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## CAROLINIAN-MARIANAS VOYAGING Continuing the Tradition

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*Saipan*

Perhaps the greatest stimulant to the modern study of traditional navigation in the South Pacific came from Hawaii's Polynesian Voyaging Society (1973), which took as an early project the construction and sailing of Hawaiian doubled-hulled canoes. When their first canoes were completed, the society turned to Satawal in the Carolinas for help in navigation. This article describes one trip from Satawal to the Marianas and the problems and pleasures encountered.

In 1972 Michael McCoy wrote a paper<sup>1</sup> presciently-entitled, "A Renaissance in Carolinian-Marianas Voyaging." This paper, subsequently included in a collection of "memoirs" published in 1976 in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, described McCoy's experiences living on Satawal at the time the ancient sea-route to the Marianas was re-opened.

According to written accounts from the 1700s<sup>2</sup>, this sea route, traditionally called the *metawal wool*, had been sailed by Carolinian sailors from before the "Spanish times." But the route had been abandoned in more recent times, perhaps because of the cruelty of the Europeans who had claimed the Marianas, perhaps because of the convenience of more modern shipping that came with the Europeans and the copra trade<sup>3</sup>.

But though the route was not sailed for many generations, the traditional sailing directions, based on stars, currents and waves, were not forgotten. In the early 1800s several canoes from the Carolines journeyed to Saipan and Guam after typhoons had devastated their at-

olls<sup>4</sup>. At that time the Spanish had removed all of the Chamorro inhabitants of Saipan and Tinian and moved them to Guam, so the Carolinians were permitted to settle on what were then uninhabited islands.

It does not appear that these voyages continued during the Spanish and subsequent German or Japanese occupations of Saipan. Neither residents of Saipan nor Satawal remembered any voyages during the first 60 years of the last century<sup>5</sup>.

This all began to change in 1969 when New Zealand physician David Lewis sailed his ketch, the *Isbjorn*, throughout Micronesia and Melanesia, interviewing men who still had knowledge of traditional navigation. On tiny Polowat Lewis found the navigator Hippour who agreed to navigate Lewis' ship the 500-mile trip from Polowat to Saipan using only the traditional navigation he had been taught. Hippour had never been to Saipan before, and this trip had not been sailed by anyone in living memory, but he had been taught the star courses and felt confident in his ability. His confidence

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was well placed. The *Isbjorn* arrived a week later on Saipan<sup>6</sup>.

The following year Hippour's feat was repeated by two half-brothers from nearby Satawal, Repunglap and Repunglug. This time the trip was made in a traditional canoe, and was likewise done without any "modern" navigational aids<sup>7</sup>.

In 1971 a group from Satawal planned yet another trip, but it was delayed by the death of Martin Raiuk, the paramount chief<sup>8</sup>. Another attempt was made in 1972, this time with two canoes, one captained by Repunglug and Repunglap, and the other by Mau Pailug. But bad weather stalled the departure several weeks, and then unexpected family illness caused several potential voyagers to cancel their trip. Disappointed, the canoes returned to Satawal<sup>9</sup>.

That same spring of 1972, 120 miles to the east, sailors from Polowat were planning the same trip<sup>10</sup>. Bad weather also delayed their departure, but Polowat's location east of Satawal, and their planned destination, Guam (which is somewhat southwest of Saipan) made the trip possible despite the unfavorable winds that had stopped the Satawal voyage. Two canoes including the *Santiago* captained by the master navigator Ikuliman and a second canoe captained by his brother, Harabwe, sailed the trip to Guam. Their trip was plagued by periods of no wind, and then a large storm that blew the canoes downwind of Guam. Ikuliman realized he had been blown off-course and decided to tack upwind until he sighted Guam. They arrived on Guam after five days of difficult sailing.

Yet another trip of two canoes from Satawal made the journey in May 1973<sup>11</sup>. The canoes, *I Am Sorry* and *Mei School*, were navigated by Repunglug and by Otakik (making his first trip to Saipan). They carried with them a small 14-foot "presentation canoe" that was to have been delivered on the ill-fated 1972 trip.

McCoy<sup>12</sup> notes that the return trips from Saipan to the Carolines were often delayed, in some cases for several weeks, "...because the voyagers were so enjoying their celebrity status on Saipan and the almost-constant round of feasts given them by members of the Carolin-

ian community." One return trip had to be aborted "when the canoes proved to be too heavily loaded with gifts...." McCoy predicted, correctly, that the "stories told by returning voyagers [would be] enough to keep the [voyaging] tradition alive in the future."

Since these early days of "renaissance," many canoes have sailed the *metawal wool*. Unlike the beginning, when every voyage was recorded and remembered, these other trips during the last 30 years have achieved less fame. Yet the incredible accomplishments of the navigators and crew on every one of these trips is noteworthy. Many of these are documented in an article by Ridgell and Ikea in 1976 (?)<sup>13</sup>

Trips include Polowat to Guam with Rapwi in 1986; Polowat to Guam on the *Maelae* with Ikefai in 1990 or 1991, Satawal to Saipan with Mau Pailug in 1997 and Polowat to Saipan with Rapwi in 1998 or 1999.

It should be recalled when one speaks of the "renaissance of traditional navigation" during the last 30 years that Micronesians have been sailing throughout the Pacific for hundreds, probably thousands, of years. Archeologists now date early Man moving into the Pacific islands in areas around Australia from Southeast Asia between 20,000 and 50,000 years ago<sup>14</sup>. At that time the massive polar ice caps had siphoned enough water out of the world's oceans that the water level was some 130 meters lower than it is today. This greatly expanded the landmass of Southeast Asia into an area called "Sunda." The similarly-expanded Australia, that included both Tasmania and New Guinea, is known as "Sahul." The movement of Man from Sunda to Sahul required significant open-water crossings across deep ocean trenches that have not been above water for the past 30 million years. This movement implies purposeful voyaging and if verified will be the earliest evidence of purposeful voyaging any place on earth. From these areas Man moved out into the more remote islands of the Pacific some 2000-5000 years ago. As Kirsch<sup>15</sup> points out, "the history of man in the Pacific must be first of all the history of navigation." And history carries us far back indeed.

Perhaps the greatest stimulant to the modern study of traditional navigation came from Hawaii's Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS). This society, founded in 1973, took as an early project the construction and sailing of a traditional Hawaiian double-hulled canoe. When their first canoe, the *Hokule'a*, was completed, the Society turned to Satawal in the Carolines for help in navigation. At that time there were several navigators alive who were capable of navigating the envisioned trip from Maui to Tahiti, though none of them had ever been to either of these islands. Hippour was one. Repunglap and Repunglug were others. The PVS selected Mau Piailug, perhaps as some Saipan Carolinians relate, because "Mau could speak some English."<sup>16</sup>

The Maui-Tahiti trip, some 6000 miles in 33 days, was completed in 1976. By 1980 Nainoa Thompson, a young man of part-Hawaiian descent, was able, under Mau's tutelage, to navigate the trip by himself. Since these historic voyages, two other canoes, the *Makali'i* and the *Hawai'iloa*, have been built in Hawaii. These large ships, navigated in the traditional manner but often accompanied by modern "chase ships" and navigational back up, have sailed throughout the Pacific, from Alaska to Japan.

While the interest and financial support generated by the large Hawaii program has undoubtedly advanced the study of and support for traditional navigation, these huge and prolonged voyages have little in common with the smaller, often family-oriented, voyages of those canoes sailing the *metawal wool*. Some of the obvious differences include: Size – twin 60-foot outriggers on the Hawaiian canoes vs. a single outrigger on a 24-26 foot Carolinian canoe; Manpower – 13-14 on the *Hokule'a* vs. 4-8 on the Carolinian canoes (though some canoes, such as Piailug's 31-foot *Hokule'a Simeon*, claimed to be the largest in Micronesia, are able to carry as many as 12-14 on a voyage); "Comfort" – the *Hokule'a* has sleeping areas, a kitchen, even a designated "toilet." Carolinian canoes have no shelter at all; sleeping is done sitting, or leaning, and is mostly napping for short periods; Lastly "mission," – the Hawaiian canoes typically travel for months at a time, visiting almost as "ships of state," carrying the

wishes and hopes and pride of the native Hawaiian people. Carolinian canoes travel shorter distances, though trips can take up to a month, and typically are more "family affairs," trips taken to visit one's relatives, or to obtain supplies.

Two voyages have already been completed in this new century. A small voyage of two canoes sailed from Polowat to Guam in May-June, 2001. The larger canoe, *Halametam*, was captained by Manny Sikau on the voyage to Guam; the return to Polowat (from Saipan) was captained by Sato Ainam. A smaller canoe, the *Quest*, was captained by Sandy Onopey.

This trip was notable in that the *Quest* had been purchased by the recently-formed UOG (University of Guam) Traditional Seafaring Society in Guam. Several members of that organization flew to Chuuk in order to accompany the voyage. In Chuuk the crew was met by disappointment after disappointment as they tried to find a boat to carry them the 120 miles west to Polowat. After a week several of the potential crew needed to abandon the voyage and return to Guam. Three intrepid sailors, Manny Sikau (a *palu* now living in Guam), Dr. Larry Cunningham and Tom Taisipic, were able to wait and finally made it to Polowat after their protracted delay. They sailed in two canoes from Polowat to Guam, and after a week sailed on to Saipan (this time including some of the Guam sailors who had been unable to wait on Chuuk). The trip to Saipan was included because of the importance the crew felt of continuing the "tradition" of Saipan-Polowat voyaging<sup>17</sup>. The canoes and crew landed at Tanapag (*Talabwog* in the Carolinian dialect) where they were "hosted" by their relatives and the Tanapag community.

A much larger voyage, six canoes in all, sailed from the Carolines to Saipan in April 2000. This trip, called the "Millennium 2000 Canoe Voyage," joined three canoes from Satawal with three canoes from Polowat. Official sponsors of this trip, the Office of Carolinian Affairs, envisioned all six canoes sailing together after meeting on tiny Pikelot, an atoll roughly mid-way between Satawal and Polowat.

That isn't quite what happened.

The Carolinian community on Saipan has many close relationships with family both on Satawal and on Polowat. When the Carolinians sailed to Saipan in the 1800s, they came in several waves<sup>18</sup>. The first likely came from the outer islands of Chuuk and settled on Tinian. Later these Carolinians, called the *rapagaoor* (“people from outside the reef”) moved to Saipan to areas around the current village of Tanapag. Because this village is in the north of Saipan, these Carolinians are locally known as “the northerners.”

Another group of Carolinians, called the *rafalawasch* (“people from the lagoon”) sailed from the outer islands of Yap and settled directly on Saipan, in areas around Oleai (taken from “Woleai,” one of Yap’s outer islands). These Carolinians are called “the southerners.”

These two groups of Carolinians still maintain their cultural identity. The “official” Carolinian community, typified by the Office of Carolinian Affairs (OCA), tends to be “southern” in its orientation (it is rumored that there has never been a “northerner” employed by the OCA). Most of the canoe voyages that have visited Saipan have been received and hosted by the OCA at their *utt* in Garapan.

Over the years, Mau Piailug has made many trips from Satawal to Saipan. Mau has several relatives, including two sons, living on Saipan and at one time Mau had been invited by Lino Olopai to teach canoe building and navigation to young people on Saipan. Mau, being from Satawal, has family connections with the “southern” community. Mau has also become something of a Pacific celebrity following his accomplishments with the *Hokule’a*. He received an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Hawaii and is seen by many Westerners as “the” master navigator. This is quite in contrast to the title given Mau by author Stephen Thomas in his 1987 book, *The Last Navigator*. In that book (considered highly controversial by the Carolinian community<sup>19</sup>) Thomas saw little evidence of interest in the navigation arts, and he indeed saw Mau as one of the “last navigators.” How things have changed since then!

When planning a canoe trip to Saipan in spring, 2000, Mau suggested inviting several

Saipan Carolinians to accompany the voyage as a way of supporting their cultural pride and knowledge. Mau invited several local residents, including Joe Ruak, a young Carolinian from Tanapag, to accompany him.

At about the same time, Manipi Rapung, a paramount chief of Polowat and an initiated navigator, or *palu* (like Mau), was planning a similar voyage. He too suggested including Saipan Carolinians and asked his nephew, Mario Benito, a cameraman for the cable television network on Saipan, to invite several individuals.

Joe Ruak and Mario Benito are friends, and when they discovered that both voyages were being planned for the same time, they realized this could be a historic opportunity. Satawal and Polowat are traditional rivals. Canoes from these two atolls have not sailed together in recorded history, at least over 100 years. Navigators from Satawal, including Mau, are mostly trained in the *Wareyang* school of navigation. Those from Polowat, including Manipi, are mostly trained in the *Fanur* school. These schools are similar, but not identical, and it was not likely they would want to share their secret knowledge with navigators from a different school<sup>20</sup>.

The Saipan Carolinian community saw this as an opportunity to bring the two communities, north and south, closer together. As a gesture, it was agreed that all of the canoes would land at Tanapag. The village of Tanapag agreed to construct a new *utt* to house all of the sailors for the traditional period of isolation that follows such a prolonged voyage.

Conflicts arose almost from the beginning. OCA felt their office needed to be “in charge” to coordinate such a historic arrival. They envisioned six canoes sailing together into the Saipan lagoon, arriving with great fanfare and greeted by “official” Saipan. OCA wanted it clear that the canoes all needed to land together, during the daytime, when they (OCA) were prepared.

OCA also wanted to “help” select the individuals from Saipan that would be involved. Initially there were over 20 interested parties (including the author) for 15 slots. OCA proposed a drawing, but Mau and Manipi (through

Mario) firmly reminded OCA that the navigators, and no one else, would have final say in who was allowed on the voyage. Period. This initially caused some hard feelings, especially since several non-Carolinians had been invited by the navigators (the final roster from Saipan included 4 Chamorros and one Caucasian. One woman, the wife of one of Mau's sons, was also invited<sup>21</sup>. The rest were Carolinian).

By the time of departure, 10 individuals were flying to Yap to sail with Mau from Satawal. Five were flying to Chuuk to sail with Manipi from Polowat. The idea was that both groups would meet on tiny Pikelot<sup>22</sup>, between Satawal and Polowat, and from there sail together the 400-450 miles north to Saipan.

Once again, that isn't quite how things turned out.

Daily radio contact between Satawal and Polowat finally settled on a day of departure for Pikelot. The three canoes from Polowat, *Solo*, *Omwar* and *Sailoam* set out late in the day on Friday, April 7. Winds were good and the canoes arrived without incident by the middle of the next afternoon. The Polowat crew apologized that the trip had taken several extra hours because "the current was against us." We swam to shore (trying to ignore the half dozen sharks circling our canoes) and pulled the canoes high on the beach to await the arrival of Satawal.

By Sunday evening the Satawal canoes had still not arrived. Attempts to establish radio contact were unsuccessful and some of the Polowat crew suspected that the canoes had not even left Satawal yet. Others worried that Satawal had sailed directly to Saipan to arrive first. To make things worse, Manipi had been watching the sky and weather all day and announced that the canoes needed to leave no later than the next day, Monday, with or without Satawal.

I was rudely awakened at 3 am by someone shaking my shoulder. "Satawal is here. The canoes have arrived!" It was true. Off shore we could just make out the sails of three canoes, illuminated from time to time by flashlights shown on the sails, the typical way of signaling when at sea.

The next morning some of the Satawal crew swam ashore. They had been sailing, against the wind, for the last three days and were exhausted. But Mau agreed with Manipi; the voyage needed to continue at once. This caused even more hard feelings – the Polowat crew had 2 days of rest and turtle hunting on Pikelot. The Satawal crews had 3 days tacking against the wind. "Tacking sucks" became the mantra of the Satawal crews.

Just after leaving Pikelot, one of the Satawal boats broke a steering oar and cracked a mast. By the time the damage was repaired, the Polowat boats had sailed out of sight. From the Satawal point of view they had been abandoned. From the Polowat point of view, Satawal didn't really want to sail with them in the first place. Since there was no way to communicate with each other, these emotions were allowed to ferment for the next several days. So much for "sailing together."

Four days later we arrived at Tinian. The crew kept looking for the high peaks of Guam, but we were apparently too far to the east. The first land we saw, or the first land the crew saw, was a small flat dot on the horizon early on the 4<sup>th</sup> day. "That's Rota," announced Rocinto, the captain of *Omwar* on which I rode. How do you know? "Because," he answered. "That is where Rota is."<sup>23</sup>

Rocinto had never seen Rota, the southernmost island in the Marianas chain save Guam. But he was right. It was Rota, which became apparent as the day progressed (and I could finally see what everyone else had seen for hours) and the telltale shape of Rota's Wedding Cake Mountain became clear. We sailed on into the night and began to see the lights of Tinian (flashing from the new Voice of America radio antenna) and the airport beacon atop Saipan's Mt. Tapochau. The flashing beacon was visible for many miles as it illuminated the bottoms of the clouds above.

The navigation to Saipan seemed pretty much a straight shot. We never tacked at all, but enjoyed constant NE trade winds carrying us directly towards the North Star, the only celestial landmark I knew! I began to recognize the large wave from the east that Rocinto used for guidance during the daytime, but I never

could make out the other 4-5 waves the men on board tried vainly to show me. Rocinto occasionally consulted an aging ship's compass, but I never saw any change in the direction or sailing course following these infrequent (about once or twice a day) glances. The rest of the time the compass was kept covered in a protective sheet. All of the crew spoke excellent English, except Rocinto and his back up, another 70-year-old, Timote. The crew enjoyed naming the stars that rose and set and in turn and asked innumerable questions about Saipan. What was it like? What would they do? It was the first visit for all of them.

We communicated with the other two Polowat canoes by short-range walkie-talkie, or by shouting. We always kept in sight of one another, though the *Sailoam*, on its first long voyage, was considerably slower than the other canoes. Since that canoe had still not been named (*Sailoam* was chosen after arrival on Saipan), we irreverently nicknamed the canoe, "Beetlebaum," from an old Peter, Paul and Mary song. I was assured, however, that *Sailoam*, the first canoe carved by Pio Onopey, would eventually be the fastest canoe on Polowat, but first it needed to be broken in and "tuned up." At night we hung small "chemilume" glow sticks high on the rigging. These small colorful lights could be seen for hundreds of yards. In addition, every hour the navigators shined bright lights on their sails, visible for considerably greater distances. We sailed both night and day, only stopping when we waited for another canoe, or the one time we tore our sail in a sudden squall. Rocinto and Timote had it repaired in less than thirty minutes.

When we reached Tinian, just three miles south of Saipan, we were able to contact OCA by cellular phone. One of our voyagers, retired Chief Justice Ramon Villagomez, had carried his phone for just this purpose. We had not seen Satawal since we left Pikelot. No one had heard from them. Manipi had to make a difficult decision. It was traditional, he told us, to sail directly to Saipan and not stop. It was also traditional to sail in no matter what the time of the day or night<sup>24</sup>. But this all went against the wishes of OCA. Manipi worried that if he

stopped on Tinian and waited, the Satawal canoes might sail by unseen and arrive on Saipan without us.

But he decided to wait, and so early in the morning, Saturday before Palm Sunday, we landed on the beach of Tinian. A small crowd had gathered despite the early hour, food was already on hand (a welcome change from our diet of coconut, breadfruit, and more coconut and more breadfruit...). We took hot showers, washed clothes, drank cold drinks and hot coffee. And waited.

By Sunday night OCA had located the Satawal canoes. They had stopped on Rota and needed to make more canoe repairs to a leaking hull<sup>25</sup>. Special glues were flown from Saipan and arrangements, under the constant prodding of OCA, made to rendezvous early in the morning on Monday, April 17, and sail together into the Saipan lagoon.

The Polowat boats left Tinian at 9 PM and drifted off shore, waiting. By midnight the Satawal boats had not been sighted and we began to sail slowly towards Saipan. By dawn the Satawal boats had still not appeared and cutting remarks were beginning to be heard – "Mau has his White Horse, but Polowat has mustangs...."<sup>26</sup> It was verified by radio that another rumor was true – one of the Saipan voyagers had brought a CNMI flag along and planned to raise it on Mau's boat so it would lead the boats into the lagoon. Some from Polowat wanted to send for the biggest CNMI flag they could find; others wanted to sail in and not wait. "It's all up to the old man," one of the sailors counseled. It was up to Manipi how to react to these concerns. The "old man" handled things with amazing diplomacy. It was recognized by the Carolinian community, at least those from Tanapag where the boats would land, that Manipi was Mau's senior and received "*pwo*," initiation, before Mau, so that Manipi was by rights the proper person to be honored and be allowed to land first. "Now we will see if Mau is Carolinian," they muttered.

Mau was, and is, Carolinian. But he had to endure a lot. OCA decided the Satawal boats, just reaching Tinian, "needed a hand" and sent motorboats to tow the Satawal canoes to Saipan<sup>27</sup>.

As the six canoes were led into the lagoon, sails down as escort vessels guided the canoes through the narrow channel to Tanapag, someone on the *Hokule'a Simeon* raised the CNMI flag. The escort boat towing the *Hokule'a* speeded up and for a time looked like it would leave its place in the procession and rush straightaway to the beach. But it slowed at the last moment and Manipi, paramount chief of Polowat, was carried ashore to the cheers of hundreds of well wishers, including the officials from OCA. Millennium 2000 had arrived.

For the next three days all of the sailors remained the guests of Tanapag. We slept and ate in the *utt*, visited by a constant stream of school children and curious tourists. On Wednesday, April 19, the *atari* ceremony was held. This ceremony, the traditional end of a long voyage<sup>28</sup>, marks the end of the voyage and permits the voyagers to return to their homes and families. Manipi chanted the traditional ceremony and a small offering of food was placed on the outrigger of the canoes. Then there was a final feast, with the crew and initiated navigators eating by themselves at a separate table.

Following the *atari*, the Satawal crews moved their canoes from Tanapag down to the Carolinian *utt* in Garapan. Many still slept in the Tanapag *utt*, others slept with families or friends. Someone always slept near the canoes.

Mau and the crews of the *White Horse* and *Hokule'a Simeon* returned to Satawal after a month of almost-constant parties and banquets. The small *M/S Niemuun* (with the leaking hull), bought by Saipan's Arts Council, stayed on Saipan.

The Polowat canoes remained for two more months, and even talked of staying longer until Manipi and Teo Onopey (Mayor of Polowat, one of the captains) insisted that the canoes sail while the weather permitted. They sailed long after the typical season, leaving Saipan in July, but were able to make the voyage without incident.

The sheer number of voyages in recent years verifies that McCoy's "renaissance" has indeed happened. When the voyagers depart they now speak of "when we return," not "if we return." Virtually every young boy I met on

Polowat is studying and hopes to become a navigator. Happily, Mau Pailug will not be "the last navigator."<sup>29</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 McCoy, Michael, "A Renaissance in Carolinian-Marianas Voyaging," Polynesian Society Memoir No. 39, Wellington, NZ, 1976.
- 2 Cited in McCoy 1976: 129 (Letter from Fr. Juan Cantova 1721).
- 3 McCoy 1976:130.
- 4 McCoy 1976:129.
- 5 Dr. Benusto R. Kaipat, cited in McCoy 1976:129.
- 6 Lewis, David, "We, the Navigators," University of Hawaii Press, 1972.
- 7 McCoy 1976:131.
- 8 McCoy 1976:135.
- 9 McCoy 1976:136.
- 10 McCoy 1976:136-137.
- 11 McCoy 1976:138.
- 12 McCoy 1976:138.
- 13 Ridgell, Riley and Manny Ikea, "The Persistence of Carolinian Seafaring," ISLA: The Journal of Micronesian Studies, ? date.
- 14 Howe, KR, "Where The Waves Fall," University of Hawaii Press, 1984.
- 15 Kirsch, Patrick Vinton, "On The Road of the Winds," University of California Press, 2000.
- 16 Personal communication.
- 17 Dr. Larry Cunningham, personal communication.
- 18 Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, personal communication, 2000.
- 19 Criticisms shared with the author were as follows: 1. "Mau Pailug is not the last navigator, nor was he the first navigator. Why does he take that title?" (It seems to the author that this title was given by Thomas, not claimed by Mau). 2. "Mau is not a chief. He is from one of the lower clans on Satawal. Why does Thomas call Mau a chief?" ( In my reading of Thomas' book it seemed Thomas was clear in showing that Mau was often in conflict with the traditional chiefs. I do not recall Thomas calling Mau a chief.), 3. "Thomas wrote down many things that were told him in confidence. These things were not to be written in a book." (Here is a valid criticism, and one that gets to the heart of any cross-cultural study. For a Western writer, it is often assumed that anything we are told is for publication. For others some things may be told but are not to be passed on. It is critically-important to be very clear when obtaining traditional in-

formation, especially knowledge that may be considered sacred or secret, if it is permissible to publish this information).

<sup>20</sup> Today some navigators, including Teo Onopey, mayor of Polowat, have received training in both schools. Some comes from their father's family, and some from their mother's. Boys can be taught by their relatives on either side. The same applies to membership in a canoe house that can come from either, or both, parents.

<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of a woman was not without controversy. While women and children accompanied voyages in the past (certainly they must have to populate the islands, including Saipan), voyages in recent years have been mostly men's affairs. Bringing women or children meant bringing an extra male relative along to assure their safety and modesty.

<sup>22</sup> Pikelot, or "Pik," is a small uninhabited atoll 100 miles northwest of Polowat. It is the traditional "setting-off place" for voyages from Polowat to Saipan. For voyages from Satawal the traditional setting-off island is tiny West Fasu, similarly-located about 100 miles northwest of Satawal. Voyagers rest on these small atolls, collect turtles, and watch the weather and wind before setting out on their long open-ocean voyage to the Marianas. Trade winds typically blow from the northeast and so both trips, Polowat to Pikelot and Satawal to West Fasu, are relatively easy to sail without tacking. To sail from Satawal to Pikelot, however, is directly into the wind and requires considerable tacking. This is not an easy trip.

<sup>23</sup> Rota was the first land seen since leaving Pikelot, and almost the first sign of life. No fish were caught, though a line and lure were pulled much of the trip. A single fishing trawler was seen the evening of the third day but it did not appear they saw us. Two guided missiles rose from the ocean a half-mile away and exploded over our heads somewhere just south of Guam. Later we learned that live-fire exercises were being held by the US military. We did not see many high-flying commercial planes, but they saw us and radioed reports of our location to Saipan, keeping OCA aware of our progress, especially as we neared the Marianas.

<sup>24</sup> Maniapi Repung, personal communication, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> The leaking hull was on the small canoe purchased by the Arts Council on Saipan. This canoe, it was carefully pointed out, was not made on Satawal. It had been made on Woleai and

many of the Satawal crew felt that it was an old and not very well-made canoe.

<sup>26</sup> The traditional rivalry of Satawal and Polowat has already been mentioned. In addition, the Satawal canoes included a small canoe from Woleai, *M/S Niemuun*, that sailed very slowly, and the large *Hokule'a Simeon* that was heavily laden with 13 sailors and their gear. In contrast, the canoes from Polowat were all full-size and carried only 7-8 men. Originally only two canoes were planned in the Polowat group, but after a test sail Maniapi decided that an additional canoe was needed to prevent overloading. Thus all three Polowat canoes were of similar size and capability, but the three Satawal canoes were each quite different. The faster *White Horse* was held back by the small *M/S Niemuun* and the heavily-laden *Hokule'a Simeon*.

<sup>27</sup> The *White Horse* separated from the two slower canoes near Tinian and sailed all of the way to Saipan. The other canoes were towed part-way.

<sup>28</sup> The *atari* and *atiba* ceremonies are traditional rituals following canoe voyages. During preparation for the Millennium 2000 voyage, Vic Igitol, traditional chief of Tanapag eloquently spoke of the need for cultural knowledge. "We have lost our language," Vic said. "We no longer remember *atiba* or *atari*. We ask you to help us remember." The *atiba* or *atitim* ceremony is the traditional welcome when a voyage lands. Prayers are offered on the canoes before coming to the beach at places in the lagoon known to the navigators. The conch shell is blown. Every voyager wears a coconut frond necklace that is not to be removed until after the canoes have safely landed. Similar fronds bedeck the ends of the canoes as well as the arms and ankles of the navigators. Following this formal welcome, the voyagers are hosted within the *utt* where they will remain for the next several days until the *atari* ritual ends this period of isolation. The traditional period of isolation is 4-5 days, but in this case it was reduced to 3 to avoid conflict with important Holy Week celebrations beginning on the Thursday before Easter.

The *atari* ritual is a brief chant, an offering of food placed on the canoe outrigger, and then a feast where the voyagers, along with any initiated navigators (men who have received "*pno*") eat apart from the others. Following this ritual the men are permitted to return to their homes and families. This period is seen as a time to allow the sea spirits to return to the sea so they will not harm those on land. Psychologically,



this period of readjustment may have an important function to help these voyagers adjust gradually to their “normal” lives.

- <sup>29</sup> Though Mau Pailug may not be the last navigator, the ranks of the master navigators grows smaller. Hippour, Mario’s uncle, died a few months after our visit. In addition, Rocinto, captain of the *Ommar*, “my” canoe, died soon after. Shortly after Rocinto’s death, the *Ommar* and Rocinto’s canoe house were both destroyed by an unusual fire fanned by a “whirlwind.” In Carolinian belief, whirlwinds can represent supernatural forces.

#### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT**

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