

Our Pacific Outpost . . .**LIFE OF THE CHAMORROS  
IN THE MARIANAS**

BY ALEXANDER SPOEHR  
CURATOR OF OCEANIC ETHNOLOGY

SINCE World War II, Guam, Tinian, and Saipan are familiar names to Americans, even though many people may be a bit hazy as to just where these pieces of island real estate are located in the Pacific. The people who have inhabited these islands since before Magellan's time are less familiar. Who are they? Where did they come from? What are they like? The people of Guam today are American citizens, and since the passage of the Guam Organic Act after



**GRINDING CORN**

The Chamorros use the metate and mano, American Indian culture elements brought into their islands by the Spanish from Mexico.

World War II, pay the federal income tax and are subject to the draft as much as any city-dweller of Chicago, while as residents of the U. S. Trust Territory those who live on Saipan and Tinian are under an American administration. The United States is responsible for the welfare of these people. Their future is in American hands.

**THE MARIANAS**

Guam, Saipan, and Tinian are all part of the same island chain—the Marianas—that stretches in a shallow arc for approximately 450 miles north from Guam, the southernmost and largest island in the group. Located some 1,000 miles south of Japan and 1,400 miles from the Philippines, the Marianas are an American Pacific outpost on the virtual fringe of the Far East, and hence of strategic and political importance.

The people of the Marianas are called Chamorros. Influenced by long contact with Spain, as well as with America and Japan, the Chamorros of today are vastly different from the original Chamorros that Magellan saw and fought when he touched

at Guam in 1521. The approximately 30,000 Chamorros that now live on Guam, Rota, Saipan, and Tinian—the principal islands in the Marianas—are largely westernized in culture, though they still preserve a core of Chamorro tradition and still speak their own language, which has nevertheless borrowed great numbers of loan words from Spanish.

**ORIGIN OF THE CHAMORROS**

What is known of the ancient Chamorros indicates that they migrated to their island home from the west. The Chamorro language belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian family that stretches from Malaysia across Micronesia and Polynesia. In culture, the Chamorros had numerous ties to Malaysia. They were rice growers and pottery makers—Malaysian traits that reached their easternmost penetration into Micronesia in the Marianas. In addition, the Chamorros raised taro and yams, which are Old World and Pacific Island food crops. They possessed the outrigger canoe in common with Oceanic and Malaysian peoples, while in warfare they used sharpened bamboo stakes to line traps for the unwary enemy. This use of bamboo stakes is also decidedly Malaysian.

After Magellan's discovery of the Marianas, the Spanish used Guam as a stopping point on the galleon run between Mexico and the Philippines, but did not actively colonize the islands until 1668. At that time a concerted attempt was made to convert the Chamorros to Christianity. The Chamorros resisted, and, in the manner of the period, Spanish efforts at persuasion were backed by the sword. A bloody war followed that lasted for thirty years, with victory finally going to the Spanish. Thereafter, the surviving Chamorros nearly became extinct, primarily through the ravages of introduced epidemic diseases to which they had slight resistance. The decimated population was able to recover, however, and through extensive intermarriage with Spaniards, Filipinos, and with migrants from other European countries, America, Japan, and China developed a racially mixed group that comprises the Chamorro people of today.

During the period of Spanish control, which lasted until the Spanish-American war, Chamorro culture became greatly modified by the influence of Spain. The Spanish priests introduced corn-growing from Mexico, together with the typical American Indian *metate* and *mano* for grinding corn, and such food dishes from Mexico as *tortillas*. Of other food plants likewise introduced, beans, squash, tomatoes, chili peppers, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and tobacco are particularly important. The ox and two-wheeled Spanish ox cart were adopted. In religion, the Catholic church became a central part of Chamorro life. The old social organization became greatly

modified and familial life absorbed many Spanish patterns.

**LATER HISTORY**

After the Spanish-American war, the United States acquired Guam but eschewed the remainder of the Spanish possessions in Micronesia. These were purchased by Germany, so that all the Marianas except Guam were under German control. This control shifted to Japan after World War I, and with World War II, the United States then assumed administration of the Marianas Islands north of Guam as part of the U. S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, retaining Guam as an outright possession. As a result, the Chamorros of Guam are American citizens, whereas the Chamorros of the remainder of the Marianas are not, and have a somewhat anomalous status as residents of the Trust Territory.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Chamorros of Guam have become increasingly affected by American contact. They are today bilingual, speaking both Chamorro and English. They dress in American style clothes, though many of the older women still prefer the colorful *mestiza* costume of the Philippines for church wear and festive occasions. They drink Coca Cola, listen to the radio, and go to the movies. Their children attend the George Washington high school and play baseball.

In the islands north of Guam, German, Japanese and now American influences have brought successive changes. Here, too, the



**CLEARING FIELD OF WEEDS**

Chamorro farmer has same problems as agriculturists elsewhere. He routs the weeds with his long-handled "fosinos" or scraping hoe.

Chamorros are bilingual, knowing Chamorro and Japanese. Since the war many have learned English too, while a few older linguistic virtuosos speak Spanish and German as well. Chamorro, however, is still spoken in the home and among themselves, and as on Guam the people are conscious of their Chamorro tradition, which though

mingling elements from many cultures, has still combined these elements into a unity.

World War II devastated the Marianas and it will be years before its destructive effects will be overcome. The people on Guam, because it is an American possession, have received compensation for wartime damages. Those of the other islands have



A CHAMORRO KITCHEN

Preparing a meat dish over an open hearth for a wedding dinner.

not been compensated, and today are attempting to reform their communities and build their lives anew, with the assistance of the American administration. In addition to its archaeological work, a principal objective of the Museum's 1949-50 expedition to the Marianas was to observe how community life was re-forming in relation to present problems of adjustment and to investigate the processes of culture change underlying the contemporary period on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

### *An Ancient Sea . . .*

## TEEMING PREHISTORIC LIFE RESTORED IN EXHIBIT

By EUGENE S. RICHARDSON, JR.  
CURATOR OF FOSSIL INVERTEBRATES

The fecundity of the sea is a matter of awe and wonder to modern man. Fishes, shrimps, kelp, oysters, and many other living things of direct value to us are to be had for the taking because the supply is renewed annually by the astounding reproductive capacity of ocean life. It is, perhaps, natural for us to conclude that all this is especially arranged for our benefit. But even before man arrived on the scene and started his campaign of using up the earth's natural resources, marine life was just as abundant. The connoisseur of sea food can look hungrily at the fat oysters and the juicy clams in the habitat groups of ancient life in the new Hall of Invertebrate Paleontology (Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall—Hall 37) and mourn that he wasn't around to enjoy them. Man or no man, the sea

has been bountiful for half a billion years and will continue so indefinitely.

The record of the sea's abundance lies in the rocks deposited as mud and sand on its floor. Enclosed in these sediments are the hard parts of the animals that lived while the sediments were drifting to the bottom. Even the record of countless millions of microscopic animals and plants without hard parts is present, in bituminous rocks so full of organic matter that they will burn. But the record of life does not extend back to the oldest rocks we know on earth, although they, too, were once sediments on the ocean floor. Life, it seems, is not so old as our three-billion-year-old planet. It is not until we examine the rocks formed during the Cambrian period, beginning 540 million years ago, that we find the oceans supporting a full quota of plants and animals. But from that time to the present, teeming life has held sway.

The Ordovician habitat group shown on the cover of this issue of the BULLETIN is a good example of the crowded sea floor of millions of years past. In six square feet of ocean bottom are fifteen species of animals, not to mention a seaweed. Some of these are colonial corals and bryozoans that band together and build single structures for the housing of thousands of individuals. Counting these only by the colony, and the larger kinds individually, we find 153 animals in the group. We could have included twice as many without exaggerating the concentration that actually lived in the Ordovician sea.

A classic locality where Ordovician fossils are found is the vicinity of Cincinnati. Almost any piece of limestone from that area includes fossils crowded more densely than are the models in the Museum's group. Paleontologists have been collecting them for more than a century, and yet they seem as plentiful as before. Elsewhere in rocks of this age there is the same wealth of fossils—Nevada, England, Argentina, Ontario, even Southampton Island and Baffin Island on the Arctic Circle, where Chief Curator of Geology Sharat K. Roy made a large collection for the Museum in the late '20s and again in the early '40s.

Some parts of the oceans of today are not populated so densely as others, and that has also been true in the past. During the lifetime of the animals in this group, thick beds of sand and mud were being laid down in New York and Pennsylvania, and animals there were few. But the vastness of the sea is such that though part may be unfavorable, animal and plant life can always find some suitable area in which to exist in amazing abundance.

### Visiting Hours Change

Museum hours, which have been 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. in the autumn, change to the winter schedule: 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., November 1 to February 28.

## SATURDAY AFTERNOON LECTURES CONTINUE

The annual autumn course of free illustrated lectures on travel and science for adults will continue each Saturday throughout November. The lectures will be given in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum and all will begin at 2:30 P.M. All of these lectures will be illustrated with color movies.

Limited accommodations make it necessary to restrict these lectures to adults. Members of the Museum are entitled to reserved seats on application. For children, free motion pictures will be presented on the mornings of the same Saturdays by the Raymond Foundation.

Following are the dates, subjects, and lecturers:

### November 3—EARTHQUAKE LAKE

Reelfoot Lake, fascinating wilderness in Tennessee

Karl Maslowski

### November 10—SHANGRI-LA ALASKA

Pioneering on our last frontier

Fred Machetanz

### November 17—EXPLORATION IN NEPAL

Difficult journey to the high Himalayan kingdom

S. Dillon Ripley

### November 24—ALGERIA

Sahara sand and oasis

Clifford J. Kamen

No tickets are necessary for admission to these lectures. A section of the Theatre is reserved for Members of the Museum, each of whom is entitled to two reserved seats. Requests for these seats should be made in advance by telephone (WAbash 2-9410) or in writing, and seats will be held in the Member's name until 2:25 o'clock.

## NEW MEMBERS

The following persons became Museum Members from September 10 to October 5:

### Associate Members

C. A. Crowley, Joseph Michael Newberger, Dr. H. R. Weinzimmer.

### Annual Members

Oscar A. Barke, John L. Behr, John F. Brent, Carlos B. Bumzahem, James J. Cronin, William J. Connors, Elliott R. Detchon, Jr., William S. Everett, A. V. Farr, Albert Leo Finston, G. N. Fisher, Dr. John T. Hart, Mrs. C. M. Kittle, Elmer Krause, M. F. Lynch, William J. Lynch, Jr., R. E. Moore, Lawrence S. Newmark, Donald J. O'Brien, Mrs. Joseph Sam Perry, Jacob C. Pratt, Jr., Nicholas T. Ritsos, Frank E. Selz, Allen K. Sewell, Frederick C. Shafer, Dr. Leon S. Shalla, B. L. Smalley, John H. Smalley, Orville Taylor, H. J. Trainor, George H. Watkins, L. E. Wybel, Sidney R. Zatz.



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