

REPORT FROM MICRONESIA

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In the northwest corner of Micronesia lie the Marianas Islands, discovered by Magellan in 1521 and from time immemorial the home of the Chamorros, as the native people are called. Although most of the islands of Micronesia are coral atolls, the Marianas are all high islands that extend northward from Guam in a long chain.

Since November, 1949, the Museum's Micronesian Anthropological Expedition has been conducting work in the Marianas on a combined ethnological and archaeological project. The ethnological project is concerned with the present-day culture of the Chamorros and the changing trends that their culture exhibits. The Chamorros today live on Guam, Rota, Tinian, Saipan, and Alamagan, a small island in the northern part of the chain, while a group of Caroline Island natives, who migrated to the Marianas in the 19th century, live on Saipan and Agrihan. The work is centered among the approximately 6,000 Chamorros and Carolinians on the islands north of Guam, for these people were formerly under Japanese domination and we know little about their present culture.

In the Micronesian area as a whole, the native peoples present extremes of cultural contrast. In the more remote islands of the Carolines the natives follow the patterns of their life in much the same manner as in olden times, allowing for certain changes brought by missionary and trader. The Chamorros are at the other end of this spectrum of culture contrast. Guam, the principal center of population in the Chamorro world, was an important stopping place for the Spanish galleons making the long voyage from Mexico to the Philippines during the days of Spanish empire in the New World and in the Pacific. The natives intermarried with Spaniards and with Tagalogs brought from the Philippines and were converted to Catholicism by the Spanish padres.

LANGUAGE PRESERVED

Nevertheless, the Chamorro language continues as the language of the peoples of the Marianas, while other cultural survivals remain as testimony of the old life. The Chamorros today are primarily a folk people, primitive in no sense of the word, yet in no way urban sophisticates.

Of all the Micronesian islands, the Marianas probably suffered most during World War II. The houses and possessions of the natives were destroyed, and much of their farm land was rendered unusable by war-time base construction. Today the people are rebuilding their communities and the old cultural patterns are reasserting themselves. Yet the war has wrought marked cultural change, not merely in the landscape but in the lives of the people as well. A

primary objective of the expedition's work is to examine this recent cultural change, as seen against the long history of contact with the West and with Japan. The techniques of making a living, the economic organization that guides the work in the fields and the fishing offshore, the life that goes on within the family, the central position of the church among these devout people, and the organization of their political life are all points of interest in the investigation.

A subsidiary problem is offered by the presence of the Carolinian minority among the Chamorros. These people, of a different ethnic background, still maintain a cultural separateness from their Chamorro neighbors. Given more to fishing than to farming, they cling to many of their own customs while staying on equable terms with their fellow islanders, the Chamorros. The Marianas therefore offer to the ethnologist a series of problems in culture contact and change.

PREHISTORY SOUGHT

A second objective of the expedition is aimed at problems lying farther back in the Chamorro past. What was prehistoric Chamorro culture like and where did the Chamorros come from? Spanish accounts contain sufficient information on Chamorro culture at the time of first contact to provide a starting point for archaeological work. Some excavating has been done, mainly on Guam, so that there is a certain amount of knowledge of prehistoric Chamorro life. But no sequence of prehistoric cultures in the Marianas has ever been established by modern archaeological methods. Perhaps none exists, but the problem must be attacked if scientific advance is to be made in the prehistory of this part of the Pacific. Eventually we may be able to relate the prehistoric Chamorro materials to archaeological data from the islands to the southwest, and even to early horizons in the Philippines.

To date, the Museum expedition has completed an archaeological survey of Saipan and a preliminary survey of Tinian. Excavations have also been commenced on Saipan and at a later date will be extended to other islands. The progress of the work will be described in future numbers of the BULLETIN.

The Museum has maintained a long-standing interest in the anthropology of the Pacific area. At the present time, with most of Micronesia under American administration, this interest is of wider importance than to a few scientists alone. Anthropological research that throws light on contemporary cultural change in Micronesia is of practical significance to the administrators who must govern the area. The solving of more academic problems regarding the prehistory of Micronesia contributes to a body of knowledge whose formulation must be primarily the responsibility of American research institutions.

STAFF NOTES

Karl P. Schmidt, Chief Curator of Zoology, will spend three months in Germany at the Senckenberg Museum and the University of Frankfurt as a member of the currently organized University of Chicago faculty exchange team. He will leave in mid-April for New York from Rockport, Texas, where he is scheduled to give an address at the spring seminar of the Texas Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission. Mr. Schmidt will engage in studies on amphibians and reptiles in the Senckenberg Museum, where his stay will be an equivalent for the recent work in Chicago Natural History Museum of Dr. Robert Mertens, director of the Senckenberg Museum.... **Dr. Theodor Just**, Chief Curator of Botany, conducted a seminar at Northwestern University on "Divergent Mutation or Selection."... **Dr. Julian A. Steyermark**, Associate Curator of the Herbarium, has been re-elected president of the Barrington Natural History Society.... **Dr. Paul S. Martin**, Chief Curator of Anthropology, **Donald Collier**, Curator of South American Ethnology and Archaeology, and **George I. Quimby**, Curator of Exhibits in Anthropology, represented the Museum at a symposium on evolution held at the University of Chicago. Dr. Martin lectured and showed films of his archaeological expeditions recently before the Adventurers' Club and gave a radio talk over a National Broadcasting Company network on the Museum's solution of a "mummy mystery" (see page 5). Mr. Collier participated in the meeting of the Carbon-14 Committee at the Institute for Nuclear Studies at the University of Chicago.... **Dr. John B. Rinaldo**, Assistant in Archaeology, lectured for the Earth Scientists Club of Northern Illinois in Maywood.

Expedition to Cuba

Dr. B. E. Dahlgren, Curator Emeritus of Botany, and Dr. Hugh C. Cutler, Curator of Economic Botany, left March 14 on a botanical expedition to Cuba. They will continue the collecting and research in which they have been engaged on that island for the past several years.

Borneo Expedition Leaves

The Borneo Expedition of the Museum emplaned for its first port-of-call, Singapore, March 19. Co-leaders of the expedition are D. Dwight Davis, Curator of Vertebrate Anatomy, and Robert F. Inger, Assistant Curator of Fishes. After arrival at Sandakan the expedition will add native personnel for the work in the field, which is to take about six months.



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