



*Finding a Path Forward*

**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS THEME STUDY**

*Edited by Franklin Odo*





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## Essay 12



# Pacific Islanders in the U.S. and their Heritage: Making Visible the Visibly Absent<sup>1</sup>

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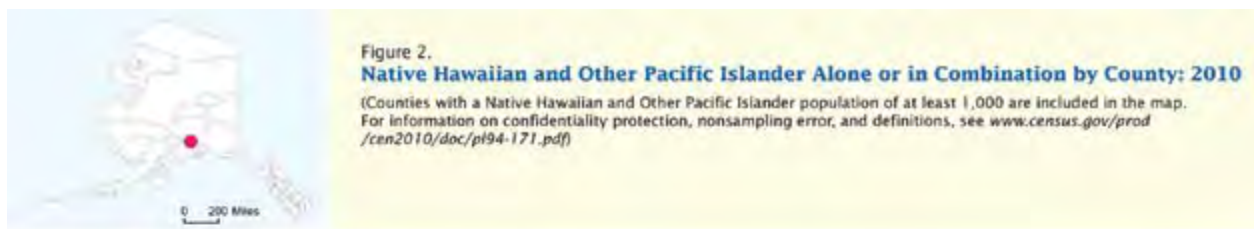
**T**he Pacific Ocean region includes 27 island nations and territories, each of which has at least one or two indigenous cultural groups. Hundreds of distinct indigenous peoples live in larger islands/island continents, such as New Guinea and Australia. Several of these Pacific Island areas are part of the United States (U.S.) in one fashion or another—the unincorporated territories of American Samoa and Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI),<sup>2</sup> and the state of Hawai'i. Indigenous Taotao Håya (Chamorro),<sup>3</sup> Refaluwasch (Carolinian), and Kånaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) Pacific Islander Americans and Tagata Samoa (Samoan) Pacific Islander American nationals are present both in their homeland islands as well as throughout the rest of the U.S.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. has also claimed eight other Pacific Islands and island groups that are essentially uninhabited except for certain military or other government-related worker

A commemorative statue of the late Senator Angel Santos is pictured here with latte pillars located to the right. The Latte Stone Park was recently renamed the Senator Angel L.G. Santos Latte Memorial Park. The Senator, an impassioned advocate for Chamorro rights and culture, often spent time with the latte at the park as a means to connect to and be inspired by Chamorro ancestral spirits. Photo by Kelly G. Marsh; used with permission.









2010 census data showing US counties with populations of more than 1,000 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders. Note that US Pacific Island commonwealths and territories are not included. Map Courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012.

or scientific data-gathering populations.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, three independent Pacific Island nations—the Republic of Palau (ROP), The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)—are Freely Associated States (FAS) in treaty relationships with the U.S. Pacific Islanders of Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae,<sup>6</sup> and the Marshalls, in relatively large numbers, serve in the U.S. military, live within parts of the U.S., and are, at times, Pacific Islander Americans in addition to being citizens of their island nations.<sup>7</sup>

In the larger picture, Pacific Islanders from at least 19 nations and territories live temporarily or more permanently in U.S. states and territories. Conversely, migration flows both ways, and each of these nations and territories are likely to have Americans living there.

Pacific Islander Americans and nationals—despite settling and thriving in their islands for hundreds or

thousands of years before the U.S. itself was established, some with urban areas older than any city in the U.S.,<sup>8</sup> and having homelands that have now been part of the U.S. through various means for well over 100 years—in many ways and to varying degrees are conspicuously absent from U.S. representation. Their numbers have been overwhelmed so that they now constitute a minority population in their own homelands.<sup>9</sup>

Those living in territories have no presence on a typical U.S. map,<sup>10</sup> no star on the U.S. flag, no representation in the U.S. Senate, and no real voice in the U.S. House of Representatives (their Delegates to Congress have not been allowed to be full members). They have no vote in the Electoral College, which means no vote for the U.S. President who is their Commander in Chief and can order them into battle. As a whole, they are also visibly absent or underrepresented in national and international historic registers and even in their local

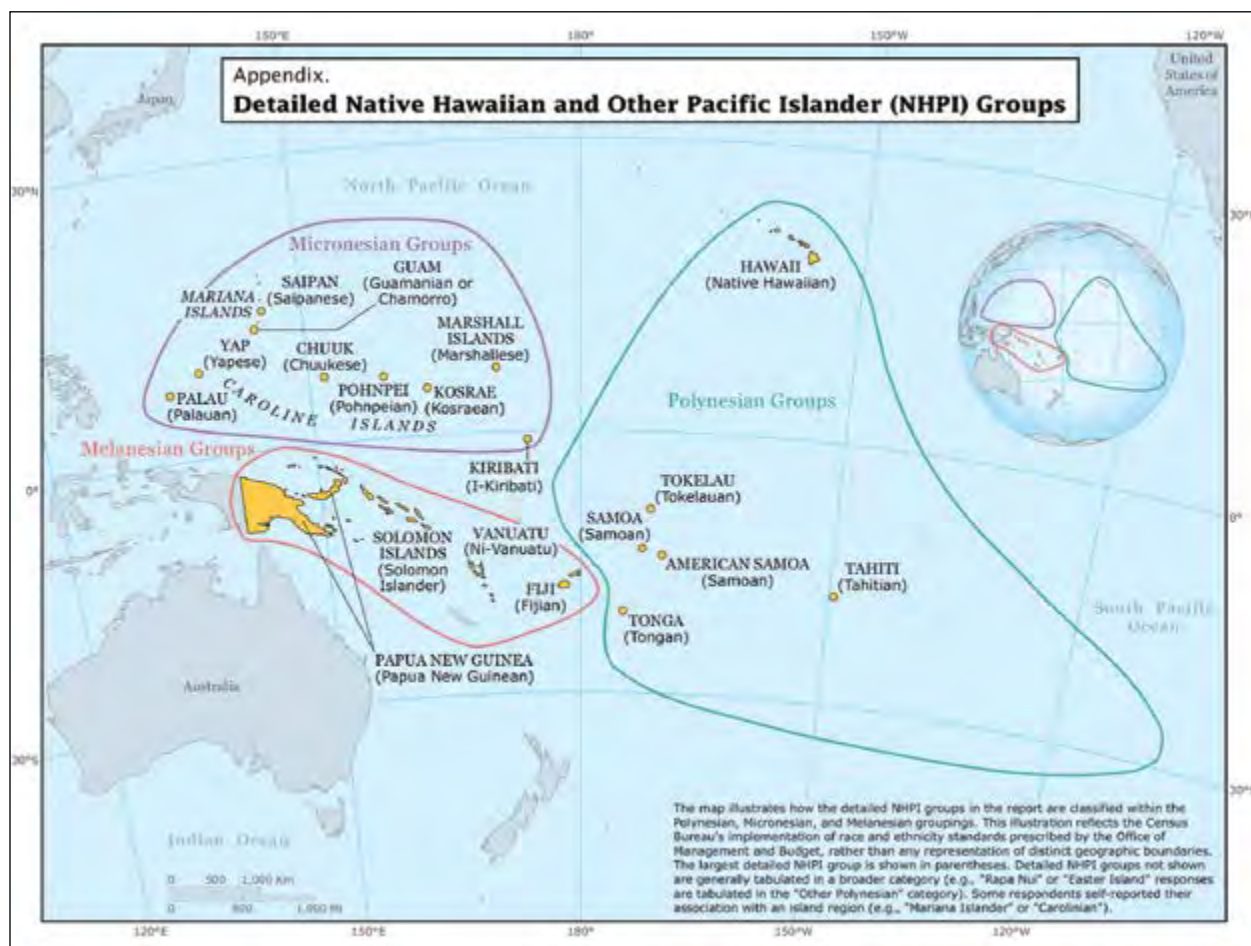
registers. An example of this “invisibility:” the U.S. 2010 Census brief on the presence of Pacific Islanders in the U.S., including its demographic maps, is restricted to discussing and depicting the 50 states.<sup>11</sup> Except for the state of Hawai‘i, the brief includes neither the U.S. Pacific Island areas themselves nor the more than 100,000 Pacific Islander Americans and Pacific Islander American nationals who live upon them.

Indeed, many Americans are not aware that any Pacific Islands outside of the Hawaiian island chain are part of or affiliated with the U.S. and are surprised to hear that Guam is, as the U.S.’s westernmost point, “Where America’s Day Begins” or that American Samoa is “Where America’s Sun Sets.”<sup>12</sup> This invisibility erases the fact that Islanders have significant aspects of their culture and history to showcase and commemorate both in their islands as well as in fellow U.S.

territories, districts, and states.

## HOMELANDS

Islands in the Pacific, or Oceania, are homelands for Pacific Islanders.<sup>13</sup> Relationships with their homelands—where they were created or to which they migrated, where they have existed for hundreds or thousands of years: raising children, gardening, gathering, fishing, hunting, and otherwise living—are deep and powerful. Some refer to the land as their soul and as the foundation of their cultures and identities. The land has provided for them, it has fed them, clothed them, and met their needs. The land and all its surrounds—the reefs, the sea, the air—are sacred and imbued with spirits of the past and present. It is where ancestors are buried, where their footsteps fell, where they harvested from their gardens and jungles, where their nets were cast, where traditions



This 2010 US Census Bureau map shows the homeland islands of Pacific Islander Americans and Nationals and other Pacific Islanders in the United States. Saipan is the largest island in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Both Chamorros and Refaluwasch are indigenous to the NMI, although only Saipanese are listed in parentheses as an associated NHPI group. Map courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012.

and practices began, and where battles were fought, alliances were forged, and peace was restored. It is where supernatural beings, demi-gods, gods, people, animals, and other living organisms co-exist and have shaped the earth or have been shaped by it.<sup>14</sup>

Pacific Islander relationships with their homelands are enduring; for most, it does not matter the years that pass, the development of the island, the change in island demographics, the time spent abroad, the colonial or other administrations, or the various national affiliations. As noted by the late Governor of Guam, Ricardo J. Bordallo, about Guåhan (Guam),

Guam is not just a piece of real estate to be exploited for its money-making potential. Above all else, Guam is the homeland of the Chamorro people.<sup>15</sup> That is a fundamental, undeniable truth. We are profoundly “taotao tano”—people of the land. This land...belongs to us just as surely, just as inseparably, as we belong to it. No tragedy of history or declaration of conquest, no legalistic double-talk can change that fact.<sup>16</sup>

Contemporarily, the concept of homeland is realized in different forms for Pacific Islanders. For some, as is the case for Native Hawaiians, the government has developed a specific and more restrictive legal definition as to what constitutes Native Hawaiian “home land.”<sup>17</sup>

Pockets of Pacific Islanders have lived for generations in various U.S. towns or villages, counties,

and states beyond their homeland islands. To varying degrees, they bring and apply qualities relating to attachment to the land, now having layered identities and sets of traditions and relationships with homelands, as well as with communities in which they and their fellow Islanders have been participants for years or generations. For example, some transplants establish social structures adapted from home. Many Islanders from Pohnpei, now living in Kansas City, have been operating under Kiti, a traditional paramount chiefdom in their home island. Others keep their home islands as touchstones of cultural identity, even as they do not envision any return. Some have been embraced by their new community as has happened in Milan, Minnesota, where the mayor states that the Islanders from Chuuk “now belong to Milan, and Milan belongs to them.”<sup>18</sup> However, in spite of the mayor’s declaration, the Chuukese of Milan (perhaps representative of other Pacific Islanders who are not U.S. citizens) have expressed that there is still a limit to feeling fully connected to the U.S.

#### VOYAGING/MOVEMENT

Migration and voyaging in Oceania is not a new phenomenon. Pacific Islanders have migrated for centuries, with their mobility marked by deep water sailing canoes, celestial navigation, and interisland voyages.<sup>19</sup> Voyaging and movement characterize Pacific identity and way of life. Pacific Islanders are peoples who crossed land bridges and shallow waters to New Guinea and Australia tens of thousands of years ago or were part of the Austronesian movement out of Southeast Asia; they are



Melchy Billy's Dance Group entering the stage at the 46th annual Chief Aghurubw Day on Managaha Island, Northern Mariana Islands. Chief Aghurubw saved his people after a devastating typhoon, by leading them to the Northern Mariana Islands to resettle. The special day of commemoration is considered an integral part of the NMI Refaluwasch culture. Photo by Cinta M. Kaipat; used with permission.



peoples who voyaged and settled islands from Madagascar, just off Africa, to Rapa Nui (Easter Island), just off the coast of South America, and the islands in-between. They are renowned seafarers. With their great voyaging skills and ingenuity of canoe design and ability, Pacific Islanders sought and settled into new homes in numerous and succeeding waves from Southeast Asian islands, such as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Sulawesi, or islands within the Pacific, like New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, or the Marquesas. Chamorros, Palauans, and Samoans were some of the first to settle their islands in the Pacific some 3,500 and 3,000 years ago, respectively. Venturing out from perhaps the Marquesas and Society Islands, Native Hawaiians made their home in their more remotely located archipelago sometime later, around AD 1000 or 1100.

While Chamorros, Native Hawaiians, Refaluwasch, Samoans, and other Pacific Islanders developed their unique societies, cultures, and languages in their homeland islands, they continued to receive new island community members from elsewhere and to voyage beyond their home islands to explore, emigrate, network, and create relationships with those beyond their islands. Examples of continued movement and interaction with others are numerous: peoples of the Marshall Islands and other eastern and central islands in Micronesia settled there from elsewhere in the Pacific, at times moving and resettling more than once. Native Hawaiians and peoples of Rapa Nui ventured to the Americas perhaps as early as AD 500 or 700.<sup>20</sup> Chamorros and other Pacific Islanders traveled aboard trading, whaling, and other ships to the Americas, Bonin, the Hawaiian Islands, and other international locales in limited numbers in the 1500s and 1600s, with numbers increasing through the 1700s and 1800s. The Refaluwasch relocated from Elato and Satawal islands to the Northern Mariana Islands in the 1800s.

Because of these traditions of continued movement, Pacific Islanders live in numerous countries around the globe, from those located in the region like Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, and Taiwan to countries farther abroad such as the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Some of the reasons for these contemporary movements include access to education, employment, particular health care, and different lifeways and surrounds; being adventurous;

being close to family and others elsewhere (family first cultures, chain migration); following their dreams to start their own business; making it big in the corporate world or serving in high profile positions in the federal government; playing in college, semi-pro, and professional sports;<sup>21</sup> and performing in the national music industry scene or becoming stars in show business. For some, it is to leave frustrating colonial situations where they are treated as minorities or second-class citizens in their own homelands.

As Pacific Islanders settled into different areas, they contributed to their new towns, villages, and cities. In the U.S., Islanders helped explore the western frontier and worked in early industries like whaling and trading or, in the Pacific Northwest, fur trade, where parts of the landscape and some of the buildings continue to bear Hawaiian names (e.g., Owyhee River and Kanaka Rapids).<sup>22</sup> They panned for gold in California and fought in national wartime efforts, beginning at least as early as the War of 1812 and the Civil War<sup>23</sup> and have served in every ensuing U.S. conflict. They now serve at military bases throughout the U.S. and elsewhere (e.g., Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, Japan, and South Africa). They fill voids in the U.S. workforce, like the Marshallese who are providing services in the fields of health care or chicken packing in locales such as Springdale, Arkansas.<sup>24</sup> Pacific Islanders, such as the Chuukese in Milan, Minnesota, have reinvigorated towns previously dwindling in size and age composition.<sup>25</sup> They establish food trucks, “mom and pop” stores, and restaurants in places like Portland, San Diego, and Miami, offering the rest of America new food choices and cultural cuisines. They play on various sports teams in states such as Hawai‘i, Washington, Utah, and Michigan.<sup>26</sup> They work in corporate America and the federal government, heading up a division of Pixar or serving as Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior. In fact, every U.S. dollar currently minted has a uniquely Pacific Islander name signed on it, Gumataotao,<sup>27</sup> because the U.S. Treasurer is married to a Chamorro from Guam. At the same time, for those in Freely Associated States, there are other consequences to their affiliations with the U.S. For example, some in the U.S. have preyed upon them by offering jobs that did not live up to their advertisement (i.e. blackbirding)<sup>28</sup> or brokering adoptions of their children fraught with cultural misperceptions (occurring





Richard K. Billy's Aghurubw Warriors perform the stick dance for the 46th annual Chief Aghurubw Day on Managaha Island, Northern Mariana Islands. Managaha Island is considered sacred in the NMI Refaluwasch culture, because Chief Aghurubw is buried there. Photo by Cinta M. Kaipat; used with permission.

both in their home islands and in the U.S.).<sup>29</sup>

In the larger context, for some of these Pacific Island communities, there are more of their fellow Islanders living in places other than in their homeland islands. These movements have influenced the way identity is expressed and culture is maintained in different lands and destinations and throughout the diaspora. Outmigration, in combination with the immigration to their islands, from the U.S. and elsewhere, seriously impacts U.S. Pacific Islands and Pacific Islands affiliated with the U.S. For example, Native Hawaiians now constitute a minority (20 percent in 2000) in their islands; so are the Refaluwasch in the NMI. Chamorros in Guam, in recent decades, have become no more than a plurality on their own island. Some of this demographic change has resulted in indigenous Pacific Islanders unable to afford the cost of housing on ancestral land, denied access to ancestral sites, and challenged by an influx of ideas denigrating the significance of their very heritages. However, in the face of these challenges, Pacific Islanders continue to follow the core cultural traditions of living together as families, contributing to the success of their families, taking care of one another, fulfilling reciprocal obligations, making traditional foods as possible, and gathering together, especially in celebration of home island cultural and historical events.

### U.S. POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

In the Pacific region, a wide variety of political relationships exists among island nations and territories and the U.S. nation-state. The political status classifications of these islands have shifted over time and range from: State, incorporated Territory, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), Commonwealth, Free Association, and unincorporated territory.

Hawai'i became the 50th state of the U.S. in 1959. Prior to statehood, the islands were an independent nation until the U.S.-backed coup d'état overthrowing Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893. Five years later, President William McKinley signed a joint resolution to annex the islands, and they remained a territory until incorporated as a state. The Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) did not passively accept the loss of their nation or erosion of their culture. There have been many forms of resistance to annexation and struggles for national sovereignty of the Hawaiian Islands. These movements continue today. Palmyra Atoll was annexed to the Kingdom of Hawai'i in 1862. When the Kingdom of Hawai'i was absorbed, Palmyra was included and now remains as the only incorporated, albeit uninhabited, territory, within the U.S.

Following the conclusion of WWII, the United Nations placed all Micronesian islands of the former Japanese-administered League of Nations Mandate

under a U.S.-administered strategic trusteeship, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). The U.S. was to guide the TTPI entities—the Northern Mariana Islands, Yap, Palau, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and the Marshall Islands—toward some level of real self-government, including possible independence. The U.S. ended its oversight and administration over the islands, island group by island group, as they became either a commonwealth of, or in free association with, the U.S.

Three of the former-TTPI island states are now classified as in “free association” with the U.S.—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The status of free association is recognized as a distinct form of separate sovereignty. It is a transitional status for peoples who do not seek full integration but opt to maintain close relations and ties with another nation during the period after separate sovereignty is achieved. For the former-TTPI islands, it is a form of independence based on an agreement with the U.S. that continues U.S. assistance and allows mutual defense. In accordance with international law, free association agreements would need to provide for unilateral termination by either party.<sup>30</sup>

Today, the U.S. no longer has trust territory or inhabited incorporated territories, but maintains five unincorporated territories: Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, and American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. adopted the doctrine of unincorporation through a series of constitutional decisions known as the *Insular Cases* (1901–1922), which developed a new type of political status for acquired territories with indigenous populations. This new status meant that these territories were not on the path to incorporation and statehood and the rights and privileges of the U.S. Constitution could only be applied as determined by Congress (in which the territory has no real voice as noted above). Some insist that these conditions constitute second-class citizenship for the peoples of these territories.

Unincorporated territories have histories of lengthy military governments and appointed civilian governors, with indigenous peoples and locals as wards of the nation, before finally being afforded varying levels of limited self-government. Their histories have resulted in decades of deliberation concerning sovereignty and

political powers. For example, while granted U.S. citizenship, territorial residents vote in local elections and plebiscites but not in presidential elections.

This inconsistency in representation continues: unincorporated territories compete as distinct entities in the Olympics but do not have seats in the United Nations, nor can they be full members in certain regional programs that support cultural heritage efforts, as islands in Free Association can. Such ambiguities and inconsistencies have caused peoples in unincorporated territories to consider whether they would gain more rights and protections as federally recognized tribes with some level of recognized sovereignty. Similarly, due to the issues of being indigenous within a state, Native Hawaiians also weigh this possibility.<sup>32</sup> Those in territories have further considered whether they would be better served seeking self-determination as an incorporated state, a commonwealth, a state in free association, or as an independent state. Indeed, the UN has formally recognized certain of their non-self-governing statuses, and supports efforts toward self-determination. Political and constitutional modernization of the non-independent Pacific through genuine processes of self-determination, however, continues to represent formidable challenges as the 21st century continues.<sup>33</sup>

## PRESENCE AND HISTORY IN THE U.S.

### Presence

The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population is larger than it has ever been in U.S. history.<sup>34</sup> AAPI communities are among the fastest growing and most diverse groups in the country—ethnically, socially, and economically. They have the highest multiracial rates of all major racial/ethnic groups.<sup>35</sup>

Further, in the period between the last two censuses, the Pacific Islander population was noted to be one of the U.S.’s most rapidly growing race/ethnic groups. Over 1.2 million Pacific Islanders call the U.S. home. Some have traveled to the U.S., but for many, the U.S. arrived on their shores as part of the U.S. expansion efforts in the 1800s as the nation was striving to become a world power.

Significant demographic shifts are occurring throughout the country, as their communities move beyond California, which has the nation’s largest AAPI population, into towns and cities across all regions of the

continental U.S. Pacific Islanders are present in every state and inhabited territory of the U.S.—from Guam, the westernmost unincorporated territory, to New York, Florida, and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the east. Interestingly, the Southern region experienced the fastest growth of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander populations, with 66 percent growth between the 2000 and 2010 censuses.<sup>36</sup> In Houston, Texas, for example, more than 200,000 Asian Americans and 6,000 Pacific Islanders have moved to Harris County.<sup>37</sup>

Beginning in 1997, the Office of Management and Budget required federal agencies to use Pacific Islander (“Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander”—again showing the bias towards the status of a state versus a territory) as one of the census race categories. Within the 2010 census brief on Pacific Islanders (in a U.S. state), Pacific Islanders are differentiated according to Western categories that are geographical, not cultural, markers: Polynesians: Hawaiian (527,077), Samoan (184,440), Tokelauan (925), Other Polynesian (9,153); Micronesian: Guamanian/Chamorro<sup>38</sup> (147,798), Mariana Islander (391),<sup>39</sup> I-Kiribati (401), Other (29,112); Melanesian: Fijian (32,304), Ni-Vanuatu (91), Other (240,179). The census also shows that Native Hawaiians make up about 45

percent of all Pacific Islanders in U.S. states.

Nearly three-fourths of the state-based Pacific Islander population live in the West, while 16 percent live in the South, 7 percent in the Northeast, and 6 percent in the Midwest. More specifically, Pacific Islanders live in large concentrations in particular states such as in Hawai‘i (355,816), California (286,145), Washington (70,322), and Texas (47,646), with more than half of Pacific Islanders residing in the first two of those states. Each population sustains itself away from their respective island homes in various ways.

## History

### *Creation, Migration, and Ancestral Eras*

Pacific peoples all have seminal accounts regarding the creation of or migration to their islands. Chamorros tell of the sister and brother Fo’na and Pontan who together created the universe and everything within it. Native Hawaiians chant the Kumulipo to recount the creation of the world. Refaluwasch recall the Chiefs Nguschul of Elato and Aghurubw of Satawal island who led their resettlement in the Mariana Islands after their islands were destroyed by typhoon. And Samoans speak of the god Tagaloa who first created Manu’atele to have



Five hundred Guam delegates stand together at the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts opening ceremony on the evening of 22 May 2016. Hosting this festival, perhaps more than any other singular event in modern times, reaffirmed Guam’s Chamorro cultural identity. Its revitalization in recent years has increased the visitation to and protection of ancestral sites on the island. Photo by Kelly G. Marsh; used with permission.





The Chuukese community of Milan, Minnesota, at the dedication of the replacement of the town's Liberty Bell replica in 2016. Participating in the celebration, they sang some of their traditional songs, as shown here. Photo by Michael Elias; used with permission.

someplace to stand on earth before he went on to create surrounding islands and life upon them.

Other accounts tell how island environments and life upon them came to be and were refined over thousands of years. The appearance of humans brought development of social structures, traditions, skills, and knowledge, the accounts of which are often inscribed in the landscape and seascape. Reminders exist across the Pacific landscapes, such as, construction of the first Palauan *bai* ('men's traditional meeting house') where the first kava ceremony in American Samoa occurred. Narratives handed down through the generations chronicle the movement and activities of gods, demi-gods, and ancestors. Some from the past are petrified in stone or inscribed into the landscape as geographical features—Fo'na and Pontan, Manu'atele, and Pele, the goddess of fire, lightning, wind, and volcanoes who created the Hawaiian islands—to name but just a few. Oral narratives, pictographs, petroglyphs, the landscape, and crafted heritage tell us of the movement of peoples and families and of shifting alliances between clans, villages, islands, chiefdoms, kingdoms, and empires. They also inform us of ancestral villages and places where ancestors carried out daily activities and special events, gathered resources, fished and hunted, interacted with life around them, crafted items, conducted battles and

rituals, as well as where their souls are honored or left the earthly realm to voyage into the afterlife. *Fiirow* are such places. Located in the reefs, *fiirow* are where Refaluwasch carry out powerful rites and sacred ceremonies like burning the belongings of a loved one who has passed away. Peoples within the Pacific managed surrounding lands and waters and built retaining walls, wells, pavements, pathways, and fish weirs and traps. Each such place is meaningful, valued, and

sacred, imbued with powers and essences still deeply felt and respected. These early and formative times create multi-layered understandings of Pacific peoples, sites, and landscapes.

Some of these complex layers have been documented and registered as Pacific Islanders and others strive to maintain, protect, and better understand them; at other times, Pacific communities have preferred to achieve



Fouha (Fuha, Fu'a) Bay in Guam is recognized as a site important to the Chamorro creation narrative of the sister and brother, Fo'na and Pontan (Fu'una and Puntan). It was included in the Guam Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The ancestral tradition of procession to sacred sites, such as this, to honor ancestors and place offerings has been revived in recent years. Photo by Michael 'Miget' Lujan Bevacqua; used with permission.



The highlight of the celebration for the replacement of the town's Liberty Bell replica in Milan, Minnesota, was a two-float parade consisting of a Viking ship denoting Milan's Norwegian heritage and an outrigger canoe, the latter seen here, representing an important aspect of Chuukese traditional culture. Photo by Michael Elias; used with permission.

these goals through bolstering traditional practices such as reinstating or maintaining ceremonies, processions, and transmission of knowledge. Unfortunately, these ancestral layers are sometimes silenced by highlighting modern historic events, destroying or removing tangible ancestral heritage, or limiting access to them. For Pacific Islanders, in contrast to many western views, these actions do not necessarily impact the integrity of the power or essence of an ancestral site. For example, the military bulldozed particular sets of *latte*, two-piece Chamorro stone house pillars, sometime around the 1950s; they were relocated to various sites on Guam. The *latte*, however, are still visited by Chamorros to connect with ancestral spirits. Further, the dislocated *latte*, rather than losing integrity, now also inform the community of the colonial relationships and attitudes of the time.

### ***Encountering Others: Voyaging Traditions, Colonization, and Militarization***

Voyaging and encountering others has been a way of life for centuries. It was into these cosmopolitan situations that Ferdinand Magellan and his crew voyaged in 1521, with *i manaotao-mo'na* (Chamorro ancestors) having the dubious distinction of being the first Pacific peoples to encounter them and having their islands claimed and missionized. Groups of Chamorros battled the intrusions for nearly three decades but were removed from their homes on 13 of 15 islands and restricted to only two. Others in the Pacific continued with virtually no contact with Europeans for decades or centuries. Throughout the Pacific, missionization and colonization were imposed upon Pacific Islanders. Diseases introduced by foreign mariners, priests and other church representa-

tives, beachcombers, traders, and others caused devastating losses within Pacific Island populations. Some groups lost 90 percent or more of their communities—treasured children, valued elders, and other holders of cultural knowledge. The sites of these events—initial encounters, missions, centers of trade, battles of indigenous resistance and foreign retribution, the loss of entire families and villages—are often known but not always memorialized despite their transformative nature.

Except for the people of Tonga, all Pacific Islanders were colonized; all to establish coaling stations, control sea lanes, access foreign markets, save souls, and build global empires. Those statuses of colonization and non-self-governance continue, directly impacting Pacific Islanders, who comprise a significant number of the non-self governing peoples in the world.<sup>40</sup>

In the age of imperialism, indigenous Islanders, such as the Chamorros in the Mariana Islands and Samoans, were politically divided among European or American colonizing nations; foreign racial categories were imposed as were segregation and Jim Crow-like regulations or policies. On many islands, speaking indigenous languages and practicing their culture in public spaces were banned. Leper and tuberculosis colonies were created while local militias and military units, such as Fitafta, a guard made up of native Samoans,<sup>41</sup> were established for the benefit of colonial powers. Such policies left physical manifestations in the U.S. and in the islands. These include pockets of Islander populations in states and territories as noted above. In addition, there are the remains of unexploded ordinance (UXO), abandoned military equipment and supplies, and the radioactive poisoning of environments in the islands,

some of which are heritage sites (e.g. see Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test Site World Heritage List dossier). Migrants from the Philippines, Japan, and mainland America were introduced to island communities, developing their own layers of connection to the islands while aspects of their languages, cultures, and foods were adopted and adapted. Reflecting this influx and exchange are current Islander names such as Diaz, Tanaka, and Underwood.

Islanders and their history and cultural lifeways are often considered “backward,” of secondary importance, or otherwise expendable because of vocal and powerful non-Islanders who perpetuate stereotypes of Islanders as “noble” or “ignoble savages.” The presence of foreign investors is likewise unhelpful. Thus, Islanders are continuously challenged by those with foreign visions for their homelands—including large military training complexes with live fire and bombing ranges, mega-developments, holding areas for political and criminal exiles or political refugees, laboratories to observe socio-cultural, political, and environmental projects, and monuments or markers for foreign interests. In 2012, the ancestral Chamorro village and registered site of Pâgat in Guam was targeted as a live-fire site for 6,000 U.S. Marines who were being relocated from the U.S.-operated Futenma military base in Okinawa, Japan. This military use of Pâgat was sacrilegious and provoked a firestorm of protest from indigenous Chamorro people. The local opposition filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Defense for not considering alternate sites for the range and arguing that the land selected is sacred and historical, the location of an ancient Chamorro village and an active archeological site. The military settled the issue in court and pursued other sites. The U.S. military has now selected the Ritidian National Wildlife Refuge for the location of its live-fire training range. However, this new location has many parallels to Pâgat; it is another historically significant site with remains of ancient Chamorro villages. Similarly, Kaho‘olawe is an island in Hawai‘i that was used by the U.S. Navy for live-fire exercises from 1941 into the 1990s. For Native Hawaiians, such military use of the island was sacrilegious; a sustained movement led by Native Hawaiians succeeded in 1994 when the U.S. Navy signed title for Kaho‘olawe over to the Hawai‘i state government.

These are but two cases of native resistance to ongoing American imperial designs on indigenous prop-

erties and cultures. Numerous other examples exist. For instance, some Pacific Islanders are pointing out that the U.S. federal government is currently carrying out two incongruous types of activities in the Pacific—the induction or expansion of marine monuments to preserve those areas’ special qualities and rich biodiversity and, in some of those same waters, the increase of military training and testing activities which have known detrimental effects on marine life and the environment.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Resistance, Revitalization, and Self-Determination***

A common thread among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is the shared stories of the many forms of resistance to political, economic, linguistic, and cultural oppression. Modern situations highlight the trajectory of how these communities both within their homelands and throughout the diaspora have engaged in cultural resilience and resistance—organizing movements for revitalization and self-determination.

Revitalization efforts have taken many forms, such as the preservation of cultural artifacts as well as cosmologies, oral histories, and cultural practices. Language revitalization efforts are centering on charter schools for youth, language immersion programs, standardizing curriculum for language learners and educators, and establishing indigenous language programs at postsecondary institutions.

In the U.S., there are many examples of efforts to revitalize and recognize AAPI populations at the grassroots and national levels. Some key examples include Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, celebrated in May, which pays tribute to generations of AAPIs who have made significant contributions to the history and future of the U.S.; the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, an advocacy organization that works to support AAPI communities in need of housing, services, and economic development; and the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, focused on mobilizing resources and increasing access to post-secondary education for AAPI students. Additionally, in 2009 President Obama signed an executive order that restored the White House Initiative and the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Notable elements of this initiative are focused on increasing resources for AAPI organizations, strengthening region-



al networks, and assessing government data on the AAPI community. Finally, Twitter hashtag #MyAAPIStory is an effort to document and share stories of the AAPI community around themes such as immigration, cultural preservation, identity, and overcoming the myth of the model minority.

### **U.S. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAMS IN PACIFIC ISLANDS**

For centuries, Pacific Islanders have developed, practiced, and refined forms of managing their environments, cultures, histories, and heritages. These forms were integrated into everyday living. From generation to generation, knowledge, skills, oral narratives, as well as approaches, practices, and traditions relating to care of the environs and cultural heritage were passed down and adapted. Over time, these forms have blended with

modern cultural heritage management concepts and institutions.

Both in their homeland islands and in U.S. states, Pacific Islander Americans have access to, interact with, and are to be served by U.S. historic preservation programs and international programs, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Additionally, Pacific Islanders, depending upon their political statuses, are participating members in regional programs that focus on cultural heritage conservation or are able to network with programs in a number of countries. These international programs afford Pacific Islanders a level of additional opportunity, although these opportunities are less available to those in U.S. Pacific Islands.

In the state of Hawai'i and insular areas of American Samoa and Guam, modern historic preservation



**Laumei ma Malie (Turtle and Shark) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2014 as a natural feature significant to the people of American Samoa and for the maintenance of their cultural and historical identity. It is where a scene of a powerful Samoan oral narrative took place that is reenacted today by villagers of Vaitogi, who perform a song calling turtle and shark to surface from the ocean. Photo by Pacheco, Tomonari-Tuggle, and Reith; courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places.**

programs were set up in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1974, the National Historic Preservation Act was amended to include Pacific Islands that were then part of the TTPI. The amendment resulted in the creation of an office to carry out historic preservation activities throughout the Trust Territory. Over time the Northern Mariana Islands, Yap, Palau, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and the Marshall Islands operated their own historic preservation offices (HPOs). Some of these programs, such as in the NMI, Palau, and the FSM HPOs, operate at two levels—a national or head office and state or municipality sections. Some units, such as Guam and Hawai'i, also have government or non-government entities that support historic preservation work.

Each of the U.S. and U.S.-affiliated Pacific Island HPOs has heritage sites listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), with most also having National Historic Landmark designation. There is a broad range of numbers and types of heritage sites they nominate to historic registers. Some have focused on modern, non-indigenous history that often revolves around colonial history and WWII. Other registers have stronger indigenous representation of ancestral history with some presence of more recent Islander history. Different peoples of the Pacific will need to consider the concept of commemorating more contemporary elements of their indigenous history by recognizing Pacific Island cultural systems as they move forward through time and circumstance.

### **WAYS OF VIEWING, REMEMBRANCE, AND COMMEMORATION**

Heritage professionals are becoming more responsive to multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities and indigenous populations. Pacific Islanders construct their societies, environments, and universes in distinctive ways. For example, long-time NPS anthropologist Patricia Parker observed that Micronesian Pacific Islanders consider it more important to preserve the “integrity of their traditional cultural systems” than to value the built environment. She also noted that the value and consideration given to historic properties and other tangible heritage was partly determined by the degree to which they supported traditional cultural systems.<sup>43</sup> Ensuing studies carried out over the decades in Micronesia have upheld such observations.

Indigenous Pacific Islander cultures have various types of heritage, tangible and intangible, that they can maintain or recapture, promote, and be transmitted to present and succeeding generations. These range from oral traditions, indigenous languages including chiefly or other specialized languages, genealogies, migration stories, customs and lifeways, art, music, dance, performances, forms of deliberation, and poetry. These numerous types of heritages and the actions to safeguard and transmit them are especially salient given the rapid changes in their islands. Consequences of globalization, immigration and emigration, market economies, modern government systems, and climate change all severely challenge traditional Island cultures and lifeways.

Thus, bolstering traditional indigenous cultures and markers of cultural identity are important ways of staving off detrimental challenges to indigenous communities. Additionally, maintaining knowledge of powerful symbolic areas is important. Islanders worry that bad things will result from inappropriate activities in powerful areas. Mapping and classification of these sites of power could serve multiple goals, including the well-being of the community as well as preserving the body of knowledge itself.

A critical force in maintaining and safeguarding intangible and tangible heritage has been the advent of the Festival of Pacific Arts, which has been held every four years since 1972. Pacific Islanders have been participating in this Festival for decades with observable impact in both conserving and fostering the growth of cultural systems. This has been noted for American Samoa and Guam, which hosted the Festival in 2008 and 2016, respectively. Hawai'i will host in 2020. Such festivals in the islands and in the U.S. mainland have encouraged the recapturing and sharing of traditional forms of chant, dance, seafaring, and other types of heritage, and encouraged Islanders to visit, respect, and protect indigenous heritage sites.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

As with cultural heritage efforts anywhere, there remains much to be done: expanding awareness of the creation myths and stories of indigenous Pacific Islander worlds and what are considered significant feats, features, and beings within them; making known indigenous Islander place names; bringing to light nuances of hundreds or

thousands of years of interaction between Islanders and their environments, as well as customary lifeways and the smaller and larger events within them; creating awareness of shared Island and Islander history and connections among regional deities, peoples, societies, and cultures that transcend local divisions or national boundaries; highlighting indigenous and colonial histories from the indigenous Islander perspectives; and showcasing Islanders as they moved through time and space in their homelands but also as they continued their journeys to areas within other parts of the U.S. This last item may have additional value because the presence of memorials, monuments, and heritage sites within U.S. territories, districts, and states can help Islanders and others understand their experiences and contributions to the U.S. but also bolster their sense of place both in and beyond their homelands.

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## Endnotes

1 Although effort has been made to discuss U.S. Pacific Islander peoples collectively and individually, the authors specialize in studying Guam history and issues, as reflected in this essay.

2 Often referred to as CNMI.

3 Taotao Tāno' (People of the land) is another indigenous term used to refer to Chamorros.

4 This includes having presence in each other's islands as well.

5 Sometimes referred to as U.S. Minor Islands, these are: Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Atoll, Navassa Island, Palmyra Atoll, and Wake Island. Palmyra Atoll is the only incorporated territory in the U.S.. At least one of these areas, Wake Island, or Eneen Kio in Marshallese, is also claimed by the Republic of the

Marshall Islands as Marshallese voyaged to and used the island traditionally. The Marshall Islands is said to have put its claim to the island on record at the United Nations. See Johnson 2016.

6 The island areas of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, each comprised of numerous islands, are states within the Federated States of Micronesia. One or more culture groups is recognized per island state. For example, for what are referred to as Yap's Outer Islands, the many culture groups there are often generally referred to as Carolinian or Remathau (People of the Sea), while the culture group in the main island of Yap is referred to as Girdi nu Wa'ab (People of Yap).

7 For a brief overview on the Pacific Islands as a geo-cultural region and their environments and histories, see Smith and Jones 2007, 17-30.

8 By royal decree, the Spanish declared Guam's village of Hagåtña (formerly Agana or Agaña) a city March 30, 1686 (Leon-Guerrero, Hagåtña).

9 Not including American Samoa.

10 Though this has become less often the case for publications and maps produced by the National Park Service and maps produced by certain U.S. federal agencies that serve all states and territories.

11 Though it does provide a map showing the islands of origin for Pacific Islanders residing in the U.S. in its appendix (See Figure 7, US 2010 Census Brief).

12 This is one of several of slogans used for Guam, others include: Tano' I Chamorro, or Tano' I ManChamorro (Land of the Chamorros), Home to a 4,000 Year Old Culture, Gateway to Asia, Gateway to Micronesia, and Tip of the [US Military] Spear (see Na'puti & Bevacqua 2015). This is likely just one of several other slogans used for American Samoa as well.

13 The descriptors Pacific Islands, Oceania, and Pacific Islanders are flexible depending upon the context of use. The Pacific Islands are a geographic region of the Pacific Ocean. Generally, the descriptors are used to refer to the peoples and islands who are indigenous to islands between Asia and the Americas excluding Brunei, Indonesia, East Timor, Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, the Aleutians, and Kuril Islands. The U.S. Census defines Pacific Islander as "those having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands." It is important to note that culturally, geographically, and otherwise, Pacific Islanders and Asians are distinct sets of peoples each of which are comprised of many ethnicities differing in language, culture, history, and relationship with each other and the U.S.

14 See e.g., Goldberg-Hiller & Silva 2015.

15 Guam is the largest and southernmost island in the Mariana Island archipelago. The Mariana Islands are considered a homeland to the Taotao Tāno' (Chamorros). Additionally, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the 14 islands north of Guam) also officially recognize a second group of peoples who migrated to the northern Mariana Islands in 1815 as indigenous, the Refaluwasch or Carolinian peoples.



16 See Phillips, Land Ownership on Guam.

17 As defined in a 2010 Census Brief on Pacific Islanders, “Hawaiian home lands are public lands held in trust by the state of Hawaii for the benefit of Native Hawaiians...A Hawaiian home land is not a governmental unit; rather, it is a specific tract of land that has a legally defined boundary and is owned by the state of Hawaii. The state, as authorized by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1920, may lease these tracts of land to one or more native Hawaiians for any activity authorized by state law.” (Hixson, Hepler, and Kim 2012, p. 19).

18 See Hubbard 2016 and Koumpilova 2016.

19 See, e.g., Marshall 2004, p. 6.

20 Indicated by particular linguistic and cultural similarities and the presence of sweet potatoes in the islands and coconuts along the coasts of South America. See e.g., Okihiro 2015 and Nelson 2013.

21 See e.g., Uperesa & Mountjoy 2014.

22 Owyhee is an older spelling of Hawai‘i; see online materials such as: Idaho State Historical Society 1987; Native American Netroots, Fur Trade; Hawaiians who helped shape Vancouver; and Dmae Roberts, Hawaiians and Native Americans (Crossing East).

23 See Shively (ed.) 2015.

24 For examples, see Schwartz 2015 and videos such as “A New Island: The Marshallese in Arkansas.”

25 See video “Postcards: Micronesian Culture In Milan.”

26 For examples, see videos such as: “American Samoan: Football Island” and “In Football We Trust.”

27 In Chamorro, Gumataotao means “house of the people.”

28 See for example Banivanua-Mar (2001) and Dé Ishtar (1994) for a brief discussion on the “blackbirding” era (1863-1904) involving kidnapping, indentured labor, and produced incalculable distress among island communities.

29 See e.g., Walsh Kroeker (2004) and Joyce (2015). For a discussion of Marshall Islands-US adoption and policy implications see Roby, Wyatt, & Pettys (2005) and the 2002 Adoption Act, Nitijela of the Marshall Islands, Public Law 2002-64.

30 See Stayman 2009, 8-9.

31 Technically speaking, the U.S. government classifies the Commonwealth as a territory.

32 On 23 September 2016 the U.S. Department of the Interior announced in a press release that they had finalized a path to reestablish formal government-to-government relations between Native Hawaiians and the U.S. federal government.

33 See Corbin 2015 and Na’puti 2014.

34 See Asian American Justice Center and Asian Pacific Legal Center 2006.

35 Perhaps reflecting a mixture of traditional ways of identification and colonial-western-US government ways of categorizing, the Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander

population, categorized as a race group in the U.S. Census, was the “most likely to report multiple races in 2010” (Asian Pacific American Legal Center 2004).

36 See Hixson, Hepler, and Kim 2012, 5.

37 See Asian American Justice Center and Asian Pacific Legal Center 2006.

38 Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands which, together, comprise the Mariana Island archipelago. The indigenous people of Guam were referred to as Guamanian for a time after WWII when the Chamorros of the Mariana Islands to the north (called Northern Mariana Islands today) were placed in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands administered by the U.S. Meanwhile, for a time also after WWII, Chamorros from the northern islands were referred to as Saipanese, Rotanese, and so forth depending upon which island they were from. Over the years, however, indigenous Islanders in both Guam and NMI have reverted back to referring to themselves as Chamorro or Taotao Tāno’ and the term Guamanian, for some, has come to refer to all residents of Guam though some who left Guam decades ago and reside off-island still use the term Guamanian to refer to themselves as the indigenous Islanders of Guam.

39 This category may include those who identify as either Chamorro or Refaluwasch of the Northern Mariana Islands, or those who identify as both Chamorro and Refaluwasch of the Northern Mariana Islands as there have been a lot of relationships between the two ethnic groups over the centuries.

40 In particular, the U.S. Pacific territories—American Samoa, and Guam—make up a third of the non-self governing territories remaining in the Pacific. Along with the territory, the U.S. Virgin Islands, U.S. territories comprise nearly 20% of all recognized non-self governing territories in the world. See UN listing of non-self-governing territories, available at [www.un.org/en/decolonization/nonselvgovterritories.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/nonselvgovterritories.shtml).

41 See Sevaetasi 1991, 181-184.

42 See e.g., Perez 2014. For more on Kaho’olawe, see Davianna McGregor’s essay in this theme study.

43 Parker 1987, 17.

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