

Hawaiian Perspectives on Historic Preservation and Cultural Resource Management

Hawai'i has long been recognized as a special place—both by visitors and by those privileged to live in these beautiful Pacific islands. Among what makes Hawai'i special is its stupendous natural character—many of us believe it is the most dramatic in the world—and, of course, its unique cultural heritage.

Unlike most of the North American states, Hawai'i possessed a proud and still clearly visible native population at the time of absorption into the U.S. Certainly a cruel fallacy as we now realize, the other “western” states were considered by both settlers and government officials as somehow “underpopulated” and “underutilized” at the time they were first admitted to the Union as territories—the great myth of “virgin land.” Native American populations had been decimated by European diseases, pushed off traditional agricultural and grazing lands, and had indeed become marginalized inhabitants of what was often considered an “empty” West.

Native Hawaiians had experienced much of the same displacement and decline in numbers, but they remained a significant component of the population during the 1890s, when issues of territorial expansion into the Pacific were being debated at a national level. Native Hawaiians were also a strong cultural and economic presence at the time, linked to prominent Euro-American merchants and planters through both business ties and marriage and—until the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani by a clique of mostly American businessmen in 1893—still headed by a unique and colorful monarchy.

In recent years the historic significance of Native Hawaiians, their important place in the cultural history of the Pacific as well as the explicit and implicit claims of the Hawaiian people to better recognition and treatment—as both a people and a culture—have gained increasing attention. This renaissance has taken many forms: consideration of various routes toward some type of political sovereignty; renewed attention to traditional agricultural practices and the cultural meanings of those practices; a virtual explosion of interest in Hawaiian language, both in high schools and universities and through the innovative language immersion programs of the Hawai'i

State Department of Education. Hawaiian names, for both people and places, Polynesian crafts, voyaging canoes, and traditional navigational techniques, even ancient tattoo designs, have all witnessed a resurgence. Although many doubt that the islands ever will press for or attain full independence from the U.S., it is indeed clear by now that *some* form of cultural redefinition is taking place and that Hawai'i will never be simply “another” state in the U.S.

These developments have had important impacts on how Hawaiians view their heritage and their cultural resources. For many years the domain of Euro-American archeologists and ethnographers, Hawaiian cultural resources are increasingly being viewed as the rightful province of Native Hawaiians themselves. Hawaiians have played a prominent role in the development of NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) at a national level; through island Burial Councils, Hawaiian people have accepted responsibility for the treatment of ancestral remains locally. Native Hawaiians have had increasing say both within the state government and through organizations such as the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) over how the Hawaiian cultural heritage should be approached in terms of both preservation and management. Hawaiian activists have been outspoken in their opposition to development activities that threaten historic or prehistoric sites and also living practices—including Hawaiian sacred sites. No longer are Hawaiians silent about their culture and history; the “future,” to paraphrase one popular slogan, “is theirs!”

Interestingly, many would argue that the Native Hawaiian story is only one that needs to be told and remembered. Hawai'i has long prided itself on its cultural diversity. Over the past 150 years, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Filipino, and more recently many mainland Southeast Asian peoples have immigrated to Hawai'i, making their own significant marks and leaving their own legacies. The same is true of Europeans and North Americans, representing groups as diverse as Portuguese, Danes, Spanish, and Germans, in addition to the better known Anglo-American settlers and merchants.

Although the present attention to the Native Hawaiian presence often precludes a more complete or inclusive viewpoint, all of these groups interacted in some way with the original population. It is a rare Hawaiian family that does not have some European or Asian ancestor in addition to Hawaiian ones; and few Hawaiians escaped the influence of other cultures in other profound ways.

It is clear, then, that the full history of Hawai'i is a complex one and needs to be understood as such. Unfortunately, the contributions of the many ethnic "minorities" in Hawai'i are still not well represented in the state's inventory of places of historic value; by far the largest number of National Register listed sites, interestingly, are, in fact, pre-contact Hawaiian sites and most listed buildings are, not surprisingly, those associated with the Euro-American elite. In addition, very little research has been done on the *historic* period in Hawaiian history, at least in terms of extant cultural resources, and very few archeological investigations have been made of Hawaiian sites of later or post-contact times; it is as if this aspect of "history" is simply not important. Still, it is easy to see why the story of the indigenous Hawaiian people—and particularly the culture of *pre-contact* Hawaiians—might be given precedence overall; it is for one a story of what can be considered a "host culture" and also simply a story that has gone untold for too long and the story of a people that has been neglected despite the longstanding life of Hawaiians on the islands!

This issue of *CRM* highlights a number of recent developments in Hawaiian views of their heritage and its treatment. Not all the interesting potential topics are covered. It would have been useful, for example, to have a piece on music as a conveyor of culture and especially one on dance—two of Hawai'i's most distinctive and recognized contributions to the world. There also is much more to be said about the role of different local organizations, including the University of Hawai'i's sometimes controversial Department of Hawaiian Studies, in sustaining and reviving traditions and Hawaiian culture. But there is an essay on language and others on agriculture and landscape

and on changing views on archeological resources that begin, at least, to bring some Native Hawaiian concerns and perspectives into the light.

Contributions have been made to this issue by a wide variety of people—both Native Hawaiians and others. Beginning the discussion is a thoughtful examination by University of Hawai'i anthropologist Michael Graves of the role of Euro-American archeologists and archeology in preserving aspects of Hawaiian culture, but at the same time often alienating themselves and their work from the Hawaiians themselves. Kēhaunani Abad then demonstrates how Euro-American categories and definitions have obscured the full range of sacred sites on Hawai'i, tragically leading to the loss of many sites which became, through the grid of misunderstanding, unrecognizable as such. University of Hawai'i Ethnic Studies professor and Hawaiian activist Davianna McGregor suggests then something of the depth of traditional Hawaiian approaches to scarcity and management, pointing out that the culture itself possesses the means by which to tackle problems of management of the built world as well as the natural one.

Case studies by Hawaiian author and photographer Rowland Reeve and by Elizabeth Anderson, the latter of the Maui County Planning Department, help to make these more abstract observations concrete. Rowland Reeve discusses

One of the taro lo'i that comprise the traditional, historic, and cultural landscape at Ke'anae on Maui. Photo by Group 70, Inc.



the island of Kaho'olawe, for many years a bombing site for the U.S. Navy and now a preserve for Hawaiian culture. Speaking as a Hawaiian, Reeve eloquently describes the Native Hawaiian commitment to preservation of this eighth-largest Hawaiian island and the hopes he has for its future. Anderson, a cultural resource planner, discusses the award-winning cultural resource study

completed by the county and by George Atta of Group 70, a local planning firm, for the management of a remote and fragile part of the island of Maui. Traditional agricultural practices as well as later adaptations define and sustain this unique landscape—one worth preserving for both historical reasons and cultural ones.

Returning to archeology, Bishop Museum specialist Maurice Major discusses the relationship between CRM archeology—as represented both through the Bishop Museum’s work and by the numerous private CRM firms in Hawai‘i—and Native Hawaiians, providing a number of significant insights. Tony

Han, also at the Bishop Museum, discusses her institution’s increasing educational role in helping to transmit the culture of Hawai‘i both to its own citizens and visitors. Kaho‘olawe, the well-publicized voyaging canoe Hokulea as well as the on-going traditions of Hawai‘i have all been subjects of recent exhibits at the museum, considered to be the foremost museum in the region and certainly the holder of the largest Hawaiian and Pacific

collections in the world. Shorter entries on Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau, the National Park Service’s interpretive site on the island of Hawai‘i and the Hōkūle‘a voyaging canoe suggest something of the range of Hawaiian preservation interests—interests that focus not only on artifacts but on *living* cultural practices as well.

University of Hawai‘i Hawaiian language instructor Puakea Nogelmeier discusses just how significant such “non-tangible” resources are to the preservation of Hawaiian culture in his thoughtful article on Hawaiian language. At one point suppressed by the dominant Euro-American community, Hawaiian language has experienced a dramatic revitalization both among native speakers and for others in the broader Hawaiian community. Language, the author argues, is a significant transmitter of culture, one that in fact gives structure and, in a sense, substance to other activities. Preservation of language use is itself a legitimate preservation activity in the profoundest sense!

In a slight departure from the more “Hawaiian-oriented” articles that predominate in

this issue of *CRM*, Dean Alexander, Superintendent of Kalaupapa National Historical Park on Moloka‘i, discusses the complex issues of preservation in this extremely fragile and problematical site. Established as a remote settlement for sufferers of Hansen’s disease (leprosy), Kalaupapa was home to Native Hawaiians—probably in disproportionate numbers due to the population’s susceptibility to outside diseases—Chinese, Japanese, and, indeed, representations of all of Hawai‘i’s ethnic groups. Still maintained as an operative health care facility, Kalaupapa presents unique problems for cultural resource managers—



Transformation of a historic shop-house in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Photo by the author.

ones that test our assumptions about historical significance, interpretation, and choices that need to be made.

The University of Hawai‘i’s Historic Preservation Program has consistently tried to address many of these broader issues in its courses and through a number of public forums in which it has played a key part. Graduate assistant Jennifer Malin describes the program’s conference on traditional landscapes, held at the East-West Center in 1995. Originally considered as an opportunity to discuss a range of historic landscapes in the state—including special places such as Kalaupapa—the conference also helped to underline the critical concerns of Native Hawaiians in the preservation not only of scenic places but cultural practices in the profoundest sense.

Expanding on this theme, Barnes Riznick, former Director of the Grove Farm Museum on Kaua‘i and also an Adjunct Professor in the University of Hawai‘i’s Historic Preservation Program, offers an overview of house museums in Hawai‘i and the role they play in interpreting the complexity of the Hawaiian experience. He also

suggests something of their significance in a region where more integrated ideals of preservation have yet to gain a firm hold.

The remaining articles remind us of the place Hawai'i occupies in the Pacific and the unique role the University of Hawai'i plays and can continue to play in this rapidly changing region (a subject covered in *CRM*, Volume 19, No. 3, 1996, of in our first try at guest editorship). Former Director of the University of Hawai'i Program William Murtagh, with graduate student Delta Lightner, tells the interesting story of the restoration of Robert Louis Stevenson's mansion in Western Samoa—a surprising resource for the Pacific area but also a reminder that perhaps we *should not* be surprised at what we encounter in so diverse a region!

Cherry Barnett, an independent historian working in Hong Kong—where I had an opportunity to teach at the Chinese University as a guest lecturer in April 1996—writes about the exotic island of Macao and efforts by the Portuguese government to ensure the preservation of some of its heritage there before transfer to China early in the next century.

Finally, as a follow-up to our earlier edition of *CRM*, the University's successful summer field schools in architectural documentation, one held in urban Honolulu and the other in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, are described. Further articles on the University's archeological program at Angkor Borei south of Phnom Penh, and on continuing involvement with the work of the World Monuments Fund at Preah Khan in Angkor Historical Park will be covered in a subsequent issue.

The guest editorship of this issue of *CRM* has provided us again with an opportunity to focus on a region often overlooked by American historic preservationists and cultural resource managers. As suggested in the earlier *CRM* issue, Hawai'i has the advantage of serving as a unique eye on the Pacific and on Asia and also is in a position to work closely with those becoming interested in historic preservation for the first time—especially Pacific islanders and the peoples of East and Southeast Asia.

In the spring of 1997, the University's Historic Preservation Program, in association with the Department of Anthropology, is conducting a first course on the topic of historic preservation in Southeast Asia. Funded in part by the U.S. Department of Education, the course will include speakers from throughout the U.S. and Southeast Asia; a special conference on critical issues is also scheduled for March 6–8 to coincide with the course. Also in January 1997, the program is offering a course on the "Fundamentals of Historic Preservation" to be held in Guam, principally for

staff members of Micronesian historic preservation offices. This is being carried out as part of the University of Hawai'i and the National Park Service's continuing partnership for training in the region. (The Micronesia Program is discussed in the Volume 19, No. 3 issue of *CRM* and the subject of a longer article by NPS administrator David Look scheduled for a later issue.) Information on these programs and also on the PREMA program for Pacific museums is included in this issue.

I would like to thank *CRM* editor Ron Greenberg for this opportunity to spotlight Hawai'i and cultural resource issues in the region. We have been invited to edit another issue in 1997 and will look at that time at some of the "other cultures" of Hawai'i. This will include articles on the plantation heritage of the islands and on the lesser-known *urban* heritage of Hawai'i. Finally, we will cover some of our continuing work in Asia and the Pacific and, we hope, offer a forum for additional "perspectives" on heritage preservation in the region.

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This is the second of three issues to be edited by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Historic Preservation Program. This issue has been compiled and edited by William Chapman, Director of the Historic Preservation Program, and Jennifer Malin, graduate assistant and coordinator of the program's Micronesian Training Initiative. Additional assistance was provided by Lowell Angell, Program Administrator, and graduate student Rosemary Ruhr. For information about the Historic Preservation Program, please contact Lowell Angell at 1-800-993-7737 or email at <angell@hawaii.edu>.