

Halawa Valley heiaus, Bishop Museum topic of senate committee meeting

The state's controversial \$1.1 billion H-3 freeway project could once again be stuck between a rock and a hard place.

In particular, its path between the walls of Oahu's North Halawa Valley puts it on a collision course with what could be two scientifically and culturally significant Hawaiian heiaus, or temples.

State Transportation Director Rex Johnson told at an informational hearing Friday before three state Senate Committees that if it turns out that the two sites indeed are significant heiaus "it would be a major problem."

"We are looking at what would happen if it turns out to be a significant site that should be saved," Johnson said. "We don't have that answer now."

The hearing Friday was as much about the alleged internal problems at Bishop Museum as whether the two sites now being studied by the museum are significant finds.

The issue surfaced late last month when museum anthropologist Barry Nakamura went public with what he said was an attempt by the museum and the state to hide that a rare female heiau, or a hale o Papa, was

found in rare conjunction with a male heiau, or a luakini.

Bishop Museum Director Donald Duckworth categorically denied any of the allegations made by Nakamura to senators.

However, a parade of former employees testified about also being fired or pressured into leaving for questioning the scientific methods being used by their superiors.

Jeff Harris, an attorney for the museum, would not let Duckworth or museum board member Kenneth Brown respond to Sen. Mary George's questions about the firings.

Kehau Abad, who has a degree in archaeology and Hawaiian studies, said the focus of the museum's study is only into the scientific significance of the two Halawa sites.

"What we're experiencing is a conflict between scientific significance and cultural significance," she said.

As much weight in a decision on preserving a site should be placed on its cultural significance, she said, urging that it be made a criteria in all future studies of Hawaiian archaeological sites.

In suggesting that the freeway could pass between the two

heiaus, Abad said designating them as separate sites is a creation of archaeologists.

The heiaus together with their placement in the valley form the cultural site that should be considered in its entirety, she said.

Haunani-Kay Trask, chairwoman of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii, said the Bishop Museum's archaeological findings would be suspect because of its previous findings which led to the H-3 covering what was thought to be ancient agricultural terraces in Kaneohe.

She noted that Scott Williams, the museum's principal researcher in the Kaneohe project, has recanted his earlier findings and now believes the freeway was allowed to cover Kukui O Kane, a major heiau known to have been in the Kaneohe area.

Sen. Eloise Tungpalan, chairwoman of the Committee on Culture, Arts and Historic Preservation, and Sen. Lehua Fernandes Salling, chairwoman of the Committee on Transportation, disagreed on the ramifications of a significant archaeological find in North Halawa Valley.

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