

Micronesia Update

Since January of 1996, through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, the University of Hawai'i Historic Preservation Program has worked to assist in meeting the training needs of the Historic Preservation offices of the Freely Associated States of Micronesia (which include the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia—Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap and Chuuk).



A bai, a traditional men's meeting house, which was built three years ago on a traditional bai platform in the state of Airai, Palau. Photo by Kimberlee Kihleng.

The Historic Preservation Program's Micronesian Training Initiative has been able to approach many of the 10 primary goals originally outlined in a 1995 assessment of needs conducted by the university and the NPS Western Field Office

(see "Historic Preservation Training in Micronesia," *CRM* Volume 19, Number 3, 1996).

With one part-time staff member and the challenge of starting from scratch, the project has created itself along the way, with much assistance from NPS, the Micronesian historic preservation staffs, and the University of Hawai'i College of Arts and Sciences. The first step was in addressing the universal question: Where to begin?

The first few months of the project were spent in locating an ethnographer to spend the summer in the Republic of Palau to help inventory, evaluate, and make suggestions for the improvement of the Palau Historic Preservation Office (HPO) oral history program (see Kimberlee Kihleng's brief report, below), at the request of the division chief. At the same time, plans were made for the deputy HPO from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Clary Makraro, and Kosrae HPO staff Standon Andrew to attend the University of Hawai'i Pacific Preservation Field School for four weeks to study the documentation of urban vernacular architecture. Both Micronesians worked on teams with other students doing measured drawings and learning the basic principles and philosophies of historic preservation.

Another technical assistant from the University of Hawai'i (Suzanne Finney, who comments on her work below) was requested by the Federated States of Micronesia to assist in the

Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office with site inventory tasks and renovation of the Spanish Wall in Kolonia. The technical assistant was also prepared to offer informal instruction on map reading, site mapping, and excavation techniques to survey aides from Pohnpei.

Some of the training opportunities came unexpectedly. Scholarship recipients Hemley Benjamin from the Marshall Islands HPO and Elvis O'Sonis, Yap HPO, were among 10 participants in the University of Hawai'i Marine Option Program Maritime Archaeology Techniques field school. With little advance planning, graduate student and diver Ceil Roberts, who was assisting with the four-week field school, was able to return to the Marshall Islands with Hemley Benjamin to help to develop an underwater resource management plan for preservation and tourism at Jaluit Atoll. The two were able to apply the learned information almost immediately and attempt to streamline a procedure that would work best with the needs and concerns of the Marshalls.

Also unexpected was the arrival of UH Urban and Regional Planning graduate student Michael Cain, who walked into the office one day and asked if he could offer his services in conducting a survey of cultural resources in the coastal area of Weno in Chuuk State. Being fluent in Chuukese, familiar with the location, flexible about scheduling and conditions, and willing to work with the Chuuk Historic Preservation Office to survey historic World War II and pre-historic sites that could be added to the state inventory and later the register made his proposal hard to ignore.

The Micronesian Training Initiative and NPS have also supported the publication of *The Plants and Environments of Chuuk*, and *The Plants and Environments of Yap*, produced as the final two in a series of books on Micronesian plants and ecosystems, for use as teaching materials to encourage the protection and sustainable use of tropical island ecosystems.

Currently, the project is awaiting the safe return of the last of its technical assistants to the University of Hawai'i, and continuation of research, reports, and cultural resource management plans for the Micronesian offices. At this time, the Historic Preservation Program is working to coordinate a training course on the fundamentals of historic preservation at the University of Guam in January of 1997.

Notes from Abroad

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia
—Suzanne Finney, graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa:

I have been working to restore the Spanish Wall in Kolonia Town. The wall was built in 1887

to contain the Spanish hostilities which destroyed the original colony, killing the governor and over 50 other people. The wall is a prominent landmark on Pohnpei and is right next to the main street through Kolonia from the airport. Much of the wall was covered with vegetation and trees have been allowed to grow unmolested for many years. The wall was in danger of collapse in many places. Our mission has been to stabilize the wall and prevent any further decay. At some later point, when further research has been completed, a program to restore the wall to its original state may be conducted. The largest portion of my time is spent on this project. I started with researching the wall and am now supervising a labor force of six Pohnpeians in clearing the wall of weeds and trees and preparing mortar for stabilizing some of the portions of the wall near collapse.

Republic of Palau

—Kimberlee Kihleng, Ph.D.:

For a three-month period I served as an ethnographer with the Palau Historic Preservation Program, Division of Cultural Affairs. The main objectives of my work were to conduct an inventory and evaluation of an ongoing oral history project and to develop a research design for the future collection and documentation of oral histories, traditions, and culture. The Division's oral history component has been in existence for the past 12 years and has consisted of a staff historian working closely with the Society of Historians to develop in written form an overview of traditional Palauan culture and lifeways.

The inventory conducted focused on three different areas, the first being the project's accomplishments, where I was concerned with those aspects of Palauan history and culture that had been recorded and documented. The second area looked at the methodology used in collecting the oral history and ethnographic data. The perceived needs and wishes of those involved in the design and future development of the project was the final area of concern. Some of these concerns were: Should all collected oral histories be put in written form, given the orality of Palauan culture and the sacred, secretive, and political nature of many oral traditions? What of alternative, more islander-oriented media and ways of transmission and preservation? What topics should be the focus of collection and documentation efforts in the future? Are the oral history narratives that are being collected and presented representative given that there are several different versions of history? What of the issue of cultural variation and diversity within Palau? And, finally, what of the systematic organization of oral history data and issues of accessibility, confidentiality and public education?

The evaluation of the project dealt with this range of issues and centered on the fact that there are actually two different aspects of the oral history program within the Division—archeology and ethnology. The archeology component has been concerned with oral history collection based on specific sites and features, such as the stone platforms, pathways, and monoliths found throughout Babaldaob Island serving as the remains of traditional villages or the ancient terraces that make up a prominent part of the Palauan landscape. The ethnology component has dealt with the broader concerns of Palau's cultural heritage, such as sociopolitical processes and activities, cultural events, persons, clans, and villages. These two aspects are closely related to one another in terms of an overall oral history program, but have been treated quite separately, and Division efforts in documentation have not been coordinated to any significant degree.

A research design is being developed to aid in the systematic collection of oral history data that are site specific as well as those that are more ethnographic in nature. It is a design that is more islander-oriented, being based on the needs and wishes of the Division, is better focused, and will provide a more dynamic and innovative view of Palauan history and culture. The basis of the design is the documentation of village histories in which one of Palau's 16 states and its respective villages, both traditional and contemporary, will serve as a baseline for implementing the design followed by the eventual collection of village histories in the other 15 states.

Two sets of questionnaires were developed to be used by the staff as guidelines for conducting more focused interviews in the villages. One is site-specific and will be used by staff archeologists to collect oral history information on traditional and historic sites and features as well as assisting in nominating a greater number of sites to Palau's Register of Historic Places. The second questionnaire will be used by the staff historian to collect a wide range of ethnographic data within villages. An interview agreement was also developed to deal with issues of confidentiality and sacred or secretive forms of knowledge. Village members should be actively involved in all stages of the research project to assist in education and awareness of preservation efforts.

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