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Pulan Maimo'

The Mystery of Maimo'

This month's newsletter starts with a mystery: What exactly does the *pu lan* Maimo' signify? In the CHamoru/Chamorro lunar calendar, many of the months have direct translations or are associated with distinct activities or weather conditions. However, with the second month of Maimo', we currently have no definitive meaning. To find an explanation, we reached out to local historians and cultural practitioners.



Image: A village scene of the Ancient Chamorros illustrated by J.A. Pellion from Freycinet's *Voyage Autour de Monde*, Paris, 1824

Malia Ramirez, oral historian for the Guam Department of Parks and Recreation, believes "The difficulty in explanation is based on, how did the CHamorus pronounce the word? The orthography was written without notation. Could the original word have been "ma'imu?" This pronunciation would give the word a different meaning.

Jeremy Cepeda, a CHamoru/Chamorro language consultant and cultural practitioner, suggests the word is derived from "mahimot". The root of "mahimot" is "hemmot" which means to cram, compress, crumple, or wad. By looking at what kind of natural phenomena occurs around this time of year, we may ask, could it be because it's getting hotter now and the plants in the jungle are drying up and crumpling, or is it because the lunar month is shortened, as in, it has fewer moon cycles.

Clearly, words change over time, and their meanings and functions can be as fluid as culture itself. Culture, history, archaeology, and science are all, to some degree, largely interpretive. We base interpretations from various sources and change our understanding when new information unfolds.

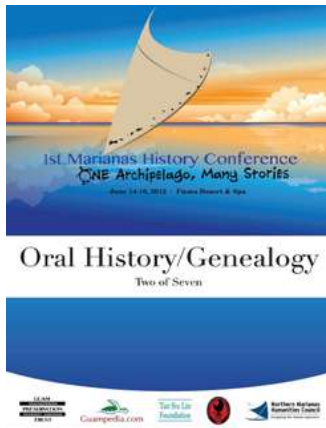
This edition focuses on the Marianas History Conference, a biannual gathering of traditional and academic scholars with the common goal of expanding our knowledge of the Marianas and her people. The success of the conference is its ability to bring together researchers of different backgrounds and approaches, sharing and connecting to help deepen our understanding of our past and help chart our course forward.

We may never fully grasp the true meaning of Maimo', but in the meantime, we invite you to share what the *pu lan* Maimo' might have meant to the CHamorus/Chamorros of the Marianas. Send us your thoughts and theories by emailing us at guampedia@gmail.com!

Marianas History Conference: One Archipelago, Many Stories

In 1898, the Mariana Islands were partitioned, with Guam becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States and the NMI a possession of Germany. For the next century the islands would be occupied by various foreign nations until eventually finding themselves together again, this time under the United States as two separate political entities.

In 2011 a group of like-minded people from our islands decided it was high time to develop a history conference that focused specifically on sharing the history and experiences of all people throughout the Mariana Islands. The initial group of organizers, Northern Marianas Humanities Council, Guam Preservation Trust, University of Guam and Guampedia, met in August, creating the theme, "One Archipelago, Many Stories" to highlight the rich history of the Mariana Islands and bridge the political division of the archipelago that continues to exist today.



A year later, on June 14 -16 in 2012, the first Marianas History Conference (MHC) was held in Garapan, Saipan. This encouraged archeologists, historians, social anthropologists and the countless others who share an interest in the Marianas to present their findings, share their stories, and engage with the people of this archipelago. Since then, the MHC has been held every two years with Guam and the CNMI alternating the honor of hosting with each new conference. Although the conferences have come and gone, you can still view papers and presentations as e-Publications on Guampedia. Explore each conference by clicking on the e-publications.



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6th Marianas History Conference

One Archipelago, Many Stories: Healing the Wounds of History

As the world continues to heal from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are reminded of the value of healing found within our archipelago and the lessons from history that continue to guide us during this pivotal time. Throughout our islands' history, whether in times of war or peace, prosperity or famine, our people have always navigated forward. Despite this, the echoes of the past, the wounds that became scars and the moments that became stories told from one generation to the next, are important for us to remember and reflect.



MARIANAS HISTORY
Conference

One Archipelago, Many Stories 

Save the Date!
September 1-3, 2023

The 6th Marianas History Conference
Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Special Conference Theme: Healing the Wounds of History
Call for sessions coming soon!

#MHC2023SAIPAN
INFO@NMHCOUNCIL.ORG FOR INQUIRIES

Like *åmot* (medicine) that relies on healthy plants, special care, and knowledge of the past to be effective, an understanding of history that is carefully formed and respectfully gathered is necessary to heal the wounds of our past that remain open, clearing the path for new possibilities.

This 6th Marianas History Conference aims to contribute and engage in the constructive process of healing and understanding by centering its presentation around the theme of “Healing the Wounds of History.” Historic research, analysis, and interpretations will be presented in an all-inclusive conference and serve as a collective effort toward the integration of shared histories and memories across the archipelago. While all historical topics related to the Marianas are still welcome, special focus will be given to Marianas’ healing practices, health care issues, the history of disease in our islands, sources of environmental contamination, and all sources of historical division in need of remedy, including the separation of Guåhan from the rest of the Marianas.

Marianas History Conference Presentation Highlights

Participants of the Marianas History Conference are invited to include their presentations in the Conference Proceedings that are published online and available on guampedia.com.

I Tinigi' I Man-Aniti (The Writings of the Ancestors):

Initial Interpretation of the Discoveries of Rock Art in the NMI
By Genevieve Cabrera

Genevieve Cabrera, a cultural historian from the CNMI, has researched and written about the connections of ancient Chamorro cultural practices with contemporary life in the Marianas. In her presentation at the inaugural Marianas History Conference in 2012, Cabrera emphasized that Chamorro history has been recorded—contrary to the Western perception of Chamorro as without a written history—through cave art found throughout CNMI and Guam. Cabrera uses a cultural historical approach based on investigative field surveys to interpret Marianas cave art as depictions of practices of ancestor worship which are linked to modern commemorations of the dead and are central to understandings of Chamorro cultural identity. [Click to view presentation.](#)



Source: G. Cabrera, I Tinigi' I Man-Aniti (The Writings of the Ancestors): Initial Interpretation of the Discoveries of Rock Art in the NMI, 1st Marianas History Conference, 2012. Guampedia, Mangilao, Guam.

According to Cabrera, 98% of the images found in Marianas rock art are of headless, anthropomorphic figures. The CHamoru/Chamorro were known to place the skulls of departed loved ones in the home to keep them close and to maintain communication with him/her (caption by Guampedia).



Source: J. Flores/W. Paulino, Remembering Father Jesus Baza Duenas Through Oral Histories, 4th Marianas History Conference, 2019. Guampedia, Mangilao, Guam.

Memorial altar for Pale' Jesus Baza Duenas (1911-1944), priest, hero and martyr of Inalåhan. His legacy and memory are passed on through oral histories and commemorations at St. Joseph Parish where he served the Catholic faithful during World War II (caption by Guampedia).

Since the images don't have a specific reference even within the presentations, and since we didn't ask them permission to use them per se, i think we can be safe by citing the sources this way.

Remembering Father Jesus Baza Duenas Through Oral Histories

By Judy Flores and William Paulino

Judy Flores is a Micronesian Studies scholar, professional artist and resident of Inalåhan. William Paulino, born and raised in Inalåhan, is a CHamoru studies educator, musician, and canon law specialist for St Joseph Church. As co-presenters at the 4th Marianas History Conference, Flores and Paulino highlighted a collection of oral histories and memories from Inalåhan residents of beloved CHamoru priest Pale' Jesus Baza Duenas who was killed during the Japanese Occupation of Guam in World War II. This presentation also demonstrated the importance of documenting oral histories as they provide unique perspectives that go beyond canonical texts and increase our understanding of historic events, places and people. [Click to view presentation.](#)