

FROM RECOVERING SHIPWRECKS TO RECOVERING OUR PAST

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Address to the 3rd Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Heritage: The Maritime Cultural Landscapes and Seascapes of Asia-Pacific: Voyaging, Migration, Colonisation, Trade, and Cross-Cultural Contacts

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Hafa Adai and Good Morning

I have been asked to give a keynote address this morning. This is a special responsibility because I am supposed to do with words what others do with pictures of even power points. I will make the best effort I can to address the importance of this conference for universities, for Pacific Islands and for academics. If this were just an ordinary speech or presentation, I would excuse my lack of slides or a power point – by saying I don't have a power point, but I hope to make some powerful points.

This is a conference of experts and cursory observers. I am clearly one of the latter.

It is an honor and special privilege to be with you here this morning to present some ideas about Maritime Archeology and the enormous growth of interest in Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH). As a result of this invitation and the continuing efforts of Bill Jeffery at the University of Guam, I have become immersed in the important work and conceptual frameworks which are used to advance the growth of your collective field and abiding interest in the traces of our human impact as found below the waterline. If this were just ordinary, terrestrial based archeology, I suppose that we would say buried in your work as opposed to immersed.

Coming from the relatively small island of Guam, I am particularly interested in the field's deep and important connection to research about the history of the

Pacific Islands, the prehistory of the Pacific Islanders and a greater understanding about Pacific Islanders themselves. I take this route to understanding all human endeavors as we all should, whether we are seeking profit from an economic enterprise such as treasure hunting, a passion for certain areas of academic research or just pursuing avocations. There must always be an overarching central purpose which enhances our understanding of our past, our resources and our future existence. It is in this vein that I think we have made the journey from Maritime Archeology and the attention to shipwrecks to international agreements about our common UCH, from the adventurism of diving for treasure to the methodical research facilitated by the latest technology.

This is of particular importance to the Pacific Islands in a number of ways. Pacific Islands were settled at various times over the past 4,000 years ago and in the process of inhabiting the Pacific Islands, they left evidence of their endeavors, their journeys and their human imprint. Most of the time, we think of their pre-historic presence as existing in terrestrial evidence and their history is determined by this evidence in combination with the oral history of the islanders (in myths and legends) as well as the notes of early voyagers. In the interplay of these sources of information, we develop coherent and evidence-based narratives about their march across vast areas of ocean. In recent decades, we have added to this corpus of evidence, an examination of remains and remnants below the water line.

The growth of interest in Austronesian migrations, the revival of navigation amongst Pacific island communities combined with the burgeoning interest in more recent historical phenomenon related to ships and vessels which now lie at the bottom of the ocean have propelled your field of study into new heights (or should I say depths). In combination with examining geographical formations and changing natural physical attributes and phenomena, underwater research may have a lot to say about issues like climate change. The connections between science and social science, past and present, natural and human phenomena are enriched and enlivened by marine archeology and its focus on uncovering evidence from below the waterline.

Most of us live in coastal areas. Over the years when I attend meetings in the U.S. on historic preservation (and I started as a young member of the Guam Review Board for Historic Preservation in 1977) attention to coastal areas and management of their resources is highlighted by pointing out that 39% of the population live in coastal counties, normally within 10-20 miles of the ocean. I always point out that 100% of the people I know live within 2-3 miles of the ocean. Yet, even in spite of the proximity of the ocean and the use of its resources on a daily basis, even those of us in the Pacific underestimate the value of remains and remnants below the water line in providing evidence about who we were and how we got here. We are more concerned with evidence that we can readily see on land than what remains underwater.

It is in my concern about Pacific Island peoples and their history which brings me here and which compels those of us who manage knowledge bearing and generating institutions like Universities to pay attention to marine archeology, especially in island-based institutions like the University of Guam. In combination with the renewed attention given to UCH, we are recreating balances between historical preservation programs on land and in the water; we are revisiting our laws and procedures as well as changing our attitudes about the management of historical artifacts and remnants of vessels. We now create Maritime Historical Trails to preserve and appreciate our history.

As I take a closer look at programs designed to protect our UCH, I am struck by the diversity of interest and the renewal of academic study and support in some of the larger countries of Asia. There is a healthy dose of interest in sunken cities as well as sunken vessels. I also admire the curiosity and patience involved which keeps you engaged in your research even when the evidence is meager and not easily discoverable (as in looking for the San Francisco off the coast of Chiba).

Living and working in Micronesia, I have always had an interest in structures like Nan Madol in Pohnpei and the islets and canals which were created at great physical cost combined with great mental abilities to bring honor to ancient kingdoms and societies. Lesser known but equally significant and obviously connected is the Insaru settlement in Kosrae. I didn't think of them originally as

part of a UCH, but they obviously are now. These are sometimes luridly described as mysterious monuments to ancient, superior cultures. They are connected to other “mysterious” structures and technologies like the latte stones of the Marianas Islands (which were likely originally quarried out of the water during low tide), the quarrying of stone money in Yap which required voyages to the rock islands of Palau. These are described as remnants of mysterious lost cities, sometimes by modern day writers who see themselves as modern day Indiana Jones’. I am more interested in the nameless Pacific Islanders who made these structures under extreme conditions and with an appreciation of the water around them.

This brings to mind submerged settlements which dot the region and are remarkably intact like the ancient city of Junzhoul in the Danjiangkou Reservoir in Hubei Province. As described by Professor Sun Jian (of the Wuhan Underwater Cultural Heritage Base), the submerged city from the Ming and Qin dynasties lies preserved in remarkably good condition in the deep dark waters of the reservoir.

There are also the remarkable submerged ruins off the coast of Yonaguni situated 68 miles east of Taiwan. The ruins consists of solid rock slabs which stand erect at right angles and are estimated to be around 8,000 years old or perhaps leading back to the last ice age. The existence of land bridges between the mainland and the surrounding islands frustrate the popular view that these underwater structures like Yonaguni (and even Nan Madol) were constructed by extraterrestrial beings and forces. They were just ordinary human beings like us. But we are still wedded in popular culture to ancient, submerged continents like Atlantis and Mu.

In the 21st century, we think of fanciful theories about lost cities and extraterrestrial action in our distant past or even divine intervention as subject to evidentiary proof. Collectively, your efforts as resource managers, academics, informed hobbyists or just intelligent people are supposed to guard against these ideas which seem so 19th century or part of some lunatic fringe. Evidentiary proof is part of the rigor of analysis and the basis for separating truth from fiction.

With the onset of fake news and the explosion of social media and sources of information, I am not so sure that these fanciful explanations are buried in our past. They are given new life all the time. I am not talking about faith-based as opposed to evidence-based discoveries like the Shroud of Turin (in which Jesus' likeness is reflected) or the Tablets discovered by Joseph Smith which gave birth to the Latter Day Saints or Mormons. I am talking about fake archeological evidence as in treasure makers or fakers who are the next step down from treasure hunters.

Today, we have a public that knows more about pirates from Johnny Depp and the Pirates of the Caribbean than shipwrecks, documents and logs. Some 25% of the American public believes that the moon landing was faked. On a more positive note, in polling done for the Society of American Archaeology, 96% of the people believe that archeological sites deserve legal protection, but only 67% think that should apply to their own private property when it comes to removing artifacts. A smaller number (61%) think that laws should prevent the general public from taking away artifacts found on shipwrecks. Private property is apparently proprietary even in history and "finders keepers" is an ethic that continues to catch our attention. Of course, this is a dated poll (early 2000s) and includes only Americans. In the poll, 56% of the respondents received their knowledge about archeology through television and only 10% from k-12 education

There must be fake archeological websites or at least ones that hold questionable views. In the new world, we respond to sources of information that agree with our points of view. I am concerned that political leadership will take a more direct hand in the portrayal of sites and findings especially when they conflict with national self-imagery or celebration. We have seen much of that in recent years and in some countries, an overt nationalist agenda trumps evidence. Come to think of it, I wonder what kind of UCH evidence President Trump would take as credible. Perhaps a few planted Trump tower signs in order to spark imagination would be acceptable.

The lost continent imagery continues to capture the imagination through popular programming and even amusement parks. Our childhood introductions to such topics in children's stories and in portrayals in amusement parks (Jungle Boat Cruise in Disneyland and across the water at Hong Kong Disneyland) are never refined unless we go to postsecondary education or have the opportunity to visit World Heritage sites.

A good, but not so dramatic example is the cluster of atolls named Papahānaumokuākea. As described in the World Heritage Listing, "This is a linear low lying islands located 250 kilometers northwest of the main Hawaiian islands, but extending some 1900 kilometer. The area has traditional significance for living Native Hawaiian culture, as an ancestral environment, as an embodiment of the Hawaiian concept of kinship between people and the natural world, and as the place where it is believed that life originates and to where the spirits return after death. On two of the islands, Nihoa and Makumanamana, there are archaeological remains relating to pre-European settlement and use. Much of the monument is made up of pelagic and deep water habitats, with notable features such as seamounts and submerged banks, extensive coral reefs and lagoons. It is one of the largest Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the world.

This World Heritage Site brings a distinctive Pacific Islander perspective to UCH. It simultaneously gives a Pacific Islander cosmological interpretation to a series of practical applications and uses of resources needed for everyday life. Pacific Islanders understood that systems of land tenure included coastlines and extensions into the water. Pacific Islander reliance on ocean resources meant the study of fish, currents, and geographical landmarks to form ponds and mark areas where access to the open ocean was facilitated. Some of this is lost as islanders themselves turned to land-based resources, imports and other ways of interpreting existence, but the perspective of this world view can still be discovered in the UCH of Pacific Islands.

In the listing of World Heritage Sites, 13 are discoverable through diving. Of these dive-able sites, three are in the Pacific Islands. They are Palau (southern Rock

Islands), Rapa Nui (Easter Island) and Bikini Atoll. The first two are heritage sites primarily for their natural assets which are unique and provide insight into naturally occurring phenomena. Only the Bikini Atoll World Heritage site brings us into the human affected underwater world. Bikini certainly does so in a dramatic way.

Bikini became a World Heritage Site in 2010. Mary Jane Naone tells us that this site exists primarily to inform us about the effects of the nuclear age and the beginning of the Cold War. The extensive testing which occurred in the Marshall Islands harkens back to the effects of colonialism and disregard for Pacific Islanders which is within the recent life span of many of us. It is not ancient history or something that happened in the 19th century. It happened as an indicator of human progress and ingenuity in the 20th century. The testing itself helped motivate a global anti-nuclear movement after radiated tuna found its way into Japanese markets courtesy of a Japanese fishing vessel. Naone reminds us that there are also important natural as well as cultural/historical elements to this particular World Heritage site. We must be mindful of both and allow each to inform each other rather than be in conflict.

UCH based on shipwrecks from nuclear testing or World War II remains of compelling interest to divers and the Pacific Islands themselves. There are perhaps as many as 4000 vessels resting on the bottom of the ocean throughout the Pacific. Many are just below the waterline and near coastlines and are accessible to divers. They offer a glimpse of history but also a hint of danger with unexploded ordnance and environmental challenges with some 300 oil tankers amongst the sunken ships. None are more stunning than the ships and airplanes in the Chuuk Lagoon. There are 50 Japanese vessels, 300 airplanes and 5000 sailors that are accessible to visitors from around the world. It is a world famous site that is not on the list of World Heritage Sites.

As reviewed by our colleague Bill Jeffery in the publication being unveiled in this Conference (Safeguarding Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Pacific), the Chuuk case presents many important lessons for us. There are challenges to the

environment from oil leaking from the vessels and the ever present threat of unexploded ordnance. This is exacerbated by the lack of adequate monitoring processes, regulation of visitors and uncertain government structure. Add to this the seeming indifference of islanders who continue to practice dynamite fishing, there is lots of room for misunderstandings and conflict. This keeps the site off the World Heritage list. Conflict archaeology clearly has a role in examining the case of Chuuk Lagoon.

More significant than inadequate or irregular processes is the varying perspectives on the site itself. There are the American, Japanese and Chuukese points of view of the value and importance of the site. For decades, Americans have flocked to the site and are encouraged by a point of view that is concerned with the war time experience. There is an almost “celebratory” dimension to witnessing the destruction of the Japanese fleet. At the time of the air raids in World War II, it was seen as payback for Pearl Harbor. Diving and examining the Japanese wrecks as curiosities and trophies have been encouraged in ways that would be unthinkable in Pearl Harbor. The ships there are seen as entombing heroic Americans and are deserving of protection and solemnity.

To some extent, the American attitude towards Pearl Harbor is more like the Japanese attitude towards the Chuuk Lagoon. There is a decidedly more subdued point of view. This is a graveyard for the remains of thousands of Japanese sailors and a site that deserves more respect and reverence. As explained by Akifumi Iwabuchi, the soldiers and sailors of the Japanese military were promised that their remains would be returned to Japan if they fell in battle.

Lastly, the Chuukese are ambivalent about it. They recognize that they have an historic site worth of worldwide attention to it, but their connection to the war experience was a tragic one. It reminds them of hardship, not national sacrifice or military victory. They want to profit from the site, but they are unsure about how to portray it in light of their own experiences. This is a continuing theme and unresolved issue which deserves serious thought and consideration if any attention to UCH is to be worthy of local and global support. It is important to

remember that worldwide acknowledgement matters very little if local communities neither support nor understand the establishment of historical sites.

This has a terrestrial counterpart in the War in the Pacific National Park in Guam. After several decades of consideration, dialogue, examination and Congressional direction, a three prong approach to explaining the war has emerged. Basically, when you visit the Park or any of its sites, there is an American, Japanese and Chamoru point of view. It is important to note that this did not occur spontaneously. It required an open mind, lots of dialogue, advocacy and literally an Act of Congress.

The sobering part of this is to understand that in Guam, World War II probably cost the lives of 5% of the entire population. For Saipan, it was closer to 10%. To ask them to commemorate the battles that occurred there in the same way that the combatant nations did is to simultaneously dishonor the islander experience and miss out an important part of the story.

As we look to the future to ironically protect our past, we must not just cooperate and follow suggested steps as outlined in the annex of the publication *Safeguarding Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Pacific: Report on Good Practice in the protection and Management of World War II-Related Underwater Cultural Heritage*, we have to work locally in individual jurisdictions to monitor regulatory processes and change laws. Local laws regarding salvaging were likely formed at a time when salvaging shipwrecks rather than history was the main concern. Treasure hunting has always captured the public imagination and impeded the growth of regulatory regimes and dispassionate academic research. We must also put teeth into the protection of these tangible remnants as looters and salvaging for metal intensifies. The desire for metal by islanders upon their first contact with Western voyagers is matched today by those eager to sell off salvaged metal.

The interest in the Manila Galleons which went through the Marianas on the way to Manila, but only shipwrecked on the way back provides some interesting lessons and insights into the history of the Chamoru people. The passage between Guam and the nearest island to the north became known as the route, La Ruta in

Spanish and now gives that island the name of Rota or Luta in Chamoru. Some estimate that there are as many as 10 Galleons shipwrecked in the area, but the waters around Guam in particular are pretty deep.

The Galleon Trade introduced missionaries, Catholicism and other major forms of Hispanicized reality to the Marianas Islands. Islander appreciation of these historical changes will be severely tested and analyzed when 2021 comes around, the 500th anniversary of Magellan's visit to the Pacific. For Guam and the Marianas, this will be a watershed moment as we will get a waterfall of opinions. I am sure that there will be a voyage in store for the Pacific. I assume that the same welcome will be extended to would be Magellans as the original one.

We do have some institutional support from resource agencies and for those of us in that part of the Pacific which is commonly referred to the US affiliated islands, this provides us a good basis to proceed with. The U.S. National Park Service has its Submerged Resources Center. It does excellent work even though it remains focused on historical sites. The work in Bikini Atoll on the archeology of the atomic bomb is an example of extraordinary effort on their part on the work that the NPS itself feels passionate about.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US Department of Commerce also supports underwater archeology and helps bridge the gap between the study of human activity in areas impacted by shipwrecks, the construction of facilities and naturally occurring phenomenon which occurs over thousands of years and increases our understanding of climate change, sea level rise and connections to human migration and coastal activity.

The role of academic institutions as the lead research agencies and honest brokers is vitally important. Marine archeology in universities is clearly not as robust as archeology on land, but it has been growing in networks which reach out to other disciplines.

Nautical Archeology Program (NAP) founded in the 1970s at Texas A and M is the grandfather for American programs and set the standard. As its name implies, it

was originally focused on shipwrecks. It has grown into the Center for Maritime Archeology and Conservation belying the trajectory of interest as academic and research interests grew and matured. East Carolina University has also been a tremendous leader.

Academic programs are also connected internationally through UNESCO and the University Twinning and Networking Program better known as UNITWIN. The UNITWIN just celebrated its 25th anniversary. There are 69 networks, covering 850 institutions in 134 countries.

There is a UNITWIN Network for Marine Archeology established in 2012, The University of Guam (UOG) is an associate member and 11 full members (US members are East Carolina and Texas A and M), 17 associate members from an international array of universities.

The Network complements the work of the UNESCO Secretariat of the 2001 *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*. The convention is one of the seven core Conventions in the field of culture. Adopted in 2001, it intends to enable States to better protect submerged heritage.

Through universities and these networks, marine archeology is growing as a discipline at the graduate level and is establishing its own presence through Field Schools which bridge practice with knowledge and hopefully within an environment of understanding.

CONCLUSION

As we look towards the future, the past looks brighter. And it will be so if we broaden our collective outlook to examine the relationship of the Pacific Island peoples back to Asia, Southeast Asia and the renewed interest in the origins of the Austronesian people in Taiwan.

The Austronesian languages make up the fifth largest language family in the world (in numbers of speakers) but they are the second largest group in terms of numbers of languages. They are clearly the most geographically dispersed. They

can be thought of as the Maritime group of languages since they are dispersed throughout most of the island Pacific, through Southeast Asia and all the way to Madagascar. Their migration over large expanses of ocean left a trail of evidence which we should search for.

They left fishing weirs, coastal settlements (some submerged) and a history of migration through navigation which is being re-discovered and re-enacted. Their ability to be scientists, meteorologists, naturalists, dreamers, planners and adventurers over large expanses of ocean remain one of the untold stories of human existence. Its discovery could even rival World War II in importance and significance.

It behooves all of us from large countries and small islands to not just promise collaboration but to work on specific networks of relationships with clear goals and objectives in mind. Those of us from small islands have big hearts, but regrettably resources and scale that are equal in size and scope to our diminutive size. Micronesia means more than small islands, it usually also means small resources. We need to rely on the expertise and extensive resources on places like Korea's National Research Institute on Maritime Cultural Heritage and Taiwan's renewed efforts to understand their UCH in terms of being the fountainhead of Austronesian migration.

In partnering with larger land masses and expertise, Pacific Islands will discover their own past. More importantly, the search will provide important clues about the diffusion and spread of Austronesian peoples and languages. They spread out over the greatest part of the globe. Their story is important not only to themselves, but to understanding the genius of all of us terrestrial beings who moved over large parts of the ocean.