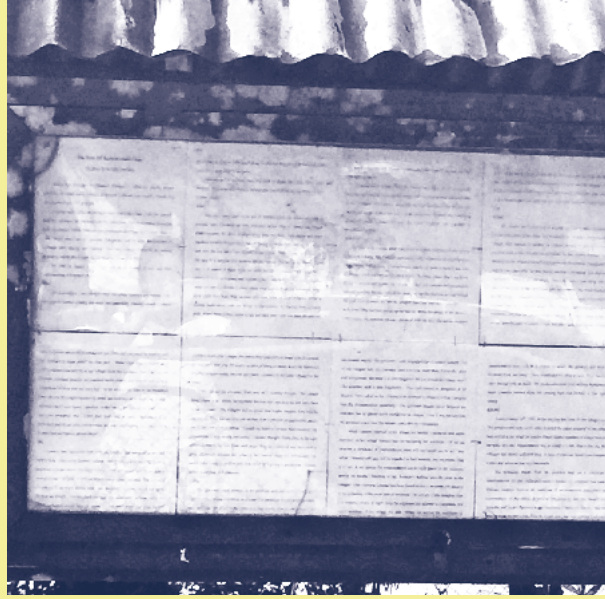
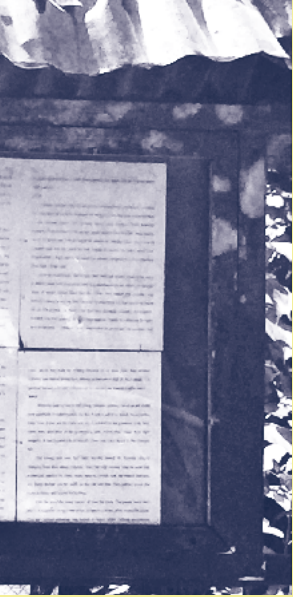




FOR SOUMADAU EN SOKEHS &
HIS FELLOW WARRIORS

EMELIHTER KIHLENG



NOT-SO-DISTANT-MEMORY, 2017
MASSACRE SITE OF 1911, KUMWUNLAID

a wire fence surrounds a cement square
 built on rocks
 inside the square lies
 what looks like a rectangular cement grave,
 odd,
 a sign is erected there with papers posted
 underneath what looks like glass
 or is it plastic?

my reflection reflects back at me
 peach shirt, eyes squinting,
 sun blazing
 cramped, uncomfortable
 this site of brutality
 couldn't we make it nicer?
 it is unloved

a house borders the fence
 koloumw wasah, I think to myself
 I wouldn't want to live next to these eni
 angry eni, fifteen of them
 killed by firing squad
 Sokehs warriors
 Sounkawad
 ohl tohroar

EMELIHTER KIHLENG

late in the night
 the sewi blows
 and their eyes open
 piercing the darkness
 the undead are restless
 still seeking revenge
 still wearing their koahl
 carrying their machetes

a weipwul grows there
 the young leaves missing



GRAVEYARD:
GERMAN CEMETERY
BEHIND KEPINLE CHURCH,
KOLONIA

not far from the massacre site lies
 the German cemetery
 behind Kepinle Church
 like most Pohnpeians, I'd never been there

I wasn't even aware of this place
and, like most Pohnpeians, I only visited
because we took visitors,
colleagues from the other historic preservation
offices in Micronesia and American Samoa

Gustav Boeder, the German district officer's
headstone reads
(from the German):
*Here rests with God
my dearly beloved husband,
our loving father;
Gustav Boeder,
born 11 Sept. 1860,
died 18 Oct. 1910.
Love survives death.*

headstone made of basalt rock
a glossy, likely marble plaque
if written by Pohnpeians would read:

iei Gustav Boeder
Kepina nan mwehin Sehmen o
Soumadau en Sokehs me kasikihdi
E lemei oh e kasarohwehdi ohlen Pohnpei kei
E sohte wahuniki tiahk en Pohnpei

here is Gustav Boeder
Governor during the German period
Soumadau en Sokehs shot him
he was cruel and he shamed several Pohnpeian
men
he did not respect Pohnpeian culture

we mourn and honour
Soumadau en Sokehs
our brave warrior
whose body lies in the unmarked mass grave
Indigenous memory survives death



2019: WE REMEMBER

ke mihmi Sehmen???
you're living in Germany???
ke sohte masak mehn Sehmen kan?
you're not afraid of those Germans?
mehn Sehmen kan sohte kamasopwehk?
those Germans aren't scary?

they keep asking
surprised that I am living in Sehmen
in Germany
far far away in the land of those
who once colonized us
they want to know what I am doing there
I doadoak
I'm working
I pahn mihmihki sounpar ehu.
I'll be there a year.
ke komwad.
you're tough they tell me.
perhaps I am...
re mwahu sang mehn Amerika. re mehlel.
they're better than Americans. they're sincere.
assuring friends and family that I am safe
in this land that is a distant memory of
brutality

Pahpa and I drive around
 with my laminated Hambruch photos
 taken in 1910
 I show them to guests at Neileen's grandson's first
 birthday party
 to FSM National police officers preparing
 for the inauguration of the new FSM President
 to Sahngoro and Likend U
 to the old, to the young
 to anyone who wants to look into our past
 Pahpa Maiko dene re mesen eni
 Nohno Mi puts on her glasses
 carefully examining each photo
 black and white photos
 unfamiliar faces
 that look like hers
 Nohno wants to recognize someone
 but does not

people want to see pictures of Soumadau en
 Sokehs
 who fought bravely against the Spanish
 Soumadau, who later shot District Officer,
 Gustav Boeder
 in the head
 Soumadau, whose name was Nihwe,
 shot by a firing squad of Melanesian soldiers
 along with the fourteen other warriors from
 Sokehs
 Soumadau, memorialized in the song

*Soumadau eri sapeng
 kumwail mahkeng kiht pwe sen
 kapwatada oh sahpw mehla*

I did not bring his photo

*Kalahngan to Hinemoana Baker for reading a
 draft of this poem. All photos taken by the author.*