# Endangered Cultural Heritage Mapping in Kiribati

## The Nnabakana (stone warriors)

European Union

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Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community

# ENDANGERED CULTURAL HERITAGE MAPPING IN KIRIBATI

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Prepared by the Department of Culture and Museum, Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs, Kiribati

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# Contents

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We also acknowledge the useful suggestions, critical materials and support from many colleagues and friends on Tarawa and Tabiteuea North.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| DCMK | Department of Culture and Museum Kiribati |
| ECHM | endangered cultural heritage mapping |
| MISA | Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| SPC | Secretariat of the Pacific Community |
| TNIC | Tabiteuea North Island Council |
| TSIC | Tabiteuea South Island Council |

## Executive Summary

The Endangered Cultural Heritage Mapping Project was carried out by the Department of Culture and Museum (DCMK) of the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs of Kiribati through a Secretariat of the Pacific Community–managed and European Union–funded project entitled 'Structuring the Cultural Sector in the Pacific for Improved Human Development'. The decision to map the Nnabakana cultural and historic site was endorsed during the Endangered Cultural Heritage Mapping Workshop held in Sigatoka, Fiji in May 2011, in which the acting director of DCMK took an active part.

The cultural site known to the locals as the Nnabakana (stone warriors) was identified by DCMK for its uniqueness and historical value. It is related to the story of two warriors known as Kaitu and Uakeia who conquered many islands in Kiribati. According to Mr Tatau Takaria (one of the project's knowledgeable informants and the oldest member of the family that owns Teabuaeroa islet), Kaitu and Uakeia arrived on Tabiteuea 12–15 generations ago. Only three islands in the southern group (Arorae, Tamana and Onotoa) and two in the northern group (Makin and Butaritari) were not part of the Kaitu and Uakeia conquests.

The mapping was designed to encourage I-Kiribati to understand the importance of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The mapping exercise enabled hands-on, on-the-job community training in the basic skills of endangered cultural heritage mapping (ECHM) with the hope that in the future the trainees will be able to conduct ECHM in their respective communities.

It was deemed vital to collect all stories related to the Nnabakana and so these were acquired from the rightful owners with respect. One of the challenges with respect to the collection of information was the initial unwillingness of knowledge holders to share information and stories. Traditionally, the knowledge, stories and information relating to families (especially genealogy) are considered to belong to those families and constitute their wealth. It is believed that once the knowledge is shared with someone outside the family circle, it will be lost forever to those giving it away. This was something that the ECHM project sought to change, through community consultations and free discussion with small groups in the community, church groups, and women's and young people's organisations.

The community of Tabiteuea has a unique and undocumented version of the Kaitu and Uakeia conquest of the island. This story describes Kaitu and Uakeia visiting Tabiteuea island to await the return of their great warrior Kaiue, who had returned to Beru island with his son Biua. The story emphasises that Kaitu and Uakeia stayed in peace and harmony with three local families who welcomed them to their small islet, which was known as Teabuaeroa. Thus, contrary to popular belief, Kaitu and Uakeia did not make war on the locals.

This Tabiteuean version of Kaitu and Uakeia, which is different from the Beru version that has been published and widely disseminated, had been kept a secret and was not widely known. Members of the community, old and young, realised the importance of sharing their story for the benefit of future generations and were happy to reveal what had been regarded as a secret in the

olden days. Consequently, they requested the publication of their until now undocumented version of Kaitu and Uakeia's adventure.

When the ECHM project began, the community on Tabiteuea did not have clear picture of the exercise and were suspicious. The Nnabakana have been publicly known to many as symbols of grave defeat on the part of the Tabiteuean warriors. The Tabiteuean community does not accept this version of the story and the project aroused some uneasy feelings as community members assumed that the ECHM project would be in full support of the former assumption. This issue was a serious challenge to the ECHM team, who addressed it with sincerity. They clarified the nature and objectives of the project and provided ample background information on the project in Kiribati. After community consultations and meetings with individual elders (men and women), the community realised the value of the project and its contribution to the island and the community.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ECHM project in Kiribati consisted of collecting qualitative and quantitative information on intangible and tangible cultural heritage that is threatened by new influences from within and outside of Kiribati. With the increasing number of young people being exposed to the outside world, and constant overseas travelling, changes in traditional cultures are taking place, particularly in cultural expressions, traditional knowledge and ways of living in general (food, clothing, transport and entertainment).

The information collected has contributed considerably to the planning process of safeguarding the less disturbed cultural heritage of Kiribati. The implementation of the ECHM project required the cooperation and coordination of all levels of government, including local government, island councils, community groups and individuals. Each of these levels has some responsibility for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. In addition, public awareness, education and community involvement are critical to the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of the people. The knowledge and experience of local communities must be drawn upon and fully utilised, and awareness must be extended to stimulate a sense of community involvement and action.

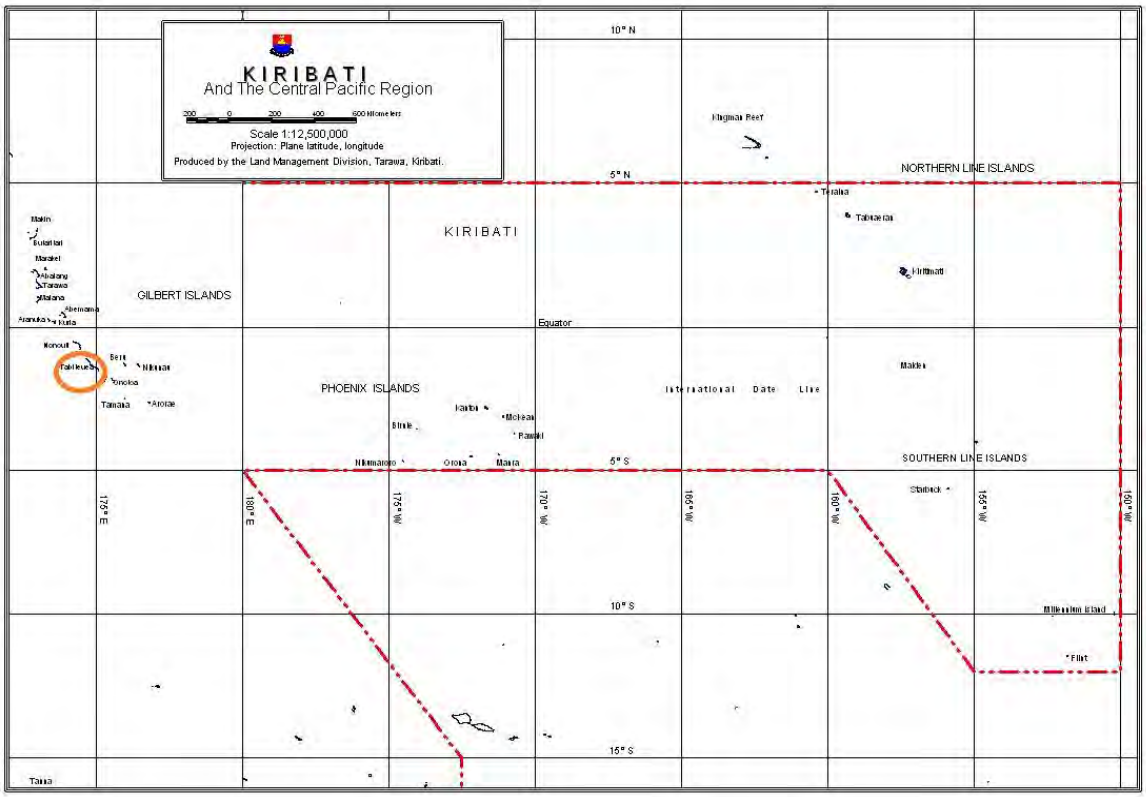
The success of the ECHM exercise depended on systematic community consultations, continuous assessment of the process, and collection of data. The local communities were the core target in this process. They are the rightful owners, doers and beneficiaries of the inheritance and needed to be fully involved right from the beginning of the process, as well as through implementation and monitoring.

This report describes the nature of the ECHM project in Kiribati, including methodologies, activities and how people reacted to the project. It also covers the main activities, namely community consultations, training of members of the community, data collection in relation to the story of the Nnabakana (stone warriors), on-site training activities, interviews with selected members of the community (face-to-face communication), and discussions on the community's expectations for the future.

## 2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Republic of Kiribati has a total land area of only 822.8 square metres. It consists of 33 low-lying coral atolls in three main groups: the Gilbert group in the west, the Phoenix group in the centre, and the northern and southern Line Islands in the east, plus the single island of Banaba, 400 kilometres to the west of the Gilbert group. The islands are extremely isolated and fragmented, covering an ocean area of 13 million square kilometres between 4° 43′ N and 11° 25′ S latitude and 169° 32′ and 150° 14′ W longitude (Thaman, Clarke et al. 1995). Kiribati consists of true atolls, except Banaba, which is a raised limestone island (Tebano et al. 1999). The islands are most vulnerable to sea-level rise and other related impacts of climate change, such as coastal erosion, seawater inundation and coral reef bleaching.

Map 1: Republic of Kiribati, showing location of Tabiteuea in orange circle

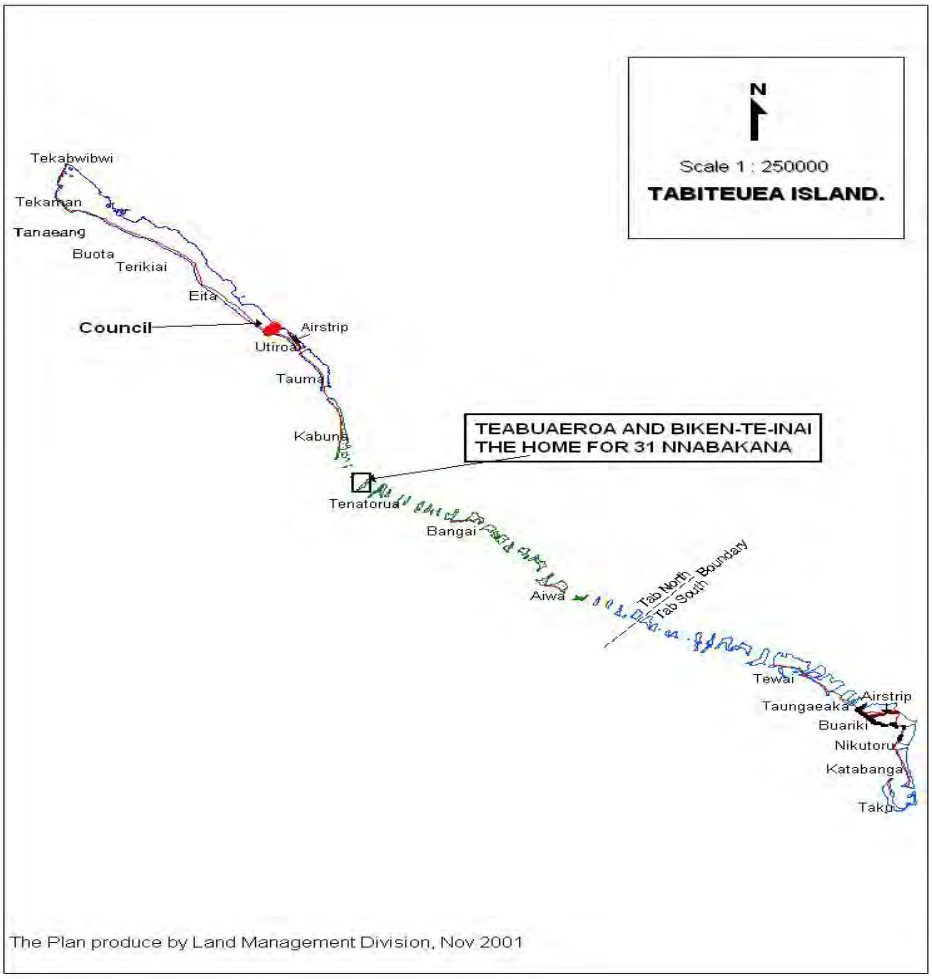



Tabiteuea island is situated in the southern district of the Gilbert group. It is the longest island in the group and is divided into two administrative councils known as Tabiteuea North Island Council (TNIC) and Tabiteuea South Island Council (TSIC). Between the two main islands (councils) are many uninhabited islets; these are divided between the two councils for administration purposes. Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai islets, the selected site for the ECHM exercise, are under the jurisdiction of TNIC.

On both sides of the two islets are passages through which small boats and canoes pass and marine larvae and fish are flushed with the changing tide. On the lagoon side there is a very wide intertidal area of fine sand that is exposed at low tide. This area constitutes one of the most important fishing grounds for sandworm (*ibo*), which is regarded as a delicacy by the people of Tabiteuea.

Farther from the end of the lagoon intertidal area, the bottom drops off to the deeper part of the lagoon; giant clams are plentiful here.

Map2: Tabiteuea, showing council headquarters and mapping-focused site




On the ocean side at the wave-breaker zone is an intertidal fringing reef that gradually drops off into the ocean. This is also an important area for fishing and gleaning where the people go to dive, net or take their boats and canoes over the reef edge into the open ocean. The community proposes that the site including adjacent marine areas should be declared a marine and terrestrial conservation area for Tabiteuea North. This proposal has been forwarded to the attention of the Biodiversity Working Committee to include the site among other proposed marine and terrestrial protected areas.

Maps 3 and 4 display:

a) north and south Tabiteuea island, showing the location of Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai, and
b) the location of the Nnabakana on the northern side of the islets.

Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai are customarily owned islets but the Nnabakana occupy a government-owned area that is outside a restricted area of land ownership. The low-level fringing coral reef on the ocean side of Teabuaeroa provides safe channels for canoes to cross into the lagoon's deep water.

According to one source of information, there were three families on the islets when the Beruan and Nikunauan warriors arrived. The invaders/visitors stayed harmoniously with these families on Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai. The families provided food and shelter for them and assisted with the construction of the Nnabakana, which are located on the coastline of Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai islets on Tabiteuea North in the southern Gilbert group. The position of the Nnabakana as displayed on a GPS screen is 501 19 25.7 E174 48 21.4.


Maps 3 and 4: B = Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai; Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai showing location of the Nnabakana.

## 3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ECHM PROJECT

The Department of Culture and Museum in Kiribati (DCMK) identified the Nnabakana on the island of Tabiteuea North as an endangered cultural heritage site that needs urgent safeguarding. The site was recommended by DCMK after the completion of a program of preliminary collection of oral traditions on all the islands in Kiribati**.**

The site was endorsed at the Endangered Cultural Heritage Mapping Workshop held in Sigatoka, Fiji in May 2011, and funding support was provided by the European Union through the 'Structuring the Cultural Sector in the Pacific for Improved Human Development' project managed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The ECHM project took place in Kiribati from April to June 2012. The consultant/coordinator service contract was signed on 26 March 2012 and implementation began on 1 April 2012 with the production of a workplan that included archival research, old files consultation, one-on-one dialogue with knowledgeable informants on Tarawa, and a visit to the selected site where the Nnabakana are located. The local consultant/coordinator of the project worked closely with DCMK under the supervision of the SPC Human Development Programme, which is based in Suva, Fiji.

## 4. VISIT TO TABITEUEA ISLAND

Tabiteuea is the longest island in the Gilbert group and is located between latitude 1° 6′ 49.9″ S and longitude 174° 39′ 40.11″ E. The team comprised of the local consultant/coordinator, Mr Bwere Eritaia, and the assistant cultural officer, Mr Anatati Wilson, left Tarawa on 29 May 2012 for Tabiteuea island. The work programme on the island included meeting with council officials to explain the nature of endangered cultural heritage and how and why the Nnabakana were selected, community consultations and training in basic ECHM skills, and one-on-one communication. How to properly use a tape-recording machine and video camera was also part of the training.

A visit to the focal site for conducting a physical mapping exercise was arranged by Mr Wilson. It took two and half days to complete the task on the site, with assistance provided by four field assistants. At the end of the mapping exercise the team presented its findings to the community and council officials. The purpose of the presentation was to discuss with the community how in the future they should manage, protect and safeguard their cultural heritage.

The meeting also discussed the future that the community envisioned for itself and unpublished myths and legends related to the Nnabakana. As a result, the community was able to provide a different version of the Kaitu and Uakeia arrival on Tabiteuea – a story that had been undisclosed for more than ten generations. The known version from Beru was published in 1942 in an invaluable book (Tibwere 1942) that contains chapters from experts on the living traditions of Tarawa and Abaiang. However, most of the stories in the book are from the island of Beru (partly explained by the fact that the first available printing machine in Kiribati belonged to Rongorongo Mission School, which was located on Beru).

## 5. MYTHS AND LEGENDS COLLECTION

### 5.1 Undocumented story of Kaitu and Uakeia

The collection of data focused on legends and myths related to the Nnabakana on Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai islets. Data were collected using an audio recording machine, a video recorder and written notes. The information collected differed from community to community and from informant to informant. One notable story collected was the Tabiteuea version of Kaitu and Uakeia's victorious expedition in the islands:

The inter-island expedition of Kaitu and Uakeia was a joint effort between the people from the islands of Beru and Nikunau. The expedition began from Beru, where the large canoes can be anchored in a beautiful calm lagoon. The island of Nikunau is surrounded by coral reef. It has no lagoon, and the anchorage is not safe for large voyaging canoes to anchor.

Kaitu and Uakeia were not warriors. Kaitu was a navigator and Uakeia a soothsayer. The third person was Kaiuea, a leading warrior. Kaiuea returned to Beru after he found his son Biua, who was once exiled from Beru for his aggressive behaviour and cruelty.

With the absence of Kaiuea, the army could not proceed any further. Kaitu and Uakeia visited Tabiteuea and built the Nnabakana while waiting for the arrival of their great fighter Kaiuea on the islet of Teabuaeroa. They sought a replacement for Kaiuea but were unsuccessful. They urged Taorobwa to join them but he refused. (Taorobwa, from Beru, was a fearless and experienced fighter who had left Beru and lived on Katabanga in Tabiteuea South.) The second person they approached was Tabora, also from Beru, who had settled in the northern part of Tabiteuea North. Tabora rejected the invitation but advised them to proceed to the next island of Nonouti and seek assistance from Queen Tabiria. Kaitu and Uakeia left Tabiteuea and proceeded to the island of Nonouti.

The major difference between the written story of Kaitu and Uakeia from Beru and Nikunau and the undocumented Tabiteuean version is that in the latter version Kaitu and Uakeia did not make war on Tabiteuea. This version was generally agreed upon at the two community consultations held during the mapping exercise on Tabiteuea.

### 5.2 The purpose of the Nnabakana is not confirmed

Kaitu and Uakeia's warriors erected the Nnabakana with the intention of scaring away the approaching enemies from the northern part of the island. Kaitu and Uakeia's army were ready to take charge but there was no Kaiuea, their leading warrior. The Tabiteuean warriors proceeded in a horseshoe formation from the northern side of the islet. Kaitu and Uakeia knew for sure that they were outnumbered and unable to stand against the approaching enemies. Their canoes were all moored in the deep lagoon water. They set sail northward and stopped at nightfall at the place called Taunibong. Here they met Tabora, a man from Beru. They asked him to join their army but he refused on the grounds that his whole family would be punished by the locals if they discovered that he joined them. Tabora told them to proceed to the island of Nonouti to seek assistance from Queen Tabiria, the granddaughter of the King of Tarawa, King Beia, who was

also the royal chief of North Tarawa. Queen Tabiria gave them nothing, but performed a special anointing on them through secret calling on the spirit of courage, with magic spells and chanting.

## 6. PROTECTION IS WARRANTED

The wealth of Kiribati is found not only in its natural resources but also in its cultural heritage, both intangible and tangible. The outcome of recent research undertaken by DCMK shows clearly the uniqueness and value of the Nnabakana site, especially for the historical facts of early civil war between the islands, traditional knowledge and cultural forms of expression. The protection of the Nnabakana is warranted on the grounds that:

a) the Nnabakana are made of loose coral stone slabs that can be easily broken up by fishers and passers-by. Of the 31 Nnabakana reported, only one is in good condition. Some informants indicated that the missing Nnabakana were destroyed through human activity, particularly by the landowners of the two islets of Teabuaeroa and Biken-te-Inai;
b) the site is very rich in marine resources. The passages on either side of the islets are full of small fish at high tide and octopus at low tide;
c) the Nnabakana are located at the edge of a coral-reef shoreline of two islets and are most vulnerable to sea-level rise. Many of the lost stone warriors have been washed away by tidal forces;
d) the communities involved are unaware of the significant value of the Nnabakana as endangered cultural heritage; and
e) the Nnabakana is a unique cultural heritage site that if protected, preserved and promoted will raise awareness and boost future focus on endangered cultural heritage.

Some significant features of cultural heritage are encompassed in the Nnabakana stories: the building of large oceangoing sailing canoes, the skills of navigation, traditional weather forecasting, warfare of the people, and consultation with the spirits. This knowledge is held by the village elders who are the custodians of Kiribati's heritage. It is important that their knowledge is documented for future generations.

Figure 1: A broken Nnabakana

## 7. METHODOLOGIES APPLIED FOR MAPPING EXERCISE

Methodologies used and lessons learned during ECHM in Kiribati included the following:

### 7.1 Community consultation

The community consultation aimed to:

a) **get acquainted with members of the community**. It was vital that project workers knew the community as they knew themselves. The community is the sole owner of the endangered heritage. Project workers needed to understand community members' backgrounds and behavioural attitudes towards the selected mapping site.

b) **disclose project information**. It was essential that the community fully understood the background of the mapping exercise. The success of the project relied very much on the cooperation of the community concerned. This is proper in the case of the Nnabakana, where there is a conflict of interest with regard to the stories about them.

*c)* **discuss with community members the type of life they want to live in the future**. It is necessary that the community decides for itself the type of life its members would like to live. The consultation approach provided opportunities for the community to discuss this in relation to the protection of cultural heritage and its negative and positive impacts.

d) **present findings.** It was proper that the community that is the custodian of the endangered heritage (the Nnabakana) was presented with the findings of the mapping exercise at the end of the undertaking. This gave opportunities for comments and feedback on what had been accomplished. The communities were excited to know what had been discovered. The team recorded comments, proposals and ideas expressed during the consultation for use in future mapping exercises.

Figure 2: Preparing material for presentation


Figures 3 and 4: Field assistants in training

e) **approve and compile recommendations**. It was at the consultation that recommendations were proposed and agreed to. Participants in the consultations represented different segments of the community. It was important that they fully understood the nature of every recommendation and were proactive in their approach to the recommended activities.

### 7.2 Training of selected community members

The selection of field assistants followed criteria prepared by the council as a standard pattern of selection for any paid labour. The four selected field assistants were junior secondary school leavers. With a limited timeframe allocated for the mapping exercise, the training could only be accomplished 'on the job'. It aimed to:

a) enable the trainees to undertake the mapping exercise in their own community;
b) allow the trainees to acquire simple techniques and skills in mapping, how to conduct interviews, proposing questions, and preparation of questionnaires leading to the focused cultural heritage element in question; and learn how to operate the audio recording machine, video camera and other mapping tools available; and
c) allow the trainees to express their views freely on the subject and record every issue, concern and item of feedback that came up during interviews.

### 7.3 One-on-one dialogue

The purpose of this method was to:

a) collect the more confidential and secret aspects of the selected mapping element;
b) enable a good listener to let shy but knowledgeable informants to say what they could contribute on the subject matter; and
c) enable people to be heard who wished to be recorded for archival purposes but not for publication.

The team always respected the wishes of its honoured informants. Cash or in-kind compensation was offered to informants as a token of appreciation.

### 7.4 Visit to chosen mapping site

It was necessary to visit the site chosen for the mapping exercise in order to:

a) ensure the story of the Nnabakana that had been passed down through generations through word of mouth was accurate and genuine;
b) undertake a physical mapping exercise of the site;
c) undertake a quick feasibility survey of the site, including details of the marine and terrestrial environment;
d) record full descriptions of the Nnabakana – their structure, formation, setting, location, number and condition; and
e) conduct on-the-job training for the selected field assistants.

The visit to the islet was scheduled to take place when the tide reached its maximum height. This was to allow the boat to reach the beach for unloading the heavy equipment and tent: arriving at low tide would have posed the problem of carrying the heavy gear ashore from a distance. The visit delay to the site provided the team with the opportunity to carry out more interviews and one-on-one dialogue on the main island.

Figure 5: Approaching the northern side of the islet

## 8. OUTCOMES OF MAPPING

Based on the second community consultation, all agreed that the expected result of the ECHM project would be 'to change behavioural attitudes of the community towards endangered cultural heritage'.

### 8.1 ECHM project is accepted

The local communities on Tabiteuea had misconceptions about the nature and objectives of the ECHM project. Prior to the arrival of the mapping team, they assumed that the project would support the story that the Nnabakana were proof of grave surrender on the part of Tabiteuean warriors during a war with the Beruan and Nikunauan warriors. According to the unpublished Tabiteuean version, however, the Nnabakana were proof of cowardice on the part of the invaders, who did not make war on Tabiteuea at all.

This misunderstanding was corrected at the very first meeting with the mayor, clerk and chairman of the Old People Association. Once the misconception about the ECHM project was cleared up, the communities welcomed the mapping team and the project was accepted unanimously and with no further objection. The team stressed clearly in plain words that the most important issue to take on with regard to the Nnabakana was the valuable traditional knowledge and forms of cultural expression that are associated with the Nnabakana and are consequently endangered.

### 8.2 Community agrees to publicise its hidden stories

The people of Tabiteuea realised the importance of publishing their oral traditions that have been passed down by word of mouth through the generations but have been kept hidden. The Tabiteuean version of Kaitu and Uakeia's conquest had not been published due to the traditional belief that legends and myths are the secret possessions of certain families or communities, and as such are considered very valuable. To reveal knowledge to people outside your family circle is like selling your birthright to a foreigner. The community attitude was: 'Keep your precious heritage for yourself – it must not be known by anyone from outside the circle of rightful owners'. This traditional belief has prevented people from sharing ideas, and even now prevents them from actively participating in discussions.

Through community consultations, the mapping team described the disadvantages and advantages of not sharing traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. The very practical example given was the case of written stories of Kaitu and Uakeia from Beru and the undocumented version from Tabiteuea. The Beruan version is extensively known while the undocumented Tabiteuean version has remained unknown. The Tabiteuean community realised that if they continued to withhold they would risk losing their pride and their identity. They were convinced and agreed to the idea of having their hidden stories published.

### 8.3 Community recognises the need for a legislative framework and by-laws for the protection of culture

The Island Council of Tabiteuea has no by-laws to protect endangered cultural heritage; nor is there any nationally binding legislation to encourage respect for cultural traditions and performing arts. The challenge is that traditional knowledge and cultural heritage are now threatened and some forms are fast disappearing. Mapping is one of the answers to this issue. Policy and regulatory frameworks are also needed.

The local communities on the island did not seem to understand the importance of protecting endangered cultural heritage: to most community members, the protection of cultural heritage was a new concept. With the mapping exercise, the local communities of Tabiteuea came to understand the importance of protecting their cultural heritage. The council agreed wholeheartedly to the formulation of new protective measures to protect, preserve and promote cultural heritage on the island.

### 8.4 Community acquires basic skills of mapping

With a limited allocation of funds for the community training workshop, four people were selected to take part as field assistants: two young women and two young men. They were senior secondary school leaving students, selected by the island council. Training was provided on the job for two and a half days. The results of the on-the-job training indicated that the trainees had acquired the basic skills of mapping exercises. It is expected that in the future they will be able to take on mapping exercises in their respective communities.

## 9. PROPOSED FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Based on the resolutions of the second community consultation, the proposed follow-up activities are:

- reconstruction of broken and lost Nnabakana;
- drafting of a regulatory framework for the protection of endangered cultural heritage;
- organisation of training workshops on ECHM for local communities;
- identification of elements of endangered cultural heritage that need immediate preservation and conservation;
- declaration of Biken-te-Inai and Teabuaeroa and their adjacent lagoon mud, deep water and reef flat as a Marine Protected Area (MPA);
- documentation of all oral traditions through publishing, transmission and storage for future generations; and
- publication of the Tabiteueans' version of the story of Kaitu and Uakeia (this was requested by the community).

## 10. WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED

The following matrix illustrates the project outputs.

| Expected outputs | Activity | Status | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Develop a method for conducting mapping in collaboration with DCMK. | Initial meeting to discuss workable plan at office of Officer-in-Charge. Technical aspects of activities shouldered by DCMK. | Fully accomplished | Collaboration is main method used between all cultural agents on Tarawa and Tabiteuea island. |
| 2. Train selected community members in ECHM. | On-the-job training for two and half days, involving trainees in actual mapping. | Fully accomplished | Involvement in all activities undertaken. |
| 3. Assist DCMK to jointly carry out ECHM. | Most activities on island and islets are jointly done. | Fully accomplished | Assist in all designated tasks for ECHM. |
| 4. Facilitate a national consultation on mapping exercise. | Done only with the people of Tabiteuea, not on a national level. | Partly accomplished | Insufficient funds. Getting people from outer islands to a national training workshop is costly. |
| 5. Assist with developing data storage mechanisms for heritage mapping that can be used for future mapping exercises. | DCMK will work on technical aspects of activity, putting data on a website and depositing in national archive and libraries. | Partly accomplished | Content of booklet completed, pending completion of artistic work. |
| 6. Assist with developing appropriate heritage transmission materials to benefit current and future generations. | Activity pending accomplishment of technical aspects of activity. | Partly accomplished | Work will start when funds are available. |
| 7. Assist with ensuring visibility actions through organisation of media event. | Activity to be included in Cultural Day program starting in July 2013. | Partly accomplished | Cultural Day for 2013 is 10 July. This will be an annual event. |
| 8. Submit report to SPC and DCMK. | Two progressive reports have been submitted. This is the final report. | Fully accomplished | Report marks completion of ECHM project. |

The matrix shows that most expected outputs have been accomplished except for the production of documents, assisting with media item production and storage of ECHM documentation for future generations.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the resolutions made at the second community consultation, the following recommendations were proposed and confirmed as follow-up activities for future mapping exercises.

i. Establish a cultural agency on the islands to manage all cultural affairs of the council and the local community. The agency will be tasked with the preservation, promotion and dissemination of culture and utilisation of cultural heritage.
ii. Organise a national training session/workshop on ECHM for all representatives from island councils**.** The training will focus on the ECHM exercise.
iii. Identify and prioritise the endangered heritage elements that need immediate attention for safeguarding. DCMK has done a lot of research on and collection of oral traditions throughout the country. These findings can be utilised for Identifying and prioritising the cultural elements.
iv. Collect and publish undocumented stories related to Kaitu and Uakeia, in particular the Tabiteuean version. The Tabiteuea community, especially the old people, requested publication of their story.
v. Formulate appropriate regulations and by-laws for the protection of endangered cultural heritage and culture in general. Regulations and by-laws are the most essential tools for the protection, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in every nation. Kiribati does not have them. The need for these legalities is essential.
vi. Provide initial funding for the reconstruction of the broken Nnabakana. The community would like to reconstruct the broken Nnabakana, for which they requested initial funding**.**
vii. Formulate a policy framework for DCMK**.** There is no cultural policy in place at present. DCMK is in grave need of a new policy.
viii. Provide more specific training opportunities for staff of DCMK to enhance personal capacity. DCMK comprises only four officers plus one ground man and a watchman. More specific training for officers is of high priority.
ix. Purchase appropriate equipment for future mapping exercises. DCMK possesses some basic tools for mapping exercises and will provide a list of needed tools.

## 12. ACQUITTAL REPORT

The compilation of the financial report of the ECHM project is a time-consuming process as the Ministry of Finance's accounts department has control of all project funds. Three official agents are involved, beginning with DCMK, which endorses all proposed activities and budget. The requested funds then have to be approved by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA) before they are released by the National Economic Planning Office of

the Ministry of Finance (MOF). MOF requires for its records all original receipts and detailed statements of expenditure.

As for the ECHM project on the island, the clerk to the island council supervises the project fund through the council treasurer, who arranges for all payments due on the island. Most local expenses are paid by the council, which also issues the receipts. The council receives departmental warrant from MISA. Many service providers and stores on the island do not issue receipts for direct purchases. Sometimes the cultural officer or council treasurer issues receipts for purchasers to sign.

The delayed completion of the ECHM financial report is due to the prolonged process of receiving full statements of expenditure from TNIC.

As indicated in the certified financial report, there is a remaining fund of AUD1536.29. This will be used to pay the cost of incomplete activities such as the printing of pamphlets, booklets and probably posters. All the artwork and technical parts of the activity will be handled by DCMK. The final acquittal report will be submitted on completion of these unfinished activities.

## 13. SPECIFIC CULTURAL FEATURES REVEALED IN THE STORY OF THE NNABAKANA

Through the mapping exercise of the Nnabakana, some important features of cultural traditions were depicted. These features should be further explored, documented and stored properly for future generations. It is not possible at this time to explore all these areas in a single mapping. Each topic requires a comprehensive study of its own.

### 13.1 The skill to build large ocean-voyaging canoes

If we accept the report of King Binoka on Abemama, the size of Kaitu and Uakeia's canoe was about 20 metres in length and 2 metres in height (Sabatier 1977). This is a very large sailing voyaging canoe. Is it possible to build such a large canoe with small planks from the Alexandrian laurel, punai nut and Jamaican vervain (quettarda: wut) trees? How did the makers stick together the small pieces of wood? What did they use for the beams and outrigger? It does seem likely that the early traditional *baurua* (big canoes) were built in these sizes, using planks of wood joined with strings made of coconut fibres. The holes in between the planks and string holes were filled with traditional buds made from mangrove seeds that were boiled, mashed and applied to the holes to fill them in. The beams and outrigger were made from local trees, breadfruit trunks and hardwood from coconut-tree trunks (not young trees). Local adzes made from clam shells were used to slice and cut the wood, and coconut-fibre strings were used to tie around the ends using special knot types (sennits) to ensure the right length.

### 13.2 Traditional navigation skills and forecasting of weather conditions

It is recorded that Kaitu was a navigator. How did he acquire his traditional navigation skills? Where did he learn them and who were other famous navigators of that time? This is something

to explore further. How did the navigators consult with the spirits? Did they consult one or many gods and goddesses? Who were they? What were their names?

### 13.3 Civil wars in Kiribati

What was the purpose of Kaitu and Uakeia's conquest? The stories suggest that the purpose of the expedition was to seek more land to settle on with their families. Is this true? How big was their army? What types of weapons did they use? How did the people feel about the civil wars?

## 14. OVERVIEW OF ECHM PROJECT

Most expected outputs of the ECHM project were accomplished except for some technical aspects of the process. As reflected in this final report, the attainment and success of this project were made possible through a collaborative effort between the local communities, DCMK and the local consultant.

A critical threat that cultural heritage in Kiribati is facing is the increased impacts of climate change. This calls for urgent safeguarding of intangible and tangible cultural heritage.

All technical aspects of ECHM activities will be completed by DCMK. The proposed national training workshop as recommended above will also be arranged by DCMK, subject to availability of funds. The workshop will include:

- training in cultural heritage mapping;
- presentation of the results of the project; and
- launch of the publications being compiled for transmission and storage for future ECHM projects.

DCMK will facilitate the national training workshop of ECHM in Kiribati.

## 15. CONCLUSION

This report has highlighted the importance of ECHM in Kiribati. The negligent attitude of communities towards safeguarding endangered cultural heritage triggered the idea of running formal and informal training for members of the community and the need to continue the collection of oral traditions. The methodology developed for the training and mapping process depends on the natural environment of the identified mapping sites. It is also fitting to say that mapping for endangered heritage in Kiribati is vital and should be continued at local and national levels before sea-level rise takes over the islands.

DCMK is the core agency for cultural protection, preservation and promotion. It must continue with the collection, documentation and dissemination of all cultural information collected.

It is important for members of communities to be trained at the local level in the basic skills of cultural mapping in their own places and sites. They should learn to collect cultural data, identify endangered cultural heritage and prioritise their findings.

Collaborative efforts between DCMK and local communities must be maintained. This is an appropriate method for getting cultural mapping exercises done successfully on the islands. The mapping exercise on endangered heritage is needed especially at this period of severe impacts of climate change taking place on small low atolls. It is time for action. Mapping is urgently needed before it is too late.

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