

Another View from Hawai`i

Cultural Continuities and Discontinuities in the Asia-Pacific Region

This is the third issue of *CRM* that the University of Hawai`i's historic preservation program has had the opportunity to edit (see inset box). An earlier issue focussed on preservation and cultural resource management in East and Southeast Asia and also in the Pacific islands, especially Micronesia, where the University of Hawai`i has conducted a long-standing research and educational assistance program. A second issue was devoted to problems in cultural resource management in Hawai`i itself, where emphasis has increasingly shifted from dependence on outside expertise to reliance on indigenous perspectives and approaches.

Much has happened since those earlier issues. The economic buoyancy of the region, especially the seemingly unlimited expansion of the Japanese and Korean economies and dramatic growth in Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, has suddenly ground to a halt. Banking failures, currency devaluations, and overall economic stagnation have caused the region to rethink its strategies and its future.

These circumstances have had a direct impact on cultural resources and their treatment as well. Less money has meant less opportunity for revitalizing historic buildings and a slow-down in more ambitious restoration plans for individual monuments. But a lack of funds for investment has also meant fewer new construction projects to threaten older buildings and environments. Furthermore, as is often the case, the hiatus in economic growth also has provided a fresh opportunity for reassessment of what is significant.

Already the Thai government, to mention only one example, has shifted emphasis from modernization to recognizing what is inherently "Thai." At least on paper, the official policy is now to recapture an appreciation for Thailand and Thai culture rather than depending on what is now interpreted as "foreign" models. This change in focus, both in Thailand and elsewhere, can potentially serve as an important vehicle for preserving traditional culture, as well as sites, buildings, and entire environments of historic and cultural significance.

To a lesser extent the "Asian Crisis" has had an impact in the Pacific as well. Increasingly dependent on Asian visitors, the economies of Hawai`i, Guam, Micronesia, and the other Pacific islands, and island nations have suffered significantly. Hawai`i is really the only state in the U.S. to have not experienced the much-publicized North American economic resurgence of the past several years. Tied strongly to Japan, Hawai`i, has experienced slow growth in all sectors, particularly tourism. Unemployment in the state is at a nearly all-time high, visitor numbers and spending are down, and property values in Hawai`i have decreased significantly from the high prices common in the late 1980s.

As a result of these reversals, state revenues have fallen greatly. This has led to down-sizing in many areas of government, including the State of Hawai`i Historic Preservation Office, which has just experienced massive cuts in personnel. A smaller staff, in turn, means that state review of development projects affecting historic properties will be hampered; a plan put forward to subcontract the review process to private firms is perceived by many as inherently inadequate to the task. Also, funds for on-going surveys of cultural resources, for enforcement, and particularly for educational outreach are also unavailable.

But again, as in Asia, the people of Hawai`i now have a fresh opportunity for reassessment of what is important in their history and in their cul-

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Other issues of *CRM* edited by the Historic Preservation program are "Preservation in the Pacific Basin," Volume 19, No. 3, 1996; and "Approaches to Heritage: Hawaiian and Pacific Perspectives on Preservation," Volume 19, No. 8, 1996.

A traditional Yapese structure in Micronesia. Photo by William Murtagh.

ture today. Native Hawaiians in particular can further consolidate their own position as “keepers” of their heritage and emerge as stronger advocates for the preservation both of tangible resources and retention and promotion of less visible qualities of Hawaiian culture—characteristics embedded in language, music, dance and many other aspects of cultural life. The same holds for peoples of other Pacific islands, especially Micronesia (including the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands) as they slowly sever their political ties to the U.S.

For other peoples in Hawai‘i, the descendants of Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Puerto Ricans, Europeans, and North Americans who have populated the islands for the past nearly 200 years, the shift in economic fortunes also provides a chance to look again at the state’s varied heritage. Hawai‘i’s history is a complex one; and though the visitor industry is often intent on presenting a single theme for touristic consumption, the fact of the matter is that the history of human settlement and interaction in the islands is multi-layered and, frankly, multi-dimensional. There is no single history, no unified heritage, but in fact multiple histories and multiple legacies. All of these deserve a closer look and a more thorough assessment. We perhaps now have an opportunity to do that.

This issue of CRM looks at several distinct themes in the heritage of Hawai‘i and the region. One collection of essays deals with urban Hawai‘i and the phenomenon of urbanism more generally. Portrayed as romantic, sun-drenched islands, wafted by cooling breezes and swaying palms, Hawai‘i also includes densely settled metropolitan areas with many typical urban characteristics and problems. O‘ahu and the capital city of Honolulu have a present population of over 800,000, and for over a century Honolulu has been an important trading and communications center in the central Pacific as well serving as the United States’ window on the East.

Suggesting some of the complexity of Hawai‘i’s urban heritage, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Don Hibbard and the author look at the development of Waikiki as a significant international resort. How buildings and other features in Waikiki might be better understood in their historic context and how important elements might be preserved despite continuing development pressure is the question that is asked, and to a lesser degree answered, in this essay first presented in different form at the National Park Service-sponsored conference on the preservation of the recent past, held in Chicago two years ago. To further illustrate the complexity of the problem, graduate student Dee Ruzicka discusses the Hilton



Dome Auditorium, one of Buckminster Fuller’s original geodesic domes, a structure now threatened with demolition.

Complementing these articles, former University of Hawai‘i graduate student Scott Bogle looks at the in-town commercial neighborhood of Upper Wai‘alae Avenue, in his article “Keeping Kaimuki: Making Main Street Work in Urban Honolulu.” The study area for the University’s 1996 Summer Historic Preservation Field School, this early- to mid-20th-century historic district faces all the problems common to deteriorating downtown commercial areas anywhere in the world. Efforts to revitalize the area following the program set out by the National Trust’s Main Street Program are discussed and measured.

At the other end of the economic scale, the author, along with Helen Nakano, president of Mālama o Mānoa, Lowell Angell, and Rose Mary Ruhr, graduate student in the University of Hawai‘i’s Historic Preservation Program, discuss preservation efforts in the affluent, early 20th-century neighborhood of Mānoa. A “classic” historic district, with intact streetscapes and an outstanding collection of mostly wood houses in Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and more eclectic styles, Mānoa is threatened by new, incompatible construction, the loss of open space, the removal of traditional tree cover and an increasing number of subdivisions of older properties. Efforts to gain community support for recognition and designation as a special design district have been hampered by community opposition. The authors suggest some of

the reasons for this and offer fresh strategies for community education.

From a different perspective, Don Hibbard looks at the varied architectural heritage of Hawai`i as a unique resource. Unlike most mainland cities, Honolulu has for much of its history been self-consciously “exotic.” While not reflected fully in its urban forms—its streets, transportation systems and overall planning—for much of its history Honolulu has attempted to convey a sense of “the other” in its buildings. Don Hibbard examines the architecture of leading Hawaiian architects, particularly of the 1920s and 1930s, and the ways in which they incorporated Asian motifs into their work. He also looks at more popular expressions of “Orientalism” in Hawai`i’s architecture: the moon gates and garden designs of many homes, the adaptation of Chinese and Japanese-inspired roof-lines in otherwise vernacular structures.

Also, in a short note, the results of the University’s recent efforts to document Honolulu’s Chinatown area are discussed. Saved from the wrecking ball in the early 1970s, the historically Chinese district of the city has been covered by special regulatory laws for over 20 years. The University of Hawai`i’s 1998 Summer Field School completed a first-ever building-by-building survey of the district and also provided instruction to a number of students in the basics of preservation practice and documentation techniques.

To provide another point of view, Australian preservationist and historical architect Elizabeth Vines discusses policies governing historic urban areas in Australia. Concentrating on her home city of Adelaide, as well as historic districts in Sydney and Freemantle in Western Australia, Elizabeth Vines retraces the history of heritage legislation in Australia, the application of the *Burra Charter* and some of the problems facing Australian cultural resource managers.

On a more “exotic” note, University of Southern California doctoral candidate Changmii Bae discusses the demolition of historically significant, though Japanese-built, buildings in Korea, demonstrating that selective memory can play an important part in national self-definition.

The work of the Asia and Western Pacific Network for Urban Conservation (AWNPU), an international association that attempts to promote a more holistic understanding of the past, is discussed in a brief report on the organization’s sixth annual meet-

ing, held in Taipei in November, 1997. UNESCO’s innovative LEAP program, an integrated approach to preserving “living” historic places in Asia and the Pacific, is also presented in a brief outline prepared by UNESCO’s regional director, Richard Engelhardt.

Returning to Hawai`i, the issue also covers the complex theme of cultural definition (and redefinition) and the representation of culture to others. Hawai`i has been bound up with tourism as an economic mainstay for nearly a century. The fact of thousands (and now millions) of annual visitors and the long-standing existence of what might be considered a “culture of tourism” has had a profound impact on many aspects of the state’s heritage. Music, dance and material culture have all been affected by the overriding effort to somehow “present” Hawai`i to the outside world. This more commercial kind of heritage has now gained a kind of legitimacy in its own right—it too is “historic” and, in turn, helps to define the culture of the Hawai`i today.

Several articles included in this issue help to illustrate this phenomenon. London-based, freelance writer and cultural historian Caroline Klarr provides a succinct history of Hawaiian *hula*. Now subject to an enormous popular revival, *hula* probably more than any other cultural practice has come to signify “Hawai`i” both to residents and outsiders alike. Ms. Klarr shows how the dance form evolved from both sacred and recreational forms to become a touristic icon and, now, a new source of pride for Hawaiian people.

Bishop Museum archivist and historian DeSoto Brown discusses both *hula* and other symbols of traditional Hawai`i in his article “Hawai`i—Never Easier to Sell.” Using popular films as a point of reference, DeSoto Brown looks at the imagery of volcanos, Hawaiian shirts, the pineapple industry and ukeleles to demonstrate how “cul-

Plan XI, Hawai`i Sugar Planters’ Association, 1919. This example was reconstructed at Waipahu Cultural Garden Park on O`ahu. Photo by the author.



ture” can be transformed through commercialization. American Studies graduate student Matt Claybaugh provides an interesting review article based on three recent books on various aspects of “Hawaiiiana”: Nancy Schiffer’s comprehensive study of the Hawaiian shirt; Fred Hemmings’ recent history of surfing in Hawai‘i; and Mark Blackburn’s seemingly exhaustive catalog of Hawaiian “collectibles.”

To round out this aspect of the story, Kevin Roddy’s review of Elizabeth Buck’s detailed history of Hawaiian music and the role it has played (and continues to play) in Hawaiians’ own definition of themselves has been reprinted from the *Journal of the Hawaiian Historical Society*.

Finally, Terry Webb’s “A New Kind of Plantation: The Polynesian Cultural Center in La‘ie” demonstrates that even cultural representations that seem wholly linked to tourism and even showmanship can have deeper routes. In the case of Hawai‘i’s famous Polynesian Cultural Center, Webb has been able to trace its origins to traditional *hukilau*, or fishing ceremonies, held on the northeast shore of O‘ahu earlier in the century. Combined with a festive *luau*, the *hukilau* served both as a means of entertaining tourists and also encouraging converts to the Mormon Church (Church of the Latter Day Saints), which had been present in the area since the mid-19th century. The present Polynesian Cultural Center, with its multi-story Imax theater and evening performances of somewhat ersatz Polynesian dances, chants, and melodies—including the show-stopping “fire-dance”—can be shown through the historical record to possess deeper cultural significance as well.

A third theme of this issue is Hawai‘i’s fast-vanishing plantation tradition. As announced in the last University of Hawai‘i-edited issue of *CRM*, the plantation economy of Hawai‘i is fast approaching an end. The once productive sugar fields of O‘ahu and the Big Island of Hawai‘i are

now dormant or are gradually being converted to other uses. The same may be true of remaining sugar and pineapple fields on the other islands as well.

With the gradual end of large-scale commercial agriculture in the state, an important part of Hawai‘i’s culture is threatened as well. This includes especially the scores of sugar and pineapple “camps,” where the majority of Hawai‘i’s immigrant population at one time lived. Every year more houses, most simple wood residences dating to the early decades of the 20th century, are pulled down or abandoned—effectively eradicating an enormously significant component of the state’s heritage.

This issue deals with some of the concerns revolving around this legacy. In a lead article, University of Hawai‘i architecture professor and well-known preservation architect Spencer Leineweber discusses efforts to preserve and interpret plantation housing. She discusses both museum-based efforts, including her own award-winning project on O‘ahu, Hawai‘i’s Plantation Village, and other efforts to preserve older housing in the Hawaiian islands.

City housing officer Jeanne Hamilton provides a succinct history of the ‘Ewa Plantation in the western part of O‘ahu and the City and County of Honolulu’s efforts to rehabilitate historic worker houses as apart of an affordable housing scheme. Once home to nearly 5,000 people, ‘Ewa Villages now preserves an important cross-section of plantation house types and other buildings associated with this important industry.

Looking at the older history of sugar production, Michigan Technological University professor Carol MacLennan, a long-time student of the agricultural and industrial history of Hawai‘i, discusses early plantations on Maui and the challenges facing preservationists and cultural resource managers in maintaining and interpreting those resources. Dr. MacLennan also describes efforts to preserve the records of early and later plantations as part of the state’s heritage.

Finally, Sheree Chase, Curator of the Kona Historical Society and American Studies student at the University of Hawai‘i, describes her organization’s efforts to preserve a historic coffee farm on the western coast of the Big Island of Hawai‘i. Unlike sugar plantations, coffee farms were generally small operations, usually no more than seven acres in size. Farmed principally by Japanese immigrants, who leased their properties from larger estates or from individual land-holders, the Kona coffee farms became models of productivity and produced a variety of coffee now famous throughout the world. Ms. Chase describes the Kona Historical Society’s efforts and the special require-

Typical Art Moderne (streamlined modern) commercial building in Honolulu. Photo by Scott Bogle.





A postcard incorporates 1950s images typically used to promote Hawai'i. DeSoto Brown Collection.

ments involved in preserving and interpreting life on coffee farms during the early part of the 20th century.

A fourth theme of this issue is continuing preservation efforts in Micronesia. Following up on earlier articles on Micronesian preservation activities, including the University of Hawai'i's cooperative training program undertaken in partnership with the National Park Service, David Look and Paula Falk-Creech describe the National Park Service's annual consultation meetings. Held in both Micronesia and on the mainland U.S., these consultations are critical to the National Park Service's on-going work in the region. Mr. Look and Ms. Creech put the work in historical perspective as well, discussing the present political status of the Micronesian islands.

Also, from the same region, Deputy Historic Preservation Officer for the Northern Marianas, Scott Russell, describes current preservation and documentation efforts in the former U.S. territory. As in Hawai'i and other Pacific islands, Mr. Russell points out, the preservation of "culture" as well as sites and artifacts, plays a critical role in the work of his office.

Writing from Australia, anthropologist Dirk Spenneman describes the special problem of unexploded ammunition as a cultural resource issue. Swept up in the events of World War II, the Micronesian islands were the theater for numerous engagements—which left a different kind of legacy in their wake. Dr. Spenneman suggests that as these sites become more popular with visitors, issues of visitor safety will become more important as well.

The remainder of this issue deals with topics first presented in the earlier two Hawai'i-edited issues. Cultural resource manager Jadelyn Moniz describes work conducted at the Pohakuloa Training area on the Big Island of Hawai'i on behalf of the U.S. Army. Sharon Brown, formerly

interpretive planner with Harpers Ferry Center and now park historian at Kalaupapa National Historic Park in Hawai'i, discusses problems in the interpretation of Hawaiian sites. Both articles indicate the complexity of the Hawaiian heritage and the work that still needs to be done on all fronts.

Following up on the University of Hawai'i's work in Cambodia, Professor Bion Griffin, Chair of the University's Anthropology Department, reports on the University's continuing efforts in research and training focussing on the dramatic pre-Angkor site at Angkor Borei. Felicia Mayro of the World Monuments Fund describes WMF's work at Preah Khan in Angkor and efforts that have resumed there after the disruptive political events of the summer of 1997.

As a follow-up to previous reports on The University of Hawai'i's Historic Preservation Program, Anthropology graduate student and the University of Hawai'i's Marine Archaeology and History coordinator Suzanne Finney describes the University's 1997 Summer Historic Preservation Field School project in Kalaupapa, the famous Hansen's disease (leprosy) colony on Moloka'i. Still home to some 60 patients, Kalaupapa is gradually being transformed into a National Park Service-managed visitor site. The University of Hawai'i project resulted in an inventory of existing cultural resources and a blueprint for interim development.

Asia and the Pacific remain exciting areas for historic preservationists and cultural resource managers. Much also is still taking place in the region. It is our hope that this issue of CRM will remind both professionals and preservation advocates in North America that this vast part of the world continues to deserve attention.

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Photo Credit from CRM Vol. 19, No. 8, 1996

In "The Significance of Heiau Diversity in Site Evaluations" by C. Kēhaunani Cachola-Abad, photos should be credited to Anne Kapulani Landgraf from *Na Wahi Pana O Ko'olau Poko: Legendary Places of Ko'olau Poko*, University of Hawai'i Press, 1994. Figure 3, Alāla heiau at Kailua, O'ahu; figure 4, Wailea heiau at Kailua, O'ahu; figure 5, Kukuiokāne heiau at Kane'ohe, O'ahu. Reprinted with permission.