

NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN

Technical information on the the National Register of Historic Places:
survey, evaluation, registration, and preservation of cultural resources



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources
National Register, History and Education

Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties



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The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes.

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Cover photographs:

Many traditional cultural properties are used for practical purposes by those who value them. This sedge preserve in northern California, for example, is tended and harvested by Pomo Indian basketmakers as a vital source of material for making their world famous baskets. The preserve was established at Lake Sonoma by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (Richard Lerner)

This bedrock mortar in central California plays an essential role in processing Black Oak acorns. (Theodoratus Cultural Research)

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GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING AND DOCUMENTING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES?

The National Register of Historic Places contains a wide range of historic property types, reflecting the diversity of the nation's history and culture. Buildings, structures, and sites; groups of buildings, structures or sites forming historic districts; landscapes; and individual objects are all included in the Register if they meet the criteria specified in the National Register's Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.4). Such properties reflect many kinds of significance in architecture, history, archeology, engineering, and culture.

There are many definitions of the word "culture," but in the National Register programs the word is understood to mean the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community, be it an Indian tribe, a local ethnic group, or the people of the nation as a whole.¹

One kind of cultural significance a property may possess, and that may make it eligible for inclusion in the Register, is *traditional cultural significance*. "Traditional" in this context refers to those beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice. The traditional cultural significance of a historic property, then, is significance derived from the role the property plays in a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices. Examples of properties possessing such significance include:

- a location associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group about its origins, its cultural history, or the nature of the world;
- a rural community whose organization, buildings and structures, or patterns of land use reflect the cultural traditions valued by its long-term residents;
- an urban neighborhood that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group, and that reflects its beliefs and practices;
- a location where Native American religious practitioners have historically gone, and are known or thought to go today, to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice; and
- a location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.

A traditional cultural property, then, can be defined generally as one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. Various kinds of traditional cultural properties will be discussed, illustrated, and related specifically to the National Register Criteria later in this bulletin.

¹ For a detailed definition, see Appendix I.



Numerous African Americans left the South to migrate to the Midwest. The A.M.E. Church (on left) and District No. 1 School remain in Nicodemus Historic District in Nicodemus, Kansas, which was declared a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 1976. (Clayton B. Fraser for the Historic American Buildings Survey)

PURPOSE OF THIS BULLETIN

Traditional cultural values are often central to the way a community or group defines itself, and maintaining such values is often vital to maintaining the group's sense of identity and self respect. Properties to which traditional cultural value is ascribed often take on this kind of vital significance, so that any damage to or infringement upon them is perceived to be deeply offensive to, and even destructive of, the group that values them. As a result, it is extremely important that traditional cultural properties be considered carefully in planning; hence it is important that such properties, when they are eligible for inclusion in the National Register, be nominated to the Register or otherwise identified in inventories for planning purposes.

Traditional cultural properties are often hard to recognize. A traditional ceremonial location may look like merely a mountaintop, a lake, or a stretch of river; a culturally important neighborhood may look like any other aggregation of houses, and an area where culturally important economic or artistic activities have been carried out may look like any other building, field of grass, or piece of forest in the area. As a result, such places may not necessarily come to light through the conduct of archeological, historical, or architectural surveys. The existence and significance of such locations often can be ascertained only through interviews with knowledgeable users of the area, or through other forms of ethnographic research. The subtlety with which the significance of such locations may be expressed makes it easy to ignore them; on the other hand it makes it difficult to distinguish between properties having real significance and those whose putative significance is spurious. As a result, clear guidelines for evaluation of such properties are needed.

In the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act, the Secretary of the Interior, with the American Folklife Center, was directed to study means of:

preserving and conserving the intangible elements of our cultural heritage such as arts, skills, folklife, and folkways. . .



The German Village Historic District in Columbus, Ohio, reflects the ethnic heritage of 19th century German immigrants. The neighborhood includes many simple vernacular brick cottages with gable roofs. (Christopher Cline)

and to recommend ways to:

preserve, conserve, and encourage the continuation of the diverse traditional prehistoric, historic, ethnic, and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American heritage. (NHPA 502; 16 U.S.C. 470a note)

The report that was prepared in response to 502, entitled *Cultural Conservation*, was submitted to the President and Congress on June 1, 1983, by the Secretary of the Interior. The report recommended in general that traditional cultural resources, both those that are associated with historic properties and those without specific property referents, be more systematically addressed in implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act and other historic preservation authorities. In transmitting the report, the Secretary directed the National Park Service to take several actions to implement its recommendations. Among other actions, the Service was directed to prepare guidelines to assist in the documentation of intangible cultural resources, to coordinate the incorporation of provisions for the consideration of such resources into Departmental planning documents and administrative manuals, and to encourage the identification and documentation of such resources by States and Federal agencies.

This bulletin has been developed as one aspect of the Service's response to the *Cultural Conservation* report and the Secretary's direction. It is intended to be an aid in determining whether properties thought or alleged to have traditional cultural significance are eligible for inclusion in the National Register. It is meant to assist Federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Certified Local Governments, Indian Tribes, and other historic preservation practitioners who need to evaluate such properties when nominating them for inclusion in the National Register or when considering their eligibility for the Register as part of the review process prescribed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation under 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It is designed to supplement other National Register guidance, particularly *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* and *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms*. It should be used in conjunction with these two Bulletins and other applicable guidance available from the National Register, when applying the National Register Criteria and preparing documentation to support nominations or determinations that a given property is or is not eligible for inclusion in the Register.

This Bulletin is also responsive to the American Indian Religious Free-

dom Act (AIRFA) of 1978, which requires the National Park Service, like other Federal agencies, to evaluate its policies and procedures with the aim of protecting the religious freedoms of Native Americans (Pub. L. 95341 2). Examination of the policies and procedures of the National Register suggests that while they are in no way intended to be so interpreted, they can be interpreted by Federal agencies and others in a manner that excludes historic properties of religious significance to Native Americans from eligibility for inclusion in the National Register. This in turn may exclude such properties from the protections afforded by 106, which may result in their destruction, infringing upon the rights of Native Americans to use them in the free exercise of their religions. To minimize the likelihood of such misinterpretation, this Bulletin gives special attention to properties of traditional cultural significance to Native American groups, and to discussing the place of religion in the attribution of such significance.

The fact that this Bulletin gives special emphasis to Native American properties should not be taken to imply that only Native Americans ascribe traditional cultural value to historic properties, or that such ascription is common only to ethnic minority groups in general. Americans of every ethnic origin have properties to

which they ascribe traditional cultural value, and if such properties meet the National Register criteria, they can and should be nominated for inclusion in the Register.

This Bulletin does not address cultural resources that are purely "intangible"—i.e. those that have no property referents—except by exclusion. The Service is committed to ensuring that such resources are fully considered in planning and decision making by Federal agencies and others. Historic properties represent only some aspects of culture, and many other aspects, not necessarily reflected in properties as such, may be of vital importance in maintaining the integrity of a social group. However, the National Register is not the appropriate vehicle for recognizing cultural values that are purely intangible, nor is there legal authority to address them under 106 unless they are somehow related to a historic property.

The National Register lists, and 106 requires review of effects on, tangible cultural resources—that is, historic properties. However, the attributes that give such properties significance, such as their association with historical events, often are intangible in nature. Such attributes cannot be ignored in evaluating and managing historic properties; properties and their intangible attributes of significance must be considered together.

This Bulletin is meant to encourage its users to address the intangible cultural values that may make a property historic, and to do so in an evenhanded way that reflects solid research and not ethnocentric bias.

Finally, no one should regard this Bulletin as the only appropriate source of guidance on its subject, or interpret it rigidly. Although traditional cultural properties have been listed and recognized as eligible for inclusion in the National Register since the Register's inception, it is only in recent years that organized attention has been given to them. This Bulletin represents the best guidance the Register can provide as of the late 1980s, and the examples listed in the bibliography include the best known at this time.² It is to be expected that approaches to such properties will continue to evolve. This Bulletin also is meant to supplement, not substitute for, more specific guidelines, such as those used by the National Park Service with respect to units of the National Park System and those used by some other agencies, States, local governments, or Indian tribes with respect to their own lands and programs.

² It is notable that most of these examples are unpublished manuscripts. The literature pertaining to the identification and evaluation of traditional cultural properties, to say nothing of their treatment, remains a thin one.



These sandbars in the Rio Grande River are eligible for inclusion in the National Register because they have been used for generations by the people of Sandia Pueblo for rituals involving immersion in the river's waters. (Thomas F. King)

ETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOHISTORY, ETHNOCENTRISM

Three words beginning with “ethno” will be used repeatedly in this Bulletin, and may not be familiar to all readers. All three are derived from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning “nation;” and are widely used in the study of anthropology and related disciplines.

Ethnography is the descriptive and analytic study of the culture of particular groups or communities. An ethnographer seeks to understand a community through interviews with its members and often through living in and observing it (a practice referred to as “participant observation”).

Ethnohistory is the study of historical data, including but not necessarily limited to, documentary data pertaining to a group or community, using an ethnographic perspective.

Ethnographic and ethnohistorical research are usually carried out by specialists in cultural anthropology, and by specialists in folklore and folklife, sociology, history, archeology and related disciplines with appropriate technical training.³

Ethnocentrism means viewing the world and the people in it only from the point of view of one’s own culture and being unable to sympathize with the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of someone who is a member of a different culture. It is particularly important to understand, and seek to avoid, ethnocentrism in the evaluation of traditional cultural properties. For ex-

ample, Euroamerican society tends to emphasize “objective” observation of the physical world as the basis for making statements about that world. However, it may not be possible to use such observations as the major basis for evaluating a traditional cultural property. For example, there may be nothing observable to the outsider about a place regarded as sacred by a Native American group. Similarly, such a group’s belief that its ancestors emerged from the earth at a specific location at the beginning of time may contradict Euroamerican science’s belief that the group’s ancestors migrated to North America from Siberia. These facts in no way diminish the significance of the locations in question in the eyes of those who value them; indeed they are irrelevant to their significance. It would be ethnocentric in the extreme to say that “whatever the Native American group says about this place, I can’t see anything here so it is not significant” or “since I know these people’s ancestors came from Siberia, the place where they think they emerged from the earth is of no significance.” It is vital to evaluate properties thought to have traditional cultural significance from the standpoint of those who may ascribe such significance to them, whatever one’s own perception of them, based on one’s own cultural values, may be. This is not to say that a group’s assertions about the significance of a place should not be questioned or subjected to critical analysis, but they should not be rejected based on the premise that the beliefs they reflect are inferior to one’s own.

EVALUATION, CONSIDERATION, AND PROTECTION

One more point that should be remembered in evaluating traditional cultural properties—as in evaluating any other kind of properties—is that establishing that a property is eligible for inclusion in the National Register does not necessarily mean that the property must be protected from disturbance or damage. Establishing that a property is eligible means that it must be considered in planning Federal, federally assisted, and federally licensed undertakings, but it does not mean that such an undertaking cannot be allowed to damage or destroy it.

Consultation must occur in accordance with the regulations of the Advisory Council (36 CFR Part 800) to identify, and if feasible adopt, measures to protect it, but if in the final analysis the public interest demands that the property be sacrificed to the needs of the project, there is nothing in the National Historic Preservation Act that prohibits this.

This principle is especially important to recognize with respect to traditional cultural properties, because such properties may be valued by a relatively small segment of a community that, on the whole, favors a project that will damage or destroy it. The fact that the community as a whole may be willing to dispense with the property in order to achieve the goals of the project does not mean that the property is not significant, but the fact that it is significant does not mean that it cannot be disturbed, or that the project must be foregone.

³ For a detailed discussion of the qualifications that a practitioner of ethnography or ethnohistory should possess, see Appendix II.

II. TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES IN PRESERVATION PLANNING

Traditional cultural properties, and the beliefs and institutions that give them significance, should be systematically addressed in programs of preservation planning and in the historic preservation components of land use plans. One very practical reason for this is to simplify the identification and evaluation of traditional cultural properties that may be threatened by construction and land use projects. Identifying and evaluating such properties can require detailed and extensive consultation, interview programs, and ethnographic fieldwork as discussed below. Having to conduct such activities may add considerably to the time and expense of compliance with 106, the National Environment Policy Act, and other authorities. Such costs can be reduced significantly, however, by early, proactive planning that identifies significant properties or areas likely to contain significant properties before specific

projects are planned that may affect them, identifies parties likely to ascribe cultural value to such properties, and establishes routine systems for consultation with such parties.

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning* provide for the establishment of "historic contexts" as a basic step in any preservation planning process be it planning for the comprehensive survey of a community or planning a construction project. A historic context is an organization of available information about, among other things, the cultural history of the area to be investigated, that identifies "the broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties" (48 FR 44717). The traditions and traditional lifeways of a planning area may represent such "broad patterns," so information about them should be used as a basis for historic context development.

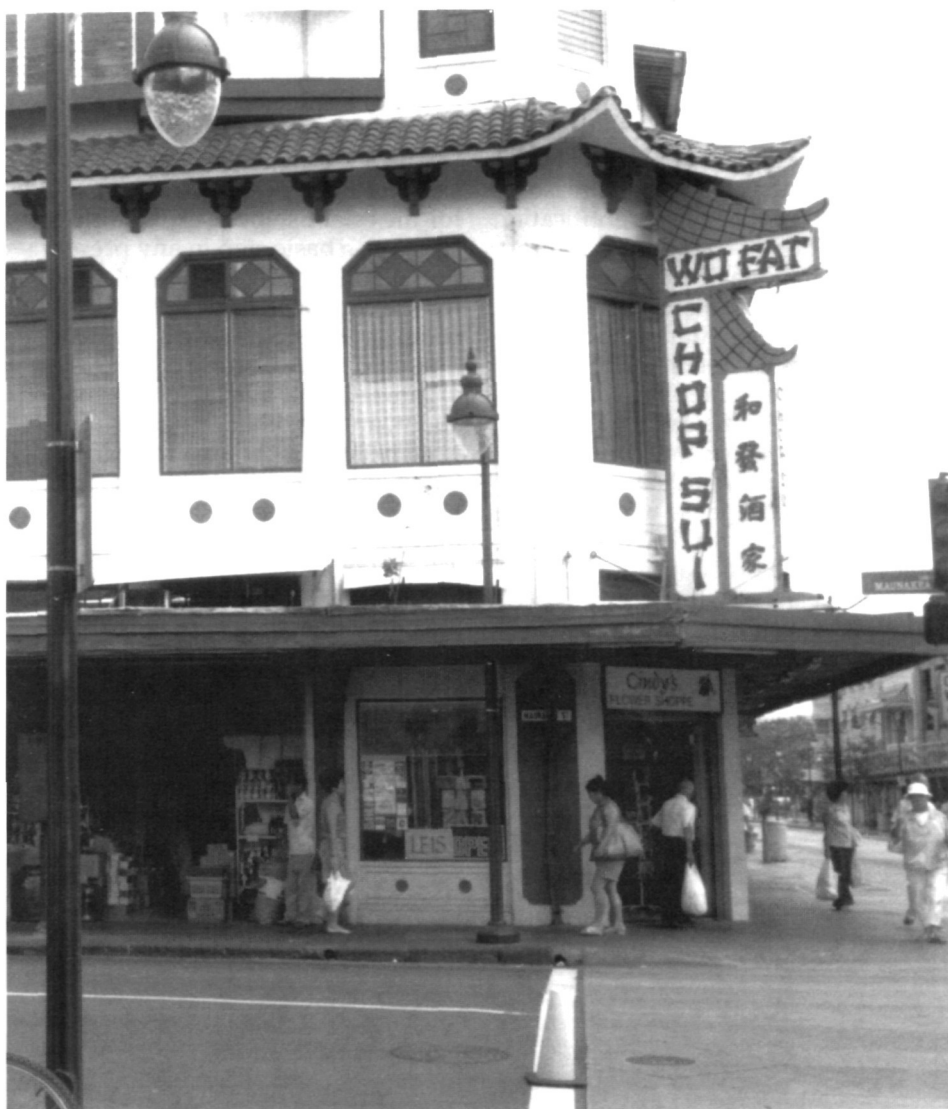
The *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Preservation Planning* emphasize the need for organized public participation in context development (48 FR 44717). The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's *Guidelines for Public Participation in Historic Preservation Review* (ACHP 1988) provide detailed recommendations regarding such participation. Based on these standards and guidelines, groups that may ascribe traditional cultural values to an area's historic properties should be contacted and asked to assist in organizing information on the area. Historic contexts should be considered that reflect the history and culture of such groups as the groups themselves understand them, as well as their history and culture as defined by Euroamerican scholarship, and processes for consultation with such groups should be integrated into routine planning and project review procedures.

III. IDENTIFYING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES

Some traditional cultural properties are well known to the residents of an area. The San Francisco Peaks in Arizona, for example, are extensively documented and widely recognized as places of extreme cultural importance to the Hopi, Navajo, and other American Indian people of the Southwest, and it requires little study to recognize that Honolulu's Chinatown is a place of cultural importance to the city's Asian community. Most traditional cultural properties, however, must be identified through systematic study, just as most other kinds of historic properties must be identified. This section of the Bulletin will discuss some factors to consider in identifying traditional cultural properties.⁴

ESTABLISHING THE LEVEL OF EFFORT

Any comprehensive effort to identify historic properties in an area, be the area a community, a rural area, or the area that may be affected by a construction or land-use project, should include a reasonable effort to identify traditional cultural properties. What constitutes a "reasonable" effort depends in part on the likelihood that such properties may be present. The likelihood that such properties may be present can be reliably assessed only on the basis of background knowledge of the area's history, ethnography, and contemporary society developed through preservation planning. As a general although not in-



Honolulu's Chinatown reflects the cultural values and traditions of its inhabitants not only in its architectural details but also in its organization of space and the activities that go on there. (Ramona K. Mullahey)

⁴ For general guidelines for identification see the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Identification* (48 FR 44720-23), *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* (National Register of Historic Places bulletin) and *Identification in Historic Preservation Review: a Decisionmaking Guide* (ACHP/DOI 1988).

variable rule, however, rural areas are more likely than urban areas to contain properties of traditional cultural importance to American Indian or other native American communities, while urban areas are more likely to contain properties of significance to ethnic and other traditional neighborhoods.

Where identification is conducted as part of planning for a construction or land-use project, the appropriate level of effort depends in part on whether the project under consideration is the type of project that could affect traditional cultural properties. For example, as a rule the rehabilitation of historic buildings may have relatively little potential for effect on such properties. However, if a rehabilitation project may result in displacement of residents, "gentrification" of a neighborhood, or other sociocultural impacts, the possibility that the buildings to be rehabilitated, or the neighborhood in which they exist, may be ascribed traditional cultural value by their residents or others should be considered. Similarly, most day-to-day management activities of a land managing agency may have little potential for effect on traditional cultural properties, but if the management activity involves an area or a kind of resource that has high significance to a traditional group—for example, timber harvesting in an area where an Indian tribe's religious practitioners may continue to carry out traditional ceremonies—the potential for effect will be high.

These general rules of thumb aside, the way to determine what constitutes a reasonable effort to identify traditional cultural properties is to consult those who may ascribe cultural significance to locations within the study area. The need for community participation in planning identification, as in other forms of preservation planning, cannot be over-emphasized.

CONTACTING TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS

An early step in any effort to identify historic properties is to consult with groups and individuals who have special knowledge about and in-

terests in the history and culture of the area to be studied. In the case of traditional cultural properties, this means those individuals and groups who may ascribe traditional cultural significance to locations within the study area, and those who may have knowledge of such individuals and groups. Ideally, early planning will have identified these individuals and groups, and established how to consult with them. As a rule, however, the following steps are recommended:

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

An important first step in identifying such individuals and groups is to conduct background research into what is already recorded about the area's history, ethnography, sociology, and folklife. Published and unpublished source material on the historic and contemporary composition of the area's social and cultural groups should be consulted; such source material can often be found in

the anthropology, sociology, or folklife libraries of local universities or other academic institutions. Professional and nonprofessional students of the area's social and cultural groups should also be consulted—for example, professional and avocational anthropologists and folklorists who have studied the area. The SHPO and any other official agency or organization that concerns itself with matters of traditional culture—for example, a State Folklorist or a State Native American Commission—should be contacted for recommendations about sources of information and about groups and individuals to consult.

MAKING CONTACT

Having reviewed available background data, the next step is to contact knowledgeable groups and individuals directly, particularly those groups that are native to the area or have resided there for a long time. Some such groups have official repre-

Federal agencies and others have found a variety of ways to contact knowledgeable parties in order to identify and evaluate traditional cultural properties. Generally speaking, the detail and complexity of the methods employed depend on the nature and complexity of the properties under consideration and the effects the agency's management or other activities may have on them. For example:

- The Black Hills National Forest designated a culturally sensitive engineer to work with local Indian tribes in establishing procedures by which the tribes could review Forest Service projects that might affect traditional cultural properties;
- The Air Force sponsored a conference of local traditional cultural authorities to review plans for deployment of an intercontinental missile system in Wyoming, resulting in guidelines to ensure that effects on traditional cultural properties would be minimized.
- The New Mexico Power Authority employed a professional cultural anthropologist to consult with Native American groups within the area to be affected by the Four Corners Power Project.
- The Ventura County (California) Flood Control Agency consulted with local Native American groups designated by the State Native American Heritage Commission to determine how to handle human remains to be exhumed from a cemetery that had to be relocated to make way for a flood control project.
- The Utah State Historic Preservation Officer entered into an agreement with the American Folklife Center to develop a comprehensive overview of the tangible and intangible historic resources of Grouse Creek, a traditional Mormon cowboy community.
- The Forest Service contracted for a full-scale ethnographic study to determine the significance of the Helkau Historic District on California's Six Rivers National Forest.

sentatives—the tribal council of an Indian tribe, for example, or an urban neighborhood council. In other cases, leadership may be less officially defined, and establishing contact may be more complicated. The assistance of ethnographers, sociologists, folklorists, and others who may have conducted research in the area or otherwise worked with its social groups may be necessary in such cases, in order to design ways of contacting and consulting such groups in ways that are both effective and consistent with their systems of leadership and communication.

It should be clearly recognized that expertise in traditional cultural values may not be found, or not found solely, among contemporary community leaders. In some cases, in fact, the current political leadership of a community or neighborhood may be hostile to or embarrassed about traditional matters. As a result, it may be necessary to seek out knowledgeable parties outside the community's official political structure. It is of course best to do this with the full knowledge and cooperation of the community's contemporary leaders; in most cases it is appropriate to ask such leaders to identify members of the community who are knowledgeable about traditional cultural matters, and use these parties as an initial network of consultants on the group's traditional values. If there is serious hostility between the group's contemporary leadership and its traditional experts, however, such cooperation may not be extended, and efforts to consult with traditional authorities may be actively opposed. Where this occurs, and it is necessary to proceed with the identification and evaluation of properties—for example, where such identification and evaluation are undertaken in connection with review of an undertaking under 106—careful negotiation and mediation may be necessary to overcome opposition and establish mutually acceptable ground rules for consultation. Again, the assistance of anthropologists or others with training and experience in work with the community, or with similar communities, may be necessary.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork to identify properties of traditional cultural significance involves consultation with knowledge-



The Helkau Historic District, in the Six Rivers National Forest of California, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with significant cultural practices of the Tolowa, Yorok, Karuk, and Hoopa Indian tribes of the area, who have used the district for generations to make medicine and communicate with spirits. (Theodoratus Cultural Research)

able parties, coupled with field inspection and recordation of locations identified as significant by such parties. It is often appropriate and efficient to combine such fieldwork with surveys to identify other kinds of historic properties, for example archeological sites and properties of architectural significance. If combined fieldwork is conducted, however, the professional standards appropriate to each kind of fieldwork should be adhered to, and appropriate expertise in each relevant discipline should be represented on the study team. The kinds of expertise typically needed for a detailed ethnographic study of traditional cultural properties are outlined in Appendix II. Applicable research standards can be found in *Systematic Fieldwork, Volume 2: Ethnographic Analysis and Data Management*. (Werner and Schoepfle 1986)

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE CONSULTATION

Since knowledge of traditional cultural values may not be shared readily with outsiders, knowledgeable parties should be consulted in cultural contexts that are familiar and reasonable to them. It is important to understand the role that the information being solicited may play in the culture of those

from whom it is being solicited, and the kinds of rules that may surround its transmittal. In some societies traditional information is regarded as powerful, even dangerous. It is often believed that such information should be transmitted only under particular circumstances or to particular kinds of people. In some cases information is regarded as a valued commodity for which payment is in order, in other cases offering payment may be offensive. Sometimes information may be regarded as a gift, whose acceptance obligates the receiver to reciprocate in some way, in some cases by carrying out the activity to which the information pertains.

It may not always, or even often, be possible to arrange for information to be sought in precisely the way those being consulted might prefer, but when it is not, the interviewer should clearly understand that to some extent he or she is asking those interviewed to violate their cultural norms. The interviewer should try to keep such violations to a minimum, and should be patient with the reluctance that those interviewed may feel toward sharing information under conditions that are not fully appropriate from their point of view.

Culturally sensitive consultation may require the use of languages other than English, the conduct of

community meetings in ways consistent with local traditional practice, and the conduct of studies by trained ethnographers, ethnohistorians, sociologists, or folklorists with the kinds of expertise outlined in Appendix II. Particularly where large projects or large land areas are involved, or where it is likely that particularly sensitive resources may be at issue, formal ethnographic studies should be carried out, by or under the supervision of a professionally qualified cultural anthropologist.

FIELD INSPECTION AND RECORDATION

It is usually important to take knowledgeable consultants into the field to inspect properties that they identify as significant. In some cases such properties may not be discernible as such to anyone but a knowledgeable member of the group that ascribes significance to them; in such cases it may be impossible even to find the relevant properties, or locate them accurately, without the aid of such parties. Even where a property is readily discernible as such to the outside observer, visiting the property may help a consultant recall information about it that he or she is unlikely to recall during interviews at a remote location, thus making for a richer and more complete record.

Where the property in question has religious significance or supernatural connotations, it is particularly important to ensure that any visit is carried out in accordance with appropriate modes of behavior. In some cases, ritual purification is necessary before a property can be approached, or spirits must be propitiated along the way. Some groups forbid visits to such locations by menstruating women or by people of inappropriate ages. The taking of photographs or the use of electronic recording equipment may not be appropriate. Appropriate ways to approach the property should be discussed with knowledgeable consultants before undertaking a field visit.

To the extent compatible with the cultural norms of the group involved, traditional cultural properties should be recorded on National Register of Historic Places forms or their equivalent.⁵ Where items normally included in a National Register nomination or request for a determination of eligibility cannot be included (for ex-

ample, if it is culturally inappropriate to photograph the property), the reasons for not including the item should be explained. To the extent possible in the property's cultural context, other aspects of the documentation (for example, verbal descriptions of the property) should be enhanced to make up for the items not included.

If making the location of a property known to the public would be culturally inappropriate, or compromise the integrity of the property or associated cultural values (for example, by encouraging tourists to intrude upon the conduct of traditional practices), the "Not for Publication" box on the National Register form should be checked; this indicates that the reproduction of locational information is prohibited, and that other information contained in the nomination will not be reproduced without the permission of the nominating authority. In the case of a request for a determination of eligibility in which a National Register form is not used, the fact that the information is not for publication should be clearly speci-

fied in the documentation, so that the National Register can apply the same controls to this information as it would to restricted information in a nomination.⁶

RECONCILING SOURCES

Sometimes an apparent conflict exists between documentary data on traditional cultural properties and the testimony of contemporary consultants. The most common kind of conflict occurs when ethnographic and ethnohistorical documents do not identify a given place as playing an important role in the tradition and culture of a group, while contemporary members of the group say the property does have such a role. More rarely, documentary sources may indicate that a property does have cultural significance while contemporary sources say it does not. In some cases, too, contemporary sources may disagree about the significance of a property.



Much of the significance of traditional cultural properties can be learned only from testimony of the traditional people who value them, like this old man being interviewed in Truk. (Micronesia Institute)

⁵ For general instructions on the completion of National Register documentation, see *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form*.

⁶ Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act provides the legal authority to withhold National Register information from the public when release might "create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction." For detailed guidelines concerning restricting access to information see the National Register bulletin entitled, *Guidelines for Restricting Information About Historic and Prehistoric Resources*.

Where available documents fail to identify a property as culturally significant, but contemporary sources identify it as such, several points should be considered.

- (a) Ethnographic and ethnohistorical research has not been conducted uniformly in all parts of the nation; some areas are better documented than others simply because they have been the focus of more research.
- (b) Ethnographic and ethnohistorical documents reflect the research interests of those who prepared them; the fact that one does not identify a property as culturally important may reflect only the fact that the individual who prepared the report had research interests that did not require the identification of such properties.
- (c) Some kinds of traditional cultural properties are regarded by those who value them as the loci of supernatural or other power, or as having other attributes that make people reluctant to talk about them. Such properties are not likely to be recorded unless someone makes a very deliberate effort to do so, or unless those who value them have a special reason for revealing the information—for example, a perception that the property is in some kind of danger.

Particularly because properties of traditional cultural significance are often kept secret, it is not uncommon for them to be “discovered” only when something threatens them—for example, when a change in land-use is proposed in their vicinity. The sudden revelation by representatives of a cultural group which may also have other economic or political interests in the proposed change can lead quickly to charges that the cultural significance of a property has been invented only to obstruct or otherwise influence those planning the change. This may be true, and the possibility that traditional cultural significance is attributed to a property only to advance other, unrelated interests should be carefully considered. However, it also may be that until the change was proposed, there simply was no reason for those who value the property to reveal its existence or the significance they ascribe to it.

Where ethnographic, ethnohistorical, historical, or other sources identify a property as having cultural significance, but contemporary sources say that it lacks such significance, the interests of the contemporary sources should be carefully considered. Individuals who have economic interests in the potential development of an area may be strongly motivated to deny its cultural significance. More subtly, individuals who regard traditional practices and beliefs as backward and contrary to the

best contemporary interests of the group that once ascribed significance to a property may feel justified in saying that such significance has been lost, or was never ascribed to the property. On the other hand, of course, it may be that the documentary sources are wrong, or that the significance ascribed to the property when the documents were prepared has since been lost.

Similar consideration must be taken into account in attempting to reconcile conflicting contemporary sources. Where one individual or group asserts that a property has traditional cultural significance, and another asserts that it does not or where there is disagreement about the nature or extent of a property’s significance, the motives and values of the parties, and the cultural constraints operating on each, must be carefully analyzed.

In general, the only reasonably reliable way to resolve conflict among sources is to review a wide enough range of documentary data, and to interview a wide enough range of authorities to minimize the likelihood either of inadvertent bias or of being deliberately misled.

Authorities consulted in most cases should include both knowledgeable parties within the group that may attribute cultural value to a property and appropriate specialists in ethnography, sociology, history, and other relevant disciplines.⁷

⁷ For excellent examples of studies designed in whole or in part to identify and evaluate traditional cultural properties based on both documentary sources and the testimony of consultants, see Bean and Vane 1978; Carroll 1983; Johnston and Budy 1983; Stoffle and Dobyns 1982, 1983; Theodoratus 1979.