generations are weak in their knowledge of both faith and traditional culture. Again, this may say something about the prospects of new groups competing in the religious marketplace.

Speaking of these groups, Catholic Church leaders do not feel that great numbers of their flock have migrated to the new churches (a perception supported by the statistics). It seems that most nominally Catholic Pohnpeians who have been drawn to the new churches were already alienated from the church of their birth. However, Catholic clerics do feel that the new churches have gained a strong enough foothold in Pohnpei to cause some concern. Their concern does not arise simply from heightened competitiveness in the religious marketplace, but from the fact that most of the new groups show a certain frostiness toward Catholicism and a more militant approach toward evangelization than that of the traditional churches.

Some Catholic clerics will acknowledge that new churches, especially those from the Pentecostal branch of Christianity, often have better sermons and more interesting music that do Catholic services. A great emphasis on biblical instruction is also attractive. While there has been no 'charismatic renewal' within the Catholic Church in Pohnpei, there have been efforts to establish weekly prayer and Bible study groups – not unlike base communities. Some have taken off more than others, and in some cases the lay people who attend them are empowered to give leadership within their parishes.

A long-standing and controversial issue for the churches in Pohnpei is the extent to which it is appropriate to acculturate the gospel. Compared to the new churches, and perhaps even to the UCC, the Roman Catholic Church has engaged in a more thorough enculturation. As far back as the Capuchins and the Spanish Jesuits, missionary priests were incorporating elements of pre-Christian religious culture in worship and church life. Today the tradition continues, with the use of sakau in liturgies of penance and baptism, for example. This does not mean that there have been no tensions between church and culture, however. Sometimes the resistance to incorporating cultural symbols comes from lay people. In one instance, a Jesuit was blocked by lay members when he tried to introduce traditional dance into the liturgy. At other times the clergy offer a critique of traditional culture. Expensive funerals have been one of their targets. The tendency in recent decades to compete for traditional titles without engaging in years of service first has been another. There is concern that the coming of American-style democracy has eroded the core values of the system of chiefly titles, leaving it only as a locus of personal ambition.

Another area in which the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church stands out is engagement in social issues. While the other churches generally see the secular realm as beyond their purview, the Jesuits especially have seen social, economic, environmental, and political challenges as worthy of resolute attention. This is especially true of the Micronesian Seminar, which has produced study documents on issues ranging from suicide to economic development to environmental degradation. Through the dissemination of MicSem's popular publication, *The Micronesian Counsellor*, and through the work of the lay catechists and the clergy, it appears that the lessons from these studies are finding their way into parish-level discourse.

All in all, the Roman Catholic Church must be seen as one of Pohnpei's most vital and successful institutions (religious or otherwise). Granted, its early missions enjoyed the advantage of forceful government support, but even in the decades since Spanish and German rule it has thrived. One of its strengths has been the quality of expatriate leadership, but this may become one of its most intense sources of concern in the near future. The missionaries in Pohnpei are almost all near or beyond the age of normal retirement. Will they be replaced?
Most are American, and Catholic vocations in the US are very few. To compound the concern, attempts to engender indigenous leadership have not been very fruitful in Pohnpei. Despite census data for the denomination, one wonders if more troubled times are not imminent.

The New Churches and Groups

The Assemblies of God (AOG)

It is difficult to know how many residents of Pohnpei are members of the Assemblies of God, and even more difficult to know how many non-members are being influenced by this church’s programmes. Unlike some of the other new denominations in Pohnpei, the AOG is not listed among the national churches in the FSM census. Statistics on membership were not available from the denomination either. Despite this lack of data, there is reason to believe that the AOG is relatively vital at this time and is experiencing some growth. The number of AOG churches has doubled from two to four in the last dozen years, and a fifth is being built. Leaders of both of Pohnpei’s traditional denominations identified the AOG as a new group to whom they have lost members. There are strong linkages to the Assemblies of God in the United States, which provide AOG churches in Pohnpei with missionaries, financial support, and the occasional influx of volunteer help for projects like the construction of church buildings.

The origins of the Assemblies of God in Pohnpei lie in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the late 1960s a young Pohnpeian named Alex Eliam travelled to Guam to complete his secondary education. After some time there, he was taken in by the family of an AOG pastor named John Burke, staying with them for several years. After high school and vocational training, Eliam was sponsored by the Burke family to attend a Bible Institute in the Philippines. Following these studies, he returned to Pohnpei via Guam. In 1970 he was ordained by the first General Council Conference of the Assemblies of God of the Marshall Islands and has carried out his ministry for the AOG in Pohnpei during the ensuing decades.

Eliam was not left alone to implant the AOG in Pohnpei. At the conference in the Marshalls he invited a Marshallese AOG leader named Deibail Jelki to come to Pohnpei as a missionary. The invitation was accepted and Jelki seems to have been instrumental in preparations for the opening of the first AOG church on the island. The building was donated by the congregation in Guam pastored by John Burke. In the early days, the congregation was made up of a handful of Pohnpeian families and young people from the Marshalls who had come to Pohnpei for secondary school or to study at the Community College of Micronesia.

In the three and a half decades since these events, the AOG has grown slowly in Pohnpei, expanding its infrastructure at a similar pace. There has been a fairly constant presence of American missionaries – usually five or fewer at any given time – and a gradual increase in the number of Pohnpeians taking up positions as pastors.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to quantify the membership of the AOG in Pohnpei. A rough estimate would be 500 people, or 1.5 per cent of the population. It appears clear, however, that a greater number of people are attending AOG worship services and Bible studies. There is a great reluctance among Pohnpeians to break with the traditional denominations, which have imbedded themselves so deeply in the social structure and culture; many of the people who benefit from the ministry of the AOG and are probably also being
influenced by its teachings, prefer to do so without making the leap to full membership and risking the family conflict and social tension that might come with it.

Besides the four (soon five) Pohnpeian congregations, the AOG also has a group that meets for an English language service at the Kolonia church, and it runs the Micronesia Bible College — a small school that offers classes in the morning and is open to anyone, not just AOG members. The English service is attended mainly by expatriate residents, most of them Filipinos, for whom the AOG has become a sort of community away from home. Once a month a picnic is organized at the beach to bring this group into less formal companionship. Other programmes include youth fellowships, women's fellowships, outreach meetings — which can take place in a home or attract a couple of hundred people in a school — and occasional revival meetings. While one of the pastors is deeply involved with Habitat for Humanity, the AOG generally sees its mission to larger society as being confined to evangelism.

Currently there are five American missionaries and 21 Pohnpeians giving leadership. The Pohnpeian leaders fall into three categories: Christian workers, licensed pastors, and ordained pastors. To be ordained a leader has to take courses through the Bible college, be licensed, and practise ministry for a number of years — usually two to four. Some of the missionaries have been ordained and some have not.

As with the Assemblies of God in other parts of the world, a congregational polity is followed. Each congregation is an independent entity, in charge of its own affairs and assets. Regional clusters of congregations form into districts and then councils. Pohnpei belongs to the FSM District and to the General Council of Micronesia. The General Council meets bi-annually, with the FSM District meeting held in off years. While church reports are given at these meetings, and the General Council always holds a business meeting, most of the time is taken by teaching and worship, not unlike revival meetings.

The core beliefs and doctrines of the AOG are uniform around the world. AOG churches fall within the larger fold of Pentecostal churches, but, unlike some Pentecostals, they accept the doctrine of the Trinity. There are 16 doctrines, covering such topics as the authority of the Bible, Christology, sacraments (the word ‘ordinances’ is preferred), mission, ministry, and eschatology. Among the 16 doctrines, four are ‘cardinal’: the Salvation of Mankind, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Divine Healing, and the Blessed Hope (the rapture).

When it comes to participation and leadership in the church, clear differences emerge between the Pohnpeian congregations and the English-speaking one. The mostly expatriate English-speaking congregation often benefits from worship leadership (sometimes even preaching) by women and youth. This is much less common in the Pohnpeian services (where leadership and preaching is really only accepted from those women who are missionaries). A cultural conservatism related to gender roles keeps Pohnpeian women out of leadership roles, except at women's gatherings, and a great emphasis on respect for elders discourages youths from taking roles as leaders. This conservatism does not drive women away from adherence, however; they make up slightly more than half of the membership.

Relations between the AOG and other churches are mixed. On the one hand there is occasional co-operation at special events, like a recent multi-day gathering of churches in Kolonia. At this meeting AOG pastors mixed and shared services with UCC pastors, Catholic priests, and leaders of other denominations. Occasionally, AOG pastors have been drawn into work for the UCC, especially in the area of youth ministry. But conflict seems to be at least as common as co-operation. In the mid-1990s a revival organized by the AOG met with a strongly negative response from the UCC. A split within a UCC congregation,
which was at least partially occasioned by the leadership of an AOG youth pastor, led to the formation of a breakaway Pentecostal church. These events, along with the gradual seepage of UCC members to the AOG and other new churches, have produced a pervasive suspicion in the traditional Protestant church. A similar, but perhaps less acute, wariness can be found among Roman Catholics, some of whom were especially disturbed by the loss of a deacon to the AOG.

The AOG's position with regard to sakau drinking and other traditional cultural practices is also a source of tension with the traditional churches. The AOG takes a firm position against the use of sakau, even during traditional rituals. It also opposes special treatment for chiefs at events like funerals. As mentioned above, these can be extremely expensive, leaving the family of the deceased in financial difficulties. Part of the expense comes from the provision of food for chiefs to take home after the feastings. Similarly, AOG weddings often forgo traditional practices, which are also expensive. These developments can be seen as reflective of a general tendency within the AOG to be less solicitous of cultural obligations. One pastor was taken to court by a high chief so that he would be forced to meet his cultural obligations to him. The case was dismissed. It is not yet clear if the unsuccessful nature of the suit will be a watershed for Pohnpeians who would like to resist cultural obligations.

Another thing that is not fully clear is whether the AOG's resistance to some aspects of traditional culture helps or hinders in the drawing of new members. It may be that, at this point, it serves as more of a disincentive for people to leave the churches of their birth. Traditional culture is still very important in Pohnpei, but if it weakens in coming decades, this dynamic could be reversed. American missionaries who come to Pohnpei are sometimes frustrated by another cultural dynamic: the tendency to be less concerned about institutional organization than is common among churches in the US. There is a perception among missionaries that the 'Spirit is moving' among the Pohnpeian people; many have been touched by the teaching and preaching at revivals and outreaches, but it has been difficult to put in place an organization that would train leaders and implement discipleship programmes to follow up on the interest generated by evangelism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA)

At least one Pohnpeian, while abroad, was converted to the SDA Church as early as the mid-1950s. He soon returned home to share the views of that church with his fellows, but formal evangelism on the island did not begin until 1966. In that year a missionary arrived from Guam; his first converts were baptized in the following year. The number of SDA members and adherents remained quite small until the second half of the 1980s, when successful revivals were held and membership increased to more than 300 (including children).

In 1992, when the first interview for this research was conducted, Pohnpei's SDA Church was still enjoying momentum from these developments and was benefiting from the presence of a number of expatriate pastors and teachers. It was baptizing 15 to 20 adults per year, and 30 to 50 during years when 'crusades' were held. A dozen years later, church growth has cooled. During the interim, national membership grew to about 500, but there are signs that adherence may actually be declining today.

There are three SDA congregations in Pohnpei: the largest one in Kolonia, with over 300 members, a smaller one in Kitti, and one on the outer island of Sapwahfik. While these were served by three ordained pastors a decade ago, two Pohnpeians and one missionary,
today they have to share one. In his absence, services are led by the head elders. Each congregation is run by a church board. The next level of organization is the Micronesia Mission, and then the South Asia Pacific Division of the international Seventh-day Adventist Church. Both of these bodies meet tri-annually, receiving church reports and discussing any matters that have to do with physical, financial, or spiritual aspects of the church. It does not seem that much attention is given to social issues.

The two interviews for this research with SDA leaders, one conducted in 1992 and the other in 2004, gathered contradictory information about the organizing of finances. It is not clear whether funds are gathered and utilized at the congregational level, or are forwarded to an international headquarters and then redistributed globally. In any case, it is certain that church members are expected to tithe and that the SDA in Pohnpei depends upon a significant influx of funds from abroad to meet its budgetary needs. The annual budget for the three congregations combined is in the area of US $50,000.

Besides the congregations, the SDA runs a kindergarten and a school that covers all grades, primary and secondary. The school has been served by Pohnpeian teachers and also by SDA teachers from North America, Europe, and India. A large majority of the students do not belong to SDA families.

The basic beliefs of the SDA Church are similar to those of conservative or evangelical Protestant churches, with some notable exceptions. Salvation is understood to be based solely upon faith in Christ, not on good works or observance of the law. Ironically, it is the SDA’s strict adherence to what it understands to be the law of God that sets it apart. The most obvious distinction is the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday. Also important are dietary restrictions in line with the Levitical Code. For example, no shellfish or pig products are to be consumed. The imminent second coming of Christ also appears to be an important belief.

Predictably, these teachings bring SDA members into conflict with other Pohnpeians over the observance of traditional cultural practices. As in other areas of Oceania, pigs are an important part of the feasting that goes on at funerals, weddings, and other traditional celebrations. The refusal of SDA members to eat or provide pigs generates conflict. In at least one case it cost an SDA leader an important chiefly title. Members are also counselled to avoid sakau drinking. Some are more exacting in their observance of church rules than others. Officers of the church can be disciplined for deficiencies in this regard.

Apart from offering a school and a kindergarten to the larger community, the SDA Church’s understanding of its mission lies completely in the area of evangelism. This takes place largely through revival meetings or ‘crusades.’ In recent years less energy seems to have been exerted in this direction and fewer converts won. There is apprehension that church growth has actually become negative. An area of concern for church leaders is the encroachment of non-biblical values into society, through Americanization and modernization. It is difficult for members to keep to the church law with so many contradictory messages present in society. Church members are drifting away – not to other churches but to worldly attractions. It is not the competition of the religious marketplace that is most disturbing, but the draw of secular pursuits and pleasures.

Perhaps spurred by this dynamic, the SDA has maintained a strong ministry to youth. In the Kolonia congregation alone there are 70 active youth, who have Bible studies, Friday evening meetings, and their own programme on the Sabbath.
As with other churches, the role of women is a subject of debate. There are no women elders and, while women have been chosen as pastors, none have been ordained. Theological and social conservatism combine to prevent such a development.

The strict and unique understanding of God’s law by the SDA Church keeps it from deep co-operation with other churches. Relations with other churches are not marked by hostility, and there is a willingness to co-operate in the pursuit of good works — although there is no evidence of this happening recently — but co-operative evangelism or teaching is not possible. Compromise on biblical matters is unacceptable. SDA leaders seem content to accept lukewarm relations with other churches, the exception being the Roman Catholic Church. SDA teaching is openly critical of the ‘Vatican system’, which has, not surprisingly, led to the occasional censorious reaction by Catholics.

In sum, it can be said that while it is not experiencing its most vigorous period of growth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church still has a strong presence in Pohnpei. It was one of the first of the new generation of churches to gain a solid footing and it has established important connections to the community through its educational work. There are signs of atrophy, but this situation could be reversed through renewed evangelism, a new injection of missionary leadership, or a resurgence of local vigour. Certainly, connections to the global organization of the SDA Church make such developments possible. While church growth is restricted by traditional culture on the one side and modernization on the other, the erosion of traditional society by modernizing processes could change this dynamic and open up new opportunities in the coming decades.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sometimes referred to as the ‘Mormons’ in everyday language, first came to Pohnpei in the late 1970s. At first, development of the LDS Church was slow and focused on a single, isolated chapel, but a period of more substantial growth began in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Today, a rough estimate would put membership in the area of 600 (which is not far off the estimates of 12 years ago). There are four congregations and two ‘basic units’ (outstations).

The LDS Church does not rely on professional clergy to give leadership. All male members are eligible for the priesthood, which has two orders or levels. For those who are admitted to the priesthood, which can happen as early as age 12, there is a ranked system of leadership roles: deacon, teacher, elder, and so on. In some countries the proportion of male members who become priests is almost 100 per cent; in Pohnpei the proportion is closer to 50 per cent. Women also have roles to play, especially in the areas of religious instruction to children and humanitarian service. There is an expectation that all church members will spread the Gospel and generally contribute to the work of the church. This does not mean that the LDS churches in Pohnpei rely entirely on their local members for human and leadership resources. Tens of thousands of church members around the world take up engagements as missionaries each year. Many but not all of these are under 25 years of age. Most of them leave their countries of origin to serve elsewhere, and Pohnpei regularly has more than a dozen carrying out their work within its bounds. Currently there are 16. Of those who come to Pohnpei, a large number are American, but others come from such places as Samoa, New Caledonia, or Papua New Guinea. The single most important part of their mission is to evangelize and share the teachings of the LDS Church, but regular time is also set aside for humanitarian projects.
For the purposes of church polity, every congregation is considered a branch, and each branch has a president who works with a committee of members, meeting monthly or more frequently, to oversee the affairs of that congregation. Branches are organized into districts, which also have presidents. Pohnpei is a district of its own, holding district meetings twice a year, often with visits from dignitaries from abroad. These meetings are topically broad; they are problem centered and work to meet local needs. Also, the General Conference of the global LDS Church meets twice a year in Salt Lake City, with two-hour sessions covering a wide range of topics. These sessions are broadcast around the world, with translation into many languages including Pohnpeian some of the time.

Church members are expected to tithe ten per cent of their income, which is forwarded to the global headquarters in Salt Lake City and then redistributed to congregations around the world and to other units for the work of the church. (As an aside, there is a perception among some in Pohnpei that the tithing expectation has a deterrent effect for Pohnpeians who might otherwise be motivated to explore membership in the LDS Church). Poorer states like Pohnpei generally benefit from this system; they receive more than they give. Smaller amounts of money are gathered by each congregation for local distribution. These come from the practice of fasting one Sunday per month and then giving the money saved to the church. These funds are used for charitable purposes, at the discretion of the branch president. At times funds or goods are also sent from Salt Lake City. Recently 250 wheel chairs were sent for distribution in Pohnpei.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints understand themselves to be Christians, but some of their beliefs are unique. Perhaps the most pronounced and commonly known difference is the acceptance of a post-New Testament revelation, the American prophet Joseph Smith, and the Book of Mormon — which to LDS Church members is scripture. Another important difference from Protestant or Roman Catholic churches is the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is replaced by the understanding that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, while being one in purpose, are three completely independent persons. The LDS Church also has unique teachings regarding salvation and the afterlife. One’s faith post-death is strongly affected by the nature of one’s actions and the treatment of one’s fellows during life. Depending on how meritorious one has been, there is a range of possibilities for the afterlife. Mormons are also distinct in terms of their acceptance of a pre-birth existence of human beings.

As mentioned above, mission work is of different kinds. Evangelism is considered to be the most important area of missions, and the greatest amount of effort is exerted here, but good works are also seen to be both important for their own sake and a good example by which the merits of the church can be displayed. Elder-missionaries are expected to devote a regular amount of time to humanitarian work each week. In Pohnpei, missionaries help build houses, pick up trash, and grow food for free distribution among other charitable acts. While social issues are discussed at LDS conferences, the church’s work in pursuit of the social good seems to be restricted to less controversial topics. It is not known to champion causes like protection of the environment or responding to AIDS. A key aspect of evangelism is detailed instruction in LDS beliefs and practices. There is a wealth of literature and audio-visual resources available for this. Even after members join, and for LDS children, there is an extensive system of self-improvement and instruction in the faith. Besides religious instruction, the LDS has a secular school in Pohnpei.
This emphasis on education naturally makes the LDS Church youth intensive, but the focus goes beyond instruction to the organization of recreational and service activities. Through the priesthood system and the great emphasis on missions, young people are drawn into significant leadership roles while still firmly placed in the years of their youth.

Women become neither priests nor elders. They do not become branch or district presidents or hold higher offices within the church. This does not mean that there are low expectations of the amount of time and energy women will devote to the church, however. They play key roles in the education of children and youth, and they have their own organization within the church in which they are expected to pursue self-improvement and offer service to the larger community as well as the denomination.

It would be accurate, I think, to describe the relationship between the LDS Church and Pohnpeian society at large as paradoxical. The church and its members feel that engagement with society through evangelism and good works is essential. People of all ethnic groups, languages, classes, and backgrounds are to be equally valued for these purposes. At the same time, however, the teachings of the church separate it clearly both from other religious organizations and from traditional culture. The LDS Church does not have ecumenical relations, formal or informal. Its teachings about such things as the consumption of *sakau* are uncompromising. The egalitarian values of the global LDS Church (gender relations do not fit this characterization, obviously) are at odds with the hierarchical structure of traditional Pohnpeian society. As with the other newer religious groups discussed above, this separation from tradition and culture seems to have both a negative and a positive effect on the church’s potential for attracting new members.

To sum up this section, the LDS Church in Pohnpei can be said to have a standing similar to that of the Assemblies of God or the Seventh-day Adventist churches in terms of membership, number of congregations, and social visibility. Like the SDA Church it seems to have been hovering around the 500-600-member level for more than a decade, but there are some signs of growth — in the first four months of 2004 there were 30 baptisms, for example — but there are also socio-cultural factors that limit growth. We await future developments to see if those factors weaken, enabling greater expansion. In the meantime, like the AOG, the LDS Church benefits from strong linkages with the global organization through which significant human and financial resources regularly flow.

**Calvary Baptist Church**

The history and development of Calvary Baptist Church are very much associated with the ministry of one man, Pastor Isamu Welles. Welles was brought up as a member of the UCC, but he explains that while he was a student at the University of Guam in 1964 “somebody told me about the Lord” and “I was saved.” After four years at a Canadian Bible school he returned to Pohnpei and set about trying to bring the members of the UCC to what he understood to be the correct interpretation of the Gospel. Because his teachings were at odds with those of the UCC leaders, especially with regard to his strict interpretation of salvation by grace alone, he was called before these leaders and told to toe the line or leave the denomination. He chose the latter option, setting up a Sunday School in his house. A small following developed and in 1971 Calvary Baptist Church was established with 35 charter members in Kolonia.

During the 1970s and 1980s the Kolonia congregation grew impressively, drawing participants from that town but also from outlying municipalities on Pohnpei Island and
even visitors to the state capital from outer islands. Whenever a critical mass of people from
one of the other municipalities had been reached, Welles would encourage that group to set
up its own congregation closer to home. The Kolonia congregation’s mission work also
extended to the state of Kosrae and even to Majuro in the Marshall Islands.

By the early 1990s, there were four Baptist churches in Pohnpei State – three on the
main island and one on an outer island – and a fifth on Kosrae. According to census figures,
Baptists represented 1.8 per cent of the population (606 people) in 1994 and again 1.8 per
cent (621 people) in 2000. This levelling of membership confirms the opinion offered to
me by a number of non-Baptist Pohnpeians that the Baptist Church’s period of vigorous
growth has come to an end — at least for the time being.

Growth in the 1980s and early 1990s may have been aided by Calvary Baptist Church’s
establishment of a twenty-four hour radio station, on which Pastor Welles preached most
days, often seven times in a week. Occasionally, there was also help in the form of American
missionaries, who operated under the supervision of Pastor Welles. The Baptist Church in
Pohnpei has an affiliation with the Worldwide New Testament Baptist Mission, for whom
Pastor Welles has operated as a field representative. But overseas missionaries are not
omnipresent by any means; most of the work is carried out by pastors indigenous to FSM,
of whom there were three in 1992.

Calvary Baptist Church is an independent church, affiliated with the Independent
Fundamental Baptist Churches in the US. This seems to be a loose affiliation of congregations
that had developed on their own or left the well-known Baptist confederations because they
were thought to have become too liberal. While Calvary Baptist Church benefits from
occasional one-time gifts from overseas friends, it does not receive regular financial help of
any kind. Funds are raised and distributed locally. In fact, the Kolonia church has distributed
modest financial aid to the more remote churches, including the one on Kosrae. The church
is run by a Board of Deacons and a Board of Trustees, made up of locals.

The basic beliefs of Calvary Baptist Church are very much in line with conservative
evangelical Protestantism. Overwhelming emphasis is given to salvation by grace and the
individual’s relationship with Jesus Christ. While some other new churches on Pohnpei
hold doctrines that are not radically dissimilar, this being especially true for the AOG Church,
and UCC teachings are not incompatible, Calvary Baptist Church has not developed strong
relations with other churches. It, and Pastor Welles, are generally perceived to have little
ecumenical spirit.

Like most of the other churches, Calvary Baptist Church would see its mission to
Pohnpei as dominated by the imperative to evangelize. Its only secular ministry comes in
the form of a school that covers all grades from primary to 12. In the early 1990s the school
had just over 200 students, most of them from UCC and Roman Catholic backgrounds.
This engagement with young people extends into an active youth ministry. Also like the
other new churches, Calvary Baptist Church takes a strong stand against traditional cultural
practices like the consumption of sakau.

The Church of Christ (COC)

The Church of Christ was founded in the Philippines in 1914. In that country it is
known as the Iglesia ni Cristo, which is also the name by which it is known in Pohnpei.
Understanding itself to be the re-emergence of the one true church founded by Jesus, the
church teaches that salvation outside the COC is very difficult if not impossible. The COC
is very strict in its doctrines, its organizational structure and procedures, its selection of people authorized to preach the Word, and its prescribed lifestyle for members. For example, church members are permitted to marry only each other, and divorce will lead to expulsion from the COC communion.

The Ilesia ni Cristo in Pohnpei is quite small, consisting of about 65 members, almost all of whom are immigrant workers or their family members from the Philippines. The church provides a small and supportive community for these families in transition. They gather twice a week for worship, making sure they are on time because the doors are locked at the appointed hour. Men and women are physically separated for the service, which is led by deacons because the COC has no minister in Pohnpei. Scripture is read and hymns are sung, but when it comes to the sermon time English-language tapes provided by the international Church of Christ are used; pastors and lay people are not sanctioned to preach the Word.

The headquarters of the Ilesia ni Cristo in the Philippines appears to have a great deal of authority to determine how the Pohnpeian branch is run. All funds collected locally are sent to international headquarters to be redistributed.

Officers of the local church carry out mission work by going from door-to-door distributing literature, but are limited in what they can do beyond that. Bible studies for prospective members are offered only when a minister visits from abroad.

While the COC shares many beliefs with evangelical Protestant churches, it sets itself apart by not celebrating communion—the ‘Lord’s Supper’ is celebrated once a year—and by rejecting the celebration of Easter and Christmas.

The COC in Pohnpei does not seem to have much potential for growth. Its numbers are not currently expanding. The absence of a minister and the restriction of mission activities by other officers severely curtail evangelism. The group is made up almost exclusively of expatriate workers and their kin, and the FSM and Pohnpeian governments have policies oriented toward reducing dependence on foreign workers. To make matters more difficult, there has been at least one conflict in the church, occasioned by a breach of lifestyle regulations by one member. Key members of the group seem to be falling out over the appropriate response. All in all, Ilesia ni Cristo has very little visibility on Pohnpei island, except among Filipino immigrants perhaps, and it does not seem likely that it will make more of an impact in the near future.

The Bahá’í

The Bahá’í religion has been present in Pohnpei since 1971, when a woman named Virginia Briggs, who had been witnessing to her faith in other parts of the Caroline Islands for almost two decades already, moved to Pohnpei. In 1972 she was joined by a group from Hawaii. During the early years of the Bahá’í mission interest in the new religion spread quickly and the number of members on the roll grew to include almost 400 people. The mid-1980s were an important time, with the construction of the National Bahá’í Centre and a successful move to make the national organization economically self-sufficient. This initial surge of participation waned however, and by the early 1990s a clear majority of people on the membership list were no longer active. An estimate (by an expatriate missionary) in 1992 indicated that of 400 people on the membership list, only 100 or 150 people were still involved with the organization’s activities. By 2004 the estimated number of active members was down to 12, of whom four were indigenous Pohnpeians.
There have been as many as six 'local spiritual assemblies' on Pohnpei, but it must be the case that some are no longer active. A local spiritual assembly does not require its own building; most of the meetings in Pohnpei have been at people's homes. Also, the National Spiritual Assembly, which serves the Eastern Caroline region (Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Kosrae) is located at Kolonia. During the years of greater vitality, the Bahá'í community in Pohnpei was marked by a certain duality: most members of the Kolonia Spiritual Assembly were expatriates, the greater number of whom would have more education and financial resources than the average Pohnpeian. The assemblies in more remote municipalities, however, were made up mostly of demographically average Pohnpeians.

The Bahá'í faith is one of the world's least exclusive and is widely known for openness to other religions. This disposition has generally led to cordial relations with other religious groups on Pohnpei. Bahá'í mission work is of two kinds. First there is a sort of soft evangelism: Bahá'í are happy to spread knowledge of their faith and the teachings of their founder, Bahá'u'lláh, but they do not engage in aggressive attempts to convert people. Their view of spiritual growth is holistic. They believe that their teachings can have a beneficial effect on people who do not formally join the organization. The second area of missions is social and economic development projects. Internationally, some of these projects are quite visible and ambitious, and Pohnpeian members have contributed to these over the years, but local projects have been more firmly grassroots. Members have initiated small-scale agricultural aid programmes, have organized a women's handicraft cooperative, and have offered tutoring and instruction to children without access to formal schooling.

With the limited amount of data available, it is difficult to know why the Bahá'í presence on Pohnpei has declined so much. One suspects that charismatic personalities played a significant role in early growth, and that the departure of those persons has been equally a part of the decline. It may also be that the soft evangelism of the Bahá'í has been less effective as the religious marketplace has become more competitive in the last quarter century. Finally, any organization of which expatriates make up a large percentage of membership is vulnerable to decline, because these people typically move on.

The Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses group in Pohnpei, about whom it was not possible to obtain much information, has been present for several decades, but has not grown past a membership level that can be measured in the dozens. The teachings and structure of this organization are well known, and are covered elsewhere in this volume.

Currently there are about 70 members in Pohnpei. They are served by two elders, two ministerial servants, and two overseas missionary couples. The Pohnpeian group is overseen by the Jehovah's Witnesses branch office in Guam, which provides some financial help. As in other countries, the primary mission activity is evangelistic; Jehovah's Witnesses members frequently go from door to door distributing print material and telling people about their religion.

Every Home for Christ

The Every Home for Christ ministry is not a church but rather a para-church organization. It was founded in Canada in 1958 with the goal of exposing every human being in the world to the Christian message by distributing gospel booklets to homes. Since the beginning, more than one and a half billion tracts have been circulated. The distribution
of materials is followed up with verbal witnessing, and, for those who show interest, the offering of Bible studies based on Every Home publications.

Every Home began its work in Pohnpei when a missionary was dispatched from Fiji, where the organization has a very significant presence. This man, Ilaisa Keligiou [spelling uncertain], lived in Pohnpei for five years, at which time he was replaced by a local resident, Isauo Santiago, as national director.

Santiago and his seven full time volunteers and 13 student volunteers go house-to-house distributing tracts. At the beginning of its work in Pohnpei, Every Home managed to visit every household in the state in one year. Nowadays, a single municipality is chosen each year and every home is visited. The shift to a more modest goal does not seem to result from weakened resolve or resources, but rather from a shift of energy toward follow-up work with Pohnpeians who have responded to the initial contact. Currently there are 20 cell groups of two to three families each being taught Every Home Bible studies.

The Every Home ministry has two office buildings, one in Kolonia and the other in an outlying municipality. Isauo Santiago serves as the director for Pohnpei and also for FSM. He works with a local board in Pohnpei, and, although there is an office and director for Micronesia in Guam, the Pohnpei unit reports directly to the national director and board in Fiji. Despite the international links, the final decision-making authority for Pohnpei rests with Santiago. The budget is irregular; the Pohnpeian ministry works with whatever funds are donated locally. There have been infusions of funds from Fiji, but this does not happen on a regular basis.

The doctrinal stance of Every Home is standard Protestant evangelical and the international organization has been endorsed by such figures as Billy Graham and Luis Palau. In Pohnpei, its approach to cultural issues like sakau drinking is very similar to that of the AOG, Calvary Baptist, and the other evangelical churches. Every Home co-operates with at least three denominations: the Assemblies of God, the United Pentecostal Church, and the United Church of Christ, although its relations with the latter are through local congregations rather than the national office, and there have been tensions on occasion. The forms of co-operation include providing materials and sometimes leadership for Bible studies with church members, filling preaching slots allocated to these churches on a radio station, and working together for opportunities on the community television channel.

There is suspicion of the Every Home ministry amongst the two traditional churches. In Fiji, where Every Home goes by the name Christian Mission Fellowship, the organization moved beyond co-operation with local churches to actually establishing its own congregations, which then drew away significant numbers of people from the denominations that had been partners. Some UCC and especially Roman Catholic leaders fear that this is the hidden agenda of Every Home in Pohnpei, or that it is channelling their members toward the Pentecostal churches. It was reported that some Catholic priests tell their parishioners to stay away from Every Home's Bible studies. Every Home does sponsor Sunday afternoon gatherings that include worship, which some Catholic and Protestant leaders think confirms their fears.
Pacific Missionary Aviation (PMA)

Background

PMA is a non-denominational service agency that carries out a number of mission activities in Micronesia and the Philippines. It was founded in 1975 by a German missionary, Rev. Edmund Kalau, who had worked for the Liebenzell Mission. Recently his son has taken over leadership of the organization.

Unlike many evangelical mission organizations, PMA does not restrict itself to evangelism and activities that give direct support to evangelism. It certainly does use systems of transportation and communication to facilitate the spreading of the gospel and the conversion of Micronesians to evangelical Christianity, but it also uses these systems to help meet the medical and physical needs of Micronesians. Neither does PMA eschew co-operation with churches or mission organizations with which it has minor doctrinal differences. It works to bring together fundamentalist evangelicals in the contexts it serves.

Activities

PMA provides a number of aviation services. Its planes carry passengers and cargo to remote Micronesian islands that are not serviced by commercial airlines. It also performs medical evacuations and medicine drops, air-sea search and rescue operations, and food drops. PMA's medical work extends to the operation of a ship that brings a mobile medical clinic to outer islands throughout Micronesia, and to the provision of an itinerant eye clinic.

PMA facilitates evangelistic outreach by transporting church and mission personnel as well as print and other resources to remote areas. Some of these resources are produced by PMA itself. The organization operates a press that prints Christian material in a large number of Melanesian languages. It also has a large recording studio that produces audio and video materials.

Organizational Structure and Funding

PMA has been incorporated in Guam, where it has a business office, as a non-profit religious organization. It is governed by a Board of Trustees. It also has an advisory board in the United States, a field office in Pohnpei, and an administrative office in Lahr, Germany.

To help fund its mission work, PMA undertakes some commercial work in the areas of printing and transport, but it also receives substantial support from churches and private donors in Germany and the United States. Besides providing financial support, evangelical mission organizations in the United States and Germany often send skilled personnel such as doctors, nurses, and pilots.

Pacific Mission Fellowship (PMF)

Pacific Mission Fellowship is a formally independent organization but has close ties to the leadership of PMA. It has congregations in Pohnpei, Guam, Palau, and the Philippines. The congregation in Pohnpei, with its new and modern building, has become a spiritual centre for a variety of people. These include members of the UCC or Roman Catholic Church who attend PMF's services as well as those of their own church, expatriates who want to worship in English, or the families of the more than 100 children who have been drawn to the PMF Sunday School. Many of these people enjoy PMF's services because of
the evangelical content and the worship presentation, which makes use of Powerpoint and other higher-tech resources. The congregation regularly draws 250 or 300 people to its services.

**SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK**

Nakayama described conversion by the first Pohnpeian Christians as “an act selected to meet the political and economic objectives of islanders. The conversion could not have taken place unless the people thought that it would be beneficial to them in their efforts to deal with the ever-changing environment” (Nakayama 1987: 390). Again today, Pohnpeians live in an ever-changing environment as traditional society and culture encounter modernizing and globalizing influences. Sometimes the encounter occurs as conflict. Sometimes the old and the new mix together to produce novel cultural forms or social structures. In either case, society is transformed and Pohnpeians are forced to respond. Conversion to new churches or religious groups is one option. Because they typically offer unambiguous worldviews and clear-cut understandings of personal responsibility and morality, these new groups may be particularly appealing to Pohnpeians who experience deep confusion or ambivalence in the midst of social change. For some individuals, the time comes when there is more to be gained by a leap into a new community of faith than there is to be lost by alienating the old one. For the perplexed, or for those confronted by wholly new social horizons, the leap can be especially worthwhile if the new community offers black and white answers to existential questions as well as a support group and a stabilising regime of personal discipline. Several of the new churches in Pohnpei were launched by Pohnpeians who had undergone a conversion experience abroad. One wonders if their leaps of faith were occasioned by these kinds of psycho-dynamics.

So far, most Pohnpeians have not made the leap to a new church, an indication that the bonds and benefits of traditional religious communities, which are so much part of the fabric of Pohnpeian society as a whole, are still too valuable to give up. Every year, however, the balance shifts for dozens (perhaps hundreds) of people and the appeal of a new religious community becomes irresistible. The fundamental question regarding religious change in the future is: “how will future social changes affect the relative appeal of the new and old churches?” A number of sub-questions can be asked:

- Will globalization further erode traditional culture, making connections between a church and this culture less important?
- Will democratization and other modernizing processes further weaken the role of chiefs and titles, again making connections between churches and traditional society less vital?
- Will increasing numbers of Pohnpeians experience mobility – social, economic, physical, or otherwise – and the inevitable reassessment of one’s identity that goes with it?

If history answers any of these questions in the affirmative, that will be to the advantage of new religious groups. And these groups, at least several of them, already benefit from a number of advantages over the established churches, especially the UCC. Through international networks and funding from the US, they can offer more opportunities to Pohnpeians who have enjoyed a taste of the world beyond FSM and would like to sample that world more thoroughly. Through the same networks they have greater access to human, financial, and media resources.
Also, new religious groups frequently promote personal discipline and morality in a way that more fully embraces economic ambition. Unlike the more established denominations, the new churches often articulate a connection between spiritual and economic progress. For people drawn into globalizing processes and attracted to the associated economic opportunities, this can be a real draw.

Of course, the established churches have advantages as well — beyond their being embedded in traditional culture and society. First of all, they have large numbers of people whose creativity and human resources can be tapped. Secondly, they have been through periods of transformation before, some of them quite dramatic, and have survived, even flourished. If memory of these times is there to be drawn upon, it must contain wisdom relevant to current challenges. Finally, they have long-standing connections to social, political, and economic institutions in Pohnpei; these kinds of linkages can be invaluable during times of transformation.

The Roman Catholic Church may be in a stronger position than the United Church of Christ. It appears to be suffering from less internal conflict, especially on gospel and culture issues. Through the Micronesian Seminar and the presence of the Jesuits, it has access to deep social analysis and an impressive history of confronting social issues, giving it skills for interpreting change and, undoubtedly, credibility with the people it has assisted and defended in the past.

Of key importance for the traditional churches is the issue of leadership. The Roman Catholic Church needs to be concerned about quantity and the UCC needs to be concerned about quality. If the Catholics cannot train more indigenous deacons and priests and are not able to replace the aging Jesuits, they could soon find themselves in a crisis of leadership. Given its polity, a national Catholic Church without a strong guiding hand from clergy would be a much less effective organization. The UCC has plenty of ministers, but it needs to find ways to train them and free up more of their time for service. Interviewees for this study repeatedly named weakness among the leadership as a reason for the defection of UCC members to new churches.

What about competition between the new religious groups? There appear to be two tiers currently. The bottom tier is made up of the Bahá’í, the Church of Christ, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and perhaps other groups of which I am not aware. They are present but weak. There are no signs that this will change without some kind of ambitious initiative launched from overseas. The top tier is made up of the Assemblies of God, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Calvary Baptist Church, and the Seventh-day Adventists. These churches can be ranked in the above order in terms of vitality based on the data gathered for this study, which it must be said is far from exhaustive. But there is not a great deal between them. One suspects that whichever church maintains the greatest pool of human, financial, and other resources will be best placed to capitalize on opportunities thrown up by coming social changes.

Will future changes assist these churches? It is difficult to know. On one hand, there are signs that the UCC community is seriously weakened, and that further erosion of traditional culture is likely — meaning that greater numbers of people may be moved to convert as social, economic, and political realities become even more fluid and as social sanctions against conversion weaken. On the other hand, the world has provided examples of traditional religious culture becoming renewed in the face of the dangers that come with modernization. There are many examples of this in the Muslim world today. Within
Christendom, the current vitality of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa can also be seen as an example. It will be fascinating to observe Pohnpei in the coming decades and to see which way the tide turns.

Notes

1 In the following paragraphs I rely greatly upon Nakayama's account (Nakayama 1987:370-90).
2 There is a significant body of literature on this. See Martin 2002 for a good introduction to and discussion of this literature.
3 In this section of the study, the great majority of the data comes from the interviews listed at the end of the paper. Data from other sources or published works will be duly noted. Non-census statistics or demographic data concerning a particular church come from officials of that denomination unless otherwise stated. A note regarding reporting on church budgets and membership: all of the non-census figures provided were given by church leaders from the various denominations. Most of the figures were rough estimates. Leaders either did not have more precise documents at hand or were reluctant to share them.
4 There are at least two churches in Pohnpei about which I was able to gather no data. One is a United Pentecostal Church that I was told was formed as a break away from a UCC congregation in Sok with. Also, several people interviewed during the course of my research made reference to an 'Apostolic' church, but I was not able to find a church leader for an interview.
5 This history is related in a three-page document entitled 'History of the Pohnpei Assemblies of God,' which was provided to me by an AOG missionary from the US. This history was also related in the two interviews with AOG leaders.
6 Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct any interviews with representatives of Calvary Baptist Church during the 2004 research trip. The data for this section comes from an interview in 1992 and from supporting data gathered during interviews with representatives of other churches in both 1992 and 2004.

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