes (one from each state) ran a torch relay. Then the national flag, the flags of the four states, and the FSM Games flag were raised on the main poles in front of the grandstand. After a short satirical play, at around nine o'clock, the ceremony concluded with two traditional Yap bamboo dances; one from Nimar village and the other from Atliw village.

The next day, when I went to watch a women's softball game, I saw one lady cheering on the Yap team, dancing and finally standing up. When I talked with her, she told me that, as the daughter of her younger sister was playing in the game, she had come with her children to cheer. The game itself was nearly an equal battle of skill. At one point the Kosrae team would score, but the next moment the Yap team would score. Although Yap eventually won by 10 to 7, the Yapese supporters cheered not only the Yap athletes but also the Kosrae athletes, whenever they played well. The Kosrae team, on the other hand, responded with a cheering song which included "*Ganbare, ganbare,*" meaning 'Never say die' in Japanese. At other playing fields where competitions were held simultaneously, many different people were seen cheering enthusiastically.

Despite this apparent success in community and nation making, there was also acute criticism of the Yap State Government. One of my friends sent me the following e-mail:

I abhor the idea of spending millions of dollars that could be used for education and health programs on games. I don't know how Yap can justify spending \$5 million for a sports complex, which is a BIG WHITE ELEPHANT. [The capitals are original]

There were other criticisms, as well. The athletes from other states complained loudly about meals prepared by local villagers. Joel Fladay, who took care of the Yap athletes, told me that the athletes would not eat local food, but simply threw it away. So, instead, he prepared pot-noodles for them.

It has to be said here that, at least on the surface, the people's point of view has not changed very much along the lines intended by the state and national governments. Moreover, though the success of the Games cannot be disregarded, the dialogue of those involved in the third FSM Games has diversified far beyond the original plans or thoughts of the state and federal governments.

During the FSM Games, the intentions of the leaders may seem to have failed because of people's indifference and the fact that people appeared to support only their acquaintances. In addition, it needs to be said that the production was not devised to create some sort of cultural unity that would then cause people to share certain similarities, but rather that the production mainly only imitated the Olympic Games. If, however, we consider the FSM Games as an occasion on which a 'nation' beyond local districts was forged, we can see it as a vitally important opportunity for the diverse people of the FSM to experience the same 'time and space' simultaneously. During the Games, not only people who were involved enthusiastically, but also people who seemed indifferent to the Games came to be in the same 'time and space,' where they could experience a sense of unity, one created by the federal and state governments. Therefore, it can be said that holding the Games helped produce a single community within the FSM, even though the leaders' intention to create national unity was not achieved.

A similar event in that sense is Yap Day, which is hosted by the Yap State Government. On Yap Day, both formal and informal discourses emphasized their cultural differences from group to group. Here the media gave rise to an aspect to objectification, allowing people to experience the same 'time and space'.

Differences of Outlook between the Leaders and People regarding the 34th Yap Day

This section deals with the 34th Yap Day, which I also observed, and focuses on cultural objectification. It was a three-day celebration, which commenced on the morning of February 28th and closed on March 2nd in 2002. Yap Day is a useful tool for a field worker because it is an invention of history, though history is itself a product.⁵⁾ It also provides us with an important example of the institutionalization of cultural objectification. Yap Day was established by law as “a legal holiday in recognition of the traditions of the people of the State.”⁶⁾ The holiday takes place annually. The theme of the festival, displayed throughout Yap Day, is “Yapese Pride” or “our island heritage and natural environment.” The broadest definition of heritage equates it with nature or environment. It refers to the conservation not only of what we call cultural property, but also of everything that can be called natural environment. For example, the programs for both Yap Day 2001 and 2002 put it respectively:

The 23rd Anniversary Celebration of the immense wealth of cultures and traditions, honor and pride, bestowed upon us by our forefathers to treasure and cherish as our true and unique identity amongst a world full of many challenges! (Yap Day 2001)

The 34th annual celebration of our island heritage and natural environment while reflecting on a just course for future generations! (Yap Day 2002)

Pride or heritage is a ubiquitous concept that people use when questioned about the meaning of being Yapese. “I am Yapese because we have custom and I am proud to be a Yapese.” The Yap State Government intends to promote and preserve Yapese culture and traditions through the festival. In particular, the governor, Vincent Figir, has undertaken the implementation of Yap Day in earnest. In his opening statement for the festival, Figir, first of all, mentioned the importance of commemorating, showcasing, and sharing the culture and traditions of Yap.

Today marks again yet another very important occasion for all of the people of Yap State to celebrate and commemorate the culture and traditions of Yap and to showcase and share aspects of our culture with all who have come from abroad to observe our celebrations this year. Yap Day founded more than three decades ago is an official day, established by law during which the people of Yap will endeavor to showcase important aspects of the culture and traditions of Yap in its performing arts of dancing and chanting, in its arts and crafts, in its agricultural products, in the traditional attire of its people, in canoe sailing and other traditional skills.

For Figir, the culture and tradition of Yap are indispensable for the people of Yap State, and they figure as objects to show off to the outsiders.

Secondly, he emphasized the dynamic nature of culture and traditions, as well as the importance of the cultural heritage that identifies the Yapese people. In addition, Figir likens culture to a living creature:

We know our culture and our traditions form the basis for what we are as a people. We also understand and appreciate the dynamic nature of culture and traditions and the fact that they are what keep cultures alive and thriving.

Then he stated that his generation ought to protect and promote the culture for future generations.

Our generation has now the awesome task to do our utmost to protect and enhance our culture and our traditions so that the next can build upon them and keep the culture of Yap alive.

Thirdly, the governor commented on his belief that culture has two aspects, the unchangeable and the changeable, and admitted the importance of the unchangeable in order to keep the culture itself alive.

Culture, like a house or a road has some core parts that cannot be changed in order to keep the culture alive. We know that if we change the door or the window frame of the house it will not come tumbling down, but if we dare cut the main beams that hold the house up, the house will surely come down. So, like our culture, we must know the parts that can be changed or replaced and those that cannot. This is the only way that the culture can stay alive and relevant through time for our own sake and that of our posterity.

These images of culture as a house convey first of all a sense of wholeness and boundedness. They establish the integral, irreducible nature of culture as an existent entity. Although culture needs to remain as it has been in the past, the metaphor of culture as a house conveys a perfect, fixed entity. Figir used this rhetorical device to insist, first, on the existence of Yapese culture and, second, on its existence as a unique and bounded entity. These metaphors were particularly effective in conveying a sense of the boundedness of culture.

This crucial idea of culture emerges in slightly different fashion in the discourse of foreign influences. Figir recognized that, in regard to recent globalization, Yap cannot be an exception

and that the people must embody both Yapese traditions that preserve their uniqueness and also the way of catching up with the West. The people of Yap, he believes, have to protect and sustain some core parts of their culture.

We will not shut out foreign influences, because in an interdependent and technologically advanced world our future will be more assured when we are open and know what aspects of our culture to change from those that we cannot change or compromise.

These statements of Yap's governor assume that authentic culture, the culture of the past, is seen as the original product of a distinctive people, apprehended and selected by those who lived it. In sum, what is historical and typical is authentic. And it is assumed that authenticity is objectively ascertainable, even though, the criteria to determine what is historical, traditional, or patrimonial can change. It is assumed that those cultures which existed in the past have come under attack from outside influences.

Having arrived at this assessment, Figir called simultaneously for modernization and for preservation of traditional values. The governor acknowledged that assimilation is proceeding apace, yet asserted that the unchanging principles of Yapese culture retain their full value. What is needed, then, are a social and cultural restoration that will modernize Yap while respecting ultimate values. And reforms of this magnitude can only be carried out by the state.

Figir looked to the future as well as the past. He saw the present as a great influential time for their culture, but he also saw it as a period of preparation for the future.

Finally, Figir concluded his remarks by touching upon the role of leaders in protecting and making Yapese culture flourish.

The traditional and community leaders in the State have especially a major responsibility in the enhancement and protection of our *cultures* and I call upon them to do their share in enhancing our culture and our important societal values through untiring efforts at the village, island, municipal and state levels. [italic emphasis mine]

As the leader of Yap State, Figir advocated the growth of Yap culture as the most appropriate tool for the social and cultural development of Yap State. In all these statements, the governor objectified Yapese culture. It is very interesting, however, that the governor used the plural form "cultures" when addressing community leaders, because Yap has traditional rankings not only among villages in Yap proper, but also between it and the outer islands. In the pre-colonial era, Yap was not a homogeneous and unified territory but rather "chains of alliance relationships that

bound villages and sections of villages together” (Pinsker, 1997b: 77). In municipalities today, some villages are considered to be the highest and their chiefs play crucial roles in contemporary Yap politics (Pinsker, 1997b: 77). In addition, prior to the colonial period, the outer islands to the south and the east were dominated politically by Yap proper. Therefore, governor Vincent Figir could not refer to one particular culture as Yap’s communal culture because he knows that each island and, in fact, each community has its own culture. The more he stressed Yap’s culture, the clearer the differences of culture became. These contradictory references to culture prevent political leaders from attempting to promote a sense of unity among the people. Figir’s statements took into account the importance of respecting their own culture, while at the same time working toward the recognition of a nation, which exposes the people to their roots and traditional culture. Such exposure is supported to build, and in some sense revive, a sense of regional consciousness and to draw upon nostalgic attachments to places to which the people belong. It also assumes that affective ties to heritage, traditional culture, and island are awakened from dormancy through Yap Day by fostering people’s attachment to their native villages or culture. Under such a condition, the members of each community become sensitive to issues of control with respect to their heritage, and objectify it. So claims on cultural property have always been as sensitive as possible to provincial and regional properties. It is not enough to have culture but the collectivity’s property claims must be recognized by other collectivities.

As we have seen until now, ‘nation’ and ‘region’ objectify culture differently when they construct unity through events. A patrimonial object can be constructed by locating its origins within the bounds of regional or national territory. For example, a custom is said to come from a region and period. On the other hand, a multi-ethnic national heritage is constructed patrimonially when the members accept citizenship and thereby subordinate their local membership to their newly chosen national identity. In the FSM, however, ‘the invention of national culture’ has been unsuccessful despite the leaders’ efforts.

For a more detailed example of how culture can be objectified, consider the evidence pertaining to ‘traditional’ dance performed on Yap Day. The villages that perform on that day dance elaborate amateur performances, and the often competitive —if not antagonistic— advertising reflects a resurgence of local patriotism. One old woman told me that, although all the dances are identical from a foreigner’s point of view, the dances of her village and all surrounding villages have their own styles and meanings, and that inter-village differences are recognized. The identification of dances with local variations may once have drawn out the spirit of rivalry among inter-villages, but today it is most obvious in self-conscious elaborations of cultural identity. The few older people who still know the dances teach younger villagers who attend to perform, and thus the villagers relearn their dances. The people are well aware that their dances are folklore and, as

such, worthy of preservation.

In addition, dance fashions change gradually, and because the history of particular dances is difficult to unravel, almost any form of dancing popular before World War II can today be presented to the public as traditional. To the extent that the villagers come to conceptualize their dances as 'traditional' their understanding of dances would have been changed. Therefore Yapese dances are not merely preserved, but largely reconstructed in what I have called objectified forms. These objectified forms are presented as 'tradition' or 'heritage' to the villagers via media, festivals, and the education. Trevor-Roper (1983) has shown conclusively how the "traditional" Highland Scottish culture was constructed by aristocratic enthusiasts and sold, as an authentic national past, to the general public. Trevor-Roper puts it:

Indeed, the whole concept of a distinct Highland culture and tradition is a retrospective invention. Before the later years of the seventeenth century, the Highlanders of Scotland did not form a distinct people. They were simply the overflow of Ireland (Trevor-Roper, 1983: 15).

In the case of the Highland Scots, pieces of culture that the public takes to be typically Highland Scottish—the items of clothing such as the kilt, musical instrument such as the bagpipe and so on—have been shown to be importations from areas of high civilization rather than indigenous elements of the purportedly folk culture.

The Yap materials presented here suggest that the work of leaders has been one among several factors that have brought continuous change to rural Yap. Rather than preserving pristine Yapese culture, leaders have catalyzed the common people to replace it with invented, objectified traditions to which both isolated and urban Yapese have responded. When Yoshinobu Ota (1993) set out to describe the folklore of Tono city, Iwate prefecture, in Japan, he learned not only that it was disappearing, but that it was not native in the way he had imagined. "Now the old tale which has been narrated in Tono City has more or less been influenced by *Tono Story* written by Kunio Yanagita" (Ota, 1993: 392). Thus the displacement of folk customs has long been combated by folklorists who, like Kunio Yanagita, struggled also to awaken the Tono people to the beauties of their old folk. But in doing so the folklorists have objectified those aspects of social life that they sought to preserve; that is, folklorists transformed them into discrete things to be studied, catalogued, and displayed. This involves selection and reinterpretation. But to select aspects of a social world as traditional culture or heritage, and then to isolate the chosen things in a new context—to inscribe them, perform them on stage, and to display them in museums—necessarily changes the meaning that those things have to objectifiers, performers and onlookers alike. Paradoxically, the attempt to preserve traditions through objectification brings change. As

a result, before unmarked practices become meaningful entities, elites assign them new meanings (for example, “traditional”). These new interpretations become incorporated into the “things” themselves and thereby add to and transform the understanding that the people have of their lives. Thus, the objectifiers change folk culture by creating it as “tradition.”

Accordingly it cannot be proved that the people in Yap are patriotic or are proud to be citizens of either Yap or the FSM. Instead, it seems likely that they establish their identities by going their own ways, ways which often differ from the directions hoped for by their leaders.

First of all, for villagers, Yap Day is far from the political event the leaders intend. People do not recognize a unified Yap culture as their own culture. Instead, as I have mentioned before, they make clear boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ within Yap, and they construct unique collective identities via dance performances (cf. Pinsker, 1997b).

Secondly, people complain about the site (Tomil) where the 23rd (2001) and 34th (2002) Yap Day were held because of the hierarchy among villages. One villager told me, “I don’t go to Yap Day because it is held in Tomil.” Another villager told me, “I go to Yap Day carrying food because, although food is sold, we don’t know who made it”.⁷⁾ In addition, on Yap Day, the outer islanders are prohibited from dancing, although they can participate in selling art crafts and other such peripheral activities.

As a result of these and other factors, the culture that the leaders try to promote as the culture of Yap—the culture by which these leaders intend to integrate people from the villages and outer islanders— instead highlights the differences among villages and islands. Although this culture is not a remainder of the pre-colonial era but something brand-new, under the present situation after colonialism, people have chosen to actively preserve it and to try to invest it with new meaning: they have objectified culture. These gaps between the common people and the leaders during the Yap Day celebration prove clearly that love for their native place detracts from their love for the state as well as the federation/nation.

This said, however, it remains true that Yap Day does bring many people—not only those within Yap State, but also those from other sister States— together. In this sense, a festival which brings together people of diverse cultures within Yap State may contribute to the goal stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of unifying the various islands while respecting their cultural differences.

On Yap Day, therefore, people experience the same ‘time and space’ and embody a sense of unity. In recent times, Yap as well as the FSM has become gradually industrialized and urbanized according to patterns designed, financed, and executed from outside the islands. These processes have been accompanied by the rise of mass media. At this point, therefore, we also need to examine the influence of media.

A Sense of National Unity Objectified by the Media

When people act to objectify culture, the media also influence the process and outcome. In an era when mass communication prevails, events hold tremendous importance. As S. Greenblatt witnessed in Bali, Indonesia, in 1986 (cf. Greenblatt, 1991), the Balinese experienced their culture through watching video tape recordings which had recorded their own dance, such as in the ritual of possession with a loud voice (Ota, 1993). When the Balinese enjoy the video of a dance they themselves produced, they objectify their culture. It is worthy of notice that a product of modern civilization such as a video camera can be utilized by other peoples or countries aside from the peoples or countries which developed such products. Before the spread of mass communication, participation in the events was voluntary, and no one was forced to listen or to watch. Yet now radio and TV broadcast the FSM Games and Yap Day throughout the FSM. Especially for the FSM Games, radio and TV stations in the other three States sent reporters and broadcast the events in their own languages. Therefore, it is possible for the media to attract diverse people who actually never meet and allows them to 'participate in' the events even though they may complain about, criticize, and seem to be indifferent to the Games. Thus the spread of media makes it possible for the people to have an occasion for objectifying their culture, even though they may disagree about its significance.

Because of the linguistic diversity and geography of the country, a national media does not exist in the FSM. However, the 3rd FSM Games, held in Yap, were broadcast in the other three States. Furthermore, Yap Day also was broadcast in the other three States through radio, although TV was only broadcast in Yap proper. Although nationally-circulating newspapers do not exist, regionally-circulated newspapers are available in Pohnpei and Yap. The newspaper accounts of both these events won front-page coverage not only in *The Yap Networkers*, circulated in Yap, but also in *The Kasehlie Press*, circulated in Pohnpei. In addition, *The Yap Networkers* circulated the *3rd FSM Games Daily Standings* and reported the results of the Games to the people every day. Thus the spread of the media provides people all over the FSM, as well as in Yap, the opportunity to share and objectify their culture.

The strength of the media was made clear to me when I received an e-mail from one of my friends who lives in Pohnpei, saying, "We knew you were in Yap because we saw you on the local channel watching one of the games." This friend, in fact, 'participated in' the FSM Games through the medium of TV. According to a TV and radio station worker, in Yap the household diffusion rate of radio is practically 100 % and of TV is approximately 95 %.⁸⁾

Therefore, it was possible to 'participate in' the events through newspapers, radio, and TV without actually attending the opening ceremony or the games themselves. So it is very possible that those who participated, whether directly or indirectly, objectified their culture.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the objectification of culture focusing on the discourses of the elites and the people's response to them, taking the examples of the 3rd FSM Games and the 34th Yap Day to illustrate the differences of outlook between politicians, who took advantage of the events to promote national unity, and the people, who reacted to these discourses.

As we have seen, nationalist ideology fundamentally assumes the existence of a geographically, historically, and culturally unique nation. That nation is believed to be born of and indissolubly linked to a bounded territory. Moreover, those links are conceived to be natural, not arbitrary. This set of assumptions is rarely questioned from within the nationalist perspective of a given nation; but when questioned from the outside by leaders of competing national groups, it is often ardently and creatively defended. In the case of the FSM, as the people identify with their local culture, outsiders would deny the existence of national unity, but leaders claim and specify the nation as the focus of identity for its citizens. It is incumbent on these leaders to delineate and, ideally, secure a bounded territory, and construct an account of the unique culture that attaches to and emanates from the people who possess it. It is at this point that disputes about the ownership of cultural property come into play. A self-conscious national or ethnic community would claim possession of cultural properties as both representative and constitutive of cultural identity. Yet each FSM community differs widely in the cultural properties they recognize.

Therefore, the people's opinions or responses to the nation vary tremendously, and they vary from the intentions of 'national' leaders. The people in the FSM do share the same experiences simultaneously through discourses narrated in the media at events such as Yap Day and the FSM Games. However, these events have not functioned significantly as mechanisms by which the people recognize and form a sense of unity. Even if any doubt remains that events such as the FSM Games or Yap Day can act as the leaders intended, to promote unity among diverse people, it is clear that the mass media and the discourses of both the leaders and the people act to objectify culture. I cannot yet say for certain whether the events have the distinct possibility of becoming 'mechanisms of national unity', but at the very least, mass media coverage of the events awakens the people's interest in culture as something objectified. Nevertheless, although it is up to the people to decide which elements they will claim as "national culture," they must be led in order for them to make a continuous effort to make such choices.

Notes

- 1) I use the concept of nation making according to the definition given by Foster (1997: 5): "the

nation” is “*an imaginative construct that constitutes persons as legitimate subjects of and in a territorial state.*” [Italics original]

- 2) Akitoshi Shimizu (1992: 134), for example, states that “the notion of national or federal unity is still alien to them.” Glenn Petersen points out that people within the FSM lack an understanding or perhaps the concept of a nation (Petersen, 1993: 3), and David Hanlon refers to Micronesia as a “nonentity” (Hanlon, 1989).
- 3) As in Kosrae, sports cannot be held on Sunday because it is a rest day. Therefore, no competitions were held on July 29.
- 4) *The 3rd FSM Games, Yap State, The Isle of Stone Money.*
- 5) Although “subjective antiquity” (Anderson, 1983: 14) lead Yapese today to claim a long tradition for the celebration of Yap Day because there was a community’s dance performance before Yap Day started, there was little evidence indicating when it started. In addition, there is a contradiction in the programs between Yap Day 2001 and 2002. The Yap Day 2001 program mentions that it is the 23rd anniversary, while the Yap Day 2002 program presents it as the 34th annual celebration.
- 6) Section 802 of Title 1 of the Yap State Code on Legal Holidays.
- 7) Traditionally, people in Yap do not eat meals prepared by people of low caste.
- 8) Television broadcasts can be received in almost all of Yap proper, but the outer islands cannot receive TV signals because of their low-lying situation.

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