

# MICRONESIAN

JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol. 5, n° 1/2

Combined Issue

November 2006

## HOW MICRONESIA CHANGED THE U.S. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM AND THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING IT FROM CHANGING BACK

Thomas F. King

*SWCA Environmental Consultants, Inc.*

The historic preservation programs established in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands during the 1970s, which evolved into today's Micronesian national and state programs, were fundamentally structured to reflect and relate to traditional Micronesian cultural values. These values, generalized to apply to both indigenous and other community interests, have come to influence the national historic preservation program in the United States, fostering a populist philosophy that helps keep historic preservation from being a completely elitist enterprise. This philosophy is under constant threat, and may not survive in the U.S., but there is no reason it should not continue to be fundamental to preservation practice in Micronesia.

### IN THE BEGINNING....

As everyone in the Pacific knows, most of the island groups of Micronesia—Palau, the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands<sup>1</sup>—were colonized by Spain and then Germany, and put under Japanese administration at the end of World War I by the League of Nations. They were then taken from Japan by Allied forces in a series of bloody engagements during World War II, and placed by the United Nations under the care of the United States, becoming the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. During the 1980s the people of the Trust Territory organized themselves into three new nations in “free association” with the United States—the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In 1966 the U.S. Congress enacted the National Historic Preservation Act, which created a “National Register of Historic Places”

within the National Park Service (NPS), provided for NPS to give matching grants to “states” to support preservation activities, established an “Advisory Council on Historic Preservation” to advise the President and Congress on historic preservation matters, and at Section 106 required agencies of the U.S. government to “take into account” the effects of their actions on historic properties. The “states” that could receive matching grants from NPS included not only the fifty “real” states, but entities like the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

In 1974, as part of one of the many actions pushed through the Congress by Congressman Phil Burton with the intent of helping Micronesia, the National Historic Preservation Act was amended to include the Trust Territory as a “state” for purposes of the act. The Trust Territory was suddenly qualified to receive historic preservation grants from NPS, as long as (a) it established and filled the position of

This is a peer reviewed contribution. *Received:* 1 Feb 2006 *Revised:* 14 Jun 2006 *Accepted:* 17 Jun 2006

© *Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* ISSN 1449-7336

HeritageFutures™ International, PO Box 3440, Albury NSW 2640, Australia

Persistent identifier: <http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.arc-65664>

“State Historic Preservation Officer, and (b) it could match the NPS money with non-federal funds or in-kind contributions. It also meant that actions undertaken, assisted, or permitted by the U.S. government in the Trust Territory were subject to Section 106 review. By this time this review process had evolved to include the identification of properties subject to effect that might be eligible for inclusion in the National Register, their evaluation against specified NPS criteria, determining whether adverse effects would occur, and developing ways to avoid, reduce, or mitigate such effects. All these activities had to be done in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and other stakeholders.

The Trust Territory Government, based on Saipan, promptly created the office of Historic Preservation Officer (HPO), and filled the position with a government official who—for all his good intentions—didn’t know anything much about historic preservation. He had a talented and smart assistant, but technically she didn’t have any background in preservation either. Following NPS rules, they set up a Review Board to oversee the office’s activities, but didn’t give its members much to do. They wisely encouraged the several Trust Territory “districts”—Palau, Yap, Chuuk (then Truk), Pohnpei (then Ponape, and including Kosrae) and the Marshalls—to create historic preservation committees of their own, and several did, often including experts in local tradition. And they nominated places to the National Register—obvious places like the Underwater Fleet in Chuuk Lagoon, Nan Madol on Pohnpei, and the Abai Ra Airai in Palau.

None of this cost very much money out of the NPS grant, but it cost some, and NPS needed for it to be matched with local money or in-kind contributions. The HPO staff couldn’t figure out how to generate such match, since virtually all money in the Trust Territory came from the U.S. Government, and couldn’t be used to match grants from the same source. So NPS kept sending money, but it became more and more difficult for the HPO to spend it. And once the obvious places had been nominated to the National Register, it

wasn’t very clear what the HPO was supposed to do.

There were, however, some pretty important things *to* do, and most of them involved Section 106 review.

For one thing, the Trust Territory Government, with the U.S. Navy and Army Corps of Engineers, was undertaking a major Capital Improvement Program in preparation for the day when the trusteeship would end and the islands would constitute their own government or governments. This program involved airports in all the District centers, roads, sewers, water systems, and a host of other improvements. All these projects had to be reviewed under Section 106; somebody had to find the archaeological sites, old structures, and other possible historic properties that might be affected, evaluate them following NPS regulations, determine effects on them, and figure out what to do about such effects. That somebody needed some kind of professional experience in order to do the job.

Others also had plans for the area. The most impressive, or notorious, example was the proposed Palau Superport, dreamed up by some of Palau’s leaders and a consortium of Japanese companies. This project would have effectively transformed Babeldaob into an industrial landscape servicing supertankers coming in from the Persian Gulf and Indonesia, and transferring their cargoes to smaller tankers that could run in to ports in Japan. Needless to say, the environmental community both in Palau and worldwide was less than enthusiastic about the plan, and those who knew anything about Palau’s history and prehistory were pretty upset too. Little archaeology had been done on Babeldaob at the time, but the megalithic structures at Badrulchau were known, as were some of the sculpted hills, and nobody who knew about them was wild about seeing them surrounded by crude oil tanks and pipelines. The Superport would require permits from the Corps of Engineers, and hence would have to be reviewed under Section 106; it was obviously going to be hugely controversial.

And in the midst of all this, a U.S. Air Force Civic Action Team working for the Truk

(Chuuk) District government building a road around Fefen Island started dredging up prehistoric pottery, and was discovered doing so by an alert Peace Corps Volunteer, who reported the matter to NPS and the State Department. The Trust Territory Government at first tried to deny the whole thing, and discredit the Volunteer, but eventually it had to acknowledge that something significant had been found, and had to do something about it. NPS put up some money and brought in Dr. Richard Shutler from the University of Iowa—one of the few archaeologists with any experience at all in the area—to salvage what was left of the site with the assistance of Dr. Yoshiro Sinoto of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum and Dr. Jun Takayama of Japan's Tezukayama University. The site turned out to be the earliest<sup>2</sup> then known in Chuuk, representing a pottery using population that contrasted markedly from the aceramic historic and late precontact Chuukese.

All in all, the Trust Territory was shaping up to be a problem child among the "state" historic preservation programs coordinated and funded in part by NPS. Something needed to be done. The Trust Territory Government—or at least, the HPO staff—recognized this, and their solution was to ask NPS for help.

As it happened, I was working for NPS at the time in Washington DC, writing regulations and National Register guidance. I was part of what at the time was called the Interagency Archaeological Services Division, headed by Departmental Consulting Archaeologist Rex Wilson and his deputy Larry Aten; we reported to Jerry Rogers, head of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. I had done some work with Indian tribes in California, so Larry, Rex and Jerry tended to turn to me when they had issues to deal with issues involving indigenous people in the west. And by a strange coincidence, my then-fiancée, Patricia Parker, had recently been prevailed upon by her University of Pennsylvania PhD committee chairman, Ward Goodenough, to do her dissertation research in Chuuk rather than Africa, as had been her intention. An opportunity presented itself.

The story of our two years in Micronesia—Pat's in Chuuk, mine in Saipan and Chuuk and throughout the Trust Territory—might be entertaining to recount but it is rather beside the point of this paper. Suffice to say that in June of 1977 I found myself in Saipan, under contract to the Trust Territory Government as "Consultant to the High Commissioner in Archaeology and Historic Preservation." My job, as defined largely through conversations with Larry, Rex, and Jerry, was to help the HPO staff get the program up and running, to get the Section 106 situation under control, to find ways to match and properly use the NPS grant money, and—we all agreed—to make sure that the program was a truly Micronesian one, not just something that NPS imposed.

For reasons apparently having nothing to do with me, both the HPO for the Trust Territory and his deputy left Saipan very shortly before I arrived. There were four people in the office I wandered into on Capital Hill—a secretary, a part-time surveyor named Ramon Kapileo, another surveyor named Jesus Pangilinan, and an ex-Peace Corps Volunteer, ex-schoolteacher named Scott Russell. 'Sus and Scott would go on to become major figures in the development of historic preservation in the Northern Marianas and throughout Micronesia.

#### **DEVELOPING A HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM FOR MICRONESIA**

A new HPO was assigned by the High Commissioner, and the position was reassigned several times during my two years as "Consultant," but for practical purposes Scott, 'Sus, Ramon and I had a pretty free hand in running the office and putting the program together. One of the first and biggest problems was to develop a way to match the NPS money so we would have the financial resources with which to operate.

Before leaving Washington I had discussed possibilities with Steve Newman, then the head of the NPS historic preservation grants program. Steve had pointed to "in-kind match"—the contribution of time and labor—as a way to make do in the absence of non-federal cash

money. It was at the time, and still is, common practice in State HPO offices to chalk up time contributed by volunteer archaeologists, architectural historians, and other professionals and non-professionals as match for Federal money. The value of the professionals' time was calculated based on the consulting fees they would command if they were not volunteering their services.

We soon found that there were professionals quite ready to volunteer their time and talents to the Trust Territory program. The first to come to our attention was Dr. William Ayres of the University of Oregon, who had in fact been trying for some years to get a permit to work at Nan Madol. Oddly, Bill was viewed with distrust and some distaste by the Trust Territory officials with whom he was trying to work. Who was this weird outsider who wanted to come dig around at Micronesia's premier archaeological site, anyhow? To me, of course, the answer was obvious: he was a cash cow. We contracted with Bill to do precisely what he'd been asking to do at Nan Madol, and chalked up his contributed services to our non-federal match. We then went looking for other professionals interested in the area, or who we could prevail upon to be interested, and soon we had a considerable range of professional archaeologists under contract—Arthur Saxe, George Gumerman and his students, Ed and Judy Jelks, Rob and Julie Edwards, Steve Athens, D. Colt Denfeld. All these scholars began to get some good work done, and their contributed services gave us some financial breathing room.

But they couldn't create a Micronesian program; that could be done only by Micronesians. We had good and talented committees in most of the districts, made up mostly of Micronesians, and the contracts we wrote required our outlander scholars to involve them intimately in their work, but the fact remained that it was the scholars who were running the show, doing the work that *they* thought was necessary, not what Micronesians wanted done. That had to change.

We proposed to NPS that the contributed services of traditional cultural experts—usually

elders—should be valued at the same rate as PhD archaeologists. This took some NPS archaeologists rather aback, but it made perfectly good sense to Steve Newman, and we put the system into place. This helped the local committees break loose NPS grant funds to support things *other* than the archaeological research and historical documentation that scholars were interested in<sup>3</sup>. But what were those things? How well or poorly did they relate to the purposes of the NPS grants? That was the crucial question. If what Micronesians wanted to do to protect and manage their historical and cultural heritage could not be related somehow to the purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act, it would be both improper and impractical for NPS to continue using funds authorized under the Act to support Micronesian programs.

And it was pretty clear that the things that NPS traditionally funded people to do on the mainland were of little moment to most Micronesians. Archaeological research was interesting to some, but generally too esoteric, irrelevant to anything that really mattered. Old buildings? Well, it was good to use them, but the idea of preserving them simply because they were old made eyes glaze over. World War II structures and sites? Good for tourists, but World War II was not a happy memory.

There were nights, staring at the ceiling of my concrete block house in Chalan Kanoa on Saipan, when I wondered if what I'd been sent to do made any sense at all in Micronesian terms, or whether I was imposing another weird colonial vision on the people. And yet the remains of the Micronesian past seemed important to *me*, and there were Micronesians I respected—Sus and Ramon, Pensile Lawrence in Pohnpei, Kathy Kesolei and Moses Sam in Palau—who let me know that they thought they were important, too. It was just that what they thought was important was construed a bit differently from what I thought was important. We glimpsed each other's values as though through water; the shapes were similar enough to recognize, or sometimes only almost recognize, but our respective visions were dis-

torted, the shapes blurring and never quite holding still.

### CHUUK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Meanwhile, plans were moving forward for the Trust Territory's Capital Improvement Program, managed by the U.S. Navy. One of the first projects off the drawing board was Chuuk (then Truk) International Airport.

The preferred site for the airport, understandably, was the site of the existing airport, a coral strip laid down on top of an old, heavily bombed Japanese airbase. What the planners didn't know—because the geological maps labeled the whole thing as “fill,” and apparently no one asked the people who lived there—was that the airbase had been built on the remains of old Iras Village. Before the war, Iras had been strung out along a sandy shore on the northwest corner of Moen, or Wena Island. Around the corner to the northeast was the village of Mechchitiw. Towering above them both was Mt. Tonaachaw, a partly wooded, partly grassy mountain with a funny-shaped knobby summit referred to as the *achaw*—the rock. Early in the war years, the Japanese authorities had required the people of Iras and others to demolish the village, level the land, and then drag down tons of soil and rock from the slopes of Tonaachaw, burying the village half a meter or more deep. They were then moved to the other end of the island, and the runway, airplane revetments, gun emplacements and other accouterments of war were implanted where the village had once been. Then the Americans had come, dropping tons of bombs on the airfield, and then resurfacing it to handle their own aircraft. The people of Iras were allowed to return, but the best land in the village was gone under the runway; the people set up their homes and their *wuut*, or meeting-house, in the taro swamp between the runway and the mountain, and on the slopes above.

In 1978, as the Trust Territory rather reluctantly began Section 106 review of the new airport project, Pat Parker—now my wife—was living in Iras studying Chuukese land law. She had learned the language, and been adopted into the family of Katin and Nesema, highly

respected elders of village clans. She was also under the protection of the village chief, the charismatic, Fiji-educated Camillo Noket. From Katin and others, Pat knew about the history of the village, and thus had an idea of what might be under the runway. She also knew the feelings of the people for their village lands, their feelings that they had been cheated by both the Japanese and American administrations. And she knew about the *achaw*.

Mt. Tonaachaw was one of the places that had been nominated to the National Register by the Trust Territory HPO before I ever came on the scene. In Chuukese tradition, it was to Tonaachaw that the great culture bearer Sowukachaw and his relative Sowuwóóniiras<sup>4</sup> had come long, long ago, when the people of Chuuk lived “like animals.” They had brought civilization to the lagoon, initiating a sort of golden age that lingered in memory. They had come from a place called *Kachaw*, which some equated with Kosrae. In some stories Sowukachaw had come in the form of a great frigate bird, bearing the *achaw* in his claws. In others he came on a banana leaf. The stories all agreed that it was to the summit of Tonaachaw that he came, and there established his *wuut*. So Mt. Tonaachaw had been placed on the National Register. But the documentation supporting its eligibility was very thin, and as Pat talked about the land around the mountain with Katin and other elders, she came to realize that there was much more to the mountain than had been recorded. In *Itang*—the highly metaphorical Chuukese language of magic, ritual, and navigation—the mountain was the head of a great octopus—*Kúús*—whose arms stretched out across the lagoon and provided sailing directions to other islands and places on the encircling reef. In one of the ears of *Kúús*, which looked like nothing but a grassy slope under the *achaw*, lived fierce though invisible barracuda who could swarm out to defend the chief in his mountaintop *wuut*<sup>5</sup>. Tonaachaw was a very powerful place, and people were not at all happy about the government's plan to put an aircraft warning beacon on its summit.

Pat Parker and I have documented aspects of the struggle over Mt. Tonaachaw and its vil-

lages in other publications<sup>6</sup>, and there is no need to do so again here. Suffice to say that Section 106 consultation became very complicated and contentious. The government at one time terminated my contract and I was reinstated only as the result of NPS intervention, the support of the Congress of Micronesia, and the machinations of the late, great radical journalist Cisco Uludong. Eventually Pat and I wound up mediating between the government and the people and leaders of Iras and Mechchitiw, and an agreement was reached.

Under Section 106, when a project will cause adverse effects to a historic property, the interested parties—typically the project proponent, the HPO, and local interests—consult about how to resolve the adverse effect. This usually results in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) documenting what will be done. This was what happened in the case of Chuuk International Airport, but the MOA contained some unusual elements.

It is quite common for Section 106 Memoranda of Agreement to provide for some kind of project redesign, and the Chuuk MOA did this; the warning light on the mountaintop was deleted<sup>7</sup>. But that wasn't all. During the consultation the people of Mechchitiw had complained that dredging the reef flat in front of their village to get coral for the runway would destroy their traditional fishing area. After a good deal of argument, the dredge area was re-configured to permit continued access from the village to the productive reef edge, and to improve the health of the reef. People in Iras said they would lose their boat moorages and take-out areas, so a small boat harbor was added to the plan.

It is also common for Section 106 MOAs to provide for archaeological excavations in areas to be disturbed, and the Chuuk MOA did this. The people of the villages themselves did the fieldwork, with coordination by Pat and me.

And then there were the other things. An arbitration board to establish the value of breadfruit trees lost, and who was entitled to compensation. A program to document and compensate for fishtraps lost in the dredging area. Accelerated construction of a sewer sys-

tem to make up for the loss of informal restroom facilities on the reef bordering the runway. And—the centerpiece of the whole arrangement—financial assistance to establish a fishing and farming cooperative, to make up for the loss of land and reef fishing areas. Some of these things were provided for directly in the MOA, others in subsidiary agreements negotiated under the MOA's terms, but they were all provided for, and carried out.

I spent much of the 1978-79 year in Chuuk working on the airport in addition to my other duties—many of which had been picked up by Scott Russell, 'Sus Pangilinan, and Ross Cordy, who was hired during the interregnum when the Trust Territory Government thought it had gotten rid of me. Because I was married to Pat, I lived in Iras and spent a lot of time with Katin, and with Camillo Nocket, an eloquent spokesman for Chuukese culture in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. It was with them and Pat, and Chief Teruo William and the Mechchitiw village council, that I hashed out the terms of the MOA. It took some doing—not only to convince the Trust Territory Government and the Navy to accept its terms, but to get *me* to accept them as legitimate subjects for a Section 106 document.

"Section 106 is about historic preservation," I'd fret. "How can we make a fishing and farming cooperative look like historic preservation?"

Pat would shake her head and look frustrated; she understood what the people were talking about; why couldn't I? Camillo would turn the question around. How could we *not* regard such a thing as historic preservation? Fishing and farming were basic to the cultural life of the people, and wasn't historic preservation supposed to preserve culture?

Well, sort of, I'd say, but it's done by taking care of sites and structures and things like that. Well, Camillo would shrug, isn't the mountain a site? Isn't the village? Isn't what people do there part of their history?

Gradually, imperfectly, I began to understand what people like Camillo were talking about, what people like Katin and Nesema understood implicitly, what Pat could put in

anthropological terms. And what I began to understand about Chuuk clicked into place with what I had learned from Pensile Lawrence, Kathy Kesolei, Moses Sam and the others.

Micronesians, I realized, were profoundly interested in and supportive of something akin to historic preservation, but only on their own terms. In those terms, places like Tonaachaw were terribly important, but not as esoteric monuments set apart from their daily lives. On the contrary, it was their place in people's daily lives, and in their beliefs about themselves, their ancestors, and their environment, that *made* such places important. In order to work for Micronesia, any historic preservation program had to be grounded in the same values, the same relationships.

I was beginning to internalize all this about the time that my two-year contract was up, Pat finished her dissertation work, and we went back to the mainland.

#### WHAT I LEARNED

I took away a number of important lessons from my Micronesian experience—most of them perfectly obvious to Micronesian historic preservation practitioners today, and indeed to many preservationists in the United States and around the world, but new things at the time.

- Places are not important only for archaeology, architecture, or “history” in the Euroamerican sense. They are important for the roles they play in contemporary but anciently rooted culture—how they figure in traditional stories, spiritual beliefs; how they are used, who has ownership rights. The *achaw* turned out to have a small archaeological site on its crest, with lots of fish heads—chief's food—in it, but even if it had not, it was still where tradition said that Sowukachaw's *nuut* had been, and that made it important. No ichthyologist could see the barracudas in the ear of *Kúús*, but Katin knew they were there.
- Preserving historic places, cultural places, cannot be isolated from the rest of culture. The only way preserving historic places made sense to traditional Micronesian

people was as part of an overall program of cultural preservation that valued breadfruit and coconut and pandanus harvesting and processing, cooking in earth ovens, fishing with spears at fishtraps, gathering shellfish. The program had to respect traditional spiritual beliefs and esoteric knowledge like that embedded in *itang* metaphor. It had to respect rights to land, trees, and the reef. It had to respect the belief that a rock in a stream on Pohnpei—which stopped a road project cold when local residents almost lynched a bulldozer driver—was a woman who had been turned to stone for committing adultery, and that a certain palm grove was the public hair of a spirit being.

- But preserving cultural values doesn't necessarily mean preserving things and places unchanged. Paddling canoes can give way to aluminum outboards without fatal injury to the cultural practice of reef fishing. A fishing and farming cooperative can preserve traditional relationships with the land, the breadfruit, the reef. People can become devout Christians and still believe firmly in the spiritual power of a mountain or a rock or a grove of trees.
- In short, what made historic places historic in Micronesian terms was not—or was in only a minor way—what Euroamerican history said about them, or what Euroamerican archaeology could learn from them. It was how they worked in traditional culture, how they informed and maintained traditional identity. Historic places could not be dealt with in isolation; they had to be understood, interpreted, and managed as integral parts of ongoing cultural life.

And I realized, with a head-slap or two, that these were not only Micronesian notions. They were arguably what the U.S. Congress had been talking about when it said, at Section 1(b)(2) of the National Historic Preservation Act, that –

*The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people*

**BACK ON THE MAINLAND**

When Pat and I returned to the mainland, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation honored me with a job overseeing Section 106 review throughout the Federal government. Pat, after a few years of dissertation writing and taking care of our new son, Tommy, took a job with the National Park Service, working with some of the same people who had sent me to Micronesia. We found ourselves in positions of some influence in the U.S. historic preservation program.

At the same time, we found that the program was evolving, and some of the directions in which it was evolving were disturbing.

The roots of Euroamerican historic preservation are rather elitist, reflecting the desire of rulers to preserve monuments to their greatness and that of selected predecessors, of dilettantes to ponder the remains of the past, of aesthetes to hold onto what they find beautiful. There is nothing necessarily wrong with any of this, but it can become rather precious, rather esoteric, divorced from the values of a country's citizens. In the 1960s, a new sort of preservation emerged in the United States and elsewhere—some people even called it “New Preservation”—that featured the attempt to preserve what local communities thought was important. It focused less on isolated monuments and more on the character of towns and neighborhoods and rural landscapes; it sought to be a populist movement. It was from this movement that Congress drew the inspiration to say that the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life. This sort of populist preservation was very consistent with the kind of thing Pat and I had learned from our Micronesian colleagues.

But the elitist traditions were still there, and they are there still. They were and are easy for the historic preservation establishment to fall back upon when threatened by the realities of the outside world, and in the 1980s there were threats aplenty. The Reagan administration would gladly have dismembered the national historic preservation program, and failing that sought to reduce it to the protection of a few

landmarks of “national significance,” preferably tucked away where they would not conflict with anyone's land development. Let something important merely to local people stand in the way of a project that someone with money and power wanted to see move forward, and the bureaucrats responsible for the impediment—in NPS, at the Advisory Council—began to feel threats to job security. The easiest way to avoid such conflicts, and the one that felt intuitively justifiable to many in the preservation establishment, was to emphasize “professionalism.” To be eligible for the National Register and thus entitled to consideration under Section 106, NPS let the world know, a place had better have the kind of significance that a professional in some preservation-related academic discipline could confidently stand behind. By the mid-1980s, historic preservation in the U.S. was coming to focus not on taking care of places important to communities of regular citizens, but on protecting those that professional archaeologists, historians, and architectural historians valued. Or simply documenting them before destruction, since professional archaeologists, historians, and architectural historians had and have close to zero political power. We were drifting back into preservation by and for the elite—albeit a professional elite in which we ourselves had membership.

There would not have been much that people like Pat and I could have done about this trend had it not been for the growing involvement of Indian tribes and Native Hawaiians in historic preservation. But the tribes and Hawaiians had come to recognize that the historic preservation laws could be used to protect places important to them, and they began to let the Federal establishment know that their historic places were just as important as those of North America's invaders and their descendants. This rising of the indigenes was actually a worldwide phenomenon—Aboriginal Australians, Canadian First Nations, and indigenous groups in Africa and Latin America were finding their voices during the same period, insisting that their historic places be respected. And their historic places—and those of Indian

tribes and Native Hawaiians—were often much like the places important to Micronesians. Mountains, springs, lakes, stretches of shoreline. Places where people did things, places to which stories were attached, places where spirit beings were thought to congregate.

At NPS, some of the same senior executives who had sent me to Micronesia—Jerry Rogers, Larry Aten—now supported Pat in trying to be responsive to the concerns of tribes and Native Hawaiians. At the Advisory Council I had the support of Executive Director Robert R. Garvey, Jr., the most populist of the three charismatic personalities<sup>9</sup> who had effectively created the U.S. historic preservation program after enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act. We were well positioned to pay attention to what the tribes and Native Hawaiians were saying, and to apply the lessons we had learned in Micronesia.

### CHANGING DIRECTION

Things came to a head in 1983, when the U.S. Forest Service issued a permit for a ski facility in the San Francisco Peaks of Arizona, one of the four corners of the world to the Navajo Nation, and the home of the *Katina* spirit beings to the Hopi Tribe. Although the tribes objected strongly, the Forest Service found that the project would have no effect on historic places because its archaeologists—its professionals—could not find anything on the project site. About the same time, the residents of Poletown, an ethnic neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, were evicted from their homes and their traditional neighborhood was leveled to make way for a federally assisted auto factory. The neighborhood had not been found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore the project was not subjected to Section 106 review, because it was not interesting to architectural historians.

Motivated by these twin disasters, and at the urging of the tribes and Native Hawaiians, Pat and I wound up co-authoring a National Register Bulletin—number 38 in the series of publications issued by the National Register Division of NPS to guide practitioners in evaluating various kinds of places for National

Register eligibility. National Register Bulletin 38 is entitled *Guidelines for the Evaluation and Documentation of Traditional Cultural Properties*. In a nutshell, it says that places like Mt. Tonaac-haw, the San Francisco Peaks, and Poletown can be eligible for the National Register, and hence have to be considered under Section 106, because of their importance in the traditional cultural lives of human communities. That seems a pretty simple concept, but the Bulletin had significant implications. While one might need a professional archaeologist to evaluate the research significance of an archaeological site, or a professional architectural historian to evaluate a piece of architecture, the significance of a “traditional cultural property” is not something for a professional to judge. Only the people who know about the role it plays in their cultural traditions can evaluate a “TCP.”

Bulletin 38 caused a good deal of angst in the Federal establishment and among some historic preservation practitioners. So much angst, in fact, that three major U.S. agencies—the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and (with delicious irony) the Bureau of Indian Affairs—issued guidance to their people in the field dismissing the bulletin as a mere NPS document of no relevance to them. The tribes promptly went to Congress and effected an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act stipulating that places of cultural importance to them could be eligible for the Register<sup>10</sup>.

Another bit of irony—the Reagan administration forced the Advisory Council to rework its Section 106 regulations in the mid-1980s, with the clear intention to reduce the scope of project review. The tribes and Native Hawaiian groups became heavily involved in the Council’s regulatory review; as a result, consultation with indigenous groups was written in at every possible point. The regulations that emerged from the mid-80s rewrite were more directive about involvement of tribes, Native Hawaiians, and the public in general than the earlier regulations had been—thus increasing opportunities for places important to local communities to be protected through Section 106 review.

I was privileged to be involved in this shift in direction by the U.S. historic preservation program, but I was by no means responsible for it. Not only did scores or hundreds of people participate in developing the various regulations and guidelines, and in making them work, but the ideas underlying them came from Indian tribes, Native Hawaiians, and—especially—Micronesians. Our experience in Micronesia made Pat and me particularly open to the concerns of people who treasured places reflective of their cultural values and beliefs, and who happened not to be professional historians, archaeologists, or architectural historians. We were able to help translate their concerns and their values into the language of law, regulation, and government guideline.

### **THE SITUATION TODAY**

Today in the United States—as in many other countries—it is pretty widely understood that places can be “historic,” and merit consideration as such when planning highways and reservoirs and power plants, because of the ways they are used or valued by local people. This is not to say that archaeological sites and fine pieces of architecture are any less significant than they have ever been; it is only that places important to ordinary people, non-professionals in the preservation-related academic disciplines, can be afforded an equal level of consideration in planning. Federal agencies and others responsible for projects that require environmental and historic preservation review routinely conduct “TCP surveys” by consulting with local communities and their traditional leaders; places of importance to such communities are pretty routinely found eligible for the National Register, and become the subjects of Section 106 cases. Some of the most contentious and highly publicized Section 106 reviews have involved Traditional Cultural Properties like Kaho’olawe Island in Hawaii, the Creek Nation’s Okmulgee Old Fields in Georgia, and the “Trail of Dreams” landscape of the Quechan Tribe in California. Not all the surveys are very well done; the cases sometimes become bogged down over marginal issues, and the places involved are not always pre-

served, but at least there is a widespread recognition that such places have to be considered. The U.S. historic preservation program has to accommodate the traditional cultural values of communities—indigenous and otherwise.

But elitism has not died out in American historic preservation. There are still plenty of people in the preservation establishment who equate historic properties with examples of fine old architecture. There are plenty of archaeologists who cannot understand that a site can be valuable as anything but a repository of research data. And there is strong political pressure, particularly in the Congress and administration now in power, toward narrowing the focus of Section 106 review, limiting consideration to places that official government bodies have judged to be significant based on narrow professional criteria.

At the same time, the members of my generation of historic preservation practitioners in and around government are reaching retirement age. In the years leading up to retirement people tend not to want to rock the boat, draw attention to themselves, fight for the future. As a result, many of the leaders of historic preservation in the U.S. government and the state governments are timid, unadventurous souls, not disposed to undertake the struggles and machinations necessary to thwart or make creative use of political pressure. The gains of the last twenty years could be easily lost, even without legislative change forced by reactionaries in Congress, simply through conflict-avoiding retreats and retrenchments by those in government who speak for historic preservation.

It is a chancy time—a time to be on one’s guard. But times of risk are also times of opportunity.

### **THE FUTURE**

What I hope I have shown in this paper is that Micronesian people and their concepts of cultural significance have had serious effects on the evolution of historic preservation in the United States over the last twenty-five years. There is no guarantee that the lessons taught us in the U.S. by the people of Micronesia and

their colleagues among Indian tribes and Native Hawaiians will “stick” in the long run. The U.S. may well revert to a narrow-minded preoccupation with the preservation of fine old buildings and the excavation of archaeological sites. But I hope that the realization that Micronesia has influenced the United States—that the influences have not all run the other way—will embolden Micronesian historic preservationists to chart their own courses, develop their own ways of—to paraphrase the U.S. National Historic Preservation Act—preserving the historical and cultural foundations of Micronesia as a living part of Micronesian community life and development, and to give a sense of orientation to Micronesia’s people.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The remainder of Micronesia comprises what is now the Republic of Kiribati, a former British colony and current member of the British Commonwealth; Guam, a U.S. territory, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which enjoys a commonwealth relationship with the U.S.
- <sup>2</sup> Around 2,000 years old; still the earliest site known in Chuuk, I believe. See Shutler, Sinoto and Takayama 1977.
- <sup>3</sup> In about 1979, Congressman Burton achieved enactment of another piece of legislation that relieved Micronesian programs like ours of the requirement to match federal grants. This greatly simplified administration of the program, but I feared at the time that it would make life too easy and stultify creativity, and I think that to some extent this has been the case.
- <sup>4</sup> In some versions of the story his brother, in others his son.
- <sup>5</sup> For details and analysis of Chuukese spiritual beliefs and practices, see Goodenough 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> See King and Parker 1981a, 1981b, 1984; King 1978; Parker and King 1985; King 2003:25-6.
- <sup>7</sup> The Governor of Chuuk State later installed it anyway; it is a weakness of Section 106 that agreements reached on one project do not necessarily bind people undertaking other projects in the future.
- <sup>8</sup> Camillo later obtained a law degree and became Attorney General of the Federated States of Micronesia.

- <sup>9</sup> The other two were Earnest Connelly, who put together the NPS Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and William Murtagh, the first Keeper of the National Register.

<sup>10</sup> Section 101(d)(6)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Goodenough, Ward H. (2002) *Under Heaven's Brow: Pre-Christian Religious Tradition in Chuuk*. Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
- King, Thomas F. (1978) Capital Improvements and Historic Preservation: The Case of Truk International Airport. *Micronesian Reporter* 26(2):10-19, Saipan.
- King, Thomas F. (2004) Places That Count: Traditional Cultural Properties in Cultural Resource Management. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- King, Thomas F. and Patricia L. Parker (1981a) Tonaachaw: a Truk Village Rediscovered Its Past. *Glimpses of Micronesia* 21(4):122-19, Guam.
- King, Thomas F. and Patricia L. Parker (1981b) Recent and Current Archeological Research on Moen Island, Truk. *Asian Perspectives* xxiv(1):11-26, Honolulu.
- King, Thomas F. and Patricia L. Parker (1984) *Pisekin Nóómw Nóón Tonaachaw: Archaeology in the Tonaachaw Historic District, Moen Island*. Micronesian Archaeological Survey Report No, 18; Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Center for Archaeological Investigations Occasional Paper No. 3, Carbondale, IL
- Parker, Patricia L. and Thomas F. King (1985) Intercultural Mediation at Truk International Airport. In *The Anthropological Difference: Translating Anthropological Knowledge into Action*. R.W. Wulff and S.J. Fiske, eds., Washington Association of Professional Anthropologists, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Shutler, Richard Jr., Y.H. Sinoto and J. Takayama (1977) Fefen Island Survey and Mitigation Project. Manuscript, National Technical Information Service, Washington DC (Microfilm).

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT

Tom King spent the years 1977-79 helping organize Micronesia's historic preservation programs. He worked for the U.S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation throughout the 1980s, and has been in private practice since that time, writing, consulting, and teaching short courses on cultural resource man-

agement topics. Since 2004 he has been affiliated with SWCA Environmental Consultants. He is the author of several textbooks on aspects of historic preservation, cultural resource management, and archaeology. He occasionally conducts archaeological research with The

International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery in Kiribati and elsewhere in Micronesia. He holds a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Riverside.

Thomas F. King, PhD, PO Box 14515, Silver Spring MD 20911. E-mail: TFKing106@aol.com