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TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CNMI An empirical snap-shot

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Community attitudes towards heritage are not well studied in Micronesia. This paper presents the results of a study of the attitudes of teachers, college and high school students of the CNMI. It shows that traditional aspects outrank those on the colonial past. Also differences in significance between Chamorro and Carolinian sites were observed.

One of the problems faced by historic preservation action today is to balance the varying, and often conflicting interests of the stakeholders with the national and state government objectives and funding opportunities. Funding is not abundant and cannot be procured to manage all site and places equally. Prioritization of some sort has to occur. The conundrum lies in the process used in achieving this prioritization. How does one achieve an equitable balance that does not disenfranchise one group of legitimate stakeholders over another. And what constitutes a legitimate stakeholder?

Some of this can be achieved by consulting with the community through community fora, the production of historic preservation plans and their public exhibition. More in-depth information can be gleaned through surveys or by using focus groups. Why do we need to engage in this level of activity? Simply put, because historic preservation can function only through the will and support of the communities it serves.

All too often substantial differences occur between the values held by the heritage professional and those held by the community

(Spennemann 1992; Spennemann & Harris 1996; Spennemann, Lockwood & Harris 2001). While the assessment of scientific and historical significance of heritage places is a reasonable straight forward matter, heritage professionals find it often difficult to adequately address the values communities hold in sites. Frequently the concepts and perceptions of value do not mesh (Spennemann & Harris 1996). All too often this is deemed too difficult and therefore set aside (Canning & Spennemann 2001). The more multicultural a community, the more complex this process will be (Spennemann 1993), with political undertones that can only be ignored at peril unless a series of cultural conventions has been carried out (Spennemann & Meyenn 1996). At the same time, community values may conflict with the managerial authorities values, particularly where a community tends to have a more self-congratulating attitude. Sites imbued with negative memories and negative values are purposefully neglected, but may have to be managed for future generations (Hollow & Spennemann 2001). This poses ethical problems for the managers.

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Modern historic preservation rests on two main pillars: (i) the enforcement of compliance with legislatively prescribed processes of protection, evaluation and, on occasion, controlled destruction of heritage properties; and (ii) the education of the public about the need of historic preservation activities. Yet much of this activity is a mere band aid solution. Enforcement of compliance will only be successful as long as there is vigilance by the agencies charged with historic preservation management. Rather than tackling the root cause of the problem modern historic preservation only addresses the symptoms of the day: that the community values its heritage less than it did in the past and that there is a reduced general will to place personal aspirations behind those of the community and 'the common good.' This is not as well developed in Micronesia as it is in the mainland USA or Australia, but it is happening.

The solution can rest only in changing the attitudes of the population. This is done through public education programs and through projects where the community can perceive an economic benefit from maintaining heritage places. This economic benefit can be intangible, such as the availability of clean air and water. Studies have been carried to measure this (cf. Lockwood and Spennemann 2001). And the benefits can be direct in terms of revenue and income. Heritage eco-tourism, for example, is seen as one of the avenues to achieve this (Look & Spennemann 2000; Heather, *et al.* 2000). From a government perspective heritage ecotourism is beneficial as creates returns for the local economy, and via taxes, for the country as a whole (Spennemann, Look, and Graham 2001; 2002). It also allows to project and market a country's perceptions of itself to the wider world (Spennemann 1997), often through selective interpretation of its past. On occasion this can prove difficult, especially where different 'markets' have a very different perception of the past (Spennemann 2001b).

The linkage between economic benefit and heritage conservation, however, sets up a dangerous relationship: it suggests that all those

sites that are unsuited for tourism development are less worthy of preservation and therefore may be neglected. Even if this reasoning is a yet not expressed formally or publicly, it occurs at a managerial level, as scarce resources are directed to the sites more suitable for interpretation. As visitation increases these sites will require further funds to manage them adequately and to mitigate the impacts of the visitors (Spennemann 2001a). Given the largely unknown nature of Micronesian heritage tourism, and given the overall dependence of the tourism industry on both economic affluence in the tourists' home countries and on the overall geopolitical stability any economic nexus may be at worst short lived or, at best, unstable and unreliable.

If heritage is to have a future, its management has to be sustainable, both economically and socially. Moreover, socially sustainable interest in heritage will ensure that adequate funding is allocated. Thus it is incumbent on the heritage managers to engage in 'social engineering,' in creating favorable conditions for heritage to flourish in the future. The obvious target is the next generation of citizens, those who are being educated in the school system at this point of time. Cultural heritage must have a firm place in the curriculum and thus in the curriculum development (cf. Spennemann and Meyenn 1997).

The 21st century Micronesia is as much a patchwork quilt of communities as it had been for centuries before. But the free movement of labor in the era after the Compacts of Free Association, as well as modern, fast and reliable means of transport, have seen a major dispersal of Micronesians into Hawaii and the west Coast of the mainland USA. More recently new concentrations in the Central USA have opened up. At the same time the population mix in the regional economic centers of Guam and Saipan has been also changing. These changes in population bring about dramatic changes in the expectation of what constitutes heritage, and who should look after it. It also poses problems as many of the newcomers have no stake in the heritage of the locality where they now reside.

Table 1. Age demographics of the surveyed population

Sample	N	14-15	16-17	18-20	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	55+
Teachers	49	–	–	–	25.53	19.15	12.77	6.38	12.77	4.26	8.51	10.64
College	44	–	6.98	13.95	41.86	9.30	13.95	6.98	4.65	–	–	2.33
MCS	42	7.14	88.10	4.76	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
MHS	24	54.17	37.50	8.33	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Table 2. Origin demographics of the surveyed population

Sample	N	Saipan	Tinian	Rota	other CNMI	Guam	Hawaii	mainld USA	FSM Pohnpei	FSM Chuuk	RMI	Palau	Other
Teachers	49	41.30	–	–	4.35	2.17	–	21.74	–	–	–	2.17	28.26
College	44	45.24	–	2.38	4.76	9.52	–	9.52	2.38	2.38	–	4.76	–
MCS	42	65.85	–	–	–	7.32	–	2.44	–	–	–	–	24.39
MHS	24	79.17	–	–	–	12.50	–	–	–	–	4.17	4.17	–

Furthermore, Micronesia has seen a series of colonial powers exerting control. Many traces of these events now constitute heritage sites. The newly independent countries are now tasked with the stewardship over these places. The main problem they face is to balance the preservation of these colonial and World War II places with the need to manage and preserve the indigenous heritage places (Spennemann 1992; O'Neill and Spennemann 2001; 2002). What should receive priority and what should fall into benevolent neglect? To what extent should national ideological interests dictate the outcome, and to what extent do the market forces of heritage ecotourism come into play, which may have different sets of priorities?

Also, as public education both for the adults and for the K-12 cohorts is inextricably intertwined with the political aspirations of the day, the direction historic preservation takes today will have a major influence on the attitudes of the adult generation of tomorrow. The rest of this paper will look at an empirical study of three sample populations drawn from the education sector on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. This paper will report the findings on the significance of the various classes of cultural heritage and heritage sites. The analysis of the attitudes towards heritage

management and the obligations of funding will be reported in a separate paper.

THE STUDY

As part of ongoing research into heritage management in Micronesia it was of interest to assess what kind of attitudes the next generation of citizens might hold. A training exercise conducted as part of the in-service teacher training (Northern Marianas Council for the Humanities History Teachers' Institute) in October 2000 allowed to poll all teachers present (n=49). The opportunity also arose to poll a sample of students from the College of the Northern Mariana Islands (n=44) and two samples of senior High School students (Mt. Carmel High School, n=42; Marianas High School, n=24). The demographics of the two populations are set out in tables 1 and 2.

The questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were requested to respond to a series of assertions and to give their view on the relative importance of a number of types of heritage resources. To grade these responses a 7-point Likert scale was employed ('Strongly Agree,' 'Agree,' 'Somewhat Agree,' 'Don't Know,' 'Somewhat Disagree,' 'Disagree,' 'Strongly Disagree'). Given both the short notice and the logistics the questionnaire could not be pre-tested in focus groups.

The questionnaire was administered in person, requesting the participants to respond to the assertions. All questionnaires were collected after the event and analyzed.

Table 3. Mean response to the assertion "The following types of cultural heritage are very important to me" Scoring: 1-Strongly Agree; 2-Agree; 3-Somewhat Agree; 4-Don't Know; 5-Somewhat Disagree; 6-Disagree; 7-Strongly Disagree

	Teachers		College		High School	
	Resp. (%)	Avg±STD	Resp. (%)	Avg±STD	Resp. (%)	Avg±STD
Chamorro sites	100.00	1.51±0.71	100.00	1.66±1.03	100.00	1.82±0.96
Carolinian sites	100.00	1.59±0.76	100.00	2.18±1.51	100.00	2.26±1.42
Spanish period	97.96	1.94±1.04	100.00	2.34±1.48	100.00	2.56±1.25
German period	97.96	1.96±1.07	100.00	2.45±1.58	98.48	2.83±1.39
Japanese period	97.96	1.94±1.06	100.00	2.18±1.26	100.00	2.68±1.39
World War II	97.96	1.79±1.09	100.00	1.95±1.16	100.00	2.41±1.21
Trust Territory Period	97.96	2.06±1.10	95.45	2.33±1.18	98.48	3.00±1.37
Trad. stories	100.00	1.35±0.66	100.00	1.75±1.06	100.00	1.64±0.99
Tr. knowledge & skills	100.00	1.41±0.98	100.00	1.57±0.93	98.48	1.54±0.87
Traditional crafts	97.96	1.31±0.62	100.00	1.61±0.99	100.00	1.62±0.89
Tr. songs & dances	97.96	1.38±0.61	100.00	1.70±1.02	98.48	1.58±0.97
Tr. plants & animals	97.96	1.50±0.90	100.00	1.66±1.01	100.00	1.82±1.09

Table 4. Mean average rank to the assertion ascribed to Scoring: Unique rank out of 12 (1 most important, 12 least important)

	Teachers	College	High School
	Avg±STD	Avg±STD	Avg±STD
Chamorro sites	4.48±2.72	4.13±3.19	3.09±2.67
Carolinian sites	6.26±2.61	6.19±3.55	4.57±2.57
Spanish period	8.05±2.32	7.92±2.66	7.43±2.83
German period	8.80±2.18	8.97±2.40	8.80±2.73
Japanese period	9.02±1.97	8.26±2.65	8.30±2.39
World War II	8.98±2.71	7.83±3.04	7.61±3.16
Trust Territory Period	9.90±3.04	9.51±2.86	9.75±2.80
Trad. stories	2.93±2.34	4.03±2.12	5.13±3.04
Tr. knowledge & skills	2.83±2.01	3.44±2.70	4.98±3.12
Traditional crafts	4.88±2.37	4.87±2.74	5.64±2.70
Tr. songs & dances	4.90±2.66	5.33±2.76	5.44±3.35
Tr. plants & animals	6.83±3.10	7.38±3.12	7.00±3.58
n	49	44	66
Resp. Rate(%)	83.67	88.64	66.67

For all participants a brief guidance introduction on how to handle the questionnaire was given. This was deemed important as one of the questions asked to rank a list of items from 1 to 12. Previous experience in a different context had shown that respondents might attempt to score each item out of 12 (Spennemann, Look, and Graham 2001b).

As some respondents left one or the other assertion unanswered, the response rate varies between 66% and 100%. The lowest response rate occurred among high school students when asked to rank the list of items from 1 to 12.

The sample populations are very small, due to the nature of the sampling opportunity and to the nature of the samples (such as the his-

tory teachers). Thus most of the findings are presented as descriptive statistics.

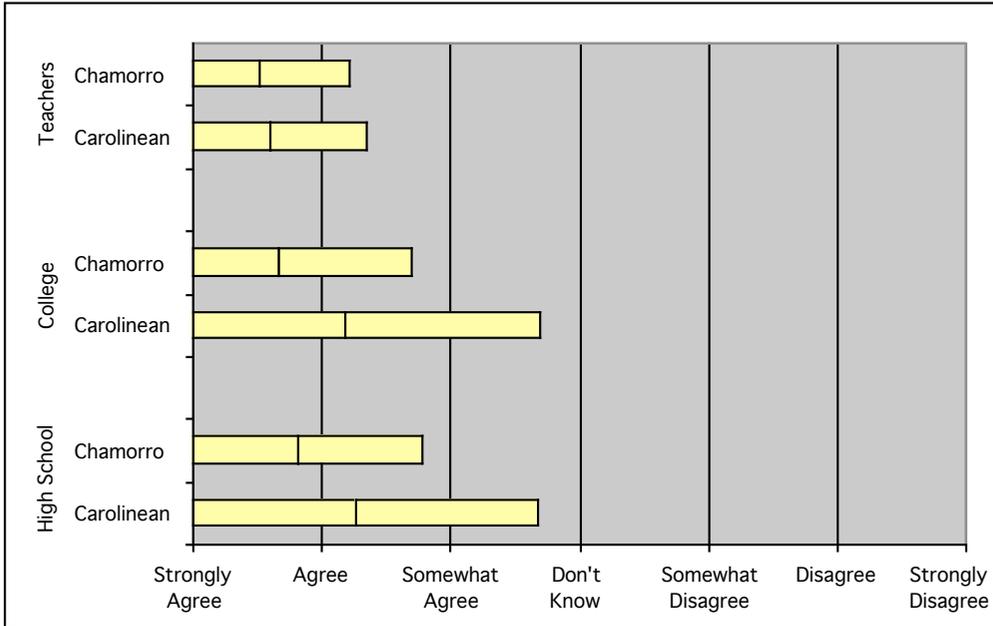


Figure 1. Mean response and 1 sigma standard deviation to the assertion "The following types of cultural heritage are very important to me" as applied to Chamorro and Carolinian archaeological sites.

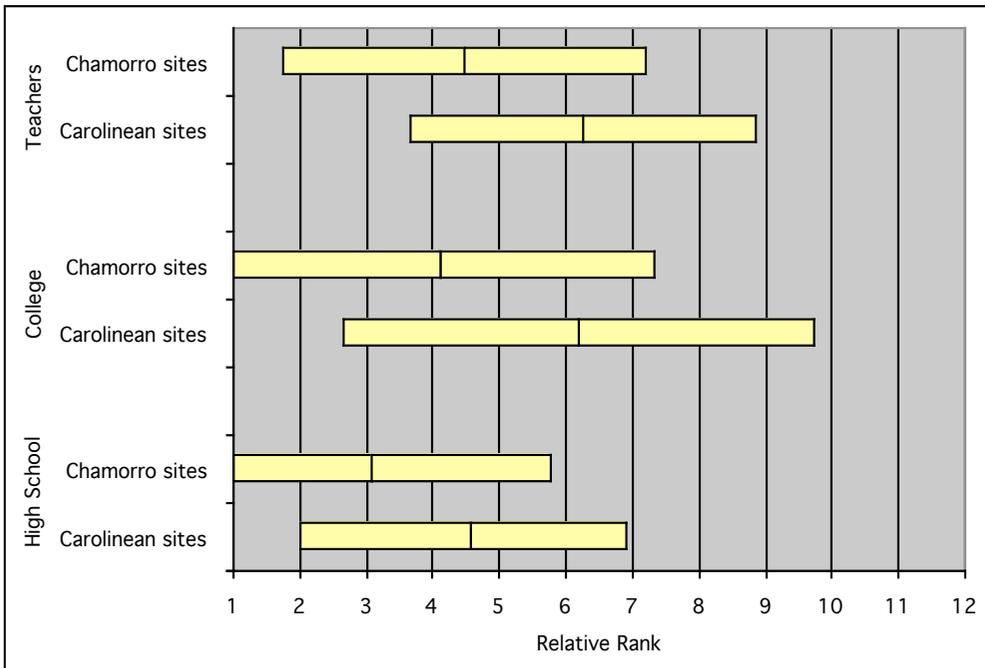


Figure 2. Mean response and 1 sigma standard deviation to the relative ranking of Chamorro and Carolinian archaeological sites.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE PLACES

Respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with the assertion: 'The following types of cultural heritage are very important to me.' The responses were scored from 1 to 7 which allowed to calculate mean responses. Table 3 sets out the mean responses for each of the three samples, the standard deviations to the responses and the response rate.

In general, all heritage items, both physical evidence and traditional skills, received a high average mean approval rating. Overall, traditional skills, stories, crafts and the like received a much higher approval than the physical sites. This observation holds true for all three sample categories. Overall the level of agreement seems to be higher among the teachers compared to the college students and the high school pupils.

The colonial periods (Spanish, German and Japanese) all fared comparatively similar, with the German period being less favored. By comparison, the World War II period had a much higher level of agreement. Consistently the lowest average response was made for "Heritage places from (the) Trust Territory Period." Yet even for this question the average response of the teachers was "agree", with a standard deviation of one increment, and "somewhat agree" with a slightly greater standard deviation among the high school pupils (table 3).

It seems that the response was in part influenced by both the state of public knowledge and by the ubiquity and relative visibility of the sites and remains. World War II sites are the most abundant and the most publicized, whereas, at the other end of the spectrum, German heritage sites are very scarce and also less well known. Age, as well as the notion of what constitutes 'heritage', were possibly also factors as evidenced by the relatively low significance attributed to places dating to the Trust Territory period.

One aspect worth elaborating on was the differential answer given as to the importance of Chamorro and Carolinian archaeological sites. Given the cultural make-up of the CNMI it was decided to separate these two, rather

than use the collective 'archaeological sites.' In all three samples Carolinian sites were given a lower approval rating than Chamorro sites. Figure 1 shows the average responses for the two classes of sites. Carolinian sites consistently receive a lower approval rating than Chamorro sites. Statistically the only significant difference exists among the high school students ($P=0.039$). Reanalyzing the data after all those respondents have been excluded who do not claim descent from the CNMI or Guam increases the differences, with the difference among the responses by the college students just missing out ($P=0.053$).

RANKING PLACES IN THEIR IMPORTANCE

The previous question allowed respondents to express their absolute attitudes towards all heritage places on an equal basis. To ascertain the relative significance of the various phases and aspects of heritage a second question was posed, which required the respondents to rank their preference from 1 to 12. This question was placed further down in the questionnaire and separated from the previous one by a series of other attitudinal questions. The results are set out in table 4.

In relative ranking (based on mean rank), the responses of teachers and college students are very similar, with the first seven positions identical. The top two spots are held by traditional knowledge and skills and traditional stories (ranking 3 and 4 among the high school pupils). Traditional crafts and traditional songs and dances ranked fourth and fifth (fifth and sixth among high school pupils). Traditional plants and animals ranked seventh in all three samples.

The colonial periods occupy the ranks 8 to 12, with the Trust Territory period ranked lowest among all three sample groups. This grouping into aspects of traditional heritage and aspects of colonial heritage is very marked across the samples and clearly demonstrates the dichotomy between the two aspects of heritage.

These results reflect those of an earlier study. In March 2000 the participants at the Rota eco-heritage symposium were also asked

to rank heritage places in their perceived significance for eco-tourism interpretation (Spennemann, Look, and Graham 2001; 2002). Archaeological sites topped the list with colonial heritage sites ranking lowest.

The difference between the perceived importance of Chamorro and Carolinian sites observed in the earlier question is now amplified as respondents had to prefer one over the other. If both were deemed equally significant elements for the sample population, then they should have the same, or very similar, averages. Even if a systemic differentiation were to occur, then both should score an average separated by one unit. In reality, however, this is not the case (table 4): the separation is one and a half to two units with quite high standard variations. The attributed ranks were statistically different among teachers ($P=0.003$), College students ($P=0.008$) and high school students ($P=0.010$).

If we again consider the relative position of the average ranks, then Chamorro archaeological sites ranked third among teachers and college students while Carolinian archaeological sites ranked sixth. Only among high school students archaeological sites had a higher importance, where Chamorro sites ranking first and Carolinian sites second.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

It is encouraging to consider that all aspects of heritage, with the exception of the more recent past (Trust Territory), were deemed important. Yet, the level of appreciation of the cultural heritage of the Mariana Islands shows a very marked difference between the traditional aspects on the one hand and those of the colonial periods. This holds true for all three sample populations of this study.

The sample surveyed here is by no means representative of the community of the CNMI. But the same finding was made in the sample of Micronesian decisions makers polled six months earlier, indicating that the attitude may well be widespread across all strata of society (Spennemann, Look, and Graham 2001; 2002).

It should follow, therefore, that the bulk of preservation efforts should be directed at these

resources, with only a small amount of funding dedicated to manage the resources of the colonial period. Clearly, the polled community of the CNMI does not care much about its colonial past. This is in stark contrast to the expectations of the overseas visitors, which are dominated by the Japanese audience. For them sites related to World War II were far more important (Sayers 2001). This nicely illustrates the conundrum between the preservation aspirations of the local community and those of the overseas visitors.

The difference in attitudes towards Chamorro and Carolinian archaeological sites has been noted above. While a difference in the relative ranking is within the range of expectations (figure 2), the differences in the average level of agreement (figure 1) was not. A survey of the expectations of Japanese visitors to the CNMI (Sayers 2001) found a similar response. In this case Carolinian culture was of lesser interest to the tourists than Chamorro culture. While the differential response by the Japanese visitors can be attributed to the level of visitor information available prior to arrival (Sayers 2001), the difference on local attitudes suggests that there is some underlying cultural barrier. This is well within the range of known political and cultural differences between the Chamorro and Carolinian community.

It is also of significance to consider that the sample surveyed included the history teachers. Despite the existence of curricula, it will be the personal values and interests of these teachers that shape the class room activities, and through these the attitudes of a future generation of citizens. Any adjustment the Historic Preservation community in the CNMI wishes to make to future public values and opinion has to be made in the first instance through a public education program for the teachers.

As indicated above, the sampled populations are snap shots but are not necessarily representative of the wider community. The study has highlighted the need for further, more elaborate surveys of a representative section of the CNMI community, both on Saipan and on the other islands.

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