PART IV

THE SAIPAN CAROLINIANS
XXII. The Carolinian Community

In the introductory chapter of this account and in other sections, certain differences between the Chamorro and Carolinian divisions of Saipan's population have been briefly described. The cultural contrasts between the two groups stem from their separate ethnic traditions and from the very long period of exposure to western and Japanese peoples and cultures experienced by the Chamorros, as opposed to the much shorter period of contact experienced by the Carolinians. Although the Carolinians share a common religious, political, and administrative organization with the Chamorros, and although they are more acculturated than their cousins remaining in the Carolines, the Saipan Carolinians are nevertheless a separate community on Saipan. In Chalan Kanoa, the Carolinians live in their own quarter; marriage between the Carolinians and Chamorros is not frequent; the Carolinians preserve their own language for use among themselves; their friends and associates are primarily Carolinians; and they are very conscious of their own traditions and cultural background. The purpose of this final part of the monograph is to analyze certain features of Carolinian social organization that serve to set off the Carolinians from the numerically superior and socially dominant Chamorros.

Saipan Carolinian Origins

The Saipan Carolinians still preserve the memories of their islands of origin. On the basis of informants' testimony, the main body of the Saipan group migrated from atolls lying just to the west and north of Truk: Namonuito, Pulusuk, Lamotrek, Elato, Satawal, Tamatam, and Puluwat.

Two of the principal islands of the Namonuito group are Pisaras and Onoun. The migrants from Pisaras settled Tanapag village, after a sojourn on Tinian. After Tanapag was destroyed by the invasion a number of families remained in Chalan Kanoa, but others moved back to Tanapag in an effort to rebuild the village. Migrants from Onoun, however, moved in with the Garapan Carolinians and now most of them live in Chalan Kanoa.
During the German period, the devastation caused by the typhoons of 1905 and 1907 in the Carolines necessitated the removal of groups of islanders from the Oleai and Mortlock (Nomoi) groups, and from Pingelap and Sonsorol, to Saipan. Most of these people were later returned. However, on Saipan there are a few individuals who, though incorporated into the main body of Carolinians, trace their ancestry, or themselves came, from the following islands: Truk, Yap, Palau, Ifalik, Ulithi, Faroulep, Oleai, Sorol, Ngulu, Mortlock (Nomoi), Sonsorol, and Ponape.

The Saipan Carolinians speak a single language, though minor dialectical differences exist between the groups in Tanapag and Chalan Kanoa. No adequate linguistic studies have been made, but the language is presumably a stabilized version of the dialects spoken in the Pulusuk-Puluwat-Satawal-Namonuito area. Fritz (1911, p. 7) noted that the Saipan Carolinian language contained a wealth of synonymous words and found that Saipan Carolinian interpreters, using the Saipan dialect, were possessed of a better medium of communication in the atolls west of Truk than were individuals from single atolls in this group.

The Community House

When the Carolinians established themselves on Saipan, they brought with them a typical Carolinian institution, the community house. In Damm's description of Pulusuk house types, a distinction is made between the community house and the canoe house, though their construction was much the same. The former was the center of village life and the place of village assembly; the latter served not only to shelter large canoes but also as a sleeping place for young unmarried men and visiting men (Damm, Hambruch, and Sarfert, 1935, pp. 115 ff.). On Saipan these two house types coalesced into a single form, the ut.

The Saipan Carolinian ut disintegrated in Japanese times, but in the period just before their final abandonment, there were four ut in Garapan and one at Tanapag. They were all large, well-built, thatched-roof buildings located along the lagoon shore. The Carolinians of Garapan were divided into ward-like districts, each of which had its own ut. The ut had names, those of the Garapan houses being, from north to south, falamagut, faltago, lugan, and falso. According to informants, falamagut split off from faltago about the year 1917, over a division of opinion as to the succession of the chieftainship of the faltago ut.
The *ut* had no walls, but the low eaves of the roof afforded protection against driving rains. The floor was the sand on which the house was built. At the height of the wall plate, the east half of the *ut* was floored to provide a second story, or loft, where the young unmarried men slept. The west half of the structure was unfloored; here fishing nets and other gear could be hung.

Apart from its use as a dormitory for unmarried men and boys, the *ut* served a variety of functions. It was a work place for the men, married and single. In the *ut* they made fish nets and worked on canoes. The *ut* was the place of general assembly for all the members of the district associated with the *ut*. In it were held all political and judicial meetings, as well as the social occasions at which the striking Carolinian dances were performed. Although women did not frequent the *ut* in the daily routine of life, and in fact were not normally permitted in the building, on special occasions they were present as well as the men.

As a social institution, rather than merely as a building, the *ut* was the nexus of political, economic, and festal life. For each *ut* there was a male chief (*samol*) and a set of male lesser chiefs or elders (*repi*), who in Japanese times numbered from six to fourteen, depending on the *ut*. Major communal activities centering in the *ut* were under the direction of the chief and the elders. The chieftainship descended within the limits of a single maternal clan; the succession of *repi* offices is now difficult to ascertain and no definite statement can be made.

The *ut* organization functioned importantly in political and judicial activities. Matters involving the interests of the district were debated in the *ut* by the *samol* and his *repi*, and decisions were reached by these men. Offenses against the moral code were likewise heard by the assembled *samol* and *repi* and penalties meted out. As in most Micronesian communities, offenses against life seem to have been rare; none were recorded for the Saipan Carolinians. More frequent were cases of theft, the punishment for which has been observed by middle-aged and elderly Carolinians. A suspected thief was brought before the *samol* and *repi* and his case debated. If the man was judged guilty, he was tied to one of the main posts of the *ut*. The relatives of the guilty man—particularly clan members—then had to bring gifts of handicraft and, in later times, money. These were placed before the chief. It was necessary for the relatives to continue bringing gifts until the chief judged the amount sufficient. These gifts were, in effect, ransom for the guilty man, and after
they had been placed before the chief he would allow the guilty man to be untied. All the ransom would be given the injured party, or a part would be retained for communal ut occasions. The whole procedure of punishment took place at a general assembly of the ut members, and much of the effectiveness of the punishment derived from its public nature and the shame attached not only to the guilty man, but also to his relatives and clan mates. A recorded instance, as told by a man who had been punished in this manner, is given below:

When I was a boy of about sixteen, I did not return a large basket I had borrowed from José Q., who was a Chamorro but was respected and liked by all Carolinians, because he knew our customs and understood us. José complained to the repí of my ut. When I heard that José had complained I grew afraid and ran off to my parents' farm. The chief told the ut "policemen" to get me, and so they came to the farm and took me to the ut. There I was tied to a post in the customary way. My relatives had to place 200 yen before the chief and repí before I was released. This money the repí then gave to José. José said he did not wish to take the money, but the repí refused to take it back and insisted that José accept it, which he reluctantly did.

According to informants, during the German regime, Governor Fritz thought well of this custom for punishing theft, and it was sanctioned by the German authorities. The custom, however, passed out during the ensuing Japanese period, partly because the Japanese officials wished to assume all responsibility for punishment of offenses, and no doubt partly because the ut was a dying institution. The last instance I recorded of a man's being tied to a post in the ut occurred in 1926.

The ut organization also played an important role in economic life. At periodic intervals, the chief would announce that all men would gather for fishing. The catch would then be divided among all the families attached to the ut, or would be cooked and eaten by all together, as the climax to a communal job such as re-thatching the ut or making a large fish-net. The ut provided the normal working place for the men. In the old days, the school for young pilots was held in the ut, and it was the locale for entertaining visitors and holding feasts.

Dances were held in the ut. The Carolinians were extremely fond of dances, their principal form of esthetic achievement. The young learned these dances from watching men and women and older brothers and sisters perform. The ut was the center for this type of artistic activity, which gave color and interest to Carolinian life.
The Carolinian ut as an institution declined during the Japanese period, and all the Garapan ut buildings were finally abandoned and torn down before World War II. The legal and political functions of the ut organization were assumed by the Japanese administration. As Saipan was developed economically by the Japanese, wage-work opened for Carolinians and men's work tended to become more individualized and more closely related to money compensation—an economic change that may well have acted to weaken the ut as a co-ordinating agent in men's work. Today the ut is only a memory, remarked on fondly by older men, who contrast the place of the ut as a center of attraction where young men combined work and amusement and where boys learned the essentials of right conduct, with the beer-halls, pool-parlors, and movies, where the boys now go for amusement.

Survivals, however, persist. In 1947, a Carolinian meeting house was built in Chalan Kanoa by the Carolinians and it bears the same name as the traditional structure. Only infrequently, however, is the meeting house used as such. Most of the time it is merely a playground for young Carolinian children.

Carolinian dances are still occasionally performed, and performed expertly, even though adults remark that the young no longer express as much desire to learn them. The stimulus to holding these dances now, however, comes from outside the Carolinian community, as it did during the last years of the Japanese regime, when the Carolinians staged dances for the prominent Japanese officials, who in recompense provided food and tobacco for the performers. During my own period of field work, Carolinian dances were held only twice: (1) as part of the secular celebration following the dedication of the new Chalan Kanoa church; and (2) at the time of the visit of a United Nations inspection party. In the first case, the padre suggested that a dance would be appropriate; in the second, the mayor of the municipality suggested the occasion. Although the fondness for dancing is still strong and perhaps is half-consciously clung to as the only indigenous form of artistic achievement that exists in the Saipan community, which is otherwise virtually devoid of artistic forms of expression, it seems doubtful that the vitality of Carolinian dancing will long endure. The Chamorros tend to regard it as "uncivilized," and as the Carolinians become more acculturated they may adopt a similar attitude.

The most important survival associated with the community house is on a less tangible level. Joseph and Murray (1951, pp.
70 ff.) have commented on the communal feeling of the Carolinians. In comparison with Chamorros, the Carolinians display less individualism and less individual desire to raise material standards of living. Wealth as well as status differences associated with wealth are much less sharply marked. At the same time, co-operative activities are common. Friends and relatives frequently volunteer to help another Carolinian build a house or complete a job requiring more than one man's work. If a house is to be built, a Carolinian carpenter often does not ask for a fee, particularly if the house is that of a relative. Boats are borrowed and lent. Food is never denied another Carolinian. Carolinian medicine men freely offer their services in administering to the sick. The Saipan Fishing Company, though suffering from management difficulties, never really lacked the co-operation of Carolinian fishermen. Carolinian women still cultivate a communal taro plot. The Carolinians have a strong feeling of group identity.

These co-operative activities are not, of course, survivals of the community house, but rather manifestations of the feeling of unity that expressed itself in the group activities associated with the at. Though the latter is gone there is marked persistence of sentiments and attitudes that act to bind the Carolinian community together.

Formerly, status differences among the Saipan Carolinians were based largely on the system of chiefs and elders, while men with special competence in navigation, canoe-making, medicine, and magic also enjoyed prestige. Though chiefly lines did maintain superior status, the atoll societies from which most of the Saipan Carolinians were drawn seem not to have been highly stratified. The same condition prevailed on Saipan.

Today, status differences are not sharply marked, and there is a minimum of internal differentiation on status lines within the Carolinian community. The male leaders are largely those who the Carolinians feel can cope best with present unsettled conditions—men with some knowledge of English and of local political affairs. Even in later Japanese times the principal Carolinian man was not of chiefly descent, but rather knew Japanese and the Japanese administration and was the intermediary between the latter and the Carolinians. Although he is no longer active in political affairs, he is often spoken of by the Carolinians as one of their prominent men. At the present time, the Carolinians are relatively homogeneous as regards occupation, economic status, amount of formal schooling, and knowledge of Carolinian custom, and a class structure cannot be said to exist among them.
Carolinian Kinship

The social organization of the Carolinians offers a marked contrast to that of the Chamorros in the way in which kinship relations are organized and in the formal aspects of kin groups. Among the Carolinians, the extensions of kinship are of more pervading importance in day-to-day life and in routine co-operative activities. The remainder of this report consists of an analysis of contemporary Carolinian kinship, from which spring many of the more significant characteristics of the Carolinian community.