

## **1. Description**

### 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Palauan, Palauan, Palauan language is in the Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian language family.

### 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

Pau

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Between 6 53'North and 8 12'North latitudes and 134 08'E and 134 44'E longitudes. (2)

### 1.4 Brief history:

Possibly settled by drifting travelers from Indonesia and the Philippines. Was under Spanish control from (1885-1898), German control from (1899-1914), Japanese control from (1914-1945) and from 1945 onward it was administered by the United States through the United Nations Trusteeship. It is still administered by the United States, but became a republic in 1981. (2,3)

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

Powerful neighbors would have been the neighboring islands within the Palau group. The Islands fought each other for control of people and resources. Western influence from the British allowed islands that allied with the British traders to have a military advantage over the islands that did not have as strong ties with the British traders. The Spanish, German, Japanese and American control of the islands all had their effects of changing Palauan culture. Once Palau was exposed to the colonial powers, large-scale warfare between islands and villages stopped. The economy would also change depending on who was controlling the islands. The Japanese created the largest changes to Palauan ways of life because they wanted Palau to be part of new modern economics. Missionaries influenced the culture by removing the men's club / women's club system from the culture. Women's clubs would visit men's clubs in order to perform sexual favors in exchange for Palauan valuables. (1,2,3)

### 1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

Tropical islands, lush vegetation and 75% forested, inland is forested with trees useful for timber, uplands have very sparse growth usually grass.

There are very few animals on the islands. Rats and bats are the only mammals originally on the islands and there are a good number of bird species. Only the birds are useful as a food source. Coral reefs surround the islands and supports abundant sea life. The flat lands on the island are suitable for growing crops such as taro.

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

Population is about 21,000 with a density of 119 per square mile. It is believed that before contact with foreigners, over 20,000 people could have been living on them even back then. The islands are not large and the village sizes must have been quite large.

## **2. Economy**

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Taro, which is cultivated on the islands, coconuts (2)

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Fish. Pigeons are also hunted and are seen as a delicacy, but fish is by far the largest source of protein. (2)

### 2.3 Weapons:

Bow and arrow, blowguns (usually used for hunting pigeons), and spears (mainly for fishing). (2,3)

### 2.4 Food storage:

Food does not keep well, no traditional food storage, ex. A pig is only killed when there are enough people to eat it in two or three days. There is of course refrigeration now in places with electricity, but in the past food was hard to store.

### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men hunt, fish and harvest coconuts because those are termed as dangerous activities, while women are in charge of planting and growing crops. (2)

### 2.6 Land tenure:

Land is owned by families/Houses and can be traded for other services. It stays in the family at death of the owner unless the Chief of the village decides that it should go to someone else that they like. People who are no "related" to the land are not supposed to go on the property. The land was not rented out or borrowed. (2)

### 2.7 Ceramics:

Mainly grog, some traditional Palau money/valuables are made of ceramics or glass.

## 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

Sharing is a major method for a person to increase their social standing in the village and region. People like to share with upper class villagers, who are related to the chiefly title holding house. This will let the sharing individual be seen favorably by the more wealthy people in society. If people share with others then there is an obligation felt to repay the person who is doing the sharing so generous people may receive rewards and gifts for their sharing. (2)

## 2.9 Food taboos:

Yes. Each house had its own taboo about eating a certain plant or animal and these taboos would be passed down to descendants, who also had to abide by the taboos. Only the taboos from the mother's side of the family were passed down forever. The taboos from the father's side of the family only had to be followed down from their grandfather's taboos. (2)

## 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

Canoes for fishing/transport/warfare

## 3. Anthropometry

### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

Couldn't find

### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

Couldn't find

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

### 4.1 Age at menarche (f):

Couldn't find

### 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

No statistic, but because of the very loose rules concerning sex, the age at first birth is probably quite low. (2)

### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

In general the larger the family the better. Did not find any statistics. (2)

### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

Did not find specific data, but the inter birth interval is probably relatively short because children are valuable to the parents and food is not scarce. Resources do not limit the number of children a woman can raise. (2)

### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

People often marry many times during their life, but when they have their first "serious" marriage it is usually around the age of thirty, when they are considered serious adults. (2)

### 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

Very high. Don't have a statistic. It is very hard for a person to increase their social status if they are married to a person of a lower social level. If you want to move up in the society, you generally have to divorce your spouse and then marry someone from the next highest social level. Marriages are conducted like a business transaction to make the families richer or better off somehow. (2)

### 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Only men with a high standing in the village marry more than one woman and they do it in order to show their wealth. Men of lower social statuses only marry one wife at a time but can have sex with any other woman that they want to while they are married. There are many divorces and men and women will marry many different spouses but only one at a time. Few men have more than one wife. (2)

### 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

The family of the husband is required to pay a large sum of money/valuable to the wife's family. The higher the wife's social status, the larger the price that must be paid to her family. (2)

### 4.9 Inheritance patterns:

When a father dies, his property is divided up amongst many different people. His wife receives a small amount while the wife's family receives a much larger share. The man's side of the family also receives a large amount of the inheritance. The two sides of the family will get together and negotiate what the man's children will inherit. The children do not seem to inherit very much. (2)

### 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

It is the parents duty to teach the children to grow up to be valuable to the family and increase the wealth of the family by being very good in the community. Parents train their children in all the daily life issues such as gathering crops, fishing etc. Fathers will instruct one of their sons in their secret lineage only if that son is selected by the family to be taught the lineage. (2)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

Didn't find any data.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Don't want to marry lower class people who are less wealthy but marrying into a higher class is desirable. It is also desirable to marry someone from the same village or a close allied village. The highly ranked people in the society will often marry incest in order to keep money in the family and keep their blood "pure". (2)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

Found one reference to the idea that the man implants the fetus into the mother. This may or may not be a true traditional belief but it was mentioned once. They do not believe in paternal partibility. (2)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

Again, the idea that the mother is a receptacle for the fetus to grow in was mentioned only once and can't be confirmed. (2)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

No (2)

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

Not common, never came across anything about it. Probably not a problem for the most part because of the loose rules concerning sex.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

Cannot be too closely related. Men and women both want to marry people in a higher social level, who are wealthy. People do not want to marry someone from a lower status than themselves because the family will have less money and the bloodline will be "polluted" by lower class blood.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

Yes they can choose their sexual partners when they go to men's clubhouses in other villages and when men court them in their own villages girls can choose who they want to court. They have less freedom when it comes to marriage, which is usually arranged by two families/lineages, but the women do not necessarily have to go along with the arrangement. There are trial marriages in which the woman can leave the "marriage" if she so pleases. Once a woman is married and her husband has paid the bride price, the woman is only allowed to have sex with her husband because he has purchased that right when he paid the bride price. Women do have the right to get a divorce, which usually happens in the case of abuse. (2)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

Women will offer sexual services to men at men's clubhouses in other villages in return for payment/gifts, which the women will give to their families when they return. After girls go through the ceremony where they become women, they are supposed to sleep with the village chief and all the other high status men in the village and those men will give her gifts such as valuables. (2)

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

The father, who will most likely marry again. The father's female relatives would help him raise the children.

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

couldn't find data

4.22 Evidence for couvades

No

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

No.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

People do not avoid their relatives. They live near to their relatives. Older, wealthier people in the family command more respect. Older women in particular are respected the most in a family.

4.24 Joking relationships?

No

#### 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

Matrilineal (1,2,3)

#### 4.26 Incest avoidance rules

Not supposed to marry or have sex with a near relative.

When a boy becomes a “man” (allowed to have sex) he is supposed to talk to his mother about which girls he is allowed to sleep with so that he does not commit incest with a relative. Higher status people in the community will not obey the incest rules and they will marry a near relative. They want to keep the blood in their high status family pure and don't want to mix with other families who may not be in the same social level.

Bothers and sisters are not allowed to sleep in the same house once they become adolescent and they are not supposed to be alone together for long periods of time. (2)

#### 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

When the husband's family pays the price for the bride, there is a family get together where the bride price is exchanged and food is given to the husband's family. This can be considered the marriage ceremony because after it, the couple are actually married and are not in a trial marriage any more. (2)

#### 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

Children take their names from one of their father's relatives, but they also receive a secret name from their matrilineal descent. (2)

#### 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Men and women marry in their village usually or to a close allied village. (2)

#### 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

Marriages are usually arranged by the two families (probably parents and grandparents) of the husband and wife, but the arrangements are not forced. Obedient children will however follow the arrangement usually to show respect to their families. (2)

#### 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Women try to only marry “up” to wealthy men so that her family will receive more money from the husband's family at the time of the marriage. A woman may not want to marry a man, but if he is wealthy then she will do it for her family, who will receive money/gifts from the husband's family/husband. (2)

### **Warfare/homicide**

#### 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

Traditionally It must have been high because Palauans engaged in largescale warfare and there are not many other ways to die unless during a fishing accident.

#### 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

Outgroup violence is main cause of violent death. Common warfare between islands and rival villages.

#### 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

War over who would hold the chiefly title to a village is an out-group form of killing

In-group killing would include assassinating the head chief in order to take his place.

#### 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

Only with neighboring islands. Hostile relations usually. Raiding/warfare. The neighboring societies are all the same or similar Palauan societys.

#### 4.18 Cannibalism?

Didn't find anything about cannibalism but did find references to headhunting. Warfare was basically gone a little after the first westerners shipwrecked on the islands.

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

#### 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

The population on the islands has always been substantial and due to the small size of the islands the villages must have been a fair size.

#### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

They stay in one place throughout the year's different seasons. Permanent villages

### 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

Traditionally chiefs were in charge of villages. The chief was the man who held the chiefly title, which was given to him by the highest ranking women in the village. In order to be chief, a man had to also own a piece of sacred ground (usually the best piece of land around). The chief was usually in control of many Palauan valuables as well. (2)

### 5.4 Post marital residence:

During the trial marriage, the wife comes and lives with her potential husband at his parent's house. After a real marriage, the couple moves into the husband's own house if he is wealthy enough to have his own house, otherwise the couple may live in the wife's parent's house. Sources were vague on this issue so can't completely confirm. (2)

### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

Coastline of the islands generally. Each village has control of the land around it that people in the village own. No active defense other than watching for enemy war parties.

### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

Until a person is near to 40 years old they are not allowed to exchange things such as Palauan valuables and land.

Men do not partake in wailing and mourning for the dead. Only women wail and mourn.

A husband's family will not pay the bride price for his wife until the people getting married are around 30 years old because they think the marriage will not last because the husband and wife are still not true adults until they are thirty. (2)

### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

Not that I found

### 5.8 Village and house organization:

Meeting house at the center of the village "square" with residential houses fanning out from the village center. The men's clubhouses were by the water, be it the ocean or a river. There were inland villages in the forest and villages near to the lagoons/coast. The villages were usually divided into two halves that were competing and cooperating. Traditionally the villages were more inland in the forest so that they were more protected from attack, but after warfare mostly ceased, villages moved to the coast and now there are almost no villages back in the forest.

Inside the houses where people lived, there was at least one sacred section where ancestors were fed and worshipped. (3,2)

### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

Men's houses, Men's clubhouses, Women's clubhouses, canoe houses. (1,2,3)

### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

Did not find specifically where people slept but there were elevated bamboo floors in the traditional houses. People probably slept on the bamboo floors. (3)

### 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

Houses based on "lineages" matrilineal bonds. Each House had a residence in the village, fields to grow taro, a chiefly title and Palauan Valuables that belong to the house. (2)

### 5.12 Trade:

Traditionally no. Each village was self-sustaining. They grew their own crops, caught their own fish and did not need to trade because all the other societies around were the same and had access to the same resources. Occasionally some villages were able to catch sharks, which they would sell or trade to other villages. (1,2,3)

### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

The richer a person is in land and Palauan valuables, the higher rank that person is in the society.

If a man has more than one wife, then that is an indication that he is wealthy because he can support a large family. (2)

## 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

Religion ritual and ceremony do not seem to consume too much time. Ceremonies are mainly reserved for special occasions such as birth and death and when a girl becomes a woman. There are weekly rituals that happen at the meeting-house in the center of town and ancestor worship and feeding that happens in the house. (1,2,3)

### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Male and female specialists in religion. Title holding males could manipulate ancestral spirits.

There are specialists who take care of pregnant women and prevent miscarriages. (2,3)

### 6.2 Stimulants:

Betel is sprinkled with lime and chewed. It is a palm nut. Similar stimulation as Nicotine. (2)

### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Girls become women when they have their first period and they meet with the women of the village and she receives a valuable to hang around her neck that shows that she is a woman.

When women give birth they go through bathing and steaming for a period of time after giving birth.

At death there are mourning rituals in order to help the deceased pass from this world and into the world of the dead. (2)

### 6.4 Other rituals:

Dancing festivals amongst different regions, eating competitions between men's clubs.

The male titleholder of a house has the duty of feeding and caring for ancestral spirits. (2,3)

### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

Creation story: There once was a child from Angaur named Uab, who ate too much food and became a giant. He then began to force people to feed him. But the people were afraid and set Uab on fire. Uab started kicking when he was on fire and fell into a bunch of pieces that flew all around and landed in the ocean and created the Palau islands. (2)

### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Dancing, music(singing) , wood carving for "mens clubs", woven mats, story telling. (1,2,3)

### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Rituals involving girls turning into women and boys to men are only conducted by people of the same sex as the person the ritual is for.

Chief title holding men are the only people who can talk to the spirits of the ancestors. (2)

### 6.8 Missionary effect:

The vast majority of Palauans today consider themselves Catholic or Christian and do not practice their traditional religion/rituals. Missionaries have been in Palau since Spanish control and have had a massive influence on Palauan culture. (1,2,3)

### 6.9 RCR revival:

No

### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

After death, the deceased supposedly ends up at the south of the island group where the world of the dead is or where the entrance to the world of the dead is. (3)

### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

Not that I found.

### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

Did not come across it.

### 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

The spirits of ancestors are worshipped as are the specific gods of each clan or house. The gods are more powerful than the ancestor spirits because they were never actually men. (1,2,3)

## 7. Adornment

### 7.1 Body paint:

Women are tattooed once they become a woman and then are continually tattooed after that.

I did not find a direct reference to Palauan men being tattooed but on other Micronesian islands the men are covered in elaborate tattoos that tell of his lineage. It is probable that Palauan men tattoo themselves especially since Palauan women are tattooed. (2)

### 7.2 Piercings:

On other Micronesian islands yes but could not find specific data on Palau

### 7.3 Haircut:

Men have long hair and on special occasions they will curl it into a knot on the side of their head and fasten it there. (1)

### 7.4 Scarification:

Couldn't find info

### 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

Boys carry fine handbags that their grandmothers weave for them in order to attract girls.  
Girls are tattooed when they become women and then throughout their life. (legs, butt, hands feet)  
Flowers are used as ornaments on other Micronesian islands and are probably used on Palau. (1,2)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

Couldn't find info

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Couldn't find info

7.8 Missionary effect:

Women do not tattoo themselves as much. The tradition of tattooing girls once they become women has probably died out for the most part. Only older women in Palau still have tattoos that you can see on their hands and feet. (2)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

No

## 8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Siblings are children born to the same parents. They create a pair if they are brother and sister and they are obligated to help each other and their families throughout their lives. Brothers are required to provide fish to their sisters and the sisters must help provide starches such as taro to their brothers. The sibling pair are supposed to support each other, but if they want to receive help then they have to be generous and helpful to the sister or brother that they want help from. Siblings can also be adopted into a family. Usually a close family member such as a brother adopts children. A brother has the right to adopt one of his sister's children if he is childless. (2)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

No

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

Each Palauan is either a "child of the woman" or "child of the man". "child of the woman" people trace their lineage back to the founding Female and have rights to land based on their blood. "child of the man" people trace their lineage back to the founding male and are less important and have less rights than "child of the woman". It is a matrilineal system so the "child of the woman" naturally hold more importance and power in the community. (2)

## 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Adoption

Palauan Valuables

## Numbered references

1. Barnett, H. Being a Palauan. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.
2. Smith, Deverne. Palauan Social Structure. New Jersey: Rutgers, 1983.
3. <http://www.everyculture.com/Oceania/Belau.html>