

# Traditional Leaders Convene

PONAPE (MNS) — The traditional leaders conference of five of the Trust Territory's six districts opened Monday at Pica Nani's High School in Kolonia. The two-week meeting was called by the Nanmwarkis and Nanikens. Ponape's

highest-ranking traditional leaders.

Yap, Palau and Truk, also indicated interest in sending delegates. No response from the Marshalls had been received.

Each day of the meeting will be devoted to a different topic with a different district's representative serving as chairman. The tentative schedule called for a discussion on the agenda Monday. Micronesian unity yesterday, constitutional convention today, future political status tomorrow, and the educational system in Micronesia Friday. Next Monday, the conferees will discuss the return of public lands, foreign investment and law of the sea; April 17, the relationship between the traditional system and the government and April 18-19, an evaluation of the conference and adjournment.

April 20 a feast hosted by the Nanmwarkis and Nanikens will

be given in honor of the delegates. Ponapean traditional dances and songs performed by the Nett Cultural Center will be featured.

Although some Ponapean leaders have discussed the idea of hosting such a conference since 1969, the final decision to implement it was made in January. The Ponapean leaders began preparation by raising funds and gathering materials to support the meeting.

The traditional Ponapean leaders feel the conference is necessary because until recently, they have not been informed about activities of the TI government, the Congress of Micronesia and the district legislatures. The leaders wish to determine their position with respect to the executive branch of the government; the relationship of Micronesia and the United States; the current political status negotiations and the desirability of Micronesian

unity. The release of public land, law of the sea and the proposed constitutional convention and questions of concern to the traditional leaders also will be considered.

The Ponapean leaders believe they are the appropriate leaders of their respective municipalities and people. This was the case before the advent of the Spanish in 1885. Under the succeeding German, Japanese and American administrations, they have seen their power steadily eroding. To reverse this process, they are becoming more informed about the nature of the trusteeship agreement and their position in the circumstances. They wish to determine the extent of their power and responsibilities.

As traditional leaders, they are also reported to be disturbed that the younger generation is poorly prepared to carry on the customs and traditions. Western influence has been responsible to a large degree it was noted.