

New archaeological research project started in Pohnpei

Takuya Nagaoka (NGO Pasifika Renaissance), Ono Rintaro (Tokai University) and Jason Lebehn (Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office)

In February a team of Japanese archaeologists has started a four-year archaeological research project in Pohnpei in collaboration with the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office. The research project entitled "Archaeological Study of human migrations and inter-islands networks in Oceania" is funded by the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research Program of the Japan Government (Principal Investigator: Dr. Ono Rintaro, 18KK0019).

The focus of the research is to shed light on the early Micronesian culture during the colonization period, when the ancestors of the Pohnpeian people first arrived on the island from Melanesia around 2000 years ago.

The team selected Lenger as the first fieldwork site because in 2007 Dr. Takuya Nagaoka of NGO Pasifika Renaissance excavated a small test pit there and recovered numerous ancient

artifacts. Most interestingly an obsidian (volcanic glass) artifact was found in the pit that according to geochemical analysis, was brought from Papua New Guinea. The artifacts suggest one of the oldest village sites in Pohnpei is in Lenger. The site is additionally suitable for archaeological excavation due to its location on land. It is difficult to carry out excavations at other early sites on Pohnpei due to their locations in coastal mangrove forests and shallow reef flats. Due to this difficulty, only small areas were excavated during the past investigations on this time period.

The team is planning to excavate larger areas during their four-year research to approach different research questions related to subsistence strategies, spatial use within village, interactions with other islands and social organizations.

From February 20 to 28, the team excavated the early village site on Lenger and found German-Japanese period artifacts such as glass bottles and iron artifacts in the upper layers. They found ancient artifacts such as pottery sherds, shell adzes, shell ornaments, and

shell midden in the lower layers. Before the team makes analysis it will wait for details on the results of the excavations, but various artifacts recovered during their investigation seemed to confirm the fruitfulness of pursuing research at the site.

With the assistance of the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office, the team endeavors to promote Pohnpeian people's participation in the research project and to foster their interest in local history. They have offered volunteer opportunities to the public through announcements on radio and Facebook and many volunteers of different nationalities, such as FSM, French Polynesia, USA and Japan, have volunteered every day. A group of twenty some Micronesian Studies students from the College of Micronesia led by Professor Delihna Ehmes also visited the fieldwork of the team.

After completing the excavations on Lenger, the team organized a one-day exhibition on March 1 of excavated artifacts at the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office in Kolonia to

show the public the results of the archaeological research. More than a hundred people visited the exhibition.

During the exhibition, Nagaoka did powerpoint presentations about the archaeology of Micronesia and the project to eighth grade students from the Kolonia and Ohmine Elementary Schools and explained them about the excavated artifacts. The students showed interest in the ancient artifacts they saw for their first time.

The team will conduct various analyses on the excavated artifacts and is planning to continue the fieldwork in Pohnpei during this summer. It hopes to learn the history of the island with the people through the project during the next four years.

"It is our wish that students' learning experiences with us will make them more interested in their own history, give them dreams, and raise future archaeologists," Nagaoka said. "Kalahngan en kupwuromwail koaros, the chiefs, landowner and other people of Lenger who supported the project."

COM-FSM Micronesian Studies program students engage in archeological learning

By Delihna M. Ehmes

"What is archeology?", a typical question I often get from my students. In the last weeks of February and early March, the Micronesian studies students at the College of Micronesia-FSM, have been fortunate to be a part of an archeological excavation and lecture series. The archeological opportunity to learn and explore is owed to Dr. Takuya Nagaoka (NGO Pasifka Renaissance), for extending the invitation to the college. When asked what they thought about the Lenger excavation, these were some of the responses:

"First thing is how dedicated and passionate they are. It made me realize that their work is not easy because it requires a lot of dedication and passion to carry out such projects. I say so because some of them are very young and some of them are very old, but they still go on. This is what inspires me the most. Second thing I found interesting is how they do their work, and that includes the digging, cleaning, sifting, classifying, and all that. It gave me much thought that it's the career for me, but I won't make a promise. It made me realize that its actually more fun to go out in the field than sitting behind a desk. And lastly, I'm interested in why they do their work. I mean, I myself, want to pursue a deeper knowledge of our history. And what

they are doing is the exact answer to my desire."; "1) It is very interesting to see such great work being done by our people and even people that came all the way from the other states. 2) The challenging part is the project itself. The project needs more people to participate because there are many things that need to be done. *Digging, measuring the site, brushing and etc...."; "The project itself was an interesting thing to me. Although it didn't go out exactly the way I thought it would be, I was amazed at how everything was done in a certain way. The digging, sifting, measuring of boxes, and picking of things found while digging. Everything was done in a certain order. What did I find challenging about the experience? The challenge was that there was so much work and so little help. I think there should be a bigger team or group involved to get the work done faster. Since this is a 4-year research project, we have been re-invited to join them next year."

Following the field experience on Lenger, the students also participated in a lecture series on a Nan Madol Course unit. This lecture series was designed to provide students an overview of Nan Madol. The course unit is collaboration between the College of Micronesia-FSM and the Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC). The course unit was composed of 3

objectives: 1) Introduction to the peopling of Micronesia; 2) the cultural history of Pohnpei Island, and the archaeological discoveries and oral traditions of Nan Madol. ; 3) The processes taken for the approval of Nan Madol as a UNESCO World Heritage site and its future challenges. The guest lecturers for all three topics were Dr. Osamu Kataoka of Sophia University, Dr. Rufino Mauricio and Mr. Augustine Kohler of FSM Historic and Preservation office. The lecture series concluded on Saturday (March 09, 2019), with an excursion to the Nan Madol ruins. A lot of credit is given to our guest lecturers and Mr. Jason Lebehn of Pohnpei HPO for an extremely enlightening and refreshing lecture and discussion series, and to COM-FSM for hosting and funding this learning experience.

Both learning experiences were generally positive for the students, as they have a glimpse of what the career is like. The learning also put more emphasis to what they learned from the textbook. Both opportunities opened doors for both students and faculty to network with local and foreign experts. It remains the goal of the program that in time; more young people come to appreciate and realize the need for more experts in this area of archeology.

