



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

WATER CATCHMENTS

B. Associated Historic Contexts

WATER CATCHMENTS ON GUAM BUILT BEFORE WORLD WAR II 1890-1941

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Maria Annie Flores/Archaeological Technician I and Alejandro T.B. Lizama, Historic Preservation Specialist II  
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city or town Agana Heights state Guam zip code 96919

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth R. Perez, Historian 12/14/93  
Signature and title of certifying official Date

Department of Parks and Recreation - Historic Resource Division  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Kenneth R. Perez November 14, 1994  
Signature of the Keeper Date

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Water Catchments

name of property  
010 Guam  
county and State

**E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The historic context of water catchments (tanken hanum or tanken cemento) on Guam include individual concrete water catchments. These water catchments are generally located on porous limestone plateaus in the central and northern villages of Guam. National Register nomination forms were prepared for each of the water catchments. While this nomination includes the majority of the existing water catchments, the possibility remains that a number of sites are yet to be identified.

During the more than 60 years since their construction, many of the water catchments which survived the war and numerous typhoons were subsequently removed or destroyed. For example, commercial developers unknowingly bulldozed water catchments to transform their property into a golf course. In one instance, a property owner who had inherited land removed a water catchment that was built by his great grandfather so that he could build his house. The conditions of these water catchments are varied. Despite the ravages of time, development, and the weather, a considerable number of the water catchments remain intact. While a majority of the water catchments included in this nomination were not directly involved in any particular historic event, they do represent an aspect of Chamorro culture prior to Guam being ceded to the United States in 1890.

Water catchments may have been built before Guam was formerly ceded to the United States by Spain in 1898, but there are no structures to substantiate any earlier dates except for those known to have been built between the years of 1902 and 1926. The island of Guam was then under the Department of the Navy. One of the first projects the United States Navy proposed for the newly acquired territory was to improve the water supply system for the preparation of military forces that were soon to arrive.

The first identifiable water plan on record for Guam was drawn by the U.S. Navy in 1902 for the supply of the new naval station. (PUAG p.3)

Before the United States arrived, the people depended on streams and rivers and/or the artesian wells which were introduced during the Spanish Period (1521-1898) (Brooks p.7). Villages with such water supply systems were historically well populated by the local population and the Spanish. Nearby villages were also crowded because of the close proximity to these water resources (Brooks p.7) The

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arrival of the Navy and implementation of subsequent projects like this one brought with it many changes to Guam and the Chamorro culture.

While the Americans drew and implemented plans to alter the methods of obtaining water, as well as improving other areas of the island, the Chamorro population continued living off the land as their ancestors had been taught centuries before them. Until a better water supply system could be devised there wasn't much improvement to farming or to the quality of life in general.

The villages associated with existing water catchment sites have been found to be primarily located in the central and northern villages of Guam. Generally, there are no rivers or standing water in these areas because of the uplifted porous limestone plateau that is a geological characteristic. Mariana limestone formations are found in the north and argillaceous limestone formations are found in the central villages. These porous limestone formations allow rainwater to sink into the ground. (Amesbury and Moore p. 5)

For those living in the villages far from water, from pre-historic times to the early 1900's, life had been shaped by the need to obtain and store supplies of water in order to live there. The construction of the water catchments provided an incentive for Chamorro villagers to consider long term settlement away from overcrowded villages. Before the construction of such structures, families travelled to their ranch or farmlands daily if they were located near water sources. If the properties were far away from water, travelling required a full day by bullcart or even a part of the week. Water catchments made it possible for families to utilize and live on their land. Until a better system could be realized, as taxing as it was on the families resources, it was the best alternative for many families who owned land in the central and northern villages, (Department of Parks and Recreation Site File #66-01-1148) far from rivers, streams and without access to private wells.

Since their construction, water catchments that have survived have not been altered. An inspection has been made this year and none of them are in use, as they have been this way for quite some time. Some are used to hold debris collected during periodic yard cleaning of the surrounding premises or contain naturally fallen objects especially those sitting in the jungles.

The recognition and preservation of such structures contributes valuable insight to the history of the Chamorro people before becoming American citizens. It is significant for all the people of Guam because it is a physical reminder of the hardships Chamorro families endeared while improving the quality of life for

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themselves. It made settlement of the northern and central villages more desirable and it encouraged Chamorro families to be more resourceful and self-sufficient. Today, the Chamorro people have made the transition to being a westernized culture and where possible, efforts to maintain traditional Chamorro cultural values are now being made.

**F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES**

Name of Property Type Water Catchments

**Description**

There are eight water catchments documented and known to have been constructed by Chamorro families during this period. Of the eight, two have been destroyed and two are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. None of the water catchments have the same configuration. The most common design type is square or rectangular. The other design is cylindrical. These hand built structures are all made of sand, rocks, limestone and cement.

**Significance**

The water catchments on Guam meet two criteria of significance for nomination, these are: 1) Criteria A, Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and 2) Criteria C, Structures that embody a distinctive characteristic of a type, period or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value.

All the structures were constructed out of necessity. The need for storing water on property far from water sources was a prerequisite to consider long term settlement away from already crowded villages such as Agana. They are reminders of the hard living conditions and the sacrifices made by Chamorro families who were trying to better utilize their resources. With the introduction of agricultural programs by the Naval government during the first two decades of the First American Period (1890-1941), the desire for Chamorro families to utilize their properties increased as the Americans also encouraged Chamorro farming families to make better use of their unused land.

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As a group, these structures represent pre-war Chamorro lifestyle. The overall design and construction patterns were implemented by Chamorro farmers when construction materials and machinery were scarce. Once built, these water catchments were used to hold rainwater. This water was used to water plants which prior to the introduction of short term crops, was limited to citrus trees, coffee trees, and other plants that required little water. Families were especially dependent on these structures during the dry seasons for the survival of livestock. With the new crops and the gradual increase of livestock, these structures became necessary containers. It encouraged self sufficiency and it helped to improve the quality of Chamorro farming life.

Important information has been provided by the study of these water catchments. They have yielded valuable insight to the culture of the Chamorro people before fully adopting westernized values, customs, and U.S. Citizenship. These sites can also provide information as to the possible location of other sites by examining the past uses of adjacent properties and locating relatives of the original property owners that may be able to reveal related cultural activity.

**Registration Requirements**

In order to qualify for listing, the water catchment must have been constructed by Chamorro people before World War II to fulfill the desire of improving living conditions for individual families who chose to live on property far from water.

The properties are eligible under Criterion A in the role they served in providing a way for Chamorro farming families to move away from crowded villages to settle the central and northern villages. They meet criterion C by the fact that their styles show a definite trend in the manner in which the farmers constructed these water catchments.

**G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

The territory of Guam.

**H. IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

The multiple property listing for Water Catchments on Guam is based on the research begun and compiled by Alejandro T. B. Lizama in 1980 for the Department

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#### H. IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

of Parks and Recreation, Historic Preservation Office, Government of Guam. Archival research was limited to water resource management and selected village topics between 1899-1944. For each recorded property, Lizama conducted all of the interviews with family members of the various water catchments. The structures were measured, photographs were taken; computerized inventory forms were completed; research, including the taking of oral histories and translating them from Chamorro to English were conducted. This work was conducted on a full time basis by Lizama in 1980. Site files were created and assigned Historic Site numbers for the inclusion to the Guam Register of Historic Sites since 1980-1983 by Lizama.

In a disputed eligibility case of the Torre Water Catchment on property presently owned by the Hatsuho Country Club, the board decided in September of 1990 that all records of water catchments on file were to be immediately nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, however it has taken much longer to complete the nominations since that time. Both Maria Annie Flores and Lizama worked full-time, researching the inventoried properties and drafting National Register Nominations in 1992 for their completion. Because of the time constraints, the properties were limited to those on file in the Guam Historic Preservation Office. This however does not include those sites that rest on U.S. military properties.

#### I. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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county and State

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Stephenson, Rebecca A., and Moore, Darlene. Freshwater Use Customs on Rota: An Exploratory Study, Partial Project Completion Report for Sociocultural Determinants Freshwater Uses in Guam, Technical No. 17. Mangilao: University of Guam Water Resources Research Center, 1980.

**Primary Location of Additional Documentation:**

Government of Guam documents as well as information contained in personal communications with Alejandro T.B. Lizama are located in the Guam Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Government of Guam.

All other documents are available at the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam, UOG Station, Mangilao, Guam 96923.