

MICRONESIAN

JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol. 5, n° 1/2

Combined Issue

November 2006

MICRONESIAN VIEWPOINT

RESOURCE, RESEARCH, AND PROTECTION: A View from Pohnpei

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All of our distinguished presenters are true friends of Micronesia and many of them are instrumental in the development of the Historic Preservation Programs in various entities of Micronesia. All of them are veteran researchers in our part of the world and I believe that most if not all of them have experienced frustration when their attempts to help protect our cultural and historic heritage failed and gratification when their attempts are successful. Many of the presenters have conducted fieldwork with us, consulted us, and taught some of us in classrooms and at workshops. They have assisted us as resource people. It is, therefore, fair to say that our distinguished presenters are among the best to discuss Resource, Research, and Protection of our cultural and historic heritage with us.

In the next few days all of us will be sharing with each other information that pertains to preservation of historic and cultural heritage in Micronesia. Hopefully, the representatives from each of the countries and entities will have the opportunity to say something about their preservation goals and the workplans generated to help achieve these goals. Achievements and challenges of the preserva-

tion programs will be discussed and requests for assistance voiced. I look forward to this exchange of information and ideas because I sincerely believe that in the end we will reach some common understanding and agreement on how, together, we can best protect, preserve, conserve, and sustain the cultural and historic heritage of the peoples of Micronesia. At the conclusion of this symposium, I hope that we can agree to have some common answers to the questions posed by Fran Hezel. For now, I will argue for and agree with those who believe that the historic and cultural heritage of a group of people, including the groups in Micronesia, are among the most important resources for the concerned groups. In the course of the next few days we will be trying to identify, describe, evaluate and discuss the importance of such resources.

I have suggested in some of my work the possibility that some Micronesian communities have long traditions (practices) of protecting and conserving their cultural and historic heritage resources. I have not done any further investigation on this besides a brief description and observation in the Salapwuk community of Pohnpei, but I think that it is a worthy topic of

This contribution is not peer reviewed. *Received:* 25 Jan 2006; *Accepted:* 15 Feb 2006

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

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

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inquiry in Micronesia. Until such an inquiry is undertaken, we will not be able to fully incorporate into our discussions as much local perspectives on cultural and historic heritage preservation as we would like to. I would request, however, that whenever such information is available, that we give due respect and consideration to it in our deliberations.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE, RESEARCH, PROTECTION

During the late 1980's Dr. Ayres and I conducted an archaeological research in the Salapwuk community of Pohnpei. The work was funded by U.S. Federal grant through the National Park Service. It was part of a large scale investigation of the Micronesian cultural and historic resources called Micronesian Resource Study.

The objectives of the project were:

- To conduct a research design to provide baseline data on the prehistoric and historic resources of the Salapwuk area of Pohnpei.
- To help increase the capabilities of the Pohnpei Historic Preservation staff in indentifying, documenting, evaluating, and protecting the archaeological resources of Pohnpei.
- To assist Pohnpei HPO in the oral traditions documentation program.
- To help Pohnpei SHPO develop the archaeological component of the Micronesian Resource Study of Pohnpei.
- To provide recommendations for the protection and use of the cultural and historic resources of Pohnpei State.

We did a reconnaissance survey of the Salapwuk area and recorded 44 sites. Seventeen of the sites are *Stone Architectural Sites*, 15 of the sites are *Earth Construction Sites*, 1 *Shell Midden Site*, 1 *Rock Shelter Site*, and ten (10) *Traditional Landmark Sites*. We collected oral histories and local stories of all of the sites from 5 members of the local community.

At the time of the research there were 127 people in the Salapwuk community. Eight of the fourteen remaining clans of Pohnpei are represented there. Members of the Dipwinpe-

hpe Clan are the most numerous, followed by members of the Sounkawad Clan.

We recommended that all of the sites or resources documented in our study are protected in accordance with Section 4, sub-section 6 of the draft Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Law. Since then the law has passed. We further recommend that Salapwuk area warrants consideration as an Archaeological District. As such the entire area should be protected. The local histories of the area demonstrate that it contributes to a deep understanding of the relationship between various local cultural and natural history concepts, such as, affiliation of the natural landscape to clan histories, affiliation of natural pools to the early settlers explorations of Pohnpei, savannas representing guardian spirits, natural boulders representing first bestowal of titles in Pohnpei.

We wrote a final report on the project in English and was eventually published.

At around the same time that we are doing our research, my friends and colleagues, the late local Field Researcher and his assistant from Pohnpei SHPO also conducted a study in Pohnpei of what they called, *waso ob dipwsou kesemppwal ob pod en Pohnpei*. This literally translates as important places and objects that have local histories affiliated with them. This is the equivalent of historic and cultural resource of Pohnpei.

They consulted with 123 oral historians, many of whom are no longer alive today from the five municipalities of Pohnpei. Information on the clan membership and the local title of these consultants was collected. In their consultations they requested information on what the consultants thought as the most important historic and cultural heritage (places, sites, natural parts of the land) of their communities.

They identified, recorded, and plotted on the map 361 important places and objects of history of Pohnpei. Ninety-five (95) of these are recorded in Madolenihmw Municipality, 38 in U, 113 in Kittu, 55 in Sokehs, and 60 in Nett.

The following is an example of the type of resources the people of Pohnpei perceive as

important in their history. In Kitti Municipality they recorded the following:

1. Hills/mountain/ridgetop – 12
2. Old settlements or site complex – 21
3. Platform/tomb – 23
4. Stone/rock/outcrops – 17
5. Canoe landing/channels in mangrove - 2
6. Savannah – 5
7. Historic land parcels – 6
8. Islet in lagoon – 1
9. Colonial history sites – 10
10. Waterfall – 1
11. Kava stone quarry - 2
12. Streams, river, pool – 6
13. Reef, deep water pools in lagoon –1
14. Mangrove locality – 3
15. Old stone path –1

They recorded their findings in Pohnpeian language and the report remains a draft report.

In the two cases, investigation of historic and cultural sites or important places and objects that have affiliated local histories was undertaken. In both, we identified and documented sites, places, and objects of historic importance. We described and whenever possible provided explanation of the importance of these sites, objects, and places. As a government sponsored investigation, we derived recommendations as to how the sites, places, and objects in Salapwuk may best be protected. We consulted oral historians and recorded their stories whenever permission was given. All of these are a components of *research* (investigation, inquiry, fieldwork) or study.

We have different ways of doing research. In the two cases I discussed two different approaches were employed. In the Salapwuk case, we selected portions of a locality and conducted survey to find sites. Then we recorded and collected stories of these sites. In the other case, the researchers had prior knowledge of the existence of the important places and objects. They must consult with the guardians of these sites first and then record them. The end result of both studies is different in some ways, but other ways they are similar and complimented each other in terms of the depth of site information provided.

The *resources* in these studies are similar. They included the important places, objects, and sites. Some of these maybe described as archaeological districts, archaeological sites (inclusive of Colonial history sites), structures, and objects. For Pohnpei, there is an interesting category of archaeological and historic resources referred to as Traditional Cultural Significant Natural Entities which included Culturally Significant Natural Landscape and Culturally Significant Objects. These are natural objects and features of the land and the marine area (lagoon, reef, ocean, mangrove) that have important oral histories connected to them.

In the two cases, the types of resources we recorded were quiet different. However, the majority of the sites or resources recorded in both studies are archaeological sites in the conventional sense.

In addition to the physical remains of history and culture, we also have the human resources, the literature resources, and the funding resources. If one is conducting ethnographic investigation some of the resources may be different and emphasis should be on human resources.

In the Salapwuk investigation we explained the importance of the resources we document and recommend their *protection* by law, given that in the next decade or so a great deal of development projects may occur in the area and adversely effect these resources. In support of this we provided information on the integrity and authenticity of these resources.

These resources, among other things, bear witness to important exchange of cultural values in Pohnpei, they provide testimony to unique Pohnpeian traditions, they bear witness to early human colonization of the island, they bear witness to some aspects of local belief systems and cosmology. These are, I think, some good reasons why such resources for Pohnpei State should be protected. Even if it is not possible for us to make direct connection between these resources and some aspects of the current Pohnpeian design of living (way of life), they inspire a deep sense of cultural identity.

We want to sustain the knowledge, traditions, and wisdom associated with these resources, in this case, for the future generations of Pohnpeians.

The late Field Researcher for Pohnpei SHPO has a deep conviction and believe that if we disrespect, disturb and destroy our cultural and historic resources, we will create disharmony in our relatively peaceful and simple existence design of living. This can lead to cultural degradation, and he believed sincerely that Pohnpei is heading in that direction and that we should do something about it. This, he would argue, is the reason we have a pressing need now to protect our resources. I respect his view

How we can best use these resources in our modernizing societies is a matter of debate and we can do that in our discussions. The immediate concern for all of us, I think, is how we can best protect these.

Finally, I have an impossible dream but one that I think is worth pursuing. This is that the cultural and historic resources of Micronesia become better understood, appreciated, and respected and that the effort of preservation, conservation, and protection of these resources become the responsibility of every Micronesians.

ENDNOTES

This paper was delivered as the keynote address at the Pacific Preservation Symposium held in the Republic of the Marshall Islands from January 17-19, 2006.