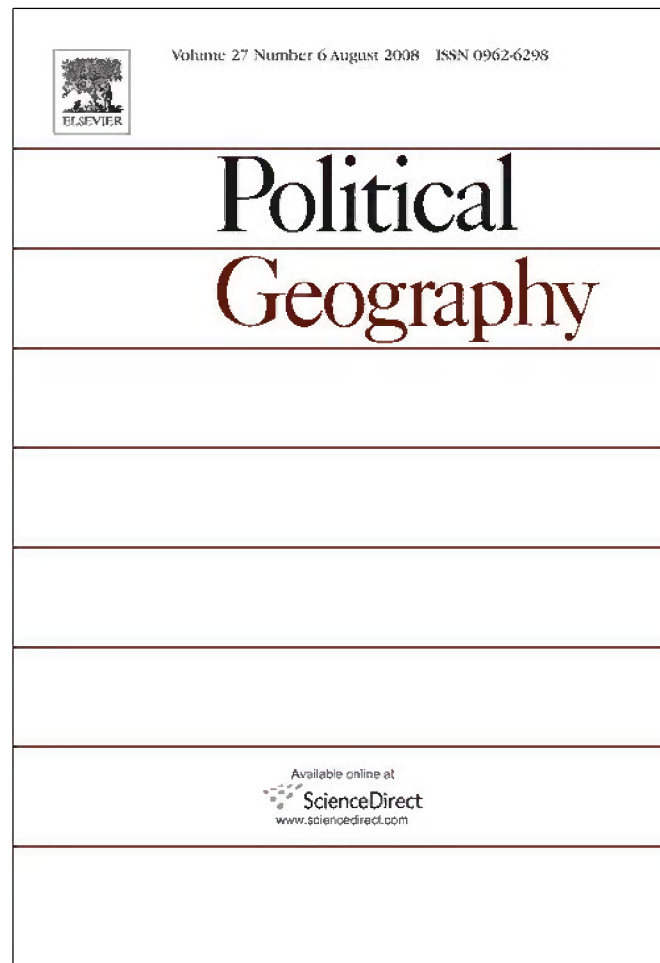


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Inscribing empire: Guam and the War in the Pacific National Historical Park

R.D.K. Herman*

*Research Unit, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, PO Box 37012, Washington,
DC 20013-7012, USA*

Abstract

National parks form an archipelago of government-run, on-site “museums,” geographic sites of territorial and rhetorical nation-building. The War in the Pacific National Historical Park, which occupies seven parcels of land on the small island of Guam, celebrates the “freedom” that the U.S. brought to the region in World War II. But in fact, this landscape sits at the nexus of several contested territories. Guam was seized in the 1898 Spanish–American War—the final wave of American territorial expansion—and experienced 50 years of dictatorship under the U.S. Navy, despite vigorous efforts by islanders to gain citizenship and basic rights. The post-war transformation of the island by the military came at the further expense of local land rights, and the park itself later got caught up in the struggle over federal land ownership. Disagreements within the park service and between the park service and the local people added to the contests. Finally and most importantly, the park-as-text presents a discourse of American military heroism against the Japanese, at the expense of recognition of Chamorro suffering, or of any historical marker tying the indigenous history of Guam into U.S. historical memory. The contradiction between U.S. expansionism and U.S. ideals is apparent in the way the park serves as a colonial tool in this remnant of the American empire. This paper examines the park as a narrative landscape within the fields of contestation that characterize U.S. rule on Guam.

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* Tel.: +1 202 633 8843; fax: +1 202 633 6894.

E-mail address: hermand@si.edu

On December 7th, 1941, Japanese aircraft launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in the U.S. Territory of Hawai'i. 2300 U.S. Military and 48 civilians were killed in what President Roosevelt called "a day that will live in infamy." Virtually unknown to Americans, however, is the attack that took place about 4 h later, on a far more remote U.S. Territory: the island of Guam. In a brief but locally well-remembered air and sea attack, Japanese troops seized control of this small American colony and began an occupation that lasted three years. Over 13,000 American subjects suffered injury, forced labor, forced march, or internment. At least 1123 died (National Park Service, n.d.).

The differences—and the similarities—of these two memories illuminate the workings of American empire. At the time, both island entities were unincorporated colonies of the U.S., and in both cases, the indigenous peoples had not been consulted regarding their acquisition by the U.S. But while the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack receives abundant commemoration, re-showings (and re-makings) of relevant movies, the seizure of Guam and the plight of the Chamorros remain virtually unknown outside of Guam and Micronesia.

I arrived on Guam in 2001 to work with community members on an oral-based indigenous-geography project. By way of familiarizing myself with the lay of the land, I used my first day there to drive around the island. I had not traveled far out of Hagåtña¹ when I encountered a large, familiar-shaped sign announcing the War in the Pacific National Historical Park. Perhaps five minutes later, I passed another such sign. And five minutes after that, still another. The highway then ended at a T-intersection facing imposing gates with armed guards and large lettering announcing "U.S. Naval Base Guam." The highway itself is called "Marine Drive," but my naïve assumption that this reflected the road's location along the ocean was dispelled by a newer sign, in 2006, clarifying that it is "Marine Corps Drive."² Given that my own concern was to research and present an indigenous perspective on the island, I found this series of signs overwhelming (Fig. 1). Americans who know anything of Guam know that the island is host to U.S. military bases, and the route I drove was littered with symbols of the military presence (Fig. 2). The signs denoting a national park commemorating war, operating in conjunction with the large military presence, too easily mark out a narrative terrain on an island otherwise lacking in alternative narrative for most Americans.

The presence of this national landscape on Guam is an uneasy juxtaposition, and this study examines how the park sits at the nexus of several contested terrains—geographic and discursive—that characterize the relationship between the U.S. and this remote possession. The island is one of the U.S.'s remaining colonies ("unincorporated territories"), located only 14° above the equator and over 6000 miles away from North America's west coast. Conversely, Guam is about 1400 miles from either the Philippines or Tokyo. The island is officially American soil, yet American citizens need a passport to enter. Seventy-six percent of the population is of Micronesian or Asian ancestry (mostly Chamorro and Filipino)³, with only 7%

¹ The capital of Guam, widely known as Agana or Agaña, is herein designated by its Chamoru name, Hagåtña. The vowel *a* is pronounced as in *mat*, while *ã* is pronounced as in *father*.

² I am informed that Chamorro Marines petitioned for this change of name.

³ After the American takeover of Guam, and especially after World War II, much of the literature refers to Guam residents as "Guamanians." For mainland American writers, this reflected the insistence that the Chamorros were no longer a "pure race." The term was also used post-war by the indigenous population to distinguish themselves from new residents who were not native. On Guam today, Chamorros refer to themselves as "Chamorros" when referring to their ethnicity, and the term "Guamanian" is used by the local media to refer to all residents of Guam much in the same as "New Yorker" or "Californian." But given the demographic shifts post-war, one can no longer refer to the islanders as a whole as "Chamorro."



Fig. 1. Large signs drawing attention to Park units along Marine Corps Drive, heading south from Hagåtña and ending at the base of the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Marianas (the highway starts at Andersen Air Force Base on the northern end of the island); photographs by author.

white and 1% black. In this setting far—in so many ways—from the U.S. core, the presence of the National Park Service—evoking the nation's famous natural and historical wonders, supervised by rangers in drab green uniforms and Smokey-the-Bear hats—seems incongruous.

This study suggests that the park's resonance with familiar icons of the American leisure landscape is not innocuous. "National park" designates "national significance," reflecting the contributions that such parks make to the construction of a narrative of American nationalism. The National Park System presents an archipelago of government-run, on-site "museums"; geographic sites of territorial and rhetorical nation-building.

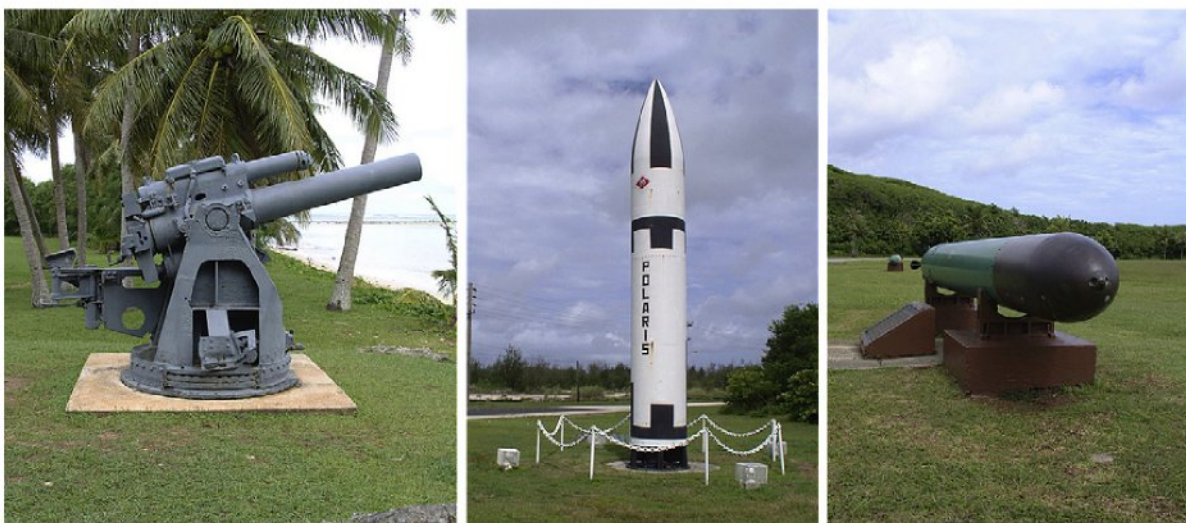


Fig. 2. The landscape is dotted with symbols of the military presence whose erect postures reflect the assertion of American military dominance on the landscape; photographs by author.

Guam's relationship to the "nation"—the U.S.—has been historically problematic from the start. Guam represents the final wave of the U.S. westward expansion—the 1898 war with Spain—wherein, by acquiring a handful of overseas island territories, the U.S. became an empire. But unlike with the Indian territories, these new insular territories were never formally absorbed into the Union. Over a century later, those that remain are still unincorporated.

Inasmuch as Guam is undeniably a vestige of the American empire, the island provides a text for reading the workings of that empire. It is a hidden text, to the degree that Guam is so small and so far removed from American consciousness, and to the extent that very little has been written about Guam in the context of that empire. But the lessons this microcosm offers about American expansionism, discourses of freedom, and the authorization of memory are powerful. In particular, the War in the Pacific National Historical Park's celebration of American values—freedom, liberty, democracy, private property—stands in uncomfortable juxtaposition with the way those values have manifested in American rule of the island. As a national(ist) landscape, the park works to inscribe a seamless relationship between Guam and the U.S. But despite the designation "Guam, USA", slogans like "Where America's day begins," and powerful demonstrations of Guamanian loyalty and patriotism, Guam tells us more about its disjuncture than its unity with the U.S.

Contested territory: Guam and empire

Guam is part of the Mariana islands, a Micronesian archipelago that has been inhabited by the Chamorro people since around 1600 BCE (April, 2006). As one of the longest-inhabited, remote archipelagos in the Pacific, the Marianas developed a unique culture linguistically and culturally unrelated to other Micronesians. From 900 C.E. the Chamorros were placing houses up on carved two-piece limestone pillars known as *latte* stones. By the 16th century, the Chamorros had developed a complex, class-based matrilineal society based on fishing and agriculture, supplemented by occasional trade visits from Caroline Islanders (see Russell, 1998; Cunningham, 1992; Pacific Worlds, 2003).

Guam has the dubious distinction of being the first Pacific Island encountered by Europeans, and the Marianas would become the first Pacific Island colony. In 1521, Magellan landed here in his crossing of the Pacific. As Spain went on to colonize the Philippines, Guam and the Marianas fell into Spain's purview. The arrival of Jesuit missionary Diego Luís de San Vitores in 1668 and his death—"martyrdom"—at the hands of angry residents triggered the arrival of Spanish military on the island in 1672. Twenty-six years of Spanish–Chamorro wars ensued, which along with introduced diseases decimated the population down to 5000 Chamorros—perhaps 10% of their former number. These the Spanish rounded up from the other islands and relocated into new villages on Guam, breaking their ancestral and cultural ties to their lands (see Rogers, 1995; Pacific Worlds, 2003).

But for the Spanish, whose attention was focused on the nearby Philippines, the Marianas offered little strategic or economic advantages, and quickly became a colonial backwater. Two hundred years of benign neglect under Spanish Governors ensued, in which Chamorros were acclimated to a peasant lifestyle under the watchful eyes of the Catholic church. While Catholicism required the dismantling of the indigenous spiritual traditions and many cultural practices, there are ways in which Chamorro culture adapted to these newly imposed forms, and survived. Housing styles, ritual practices, and the language spoken by the majority of the Chamorro population even today reflect the continuation of Chamorro culture (Pacific Worlds, 2003; Safford, 1903; Hofschneider, 2001).

The Spanish empire was approaching its twilight years by the time the young U.S. acquired California from Mexico in 1848. Having expanded westward from the original 13 colonies in a mere 60 years, this young nation-state had stunned the world with its rapid growth. As that growth came at the expense of indigenous inhabitants, it is important to note the ideology whereby a country espousing freedom could engage in conquest. Drinnon (1980) presents a progressive development of racist—expansionist thinking that Merk (1963) breaks into two themes: first is a sense of *mission* that was inherently Christian, with a strong belief that Divine Providence was guiding the nation, and always focused on notions of freedom, equality, and republican ideals (Merk, 1963; Segal & Stineback, 1977; Horsman, 1981). These combined in a firm conviction that American institutions would spread by the natural attraction of surrounding peoples to this high standard of civilization: freedom.

Added to that, however, was an expansionist agenda held by some, asserting the prerogative of the U.S. to acquire new territory as it pleased. From the earliest days of the nation there were those who foresaw the U.S. incorporating all of North America; for others, the entire Western Hemisphere; and for still others, American ideals and institutions should be planted on every shore. Mission and expansionism combined into the discourse of Manifest Destiny.

Forcible expansionism was justified by a racial factor, whereby peoples deemed “not ready for civilization” were candidates for colonization. This was first formalized in Chief Justice John Marshall 1838 Supreme Court ruling in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, wherein he stated that American Indians constituted “domestic dependent nations” that “occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will” and whose “relation to the U.S. resembles that of a ward to his guardian.” (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 1831) As the American nation was, in Lepore’s (1999) argument, based on justifiable violence towards Indians, the discourses of mission and expansionism had always had a racial component (Berkhofer, 1978; Drinnon, 1980; Horsman, 1981; Deloria, 1998). Particularly in its 1890s manifestation, Manifest Destiny was an overtly racist ideology, extending “Indian-hating” to the far western Pacific.

These were the notions at work when the USS *Charleston* seized Guam at the outset of the Spanish–American War in 1898. The 1898 Treaty of Paris between Spain and the U.S. formalized the handover of Guam. What then unfolded over the next century cannot be understood apart from this ideological paradox between freedom and conquest.

The American takeover of Guam was peacefully accomplished, but in an ironic accident of history and geography, the American officers neglected to take the rest of the Marianas and much more of Micronesia claimed at that time by the Spanish (Figs. 3 and 4). Spain quickly sold these other islands to Germany, leaving Guam and the Philippines isolated by thousands of miles of ocean from the next nearest (newly annexed) American territory, the Hawaiian Islands.

That the island was conquered by the U.S. marks the first way in which Guam is a contested terrain. It is a place taken in conquest from another state that earlier took it by conquest, with no choice on the part of the indigenous inhabitants in either case (Blaz, 1994; Rogers, 1995).

Contested nationhood: Guam, USA

Until the 1898 war, U.S. territories had customarily progressed into states, and the Constitution had “followed the flag.” But there was no such intention here. This reversal of policy was confirmed by the *Insular Cases* of 1901. New territories, it was decided, might never be incorporated into the union, and were to receive only unspecified “fundamental” Constitutional protections. They were to be governed without the consent of the governed in a system

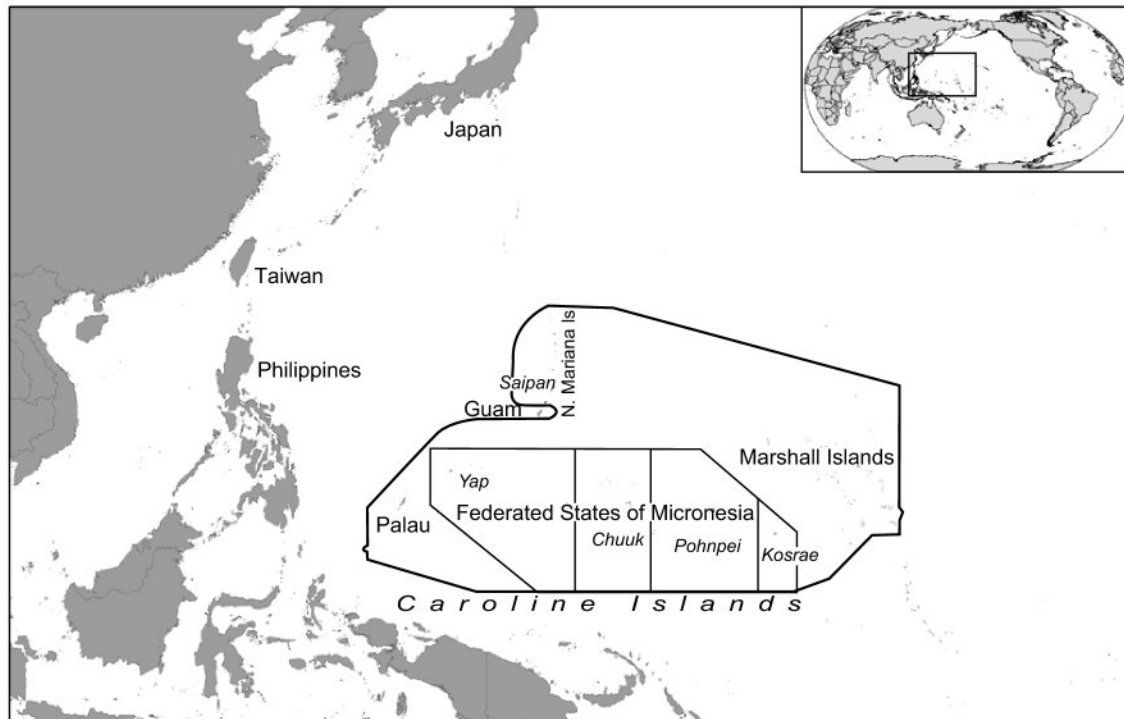


Fig. 3. Map of “American” Micronesia. Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Caroline Islands were all nominally claimed by Spain by 1898. After the U.S. captured Guam, Spain sold the rest to Germany, which already controlled the Marshall Islands. Germany lost its holdings to Japan in World War I. The larger loop shows the Japanese-controlled region that became the Trust Territory of the Pacific under U.S. control after World War II. In the 1980s, it broke up into the countries represented. Except during Japan’s occupation, Guam has been separate from this region.

that lacked the checks and balances that underlie the principle of limited government (Sparrow, 2006, p. 5). The new insular possessions became “real dependencies...territories inhabited by a settled population differing from us in race and civilization to such an extent that assimilation seems impossible” (Coudert, 1903, p. 13). Thus in the 1898 war the U.S. became an empire in the manner of Britain, France and Germany (see Williams, 1980). The contradiction of a “free,” “democratic” country holding colonies unfolded powerfully on Guam over the ensuing century.

Given the unincorporated status of Guam as a territory, the status of the people of Guam is similarly liminal. And indeed, it is the contest over the relationship of Guamanians to the U.S. that most clearly affirms Guam as contested territory. The Chamorros adapted quickly to the notion of American rule, and efforts at Americanization were both employed and appropriated, resulting in an early apparent patriotism towards the U.S. But the resulting Chamorro struggle for citizenship and civil rights stands in contradiction to the highly touted “freedom” that U.S. rule was supposed to have brought. Writers on the 1898 war and on Manifest Destiny have themselves ignored the implications of what unfolded on Guam after the U.S. takeover (Camacho, 2005; Maga, 1984).

Right after the U.S takeover, the leading families of Guam met and established a legislature in anticipation of a democratic, representative government. To their surprise, the island was instead placed under the Secretary of the Navy, and ruled by a series of military governors who, though generally benign, wielded absolute power. The Navy maintained the island—both physically and discursively—as an essential American forward base, and under their

administrations, Guam was run like a well-ordered battleship with what was essentially martial law (Thompson, 1946).⁴ Practices deemed incompatible with military order were suppressed, including (at various times) the Chamorro language, Catholic rituals, drinking, gambling, and whistling on the streets. Trials were by military court. There was no civilian government.

From the start, the contradiction of American rule without American democracy was apparent to the Chamorros. The actions they took over the next few decades demonstrated their determination:

- In 1901, 32 leading citizens of Guam sent a petition to the U.S. Congress stating that “fewer permanent guarantees of liberty and property rights exist now than when under the Spanish... We believe ourselves fully justified in asking relief from a system of government that subjects a thoroughly loyal people to the absolute rule of a single person...” (cited in Hofschneider, 2001, pp. 48–49). This petition, like so many that followed, was ignored.
- The first Guam Congress was established in 1917. To the dismay of the local people, the Naval governor insisted that its members be appointed by his office, rather than elected, and treated the Congress as merely an advisory body to enable his goals of civil administration (Hofschneider, 2001).
- In 1929 a different governor pushed for Chamorro citizenship and self-rule, and even signed a bill of rights. The second Guam Congress was formed with, for the first time, elected members, but was treated as merely an advisory body with no actual power. The proposed measure for self-rule and civil rights was rejected by the Navy Department (Rogers, 1995).
- In 1933 the Guam Congress sent a citizenship petition to the U.S. Congress. This petition was filed away and ignored.
- In 1936, two Guam delegates, Baltazar J. Bordallo and Francisco B. Leon Guerrero, went to Washington to petition in person for Chamorro citizenship. They were positively received by the President and by members of Congress. But the Navy convinced the federal government to reject the petition (Rogers, 1995). The Navy cited, among other things, “the racial problems of that locality” and asserted that “these people have not yet reached a state of development commensurate with the personal independence, obligations, and responsibilities of United States citizenship” (Hofschneider, 2001, p. 93).

Yet despite their insistence on military rule, the Navy was completely unprepared when the Japanese arrived in December of 1941. Five thousand Japanese troops quickly overpowered the very small and ill-armed U.S. military and Chamorro Insular Force Guards. Then began three years of an increasingly brutal occupation of the island (see Palomo & Borja, 1994). During this period, Chamorros were executed for aiding and abetting a few American hideouts. In the most prominent case, Father Jesus Baza Dueñas was tortured and executed for allegedly aiding radioman George Tweed (Flores, n.d.; *Pacific Worlds*, 2003). Towards the end of the War, Chamorros were herded into concentration camps, and some were massacred.⁵ It is important to

⁴ Thompson (1946) remarked that the Naval Civil Government offered even fewer rights and protections than regular Naval Martial Law, since the naval governor *was* the law—there was no appeal beyond him. Cox (1904, p. 395) noted the government’s “failure to provide a code of laws and to limit the powers of the executive, whose orders... have all the effects of statute law.”

⁵ Experiences recounted by Chamorros who survived the Occupation are recounted in the “Hopkins Committee Report for the Secretary on the Civil Government of Guam and American Samoa” (1947), reprinted in *Guam War Claims Review Commission* (2004).

note that these brutalities were brought on in part by Guam's having been an American possession. On the surrounding islands owned by Japan since 1917, treatment of the islanders during the war was not as bad (Camacho, 2005; Diaz, 1993; Higuchi, 2001).

Liberation from the Japanese did not bring democracy. Two years of outright Martial Law followed, then a return to Naval dictatorship. A post-war spate of articles, while acknowledging the bravery and sacrifice of U.S. military forces, critically appraised this military rule. Thompson (1946) referred to the "crisis" on Guam and compared the Naval government unfavorably with the former Spanish administration. James (1946, p. 277), while praising the military in some regards, nonetheless remarked, "The Guamanian is loyal to the form of government we have imposed upon him, but he finds it difficult to understand why the United States still governs his island as though it were conquered enemy territory." The United Nations criticized Navy rule as "colonial" and "departing from the principles of a democratic nation" (Rogers, 1995, p. 208). Various fact-finding committees recommended legislation for a civilian government, a bill of rights, and some transfer of power to the Guam Congress (Guam War Claims Review Commission, 2004).

Maintaining military rule over a colony in the Post-WWII environment was increasingly problematic, and in 1947 Governor Pownell was forced by the Acting Secretary of the Navy to give the Guam Congress legislative power (Maga, 1984). Finally in 1950, President Truman signed a law establishing Guam as an "unincorporated territory" with a civil government, and granting "congressional" citizenship to Guam residents. This is a second-class type of citizenship in which Chamorros remain unprotected by the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, the Governors were, for the next 18 years, appointed by the federal government rather than elected. It took 22 years for Guam to get a non-voting representative to the U.S. Congress. But as Rogers (1995) notes, the U.S. Supreme Court continues to assert that "The Government of Guam is in essence an instrumentality of the federal government."⁶

No doubt in response to their loss of control, in 1950 the Navy invoked Executive Order 8683 of 1941, which established a Guam Island Naval Defensive Sea Area around the island and the Guam Island Naval Airspace Reservation over the island. A Security Clearance Program was thereby instituted in which the Navy controlling all travel to, from, and on the island, effectively maintaining a function of martial law. It was not until 1962 that an Executive Order ended this program (Barrett & Ferenz, 1960).

Since then, Guamanians approved a proposed Guam Commonwealth Act in two 1987 plebiscites. The Guam Commission on Self-Determination submitted the document to the Congress for its consideration in 1988, and though it was introduced in four consecutive Congresses—the 100th through the 104th—there has still been no action on it (Office of Insular Affairs, 2007). The United Nations continues to list Guam among the remaining 16 non-self-governing territories in the world.

Contested geography: post-war transformations

The re-conquest of Guam by American forces in 1944 lasted over three weeks. When the dust had cleared, 80% of all buildings and homes on the island had been destroyed, leaving more than 19,000 residents homeless (Palomo n.d.). The death count for both the occupation and the liberation included over 1800 U.S. military, 1100 civilians, and 18,000 Japanese. A

⁶ This was in the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court in 1985, *Sakamoto v. Duty Free Shoppers, Ltd.*

lesser-known engagement of the Pacific War, the battle of Guam was still a major military campaign.

Admiral Nimitz, who took command of the island after its liberation, envisioned Guam as a Pacific Base “second only to Pearl Harbor,” and this required land acquisition. The Naval government had taken up to a third of the island from Chamorros prior to the war, much of it arguably through fraud (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004; Rogers, 1995). In 1945, Nimitz wrote the U.S. chief of Naval operations that U.S. post-war objectives would require about 55% of the entire island, or 75,700 acres. The federal government already controlled 28,345 acres through pre-war purchases and tax confiscations. With the Land Acquisition Act of 1946, the Navy Department purchased or condemned another 29,460 acres. The remaining 17,895 acres were to be leased from local owners at \$0.60 per acre. The prices were based on 1941 levels, but real prices had increased 100% by 1947.

Moreover, the Land and Claims commission on Guam cut corners in appraisals and legal technicalities in their rush to acquire land (Rogers, 1995). While some Guamanians, out of patriotism, willingly loaned or sold land to the military, others began taking their cases to court. By September 1945, more than a third of Guam’s total land area was condemned by the Naval Government, increasing the federal government’s land claims to approximately two-thirds of the entire island. Admiral Nimitz had an 18-hole golf course built—for military-only—150 acres of it on private land. In 1947 Governor Pownell created a one-man Superior Court with a statesider judge, John C. Fischer, to accelerate land condemnations outside of any Guamanian control. It was later found that threats, coercion, appeals to patriotism, and fear of reprisal from the all-powerful Naval government led many Guamanians to sell or lease land for less than fair compensation (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004; Rogers, 1995). Chamorro historian Anne Perez Hattori asserts that “the appropriation of land by the military intervened in Chamorro lives unlike any other imposition of the U.S. government. By 1947, a total of 1350 families had lost their land and homes due to military policy.”⁷

The enormity of the spatial reorganization of Guam goes beyond the acquisition of land. Immediately after Liberation, the military took complete control of the island for a massive military buildup, pushing around residents (now mostly refugees) as deemed necessary. After the war, despite the November 1945 Land Transfer Act that made federal land available to Guam residents, it was not until 1948 and 1949 the Navy offered Guamanians the opportunity of buying their new government-provided lots instead of waiting to rebuild on their old pre-war properties. This resulted in a massive rearrangement of the pre-war village patterns in the central and northern villages, where the majority of Chamorros resided (Rogers, 1995).

The rearrangement of Guam villages around military-claimed lands is apparent from the comparison of census maps. The 1930 map shows the eight administrative districts created by the first naval government. The 1950 map shows a new complexity in the immediate post-war period, with the 1960–1970 map then showing the intensification of population in the north, but also the disappearance of Machanao in the north and the realignment of Barrigada and other districts to accommodate land taken for the military. The complexity added by military districts is made more explicit in the 1980 map. In short, Guam was restructured around these new military holdings.

Because of the massive labor needs to assist the military buildup, imported labor from the U.S. and the Philippines (in particular) radically changed the demographic structure of Guam’s

⁷ Anne Perez Hattori, “Guardians of Our Soil: Indigenous Responses to Post-World War II Military Land Appropriation on Guam,” in *Farms, Firms, and Runways: Perspectives on U.S. Military Bases in the Western Pacific*, ed. L. Eve Armentrout Ma (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 2001). Cited in Camacho, 2005, pp. 137–138.

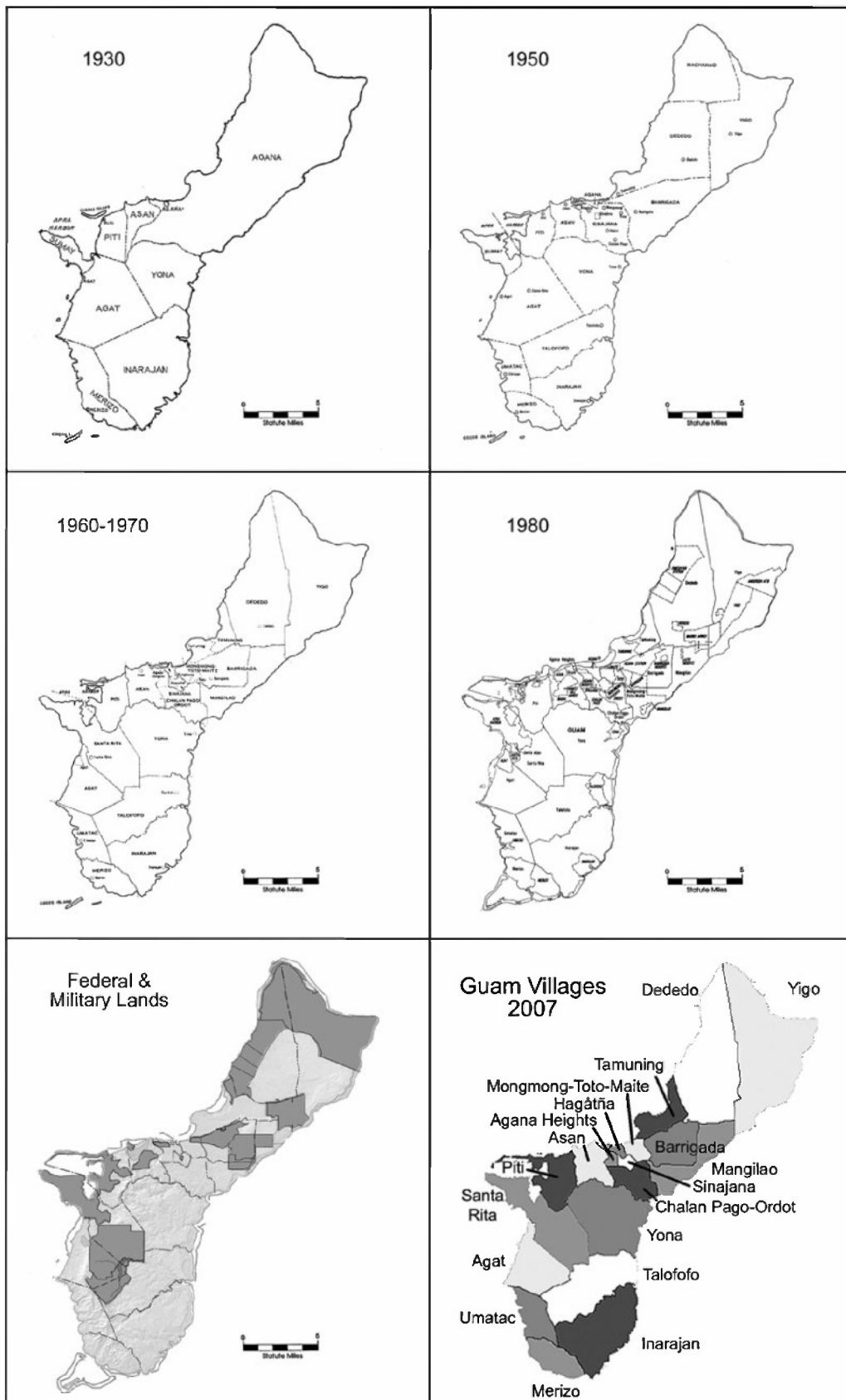


Fig. 4. Maps from the U.S. census reports for Guam, showing the shifting of administrative divisions on the Island in relation to military lands.

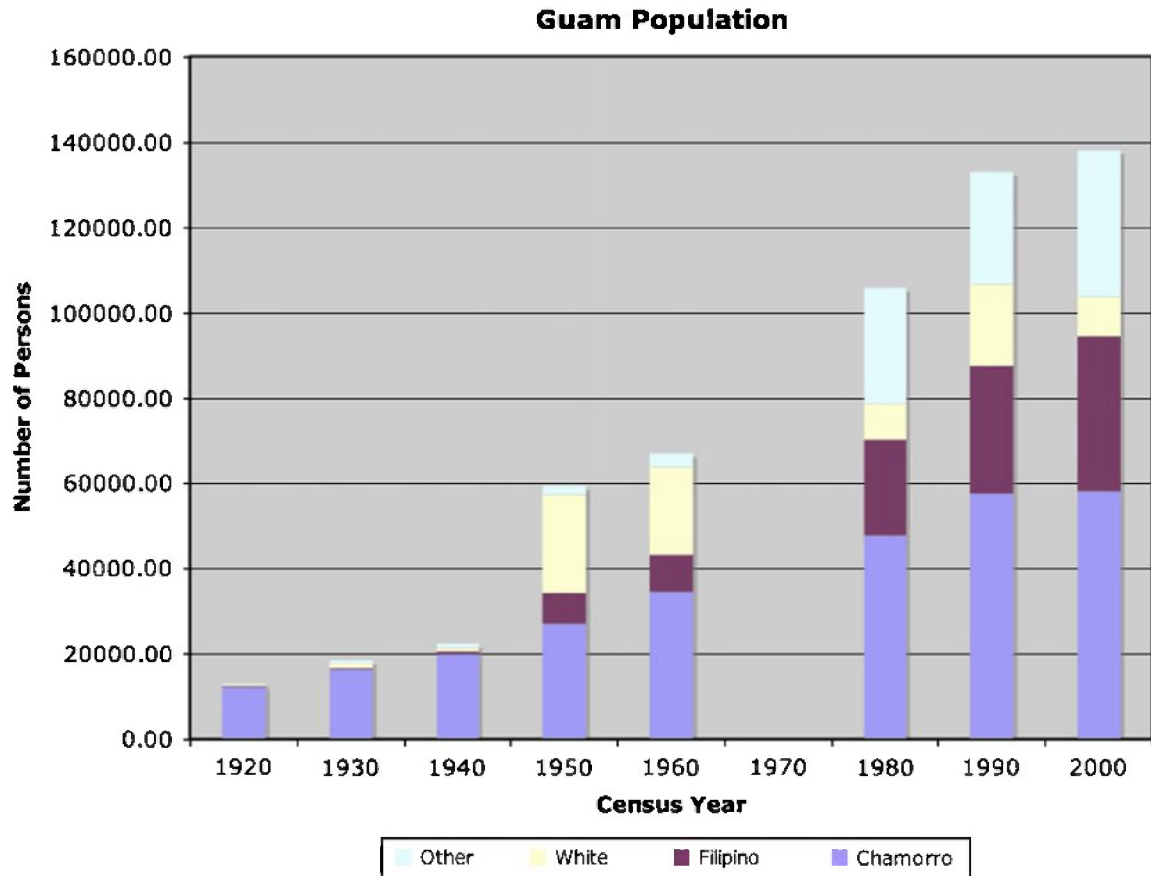


Fig. 5. Changing demographic structure on Guam, 1920–2000. The post-war influx of white Americans is clearly visible, then the influx of Filipinos and Others (predominantly Asians and Pacific Islanders) from the lifting of the Security Clearance Program in 1962. Breakdown for 1970 is not available. Data from the U.S. Census.

population, which went from 90% Chamorro in 1940 to 46% in 1950, and remains below 50% today (Figs. 5 and 6).

Place names—and street names in particular—add to the impact of the military imprint on Guam. New villages planned by the naval government post-war were laid out in grids with street names often commemorating the military. These included important battle sites (Tarawa, Midway, and Rabaul), American family names, presumably of naval personnel (Tyson, Jones, Shephard, Perry, Cook, and Osborne), and Victory Street and Marine Drive. Nimitz Hill, Leary Junction, Wettengel Junction, Potts Junction, and the Glass Breakwater (named for Henry Glass, who seized the island in 1898),⁸ along with schools named for Presidents Washington, Truman, Johnson and Kennedy, are among the place names that add to the U.S. spatial stamp on the island.

Thus the contest over the geography of Guam played out on the land in a number of ways, with the Navy placing an enormous Americanizing imprint on the island that despite the civilian government afforded by the Organic Act, maintains much of Guam as a military base ringed by civilians. By time the War in the Pacific National Historical Park was proposed, Guam was being used as a primary resupply location for the war in Vietnam.

⁸ The author has been unable to determine the origins of these various place names, and how many of them still exist. The names listed here are found on maps printed in the immediate post-war period.

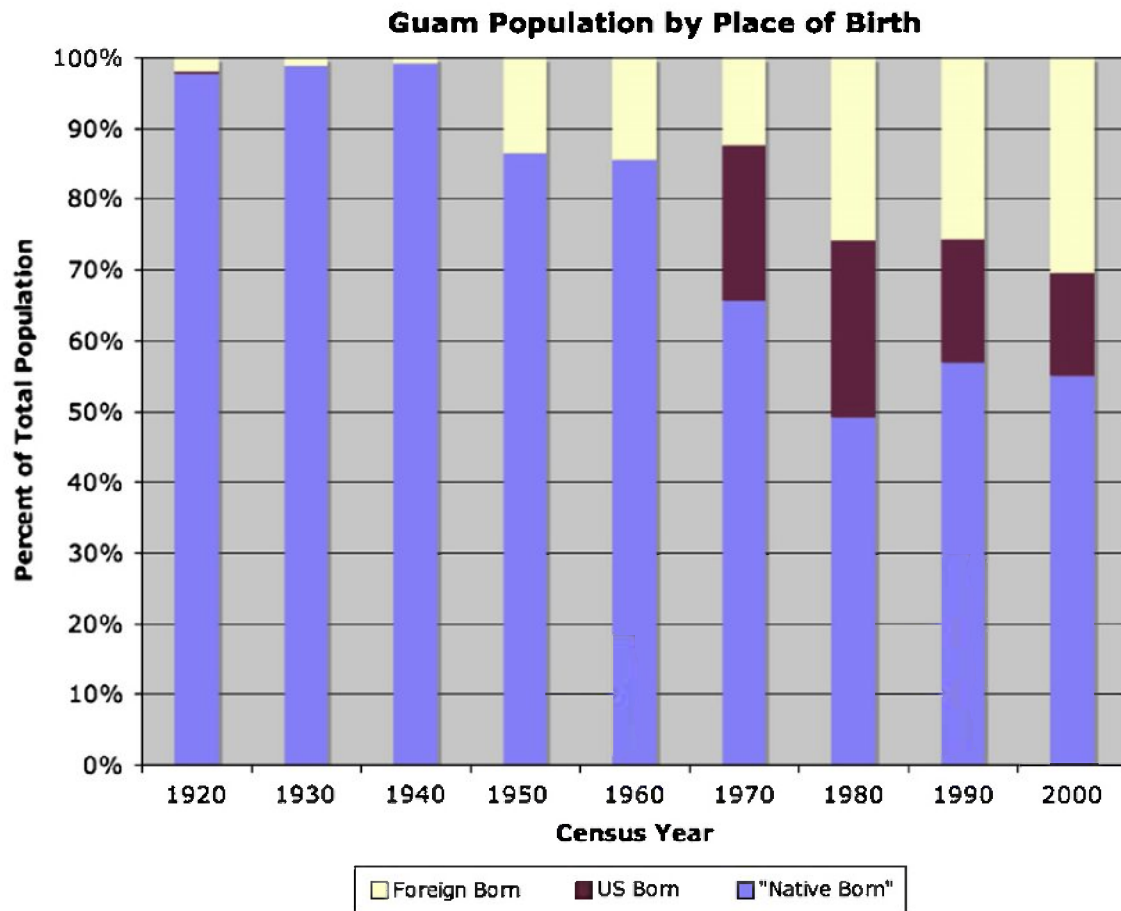


Fig. 6. Population of Guam by place of Birth, showing the growth of immigrants as a percentage of the overall population. For most years up to 1970, “Native” includes people born in the USA or any of its territories. Then this is variously subdivided among those born in Guam, the fifty states or the other territories (including the Trust Territory of the Pacific). Data from the U.S. Census.

Contested memory: battlefield as national park

National parks by their very nature serve the creation and maintenance of national identity (Bauman, 1995). They create what Azaryahu and Kellerman (1999) call a “national geography of historic myth,” embedding “sacred history” and heroic mythology within the symbolic matrix of modern nationhood. President Franklin Roosevelt asserted this role when he stated that “The preservation of historic sites for the public benefit...tends to enhance the respect and love of the citizen for the institutions of this country, as well as strengthening his resolution to defend unselfishly the hallowed traditions and high ideals of America” (in Mackintosh, 1987, p. 54). This is pre-eminently apparent with battlefield parks. National Park Service historian Drury (1943) echoed Roosevelt, saying that “The march of freedom in the United States is realistically revealed at the scenes where our forefathers fought and won independence and national unity. The battlefields of Yorktown and Gettysburg, the Statue of Liberty, the sites of pioneer exploration and national expansion, are well-springs of patriotism from which thousands gain inspiration and renewed courage.”

Linenthal (1991, p. 4) asserts that sites commemorating war “dominate the patriotic landscape,” and provoke visitors to “perpetuate, reawaken, revitalize, and rededicate themselves to the ideals for which sacrificial warriors died.” He compares the role of battlefields in

American patriotism to that of medieval cathedrals to Christianity: they provide conduits through which citizens “are able to participate in the power of a heroic past—a past that continues to demand allegiance to its cherished principles.” Campo (1998, p. 44) similarly calls battlefields “pilgrimage sites” connected with “the values, symbols and practices of American civil religion...primarily with the production of patriotic loyalty to the United States.”

The establishment of battlefields as historical parks in the U.S. is a practice older than the National Park Service itself. It began in 1886 with the establishment of the National Cemetery of Custer’s Battlefield Reservation (redesignated Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in 1991). This first battlefield park marked the rhetorical transformation of violent expansionism into a nationalist commemorative site for American soldier-heroes. From there, Congress established two Civil War battlefield sites as historical parks in 1890, and three more in the ensuing decade. These were administered under the War Department. The National Park Service (NPS) was created by an act of Congress in 1916, and when Horace Albright became director in 1929, he looked to subsume battlefields and coastal fortifications administered by the War Department into the park system. These were added to the NPS in 1933, making battlefields a disproportionate component of Park Service historical areas (Bearss, 1987).

Verne Chatelain, hired by Albright as the first Park Service interpretive historian, wrote that “The sum total of the sites which we select should make it possible for us to tell a more or less complete story of American History” (Mackintosh, 1987, p. 53). But that history includes the destructive encounter with American Indians as they were cleared out of the way for American expansion. Particularly as American Indians and other minorities have become more vocal and more politically powerful, the positioning of those others who were subsumed by the U.S. has been an ongoing problem for the National Park Service (see Bousé, 1996; Linenthal, 1991). The resulting rhetorical strategies at national parks vary widely in their attempts to balance patriotic commemoration with indigenous tragedy. For Guam, the island’s unincorporated status makes such a landscape of nationhood all the more unwieldy. The end result manifests as a park that celebrates America on Guam without celebrating Guam as America.

The National Park Service first arrived on Guam when Irving C. Root was sent to study the need for parks and recreation areas on the island. Root arrived in 1952—not long after the Organic Act, and only seven years since the end of World War II. But unlike those that would follow more than a decade later, Root’s study was critical of the military control of land and empathetic towards both the recreational needs of the Guamanians and the need to preserve sites of Chamorro cultural heritage. On this latter point, the report calls at the outset for enacting a statute protecting historic sites, arguing later that “The first and fundamental need is general protection by law of surviving historic structures, historical monuments, and archaeological sites from destruction and vandalism,” especially for lands transferred out of the public domain that were not therefore protected by the Antiquities Act of 1906. The report recommends that a Territorial Statute be promptly enacted. Root points to the Spanish remains at the Old Plaza near Hagåtña, remarking that “Examples of Spanish architecture are so few but so basic in the Guamanian culture that those remaining in the Plaza should be carefully preserved” (Root, 1952, p. 6). Finally, the report argues that “Organization and development for educational uses of a Territorial Museum on Guam is much the most important step in an interpretive program, without which the preservation of the sites and remains does not become full conservation for public use. Markers and additional explanatory exhibits at major sites are also

important features of the program, but probably can best be handled in connection with a central museum” (pp. 45–48).⁹

Regarding the military, the report points out with clear annoyance that the best recreation areas on the island are controlled for exclusive military use. Of Tumon Bay, the nearest good bathing beach to the capital, Root notes that “The central and best portion of the beach is owned by the Federal Government and is restricted to the use of Navy personnel. This portion of the beach is improved with cottages, bathhouses, beach club, refreshment stand, picnic areas, roads, and parking spaces. The popularity of this improved portion of the beach indicates the demand for similar facilities for the citizens of Guam *who have no improved public beaches*” (p. 21, emphasis in original). The report goes on to say that “The citizens of Guam would appreciate and use such facilities for I have seen them by the jeep load at abandoned Camp Dealy and using the beach for swimming and picnicking....I feel that the acquisition of the beach areas for recreation and scenic purposes as recommended in this report is so important that the program should be started at once” (p. 36). Root further recommended that surplus military land be released to the Government of Guam, and that harvesting of coconuts, fruit and timber be permitted on military reservations.

Root clearly acted in the best tradition of the National Park Service, recognizing history worth preserving and balancing that with needs for recreation. He speaks to a tradition of building civic pride through landscapes that celebrate the people and their culture.

That little came of Root’s recommendations is clear from the subsequent NPS reports. The NPS next came in 1965 at the request of Guam Governor Manuel F. L. Guerrero and the Office of Territories, who wanted the NPS “to determine whether sites of national significance exist on Guam” (*National Park Service*, 1969, p. 1). This might have come as a response to the designation of Pu’u o Mahuka *heiau* (a Hawaiian temple site) on O’ahu as a National Historic Landmark in 1962. That designation, according to the plaque at the site, identifies this Hawaiian cultural landscape as “possessing exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States.” It is likely that the Government of Guam was looking for similar recognition for Guam’s heritage. Instead, the 1965 study proposed a Philippine Sea National Seashore and a War in the Pacific National Historical Park (known in the NPS by the acronym WAPA), neither of which aimed at connecting the history of Guam and its indigenous inhabitants to the American national discourse.

The timing of the park’s initiation contributes context to a reading of the resulting landscape. The 1965 visit came a mere three years after the cessation of the Navy’s Security Clearance Policy ended the last vestiges of U.S. military rule on the island. It also came during the escalation of the Vietnam War, when the island was being used as a military resupply station. Anti-war protests were already taking place back on the continental U.S.. While there is no direct connection between the military and the park service, both are branches of the federal government, and this larger context of U.S.-Guam relations cannot be ignored in assessing why this type of park was chosen over one that recognizes Chamorro heritage.

Moreover, in January of 1967, before the Master Plan study was undertaken, members of Japan’s South Pacific Memorial Association, representing the Buddhist and Catholic faiths, arrived on Guam to initiate construction of a peace memorial dedicated all the war dead. Not long after the inauguration of this memorial, criticism came loudly from (especially) over-seas Americans who saw the Japanese memorial as an affront to the American war dead.

⁹ The section of Root’s report on “Historic Sites and Archeological Remains” was prepared by Dr. Erik K. Reed, Chief Archeologist for Region Three, National Park Service.

Thus when a few months later the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments approved the proposal to create the War in the Pacific National Historic Park, they indicated that pressure to develop the Park increased due to the proposed development of the Japanese peace memorial (Camacho, 2005). In Camacho's estimation, this sequence of events revealed "one outstanding truth. Clearly, American veterans and politicians in the 1960s possessed the political, emotional, and social license to determine how the war should be commemorated at a national level in Guam" (Camacho, 2005, pp. 172–173).

The 1967 draft Master Plan for WAPA stands in marked contrast to Root's study by its dismissal of Chamorros and their history. Noting the presence of *latte* stones and other artifacts of the early Chamorro culture, the study remarks upon the inadequate funding available to the local museum (clearly Root's emphasis on the importance of such a museum did not translate into federal funding) but contains no suggestion of funding any efforts to preserve pre-War history. Sites of pre-war historical significance are instead designated as important only in terms of the War. The "reputed" ruins of old Spanish Fort Santa Agueda is important because "This was the site of a *Japanese gun emplacement*" (National Park Service, 1969, p. 21, emphasis in the original). Such remarks cast doubt on the validity of pre-war history, stripping the sites of their local significance and integrating them into the American war narrative.

While the report boasts that "Such a park would be a source of pride to Guamanians and to other Americans" (p. 7), it otherwise virtually ignores those same Guamanians and their plight in the War. Sites associated with the War that have local significance but which had no role in the U.S. campaign do not merit recognition. This is particularly apparent in Thompson's (1985) Historic Resource Study. He lists as "Other" those sites associated with Chamorro suffering under the Japanese occupation. These include the site where the Chamorro priest Father Dueñas was executed, and the concentration camp at Manengon where over 10,000 Chamorros were rounded up.

All of this comes despite the fact that during public hearings for the park in the late 1970s, two of the major concerns voiced were greater recognition of Chamorro involvement in the War, and the identification and protection of prehistoric Chamorro sites. Instead, in the 1970s the Park Service turned its concern onto the growing influx of Japanese tourists to the island, and moved to make the Park more relevant to the Japanese visitors. All interpretive materials and signage, it was decided, were to be bilingual English-Japanese (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004). The sense of the Park as a sort of ambassador for United States policy had been presaged in the 1967 plan, which stated that such a park "would be of considerable interest to foreign visitors not only for its historic significance, but as an example of an American institution—the National Park System" (p. 7).¹⁰ The big combatants of the Battle of Guam meet again at this park, and again the local people are marginalized.

Indeed, in the 1969 report, Chamorros disappear first as a "race"—"true native pre-Magellan Chamorro blood can no longer be readily identified" (National Park Service, 1969, p. 9)—and then as historical actors of any sort. By dismissing both the people and their landscapes, the report renders Guam a *tabula rasa* for talking about the American War effort. Where Root's study advocated the handover of military lands, the 1969 study first minimizes the aggression of 1898 wherein Guam was seized and then asserts that "the requirements of national strategy in an unpeaceful world have dictated that large chunks of Guam remain in the

¹⁰ The Park Service noted in 2001 that 75% of WAPA's visitors were Japanese tourists (Dittmar, 2001).

control of the U.S. Defense Department” (p. 19). The military is naturalized, and Chamorros are erased.

Thus the choice to create the War in the Pacific park continues the colonialist treatment of Guam in two ways: first, it comes at the expense of any such national site recognizing Chamorro history and culture; second, it chooses to commemorate the war in a way that focuses on the U.S. military rather than on Guam itself, thus minimizing both the Chamorro wartime experience and their presence as active inhabitants of the island. Through these two mechanisms the park becomes a site of American military memory rather than Chamorro history.

Contested location

It should come as no surprise that by the time the National Park Service wanted to appropriate land for the park on Guam, their reception by Guamanians was less than cordial. An NPS memorandum in 1972 stated that “The Territorial government is resentful of the U.S. Navy and the Navy in turn sometimes appear [sic] contemptuous of the Government of Guam.”¹¹ The park’s Administrative History called the environment “unsympathetic” to the Park Service needs, adding that “some would characterize it as hostile” (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004, p. 63).

This antagonism came not only from the history of naval dictatorship and federal land grabs at Chamorro expense, but also from the resultant spatial reorganization limiting land for civilian use at a time of rapidly growing population. This plus the additional land pressures of the new tourist economy were creating greater demand for open spaces. And land prices were escalating. Into this mix arrived the National Park Service, looking to establish a historic battlefield park in which recreational uses would be limited.

The first issue for the park was the acquisition of the land itself. When Congress established the park in 1978, the boundaries they set did not correspond with the boundaries earlier envisioned, and of the 850 acres transferred by the Government of Guam to the NPS, only 521 were inside the park boundaries. Moreover, the NPS had no title to about 240 privately owned acres within the new park boundaries. Those holding title to these lands “wanted either to sell their land at a reasonable price to the park service, sell their land to commercial developers, or to be free to develop the land themselves” (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004, pp. 84–85). These residents thought that since \$16 million had been *approved* for the park, that this money was immediately *available*. Evans-Hatch notes that “the subtleties of United States government appropriations machinery was not completely appreciated” by them, and distrust set in as the park was unable to purchase their lands.

Land acquisition for the park was raised at public meetings held in the 1970s as the most significant issue to local people, with many who testified expressing concern about the amount of land that would be incorporated into the park (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004). Among comments at park planning hearings in the late 1970s, the top three concerns were land acquisition, boundary adjustments, and the conflict of public recreational uses with NPS policy. Battles would subsequently be fought with the government of Guam over a small boat ramp the Guam Government wanted to build in one proposed park section, and plans to build a subdivision in another one. Facing these obstacles, in the mid 1970s the Park Service declared the

¹¹ Memorandum from General Superintendent, Hawaii Group, to Director, Western Region, NPS, March 15, 1972. WAPA archives. Cited in Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004, p. 57. Disputes between the Governor and the Legislature also held things up.

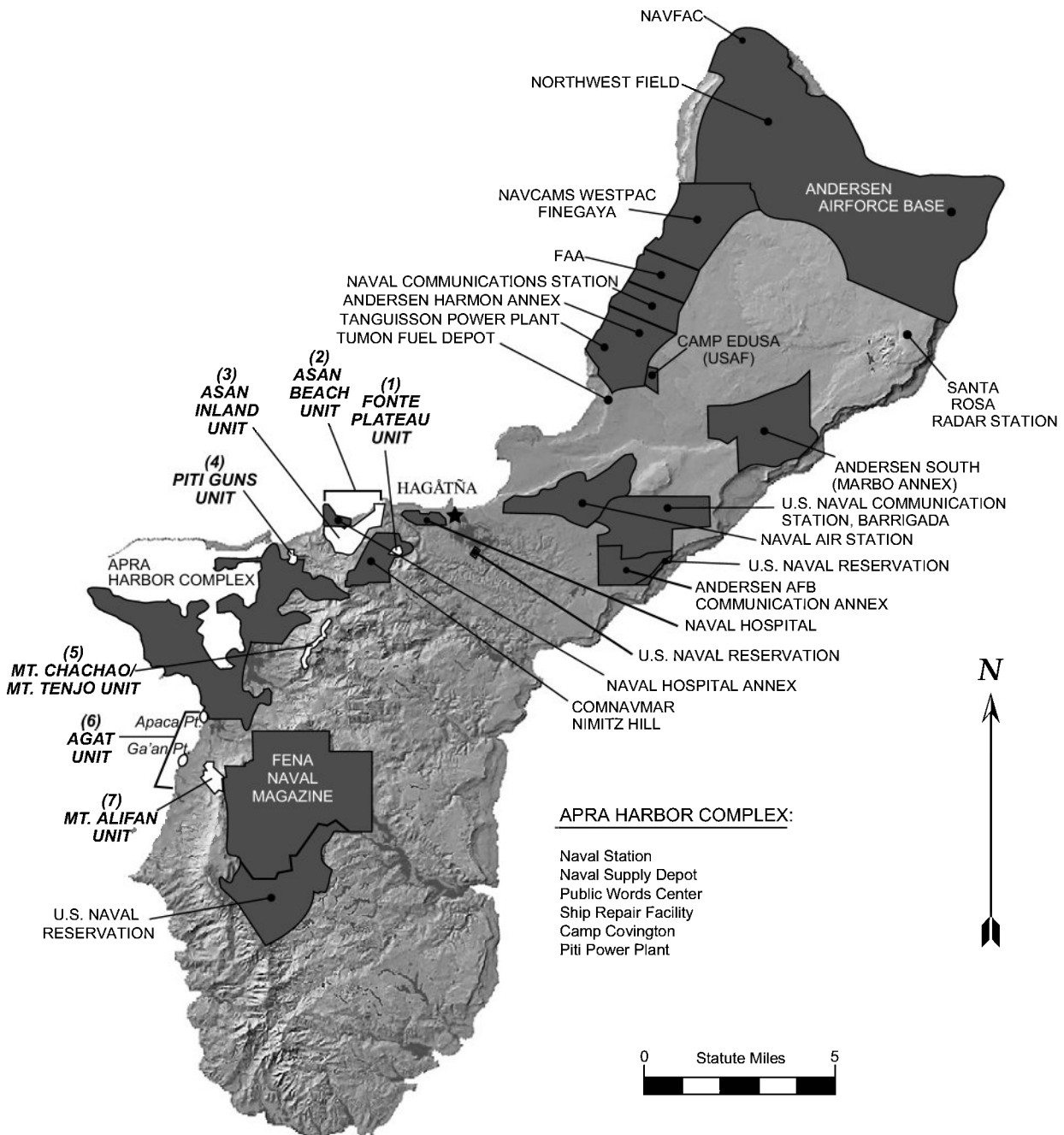


Fig. 7. Map of Guam showing the seven units of the Park and lands held by the U.S. military, after Rogers (1995).

park no longer viable, and looked into leasing the lands to the Guam Government for a recreational park. Guam Representative Antonio Won Pat stepped in and asked why no one from NPS had gone to Guam to assess the impact of these developments in person. The resultant 1976 trip resulted in a more favorable report, and the park went forward. But the acquisition of land would prove to be “an abiding irritant to those who would later manage the new park” (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004, p. 63).

The location of the park would also be site of contestation within the National Park Service itself. NPS Chief of Park History Studies Roy Appleman and NPS research historian Ed Bearss both argued against Guam as best location for such a park, declaring it historically inappropriate. NPS chief historian Robert Utley concurred. They argued that the battle for Guam was not a turning point in the Pacific—not even the most important battle for the Marianas—and

was not the only American soil lost to the Japanese.¹² Other islands in the Trust Territory of the Pacific, then under American control and being considered for annexation, were of equal or greater importance. They argued for O‘ahu in the Hawaiian islands. They also argued that, in terms of the proposed park boundaries, the Japanese rarely contested beaches, so higher-ground sites were more important. Their arguments did result in the inclusion of more higher-ground sites, but were otherwise dismissed.

Given their concerns, and given the long history of the U.S.’s cavalier attitude towards Guam, the reasons for establishing this park on Guam in the first place deserve deeper inquiry. Indeed, it must be embedded in the greater context of national historic battlefield parks in the U.S.

Signs of empire

National parks, as a genre of representation, are essentially museological institutions, not only because they preserve and conserve, “but because they employ many of the techniques of display, exhibition, and presentation that have been used by museums to organize and regulate the vision of visitors” (Patin, 1999, p. 41). Patin calls this the “museum effect,” including the various modes of organizing vision through the presentation of objects and spaces into the “museological gaze.” The park can be seen as a state-controlled mechanism for reproducing memory of the War. The choice of sites and signage (and those that are left out) all function to construct memory in a specific way, presenting an authorized narrative landscape through which the visitor is guided.

The structure for that narrative is outlined in the Army War College’s 1926 study on battlefield commemoration (Bach, 1926), which states that national military parks should cover a comparatively large area and be usable “for detailed study by military authorities, the battle lines and operations being clearly indicated on the ground.” The story told at WAPA follows this dictate in the aim of the original (1969) master plan: to tell the “epic story of that phase of World War II...which involved the conquest of island strongholds on the road to victory in the Pacific Theatre; and, within this framework, to tell the story of the recapture of Guam itself, as a classic example of invasion techniques employed by our armed services against a bitterly determined enemy” (National Park Service, 1969, p. 2). The park brochure provides a chronology of the overall War in the Pacific, with information about the capture, occupation, and liberation of Guam.

In his critical analysis of Liberation Day commemorations in the Marianas, Camacho (2005, pp. 13–14) remarks that in Military narratives of the War in the Pacific, Pacific Islanders play no central role. Instead, military historians tend to envision the Pacific Islands as “a *tabula rasa* on which to inscribe their histories of heroism and victimization,” forming “a body of discourse in which only Japanese and Americans constitute the agents of change and continuity in the region, erasing the agency and voice of indigenous peoples.” While particularly in more recent years the WAPA staff have tried to incorporate more Chamorro heritage in their programming, a casual visitor to the park—observing the signs, the bunkers, the guns, the maps and the photographs—encounters an almost relentless narrative of the Battle of Guam.

The Park constitutes seven different units. Encountered in person, these are large chunks of land. Yet the big, open park areas obscure the far larger extent of military land ownership on the

¹² Also occupied by the Japanese were the sparsely inhabited islands of Attu, Agattu, and Kiska in the Aleutians, and Wake Island.

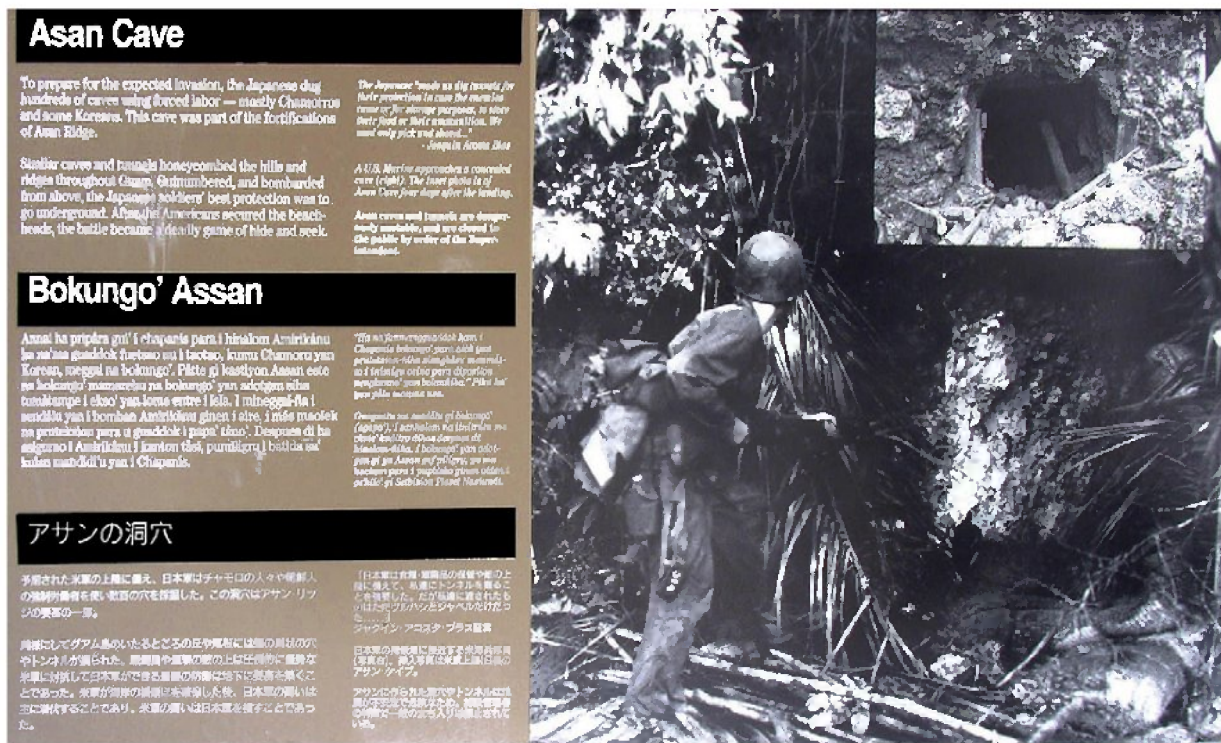


Fig. 8. Interpretive sign at the Asan Beach unit, showing the text in English, Chamorro, and Japanese.

island. Most civilian visitors would see, at best, the gates of the large bases, so the true extent of military lands remains hidden (Fig. 7).

Each section of the park represents a particular aspect of the battle. As one of the signs notes, “By traveling from unit to unit, you can trace the three-week battle that began at the beaches, spread inland, and swept across the island.” You are invited to focus on American liberators, Japanese defenders, and passive Chamorro occupants “whose land and lives were changed by the war.” At Ga’an Point, one sign explains how after the Americans secured the island, the Navy set up shelters for Chamorros released from a Japanese concentration camp. A photograph shows bedraggled but thankful Chamorros kneeling in prayer at the Agat refugee camp during mass held by a military chaplain. This representation positions them as passive, pathetic victims saved by heroic Americans. Those brave Chamorros who withstood the Occupation, or who stood up to the Japanese and were executed for it, are not a part of this narrative.¹³

It was not until 1993, with the 50th anniversary of the Liberation approaching, that the U.S. Congress was moved by Guam’s congressional representative, Robert Underwood, to overtly recognize the suffering of the Chamorros. Public Law 103–197 authorized construction of a monument to commemorate, by individual names, those people of Guam who suffered during the occupation (National Park Service, n.d.). And in the end—it is not clear when the decision was made—all the park’s signage became tri-lingual: English, Chamoru, and Japanese (Fig. 8). But apart from the 1993 monument, references to the Chamorro people are very few.

¹³ While official policy almost completely ignored the role of local people in the War, the reality on the ground took on slightly different contours. After Public Law 95-348 finally established WAPA in 1978, park superintendent T. Stell Newman established close ties with the local community. Newman teamed up with Dr. Dirk Ballendorf, then director of the Micronesia Area Research Center (MARC), to gather testimony from Guamanians as well as U.S. and Japanese soldiers (Evans-Hatch & Associates, Inc., 2004). The original Visitor’s Center for the park apparently told more of Guam’s story. It was destroyed by Supertyphoon Pongsona in 2002. The author has been unable to visit the newly opened (2007) Visitor’s Center.

The position of this park as a large, highly visible landscape off the edge of Guam's main population area reflects the position of the American military on Guam: central yet peripheral; obvious yet removed; appreciated yet reviled. In the ongoing refusal of the U.S. to consider commonwealth status for Guam, Guamanian reverence for the U.S. military is mixed. The post-war economic development of the island has raised most people to a standard of living comparable to average Americans, and a large measure of this growth is owed to the military presence. Some local leaders have encouraged greater military buildup on the island because of the benefits to the economy, and at this writing, 9000 U.S. Marines are preparing to relocate to Guam from Okinawa (Pacific Islands Report, 2003; Murphy, 2006). Despite all the failings of the military on Guam, its presence there is considered by many to be a plus, and the park is a reminder that they owe it all to the Liberation forces in 1944.

But not all perceive this debt favorably. Perez (2002, pp. 463–464) argues that since the Liberation, Chamorros have become “locked in a mentality of paying back the U.S. for their ‘generosity’.” Chamorro scholar Laura Souder asserts that Chamorros “have become the worst kind of mistress to Uncle Sam...whopped into docile submission....Our psyches are under siege. Our spirits as indigenous people are held under lock and key. We are typically afraid to speak out for fear of reprisal. Our creativity and self-sufficiency have been stymied. We long for justice.”¹⁴ The image of conquered but liberated Chamorros in prayer at Agat under the leadership of a military chaplain comes to mind. “The pride and enthusiasm attached to the War in the Pacific may have been shared by veterans and survivors of the war,” writes Camacho (2005, pp. 171–172), “but it was not as widespread among Chamorros as some assumed....The War in the Pacific National Historic Park, at that time, simply represented another example of how a national government, as well as its affiliates, could commemorate the war.”

Conclusion

By creating the War in the Pacific National Historical Park, the Park Service continued the American colonial tradition by framing Guam as American-yet-not. The park landscape, as a text within the overall landscape of Guam (as well as on the internet and in publications), is the nationally authorized narrative by which Guam is framed into American historical memory. And it is a memory in which Guam and its indigenous peoples figure very little.

Today at the Ga'an Point section of the park, three flags are flown which, according to the sign's ambiguous language, “commemorate those who died for their country: Americans, Chamorros, and Japanese.” For which “country” did the Chamorros die? In words that echo the pre-war articles about Guam, WAPA curator Ana Dittmar (2001, p. 38) writes that the “War in the Pacific National Historical Park on Guam contributes to an American presence on this densely populated island.” One would not say that Yellowstone “contributes to an American presence” in Wyoming, or that Gettysburg does so in Pennsylvania. Is Guam American, or not? What is more, the overall population density on Guam is less than that of New York state, so “densely populated” reflects how much of the land is off limits to civilian settlement. In short, Dittmar's remarks reaffirm Guam as a colony, WAPA as a colonial instrument, and the military as otherwise invisible.

¹⁴ Laura Torres Souder (1992) *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*, 2nd ed., Lanham, MD: University Press of America; Mangilao, Guam: Micronesian Area Research Center, 1992, p. 143; cited in Perez (2002 p. 464).

The story of Guam demonstrates the need to remain wary of rhetoric about spreading freedom and democracy. The War in the Pacific National Historical Park reminds us of the role that battlefield preservation plays in national discourse. The battlefield-cum-national park is a space that manifests nationalist rhetoric and symbolism with the reproduction of citizenship, reaffirmed through the violent encounters of American expansion. On Guam, the lofty ideals of the nation were vigorously denied for more than half a century, and remain unrealized. The War in the Pacific National Historical Park frames the island as a site where American military heroism brought “liberation.” By designating Guam as a place where U.S. troops were sacrificed in the name of freedom, it works to obscure the story of freedoms denied for the sake of empire.

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