



Kapingamarangi carver at Ponape's Porakiet Village, photographed by Harvey Reed.

glimpses

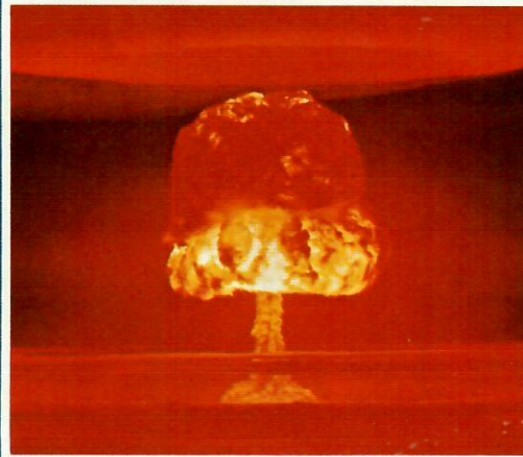
OF MICRONESIA & THE WESTERN PACIFIC

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Visions of Polynesia - Ponape's Porakiet Village

"It's like finding Tahiti smack dab in the middle of Micronesia," is how one visitor to Ponape describes Porakiet Village. The village, home of more than 500 former residents of Kapingamarangi, is a colorful blend of Micronesian and Polynesian cultures. By Harvey Reed



NUCLEAR WASTE: THE PACIFIC PROVING GROUNDS

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As more and more cases of radiation-linked illnesses are uncovered in the Marshall Islands, the world is only beginning to understand the tragic effects of nuclear testing in the Pacific Proving Grounds. As second-generation Marshallese show signs of radiation damage, it's time for a reappraisal of the United States' role in one of the world's least-understood tragedies. By Larry Pryor and Ron Jett.

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THEY DON'T MAKE STORES LIKE THIS ANYMORE

Several years ago, in an annual clearance sale at the Truk Trading Company, a Trukese rummage discovered a mint condition World War I uniform among the piles of dusty bargains! Further proof that the Truk Trading Center is one of Micronesia's most fascinating landmarks. Written by Robert Kiener, photographed by Thomas E. Walsh, Jr.

RESURRECTION AT SUNHARON ROADS

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Never in the annals of maritime adventure has a ship experienced the strange twists of fate that greeted Commodore George Anson's *Centurion*. Anson's 1742 voyage, especially his adventures on Micronesia's Tinian Island, is one of the Pacific's most compelling sagas. By John Perry

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LATTE STONES: CHAMORRO CASTLES IN THE AIR

There are those that claim the Marianas latte stone proves that Micronesia did experience its own "Golden Age." Others pass off the mushroom-shaped latte as a mere house support. One thing is clear; the latte continues to be Micronesia's most controversial glimpse into the past. By Larry Lawcock

the Tokyo Tremble 72

"Tokyo operates like a high energy computer, with its mind boggling turnover in commodities: people in general, visitors in particular, goodies and baddies from around the globe, fancy fads, festivals, photo chemical smog alarms and its ever changing ways. It is the city of evermore." By Wolf Morrison

ISLAND TIME BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

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Time is never of the essence in Micronesia. In fact, being on time is considered by some as not only unthinkable but insulting. To the uninitiated, "Island Time" gives new meaning to the old adage, "better late than never." By Red Garrison

Robert Kiener, editor / Sue Couch, art editor / Thomas E. Walsh, Jr., photography editor / Mark Noyes, staff artist / Laling Cruz, editorial assistant / Phyllis Villagomez, art assistant / Fred Francisco Blas, photo assistant / Joe Couch, publisher / Robert Maloney, advertising representative / Bernie Cabrera, advertising assistant.

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LATTE STONES: CHAMORRO CASTLES IN THE AIR

by Larry Lawcock



Oceanic folklore is permeated with tales of god-given stones and coconut trees. Nowhere were these two basic mineral and vegetable substances more perfectly combined than in the Marianas latte houses, the tropical castles of the ancient Chamorro nobility.

Newcomers to the Marianas are confronted at every turn with bold figures vaguely resembling thick-stemmed stone tulips. Some are genuine latte stones;

most are concrete replicas. Miniature latte are for sale. "Latte" appears on modern apartment buildings and denotes planned housing developments. A latte stone is emblazoned on the flag of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.

The wood and the thatch long ago fed the flames of Spanish conquest; but those rocks, which were cornerstones and foundations of Chamorro architecture, have captured the interest of both scholars and travelers. Like the tombs of Egypt

and the temples of Buddhist Burma, the latte stone is the emblem of fifteen or sixteen small bits of America in the Western Pacific.

There are remains of ancient columns scattered the full length of the 500-mile-long Mariana Islands arc. In addition to archaeological sites on the populous islands of Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan, ruins are encountered on Sarigan, Alamagan, Pagan, Asuncion, and even as far north as northern Maug.



The preferred location for a house of a leading Chamorro family was a sandy shore. It was important to have rights to a section of the reef for fishing and to have good garden land conveniently available. Coastal latte in Guam were heavily concentrated along the south and western shores. However, the most extensive occupation site runs for several miles along Tarague Beach at the northern tip of the island.

Objan in Saipan was a typical coastal site. The villagers had easy access to off-shore fishing and enjoyed a fine view of Tinian which lay just four miles across the water.

Most upland settlements were small. Pulantat site near Yona in Guam was the exception. Ruins of 32 latte houses were found there in 1945, but all of them have since been devastated.

Saipan, which had relatively few prehistoric villages, was divested of most of its ruins during World War II. Tinian fared little better, with the notable exception of the miraculous preservation of the House of Taga (see page 30). Of all the islands, Rota has the largest number of relatively intact clues to the material culture of the ancient Chamorros.

Only Rota can boast of latte bigger than Tinian's. These are the nine mammoth shafts measuring 18 x 7 x 4 feet and the seven twenty-ton capitals which lie unfinished and abandoned in the As Nieves limestone quarry where stonecutters quit work centuries ago.

The latte uprights are known in modern Chamorro as *haligi*, which is also a Tagalog word meaning house post. The capstones are called *tasa*, a term derived from the Spanish word for cup or small bowl.

Latte stones may be classified by raw material and by shape. But a concise description of the latte stone is complicated by the various combinations of materials and the variety of forms which exist. Variations in material are principally a matter of geographical location. Differences in shape and size appear to be a function of time. However, the stone pillars reflect the free and independent character of their creators. The latte are difficult to pin down with hard and fast rules.

The material used for pillars in the southern islands was chiefly a metamorphosed coral limestone, locally designated *cascajo*. However, construction materials ranged from natural coral rocks to sandstone. On the volcanic northern islands where limestone may be absent, blocks of basalt were employed.

Observer after observer in the last century described the material of many notable latte as very hard masonry, but modern investigators are reluctant to accept that idea. In most instances they have been able to point out a source of similar natural rock nearby.

The latte form appears to have undergone considerable development and refinement over a period of centuries. Although no evidence has yet been found, a wood-post style of construction may have antedated the use of stone pilings. Some latte shafts were short rocks which required little effort to relocate. When these short, weathered and, presumably, oldest latte are dislodged from their original emplacements, the components are often difficult to recognize. Other units, which are distinguished by their large size, uniformity and fine workmanship, leave no question as to what they are.



An abandoned latte stone at Rota's As Nieves quarry.

How were these blocks hewn to the desired specifications? One eleven-year-old who lives near a display of impressive columns says with wide-eyed amazement, "They say they cut them with their hands!" She pauses abruptly to envision the supermen who could perform such feats.

In fact, there may have been as many cutting methods as there were kinds of rock to be cut. Naturally occurring pieces of basalt which were used for pilings exhibit the pecking and grinding which was done to achieve a better fit between the *haligi* and *tasa*. Although chisel marks are not visible on the hard island-rock type of latte originally found in the interior valleys of Guam, the use of iron as a possible tool cannot be discounted. The first century of the Spanish galleon trade fully overlapped the last century of the Chamorro latte culture. The Marianas were an anticipated port on that long and perilous commercial voyage. In these islands iron implements could be exchanged for any desired quantity of

fresh fruits and vegetables.

More precise information is available about cutting the common limestone latte. Fifty years ago Hans Hornsbostel closely examined the physical evidence at As Nieves quarry. He determined that fires had been built along desired cut-lines on bedrock limestone. When the surface was well heated, it was doused with water. This procedure converted the limestone, which was hard enough to break basalt adzes, into a softer compound which could be removed with shell scrapers. This process of alternately applying heat and water and then scraping out the resulting lime had to be repeated countless times before a unit could be freed from its matrix.

Quarrying *haligi* and *tasa* in this way must have been an expensive project which only the powerful and wealthy could afford to undertake.

Governor Fritz, administrator of the one-time German Marianas, thought that large latte columns were set in place by rolling them up a temporary earth ramp and dropping them from the high end into previously prepared pits. Of course, ropes could have been used to erect columns as they were employed to position the famous stone heads on Easter Island, but Fritz's incline-plane theory provides a rather simple explanation of the way hefty capitals could have been raised to the tops of pillars.

Up to a third of the length of an upright was set into the ground. Usually, the excavation was packed with a ring of coral stones to serve as props. Sometimes, as in the case of the seven-foot Orun-NCS Beach latte stone on exhibit at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu, the shaft was buttressed by a basework of carefully fitted stone bricks.

A cache of rusty iron discovered under a stone foundation pillar on Saipan by Alexander Spoehr, noted Pacific archaeologist, suggests that Chamorros may also have practiced the oriental custom of putting something of value beneath the main post of a new house to insure future prosperity. Iron, which was introduced as a trade item by passing ships, was worth more than gold to the islanders who had to build their boats and houses with stone-age tools.

The form of the pillars varied from natural oblong pieces of coral and basalt to worked slabs and pyramidal shaped rocks. A few were conical.

Latte capitals present an even greater array of forms. It appears that coastal settlements established a standard when natural heads of brain coral were used. Inland, where these were not obtainable,

other stones were laboriously shaped in imitation of the natural hemispheres. Some capitals were artfully crafted ovals which had a depression carved in the base so that the cap would fit securely over the head of the upright. Others resembled symmetrical vases, a few of which repeated the shape of the pillar inversely and many which were shaped like large bowls. In many cases, the *tasa* reposed on its *haligi* in the way a funeral urn rests on a mortuary vault.

These rocks, precariously balanced one upon another, assumed highly standardized patterns. The long axis of a structure was often oriented parallel or perpendicular to the seashore, a river or some other prominent geological feature. The structures typically had from two to six pairs of columns. Four pairs was the average. Fritz believed that columns in the two parallel rows may have been given a slight inward slant, but too few remain standing to prove this assertion. The distance between rows and between uprights within the rows was probably dictated by the length of the timber which was available.

The calcinated lime obtained as a by-product of carving out the columns was sometimes used to dress the finished pillars. Old reports mention friable white plaster found on stone ruins in Tinian and Rota. Most of this adornment has since eroded away, but recently some plaster was observed on the seaward face of a pillar on one of the northern islands.



It seems curious that mere house foundations would incite the curiosity of so many persons, both lay and learned.

Part of the answer is probably to be found in the monumental appearance of the latte as well as in the alignment of the stones, which recalls the famous parallel rows of menhirs in northwestern France. More of the answer is to be found in the cultural significance of the latte which will be discussed later.

The saga of the elevated house began about 28,000 years ago when Paleolithic hunters erected the world's first houses. Those rude skeletal frameworks which bore pitched roofs of animal skins were supported on posts. Today, houses resting on pilings may be found in places as far apart as the Sulu Sea and the banks of the Amazon River. Even at the Shelter Institute at Bath, Maine, where amateur homebuilders can learn to construct handsome houses for themselves for \$10,000

or less, the typical house designed by students rests on piles cut from telephone poles.

Elevated houses possess several distinct advantages over those built directly on the ground. Dwellings elevated a few feet above the earth catch a refreshing breeze, keep provisions dry in the rainy season and discourage the entrance of vermin. They also may escape flooding when wind-whipped waves or rain-swollen rivers depart from their normal courses.

In the islands inhabited by Polynesians, including Hawaii, Samoa and Easter Island, temples and the houses of important persons were erected on stone platforms. Similar platforms are also found elsewhere, such as those in Yap in Micronesia.

Houses supported by posts are especially common in Southeast Asia and on the major islands nearby. Stone foundation piles are rare, however. *The latte version of the house support is unique.* Did the latte appear in the Marianas with a new wave of canoe-born immigrants or was the latte an indigenous product of trial-and-error evolution? The meager evidence is unclear.

Since the raw material used for the stone columns may actually be millions of years old, the dates of the latte structures must be inferred from materials found in association with the pillars. Ashes and shards of fired pottery have served this purpose.

Thus far, all latte stones have been found on the surface, although some fallen capstones have been discovered partially covered by soil. Evidence of prior site habitation underlays some latte. Taken together, these two facts suggest that the latte are of relatively recent origin.

The prehistoric era in the Marianas has been divided tentatively into two periods. The earlier one is designated the pre-latte phase; the later period is known as the latte phase. Presumably, the latte phase was initiated sometime prior to 1000 A.D. The carbon-14 date which established this architectural watershed was obtained from ashes found under the base of a latte stone on Tinian.

Fragments of pottery practically pave the surface of some areas of the larger islands. Two principal types have been identified. A pre-latte type of pottery, classified as Marianas Red, was largely superseded by an inferior quality of pottery which is labeled Marianas Plain. Since the new type of pottery was closely associated with the latte, it could be cited as support for the argument that the latte was introduced by newcomers.

The circumstantial evidence availa-





ble does not answer the question of why a people would adopt an improved house design and simultaneously abandon a good quality pottery, which had been manufactured for centuries, in favor of an inferior type.

Although no definite conclusion can be reached about the origins of the latte, there was an island tradition that the large columns were first a feature of the canoe houses and later were employed by chiefs to make their houses more impressive.

Whatever its source, the idea of the latte gained a momentum which shows no sign of slowing down.



The delicately poised *tasa* is the most perplexing riddle in latte archaeology. What useful purpose did the instability of the carefully engineered latte capitals serve? This problem lends itself to speculation, but it is unlikely ever to be resolved with finality.

By way of comparison, an ancient structure in Palau, a thousand miles to the southwest, had channels cut in the tops of stone pilings to receive the wood joists. Why did the Chamorros find it convenient to interpose a loose stone between each support and the beam?

Speculation on the purpose of the *tasa* assumes that it was a functional response to a prevalent problem. Earthquakes, rats and typhoons readily come to mind. Perhaps it was a sort of earthquake shock absorber. But isn't a frame-and-thatch structure inherently resistant to damage from earth tremors? Maybe it was a rat guard similar to the cart-wheel disks seen on posts of Ifugao houses in the mountains of Luzon. If so, why wasn't the flat side of the hemisphere placed downward to present a greater obstacle? Furthermore, it is questionable whether there were rats and mice in the Marianas before European contact. Archaeologists have found evidence of rats in their siftings, but neither positive identifications nor early datings have been ascribed to them.

There seems to be at least some logical validity to the theory that, when lashed to the heavy capstones, houses of wood and thatch acquired sufficient give-and-take to ride out a storm. In practice, however, this somewhat loose-jointed construction did not work out very well. Early missionary chronicles mention several typhoons which flattened every building on one island or another, including

the new churches.

It might seem to have been an easy matter to pick up the pieces of the house and reassemble them on their sturdy foundations. The fact is, it may not have been so simple a matter. After the typhoon of September 1671, nothing was left of one big Chamorro house but "a heap of stone and wood," wrote a missionary. His report stated that almost all the houses in Agana and the villages were in ruins, "The wind caused damage that cannot be repaired for many years."

Chamorro houses owed much to the seafaring component of the culture. There were only a few specialized professions. The chief carpenter was both shipwright and architect. Sorcery and the close observance of prescribed taboos were part and parcel of his trade. He employed magic formulas to appease the spirit who resided in any tree that was to be felled. One of the preferred timbers for houses was *daog* (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), which grows near the shore. The timber was trimmed to reduce its weight. A gang of men, summoned to help by the village chief, chanted to lighten the work as they hauled the log into the village.

Much that is known about pre-colonial Chamorro architecture has been preserved through the cooperation of Louis de Freycinet, a French count, and Don Luis de Torres, a Chamorro mestizo who served in an office equivalent to lieutenant governor. Both were scholarly men. From the information which Don Luis had recorded from the oldest people on the islands, the last survivors of the aboriginal race, Freycinet endeavored to reconstruct a vision of the former culture.

Chamorro prehistoric dwellings, according to Freycinet, were of two types: those erected on stone pillars and those built directly on the ground. The former, called *guma saga*, were considered to be permanent houses. The latter were constructed in several different forms which included the *anagong*, a plain hut put up by poor people. The roof and walls of the *anagong* reached to the ground. A doorway was its only opening.

A rectangular building constructed of wood and palm leaves served as a temporary granary at harvest time. This hut also provided shelter to travelers caught on the trail by stormy weather, hence the name *guma padju* (storm house).

Fritz believed that the number of pairs of latte was proportional to the number of rooms in the building. The longest house, a fourteen-pillar model, was discovered on Rota. According to

Continued from page 29

Fritz's hypothesis, this 72-foot-long dwelling would have consisted of six rooms.

The first books devoted to the Mariana Islands were published in Europe in 1683 and 1701. They were based on letters and reports from the missionaries. These books are in accord in their descriptions of Chamorro houses. Each house had four rooms separated by curtains of woven palm leaves. The rooms were a bedroom, a dining room, a pantry and a workroom which also doubled as a nursery.

The idea of what a house should be was deeply imbedded in Chamorro thought. In spite of the enormous cultural changes which occurred in the following centuries, the organization of space within the largest houses changed but little. The elevated house continued to enjoy popularity. But the massive stone pillars were lost and the shell of the structure took on a European form.



The Spanish-Chamorro wars of the late seventeenth century abruptly terminated the latte phase of Chamorro culture.

The era of good feeling which initially existed between the Spaniards and Chamorros ended in violent clashes when the foreigners attempted to change or prohibit customary social practices. Christian and military authorities waged a coordinated campaign to repress recalcitrants and renegades. This crusade all but demolished the traditional social system and wiped out the culture-style of the native inhabitants of all the Mariana Islands.

Magellan presaged the future course of events when he burned fifty houses during the first visit by a European in 1521. During the years 1674-75 Sergeant Major Don Damian de Esplana burned the villages of Pupuro, Sydia, Hati, Nagan and Hınca on Guam, and Targua and Guegu on Rota, among others. Two Spanish governors, Juan Antonio de Salas and Jose de Quiroga, continued the punitive expeditions against unruly villages.

Unable to swallow their immense pride and unwilling to give up their independence, an unknown number of the nobility fled to new homes across the sea. (Only upper-class individuals were permitted to build and sail paraos and canoes.) Rota temporarily harbored fugitives flushed from hide-outs on Guam. Other refugees settled in the Caroline Islands. Dampier, who happened along soon after the revolt of 1684, reported that they

Lotz



A WINDOW TO THE PAST

The ancient village of Pagat nestles beneath a verdant forest canopy where the rock-bound coast of northeastern Guam drops precipitately into the indigo depths of the deep-water sea. Half a world away the famous American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow visualized a similar settlement situated "by the shores of Gitche Gumee," whose icy waters contrast with the tepid waves which lap incessantly at Pagat's vertical shoreline. No description of Pagat conveys the impression it makes on the casual visitor better than these lyric lines from Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha":

Dark behind it rose the forest,
Rose the black and gloomy
pine-trees,
Rose the firs with cones upon
them,
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.

The pines and firs which line Lake Superior's glacial shore are transformed at Pagat into *chopag* and *puting* and it is the towering cliff which casts an early evening gloom, but the parallels are sustained. Historians affirm that the Chamorros of old were avid lovers of poetry. Although few fragments of their verse survive, Pagat's pristine beauty may well have inspired a Chamorro wordsmith to compose an immortalizing ode. Among the dozen or two principal houses which dotted this ledge which hangs suspended between sea and sky there must have stood the hut of a grandmother who told her little grandson tales about the moon

and why the *fanihi* has a short tail.

First occupied about the year 1000, this village was abandoned at an undetermined date in the Spanish period. Today, the government of Guam owns the 385-acre site. To reach Pagat take Route 15 and turn onto a narrow ranch road and head seaward for two-tenths of a mile. As your vehicle bumps and lurches along, the fields where the aged Chamorro "Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis" planted her crops glide by; but it is the chain stretched across the rutted track which effectively divides the present from the past.

After parking your vehicle, you begin a descent into the vortex of time. Watch your step on the steep path which clings to the face of the nearly perpendicular cliff. There is no need to keep up with the sure-footed lad carrying his grandmother's basket of succulent roots topped by the tempting fruits he gathered today in his forest rambles. Instead, pace yourself with the wizened old woman who carries a bulky bundle of dry sticks on her head with such grace.

This is fantasy, of course; but the Pagat archaeological site is a place where the past promises to come to life soon.

There, at the base of the trail, is the well of the ancients. Its sides appear to have been chipped to provide the members of the vanished community easier access to its essential life fluid. The slightly brackish water in the well floats on a hydraulic system which causes it to rise and fall with the tide. Two small caves whose entrances are located near the well add their own mystery to the scene.

Archiving branches shade the weathered remains of some personal effects of World War II fighting men. Obviously, the few intruders since that time of pain and sorrow have been respectful and considerate. The distant hooting of one of "Hiawatha's Chickens" lends a mournful note to the otherwise deafening silence.

Historical documents reveal little about this isolated place. Bellin's map of 1752 indicates that once upon a time one of the thirty-five churches and chapels which ringed Spanish Guam like a garland of plumeria was situated here. In February 1680 two priests and a party of friendly Chamorros struck inland from this point. They encountered an ambush. Gunshots killed two of the attackers. Because a man in their party received a severe spear wound in his leg, the missionaries immediately returned to Agana.

Few latte stones stand tall and

of the area under a former latte structure to a depth of two to four feet turned up twenty-two human skeletons and the bones of many kinds of fish. Apparently the big fish, which constituted an important part of the diet of these villagers, were hauled out of the deep water right at the doorstep of the Chamorro fishermen whose ingenious fishing techniques became legendary.

Digging out a firepit-cum-mound to bedrock seven feet down revealed, among other things, a quantity of baked clay tablets whose use is not definitely known. Their thickness and location suggest that these may possibly have been used in an attempt to improve the effectiveness of a primitive pottery kiln. In any case, pottery making was an important activity in Pagat. The clay for this enterprise must have come from Mt. Santa Rosa which is four or five miles distant.

Other features of the site are no less interesting. Among these are several dozen ponderous stone mortars as well as many small mortar depressions in a unique natural-rock kitchen work table, a rock-shelter camp site, a slightly raised stone platform on which a latte structure was erected and, at the extreme north end of the settlement site, there are several sets of basalt latte foundations. No known source of igneous rock exists in the vicinity. These heavy columns must have been brought to Pagat from some distance away at considerable expense in time and effort.

Pagat is slated for a new career. Over the hill as a village and by-passed by modern economic development, Pagat may some day be the prettiest park on Guam.

Preliminary proposals call for a dual-purpose preserve. The village occupation site is large enough to play host to groups of visitors while allowing serious scientific work to proceed without interference. Parking areas on the upper level, improved access trails and a reconstructed village will be built. Educational aspects of the proposal include an active arts and crafts demonstration center, artifact exhibits, and an area where the survey methods employed by archaeologists can be observed.

Development plans for Pagat currently simmer on a back burner. Whatever form the park project finally takes, Pagat will become a magnet for school children and tourists. No doubt a certain grandmother and her stalwart grandson will be pleased to let you look at the past through their window.

destroyed their plantations before embarking.

Dumont d'Urville, another French voyager, was guided on a hike from Agana to Pago in 1828 by Don Luis de Torres, who had become world famous as a reliable informant on Pacific history and culture. In the short distance between the former Jesuit *hacienda* of San Ignacio de Tachogna and Pago they passed by the stark remains of the largest of these ghost villages: Fagto, Tagon, Pomod, Tinaka and Agoan.



Why were the highly prized stone pillars not transferred to home sites in the new villages? The reasons seem to fall into two discrete, but curiously compatible categories. On one hand there were conservative Chamorro traditions which compelled their abandonment; on the other hand there was Spanish compulsion to eradicate cultural traditions which conflicted with Christianity.

In order to recapture the meaning and evoke the significance of the latte in the old culture, let us focus attention briefly on several aspects of pre-contact Chamorro society and the cosmological beliefs which reinforced it.

First, there is the concept of status of place or position. As Laura Thompson expressed it in *The Secret of Culture*, "rank tends to be spelled out spatially." This concept may account for the fact that the largest latte tended to be centrally located in a village complex. Thompson's observation holds true in the vertical dimension as well as in the horizontal. In modern times for instance, is it the apartment-house maintenance man who occupies the penthouse? A member of the Chamorro elite would never sit in the presence of a social inferior. Conversely, the hereditary serfs were required to crouch in the presence of a noble. On a

Lotz



Located on Guam's rugged northeastern coast (left), the prehistoric village of Pagat (above) contains numerous toppled latte stones.

proud at Pagat. Some of the old house pillars may have been toppled when a devastating wall of water swept the south and eastern shores of the island in July 1900. In this area there is no off-shore reef to buffer the force of an angry tempest. The process of natural change continues. Supertyphoon Pamela delivered a solid chunk of the Pagat shelf to Neptune in May 1976 and exposed several graves. Remnants of a stone wall parallel to the shore may be evidence of an early attempt to hold back the sea.

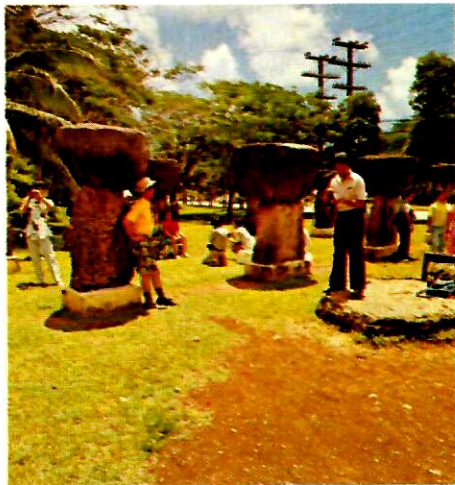
Dedicated archaeological technicians trained by Dr. Fred Reinman traversed the demanding trail twice daily for many months in order to make an in-depth evaluation of this site possible. Excavation

nearby island it was forbidden for anyone to climb a coconut tree in the presence of the king. No one was permitted to be higher than the ruler. A similar rule may have governed behavior in the Marianas, where persons of low social station were prohibited from even approaching the elevated house of a noble.

Second, every society has its status symbols. Some are a birthright, some can be won by achievement, and still others can be purchased. In the rigidly stratified society of the prehistoric culture, only members of the upper class were entitled to build houses atop carved stone columns. The nobles could afford to maintain the workers necessary to carry through such a major project.

Sometimes, of course, status-symbol competition seems to get out of hand. These excesses are usually obvious to persons not caught up in the same social system. Detroit's top-of-the-line luxury automobiles, Yap's stone-money wheels and Tinian's House of Taga may serve as examples of symbols of status pushed to an absurd extreme.

Third, ancient Chamorros venerated their ancestors. An Augustinian bound for the Philippines made an unscheduled stop-over on Guam in 1596. "Out of love and respect," he observed, "parents, children and relatives" were buried "in front of or under their house." By virtue of their proximity, a latte house provided a member of the noble class with a direct



The transplanted lattes of Guam's Latte Stone Park are the island's most-photographed tourist attraction.

link to his forefathers.

Fourth, Chamorros, in common with people in many remote parts of the world, shared their land with countless spirits, both good and evil. The living endeavored to appease the dead because of the help their spirits could render or the havoc they were capable of wreaking.



These toppled latte are preserved at Mochom, a prehistoric settlement on the northeastern coast of Guam.

Friends and relatives who gathered at a wake extolled the virtues of the deceased in song. He was invited to walk through the air and come to their house.

Friendly spirits could be marshalled for support whenever danger threatened. All that was necessary was to call upon them in a loud voice. But woe unto any man who became so infuriated with an enemy that he overturned the pillar of his house! The spirit of the builder of that latte house would avenge itself upon the evil-doer in kind!

Hence, the latte as it evolved came to symbolize a nobleman's caste, status, ancestry and spiritual strength. The stones were not something to tamper with. The Chamorro people were subject to enough misery without calling down the vengeance of their progenitors.

The European residents sought to instill new values in the Chamorro people. In order to accomplish this Christian objective it was absolutely necessary to discourage what the religious perceived as a pernicious cult of ancestor worship. It was imperative to sever those bonds which allowed the lives of the living to be controlled or influenced from beyond the grave by the spirits of their ancestors.

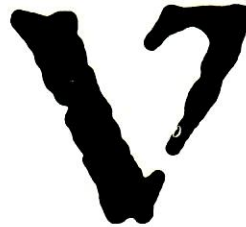
Construction of latte houses in the new communities was discouraged in a number of ways. The population was down to one-tenth of its former size. The military governor conferred political status by appointing new village officers. The burial of Chief Quipuha in the Agana church for which he had donated the land helped to establish a new burial pattern. Pressure to hasten the building of homes and new churches undoubtedly thwarted tradition.

The latte culture was the silent victim of foreign conquest.

The purpose of the crowned megaliths was largely forgotten during the long period of colonial rule. Romantic Spanish writers termed them *monumentos*. Some American researchers considered them shrines or tombstones because of the large number of burials encountered near them. Islanders, however, referred to them as "houses of the ancients."

The Marianas latte became known to the world through Commodore George Anson (see page 62). Books on the incredible adventures of the Anson expedition were best sellers in Europe when George Washington was a boy. Armchair sightseers were introduced to the magnificent pyramidal pillars of the House of Taga. In the deluxe, illustrated edition the artist resurrected fallen columns and restored toppled capitals.

These alluring accounts drew European adventurers to Tinian for over a century. The earliest of these included Byron (1765), Wallis (1767) and Gilbert (1788). The explorers who followed in Anson's wake uniformly failed to share his rose-colored-glass view of the island; but they, too, were fascinated by Taga's giant stones.



"The latte stone is the ancient Chamorro symbol of love."

Thus reads a hand-lettered placard in a souvenir shop. The legend of paternal devotion associated with the House of Taga lends an iota of truth to this fanciful claim. But, of course, the full meaning of the latte is not, and probably never can be, known. Totally functional in origin, the latte did accrue symbolic significance. They clearly set the wholesome elite above the despised caste of untouchable bondsmen.

Chamorros did not build temples, but it is clear that a nobleman's elevated castle was more than just his home.

Three centuries have passed, and at least a dozen generations have been born, since the latte houses were abandoned. Yet until recently, old folks would cautiously whisper a polite, "*Guela yan Guelo, nafapus yu*" (Grandma and Grandpa, allow me to pass) when approaching a latte site. Even now one does not have to look far before finding someone in whom a genuine latte site automatically provokes a reverential, respectful attitude. Explanations for this response may be confused now; nonetheless, an uneasy wariness persists.

Continued on page 81

LATTE STONES: CHAMORRO CASTLES IN THE AIR

Differentiated in the past, the denizens of the forest nowadays are commonly lumped under the term *taotaomona*, or the people who came before. Described as tall, strong and ugly, they jealously guard their preserves against trespassers. Intruders who fail to show proper respect when venturing into these sacrosanct regions may offend the residents, who frequently are invisible. A blunderer may discover an inexplicable, indelible purple splotch somewhere upon his body. Once upon a time it was believed that violation of a latte site was punished by death. But the penalty has been reduced.



A different explanation for the superstition which surrounds the latte states that it originated when missionaries warned Christian Chamorros to avoid the few remaining pagans. It was believed that "heathen devils" inhabited the ruins of houses which once belonged to the opponents of Christianity.

When the explanation of evil spirits is combined with the explanation of an ancestral presence, it is not difficult to understand the strange blend of fear and respect which the latte ruins inspired.

A belief in wrathful spirits protected the latte for hundreds of years. But these guardians of antiquity are fast losing ground. Although many latte are badly eroded, they have withstood the ravages of time, weather and war far better than they have been able to stand up to the machines of military contractors, land developers and farmers.

The areas of these rocky islands which were most suitable for planting centuries ago are still the most fertile garden spots. The fields have now been cleared for mechanized agriculture. Heaps of jumbled *haligi* and *tasa* can be found ringing the trunks of large trees, and edging fields and animal pens.

Mogfog, Toto, Maina, Mepo and Fena are a few of the latte complexes which have been obliterated. The earliest material evidence of Christianity on Guam, a latte column carved with crosses, was bulldozed together with the largest known village of ruins at Pulantat near Yona.

The beaches bordering Guam's Tumon Bay have been stripped of all impediments to development of tourist resorts. Ironically, the ruins were swept away, too. Now concrete replicas decorate the garden of the Hilton Hotel. Fortythree percent of the prehistoric sites listed in a 1965-66 inventory were found destroyed when a second inventory was taken in Guam in 1974.

Paradoxically, the latte image became a popular motif as regard for the age-old rocks ebbed. Besides the ubiquitous pairs of concrete latte which herald the approach to Guam's villages, several modern church building incorporate the

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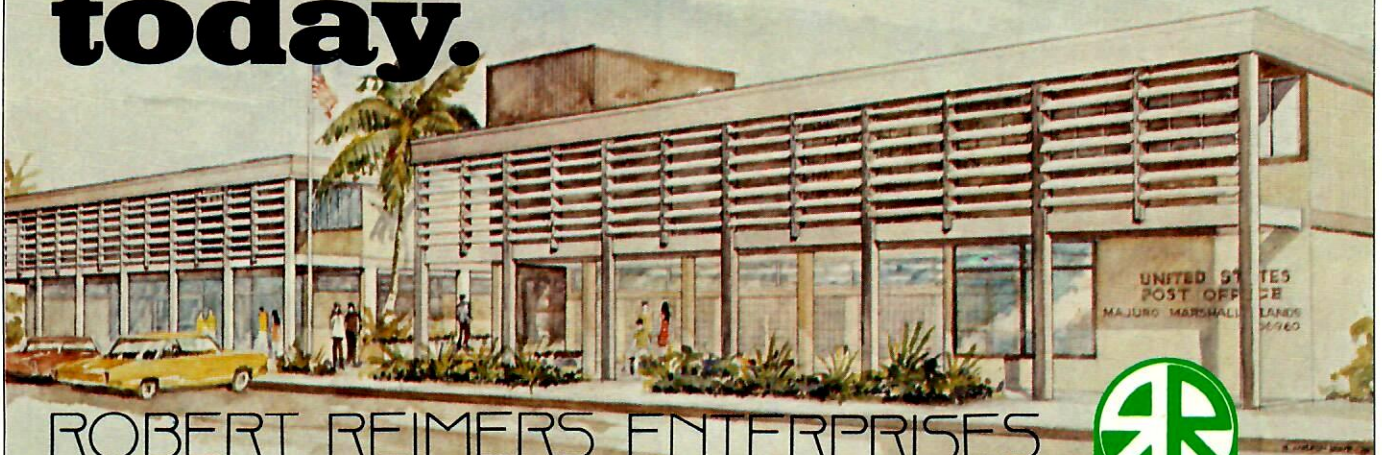


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latte design. Across from St. William's Church in Tumon there is an instructive out-sized concrete replica of a latte structure.

Contrary to common impression, the high and elegant umbrella pillars of the terminal building at Guam International Airport were inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, not by the latte. Nevertheless, it is a faultless marriage of brilliant design to a local theme.

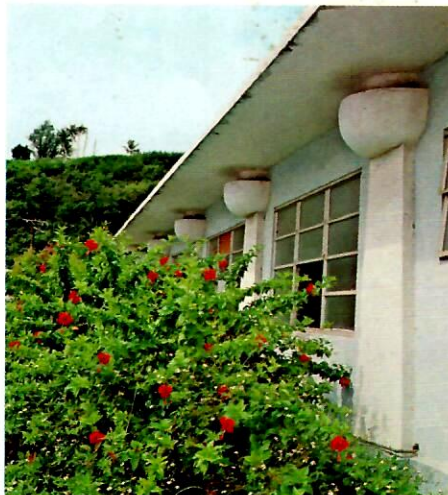
Ricardo Bordallo, Guam's second elected governor, has pledged to build the 400-foot "Latte of Freedom," a towering civic memorial to America's two hundred years.

Fanciers of genuine latte have many opportunities to inspect them up close. Among relocated shafts, those on display in Latte Park in Agana, Guam constitute a superb set. Another rescued set, which illustrates the disarray now found at most sites, is arranged on the lawn near the library of the University of Guam. One may linger there to ponder the relation of the dwarf pedestal to the grotesquely large capital near by. A contrastingly delicate old pair, with brain-coral capstones (now cemented in place) stands on the front lawn of John F. Kennedy High School in upper Tumon.

Fine pairs decorate a small park at

Guam's Andersen Air Force Base, the gate of Inarajan's quaint Lanchon Antigo and the entrance to the Bishop's residence and Chancery in Agana Heights. The latter pair was a gift to the people of Guam from Mayor Atalig of Rota. The *U.S.S. Guam*, commissioned in 1965, carries a latte pillar on its bridge.

Students at Marianas High School on Saipan have initiated the development of Laulau Beach Latte Stone Park to preserve an ancient village site. Tinian's extravagant House of Taga and Rota's petrified dream house at As Nieves quarry are in the "don't miss" category.



Other latte *in situ* are located in out-of-the-way places. At the Country Club of the Pacific in Ipan latte are hidden in the border of jungle which screens the golf course from the highway. A few columns overgrown by tropical vegetation have been left there undisturbed. Adventuresome latte-seekers will appreciate Pagat, the rustic site of an old village situated on the northeast shore of Guam. This idyllic Chamorro Eden, replete with a plethora of large black stone mortars (*lusong*) scattered beneath the trees, is a candidate to become an open-air museum. Pagat is a miniature pre-Colonial Williamsburg awaiting its Rockefeller. (see page 32)

Here and there around the islands, and even in the shallow lagoon off Agana, may be seen solitary stairways leading nowhere but to the open sky. One such flight of concrete steps, now hidden by a cascade of red hibiscus blossoms, marks the site of the former residence of the commanding general of World War II's Harmon Field. Just as jungle-covered foundation stones of ancient Chamorro houses evoke myths and mystery today, perhaps in a future century these ignored monuments to the devastating power of typhoons, will, like the latte, intrigue enthusiasts and capture the interest of scholars probing into the past.