

The Reef of Heaven Part of the series ⁶

So there I am, running down the length of a swinging rope bridge, islanders shouting curses at my back. I keep getting a faceful of leaves from the kava plant in my hands, but I just have to trust my feet to find the next board. Otherwise I'll have to swim faster than the tangle of glowing eels writing in the waves beneath me. And of course, that's when one of the beachcombers opens fire.

The rope in my hand goes slack: shot in two. So I do the only thing I can think of. I cock the kava plant behind my ear, spot the altar two bridges away, and heave the leafy thing at it with all my might.

When it connects, the waves still and the whole ancient city goes silent. And then a thunderous voice speaks...

WELCOME TO POHNPEI ISLAND

In the following pages, the South Pacific island of Pohnpei awaits you. How it came to be there, what the island really is, and what place it has in the universe, depends on who you ask. An island built on top of an altar, a den of debauchery, or a earthly paradise? What is clear to all is that the quiet war for Pohnpei's soul is about to explode across the island.

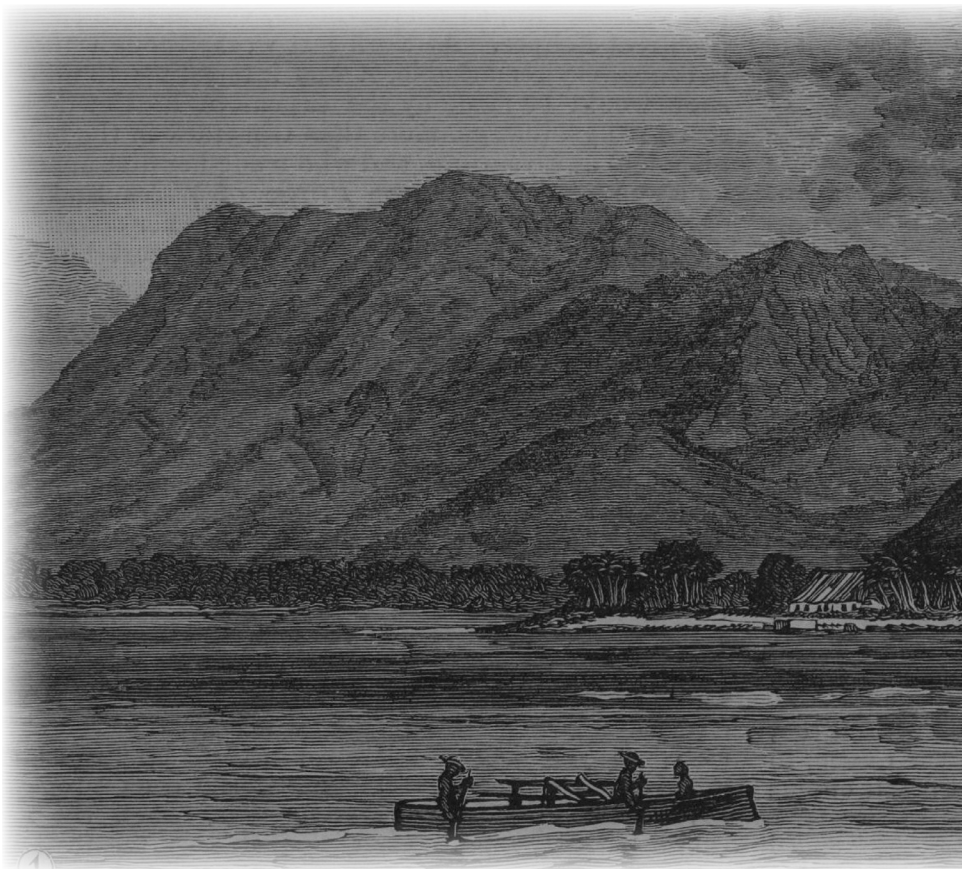
This port-of-call includes six game master characters maneuvering to strike in a deadly game of desire, politics, religion, and profit. They're all very eager to meet, recruit, and exploit your picaros.

The Reef of Heaven is a dangerous port-of-call ready to split at the seams. The island's veneer of faith, tradition, and propriety is chipping away, revealing the ruthless ambition and deep tyranny that lurks within.

A TALE OF TWO ALTARS

When people first came to Pohnpei, all they found was a branch of coral, no bigger than a thumb, sticking up out of the water. And so the men and women in the canoe built a stone altar on top of the coral. They added soil from their homelands on top of the altar. Over the course of many trips back and forth, the soil they added grew and grew until Pohnpei became the island that we know today.

People came to live on Pohnpei. They built houses with palm roofs. They grew banana and coconut and kava. But they did not drink the kava in the right spirit. They were riven with dissension; they stole and murdered and dug up each other's yams before they were ripe. The cannibal liet rose up from the interior, descended on the people living along the shoreline, killed and ate them. It was a dark time.



Then came the Saudelaur from the east. They settled on Temwen Island and they built their own altar on the coral reefs there. They built tall basalt walls around the altar and built up islands for the homes and graves of their priest-kings. Today it is called Nan Madol, but they named it Soun Nan-leng, the Reef of Heaven. In a small pool lived their ravenous eel god, Nahn Samwohl, and on the Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle, the subjugated people of Pohnpei brought the Saudelaur the tribute of their first fruits. In this way, the Saudelaur priest-kings drew power away from the interior and pacified the island.

From the west came Isokelekel, son of the thunder god Nahn Sapw. He had heard how the Saudelaur had grown prideful and corrupt in their power. They demanded too much from the people of the island, ignored their pleas for mercy, and crushed any dissent. With his war party of 333 heroes, Isokelekel overthrew the tyrants, chasing the Saudelaur up into the interior until, in his desperation, the evil priest-king turned himself into a fish and leapt into a stream, never to be seen again.



Isokelekel settled in the lands outside Nan Madol and declared himself the first Nahmwarki, the just and righteous priest-king of Pohnpei. He named his son as the first Nahnken to be his right hand and advisor in all matters. Together they ruled over a golden age of peace and prosperity. The first fruits of the grateful people were lavished upon Isokelekel at the Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle, but the terrible eel of the Saudelaur was no more. The Nahmwarki kept the dark power of the interior subjugated without becoming a tyrant to the people of Pohnpei.

Isokelekel and his son passed into history, but their lines continued, intermarrying across generations. The descendents of Isokelekel became the royal clan; the descendents of his son became the two noble clans. To this day, they share kava in the proper way, thus ensuring peace on the island. And this is how people came to Pohnpei.

*—recited by Luclen Bernart,
child historian of Pohnpei*

TO THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON FOREIGN MISSIONS—

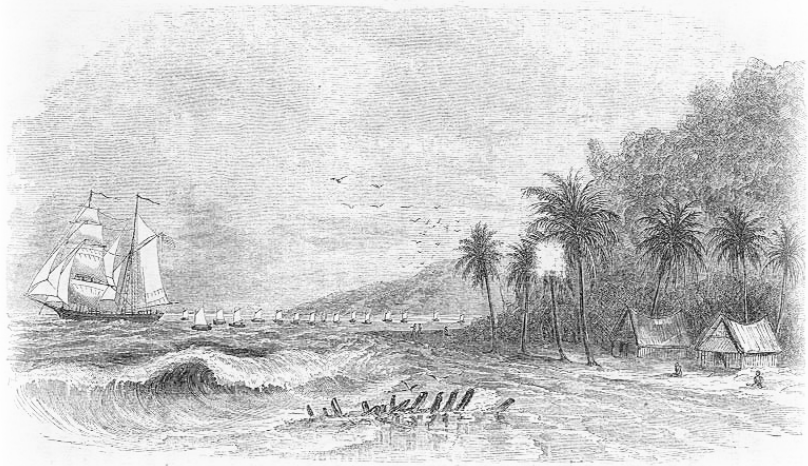
We had heard tales of Ponape long before our mission first set foot on the island. Renowned across the Pacific as a fleshpit of debauchery and a haven for deserters of the worst stripe, we knew that we would have our work cut out for us in taming this small island in the name of the Most Holy.

The Gulicks, Sturges, and Kaailcaulas landed in 1852. They negotiated with the local chief, a fellow named Nahnmwarki, for land on which to build. They were given an inlet with good harborage called Rontiki. When I arrived nearly three years later, the mission was a mess. No proper church, no converts, no relationships with the savages, no vision. Under my leadership, that changed. We built a church at Rontiki and began catering to the needs of the natives.

The Ponapeans are a petty, arrogant people steeped in their ways. They in fact have a saying, “tiakh en sapw,” which Gulick told me means “the way things are done here.” They were very resistant to our message of salvation at first. But God saw fit to punish their pride with a plague of smallpox, and after this the natives realized a proper fear of the Lord. We conducted our first baptisms in 1860.

Of course the devil could not abide such success, and he raised up his champion, a foul creature known as Nahnawa en Mwudok, who became the scourge of our mission. Gulick said he was a sort of sub-chief, a Nahnken, but what I know is that he pitted himself against us mightily, curtailing our freedoms with threats, stealing our goods, and intimidating our converts from attending services. So great was his interference that we built new missions at Ohwa and Sokehs and focused our efforts there.

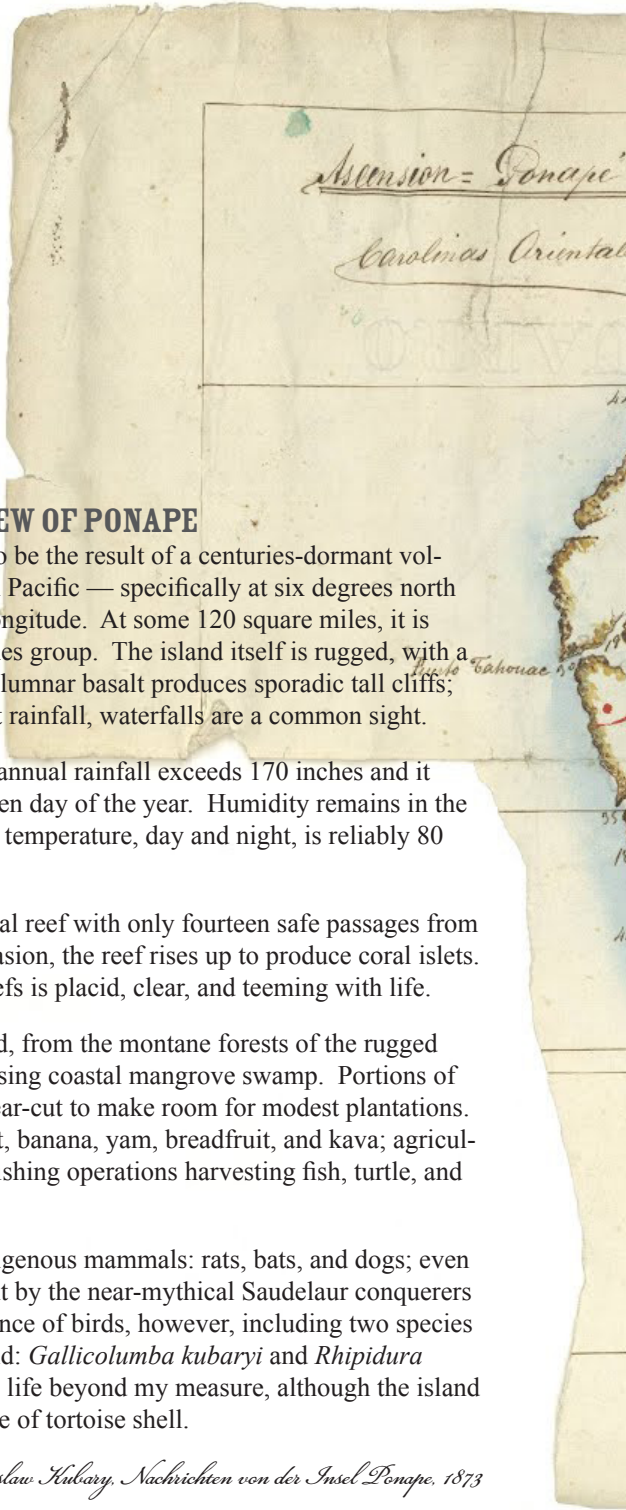
I entrusted the church there to Sturges and charged him to continue services, but two obstacles barred the way. First, to the Ponapeans, every day is like the rest, and so counting seven days until the next Sunday is often beyond them. The greater obstacle, however, came in the figure of Benjamin Pease, a disreputable scoundrel and agent of evil masquerading as an entrepreneur. Currying favor with Nahnawa en Mwudok, he purchased the land on which the Rontiki mission stood, cast out the Sturgeses, and built in the church’s place a grog shop.



Despite our setbacks, we have had some successes. At the time of this writing, our mission has succeeded in baptizing nearly 800 Ponapeans (of the native population of perhaps 5000). Chief among these converts, if you will, is the Nahmwarki of Madolenihmw himself, paramount chief of the entire island. We have rechristened him Paul.

This noble barbarian has shown proper humility in the face of the Lord's teachings as well as our lessons in democracy and free trade. He is quite keen on my proposals to create a trading company operating out of the missions here. This is my vision for these islands, and it is for lack of such a vision that this mission has consistently floundered. I know the Society has rejected this scheme before, but it is my hope that my securing royal sanction and cooperation may improve your estimation of its chances. I would hate to see our progress with the Nahmwarki evaporate for lack of support from home.

— Edward Deane, Chief Missionary to Ponape



A GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF PONAPE

The island of Ponape appears to be the result of a centuries-dormant volcano in the middle of the South Pacific — specifically at six degrees north latitude and 158 degrees east longitude. At some 120 square miles, it is the largest island of the Carolines group. The island itself is rugged, with an increasingly rough interior. Columnar basalt produces sporadic tall cliffs; combined with the ever-present rainfall, waterfalls are a common sight.

The climate is wet and humid; annual rainfall exceeds 170 inches and it can be expected to rain any given day of the year. Humidity remains in the 80s almost exclusively, and the temperature, day and night, is reliably 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

The island is encircled by a coral reef with only fourteen safe passages from ocean to the coastline. On occasion, the reef rises up to produce coral islets. The lagoon protected by the reefs is placid, clear, and teeming with life.

Jungle blankets the entire island, from the montane forests of the rugged interior to the island-encompassing coastal mangrove swamp. Portions of the coastal plains have been clear-cut to make room for modest plantations. The principal crops are coconut, banana, yam, breadfruit, and kava; agriculture is paired with large-scale fishing operations harvesting fish, turtle, and sea cucumber.

The island hosts only three indigenous mammals: rats, bats, and dogs; even the dogs were allegedly brought by the near-mythical Saudelaur conquerers circa 1100. There is an abundance of birds, however, including two species unknown to the rest of the world: *Gallucolumba kubaryi* and *Rhipidura kubaryi*. The oceans team with life beyond my measure, although the island is notable as an abundant source of tortoise shell.

— *Johann Stanislaw Kubary, Nachrichten von der Insel Ponape, 1873*



TIAKH EN SAPW

Alright, I've given this schpiel to new hands like you so many times I can do it my sleep. So if my eyelids start drooping in the middle of it, just keep listening. This is essential information for our operation here.

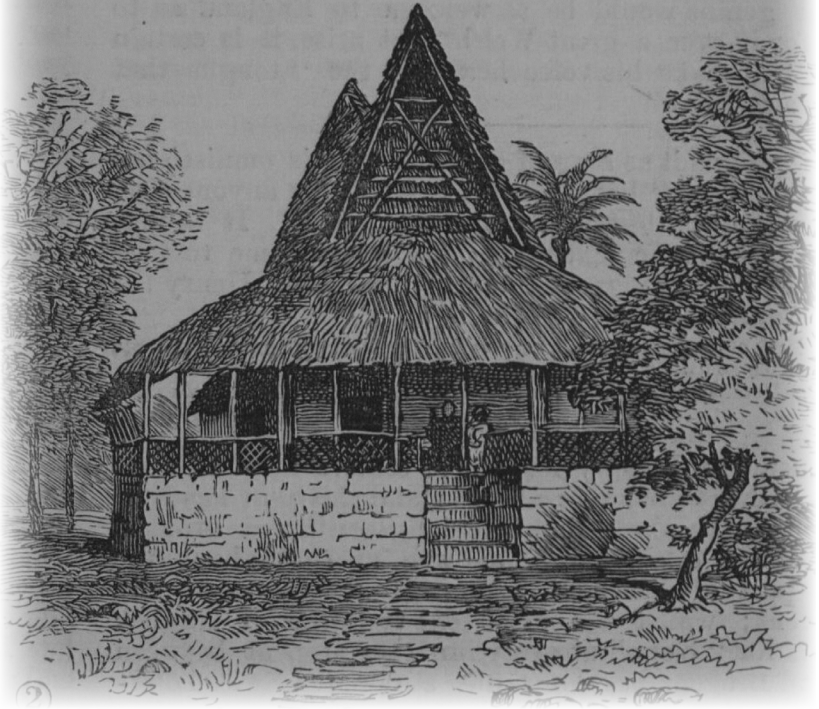
Do not underestimate the Pohnpeians. I know you're a savvy cosmopolitan world traveller from—wherever, the Marshalls or Hawai'i or something, but so are they. Pohnpei has been dealing with the greater world around them for their entire history, and with white-skinned foreigners for fifty years. They crew sailing vessels and airships and come back to tell stories about the wider world. They know what is happening around them. They are not fooled or in awe of our sophisticated ways. They have been backstabbing each other for material gain and political power for hundreds of years, and when we showed up I'm pretty sure their battle cry was "Fresh meat!"

Everyone else thinks I hire working hands like you from far off because I don't trust the amoral natives who don't understand personal property. Damn straight I don't trust them, or their sizable extended families. That's who they will bring along with them, all of them armed, when they want to settle a dispute with me. You don't have family on this island; that's why I hired you. Which is to say, I abducted you from your home and brought you here. But that's splitting hairs. Let's focus on the work.

You will be tasked with harvesting sea cucumbers and turtles from the lagoon. We will stockpile those goods in the stockhouse. I will sell those goods to passing clippers, steamers, and dirigibles.

At no point in that process will you ever allow a Pohnpeian access to our stocks of goods. The natives do indeed have an understanding of private property; that understanding says that every single thing inside the island's barrier reef belongs to their Nahnmwarki. So until it's safely traded away onto a ship, everything in that storehouse they consider theirs for the taking. They all know the Nahnmwarki, or the Nahnken, or one of their cousins, and they're all acting on behalf of the royals whenever they take my goods. So don't let that happen.

Speaking of the Nahnmwarki and the Nahnken, don't speak to them. There are five of each, by the way, and more royals and nobles under them. Don't speak to any Pohnpeian with a title. Which is most of them, even the scrubs who don't have two shells to rub together. You open your mouth, you risk falling afoul of their local customs, which I have spent years unravelling. They will beat the living shit out of you for disrespecting them, and you will never know why. You do not begin to understand the shitstorm of poorly-hidden ambition, bottomless greed, and utterly ruthless pragmatism that powers this island. I do, and that's why I deal with the royals, and you deal with the sea cucumbers.



This is what they call Tiakh en Sapw, the way things are done. They will try to give you gifts; you decline and tell them to forward the gifts to me. They will offer you women; I've got women for you lot to use, you don't need native quim. And if they ever offer you sakau, a sort of drink they make out of kava, you make your excuses and you get the fuck out of there. They will make every effort to ensnare you in the network of obligations and duties that make the island go. Your job, besides diving the lagoon, is to stay the hell out of politics.

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's get you a bunk in the house and then we'll get you into the water. And I promise you: do good work for me, and in a few months, I'll take you home and you'll see your family again.

— *Captain Benjamin Pease, Sea Cucumber Tycoon*

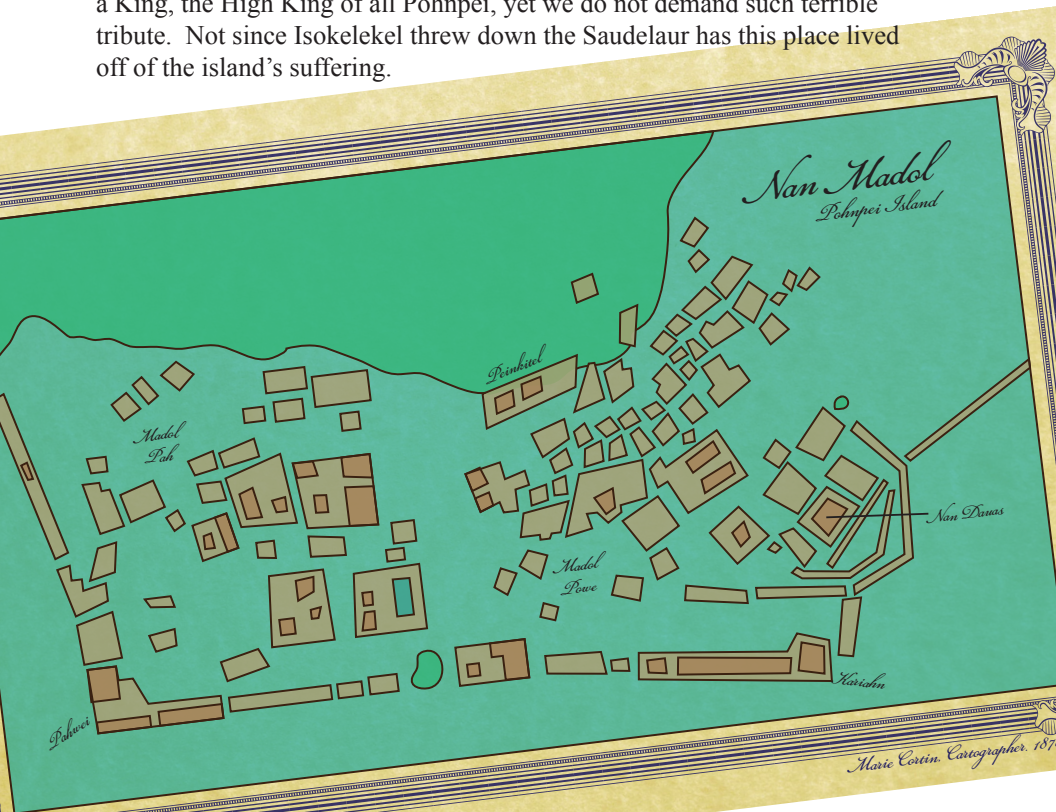
THE VENICE OF THE PACIFIC

Come, come. We want your opinion on our plans. But first we must show you. Here. Look. This is Nan Madol.

Yes, impressive, isn't it? And yet you cannot quite tell what you are looking at. That is a common response among outsiders. These are man-made islands. Tall walls built out of basalt columns, most of them taller than two or even three men. Inside they are filled with coral and rubble. There are nearly one hundred islands in this ancient city, with canals cutting between them. That is why we call it Nan Madol, the "spaces between."

The Saudelaur called it the Reef of Heaven when they forced us to build it. Here, come up this ladder, and you will see. See, here, in this pool they kept their eel god. Now we know what it really was: a demon, sent from Hell, to torment the people of Pohnpei before we knew of the true God, Jesus Christ. This is where our oppressors bade us bring them the fruits of our harvests, and sometimes our own children, or our wives, to sate the appetites of the Saudelaur.

This was where they lived. You can still see great thatch roofs on some of the islands; others have fallen into disrepair or collapsed entirely. We do not use Nan Madol as much any longer. Nothing grows on islands made of rubble and it took the entire island's produce to feed the Saudelaur. We are a King, the High King of all Pohnpei, yet we do not demand such terrible tribute. Not since Isokelekel threw down the Saudelaur has this place lived off of the island's suffering.



Here, come across this bridge. You can see this roof is still in good repair. We still come here, or we used to. Here, in the cool shade, is the Pei en Namweeias, the Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle. It was an instrument of oppression for the Saudelaur. Isokelekel transformed it into the backbone of our people. We had many celebrations, many rituals, many feasts here. This altar came to mean what it was to be free of the Saudelaur.

We do not feast any longer, or drink sakau; the missionaries have explained those evils to us. Not as evil as the Saudelaur, but not the perfect good that is of Jesus Christ. Which is why I have made plans for the Pei, and the rest of Nan Madol.

Do you know how difficult is it to land an airship on Pohnpei? This seems unconnected, but trust us, it is not. The interior is far too rugged, and the pilots do not like to keep station above the sea. It is dangerous. There are only a handful of beaches where the airships can come to rest. Most of our trade still comes by ships over the water, which can weigh anchor in the lagoon. Trading only by sea limits our ability to trade with the rest of the world.

But we do have Nan Madol. You see there, that breakwater is called Pahnwi. And that one there, you can barely see through the trees that have grown up through the rocks, that one is Kariahn. There are more than a dozen islands along the outside of Nan Madol, and they can be built up another two or three men high. They can be what the pilots call mooring derricks.

And inside the breakwater, all of these islands, we can rebuild roofs and put up walls, and these can be storehouses for trade goods. And there, on Peinkitel, which abuts the land of Pohnpei, we can build offices for trading companies to use.

But here, on Nan Dauwas, the greatest island and where rests the old Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle, we build a church. We will replace the Pei en Namweeias with a proper altar to Jesus Christ. We build pews there and there, under the greatest community roof the island has ever seen. Then our church and its altar will sit in the middle of all the trade, all the visitors from beyond; the beating heart of our connection to the wider world. Everyone will know that we, too, are Christians, and friends, and trading partners. And all the world will call this the Venice of the Pacific.

We will hold our first service here soon; we will not have pews yet or even a roof, but I mean to be married here. To a Christian woman! It will be glorious. And it will properly dedicate this place to the new ways of Pohnpei: strong, modern, Christian, and rich. What do you think, outsider?



TO THE NAHNMWARKI OF MADOLENIHMW, “PAUL”—

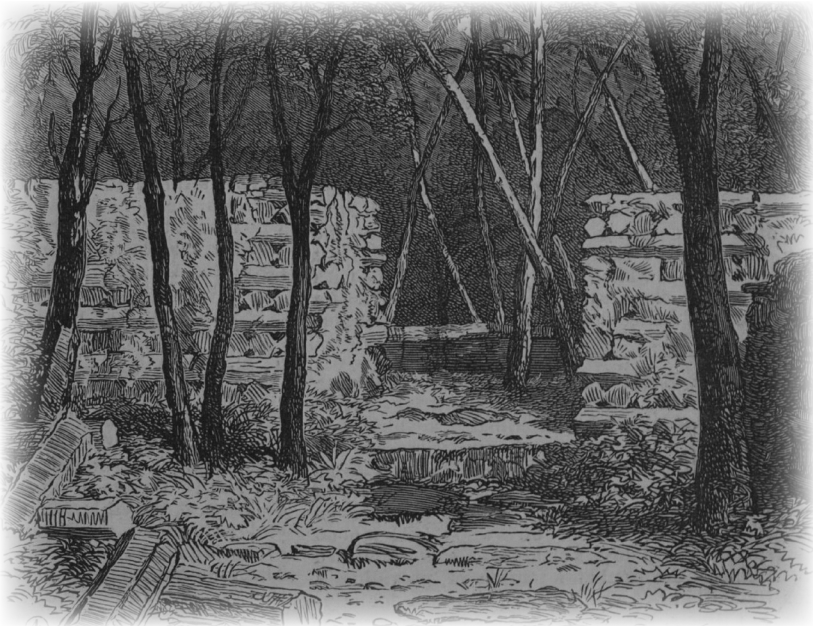
I write to you, proud king of Pohnpei who deigns to accept the name given you by outsiders. I have learned to write in their hand. Can you say the same? Has taking on their name and their rituals and their undead god given you anything? Or will you have one of your women read this to you? You have abandoned our ways for nothing.

If you were a common man, I would let this go without comment. The commons offend; it is their nature. But you are a king, and the actions of a king have greater consequence than his lessers.

You have put your responsibilities as nahnmwarki aside to take up the worship of this Christ. You have bid your people to present their first fruits to you but you do not feast with them. You do not count their cookhouses. You have only one wife. You have placed nothing on the altar at Nan Madol for more than a year. I am told you even disdain sakau! How will you bind your people to you without feasting? Without marrying their daughters? How will you mediate disputes without kava?

There have been sightings of liet in the highlands. In Kiti, two men, two women, and four children have been dragged out of their homes. We found nothing of them but scraps of skin hanging on tree branches. The liet have returned, and they descend from the heights to devour our people.

I place blame for this fact at your feet.



You have neglected the Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle for too long, proud Nahnmwarki. You have set aside the traditions given us by Isokelekel, and you have allowed the power of the island slip inwards, to the first altar beneath Nankawad. Only darkness and destruction will follow.

I understand that the missionaries make delightful promises. They speak of riches from beyond the ocean. But they lie, my old friend. The riches of the world are not theirs because of this Christ god; following their ways will not yield you any wealth. Just ask those people who have left Pohnpei on boats and airships and returned; they will tell you that the wider world does not bow down to Jesus Christ as the missionaries claim.

You must tend to the altar at Nan Madol; you must take the fruits of the island there, and you must drink sakau again to set things right.

To that end, I am coming to you, Nahnmwarki. I come with my entourage of three hundred strong men and women, and we will be there in time for the festival of dakadak dipenihd. I bring with me the produce of Kiti and will lay it at your feet, to reflect your precedence as the greatest Nahnmwarki on Pohnpei. You will feast with this produce, you will observe the proper rites at Nan Madol, and you will drink sakau. If you refuse, my warriors and I will force you.

These are strong words, I know. My action is a desperate one. But I fear that if I do not act, we shall all be eaten alive.

— Nahmawa en Mwudek, Nahnen of Kiti

THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME HERE

Obviously I am not accustomed to being in a place like this, so you will forgive me, I hope, my... discomfort. No, I do not need any 'grog.' I have been temperate since we landed, and was only intemperate on the voyage here because the sailors insisted I drink that foul concoction to avoid ill health. Water is fine and plentiful, thanks to God's grace.

All of which is neither here nor there. It is my understanding that certain persons can be found in... places such as this. Persons who, I think it is plain, I would not normally have any traffic with, but of whose... nefarious background I have need. You see, my daughter—my darling young Karolin—was taken in the night over a week ago. I need to get her back.

Oh, I know exactly where she is. She is being held by Chief Paul, the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw. The chief has claimed her and intends to make her his bride. Obviously I cannot let this stand! That savage thinks that he can just lay hands on any pretty young thing that happens to take his fancy, just because the natives have let their chiefs get away with such antics before. Disgusting.

And worse, he intends to pretty it up with a wedding ceremony. In two days' time, at Nan Madol. With the Reverend Doane officiating, of course, that two-faced toad. I went to him, the next morning. I told him what they'd done. And what did the Reverend say? He said, "Praise the Lord, Paul has chosen a good Christian woman for a wife." Yes, our brave leader sees this travesty as an advantage to be gained in our missionary work.

Everything to him is an advantage or an obstacle to his proselytizing glory. Did you know he held an election for who would succeed the ailing Nahken? Of course the natives went along with it and everyone voted for the man who was next in line already. But Edward counted it a great success in civilizing the savages. And when that coolie chief rapes my daughter on their supposed wedding bed, I expect that, too, will be a great success in his estimation.

Needless to say, he is useless to me. Which is why I find myself in a den of vice and villainy which was, once upon a time, a church. Praying to God that I can find someone, anyone, to help me. So tell me: do you know where I can buy a gun?

— Susan Surge, Missionary to Pohnpei

COMING TO THE REEF OF HEAVEN

Pohnpei is a favorite port-of-call for picaros with a legacy that goes back to their pirate and smuggler forebearers. Anyone operating in the Pacific knows about the island if they haven't made a visit once or twice (or more), and the legend of Ponape is known even wider. Here are some specific reasons to get your picaros heading towards the action at Nan Madol:

- There's a warrant (let's face it: probably multiple warrants) out for Benjamin Pease. He's also the only man who knows where to find the prophet that the picaros are searching for. Can they get to him before the bounty hunters and naval officers descend on the island?
- A ley line has been corrupted by some dark phenomenon on the other end. Following it leads the picaros to Pohnpei.
- Luther Hasley Gulick, a missionary and politician in the Kingdom of Hawai'i, has spent a lifetime collecting legends and tales of the Pacific. He once recorded a story which now appears to reference an Atlantean vault, but he left the account behind in the mission on Rontiki. His letter asking Albert Sturges to recover it has gone unanswered.
- A lovestruck person of means belatedly realized that they had fallen in love with Merian Headley, right after she shipped out. The picaros might deliver a love letter or be tasked with bringing her back.
- A commissioner of the ABCFM worries that Doane's shenanigans might become internationally embarrassing, and wouldn't mind if the picaros make sure the good minister's meddling comes to an abrupt and decisive end. Charitable donations to the Board have been very good this year.
- The formula that turned common men and women into ravenous monsters was distilled from the blood of unfortunate sailors whose last port-of-call was Pohnpei. If a cure is to be found, it may very well require the blood of a captured liet.
- Captain Christopher Weeks runs a trading post on Pohnpei, made out of the hull of his wrecked ship where it ran aground on a coral islet. Little did he know that his bosun was smuggling Atlantean artifacts in a secret bolthole within the hull. In that bolthole, if the dying bosun's words are to be believed, is the artifact that the picaros are after.

PERSONS OF NOTE

NAHNMWARKI PAUL OF MADOLENIHMW

On an island clothed in grass skirts, Paul stands out easily as the only Pohnpeian dressed in a white suit—or at least the slacks and jacket—which is kept meticulously clean and dazzling. In his hands he palms a small bible, the gilded pages often shining in the sun. While his demeanor is often distant and unapproachable with his subjects, he is eager to deal with people from beyond Pohnpei and welcomes them forward to speak with his royal person. He continues, however, to expect these outsiders to show him the proper respect due a Nahnmwarki, and can grow enraged in an instant if he feels he has been disrespected.

Born to one of the noble clans of Madolenihmw, Paul was selected to marry a daughter of the royal line and eventually become the next Nahnmwarki. Shortly after his elevation to the island's preeminent position, he announced that he was converting to Christianity. He had been impressed by the missionaries' talk of a simple faith, a strong federal government, and lucrative trade opportunities.

While Paul suffers no illusions that these things are all necessarily connected, he has concluded that his best course of action is to throw himself into it all—worshipping Jesus Christ, unifying the five tribes of Pohnpei under modern government (and himself), and creating trade links through the missions. He can sort out which parts he wants to keep once he has the luxury of picking and choosing, he reasons. With his wife recently dead by smallpox, he has decided to further cement his position with the missionaries by marrying one of their daughters. Whether or not she consents.

Exemplars

- Ill-fitting White Suit
- Worn Gilded Bible
- Tall Amber-skinned King

Classes

- Herald (Consecrate)
- Ringleader (Minions)

Approaches

- with Privilege
- with Force

Languages

- fluent Pohnpeian
- fluent English
- broken Palauese
- broken Kosraean

Possible Wants

- keep Nahawa en Mwuodok at bay
- convert Nan Madol into a Christian church
- approve of his marriage to Karolin Sturges
- establish trade relations with the outside world
- get his sister to convert to Christianity

NAHNKEN NAHAWA EN MWUDOK

The most common first impression Nahawa en Mwudok makes is “quick, get out of the way!” Even when seated, the man appears to be barreling ahead. His frame is short but powerfully built, and he is not above using his raw physicality to intimidate. He wears a grass kilt, called a koalikhos, the pleats of which have been painstakingly crimped to reflect his station; pink oyster shell pendants hang from its woven belt. On his head sits a beaded headband from which rise two red spurs made of polished coral.

Around his neck and shoulders coils a semi-transparent shape; this is the Nahnken’s enihhwos, or clan deity: a powerful spirit. Its motion reflects his mood, from agitated flexing to a calm slither. When the spirit is missing, islanders reasonably fear what errand he has sent it on.

The son of the Nahnmwarki of Kiti, Nahana en Mwudok married a lady of Kiti’s noble clan. He was raised to prominence as the successor Nahnmwarki’s Nahnken, and has waged and ceaseless and sometimes violent war against the missionaries that he sees as encroaching on the necessary traditions of Pohspei’s way of life. After running them out of Rontiki, he found an ally in Captain Benjamin Pease. The outsider has promised to introduce Nahawa en Mwudok to all the benefits of the modern world, without requiring him to worship foreign gods or eschew his own ritual requirements.

Most recently, the Nahnken has been troubled by reports of the legendary and cannibalistic liet resurfacing in the island’s interior. When he heard that the Madolenimhw altars had been neglected and its Nahnmwarki converted to Christianity, he instantly knew why this ancient threat was looming over the island. Now he sails to Nan Madol, intent on ensuring that Paul observes the proper rites, whether he wants to or not.

Exemplars

- Crimped Grass Kilt
- Two-spurred Beaded Crown
- Broad Brown Nobleman
- Translucent Dragon Familiar
- Kiti Entourage

Classes

- Ringleader (In Charge)
- Spiritualist (Totem Spirit)

Approaches

- with Honesty
- with Force

Languages

- fluent Pohpeian
- fluent English
- broken Kosraean

Possible Wants

- convince or force Paul to perform Nahnmwarki rites at the Altar of the Life-Giving Turtle
- take the title Nahnmwarki of Madolenimhw from Paul
- end the threat of the liet
- purge the missionaries from the island
- take Merian Headley as his next bride

ISOHLAP OPATINIA

Tall, fine-featured, and possessed of an undeniable grace, Opatinia is a stunning beauty of Pohnpei. By her smirking smile and often-arched eyebrow, she is also well aware of this fact. In addition to her grass skirt, she wears a bright green silk wrap, its sumptuous texture complementing the warm tones of her neck and shoulders. On her head is wreathed a garland of fresh hibiscus blooms, picked fresh that morning.

Opatina is Paul's older sister, and as such she enjoys a high station. Higher, in fact, than that of her husband, a feckless son of the royal line who everyone understands will never be allowed to hold real power. As the Nahnmwarki's sister, she is titled Isohlap, and her position allows her to take lovers with impunity, telling their wives to wash and perfume them before sending them to her home. This is a significant honor, and the Isohlap is held in high regard throughout the Tribe. Her words are given serious consideration, and she is known as a keen advisor to the Nahnmwarki.

As Paul gives more and more of his attention to Doane and the missionaries, however, Opatinia has found her position weakening. The Isohlap cares little for questions of faith or modernization, but she can recognize a widening vulnerability when she sees one. She loves her brother, but she has other brothers, too. They stand next in line for the position of Nahnmwarki if it were to be vacated, and they do not share Paul's distressing fascination with the outsiders. As the Nahnmwarki's wedding at Nan Madol draws near, Opatinia is carefully considering her options, trying to find a peaceful and stable way to transfer power from Paul to a more worthy (and appreciative) brother.

Exemplars

- Green Silk Shrug
- Garland of Magenta Hibiscus
- Proud-shouldered Cocoa Lady

Classes

- Mondaine (Fashion Sense)
- Ringleader (Eye for Talent)

Approaches

- with Grace
- with Misdirection

Languages

- fluent Pohnpeian
- fluent Kosraean
- fluent Chuuk
- fluent Kajin Majōl
- broken English

Possible Wants

- shame her brother Paul into abdicating his title
- bed Nahawa en Mwuodok
- convince the elders of the noble clans that Paul's marriage makes him ineligible to be Nahnmwarki
- become a partner in Pease's trading operation
- keep Merian Headley from distracting the Nahnmwarki and nobles with her ill-conceived expedition

SUSAN STURGES, MISSIONARY TO POHNPEI

In the oppressive heat and humidity of a tropical island, Susan Sturges persists in wearing a voluminous black dress, underskirts, and a high, starched collar. Her brown hair is caught up in a snood at the back of her neck. Her features are unremarkable but appear to favor a slight frown, as if a lifetime of looking out on the world has only made her weary. She carries a sling bag at her hip, its largest occupant a heavy bible. On the front inside cover is her family tree; including the date of her husband's death and an empty space next to her daughter's future husband.

Always a devout woman, Susan married Albert Sturges with a shared plan to pursue missionary work in the wider world beyond their Ohio hometown. Shortly thereafter, they landed on Pohnpei along with their fellow missionaries, the Gulicks and Kaailcaulas. The work was difficult, almost impossibly so. The islanders wanted nothing to do with the missionaries' church. Adapting to the realities of the island's climate and isolation was particularly trying. (When Pohnpeian women refused employment as household servants, the white Sturges and Gulicks petitioned the missions board to order the Hawai'ian Kaailcaulas to do domestic tasks; their petition was refused.) However, the mission persevered, and in time produced converts.

The loss of the Rontiki church to Nahawa en Mwudok and Benjamin Pease was devastating, especially to Susan's husband, Albert, under whose stewardship the church had been placed. One night six weeks ago, Albert left the mission at Ohwa to "go talk some sense into Pease." The next morning, a canoe from Rontiki returned with his dead body. Pease claimed to have found him, dead, in the church's storeroom. Susan suspected foul play, but had absolutely no recourse except to bury him and pray for justice. Last week, islanders arrived at the Ohwa mission and carried away Susan's daughter, Karolin. The Nahnmwarki Paul intends to marry her at Nan Madol, but Susan refuses to let the island take any more of her family.

Exemplars

- Black Missionary Dress
- Worn Family Bible
- Middle-aged White Lady

Classes

- Herald (Parish Ministry)
- Mondaine (Rumormill)

Approaches

- with Honesty
- with Reason

Languages

- fluent English
- broken Pohnpeian
- broken French

Possible Wants

- rescue Karolin from Paul before the wedding occurs
- collect evidence to get Doane dismissed from the mission
- get Pease to confess to Albert Sturges' murder
- convert Nahawa en Mwudok to Christianity
- kill Nahnmwarki Paul

BENJAMIN PEASE, ENTREPRENEUR

With the devil's own smile, Captain Benjamin Pease radiates as much charm as danger, a heady combination he is very experienced in putting to good use. His usual island dress is a pair of rugged pants and a loose white shirt; over this he straps two braces of pistols and covers it with a heavy seaman's coat when he "goes calling." Tucked into his waistband or secreted in his coat, he keeps his account book on his person, ready to make a deal.

An experienced sea hand, Pease has sailed the Pacific for nearly twenty years. While some of that time was spent moving legitimate cargo, his primary concerns have been smuggling opium into China and kidnapping islanders to use as forced labor elsewhere in the Pacific. Discontented with providing labor exclusively for others, he resolved to put his skills to his own use. Hearing that the Rontiki mission had fallen afoul of a local ruler, Pease swept in to secure the Nahnken's favor as well as the mission's land. He then began "importing" workers, mostly abducted from the Majol and Tungarua, and putting them to work harvesting sea cucumber and turtle shell for passing ships of sea and sky. They work in the hopes of being returned home, a promise that Pease may or may not deliver on.

Six weeks ago, Pease was awakened by a commotion near the stockpiles; suspecting thieves, he armed to investigate. Instead, he found a raving Albert Sturges locked in savage combat with a number of islanders. When Pease fired to scare off the natives, he was disquieted by the inhuman faces they seemed to wear. Sturges died of his wounds shortly thereafter. Now his new friend, the Nahnken, has requested Pease's assistance in forcing a neighboring king to perform some local ritual to quiet some inhuman power on the island. Pease suspects Sturges' attackers may somehow be related.

Exemplars

- Leatherbound Account Book
- Brace of Loaded Pistols
- Spade-bearded Ruddy Cove

Classes

- Tycoon (Everyone Has a Price)
- Sailor (Boarding Action)

Approaches

- Force
- with Money

Languages

- fluent English
- fluent Pohnpeian
- fluent Hawai'ian
- fluent Kajin Majōl
- broken Tungaruan
- fluent Mandarin

Possible Wants

- convince Nahawa en Mwu-dok to name him Master of Outsiders
- secure trading rights in Madolenimhw from Paul
- bed Opatinia
- steal Headley's maps to Nankawad
- Capture a liet

MERIAN HEADLEY, PRODIGAL AERONAUT

Overlookable at first, the energy and drive sparking within this woman cannot go long unremarked. This youthful exuberance animates her compact body, often making her seem flighty and unreal. Such an impression can be quickly demolished by her bullish determination, or the heavy aeronaut's mattock she carries at her hip or on her shoulder. She is every bit the sky sailor, with flying goggles on her head, a sturdy map case on her hip, and a dozen tools and gadgets dangling from the straps of her leather harness.

Despite her patent experience in the sky, Merian was born on Pohnpei, to the beachcomber James Headley and Liahtensapw, daughter of the Nahnmwarki of Kiti. She grew up on Rontiki split between the world of her father, told in fanciful stories, and the world of her mother, played out in beautiful and brutal reality. It came as little surprise to anyone when she signed on to an airship crew to find out the truth behind her father's stories.

Merian saw as much of the wider world as she could throughout her four years in the sky. She travelled through Hawai'i, San Francisco, Manila, Tokyo, Shanghai, and all points in between. More than once she encountered stories and artifacts from Atlantis, and once toured an empty vault. Remembering the stories of her mother and her grandfather, she began to suspect that the first altar of Pohnpei, rumored to lurk in the highlands of Nankawad, might be another Atlantean vault, untapped by modern man.

Merian returned to Pohnpei intent on investigating her theory, but a rude awakening was waiting for her. On the island, she is again a woman of the royal clan, and of marrying age; no sooner had she arrived than suitors flocked to her side. The person Merian most wanted to see, her childhood friend Karolin Sturges, has been taken from her mother's home.

Exemplars

- Brass Flying Goggles
- Heavy Steel Mattock
- Young Copper-skinned Woman

Classes

- Aeronaut (Dashing)
- Hinterlander (Nature's Bounty)

Approaches

- with Force
- with Misdirection

Languages

- fluent Pohnpeian
- fluent English
- fluent Mandarin
- broken Arabic

Possible Wants

- mount an expedition to the "Atlantean vault" in Nankawad
- get arcane secrets from a Nahnmwarki or Nahnken about the island's original altar
- convince Paul that the missionaries are lying
- undermine Pease's reputation
- rescue Karolin Sturges

LOCAL NAMES

POHNPEIAN NAMES AND TITLES

Common Pohnpeians only have one name. Rulers often have secret names which are ascribed mystical power. They may go by a different, public name, or they may use their title as their name. Pohnpeians of common descent, too, may have a minor title and insist on being addressed accordingly.

Names

- Sarapwau
- Mwohnmur
- Lapoange
- Saumwin
- Warikitawni
- Souiap
- Mwas
- Konopwel
- Likarepwel
- Meteriap
- Mesia
- Lisoumokeleug
- Likamadau
- Daukir
- Nahnesen
- Nahnsoused
- Tepit
- Sera

Titles

- Nahnsau Ririn (Lord of the Ladder)
- Nahmadaun Idehd (Lord of Thinking)
- Souwel Lapalap (Great Forest Master)
- Lepen Ririn (High One of the Ladder)
- Ou Ririn (Watchman of the Ladder)
- Oun Pohnpei (Watchman of Pohnpei)
- Kaniki Ririn (Steward of the Ladder)
- Isohlap (Great Honored One)
- Sou Madau (Master of the Ocean)
- Nahn Kirou (Lord of the Husbanders)
- Oundol (Watchman of the Mountains)
- Nahnsou (Lord of the Masters)
- Soulik (Master of the Exterior)
- Kiroun (Husbander)
- Mwarekehtik (Little Nahnmwarki)
- Nahnid Lapalap (Great Lord of the Eel)
- Oaron Maka (Gatherer of the Bananas)
- Soulikin Dol (Master of the Exterior Mountain)

BEACHCOMBER NAMES

Ship captains are accustomed to losing a hand or two when they bring their ship to port at Pohnpei; something about the beautiful island seems to tug at weary sailors' souls. The deserting crew are occasionally recovered by paying the islanders to hunt them down, but it's often easier to recruit new crew members from the Pohnpeians or other sailors who jumped ship years ago and are finally ready to leave this island paradise.

The following list are all names of foreigners who spent some time, intentionally or not, on Pohnpei.

Names

- Abraham Adams
- Ale Ander
- Captain H. D. Bayer
- Beader
- Helga Brown
- Andrew Cheyne
- Joanne Christofersen
- Coliharo
- Dailey
- Georgina Dixon
- Faney
- Joaquin Gilmete
- Dr. Hutchinson
- Scandalous Jim
- Manuel Jokaim
- Josephene
- Captain JTO
- Mander
- Elaisa Mativa
- Nahnsen
- Pierre Nedelic
- Overbeck
- A. Pond
- Pupoulaski
- John "Growling Jack" Schmidt
- Van Nyneberger
- George Washington, AKA "Mountain George"
- R. Wolfhagen



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