REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Anthropological Survey of Mejit Island

Richard V. Williamson and Donna K. Stone

HPO Report 2001/04

The research and this publication have been financed entirely with Federal funds from the Historic Preservation Fund grant program in partnership with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, United States of America. However, the contents and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, or the Government of the United States of America, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior, Government of the United States of America, or the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

This program received Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

For bibliographic purposes this report may be quoted as:
Williamson, Richard and Donna K. Stone, 2001, *Anthropological Survey of Mejit Island.* HPO Report 2000/04 Majuro Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands: Historic Preservation Office.

LIBRARY CODE

KEYWORDS
Anthropology – Marshall Islands – Mejit Island
Archaeology – Marshall Islands – Mejit Island
Archaeology – World War II – Marshall Islands
History – Marshall Islands – Mejit Island
History – World War II –Marshall Islands
Marshall Islands – Anthropology – Mejit Island
Marshall Islands – Archaeology – Mejit Island
Marshall Islands – History – Mejit Island
Micronesia – Archaeology – World War II

Table of Contents

LIST OF MAPS

LIST OF PHOTOS

Forward

The following monograph is the result of research conducted from November 25 to December 1, 1998 at Mejit Island, Republic of the Marshall Islands. The research consisted of non-intrusive, terrestrial archaeological reconnaissance survey and the collection of oral histories. The project was sponsored by the Republic of the Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Office and funded by the Historic Preservation Fund, National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

Our thanks go to our colleagues at the National Park Service, Paula Falk Creech, Mark Rudo, and David Look for their assistance and guidance. We could not have performed the survey without the assistance of many individuals at the Historic Preservation Office and Alele Museum. Most especially, Hemley Benjamin, Assistant Archaeologist and the individual who assisted the actual survey; and Langinbo Frank, Alele video technician who collected the traditional stories. We would also like to thank Clary Makroro, the Deputy HPO and Bernice Joash, Executive Director at Alele. Our further thanks go to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Chairman of the RMI Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, the Hon. Nidel Loak, as well as the Secretary of Internal Affairs and Historic Preservation Officer, Mr. Frederick deBrum. Finally, our deepest thanks goes to the people of Mejit Island and all those who helped make this research possible.

The research and this publication have been financed entirely with Federal funds from the Historic Preservation Fund grant program in partnership with the National Park Service, Department of Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Interior nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of Interior.

Richard V. Williamson
Donna K. Stone
Majuro Atoll, Marshall Islands
May 2001

I. Introduction

This report represents the results of archaeological and anthropological research conducted on Mejit Island, Marshall Islands between November 25 and December 1, 1998, by the Historic Preservation Office, Majuro, Marshall Islands. All field documents, including completed site survey forms, field notes, maps, and photographs are housed at Historic Preservation Office, Majuro Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands. No artifacts or food remains were collected. The US National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant provided funding.

1.1 Project Objectives

The purpose of the survey was two-fold. The first was to identify, record, and evaluate the historic, prehistoric, and traditional sites located on Mejit Island in accordance with the survey and inventory program area of the Historic Preservation Office. The second was to educate the inhabitants of the island on the importance of protecting and preserving the sites that the team identified. As such, the Historic Preservation Office made every effort to include the local population, their elected officials, and traditional *Irooj* (chiefs) and landowners in every step of the research. Local informants and guides were used throughout the research and formal and informal lectures covering the activities of HPO staff were conducted at the schools, town halls, and churches of each island that was visited.

1.2 Evaluation of Research Design and Methods Used

A) "Non-intrusive" reconnaissance survey

The research conducted was a "non-intrusive" reconnaissance survey. The team did not remove any artifacts and/or food remains. The sites were identified through either a walking survey or from knowledge of local guides. The sites were recorded using a Geographical Position System (GPS) unit and that data was entered into ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS) software to generate maps. Information for Site Survey Forms was entered into the GPS unit in the field and was transferred into the database software that is contained in the ArcView program. Slide photographs as well as digital photos of all sites were taken. All notes, survey forms, GPS data, and photographs are housed at the Historic Preservation Office, Majuro Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Evaluation was based upon the Republic of the Marshall Islands site significance levels established by the RMI Historic Preservation legislation of 1992. Determining the definition of significance varies if the site is prehistoric, historic, or traditional. All traditional sites are determined as significant. Prehistoric or historic sties can be evaluated as being "very significant," "significant," "less significant," insignificant," or "undetermined significant" [RMI Historic Preservation Legislation, Regulations Governing Land Modification Activities, Section 6.]

A Prehistoric site was considered "very significant" if it met at least one of the Marshall Islands' formal criteria:

(i) the resource is the only one of its kind known on the atoll concerned; or
(ii) the resource is part of an ensemble of sites, even if the individual sites as such would not be considered to be very significant; or
(iii) the resource is rich in cultural artifacts and undisturbed by construction activities; or
(iv) the resource is particularly well preserved; or
(v) the resource is connected with oral traditions important beyond the limits of the individual atoll on which the resource is located.

A Prehistoric site was considered "significant" if it met at least one of the Marshall Islands' formal criteria:

(i) the resource is the only one of its kind known on the islet concerned; or
(ii) the resource is rich in cultural artifacts and undisturbed by construction activities; or
(iii) the resource is well preserved; or
(iv) the resource is connected with oral traditions.

An historic site was considered "very significant" if it met at least one of the Marshall Islands' formal criteria:

(i) the resource is the only one of its kind known in the Republic; or
(ii) the resource is part of an ensemble of sites, even if the individual sites as such would not be considered to be very significant; or
(iii) the resource is considered to be a prime example of the workmanship of a particular architect, builder or craftsman; or
(iv) the resource is rich in cultural artifacts and undisturbed by construction activities; or
(v) the resource is particularly well preserved and shows little or no alterations to the original appearance of the structure; or
(vi) the resource is connected with historic events or persons or oral traditions important beyond the limits of the individual atoll on which the resource is located.

An historic site was considered "significant" if it met at least one of the Marshall Islands' formal criteria:

(i) the resource is the only one of its kind known on the atoll concerned; or
(ii) the resource is considered to be a good example of the workmanship of a particular architect, builder or craftsman; or
(iii) the resource is rich in cultural artifacts and relatively undisturbed by construction activities; or
(iv) the resource is well preserved and shows only limited alterations to the appearance of the original structure; or

(v) the resource is connected with historic events or persons or oral traditions important for the individual atoll on which the resource is located.

As the survey was designed to be non-intrusive, no test excavations were conducted and no artifacts were collected. The purpose of the survey was purely to identify and record the sites in order to allow evaluation of each site's significance level, which will be used to establish eligibility for inclusion on the RMI National Register. Future researchers can use this information in assessing which sites are deemed significant enough to warrant further research, analysis, interpretation, and/or protection and restoration. The survey followed the standards and guidelines of the grantor, the United States Department of Interior National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund.

B) Nomenclature

In assigning sites, the system used in the Marshall Islands includes three two-letter abbreviations and then a site number. For example, the first abbreviation identifies the site as located in the Marshall Islands (MI), the second is the atoll, Ailuk (AI), the third the islet, Ailuk (AI). Therefore the site MI-AI-AI-001 is the first site identified on the islet of Ailuk in the Ailuk Atoll. As Mejit is a single island, sites are recorded as MI-ME-001, etc.

C) Survey Equipment and Team Members

The following equipment was used in the survey:

1 Trimble GPS unit with Pathfinder Office 2.02 software
ArcView 3.0a GIS software
1 Sony Mavica MVC-FD83 digital camera
1 Canon EOS Rebel 2000 SLR camera with slide film
2 5m metal tape measures
1 30m cloth tape measure
1 roll of flagging tape
Notebooks, pens, and pencils
1 compass

Field team members included Staff Archaeologist, Richard Williamson; Assistant Archaeologist, Hemley Benjamin; and Video Technician, Langinbo Frank. Donna K. Stone, Staff ethnographer, provided historical background.

D) Informants/Guides

Fieldwork relied heavily on informants and guides. The informants provided information on the location and history of sites, while the guides, if not the informants themselves, lead the team to the sites. Key-informants[1] were the elders of the community, who as custom dictates were also the government leaders, and so were the most knowledgeable about island history.

[1] Ethnographically defined as individuals who have been interviewed intensively or over an extensive period of time for the purpose of providing a relatively complete ethnographic description of the social and cultural patterns of the group. In the present case "key-informant" refers to those individuals who provided general and specific information on almost every site investigated.

They provided a never exhausting pool of knowledge to be further investigated ethnographically. Since precisely locating sites on the island was problematic, the use of guides was essential. Information was obtained in casual meetings throughout the duration of the fieldwork; no formal questionnaire was developed.

E) Survey Methods

The survey did not include the total landmass of the island. When informants or guides could not lead the team to the potential sites on the island the following method was applied. The crew was distributed at five to eight meter intervals and surveyed the island from north to south or east to west. Areas of the extremely dense vegetation were not surveyed due to the lack of appropriate clearing tools (machetes). When a site was noted, a site number was assigned, a GPS position was taken, the area was photographed, and site survey forms were filled out. In areas of dense vegetation, the GPS position was sometimes taken several meters away from the site itself.

1.3 Limitations of Research

Although the purpose of the survey was to identify potentially significant sites, it must be remembered that the survey was non-intrusive. Shovel test pits were not conducted and given time and money constraints, much of the survey relied heavily upon the local informants and their knowledge of historic sites. The survey attempted to be as extensive as possible, but included no follow-up intensive research. As such, this report should be considered preliminary and only includes those sites readily identified either visibly or with the aid of an informant. Given previous research in the Marshall Islands that has included either shovel test pits or more intensive excavations, it is apparent that prehistoric archaeological sites in this type of non-intrusive reconnaissance survey will be highly underrepresented. This is especially true in the Marshall Islands where the lack of durable artifacts such as ceramics is lacking.

A further limitation was encountered with the generation of maps using the GPS unit and ArcView GIS software. Problems encountered were two-fold. First, it was impossible to remove the selective availability that the US Department of Defense uses to "scramble" GPS coordinates, thus giving some error in the recording of exact locations of the sites. Second, the digitized map of the Marshall Islands used by the HPO is one that was originally made by the Japanese during their administration of the Republic. The map was updated by the U.S. during the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands administration, but still prone to many errors. While most of these errors were external, there were instances of internal inaccuracies. Unfortunately, this was still the most up-to-date map available at the time of the research. However, in recording the GPS readings in the field, the GPS unit that was used did allow for the recording of a series of readings (120 points were recorded) that averaged out to one reading per site. This should remove some of the inaccuracy caused by the selective availability. Regarding the maps, as the data is stored electronically in ArcView GIS software, when an updated map of the Marshall Islands is available, the new digitized map can be replaced for the older version. For the purpose of this report, the maps cannot give much more than a "general" location of each site. However, in the section describing the sites, the GPS coordinates for each site are provided.

1.4 Previous Research

The lack of previous research conducted was one, if not the main, criteria for the selection of Mejit Island. In accordance to the Historic Preservation Office's survey and inventory program area, Mejit Island was selected to be surveyed by the HPO staff. Although no previous research had been conducted on Mejit Atoll, previous researchers have included overviews of the history and prehistory of the Marshall Islands. Some of the better overviews include Beardsley's 1994 report (1994: 1-28) and the Historic Preservation Plan United States Army Kwajalein Atoll (1996). The comprehensive study carried out under the leadership of Paul H. Rosendahl (1979, 1987) during March-June 1977 did not include Mejit. That expedition, which became known as the "Louis L. Kelton-Bishop Museum Expedition to Eastern Micronesia," covered parts of Majuro, Mili, Arno, Aur, Maloelap, Wotje, Likiep, Wotho, Lae, Namu, Ailinglaplap, and Ebon Atoll, as well as, Lib Island in the Marshall Islands.

1.5 A Brief History of the Marshall Islands

The people of the Marshall Islands refer to their parallel-chained archipelago as *Aelon Kein*, "these atolls." According to folklore, the first discoverers and settlers of the Islands were a handful of wayfarers seeking an uninhabited autonomous area where they could live (Hart 1992). What little we know about early Marshallese comes from oral history and early accounts by explorers.

Marshallese autonomy was threatened as early as 1526 when the first of eight known Spanish ships passed through the area. The first recorded sighting, probably Bokak Atoll, was made by Alonso de Salazar, commanding the *Santa Maria de la Victoria*, but no contact was made (Levesque 1992a, Sharp 1960). In 1529 contact was made by Alvaro de Saavedra of the *Florida* which laid anchor to take on provisions at Eniwetak or Bikini and stayed for eight days. He also discovered Utirik, Taka, Ujelang, and made landings at Rongelap and Ailinginae. The Spanish flagship *Santiago* and five other ships in the expedition under Ruy Lopez de Villalobos is credited for the western discovery of Wotje, Erikub, Maloelap, Likiep, Kwajalein, Lae, Ujae, and Wotho, landings were made on some of the islands. (Levesque 1992a, Sharp 1960).

In 1565, Alonso de Arellano of the Legaspi expedition sighted Likiep, Kwajalein, and an island thought to be Lib (Sharp 1960) while Legaspi himself is credited with sighting Mejit, Ailuk, and Jemo. Some trading was done at Mejit. The following year the mutineer Lope Martin commanding the *San Jeronimo* made several sightings and was eventually stranded in the Marshalls, probably on Ujelang. Two years later the Spanish ships *Los Reyes* and *Todos Santos*, under Alvaro de Mendana went ashore at what is probably Ujelang. Namu was also thought to be sighted. (Levesque 1992b)

Fifty seven years passed before another vessel is reported to pass through the Marshalls. The Dutch ship *Eendracht* and ten other vessels of the Nassau Fleet, commanded by Admiral Gheen Schapenham sighted Bokak (Hezel 1979). In spite of Spain's annexation of the Marshall Islands in 1686, the Spanish established no trading posts, trade routes, or left any lasting influence.

In 1767 Captain Samuel Wallis of the British ship *Dolphin* sighted what is thought to be Rongerik and Rongelap (Sharp 1960, Hezel 1979). Even though the Spanish were the first known westerners to see the Marshall Islands credit is given to Captain William Marshall, commander of the *Scarbough*, who together with Thomas Gilbert of the *Charlotte* for the discovery or more appropriately, the rediscovery of the Marshall Islands in 1788. Marshall and Gilbert mapped these island groups and traded with the various atolls. They are the first westerners to sight Mili, Arno, Majuro, Aur, and Nadidik (Sharp 1960). They also sighted the previously discovered Wotje, Erikub, Maloelap, and Ailuk.

Captain Henry Bond aboard the British merchantman vessel *Royal Admiral* sighted Namorik and Namu in 1792. Two years later The British ship *Walpole*, under the command of Captain Thomas Butler sighted Eniwetak. Thomas Dennet was the first westerner to sight Kili as well as reporting on Ailinglapalap, Lib, and doing some trading on Namu in 1797. Other vessels sailed through the area including the British ship *Hunter*, the British brig *Nautilus*, the ship *Ann & Hope* of Providence, *Ocean*, *Herald*, and *HMS Cornwallis*, to name a few. These ships sighted atolls and islands that had been previously reported but did not stop and trade. Jaluit was sighted by the *Rolla* in 1803 and again in 1808 by Captain Patterson of the British merchant brig *Elizabeth* both of which landed and did some trading (Sharp 1960, Hezel 1979, 1983).

The first scientific exploration of the Marshalls was conducted by a Russian, Otto von Kotzebue, in 1816-17 and 1824. It is during this time that first significant contact between Europeans and the Marshallese was made. Von Kotzebue and his crew spent several months in the Ratak islands in 1817 and 1824, specifically Wotje, Maloelap, and Aur Atolls (Kotzebue 1821, 1830; Chamisso 1986).

The account left by this expedition provides the first early ethnographic material, including an interesting description of how Kotzebue was urged to help Lomade defeat Latete, a powerful southern Ratak *Irooj*, and become *Irooj* of all Ratak. Although Kotzebue declined the offer his influence was noted. Traditional warfare practices began to change soon after Kotzebue's first visit. Metal hatchets given as gifts were attached to wooden poles. Lomade's troops used these new weapons to defeat the powerful Majuro *Irooj* and establish control over the Ratak Chain (Erdland 1914, Kramer and Nevermann 1938).

Other ethnographic observations come from Lay and Hussey (1828) who survived the *Globe* mutiny at Mili Atoll and Paulding (1831) a U.S. Navy lieutenant who helped to retrieve Lay and Hussey. These early observers published accounts which give us an insight to traditional personal appearance, manners, food, dwellings, and in a lesser extent, facets of political and social organization reflecting traditional practices.

The prospects of profitable trade lured the German entrepreneurs into the Marshalls in the latter part of the 19th century. Subsequent contact with Europeans gradually increased as whalers concentrated their activities. They were hunting to provide lamp oil to meet European and American demand. With the disruptive and intolerant whalers, as well as the English blackbirders in search of cheap labor to work the mines and plantations in the New World and Australia, encounters turned hostile. Numerous ships were attacked by the Marshallese and the

crews killed; brutal retaliations followed. The mood of contact in the first half of the 19th century was one of confrontation (Hezel 1979, 1983; Dye 1987)

The treacherous reefs, small number of whales, and the new methods of distillation of kerosene from crude oil soon put the whalers out of business. The blackbirders, however, continued their raids until the 1870's.

In 1857 two American missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Congregationalists from the New England area, succeeded in setting up operations on Ebon (where as recently as 1852 a ship from San Francisco had been attacked and the entire crew killed) (Hezel 1979). The Marshallese *Irooj* opposed the missionaries and the establishment of new congregations throughout the 1860s because it eroded their power. This loss of power was somewhat alleviated by establishment of permanent trading stations as the demand for copra rapidly increased. The chiefly power base gradually shifted from control over the land to control over the trade between the Marshallese and foreigners (Dye 1987). Ebon remained the mission center, from which occasional trips were made throughout the southern atolls, until 1880, when the station was moved to Kosrae in the eastern Carolines.

Changes in the Marshallese way of life had been rapid and extensive. The dominant contact with the outside world had been through missionaries sent or trained by the American Board. Yet virtually no ethnographic description is to be found among the voluminous records kept by the missionaries. Instead, they were "not only indifferent, but supremely scornful of the religious beliefs [of the Marshallese]. They tried to extinguish them completely and destroy every trace of them" (Knappe 1888). The ethnography summarized by the Germans, Erdland (1914) and Kramer and Nevermann (1938), coincided with major structural changes in Marshallese way of life. Writing in about 1905, the German ethnographer and priest Erdland commented, "the present generation no longer has any exact knowledge of the inner coherence of the ancient traditions" (1914:307).

Other factors also influenced these changes. The copra trade dates from about 1860 in the Marshalls and American, Australian, and German firms often had resident traders on the various atolls. Beachcombers added to the resident white population, often filling the role of trader as well.

European political empires reached into the Pacific in the 1880s and German traders were exercising increasing influence in the Marshalls. In 1885, the Marshall Islands became a protectorate of Germany, as "the Marshall islands were not under the sovereignty of any civilized state" (Pauwels 1936). During the German era, which lasted until 1914, the atolls were visited regularly by traders, missionaries, and administrative officials. Administration of the area was carried out by the German trading company, Jaluit *Gesellschaft*. This firm, which resulted from a merger of companies active in the area, Robertson and Hernsheim, and *Deutsches Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft* (D.H.P.G.) (formerly Johann Godeffroy und Sohn), had exclusive trading rights in the Marshalls. Despite complaints about this monopoly by the Australian firm, Burns, Philip and Co., the New Zealand company, Henderson and MacFarlane, and others, the German government continued to act on the advice of the Jaluit *Gesellschaft* until 1902 when it assumed direct administration of Micronesia (Hezel 1983).

This form of administration, with primarily an economic focus, had little impact on the health and educational level of the Marshallese. In this regard, the missionaries were of greater importance. Select groups of Marshallese were educated in the German language to serve as interpreters and the services of a doctor were available on occasion. Copra was the main product of the Marshalls and production was stimulated by taxes assessed through the traditional leaders as well as through the availability of Western goods. This form of indirect rule strengthened the traditional political organization of the Marshallese, while the German administration dealt mostly with conflicts between foreigners and the *Irooj* (Hiery 1995).

Warfare between the islands *Irooj* was eliminated, an act which froze the relative social positions of the *Irooj* and their *jowi* (clan) and created a condition of inflexibility in the social system; in addition it allowed increased trading and missionary activity and thus contributed to more rapid cultural change (Spoehr 1949). German ethnographers were active in this period and it is largely through their efforts, especially in the many volumes published on Micronesia by the German South Sea Expedition of 1908-1910, that much is known of the traditional way of life (Kramer and Nevermann 1938 is a result of this expedition).

In 1914, at the conclusion of World War I, the Marshalls were taken from Germany by Japan. They shifted to a system of direct rule through a set of community officials and greatly expanded the administrative staff. Traders of other nationalities were excluded and the Japanese attempted to expand copra production. Protestant and Catholic missionary activity was allowed to continue unhampered, and in general the Marshallese appear to have gotten on well with the Japanese (Spoehr 1949). The Japanese did conduct ethnographic research, however most of this material has yet to be translated into English.

The Japanese military, through the South Seas Defense Corps, governed the Marshalls until 1918. From 1918 until 1920, a combined civilian and military government was in charge. In 1920 Japan was awarded Micronesia as a Class 'C' mandate by the League of Nations. The terms of the mandate were upheld until 1933 when Japan withdrew from the League of Nations (although they continued to submit annual reports through 1937). After 1933, the Japanese considered the Marshalls and the rest of their Micronesian mandate, an integral part of the Japanese Empire (Peattie 1988).

During the Japanese era, the administration had several goals; the economic development of Micronesia, the use of the islands as an immigrant settlement for Japan's rapidly increasing population, the Japanization of the islanders through education, language training, and enforced cultural change, and eventually, the use of the islands for military bases in anticipation of World War II (Peattie 1988).

For the Marshallese, improvements in health and sanitation were minimal. The "availability of adequate medical care was directly related to one's ability to pay" and despite a sliding fee scale, "the poorer and generally unhealthier native received less care" (Shuster 1978).

Education was also segregated and of differential quality. Ethnic Japanese were offered a school system identical to the one in Japan; while the Marshallese received three years of

primary education consisting mostly of Japanese language instruction and ethics classes, with an additional two years for the more promising students (Hezel 1995).

The Japanese administration also attempted to make a number of changes in the Marshallese social and political organization. They appointed non-*Irooj* Marshallese leaders, which was contrary to the existing political structure, thus weakening the position of the traditional leader (Bryan 1972). The Japanese also attempted to change the Marshallese social organization of matrilineality to conform to the Japanese system of patrilineality, more like their own system, with little success.

In early 1930s, Japan began to construct fortifications on Kwajalein, Eniwetak, Jaluit, Wotje, Mili, and Maloelap. Marshallese were conscripted to labor on these buildings and were resettled (Peattie 1988). World War II started in 1941. In 1944, U.S. forces concentrated on gaining supremacy in the Pacific. Kwajalein, Majuro, and Eniwetak were captured within one month. All of the other atolls except Wotje, Maloelap, Mili, and Jaluit were checked for Japanese in the next two months. In those bypassed atolls, the Marshallese escaped or were removed under cover of night and resettled temporarily on Majuro, Arno, or Aur atolls (Smith 1955). The U.S. fortified Eniwetak and Kwajalein atolls as military bases.

After World War II, the United States took over trusteeship of the Marshall Islands. Beginning with Spoehr's work on village life in Majuro (1949), ethnographers have concentrated on community studies. The primary sources are Mason (1947, 1954) whose focus is economic organization; Kiste (1967, 1974) who deals with resettlement issues; and Davenport (1952, 1953) and Chambers (1969, 1972) concentrating on oral traditions.

1.6 Important Historical Events for Mejit Island

~500 BC - 2000 BC The first Micronesian navigators arrive in the Marshalls, calling the atolls *Aelon Kein Ad* (our islands). Dates and origins of the settlers are still uncertain. Relatively little is known about the prehistory of the people. They are thought, like other Pacific Islanders, to have originated in Southeast Asia and to have established themselves on their scattered islands centuries before European voyagers reached this area. Early accounts depict Marshallese society as having much in common with other Micronesian Islands, such as the Carolines. Chieftainship was strong and material culture, given the paucity of natural resources, was relatively advanced. Early Marshallese were regarded as superb canoe builders and sailors.

1494 The Treaty of Tordesillas cedes ownership of all of Micronesia to Spain.

1527 Three ships under Alvaro de Saavedra, sent from Mexico to seek news in the Moluccas of the Magellan and Loaisa expeditions, are sent to the area of the Marshalls (Sharp 1960, Levesque 1992).

1565 9 January, Miguel Lopez de Legaspi visited Mejit. Some of the Spaniards, including Urdaneta, went ashore and found residences on the western side.

1788 The *Scarborough* (Captain John Marshall) and *Charlotte* (Captain Thomas Gilbert) sight Mili, Arno, Majuro, Aur, Maloelap, Erikub, and Wotje Atolls while proceeding to China from Botany Bay. The name Marshall Islands is later applied to the group as a whole by Russian hydrographer A. J. Krusenstern (Sharp 1960).

1800s Wotje, Utirik, Mejit, Maloelap were allied with Aur and *Irooj* Lomade against Arno and Majuro. Lomade inherited his position as *Irooj* from his great-great-grandmother Litarau matrilineally through Legerinoa, Leom, and Limidjoa (Kramer and Nevermann 1938).

1817 1 January, the Russian brig *Rurick* and tender *Nadesha*, commanded by Lt. Otto von Kotzebue lay off Mejit, which was named 'New Year's Island.' Natives bartered aboard ship, but prevented the Russians from going ashore (Sharp 1960).

1820s American whalers seeking food and water begin visiting the Marshall Islands. Some of these occasionally leave men ashore who become beachcombers and, later, traders (Hezel 1983).

1823 *Iroojlaplap* Lomade Juen, of the *jowi* Rimwejoor, conquers all the islands of the Ratak Chain and ultimately conquers Kwajalein, Lae, Ujae, Wotho, Rongelap, Bikini, Eniwetak, and Ujelang in the Ralik (Kramer and Neverman 1938, RMI Ministry of Education1996).

1850 9 September, the whale ship *Oympia* passs Mejit (Hezel 1979).

1854 A typhoon struck Mejit Island (Kramer & Nevermann 1938).

1857 Rev. Hiram Bingham, Jr., of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), creates missionary outpost on Ebon. Kaiboke supports their work (Hezel 1983).

1860s American and Hawaiian Protestant missionaries arrive at the Marshalls, sent by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, an auxiliary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. About this time, *J. C. Godeffroy und Sohn*, of Samoa, establishes trading stations on Mili, Aur, Jaluit, Ebon, and Namorik. A few years later, two other German companies, Hernsheim & Co. and A. Capelle & Co., are also in business. Copra is their principal interest (Hezel 1983). Capelle is the first to teach Marshallese how to make copra (Finch 1893).

1860 Mejit's population is 50 (Bryan 1972, Gulick1862)

1878 Mejit's population is 50 (Kramer & Nevermann 1938)

1880 Mejit's population is 50 (Bryan 1972).

1885 Under mediation of Pope Leo XIII, German government annexes the Marshalls.

1886 By agreement with Great Britain, the Marshall Islands became a German protectorate.

1887 The German Jaluit Company (Jaluit *Gesellschaft)*, an entity entrusted with governance of the Marshalls. It buys out two foreign competitors based in San Francisco and Auckland. However, Burns, Philp & Co. of Sydney, which has been trading in the Marshalls for some years, continues to do so and remains until World War I (Hezel 1995).

1893 The Jaluit Company operates trading stations on Namorik, Kili, Likiep, Ailuk, Mejit, and Rongelap. The island of Kili is now the property of the Jaluit Company, which has laid out coconut plantations (Langhans 1898).

1900 Copra workers on Mejit unionize and 'strike' to obtain better wages. A German warship came and arrested seven of the ringleaders, and imposed a fine, but still the people held out. When the Jaluit Company reduced the price of copra in an effort to force the people's compliance, they ceased copra production altogether. The government retaliated by blockading the island to prevent the importation of trade goods, but the islanders would still not yield. The blockade continued for nearly three years, from 1901-1904, before the government finally capitulated and doubled the daily wage rates of the workers (Erdland 1914, Hezel 1983).

1906 Mejit's population is 100 (Bryan 1972).

1910 Mejit's population is 492 (Spennemann 2000).

1912 Mejit's population is 388 (Spennemann 2000).

1913 Mejit's population is 390 (Spennemann 2000).

1914 The Marshalls are captured from Germany by Japan.

1920 Marshall Islands are mandated to Japan by the League of Nations, together with the other occupied islands. The group is administered as a separate district. The Marshallese are given little voice in their own government, but the copra industry is left in their hands. Copra has to be exported to Japan at a price fixed by the Japanese (Peattie 1988).

1920 Mejit's population is 500 (Bryan 1972).

1921 The Japanese take over the copra industry from the Germans, replacing the Jaluit *Gesellschaft* with *Nanyo Boeki Kaisha* (Peattie 1988).

1930 Mejit's population is 318 (Spennemann 2000).

1934 Japan withdraws from the League of Nations, but retains possession of the Marshalls. Fortification of the Marshall Islands begins as Japan prepares for war. The Japanese

military begins building airstrips, power plants, and bunkers on Wotje, Eniwetak, Jaluit, Mili, Maloelap, and Kwajalein (Peattie 1988).

1935 Mejit's population is 324 (Bryan 1972).

1936 Mejit's population is 560 (Spennemann 2000).

1939 World War II begins in Europe.

1944 April 2, Marines land on Mejit Island. Six Japanese assigned to a naval weather station there are killed resisting the landing (Smith 1955).

1945 End of World War II grants effective control of the Marshalls to the U.S.

1945 Mejit's population is 260 (Bryan 1972).

1946 U.S. begins its nuclear testing program in the Marshalls. Bikini atoll is evacuated to Rongerik for first tests under Operation Crossroads (Deines et al. 1990).

1947 The Marshall Islands become part of the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) following three years of American military administration.

1948 Mejit's population is 302 (Spennemann 2000).

1951 US Department of the Interior assumes responsibility within US Government for the TTPI from the Department of the Navy.

1952 The first hydrogen device (Operation Ivy) under the US testing program in the Marshalls is fired on Eniwetak on 1 March. The Eniwetak people who live on Ujelang temporarily stay on a U.S. Navy ship. The ship takes them to a point 100 miles away from Eniwetak (Deines et al. 1990).

1954 US nuclear testing program detonates Bravo, the most powerful hydrogen bomb ever tested by the U.S., on Bikini atoll. Radiation from the test forces evacuation of Marshallese and U.S. Military personnel on Rongelap, Rongerik, Utirik and Ailinginae (Deines et al. 1990).

1958 Mejit's population is 364 (Spennemann 2000).

1965 The Congress of Micronesia is formed, with representatives from all of the TTPI islands. It is created by the U.S. administration in preparation for greater self-governance by Micronesians.

1967 Mejit's population is 320 (Spennemann 2000).

1970 Mejit's population is 185 (Bryan 1972).

1979 Government of the Marshall Islands officially established, and country becomes self-governing.

1979 Amata Kabua is selected as the first president of the Marshall Islands.

1980 Mejit's population is 325 (Spennemann 2000).

1982 Official name changed to the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

1983 Voters in the RMI approve the Compact of Free Association with the United States.

1983 Amata Kabua selected second time as president.

1986 U.S. Congress approves the Compact, resulting in its entry into force. The Compact grants the RMI its sovereignty and provides for aid and US defense of the islands in exchange for continued US military use of the missile testing range at Kwajalein Atoll.

1987 In third election, Amata Kabua is selected as president.

1988 Mejit's population is 445 (Spennemann 2000).

1990s Settlement of compensation claims as a result of the US nuclear testing in the Marshalls still proceeds, and is associated with various agreements being made as part of the Compact of Free Association package. There are also outstanding court cases. Almost 5000 Islanders had sought compensation from the Nuclear Claims Tribunal and, up to September 1993, some 380 had been granted compensation totaling about $14 million, only a quarter of which had been paid (Deines et al. 1990).

1990 UN Security Council terminates the RMI's Trusteeship status.

1991 RMI joins the United Nations.

1991 In fourth election, Amata Kabua is selected as president.

1994 The U.S. Department of Energy begins releasing thousands of previously classified nuclear test era documents, many of which confirm the wider extent of the fallout contamination in the Marshall Islands.

1994 *Iroojlaplap* Kabua Kabua of the Ralik Chain passes away.

1996 In fifth election, Amata Kabua is selected as president.

1996 Amata Kabua dies.

1997 Imata Kabua selected to finish the late Amata Kabua's term.

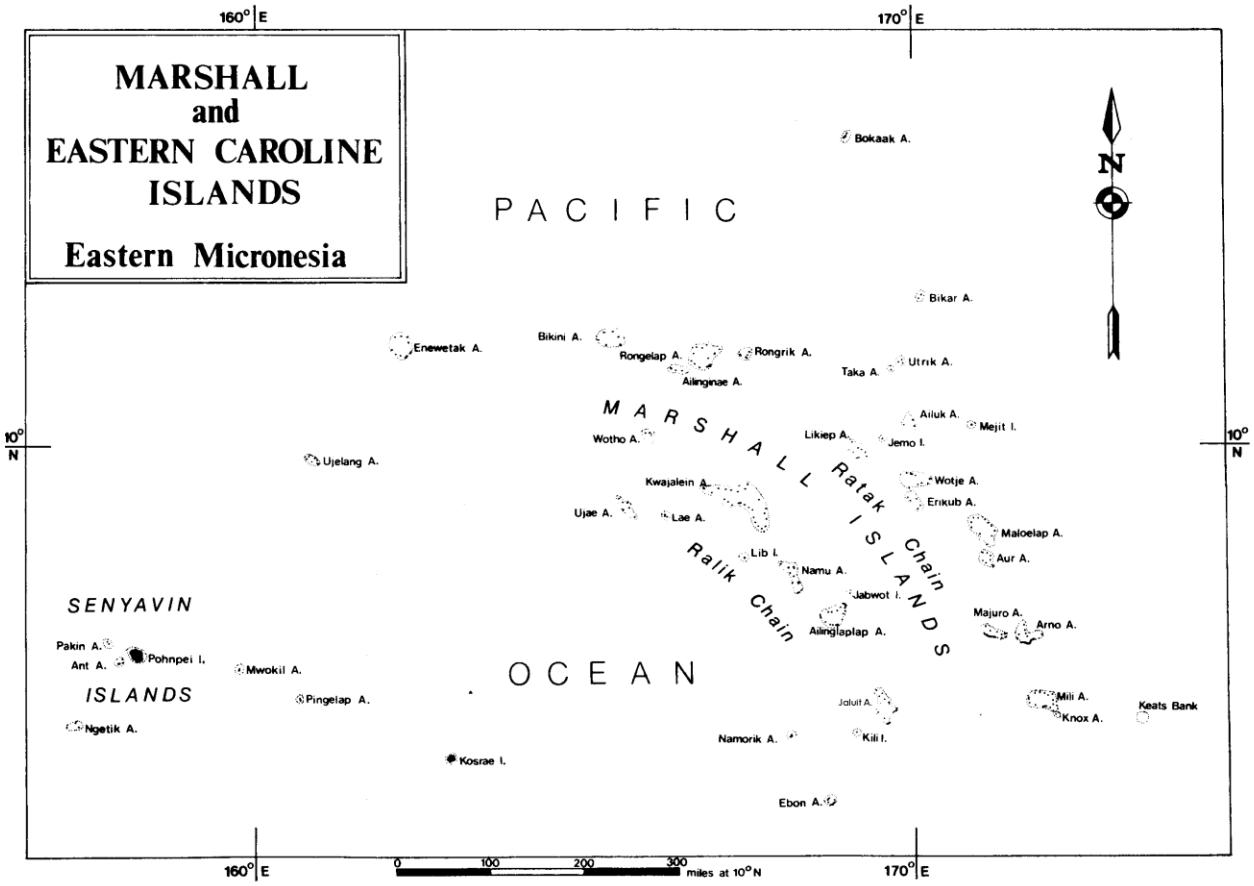
2000 Kessai Hesa Note selected as president.

2001 Current Compact of Free Association expires.

II. Environmental Settings

2.1 Physiographic and Biological Setting

Located in the central Pacific between 4° and 14° north latitude and 160° and 173° east longitude, the Republic of the Marshall Islands consists of 29 low-lying coral atolls and five coral islands (Map 1). Twenty-two of the atolls and four of the islands are presently inhabited. The atolls and islands are situated in two almost parallel chain-like formations. The eastern group is the Ratak (Sunrise) Chain and the western is the Ralik (Sunset) Chain. Together these two chains extend about 700 miles (1130 km) north to south and approximately 800 miles (1290 km) east to west. Isolated by ocean, the Republic is more than 2,000 miles (3230 km) from the nearest trading centers, Honolulu and Tokyo. Its nearest neighbors are Kiribati to the south and the Federated States of Micronesia to the west.



Map 1: Republic of the Marshall Islands

There are approximately 1,225 islets spread across an area of over 750,000 square miles (1.2 million square km). With a total land area of 70 square miles (110 square kilometers), a mean height of 7 feet (2 meters) above sea level, and soils that are nutrient poor, the nation's agricultural base is limited. The marine resource base, however, is extensive. The combined lagoon area totals 4,037 square miles (6511 square km). Coral reefs fringe the atolls and serve as the only defense against the ocean surge. The clearance over the reef in the sections that are covered by water is usually no more than a couple of feet (Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations, 1992).

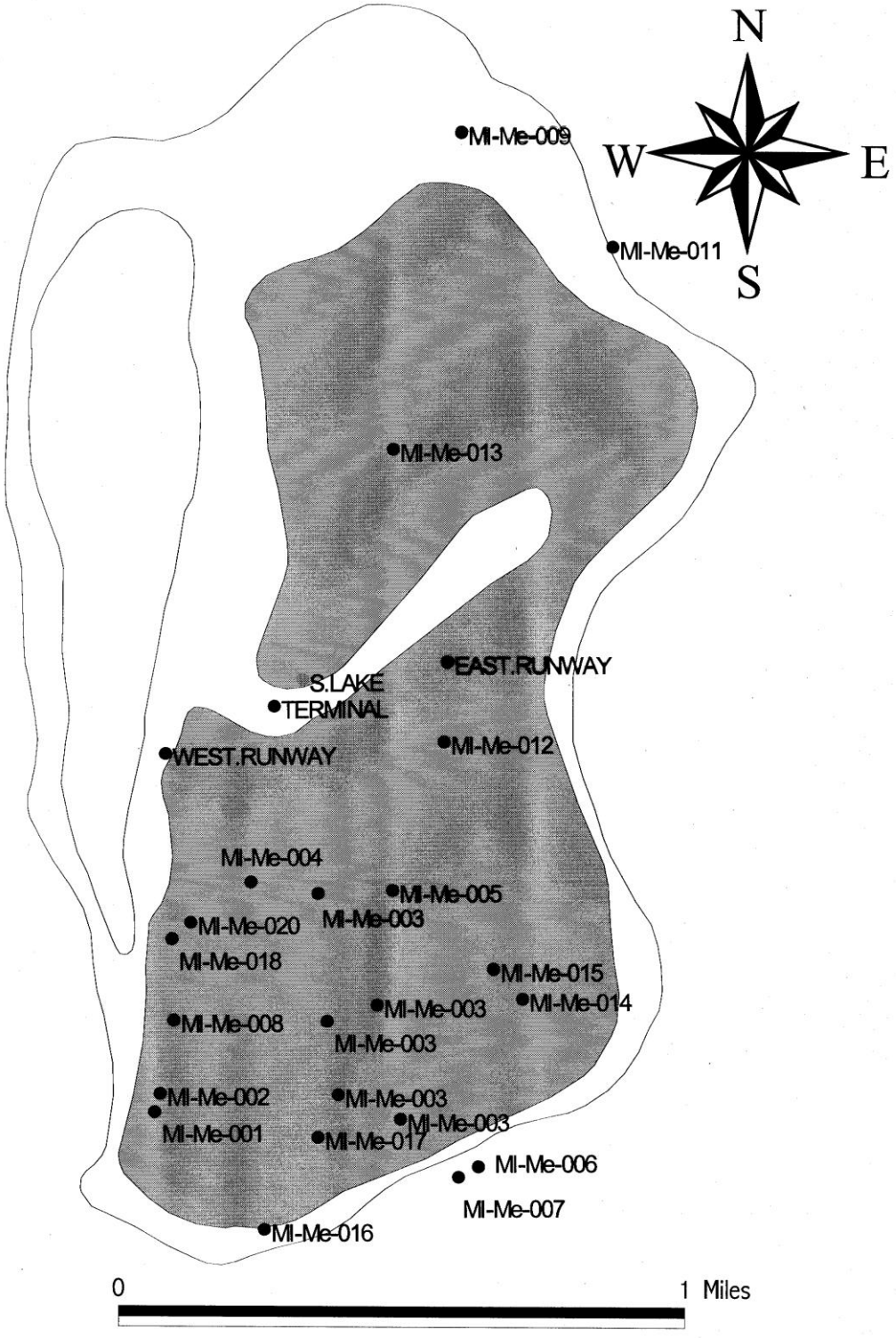
Generally speaking, an atoll consists of a series of low-lying islets and submerged reefs arranged about a central lagoon, which mixes with the open ocean via one or more channels and/or shallow passes. In the Marshall Islands, the islets composing an atoll usually form an oval shape around a central lagoon of 150 foot (45 m) average depth. The surrounding ocean depth plunges to over 5,000 feet (1525 m) within two miles (3 km), and to 10,000 feet (3050 m) within ten miles (16 km) of the typical atoll (Fosberg 1990; Wiens 1962).

Dye (1987) suggests a probable development history for the Marshall Islands. He states that approximately 70 million years ago the volcanic cores of the Marshall Island atolls erupted forming new volcanic islands. The islands, slowly subsiding but standing above sea level, were colonized by species of reef-building corals, and the process of reef flat construction began (approximately 40 million years ago).

Underwater ocean maps show that there is also an abundance of underwater seamounts, some of which reach almost to the surface, such as Keats Bank east of Mili Atoll. Most of these guyots are aligned along the same axes as the Ralik and Ratak Chains, so that these underwater features as a whole have recently been termed Ralik and Ratak Ridge (Spennemann 1993).

Mejit Island is part of the Ratak Group of the archipelago of the Marshall Islands (Map 2). It is located 10^{o} 32' north latitude and 170^{o} 67' east longitude. The island is 1.7 miles long from north to south, surrounded by a very broad reef, and has a land area of 0.36 square miles. It has two sections that were once separated by a narrow channel. The larger section was called the "main island, the other called "that island" or "the other part". Near the center is a shallow inlet or pond[2] connected with the ocean on the west side by a shallow narrow channel. During Japanese occupation the channel was gradually filled in with sand brought in by the tides connecting the two sections (Weins 1957).

[2] For a traditional account of how this pond was formed, see the Oral Tradition section, 6.2



Map 2: Mejit Island.

2.2 Climate

The climate of the Marshall Islands is predominately a trade-wind climate with the trade winds prevailing throughout the year. Minor storms of the easterly wave type are quite common from March to April and October to November. The islands are not generally considered to be in the typhoon belt, but because they are low with small land masses are easily subject to flooding during storms. Tropical storms are rare but do occur. In 1854 a typhoon struck Mejit Island (Kramer & Nevermann 1938).

The only atoll for which complete weather data exists is Majuro, where a U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Station is located. Annual rainfall varies considerably from north to south; the southern atolls receiving 120-170 inches (300-430 cm), and the northern atolls receiving 40-70 inches (100-175 cm) (NOAA 1989). The highest rainfall generally occurs during the *Anon Rak* season, also known the breadfruit season (June to October). Precipitation is generally of the shower type; however, continuous rain is not uncommon. During the *Anon Ean* season, also known as the pandanus season (January to March), the rainfall decreases with February noted to be the driest month of the year.

One of the outstanding features of the climate is the extremely consistent temperature regime. Daily temperatures recorded for both northern and southern atolls fluctuate between the high seventies and mid eighties with no seasonal variation. The range between the coolest and the warmest months averages less than 1 degree Fahrenheit. Nighttime temperatures are generally 2-4 degrees warmer than the average daily minimum because lowest temperatures usually occur during heavy showers in the daytime. In spite of this, the weather is always hot and humid with the average temperature of 81 degrees Fahrenheit all year around (Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations, 1992).

2.3 Vegetation

There is no written record of the original vegetation of the Marshall Islands. The precise date when plants first occur in the Marshall Island atolls is still debated (Dye 1987). It is possible that 44 species of plants, including various herbaceous species, shrubs, and trees, drifted to the southern Marshalls before the arrival of man (Hatheway 1953). The early inhabitants probably altered the vegetation of the atolls by introducing new species. During the twentieth century, coconut plantations developed by the German, Japanese, and American administrations replaced most of the original vegetation of many atolls (Fosberg 1990). Today as much as 60 per cent of the nation's land area is covered with coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) (OPS 1991).

Many areas not dedicated to coconut plantations have been put to other uses such as cultivation of taro and other plants. Species that have been introduced are reliant on the presence of humans for propagation (Fosberg 1990).

The vegetation that grows on the Marshall Islands include mixed broadleaf forest composed of a small number of tree species (*Tournefortia argentea, Guettarda speciosa, Pisonia grandis, Pandanus tectorius, Allophylus timoriensis, Cordia subcordata, Hernandia Sonora*); a few shrubs (*Scaevola sericea, Suriana maritama, Pemphis acidula, Tournefortia*); and a layer of ground cover consisting of several species (*Lepturus repens, Thuarea involuta, Fimbristylis cymosa, Polypodium scoloprendria*). Several mono-specific forests occur in the Marshall Islands (*Neisosperma, Pisonia grandis, Tournefortia argentea*) (Fosberg 1990). Shrubs such as *Pemphis acidula, Suriana maritama,* and *Scaevola sericea* typically grow along shorelines while herbaceous plants occur mainly under forests. Limited strands of mangroves (*Bruguiera*) occur larger islands of the wet southern atolls (Stemmerman 1981) and are found in swampy areas containing brackish water on several of the Cultivated plants (*Musa, Cocos nucifera, Artocarpus altilus, Cyrtosperma chamisonnis, Pandanus tectoris*) are commonly found on the inhabited islets of the Marshalls. These various plants serve as wind breakers, salt spray repellents, food, and are used by locals for weaving and medicinal purposes.

The vegetation of Mejit Island consists of coconut trees, breadfruit trees, pandanus trees, papaya trees, and some banana trees. The undergrowth below the coconut trees is mixture of grasses, thick stands of arrowroot, and bushes. Inland from the east shore *Ipomoea tuba* covers the ground which impedes walking. *Bruguiera* mangrove trees line the edges of the salt lake and are backed by *Pemphis* (Wein 1957).

2.4 Sea Level Changes

Due to being so low in elevation, the recent sea level rise caused by global warming or "greenhouse effect" is a critical threat to the Marshall Islands. The rising of the sea during the last two decades has devastated the low-lying atolls economically and culturally. It is estimated that the normal trend for sea level rise has been approximately 1.3 inch to 3 inch increase over the span of 100 years. However, it is figured that within the next 50 years there will be a 1.7 inch increase alone. As predicted by scientists (global warming red alert), the islands of the Marshalls is among the Pacific nations that will be affected by the rising of the sea level within the next fifteen to twenty years. Under normal conditions, coral and the other components of the coral reef can maintain a healthy landmass. At present, visibly eroded scrublands are along the coastline and most of the vegetation growing in this area will soon be washed away by the incoming tide. Any archaeological sites that are located within this area will vanish and their significant historical value will be lost to the tides.

For many years, the Marshall Islands Government has been concerned with the issue of global climate change. As the Marshall Islands lie in open ocean, the islands are very close to sea level. The vulnerability to waves and storm surges is, at the best of times, precarious. Although the islands have by no means been completely free from weather extremes, they are more frequently referred to in folklore as "*jolet jen anij*" (gifts from god). The sense that Marshall Islands are a god-given sanctuary away from the harshness of other areas is therefore part of the sociocultural identity of the people. When any variation in the weather hits the Marshall Islands, the effects can be severe. When Typhoon Paka passed through Ailinglaplap in late 1997, food crops were severely hard hit and outside food had to be brought. *El Niño* induced

drought that followed caused the entire Marshall Islands to be declared disaster areas, and emergency water making equipment and food supplies were shipped in from outside.

Given the physics of wave formation and the increasing frequency and severity of storms, the Marshall Islands will likely be at even greater risk of total inundation. The relative safety that the islands have historically provided is now in jeopardy. The impacts are not limited to the Marshalls and its immediate neighbors. The Marshall Islands are often referred to as a "front line state" with regard to the climate change issue. It is important to realize that once the potentially catastrophic effects begin to appear, it is likely too late to prevent further warming that will threaten virtually all of the world's coastal regions (Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations, 1992).

III. Land Tenure

Marshallese society is generally matrilineal and is composed of a number of matrilineal clans (*jowi*). The most important descent group is the lineage (*bwij*). The *bwij* is the matrilineal system in which all land rights are passed down through the mother's side. Therefore, the whole group is descended, mother to daughter, from a common ancestor or a *jowi* (clan). There were at least forty-four clans spread over the atolls and though it no one remembers how members of a *jowi* were related by blood, members considered themselves related. The lineage head (*alap*), usually the eldest male of the senior line of the lineage, is steward of the lineage land holdings.

With slightly less than 70 square miles of land in the entire archipelago and prime settlement areas being extremely limited, land has long been the most highly prized possession in the Marshall Islands and control of land is the central theme of Marshallese culture. The basic land division of the Marshall Islands, *weto*, is a strip that runs from the lagoon to the ocean side of an island. One or more *weto* are held and administered by a matrilineage line. Title is divided and shared by several levels of the society. In the pre-Christian era, the Marshallese social system distinguished between two major classes: *irooj* (chiefs) and *kajur* (commoners). The *irooj* hold title over an island or atoll. Among the *irooj*, the *iroojlaplap* (paramount chief) were the ones with the most power while the *iroojerik* or the lesser chiefs, shared the power and many of the privileges, but to a limited degree. Today, the term *kajur* is not used so often as the class has been divided into the *alap* (land managers) and the *rijerbal* (workers). The *alap* organizes and directs lineage activities and allots lands for use to different descent lines within the lineage. The *alap* and the *drijerbal* (workers) make up the subjects or *kajur* (commoners) and render services to the *Irooj* in exchange for land use. The *Irooj* managed the land in a way that not only provided themselves with food but also provided for the *kajur* (*alaps* and *drijerbals*). The k*ajur* in return cultivated the land, harvested the waters surrounding the atoll, and performed *ekkan* (tributes) to the *irooj*. The procedure is a cycle that has been repeating for hundreds of years. The common members of a lineage have land rights, although the *alap* and *drijerbal* change land ownership. The *Iroojlaplap* is the only individual with permanent land rights, unless defeated in war.

Historically, one *Iroojlaplap* (paramount chief) was able to extend his control over most of the Ralik Chain (except Eniwetak and Ujelang). Periodically the *Irooj* visited these islands to collect tribute. The Ralik Chain was subsequently divided into two districts, one including Namu and the north islands, the other Jabat, Ailinglaplap, and the islands south. Although all of these islands were owned by the *Iroojlaplap* he rarely visited those further north than Kwajalein and Ujae because they were isolated and somewhat impoverished (Alikire 1977). Within the northern atolls, stratification was less elaborate in comparison to those in the south.

Ratak was likewise structured but far less centralized. The whole chain was never integrated under a single *Iroojlaplap*, although the *Iroojlaplap* of Maloelap was able to put the islands to the north (except for Mejit) under his rule. Majuro and Arno broke away from this

union, however, and again became independent political entities. The Ralik and Maloelap associations were unstable and varied in size as local lesser *Irooj* tested the strength of their islands against that of the *Iroojlaplap*. This trend toward instability encouraged the *Iroojlaplap* to move his residence from island to island to make his control evident to the local lesser *Irooj*.

Today, traditional rights of land tenure are unequivocally preserved in the Constitution, and the traditional requirement of consensus decision making, in which all persons with land rights to a certain *weto* must agree on questions of land transfer is retained.

The traditional land tenure system confounds Western-style efforts of historic preservation. Public or government land is non-existent and private landowners are accustomed to exercising ultimate control over land use and access, and are therefore unaccepting of regulations which might restrict the usage of their property (Williamson 2001).

IV Field Investigation

Twenty prehistoric, historic, and traditional sites were documented during the field reconnaissance survey. The actual age of a site was often conjectured being a reconnaissance survey age determinations were made either by identifying dominant surface features, or more likely, local informants made statements about the possible age.

Mejit Island

There were 20 sites recorded on Mejit Island (Map 2).

Site MI-ME-001 (Marshall Islands - Mejit Island -Site No.)

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 17.60"
E: 170°51' 50.91"

Site MI-ME 001 is a historic Japanese cistern located on the southwestern portion of the island. It measures 4m x 2.5m and is 95cm deep. Originally, it was dug into the ground however dirt has filled it. The walls are in fair condition but coconut trees are growing in the interior (Photo 1). This historic site is determined "less significant".

Photo 1 Japanese cistern

Site MI-ME 002

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 19.78"
E: 170°51' 51.49"

This is a historic cemetery site located 20m north of MI-ME 001. Six Marshallese graves are surrounded by dense vegetation including 13 *utilomar* trees, 6 coconut trees, 4 flower hornets, and 6 bushes (Photo 2). The site is approximately 50 years old and is no longer used. This historic site is determined to be "significant".

Photo 2 Historic Cemetery

Site MI-ME 003

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 41.62" E: 170°52' 01.24"
N: 10°16' 40.45" E: 170°52' 08.09"
N: 10°16' 19.20" E: 170°52' 10.27"
N: 10°16' 16.58" E: 170°52' 16.97"
N: 10°16' 26.91" E: 170°52' 08.96"
N: 10°16' 28.52" E: 170°52' 14.49"

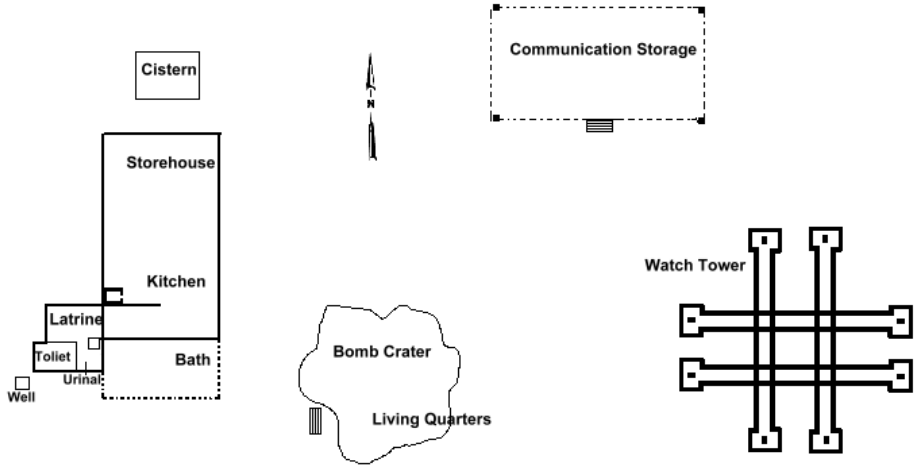
This site is 200-300 prehistoric taro pits which conjoin to form one large irregular shape pit which measures 30m long and 4m at its greatest width. It is approximately 2m deep. There is standing water on the bottom and a walking path runs north-south through the center of the patch. Some of these pits are still in use today (Photos 3 & 4). This prehistoric site is determined "significant".

Photo 3 Taro Pit

Photo 4 Taro Pit

Site MI-ME 004

This historic site was the Japanese observation/communication compound for the island of Mejit (See Map 3 for layout)[3]. The concrete foundation that was used to support the observation tower consists of 4 slender rectangular bases measuring 50cm x 13m (2 running parallel north south, and 2 running parallel east-west) (Photo 5). Together they form a double cross shape #. A winding staircase was in the center which lead up to tower. The four base foundations extend 13m x 13m. On the outer ends of each base is a hole where wooden posts were set to support the wooden structure (Photo 6).



Map 3: Japanese Compound, Site MI-ME 004

[3] Although only some of the Marshall Islands were heavily fortified by the Japanese, all of the inhabited atolls and islands had some level of Japanese presence. The presence on Mejit was small. Although an exact number is not known, it is quite possible that all the Mejit Japanese were shot rather than surrender (see Site MI-ME 007).

Photo 5 Two of the bases for the Observation/Communication Tower

Photo 6 Closeup of post hole in base

To the northwest of the observation are remnants of the radar house. There are intact concrete steps (183cm x 78cm) that once led to a wooden structure that housed the communication equipment (Photo 7). To the north of this structure was a generator, however it has since been removed.

Photo 7 Steps to the Radar House

South and west of the communication center was the living quarters. Its access was to the west with concrete steps. These steps are broken apart from a bomb that hit this wooden structure (Photo 8). The bomb crater measures 6.2m x 9m.

Photo 8 Japanese Barracks Steps and Section of Bomb Crater

West of the living quarters was the warehouse/bath/toilet area. This structure has a concrete foundation (Photo 9). The building itself was made of wood and glass. The structure measures approximately 14m x 3.5m

Adjacent to the warehouse was the latrine which had one section for a urinal, another for a toilet. The human waste ran along a drain 3m west to a 1m x1m concrete hole and was used for fertilizer. The laterine is attached to the southwestern end of structure and measures 168cm x 165cm (Photo 10)

The eastern section of the structure had a large metal bath tub (no longer on site) that was used for bathing . In the western part of the structure was a cooking area. Due north of the storehouse was a cistern (313cm x 231cm x 60cm) which stored drinking water (Photos 11 & 12). It is still in use today. South of the structure was a man-made well for bathing. This historic site is determined "significant."

Photo 9 The Concrete Foundation for the Warehouse (far right) and Latrine

Photo 10 Closeup of Laterine and drainage

Photo 11 Warehouse foundation and cistern

Photo 12 Original cistern foundation

Site MI-ME 005

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 40.60"
E: 170°52' 16.24"

This historic site is associated with the Japanese observation station (MI-ME 004). It is located in the central part of the island. What remains is a small concrete platform (Photo 13). The station was used to observe the south and eastern end of the island. The small house that was once on the foundation was used as a rest area. The remains of a flat, upright, coral stone lined path are still present (Photo 14). This historic site is determined "significant."

Photo 13 Foundation of MI-ME 005

Photo 14 Coral Stones lining path

Site MI-ME 006

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 11.63"
E: 170°52' 24.97"

This traditional site located on the southeast side of the island is commonly referred to as *Ladrik in Kamrok* which translates to 'boy from Kamrok' (Photos 15a and 15b). People bring an offering of food to the rock in exchange for a beard. For more information, see the Oral Traditions sections 6.3 and 6.4. This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 15a Traditional Site, Ladrik in Kamrok

Photo 15b Ladrik in Kamrok, photo taken in 1901

Site MI-ME 007

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' "10.46
E: 170°52' 22.94"

This historic site is where seven Japanese soldiers were buried (Photo 16). According to the informants, the Japanese refused to surrender to the American forces and were shot in this hole where they were hiding. The hole is irregular in shape, measuring 107cm deep, 180cm wide, and 580cm long. In the past human remains could be seen. It is believed that Peace Corps volunteers who were stationed on Mejit removed the bones. For more information, see the Oral History section, 6.5. This historic site is determined "significant."

Photo 16 Japanese burial

Site MI-ME 008

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 27.06"
E: 170°51' 53.09"

This historic site is represented by a concrete foundation (Photo 17). It is the remains of a house built by the Japanese. The house was built for the *Irooj* of the southern portion of the Island. The foundation is 4m x 3m and there are postholes on the corners. The posts once supported a wooden structure that was roofed with fabricated tin. Remnants of the tin and wood litter the area surrounding the site. This historic site is determined "significant."

Photo 17 Chief's house foundation built by Japanese

Site MI-ME 009

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 59.76"
E: 170°52' 23.92"

This fishtrap site is both a prehistoric and traditional site. It is commonly known as *Meenan Letao* as it is associated with Letao (a trickster in Marshallese traditional history). It is located on the Loboro *weto* on the northwest end of the island in the lagoon between the beach and outer reef (Photo 18). This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 18 Traditional Site, *Meenan Letao*

Site MI-ME 010

This site is not listed on Map 2 because it is a passage cut into the reef. It leads in and out of the lagoon (Photo 19). It is associated with MI-ME 009 and is just wide enough for an outrigger to pass. It is commonly referred to as *Mejit lo Mejeb.* This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 19 Traditional Site, *Mejit lo Mejeb*

Site MI-ME 011

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 47.94"
E: 170°52' 39.72"

This traditional site is located on the north portion of the island on the Elkurkur *weto*. The associated story tells of a mother and her two daughters. The mother instructed the daughters to play only to the north but they disobeyed her and played to the south. The mother turned into a demon and chased them to eat them. The daughters ran to another woman who hid them, but the mother came and chased them to a third woman. This rock represents the mother (Photo 20). This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 20 Traditional Site

Site MI-ME 012

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 56.39"
E: 170°52' 21.72"

This traditional site is associated with MI-ME 0011. The rock was originally on Lomake *weto* but the typhoon of 1989 moved it to its present location on Lojar weto. The rock represents the first woman the children ran to as their demon mother was chasing them (Photo 21). This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 21 Traditional Site

Site MI-ME 013

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 26.77"
E: 170°52' 16.63"

This site consists of 8-9 prehistoric taro pits which expand 100m radius from the GPS reading. They are located on the Lokinbinko *weto*. These pits are no longer in use. This prehistoric site is determined "significant."

Site MI-ME 014

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 29.09"
E: 170°52' 29.78"

This traditional site is a rock on the reef approximately 150m from the beach on the Likiej *weto*. The GPS reading was taken approximately 30m east of the rock dur to high tide. This rock represents one of the posts that holds down the island (Photo 22). *Kujukire* is the name of the post. This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 22 Traditional Site, *Kujukire*

Site MI-ME 015

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 32.01"
E: 170°52' 26.87"

This traditional site is related to sites MI-ME 011 and MI-ME 012 and is located on the southeast portion of the island approximately 30m from the beach on the Bolwoj *weto*. This rock represents the second woman that the children ran to while fleeing their demon mother. This is a good place to catch crabs as the daughters themselves turned into crabs (Photo 23). This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 23 Traditional Site

Site MI-ME 016

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 05.22"
E: 170°52' 02.41"

This traditional site is a series of rocks on the south end of the island (Photo 24). The rocks are remnants of a boat that two brothers rode from Aur to Mejit. The story, as explained by Simon Simon, tells that Letao instructed his sons not to go to Aur but they disobeyed. Lejmeja, an *Irooj* from Aur, chased them back. Their boat broke up on the reef and the fragments turned into rocks. Letao hid the boys under coconut husks. Lejmeja came looking for them and asked if the boys were nearby. Letao said yes and invited Lejmeja into his home. He sang a song to make Lejmeja sleep and then tied him up in the house and burned it therefore killing Lejmeja.

Letao song: *Ilo Lejmeja eo ekemjelok kukure,*
Ilo Lejmeja eo ekemjelok kukure,
Wade mejjam dejjen kwadejenjen.

This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 24 Several of the rocks of Site MI-ME 016

Site MI-ME 017

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 14.83"
E: 170°52' 07.94"

This traditional site is located in on the southern end of the island. It is a water well associated with two boys (Photo 25). The story tells of an old demon man who ate all of the people of Mejit except for two small boys. The demon threw them in the well to confine them while he fattened them up with coconuts so he could eat them. The boys kept the husks and made a rope, which they used to climb out of the well. They then threw the rope to Maleolap so they could escape. The demon followed them. When the boys reached Maleolap the demon was still over the ocean. The boys cut the rope, the demon fell into the ocean and sharks ate him. Crabs near the well represent the boys. This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 25 Traditional Site

Site MI-ME 018

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 35.79"
E: 170°51' 52.94"

This traditional site is the area described in MI-ME 016 where Letao hid his sons and where Letao killed the *Irooj* from Aur (Photo 26). A modern house was constructed on this location. This traditional site is determined "significant."

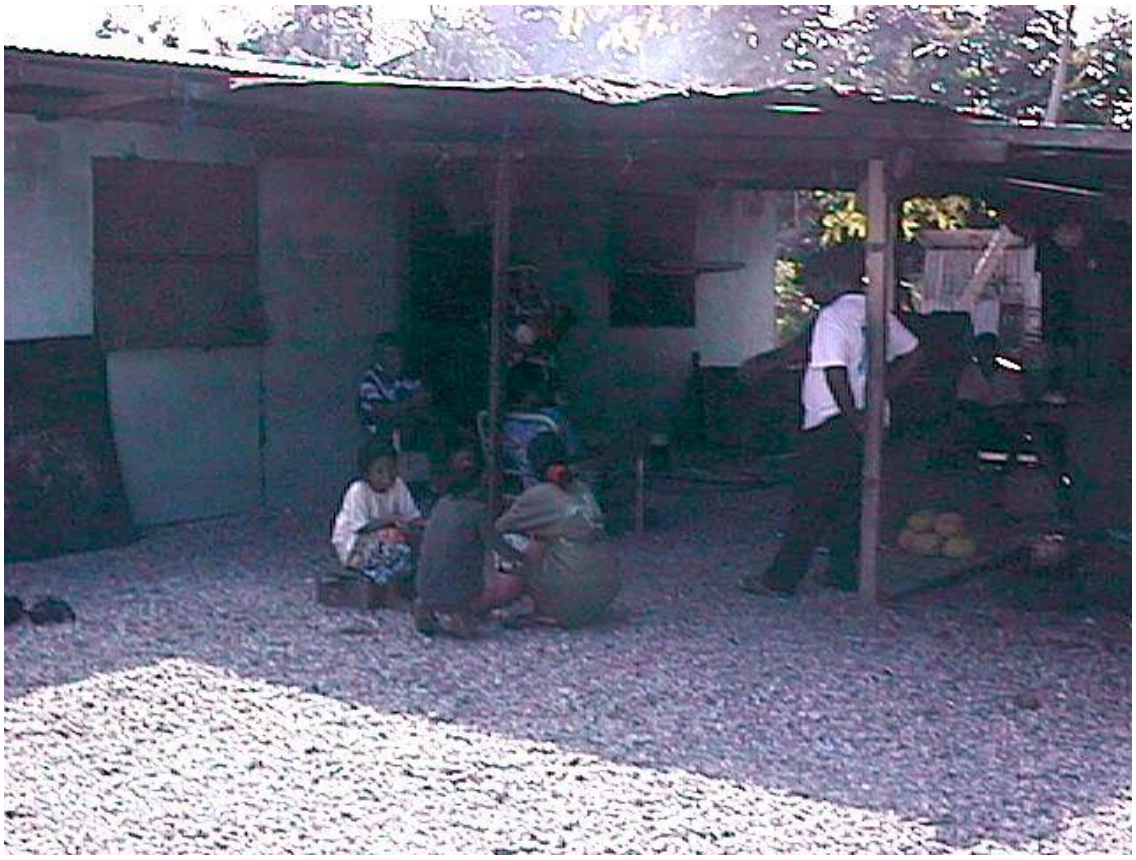


Photo 26 Area of Traditional Site (House is not part of the site).

Site MI-ME 019

This traditional site is related to MI-ME 014 and is the second "post," which holds down the island. It is located on the reef to the east of the island, north of the runway. It was too far out into the ocean to get an accurate GPS reading. This traditional site is determined "significant."

Site MI-ME 020

GPS Coordinates N: 10°16' 37.25"
E: 170°51' 54.84"

This historic site is the location where once a German colonial house stood. All that remains today is the coral spread foundation (Photo 27). The modern house in the photo is not associated with the site. This traditional site is determined "significant."

Photo 27 Foundation of German House.

V. Management Plan

Cultural Resource Management (CRM) in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, while becoming an important part of archaeological work, is still in its infancy. CRM is based on the realization that cultural resources are nonrenewable and that prudent care must be taken to utilize these resources efficiently. While the immediate goal of the HPO survey was to identify the sites of Namu Atoll, the long-term goal should be the education of the local and national population on the importance of preservation of these sites. While the Historic Preservation Legislation of 1992 has codified CRM into law, the cultural traditions of the Marshall Islands, namely the lack of public lands and the importance of land rights to private landowners, makes the practice of CRM difficult to legislate. And while the Act has established that developers are responsible for the costs involved in conducting archaeological investigations prior to the commencement of construction, there is no precedent case for developers being prosecuted due to violations of that law. Therefore, education is still the most important tool that the HPO can use in site management and preservation.

5.1 Long range recommendations

The sites on Mejit Island are valuable resources. As such, they warrant an active preservation effort. Primary concern must be the stabilization of the sites. After successful completion of the physical preservation of archaeological remains, further use of these resources has to be planned. The best strategy for the HPO seems to be raising public awareness and to actively involve local governments in their preservation efforts. Those preservation efforts should also be directed towards possible sources of income for outer island residents through tourism. Sites that have potential tourist possibilities should to be selected for restoration and possibly restoration. As Mejit contains several traditional sites it is recommended that further research be conducted to add to the information already attained.

Mejit Island is a good showcase of the Pacific war. Unlike Wotje, Maloelap, Mili, or Kwajalein, whose islands were heavily fortified by the Japanese, Mejit is an excellent example of how a minor Japanese presence is represented archaeologically. Partial restoration or simple clearing of the sites and footpaths would allow tourists to visit actual sites associated with real events in WW II. In addition to the WWII sites, Mejit contains examples of Marshallese agriculture practices (taro pits) as well as traditional sites. Guided tours and handouts could incorporate the prehistoric with the historic and would generate the revenue needed to restore more sites and yield potential employment for local residents. A tourism management plan for Mejit seems to be a valuable investment for the future. It might be added that the recovery of data, as well as the preservation and possible restoration of archaeological sites, serves little purpose if the results of this work are not disseminated to both the public and scholars alike. Some of the ways through which this information can be disseminated include training local guides and the production of handouts. Exhibitions, public lectures, and publications should also be considered.

5.2 Short range recommendations

The primary goal of every preservation action should be the proper stabilization of sites being threatened by natural forces or human impact. This is especially true for sites that have been determined to be of significance to Marshallese history. Of the twenty sites surveyed, 19 have been determined "significant," and one "less significant." For most of these sites, avoidance is a sufficient management plan. Only site MI-ME 007 and site MI-ME 017 require stabilization, as they are holes in the ground. Further research at MI-ME 004 is recommended.

VI. Oral Traditions

6.1 Introduction

Prior to the introduction of a written language, Marshallese cultural was largely an oral society where information was maintained through oral traditions. Elder generations passed down beliefs, values, and philosophies by telling stories and chants to the younger generations. Many places in the Marshall Islands, which have special cultural significance, offer a wealth of folklore associated with their pasts.

The themes of Marshallese stories are universal: good versus evil; heroism and success of the underdog; the repercussions for children of disobedience; family respect; and sibling and peer rivalry. They are flavored with demons, ghosts, giants, and personified fish and animals. Supportable historical fact is often combined with mythology in the same story.

There is a growing awareness among the Marshallese people of the important roles their oral traditions play in preserving Marshallese cultural identity. In all of the stories, morality prevails, and acceptable behavior and traits of character are exemplified so that they may be passed on from old to young, past to present, and hopefully from generation to generation.

There are many variations in the creation accounts. Regardless, the different versions introduce key characters import to Marshallese cosmology.

According to Erdland's sources, the Ralik version of creation begins with a being Lowa (or Loa) who lived on the sea. An extensive, low table reef in the south and a swamp in the north bordered the sea. Lowa spoke to the sea, 'See your island reef' and the reef formation appeared. The he said, 'See your sand' and the earth appeared on the reef. Again, he spoke: 'See your plants' and plants were growing. Again, he spoke, 'See your birds' and they appeared. One of the birds, a white gull, flew up and, while circling, spread out the sky, like a spider weaving its web between two bushes. When Lowa finally said: 'See your human beings' four human beings appeared, one in each direction: Irojrilik, in the west; (LoKomraan) Lakameran (Daymaker) in the east; (Lorak) Rerek in the south, Lajiminanmen (Lajbuineamuen or Lalikian) in the north.

Then a boil grew on the leg of Lowa, from which, when it burst open, emerged Wulleb and Limdunanij. Limdunanij gave birth to two male beings: Lanej (Master of the Heights), and Lewoj (Master of the Middle of the Island).

Wulleb and his sister's children sat down one day on a stalk of arrowroot. Which, growing up to the vault of the sky, enabled them to ascend. Their peaceful companionship, however, was of short duration. Soon the brothers plotted to kill their uncle, and Wulleb, Lanej, and Lewoj waged war in the dome of the sky. After they had observed each other mistrustfully for several nights, Wulleb's retina tore, and he fell down from the dome of the sky on Imroj. Thus, matrilinearity begins.

When he sighed aloud as the result of his fall, Iroijrilik awoke, came to him, and spoke: 'Well, this is Wulleb, and he has fallen from the sky!' Wulleb answered: 'My nephews and I watched one another by night; then when my retina tore, I fell down.' Iroijrilik then spoke, 'Let us go into the hut.' They went into it and three months passed.

When Wulleb had spent some time with Iroijrilik, a large and extremely painful boil developed on the extensor side of his leg. After it became ripe it broke open, two little boys issued from it, the elder of whom was called Jemeliwut, and the younger Letao.

Wulleb sent them to Lijbage (Tortoise woman) on Bikar Island in order to get magical tortoise shell from her. Lijbage – who, with her granddaughter Lijwei, had come from the Gilbert Islands – gave Letao a magical potion, which he drank despite all his disgust. By doing so, he became a crafty hero who not only conquered several atolls, but also embittered the life of his brother, Jemeliwut that the latter settled on Majuro Atoll, married there, and finally changed into a silver tree. Letao went everywhere seeking adventure and met sudden death in the Gilbert Islands.

According to Reymond (1899) in Das Weltall, the Ratak version of creation starts with two serpents (or worms), the male was called Wulleb and and the female, Lejman (Woman Rock). They developed into human form in a shell. To make a larger world, Wulleb lifted the arch of the shell, using a stick to expand it to the present height of the sky and width of the oceans.

From a boil on Wulleb's forehead emerged Lewoj and Lanej, who were sent to the sky by Wulleb in order to put up the stars. Lejman also had two female offspring, Lino (tidalwave) and Ni (coconut).

Then Wullip collected in a coconut shell the blood from a cut on his leg, and from this blood came Letao (one with the white eyebrow, the powerful, the crafty, the favored one) and Jemelud (father of the rainbow). They went out to conquer. Prior to the conquest of the islands they had already ascended to the vault of heaven in order to defeat their older brothers. That their ascent in the north was successful is clearly shown by the fact that the Northern Hemisphere is less inhabited (studded with stars) by far than the Southern Hemisphere. A bird flew to tell one of the sky gods their plans to defeat their brothers. This god captured Letao's small son, set him impossible tasks, which the son accomplished, then lowering himself to earth on a thread. Letao had settled on Mejit. Bikar was formed by a rock which Letao threw at the bird which had come to spy on him.

For clarification, from the Ralik chain the cosmological genealogy is as follows:

Lowa

Wulleb Limdunanij

Jemaliwut Letao Lanej Lewoj

From the Ratak chain the cosmogonic genealogy is as follows:

			Wulleb			Lejman	
Jemaliwut	Letao	Lanej	Lewoj		Lino		Ni

Other accounts add information, some contradictory. According to Knappe the first being was Wulleb who lived with his wife on the invisible island of Eb. One day a tree grew from Wulleb's head, split his skull, and out came Letao and Jemeliut. Letao quarreled with his father and went away, flying through the air with a basket of earth some of which spilled through a hole, so that the islands came into existence in the sea. Then Letao planted the land, created land and sea animals, and married his mother. Then the bird Babuk came with the female sexual organ in his beak. Letao hid it. Lejman found it and put it on. Neither wore clothes at this time but Lejman became ashamed and took two mats as covering (beginning of clothing). From their union came the first people. In this version, Letao is credited with creating the animals and plants. According to Knappe (1888) the woman wasn't ashamed at her nakedness but because she had an incestuous relationship with her son.

Davenport's version states that Lowa sent a man who put all the islands in a basket and arranged them, first the Carolines, then the two chains of the Marshalls, Namorik was dropped out of order. The basket was eventually thrown down and became Kili.

In several versions, Lowa sent two men to Ailinglaplap to tattoo all the living creatures,' thus giving them colors and markings (Davenport 1953, Chambers 1969, Buckingham 1949). Lowa sent two men down to Bikini with measurements for the first canoe (Buckingham 1949, Davenport 1953). A woman bore a son and a coconut. At his request, she buried the coconut, which grew into the first coconut tree. Again, at his request she husked a coconut and the husks floated to Iroijirilik, who made sennit with them. The sennit was taken by a bird and flew into the air with the rope making a net and widening and raising the sky, holding it up. Rain is water separated into drops falling through the net (Kramer and Neverman 1938, Buckingham 1949, Chambers 1969). Everyone went to Namu to honor Liwatonmour, founder of the *Irooj jowi*. From this gathering came all *jowi*, with *Irooj* as the highest (Chambers 1969).

There are many other stories, which explain the origin of the sailing canoe (Liktanur and her son's canoe race) (Kramer and Neverman 1938, Erdland 1914, Buckingham 1949, Davenport 1953), the origin of navigation (Buckingham 1949), origins of animals, breadfruit (Mackenzie 1960), and taro (Bikajle 1960).

6.2 How the large pool was formed on Mejit

There are only two pieces of land that are not atolls in the Ratak Chain of the Marshalls, Jemo, which is uninhabited, and Mejit, on which people live. On Mejit, there is a very big pond in the center of the island. People say it was made by a monster a long time ago. At that time, there were only two inhabitants there, an old man and his wife. Each evening the old man would go to the center of the island to make copra, and he would remain there into the night. His wife would stay at their home preparing food. One night while away from home, the old man saw something shining in the distance, but he did not go to investigate to see what it was.

The next night the old man returned to his place of work in the middle of Mejit. He suddenly realized that the shining area had become larger, and that it was a pond reflecting moonlight. He returned home to tell his wife that he was going to spend the whole night there to see what was happening. The next evening, his wife prepared food and the old man left to visit the pond.

During the night, he noticed that someone or something was working to make the pool larger. He returned to the area several more nights and watched. Then one night he realized that it was a monster working on the pond, and the old man, very much afraid, hurried home to tell his wife. They realized that their lives were in danger from the monster, so they made a plan to slay it before the monster killed them. The man would lure the monster away from the pond, and his wife would entice the monster into their house.

The old man went to the pond for a final visit. When he saw the creature leave the water, he threw stones to attract him. When the monster chased the old man, he ran towards the house where his wife was standing in the doorway. The old man went quickly inside, hid, and waited. When the monster saw the old lady, he ran into the house after her, and was stabbed in the back and killed with a spear by the old man who was hiding behind the front door.

Today the island of Mejit is peaceful and the monster is just a memory. His pond, though, is in the center of the island and is enjoyed as a swimming place by all of the people.

6.3 Laddik in Kamrok

The story of this rock has been passed down from our ancestors and I believe it's a true story. The reason I believe in this story of this rock is because I've have experienced it once, not only that but I've seen it happen to many people.

This rock is special because it can give you something right away. If you want to have a mustache all you have to do is place a food offering on this rock. As soon as you place it on the rock, two different kinds of ants, black or red, will appear. If the black ants appear, it means that you are going to get a black mustache. If the red ant appears, you are going to receive a red mustache. This rock decides what mustache you will have once you place the food on this rock. It means you're asking it to give you a mustache of either color (black or red).[4]

6.4 Another Version of Laddik in Kamrok

A long time ago according to legends, one of the tidings show that of the legendary monument which still exists today. A Rock is located in Mejit Island. This Rock is situated on the lagoon side of the island. Its purpose is to give anyone whiskers (upon request). One obtains whiskers by requesting them from the rock while planting a small grass stalk into one of the holes of the rock. Then you say, "give me whiskers." If a red ant appears, then one knows that the request for whiskers was not granted. However, if a black ant appears, then the wish has been granted. It is possible that one might end up having more whiskers than either his older

[4] Langinmij Lang told this story and Langinbo Frank recorded it. Kenny Paul provided the English translation. See site MI-ME-006

brother or even his grandfather for that matter. The name of this special tiding is called "Murin Ej".[5]

6.5 WWII oral history

During WWII, many Japanese soldiers were captured on Mejit by Americans soldiers. After they had been captured, they were put in one of the foxholes. There were about 27 of them in the hole. Some days later, the Americans asked them if they wanted to have their lives spared for the next shipment coming. Suddenly a voice came from the hole. A Japanese high-ranking officer shouted back to the American soldiers to kill them right away. Therefore, the Americans dropped bombs into this hole. The Japanese soldiers died. They were buried by the walls caving in around them.[6]

6.6 Miscellanous Traditional Stories from historic sources

Letao and Jemeliut

Letao and Jemeliut were sent by their father to conquer islands. They planned to conquer the sky kingdom of their older brothers, but a bird flew to tell one of the sky gods their plans. This god captured Letao's small son, set him impossible tasks, which the son accomplished, then lowering himself to earth on a thread. Letao settled on Mejit (Reymond 18991: 9-10).

Laneo and Limeruitub[7]

On Mejit the *Irooj* daughter, Limeruitub, was of marriageable age but because she was of low descent and her family had committed an offense, the puberty celebration was forbidden.

From Ebon, Laneo the ogress came to devour the girl, her father, and the woman in charge of ceremonies. She sang, "Laneo is here, the people are beating the drum for the maid in the *Irooj* hut, they will not celebrate; they are celebrating, they will not celebrate…by this current, by that current on the seaward side of Limeruitub's Mejit!" Some of the people said, "What do I hear?" The people became angry because of the shouting, since they wanted to celebrate. They said, "*Bililom* – we shall celebrate all the same!"

The woman again shouted, "Laneo is here, the people are beating the drum for the maid in the *Irooj* hut, they will not celebrate; they are celebrating, they will not celebrate…by this current, by that current on the seaward side of Limeruitub's Mejit!"

The people were frightened and hastened to practice divination so that they might flee and hide. They dug a hollow beside the trunk of a thick breadfruit tree, a very deep hole. They went in and covered the opening with grass. Laneo, however, came and searched the entire island.

---

[5] Langinbo Frank translated this story found in the Alele oral history files. The storyteller is unknown. See site MI-ME-006

[6] Langinmij Lang told this story and Langinbo Frank recorded it. Kenny Paul provided the English translation. See site MI-ME-007.

[7] As told by Lejitnel (according to Erdland).

When she was tired, she went under the breadfruit tree to rest; she smelled a sweet odor, went about the trunk, and spoke, "Oh sweet odor by the trunk of the breadfruit tree of the maid!" Then she stepped on the opening, llifted the grass, saw and ate them, and was satiated (Erdland 1914: 260-61).

Chief Lantumur

Chief Lantumur was on the boat Berokul. He and another man were in love with the chiefess of Mejit. They sailed to Mejit and caught fish on the way. They gave the large tuna to the girls who flew from Bikar, and the smaller ones to the chieftess from Mejit. So today in Mejit there are small tuna fish (Chambers 1969, as told by Rufus).

Battle between the Rutobaal *jowi* and Mokauleej *jowi*

On Mejit Island a famous battle was fought between *Irooj* Lorron Lipinirok supported by his *jowi* members, the Rutobaal, and Mokauleej *jowi*. The battle lasted all day and as night was falling *Irooj* Lorron and his people escaped by swimming and sailing their canoes to the ocean. When they reached the safety of the ocean *Irooj* Lorron performed a special magical ritual to determine whether it was safe to return to the island. The *Bwe in Atari* indicated that they should immediately go ashore at the northern most part of the island, even though it was now low tide and the exposed coral reef was very dangerous. Meanwhile the opposing mob was celebrating their victory and never suspected that *Irooj* Lorron and his supporters would return. Thus, *Irooj* Lorron surprised and killed everyone. Mejit is still divided into two different factions and the expression *Bwe in Atari* has since come to mean the necessity of taking quick and decisive action in order to avoid danger and harm.[8]

Storm Tide On Mejit

This song was published by Kramer 1906. Kramer calls it a *Bujebuj* dance.

The wind's spine is broken,
It blows less,
We perform the wind-tabu.
It grows still, still, still,
Wholly still,
The calm, the calm.
The wind-tabu, *e*,
Makes calm, calm, calm.
The surf, surf, surf,
The surf, surf, surf,
The surf, surf, surf,
Plunges, roars,
Plunges, roars,
Plunges, roars,
It flows up,
The sea covers the beach with foam,
It is full of the finest sand,

[8] This story is found in the Alele files.

Stirring up the ground, stirring up the ground.
It slaps, slaps, slaps,
Slaps, slaps, slaps
On the beach and roars.

6.7 Traditional Places in Mejit

The language of the Marshall Islands has four different words to indicate spiritual beings: *jetob, anij, ekjab,* and *noneip*. The meanings of these are not clear. Knappe (1888) states that a *jetob* is a spirit who had existed somewhere in the universe and to whom one attributes particular supernatural qualities and abilities. An *anij* is an invisible being, which can both help and harm people. An *ekjab* is embodied in natural objects; a tree, a plant, a stone, a reef, an animal, etc. A *noneip* lives by themselves on certain islands of the Marshalls and are invisible to ordinary mortals. Knappe (1888) recorded information concerning various Marshallese spirits. Most fall into the category of *ekjab* although there are a few *anij* as well. Knappe, in the publication *Religiose Anschauungen der Marshall-Insulaner,* recorded the following *ekjab.*

1. Latojo is a *wôt* tree. It assures good fishing. Twice a year feasts are celebrated in his honor. While the men catch fish for the feast, the women sit on the beach drum and shriek to following prayer: "The fishing-rod hangs out, the *bebei* bit, but managed to free himself again when the line was pulled in; he tore himself free at the side of the canoe, he tore himself free at the center of the canoe. The canoe is pushed away with the pole. The fish is pulled onto the beach with great effort. It is pulled from two sides. Both parties unite. The fish come from the invisible island of Ep. The fish is thrown from the beach to the land by the fisherman. The canoe comes onto the reef. The anchor stone is thrown out on the line. Head and tail are bound in the west of the stone Lineuid, east of the other stone lineuid; and the canoe must move backwards from the third stone lineuid. The canoe must pass between two other *ekjab*. Fish spring here and there. They approach the stem, the pin where the sail rigging is fastened. The fish is pulled up on the rod. Hurrah! I take the shoulder piece; I want the bones of the head. Let us drum on the canoe. Lift the fish out of the water into the canoe. Pull vigorously; pull the fish *bebei*. Throw out the anchor stone; speak to the fish; he can move neither his head nor his tail, he is dead, the fish. The head is intended for the women."

2. Latujok Ragot was a sea monster which resided in front of Djabedjaban Island, Mili, between two shallows, Bedjen and Edjerik; he had a beard and half resembled a human being; he devoured people. Two young boys, Adjimedut and Adjimedet, sons of Lemedudjaban, were determined to kill this monster. One of them remained on the shore while the other swam toward the dwelling place of the monster. The monster attacked the boy on land so that the other boy was able to attack the monster from behind. The monster was not killed by spears. Irresponsibly, the two boys murdered most of the *ekjab* on Mili as well as a number of the *Irooj*. Next they went to Uolot Ilsand in the Maloelab Atoll, about 150 miles north of Mili, where they appeared as two *ekjab* in the form of stones. Latujok, one of the *Irooj* killed by the two boys, is regarded as an *ekjab* in the form of a wôt tree on Mejit Island, about 300 miles north of Mili. Twice a year feasts are celebrated in his honor and prayers are offered for abundant food.

3. Ladjodjungur, a stone heap on the beach; provides good weather. During a storm the following prayer is offered to him: Waves be still, Send the large waves back, we drum to thee, and blow in the horn, Hu—u—u."

4. Lugalul, a bush on Mejit; is approached for good fishing

5. Mirigago, a bush , calms the waves

6. Ladoredak, a pit, helps in catching bonitos

7. Oadunik, a stone on the reef; helps good fishing

8. Laniu, a stone on the reef, brings a rich harvest of pandanus leaves for plaiting mats

9. Ledebit, a *nen* tree, brings good fishing

10. Lubul, a stone on the island; is addressed as the god of war

11. Lerigeran, a stone on the reef, which facilitates good fishing

VII. Summary and Conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction, the objectives of the present project were very clear and focused on site survey and inventory and education. The present work at the HPO is focusing on surveys of all the atolls within the Republic in order to produce a complete site inventory and National Register. Unfortunately, given the limitations of a reconnaissance survey it must be remembered that only visible historic and traditional sites were recorded. A more intensive survey and possibly limited test excavations are still required.

Part I of this report acquainted the reader with the research design, scope of work, and methodology involved in solving the pre-stated problems. It gave information on previously conducted research, a brief history of the Marshall Islands, and important historical events relating to Mejit.

Part II described the environmental setting of Mejit Island. Typhoons can drastically alter the landscape and therefore archaeological sites of low-lying atolls in the Pacific. Sea level changes pose additional threats to atoll environments. It is predicted that the global warming trend will have a tremendous impact on atoll communities within the next century. Information provided on vegetation and soil types provided clues to the likelihood of areas primarily used for agriculture.

Part III described the Marshallese land tenure system. Gaining knowledge on land tenure and subsistence strategies was important for evaluating the significance of sites concerning their standing in time and space.

Part IV reported the results of the field investigations. A total of 20 sites were recorded during the reconnaissance survey; ten traditional sites, three prehistoric sites, and seven historic site.

Part V listed possible long-term and short-term management plans for the preservation of the sites on Mejit Island.

Part VI lists the traditional stories associated with Mejit.

References

Alkire, William H
1977 An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia. Menlo Park, CA: Cummings Publishing Co.

Beardsley, Felicia Rounds
1994 Archaeological Investigations on Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. Unpublished manuscript. Prepared for U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Pacific Ocean Division. Prepared by International Archaeological research Institute, Inc., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Bikajle, Tion
1960 Taro Culture as Practised by the Marshallese. Pp.133-140 IN Taro Cultivation Practices and Beliefs part II: The Eastern Carolines and the Marshall Islands. Anthropological Working Papers No. 6:2. Guam, Office of the Staff Anthropologist, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Bryan, E.H., Jr.
1972 Life in the Marshall Islands. Honolulu: Pacific Scientific Information Center; B.P. Bishop Museum

Chambers, Keith Stanley
1972 Tale Traditions of Eastern Micronesia: A Comparative Study of Marshallese, Gilbertese, and Nauruan Folk Narrative. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of California, Berkeley.

Chamisso, A. von
1986 A voyage around the world with the Romanzov exploring expedition in the years 1815-1818 in the Brig Rurick, Captain Otto von Kotzebue. (translated by H.Kratz). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Davenport, William H.
1952 Popular Sayings and Tales of the Marshalls. Manuscript on file at University of Hawaii Pacific Collection Library.

Davenport, William H.
1953 Marshallese Folklore Types. Journal of Am. Folklore 66:219-237

Deines, A.C., David I. Goldman, Ruth R. Harris, and Laura J. Kells
1990 Marshall Islands Chronology-1944 to 1990 U.S. Department of Energy

Dye, Tom

1987 Marshall Islands Archaeology: Pacific Anthropological Records No. 38. Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. Honolulu, Hawaii.

Erdland, P.A.
1914 Die Marshall Insulaner. Leben und Sitte, Sinn und Religion eines Südsee-volkes. Anthropos Bibliothek. Internationale Sammlung Ethnologischer Monographien, Vol.2(1). Münster: As chen dorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung.

Fosberg, F.R
1956 Military Geography of the Northern Marshalls. Engineer Intelligence Dossier, Strategic Study Marshall, Subfile 19: Analysis of the Natural Environment. Prepared under the direction of the Chief of Engineers, U.S.Army by the Intelligence Division Office of the Engineer Headquarters United States Army Forces Far East with personnel of the United States Geological Survey.

Fosberg, F.R.
1990 A review of the Natural History of the Marshall Islands. Atoll Research Bulletin. 330. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Hart, Kevin
1992 Sung for Anidreb: A Brief History of the Marshall Islands. Marshall Islands Publishing. Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Hatheway, William
1953 The land Vegetation of Arno Atoll, Marshall Islands. Atoll Research Bulletin No. 16. Pacific Science Board, National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, Washington DC.

Hezel, Francis X.
1979 Foreign ships in Micronesia. A compendium of ship contacts with the Caroline and Marshall Islands 1521-1885. Saipan, Mariana Is.: F.J.Hezel & Trust Territory Historic Preservation Office.

Hezel, Francis X.
1983 The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521-1885. University of Hawaii Press. Honolulu, Hawaii.

Hezel, Francis X.
1995 Strangers in their own Land: A Century of Colonial Rule in the Caroline and Marshall Islands. Pacific Island Monograph Series 13. University of Hawaii Press. Honolulu, Hawaii.

Hiery, Hermann Joseph
1995 The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I. University of Hawaii Press)

Historic Preservation Legislation
1992 Republic of the Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Legislation, Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs, Historic Preservation Office, Majuro.

Kiste, Robert C
1968 Kili Island: A study of the relocation of the Ex-Bikini Marshallese. Eugene, Oregon: Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon.

Kiste, Robert C
1987 History of the People of Eniwetak Atoll in Devaney, D.N., E.S.Reese, B.L.Burch & P.Helfrich, The Natural History of Eniwetak Atoll. Volume I. The Ecosystem: Environments, Biotas, and Processes. Oak Ridge, Ten.: U.S.Department of Energy, Office of Scientific and Technical Information. Pp. 17 - 26.

Knappe, Konsul
1888 Religiöse Anschauungen der Marshall-Insulaner. Mittheilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten 10, 63-81.

Kotzebue, O. von
1821 A voyage of discovery into the South Sea and Beering's Straits. for the purpose of exploring a north-east passage undertaken in the years 1815-1818: at the expense of His Highness the Chancellor of the Empire, Count Romanzoff in the ship Rurick, under the command of the Lieutenant in the Russian Imperial Navy, Otto von Kotzebue. 3 vols. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown.

Kotzebue, O. von
1830 A new voyage around the world in the years 1823-1826. 2. vols. London:H.Colbourn & R.Bentley.

Kramer, A. & H.Nevermann
1938 Ralik-Ratak (Marschall Inseln). In G.Thilenius (ed.), Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-1910. II. Ethnographie, B: Mikronesien. Vol. 11: Hamburg: Friedrichsen & de Gruyter.

Langhans, P.
1898 Beiträge zur Kenntnis der deutschen Schutzgebiete. Petermanns Mitteilugen 39, 238.

Lay, William & Cyrus M.Hussey
1928 A narrative of the mutiny on board the ship Globe of Nantucket in the Pacific Ocean, Jan 1824, and the journal of a residence of two years on the Mulgrave Islands, with observations on the manners and customs of the inhabitants. New London (Reprint: New York: Corinth Books

Levesque, Rodrigue

1992a Levesque, Rodrigue History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents. Volume 1-European Discovery 1521-1560. Levesque Publications, Quebec, Canada.

Levesque, Rodrigue
1992b Levesque, Rodrigue History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents. Volume 2-Prelude to conquest, 1561-1595. Levesque Publications, Quebec, Canada.

Mackenzie, J.Boyd
1960 Breadfruit cultivation Practices and Beliefs in the Marshall Islands. Anthropological Working Papers No. 8. Guam, Office of the Staff Anthropologist, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Mason, Leonard
1947 Economic Organization of the Marshall Islands. Economic Survey of Micronesia. US Commercial Company Report, No. 9.

Micronitor News and Printing Company
1996 Nuclear Testing in the Marshall Islands: A Brief History. Majuro, Marshall Islands: Micronitor News and Printing Company, August 1996. 18.

Office of Air Force History
1973 The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology, 1941-1945. Headquarters USAF.

Paulding, Hiram
1831 Journal of a Cruise of the United States schooner `Dolphin' among the islands of the Pacific Ocean. New York: Carvill.

Pauwels, P.C.
1936 The Japanese Mandate Islands. Bandoeng: G.C.T. Van Dorp.]

Peattie, M.R.
1988 Nanyo. The rise and fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945.(Pacific Islands Monographs Series, No.4. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

Permanent Mission of the RMI
1992 Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations Republic of the Marshall Islands: Basic Facts and Statistics.

Rosendahl, Paul
1979 Archaeology in Eastern Micronesia: Reconnaissance Survey in the Marshall and Eastern Caroline Islands. Prepared for Historic Preservation Office, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Unpublished manuscript.

Rosendahl, Paul

1987 Archaeology in Eastern Micronesia: Reconnaissance Survey in the Marshall and Eastern Caroline Islands IN Marshall Islands Archaeology, Tom Dye editor, Pacific Anthropological Records No. 38. Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. Honolulu, Hawaii.

Sharp, Andrew
1960 Discovery of the Pacific Islands. London, Oxford University Press.

Shuster, D.R.
1978 Major Patterns of Social Change Instituted in Micronesia During Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1948. Ms.

Smith, S.E., ed.
1955 The United States Marine Corps in World War II. New York: Random House.

Spenneman, Dirk H.R.
2000 Historic Demographic Information for the Marshall Islands -- Mejit Island. Albury: URL: http:/life.csu.edu.au/marshall/mejit.html

Spenneman, Dirk H.R. and Ian Marschner (comp.)
1994-2000 Stormy Years. On the Association between the El Nino/Southern Oscillation phenomenon and the occurrence of typhoons in the Marshall Islands. Albury: URL: http://life.cse.edu.au/marshall/html/typhoon/StormyYears.html

Spoehr, A.
1949 Majuro, a village of the Marshall Islands. Fieldiana: Anthropology 39. Chicago: Chicago Natural History Museum.

Tobin, Jack
1952 Land Tenure in the Marshall Islands. Atoll Research Bulletin 11.

U.S. Department of Energy
1993 List of Declassified Yields of Tests Conducted in the Pacific Prior to 1958-1961 Moratorium, December 1993.

Williamson, Richard
2001 The Challenges of Survey and Site Preservation in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Cultural Resource Management, Volume 24, No. 1, pp. 44-45.