

War graves, munition dumps and pleasure grounds: A post-colonial perspective of Chuuk Lagoon's submerged World War II sites



Thesis submitted by
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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Statement on the contribution of others

During some of my fieldwork, I was under a contract to the FSM National Historic Preservation Office to work as a maritime archaeologist in Chuuk, the setting for this study. I received a salary during these periods (approximately five months) and financial support in the implementation of some field surveys. This extended to funds from Historic Preservation Funds in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior for additional field surveys that were primarily for the use of the Chuuk Historic Preservation Office, but which benefited my site surveys.

Additional funding was gained from the Earthwatch Institute to provide for further site surveys in collaboration with other specialists and the Chuuk government, as detailed in the acknowledgements.

Dr Shelley Greer supervised this study during its final stages and made a number of editorial comments. All other support is detailed in the acknowledgements.

Declaration on Ethics

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics. Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H1440).

W.F. Jeffery

Date

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Inspiration for this research has come from working in maritime archaeology for a number of years, and collaborating with numerous colleagues, researchers and communities in Australia and elsewhere. When in Chuuk, I saw a need to apply submerged WWII site research to contemporary Chuukese and my inspiration came from living, working and getting to know a number of people. I have also derived inspiration from my father who passed away in 2002, and I am sad he could not have been here upon completion of this work. He fought in the World War II, and was in Darwin when it was bombed by the Japanese. He lost his only sibling during the war, a brother named Bill, and I can always remember his reluctance in talking about the war, until his last few years. My mother is still with me and I thank her for getting me this far, and in her tolerance when I abandoned my job and home to take on this work. In this same token, I want to say thanks to my children, Jessica, Peter and Rachel, who I am sure think I am crazy for going back to study. Finally I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my wife, Vivienne Moran, who as a maritime archaeologist, has provided some lively discussion, and assisted in field work. This topic has consumed many of my thoughts, much of my time and our office at home, and I thank her for her support during this time.

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is the meanings that can be gained from examining the conflicts in the values associated with the submerged World War II sites located in Chuuk Lagoon, Federated States of Micronesia. The submerged WWII sites are representative of the war phase in the history of Chuuk and part of Chuuk's colonial period. They are valued and used by the three relevant groups, Chuukese, Japanese and Americans in different ways that are indicative of a range of social, cultural, economic and political connections. I have investigated these connections using a post-processual approach to underwater cultural heritage management to appreciate contemporary societies and issues, and site management.

Understanding Chuukese contemporary societies and issues includes understanding Chuukese local history. After 1,800 years of regional seclusion, Chuukese experienced a number of foreign contacts and colonial rulers. As a result, they experienced a number of changes and adapted and adopted practices for their own benefit. During World War II, Chuuk was utilised as a major Japanese base in the same manner as Pearl Harbor was to the United States of America (U.S.), and Chuukese were dominated by a large Japanese military presence. War and suffering came to Chuuk on 17 February 1944 with the commencement of the U.S. bombing of the base and the associated cruelty of some Japanese military personnel. The base was bypassed by U.S. amphibious forces during their 1944 conquests in the western Pacific and not only left to 'wither on the vine', but used in U.S. bomber tests, British aircraft carrier tests, and discussed as a target for U.S. atomic bomb tests.

Chuuk was dominated and Japanized pre-war, which had a number of consequences, including many marriages between Japanese men and Chuukese women. Although there was an initial hatred of the Japanese post-war, many Chuukese today acknowledge their Japanese ancestry and many older Chuukese lament the 'good' pre-war Japanese days, as compared to the poor current services and supplies that came after the war.

With the loss of over 50 million lives, World War II was a watershed in 'world' history and the bombing of the Japanese base in the Chuuk lagoon was an important historic event in relation to this. But for the Chuukese, this is not 'world' history, but *their* 'local' history. This research focuses on gaining an understanding of Chuukese local history, including the values associated with the war and the submerged WWII sites. The need to have a local perspective and to be socially inclusive

(rather than objectively scientific) is inherent in this approach. It has revealed that submerged WWII site management takes its cue from Cultural Resource Management (CRM) approaches that privilege archaeological values of sites that are then used to prescribe site management. The Chuuk Lagoon submerged World War II sites are currently managed and promoted according to the dominant Euro-American values, that is, as significant sites associated with the U.S. conquering the Japanese during World War II, and as a focus for international tourism. Chuukese values have not been acknowledged, and while Japanese values are acknowledged, they are ignored. These values can be complex, they can conflict, perhaps especially in relation to those of the Euro-American approach. However, I argue that the lack of Chuukese and Japanese values in this approach is indicative of neo-colonialism, and the continued contested nature of World War II and its remembrances. This investigation has also revealed that conflicts between Chuukese and Japanese values are related to past colonialism and the impacts of World War II.

The value of this research is in demonstrating how a more socially inclusive, less scientific approach in investigating submerged WWII sites, will facilitate better understanding of the range of meanings inherent in this important submerged landscape. It is anticipated that it could result in a more valuable and viable methodology for site management. This research also demonstrates that submerged WWII sites can have value, meaning and relevance for contemporary societies, in addition to their role as repositories of the past. This study has also revealed apparent paradoxes in war sites that both commemorate war and are used as peace memorials, which in association with the conflicts shown in Chuuk Lagoon illustrate the need for less domination and more inclusion.

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Appendices

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Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Chuuk HPO staff and COM students on heritage issues in Chuuk

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for diving tourists on their perceptions of the submerged heritage sites

Appendix 4: A list of ships sunk or damaged inside and outside Chuuk Lagoon, from four primary and four secondary sources.

Appendix 5: Book chapter: *Federated States of Micronesia* in: *The Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage: National Perspectives in light of the UNESCO Convention 2001.*

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Abbreviations

ARIUA	Asian Research Institute in Underwater Archaeology
ASA	Abandoned Shipwrecks Act (U.S.)
AWM	Australian War Memorial
C	Celsius
Centimetre	cm
CIMA	Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology
CHM	Cultural Heritage Management
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COM	College of Micronesia
DCI	Decompression Illness
DGPS	Differential Global Positioning System
EW	Earthwatch Institute
FSM	Federated States of Micronesian
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
grt	gross registered tonnage
hp	horse power
HPO	Historic Preservation Office
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
ITCZ	Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone
JEEP	Japanese Environmental Education Program
Kilometre	km
MEHP	Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation
Metre	m
Millimetre	mm
NAD	Naval Analysis Division
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NHL	National Historic Landmark

NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPS	National Park Service
PATA	Pacific Asia Travel Association
PI	Principal Investigator
RDF	Radio Direction Finding
SCRU	Submerged Cultural Resources Unit
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPREP	South Pacific Region Environment Program
SRU	Submerged Resources Unit
TTPI	Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands
UCHM	Underwater Cultural Heritage Management
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.N.	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation
U.S.	United States
U.S.CC	United States Commercial Company
U.S.N	United States Navy
U.S.NPS	United States National Park Service
WHC	World Heritage Committee
WHL	World Heritage List
WGS	World Geographical Series
WHC	World Heritage Convention
WTO	World Tourism Organisation
WWII	World War 2