Project Highlight

Managing the Remains of World War II in Micronesia

Micronesia was a major battle ground between the Japanese Empire and the Allied forces, led by the United States of America. Many islands were developed by the Japanese into formidable air and naval bases, bristling with gun installations, bunkers, seaplane ramps, air craft hangars and military equipment such as aircraft, tanks and trucks. While targeted by aerial and naval bombardment for prolonged period of time, many buildings and guns survive in a surprisingly intact condition.

Today these remains survive and present heritage managers with serious problems, ranging from metal conservation issues to aspects of unexploded ammunition. The tropical marine environment with its ocean air with a heavy salt content is not very benign to the metals which make up most of the artefacts or which form the reinforcement iron of concrete structures.

Unexploded ammunition in form of cannon shells and aerial bombs still abounds both near the sites and as isolated finds, thus posing threats to residents and visitors alike. Furthermore, some sites still contain moveable material culture that can be souvenired by visitors.

The research carried out looks at the history and management of such sites. These sites have a substantial tourism appeal, but at the same time require appropriate management to avoid injury to the visitors and damage to the sites alike.

Further information is available from:

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