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February
2026

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The Creative Indeed Art exhibit in the Dusit Place became a creative hub where artists and patrons could engage and feel like the space truly belonged to the community.



“Rooted” from the Guam Museum

February: The Call of the Kulo’: A Sound That Brings the Community Together

by Kelly G. Marsh-Taitano

Across the world and across time, people have used horns to send messages. Long before phones or radios, sound already carried meaning. From animal horns and metal trumpets to shell horns shaped by island artisans, these instruments sent messages farther than the human voice. A single breath could announce an arrival, warn of danger, celebrate success, express grief, or call people together. Sound became a shared language.



Side view of the kulo'. Photo courtesy of the Guam Museum Repository Collections Division. Photograph by Vinessa Duenas, Kay Quidachay, and Giana Damian.

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In the Mariana Islands, the kulo', a CHamoru shell horn made from a large marine shell, carried deep meaning. Blown to announce the return of fishers, its low, resonating call signaled success at sea and the shared responsibility of distributing food. As the sound rolled across the land, families stepped from their homes, neighbors gathered, and the village came alive.

The kulo' could also summon people together, call warriors, keep canoes connected at sea, or express grief during funerals. More than a simple instrument, the kulo' embodied relationships among people and between people, land, and sea, reminding listeners that survival and culture in Guåhan were deeply communal. Even today, the kulo' can still be heard at special ceremonies, its deep, vibrating sound traveling through the air and connecting past and present.

Highlighting the kulo' is a fitting beginning for telling the stories of place and region connected to the Guam Museum's collections. It is both an invitation and a reminder, a call to the community to come together and listen to the richness of the past. Some of Guam's stories were buried in the earth, left behind by i manaotåomo'na, CHamoru ancestors who voyaged here 3,500 or more years ago and made the island and archipelago their homeland. Other stories are held in memories, chants, documents, maps, and in the land itself. This is the moment to bring them forward.



Side view of the kulo'. Photo courtesy of the Guam Museum Repository Collections Division. Photograph by Vinessa Duenas, Kay Quidachay, and Giana Damian.

As Guam Museum Head Curator Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua explains, 2026 marks 100 years since the dream of a Guam Museum was first shared publicly. In October 1926, The Guam Recorder announced plans for a museum and called on the community to help preserve what was at risk of being lost. That early call still matters today.

Over time, the Guam Museum has changed. What was once imagined, as Dr. Bevacqua has described, as a place to hold the remnants of what many believed was a disappearing culture has grown into something very different. It is now a place that lives alongside the community. It holds ancestral and family treasures. It welcomes new generations to learn, reflect, and connect with those who came before them, helping us move forward by looking back.

This year marks an important step for the Guam Museum. After a long journey, the Museum's Cultural Repository is now fully integrated into the Museum itself. This is where artifacts, documents, photographs, and the stories they hold are carefully rehoused, inventoried, studied, and prepared for future exhibits. It is a place of care, respect, and responsibility.

Today, the Museum continues to grow by strengthening its permanent exhibit, rotating new displays, showcasing art, organizing its collections, and hosting events, talks, gatherings, performances, and youth programs, while also building Guam's first national theater for CHamoru dance, music, and performance. Each effort builds on the work and vision of those who came before, brought to life by those who are with us now.





The kulo' reminds us why this work matters. It was more than a tool. Its call affirmed shared responsibility and reinforced social bonds that tied people to one another and to the land and sea that sustained them.

While the Guam Museum prioritizes preserving artifacts in place, this kulo' comes from an archaeological project at a site that was developed decades ago. It is one of the few fully intact kulo' recovered through archaeology on Guåhan.

That site located along Guam's northeast coast has been referenced in archaeological projects as Mochom. In conversations with Laura Souder, Chairperson of I Kumision I Fino' CHamoru, the Museum's Archaeological Collections Manager, Nicole Delisle Dueñas, learned that earlier records may have written the CHamoru "å" as an "o," and that the name may instead be Måchom, a word meaning "closed," "shut out," or "hard to pass."

During a visit to the site and through conversations and research about the surrounding jungle, Delisle Dueñas and the team explored the idea that Måchom could describe the area's thick, tangled vegetation, which is difficult to move through. This interpretation is shared as a possible connection, and research on the ancestral village name will continue.

Archaeologists believe the site was first used as early as 1600 BC, and certainly by 1400 BC, about 3,500 years ago, during the Pre-Latte period. According to I Kumision I Fino' CHamoru,[i] this time may be described as Manhålom I Mantåtasi, "when ocean voyagers came and went," or Mañåga I Mantåtasi, "when voyagers stayed and established their homeland." This makes the site one of the oldest known ancestral places in the Mariana Islands, of which there are very few.

[i] The full name of the Commission is: Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru yan i Fina'nå'guen i Historia yan i Lina'la' i Taotao Tåno' (Commission on CHamoru Language and the Teaching of the History & Culture of the Indigenous People of Guam).

According to archaeologist and shell expert Judy Amesbury, the shell used for this kulo' is *Cassia cornuta*, called by some, the horned helmet shell. She shared that, along with the Triton's trumpet (*Charonia tritonis*), it is one of the most common shells used to make kulo' in Guam, the Northern Marianas, and parts of Micronesia.

For this type of shell, the opening for blowing was made at the top. We do not know when it was last blown. Was it calling people to share a catch? Was it warning of danger? Did it call men to battle? Why was it left behind? These unanswered questions remind us that artifacts still carry voices if we take the time to listen.

From what they left behind, we learn that i manaotåomo'na lived rich and connected lives at Måchom. They fished along the shore, on the reef, and in the deep sea. They gathered shellfish, hunted birds and bats, gardened, used plants for food and medicine, and found fresh water, possibly from a nearby sinkhole.

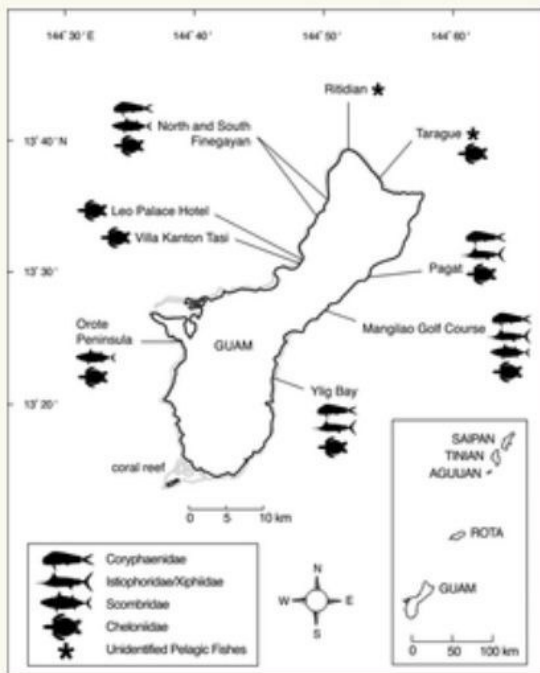
The Guam Museum's archaeological collections help us understand the many ways of ancestral living, including life along the coast, on ridges, near rivers, and deep inland. Each place tells a different part of the story of the CHamoru people.

We invite you to join us each month here as the Guam Museum and its repository team continue this work. Come hear the stories of Guåhan, stories of community, care, and connection. The call of the kulo' still reaches us, reminding us to listen, gather, and remember.

Follow the Guam Museum on Instagram and Facebook. Become a friend of the Museum, learn more through the Guam Museum Foundation website, www.guammuseumfoundation.org.



Top view of the kulo'. Photo courtesy of the Guam Museum Repository Collections Division. Photograph by Vinessa Duenas, Kay Quidachay, and Giana Damian.



This map shows certain archaeological sites on Guam where remains of pelagic, or open-ocean, fish and turtles have been found. Source: provided courtesy of author of the map, Judith Amesbury (2013); developed into a map by Robert Amesbury.

Amesbury, Judith R. 2013. "Pelagic Fishing in the Mariana Archipelago: From the Prehistoric Period to the Present." In *Prehistoric Marine Resource Use in the Indo-Pacific Regions*, edited by Rintaro Ono, Alex Morrison, and David Addison, 33–57. *Terra Australis* 39. Canberra: ANU Press.

Photograph Consultants: Nicole Delisle Duenas, Charlene Flores, Jonathan Patton, Odyessa San Nicolas.



Kelly G. Marsh-Taitano is a curator at the Guam Museum, leading its Cultural Anthropology and History Unit. She has taught Guam History and, with cultural practitioners, courses to recapture latte quarrying and carving at the University of Guam, has long led community cultural projects, and served as a senator in the 35th Guam Legislature.



Talent Search

The Filipino Community of Guam is inviting those interested in participating in group performances at the FCG's Philippine Independence Ball on June 13, at the Dusit Thani Guam.

Singers, dancers, and volunteers are welcome. This will be a fun and memorable experience.

Please contact the following individuals for more information:

Edna Rebanal, 671-689-3362
Emily Marquez, 671-687-7704
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