

Transactions in the Space of Adoption

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This report summarizes the outcome of researching legal and customary adoption in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. In this article, the ethnographic examples collected from the interviews during my fieldwork from October, 2014 to July, 2015 show that on one hand, the functional importance of kinship keeps adoption thrives under the influence of family planning and the trend of nuclear family. On the other, locals criticize others technically apply for adoption to earn benefits from the social welfare system. I argue that the misuse of adoption is not loophole of the welfare system; instead, it shows how people creatively strive contemporary rules for social and economic mobility. Historically, the cultural practice of adoption is common throughout the Pacific. Compare to the extra care that the child can be given, researchers have pointed out that the sociocultural means formed by the alliance between two families weighs more while considering adoption. The court documents of recognition of adoption not only formalizes transactions in parenthood but is utilized to reduce the potential conflicts such as land rights and inheritance.

Literature Review

As the definition of the nuclear family in Euro-American societies—which is often perceived as the relationship between the wife and the husband (or the biological mother and father)—is so widespread to be assumed as the legitimate unit for reproduction and raising children, the various forms and concepts of the family found in other cultures are usually paralleled as deviance or exceptions. For example, E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (1951) extensive work on the Nuer in East Africa included descriptions of woman–woman marriages in which both the “female husband” was

recognized as the child's pater or social father, and the biological father or progenitor had recognized obligations and roles. Similarly, The Bangwa in Cameroon was also recorded as practicing a form of woman–woman marriage (Brain 1972): The titled sister (or half-sister) of a chief (*fon*), known as the *mafwa*, could take wives of her own and become pater to the woman's children, thus avoiding the status conflict inherent in her high social position as the *mafwa*, and the consequent loss of power and control when becoming someone's wife. As David Schneider observed, the relationship of blood, or shared biogenetic inheritance, which "cannot be ended or altered and that is a state of almost mystical commonality and identity" (1968: 25), is explicitly a Euro-American notion of family and kin; however, this pair of culturally biased glasses was continuously worn by early researchers when observing the "distinctions" in non-Western societies, such as the division of labor and ideas of parenthood (Bowie 2004: 7). Since the primary goal of this article is not on contributing to the critique on anthropological theory, these cultural distinctions will only be extracted as relevant ethnographic data with which to discuss the local knowledge about the family, rights, and mutual support among kin.

First, instead of the image of the nuclear family, anthropologists have seen that the extended family as a unit in which lineage and the clan are the main concern exists more commonly. Thus, the practice of circulating children is considered not only in terms of sustaining each household of the group but also of granting access to certain rights. In Aud Talle's (2004) description of the pastoral Maasai of East Africa, a cattle-owning society based on patrilineage and household groups, children circulate, not in the individualistic, actor-oriented manner of the West Indies, but in order to ensure that the presence of children within households remains "in balance." Inge Roesch-Rhomberg (2004) also describes a Korean kinship structure rooted in patrilineal, exogamous clans into which wives are incorporated. The clan takes

precedence over individual needs, and the adoption of an agnate from a descending generation is often necessary to perpetuate a patrilineage and to ensure that ritual obligations are met. The same situation also exists in East Cameroon, and the Batouri people sometimes act in a rather radical way. According to Notermans (2004), the Batouri people practice adoption of matrilineal relatives to build up matrilineage and maintain ties with matrilineal kin. In some cases, maternal grandmothers would decide to resort to a number of measures to incorporate grandchildren into the matrilineage, including creating birth certificates that name a matrilineal relative as a child's father, irrespective of the identity of the actual genitor, and even destroying birth certificates that name a daughter's legitimate husband as the grandchild's father. In these cases, adoption is thus lineage- and not child-centered, and adults are often involved, indicating that focusing on the strategies of the movement of people is an alternative to the study of adoption.

Vern Carroll, the editor of the first volume on adoption in Eastern Oceania, has pointed out how "the function of adoption as part of more comprehensive systems of exchange and the joint use of cultivated land, mobile goods, information and people" (1970) thus explains the relatively frequent occurrence of adoptions. The biological parents who give away their children for adoption are "usually ready, willing, and able to keep their children" (ibid: 5), but the social relations between the families involved are the focal point in the negotiation process of adoption. Recorded in early ethnographies (Carroll 1970, Fischer 1970), grandparents were frequent adopters of their children's children, particularly of their first-born. In fact, children raised by grandparents are considered lucky, as the grandparents have useful skills, knowledge, and resources to share. In Pohnpei, children can be adopted from the homes of younger siblings or from those with few economic resources into the families of elder siblings who are in line for a greater share of the inheritance. Jack Fischer also noted

that Pohnpei senior relatives who desire children either for reasons of childlessness or for care in old age hold a position of authority that commands deference. While there is no culturally approved method to force a parent to give away a child, implicit acknowledgement of the difference in status makes it difficult for birth parents to refuse the requests of a senior lineage member (1970: 299).

The prevalence of circulating children, which is noted as the second most revealing feature about Pacific adoptions, is suggested as an environmental factor by some anthropologists. According to research conducted in the 1970s that contrasted Polynesian and Micronesian rates of adoption, Micronesian communities were among those with the highest rates at nearly 70 percent of households having one or more adopted or foster children (Smith 1976: 250). In the Marshall Islands, Michael Rynkiewich (1976) examined the numerous forms of adoption and their impact on land tenure. Like the adoption patterns in other Pacific Island societies, children were generally adopted by clan members (where the clan membership was determined by the mother in the matrilineal Marshalls), and the practices were usually a response to the adoptive parent's need for labor or care. Occasionally, adoptions occurred for the benefit of the birth parents, who may have already had many children, in order to ensure a better inheritance. As John Frechione and Richard Scaglione suggest, when natural resources are limited in island societies, there is an increased probability that a feeling of "we-they" will exist in contradistinction to situations where these pressures are absent. Therefore, the kinship groups, based upon the limited number of ways in which kinship is calculated, are often perceived as being a method to cope with cohesiveness and membership restrictiveness (1981: 28). Though the hypothesis of discreteness in the particular relationship between agnatic kin groups and the intensity of arable land in Micronesia needs further study, it points out that land, as a necessary resource for subsistence, is a concern for the kin-group level of organization, and the

implications of adoption, including the authority, rights, and responsibilities of parenthood, play a role in measuring and adjusting the distributive mechanism for resources.

Despite the prevalence of extended families and customary adoption, the third characteristic of circulating children in the Pacific cultures involves the concept of parenthood. In Euro-American discourse, the terms “real” and “natural” are often used as prefixes to “parents” to refer to the birth parents of a child, who are seen as the opposite of social parents. As Judith Modell Schachter (Modell 1994) has argued, the power of the blood relationship is sometimes perceived as so strong that people expect adoptive children to be treated as if they had been born to their substitute family, and on official documents, the new parents become the legal mother and father of the child, taking the place of the biological parents. This fixation on biological relatedness is cultural, but the Euro-American laws have taken it as the premise of parental rights, thus ruling out the birth parents once the adoption is officially confirmed.

However, the biological/social distinction is treated differently in other societies. By using an additive rather than substitutive model of parenthood, it is possible to include both biological and social relatives in the same frame simultaneously. In other words, adoptive parenthood can be real without replacing or denying biological parenthood. For example, the Baatombu in Northern Benin do not have terms for biological or social parents, and both natal and adoptive parents use the term for “giving birth” when speaking about “their child” (Alber 2004). The families studied by Claudia Fonseca in Brazil combined a belief in the indissolubility of blood ties with the notion that “mother is whoever brings you up” (Fonseca 2004: 168). New mothers do not cancel out old ones but can be multiplied, just like the child who proclaimed proudly that she had three mothers: “the mother who nursed me, the

mother who raised me and the mother who gave birth to me” (ibid). Melissa Demian’s work (2003, 2004) in PNG also argues that the Euro-American notion of binary parenthood is narrow-visioned. In these cases, adoptees maintain obligations to both adoptive and natal parents, and adoptions are most likely to occur when the distance between the two is not great. The social parents of course do not replace the birth parents, but become other constituents in the complex of relationships that composes the individual child. Viewing the adoption on a larger scale, an adoptee moves not just from one nuclear household to another but from one clan or lineage to another in order to widen social relationships; in other cases, the adoptee might be transferred to another household but remain in the same lineage. Therefore, adoption is definitely not thought to harm children in any way when leaving their natal families. More importantly, parenthood here is not assigned to certain personnel; instead, the rights and responsibilities of being a parent have been dispersed to the entire kin group.

Adoptive parents and their children know all too well that the transfer of parental responsibility is the beginning rather than the end of a lengthy journey, and thus the process of “kinning” has caught anthropologists’ attention recently—including how the circle of kin spreads outwards from parents and children to other relatives and how kinship is created and reinforced through family events, ritual occasions, visits, and the construction of a common family history (Howell 2004). This can be especially important for an adoptive family, since the position of an adoptive child in the wider family may be more tenuous than that of the birth child, and the formation of familial relationships requires greater effort. As Marshall’s insightful review for the special issue of *Pacific Studies on Adoption and Fosterage* has pointed out, adoption is all about belonging—not only in terms of the adoptees’ sense of identity and belonging, but also of belonging to families and kin groups, such as lineages and

clans, and where belonging can be present in terms of “the land,” “a people,” or even “a nation” (2008: 8).

The Pohnpei Case

When I first went to Pohnpei, Micronesia, and began my pre-field study, female informants usually brought babies with them. During conversation, the informants would stop from anywhere between seconds and minutes to comfort their crying babies. Sometimes, the baby could walk and run, so we had to pay attention to the baby’s safety. Additionally, sometimes, we were unable to finish the interviews immediately because of the baby’s biological needs, such as hunger and hygiene. Although these female informants would call the child “my baby,” they were not the baby’s biological mother. They would then explain how they spent all of their time taking care of the baby, but that they were genealogically the baby’s sister, aunt, or even grandmother. The informants were more than willing to share their stories with me: The child’s biological parents were too busy, so they decided to adopt the baby and help the parents.

However, when I tried to explore how and why the children had been adopted, many informants clarified how “they hadn’t really ‘adopted’ the child” because “there could be too many court cases fighting for heritage.” In other words, local people conceive of childcare as a form of adoption, but also recognize that the English term “adoption” implies a different system to outsiders. This experience intrigued me, and I wanted to understand the multi-layered meanings of adoption, especially as different periods of colonization had shaped the unique Micronesian historical context, and as globalization had dragged this region into the order of the political economy.

To clarify the “adopting but not adoption” confusion exemplified above, it is necessary to start by exploring how Pohnpeians understand adoption. In the ideal

Pohnpeian customary sense, an adopted child (*serin pwekipwek*) is a child who is given by his birth parents to another couple with the understanding that the foster couple will raise the child and treat him as if he were their own (Fischer 1970). This is the closest meaning to the English definition of adoption, since when a child physically moves into a new home, the material, moral, and relational responsibilities are also transformed. While the transfer provides the child with access to instruction, education, wealth, or affection, the new parents expect the child to enjoy the physical closeness of co-residence, and render the services that a child would normally give to his natural parents, such as sharing in the daily tasks of the home (e.g., cooking, farming), and care in old age. Adoption requires no special ceremony in Pohnpei. In addition, according to Fischer's research (*ibid*), the decision to give a child up for adoption is wholly in the hands of the parents, and the initiative in an adoption generally comes from the adopting parents. In other words, the significance of child adoption is better understood in terms of building social relations, rather than as rescuing an abandoned child.

Generally, it is neither uncommon nor surprising to hear people analogize a child to family wealth or property (Inhorn 1996, Ward 2005, Maternowska 2006). As many anthropologists have mentioned, in Polynesian and Micronesian societies, adoptive kinship is a means to gain access to strategic resources, such as land and achievement (Brady 1976a, Morton 1976, Rynkiewich 1976). Therefore, the prevalence of adoption and fosterage throughout Oceania is described with an emphasis on the active “transactions in kinship” (a term based on Goodenough’s 1970 discussion on “transactions in parenthood”) that construct or revise kinship bonds and kinship identity (Brady 1976b). In Nukuoro, the sharing of children as adoptees can be explained as part of a larger pattern of sharing resources among kinsmen and represents the major features underlying parental succession and communal

interdependence (Carroll 1970). According to Levy (Levy 1970), Tahitian adoption communicates a psychological message that all social relationships are conditional. Children, as highly valued assets of their parents and community, have a contingent relationship with their parents subject to manipulation through adoption.

Fischer (1976) has discussed how the environment of Pohnpei and many other Oceanic societies—small, isolated social arenas with a stable climate—can be a conducive factor for the development of widespread adoption. Several consequences are also noted here. First, rare, serious disturbances from outside invaders give inhabitants the opportunity to work out stable sociopolitical arrangements that are suited to their technological level and local resources. Further, after an optimum population level is reached in a few generations, an upper limit within the sociopolitical arrangements can be maintained. From an ecological perspective, a dense population dependent on various forms of horticulture has a need to prevent the grossly uneven accumulation of inherited land rights through the introduction of random irregularities in genealogies. Especially, the problem of the accumulation of land rights can become severe if childless couples must always return their own land rights to collateral relatives or if there is a preference for one sex as the holder and receiver of land rights, so that couples with children of the wrong sex may not pass on their rights to their children. Therefore, the relocation of the child exemplifies a kinship practice that has been labeled as adoption and fosterage, accounting for the multiple ways in which children circulate from person to person and place to place, and the term “child circulation” is then employed by anthropologists working on similar relationships (Bowie 2004, Fonseca 1986, Leinaweaver 2008, Marshall 2008, Schachter 2008).

The functional importance of conditionality in parent–child relations and of the focus on sociocultural aspects of kinship can be seen in various dimensions. First, compared to other, surrounding coral atolls, the relatively tall and fertile volcanic

island geography has been noted as contributing to the renowned Pohnpeian chiefdom (Hanlon 1988, Petersen 1982). In addition, women, especially those of marriageable age, appear to “take pleasure in caring for young children” and volunteer for “baby-sitting” jobs around the community, “carrying the babies around well after the age when the child can walk, singing songs to them and playing with them” (Ward 2005). Culturally, children are desirable in Pohnpei for several reasons. As children age, especially as they approach adolescence, they can help with the work of daily living and become increasingly useful as they reach adulthood. When the parents reach old age and become too feeble to take care of themselves, it is expected that one or two married children will remain in the household. Therefore, some parents spoke plainly about being farsighted enough to adopt a child of their younger siblings (usually younger siblings), so that they would have someone to care for them in their old age.

Another common explanation parents give for adoption is to “have someone to inherit the land” (Fischer 1976: 306). The Pohnpei people are deeply attached to their native places and affectionate toward the land that they have worked. Practically, it is also safe to say that this concept is based on the community’s heavy reliance on subsistence agriculture. Breadfruits, bananas, coconuts, and taros are largely consumed daily. Sweet potatoes, cassava, and a few other crops introduced after foreign contact centuries ago have also acquired importance. Giant yams, which involve elaborate farming skills and knowledge, are an important feast food that serves the persisting title system. Due to the lack of foundational industries and the uneven development of the cash economy, full-time salaried jobs are rare, and they do not pay well enough to support a whole family. Traditionally and into the present, there is no way of making a living without land; especially, the land and its crops are closely related to Pohnpei customs. Therefore, a couple with many children and little

land who refuse to give up some children for adoption would be economically hampering all of their children.

Micronesian cultural values interwoven with colonial history also complicates the consideration of adoption. In Pohnpei, there are examples of high-ranking chiefs adopting an elder sister's first son; that is, the first-ranking heir in the matrilineage. Traditionally, avunculocal residence was practiced more by the prospective heirs of the heads of the higher-ranking matrilineages, so that certain plots of land that were permanently associated with special political titles could be kept inside the clan. Under German and Japanese colonial control, which instituted a strict patrilineal inheritance of land, this movement was a technical twist that was meant to make the sororal nephews, as officially adopted first sons, stay in line to inherit the chief's land. In other words, the adoption was seen as a special device for insuring the customary matrilineal inheritance of land and title under the reformed colonial land laws. In addition, children rank in order of birth in Pohnpeian tradition. Older siblings are supposed to have authority over younger ones and are generally given a larger share of the family inheritance. Due to the emphasis on birth order, on the one hand, younger children given up for adoption were more likely to get a better chance to inherit more if the adoptive parents did not have other children. On the other hand, in terms of the importance of personal achievement in the local political system, cases were reported where aged parents had decided to pass their support and resources on to a hard-working later child instead of the first child who had stayed overseas.

Other special features of adoption in Pohnpei are the emphasis on infant adoption, and the maintenance of the adopted child's original clan and lineage membership. According to Fischer's study (1970), Pohnpeians preferred adopting children at an early age, as soon as they were weaned. Some Islanders thought that children adopted after infancy would be less likely to have a close relationship with

their adoptive parents, though disagreement on this aspect by other informants was also noted. Fischer further suggested that this inclination was related to the island settlement pattern (ibid). The landscape of Pohnpei consists of isolated small farmsteads; there are no true village clusters, although there might be a sort of hamlet or cluster of an extended family around the house of an important chief. Due to the thriving chiefdom, there was a fair amount of competition between men in the feast and the title system. While adoption can be an acceptable method to strive for more resources by circulating people, there can also be some devices in place to encourage redistribution, and to prevent harsh competition between close kin. Though there were no statistics available, stories were told of how the adoptive child was given a share of land by tracing the matrilineage of its birth family after the adoptive family went broke. If the child was adopted by the birth mother's sister, there was no doubt that the child belonged to the same matrilineage of the adoptive mother. On the other hand, if the child were adopted by the birth father's brother, the maintenance of the adopted child's original matrilineal identity would show how the operation of the matrilineal rules was enacted through connecting the child through the birth mother. Either staying close to the original matrilineage or developing new ties with the clan of the adoptive family allowed for another form of flexibility in that the adoption would allow the individual to join in with community politics.

File a Request of Adoption

Parties who wish to adopt a child have a choice of method of adoption. They may adopt according to local custom, or they may adopt according to the laws of the Federated States of Micronesia. What a petitioner may not do is seek the court's involvement in a customary adoption. (6 FSM Code 1614)

Before the court may confirm a customary adoption, there must have occurred a customary adoption. Thus, a threshold question is whether the customary adoption has taken place. (6 FSM Code 1615)¹

A petition for confirmation of an adoption filed in the Pohnpei State Court in 1992 was dismissed as “unripe for adjudication.” According to documents in the FSM Supreme Court Interim Reporter, Susan Defang Billy and Keresio Billy petitioned for confirmation of the adoption of an infant born to a pair of unwed parents. In this case, Albertina Marquez, the child’s birth mother, offered an affidavit to prove that she had consented in writing to the customary adoption. However, Sebastian Defang, the birth father and brother of Mrs. Billy, did not provide any evidence. Therefore, the court concluded that the customary adoption was questionable and decided not to grant legal recognition.

Reading between the lines of this case, it is clear that a child had been relocated with and cared for by Mr. and Mrs. Billy, but the Billys and the birth parents disagreed about whether the child was adopted. In Pohnpei, living with the extended family is still very common. Though more couples elect to build new houses after marriage, siblings tend to live nearby one another and their parents. It is also extremely common for children to eat, play, and sleep with their cousins in their uncles and aunts’ houses for periods ranging from days to weeks. While doing fieldwork in Pohnpei, it is worth noting that the role of the uncle or aunt who provides a relatively stable environment is especially important when the child is born out of wedlock or lives with a single parent. Under special circumstances, extended family

¹ The FSM Code and the FSM Supreme Court Interim Reporter are available at http://fsmcourtsupremecourt.org/WebSite/fsm/code/title06/T06_Ch16.htm (last accessed Aug. 8, 2013).

members might even raise the child for years. Although the family with whom the child stays often claims the child as “our child,” the birth parents can still hesitate in officially acknowledging that the child has been adopted, as in this case.

Two themes have driven my interpretation of this case. First, adoptions need to be understood in the context of the global political economy. In terms of the political dimension, the Compact of Free Association (COFA) facilitates the international migration of Islanders from Third World Micronesia to First World America to take advantage of its higher education, job market, and medical resources. As members of a Freely Associated State (FAS), FSM citizens have the right to live, work, study, and assume “habitual residence” in the United States without any visa requirements. Therefore, through chain migration, promising children are encouraged to live with extended family members overseas in order to gain better opportunities. The statistics of the Micronesian Legal Services Office, where handles more than 90% of the adoption confirmation requests, also show that the reason of most cases is for the convenience of education and tax refund.

Adoptions, following the logic of migration, are not uncommonly practiced to strengthen connections. In economic terms, no matter whether the relocation is between islands or countries, adoptions often resemble a shifting of resources; that is, children, from the rural family, the small island, or the peripheral country, to more urbanized areas, the Big Island (Hawaii), or the wealthier mainland (Continental United States). It is worth noting this new, emerging wave of adoption—children whose parents are working abroad are taken care of by relatives or grandparents—is the result of the political economy and globalization, and, at the same time, matches with the local concept of adoption as a safety net for childcare.

Some adoption requests have brought concern of earning extra benefits from the welfare system. According to the FSM Social Security policy, the surviving child who

can be proved as dependent upon an individual who died fully insured or currently insured will be eligible to a child's insurance benefit for each month beginning with the month of death of such individual until the child reaches 18 or to 22 if the child studies as a full-time student. Therefore, several controversial cases that requested confirmation of adoption after the adopter passed away have caught the attention of FSM Social Security Administration (SSA), and make SSA be more strict into examining the applications for the dependent's support, especially the official documents of adoption confirmation. On one hand, many people complain that the requirement of official adoption documents has caused a hassle; on the other,

Just as important, and perhaps more unsettling, is that adoptions are practiced against another set of relationships that the Western-based legal system does not recognize or even consciously defines as inadequate. However, these relationships that are closely tied to matrilineal chieftainship—the sharing of lands, residence, responsibilities, and kinship among the child, birth parents, and purported adoptive parents—are socially legitimate, and many Pohnpeians rely on such connections as they strive for social and economic mobility. Thus, the clarity of the court's well-meaning statement does not map neatly onto the complex and creative world of kinship and parenthood in the field, and it is intriguing to analyze the intertwining of the conceptual changes in adoption with social identity and legal knowledge.

Short Conclusion and Reflections

In Pohnpei, the closest parallels to Euro-American conceptions of adoption are *pwek-seri* or *pwekipwek*, which, although not identical, literally mean “lifting a child” or “being lifted” (Fischer 1970). Compared to the concept of adoption as an official, legal, documented procedure, the movement to another household was usually

described by the locals in a straightforward fashion, often with the phrase “went to live with.”

Indeed, Pohnpeian customs include a variety of fosterage arrangements. For example, one type of fosterage involves the children of deceased siblings, especially the children of a man’s brother or a woman’s sister. In addition, the stepchild who is a spouse’s child by an earlier union and the foster child who is brought into the family when an old couple is too weak for heavy physical labor would not be regarded as adopted, but could be given some share of the inheritance if they stayed with the elders until their death. These individuals are also classified in the kinship terminology as “children.” Therefore, following Leinaweaver’s (2008) usage of “child circulation” to refer to the various local terms and interpretations of children’s mobility, this paper intends to discuss child circulation in Pohnpei as an active process leading to the formation, and transformation, of relatedness and sociality. At the same time, the word “adoption” is still used for both analytic and comparative reasons—not only because Pohnpeians now more often, but also because the practices of child circulation have increasingly been brought to the courts for legal recognition.

Child circulation is a widely observable and understandable practice across the Pacific, although there are no reliable statistics on its frequency. Viewed from the comparative perspective, the adoption triad of birth parents, adoptive parents, and child produces children as mobile beings whose movements between households can achieve a number of important ends. On the one hand, for the birth parents or the sending countries, child circulation is a method to deliberately strengthen social ties and build an affective network that creates “new geographies of kinship” (Volkman 2006 [2005]). In South Korea and China, for example, the current embracing of globalization coincides with the embracing of adoptees as “overseas Koreans” (Kim 2010) and “little ambassadors”(Dorow 2006), even as new articulations of identity are

produced and represented due to the thriving Internet, and the growing, global cyber-spatial communities. On the other hand, the adoption system, which includes institutes, rules, and agents, redistributes both the pleasures and constraints of parenting and childhood. Indeed, any adoption practice that crosses borders—whether of culture, race, ethnicity, nation, or class—is shaped by inequities in power; thus, contradictions and ruptures are inevitable. In North America, transracial domestic adoptions and Native American adoptions can be “simultaneously an act of national violence and an act of love” (Strong 2001). Although adoption brings hope to couples who cannot reproduce because of infertility or other causes, researchers issue warnings about the risks of the child business (Dubinsky 2010, Fonseca 2009, Marre and Briggs 2009).

Despite such controversies, there is an unassailable cultural logic to the practice of child circulation. In the succinct preface to a special issue on adoption and fosterage in Pacific Island societies, Mac Marshall (2008) points out that “most transactions occur among people *who are related by blood*” (emphasis in the original text). As early as Schneider’s (1984) challenge to the biological presuppositions that underlay anthropological studies of kinship within the Yap system, the complexities, and flexibility of child circulation in Oceania, especially in Micronesia, have been represented and positioned as a cultural adaptation to the island environment (Caughey 1977, Flinn 1985, Kirkpatrick and Broder 1976, Rynkiewich 1976, Schachter 2009, Treide 2004). Moreover, power operating either implicitly or explicitly in kinship politics is central in these discussions. Notably, instead of underestimating the transfer as a social mechanism, researchers have expanded their scope to focus on the identity and sense of belonging that develop through the process of relationship making. Thus, the empirical study of child circulation should be

expanded from the moment of transfer to the long-term influences on both the individual and the community.

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Sakau (kava) drink is important ritual drink for family gathering





Family funeral: Men gathered and pounded sakau. The priest led people pray.



After the funeral day, relatives bring fish, sakau, and other food to visit.



Easter: Village dinner preparing



Easter: Nahnken and the village chief (and the wife)



The new-born baptized ceremony