

THIS IS THE FIFTEENTH INSTALLMENT IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES CONCERNING LIFE IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN AS A WHOLE. THEY ARE BEING PUBLISHED EXCLUSIVELY BY THE HOURGLASS AND WRITTEN BY E.H. BRYAN, JR., WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE STAFF OF THE PACIFIC SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION CENTER AT THE BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM IN HONOLULU, OF WHICH HE IS MANAGER.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

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THE DAILY LIFE OF A MARSHALLESE FAMILY MAY HAVE SEEMED CAREFREE AND UNHURRIED, BUT THERE WAS A NEVER-ENDING ROUND OF CONCERNS AND DUTIES. MOST OF THESE HAD TO DO WITH PROVIDING FOOD, SHELTER, AND CLOTHING. ONE PART OF THE YEAR WAS VERY MUCH LIKE ANOTHER, BUT CERTAIN OF THE FOOD CROPS WERE SEASONAL, AND IF ONE WERE TO HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT ALL YEAR, A PART OF THE PRODUCE SHOULD BE PRESERVED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

MEMBERS OF A HOUSEHOLD WORKED FOR THE COMMON GOOD, AND THERE WAS A DEFINITE DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE SEXES. IN GENERAL, THE MORE DIFFICULT, STRENUOUS, OR HAZARDOUS WORK WAS PERFORMED BY THE MEN. THIS INCLUDED THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES AND CANOES, IN FACT ALL WOODWORK. MEN NAVIGATED THE CANOES AND DID ALL THE OFF-SHORE FISHING. THEY MADE FISH LINE AND ROPE FROM PLANT FIBERS AND FISHHOOKS FROM SHELL, WOOD AND BONE. THEY GATHERED THE FOOD AND DID WHATEVER CULTIVATING WAS NECESSARY. THE MOST STRENUOUS FORM OF THIS WAS GROWING TARO IN PITS DUG DOWN TO THE WATER TABLE. TO THESE ACTIVITIES, IN BYGONE DAYS, WAS ADDED FIGHTING.

WOMEN BORE AND LOOKED AFTER THE CHILDREN, DID THE COOKING, GATHERED DRY COCONUT HUSKS AND OTHER WOOD FOR FUEL, KEPT THE HOUSES AND GROUNDS CLEAN, PICKED UP PANDANUS LEAVES AND MADE THATCH, WHICH WAS TIED TO HOUSE FRAMES BY MEN, PLAITED MATS AND BASKETS AND GATHERED THE FIBER MATERIAL FOR THESE. AFTER THE ERA OF TRADERS BEGAN, THEY SEWED CLOTH AND MADE CLOTHING, WHICH THEY KEPT CLEAN WITH MUCH WASHING. WITH THE HELP OF THE CHILDREN, THEY BROUGHT WATER-WORN PEBBLES FROM THE BEACH TO USE AS COVERING FOR HOUSE FLOORS AND GROUNDS. THEY OFTEN APPEARED BUSIER THAN THE MEN.

CONCERNING THIS SUBJECT, HERR HERNSCHEIM, IN HIS HAMBURG LECTURE IN 1886 SAID: "THE POSITION OF THE WIFE IS NOT A HARD ONE. SHE DOES NOT HAVE TO WORK IN THE FIELDS, AS ON OTHER ISLANDS..., BUT SHE IS OCCUPIED WITH WEAVING MATS AND SHE UNDERSTANDS HOW TO INTERWEAVE DAINTY DESIGNS;..SHE DECORATES HERSELF AND HER HUSBAND DAILY WITH FRESH FLOWER WREATHS, AND HELPS HIM CUT THE COPRA."

THE MARSHALLESE WERE EARLY RISERS. BY THE TIME IT WAS LIGHT, MOST MEMBERS OF A HOUSEHOLD WERE UP, BATHED, DRESSED AND ABOUT THEIR DUTIES. MEALS WERE IRREGULAR, MOST ADULTS EATING BUT TWICE A DAY, MORNING AND EVENING.

BREAKFAST (CALLED MABUNG) WAS A SIMPLE MEAL, EATEN INFORMALLY. MUCH OF THE FOOD MIGHT BE MATERIAL LEFT OVER FROM THE EVENING BEFORE, EATEN COLD AND WITH THE FINGERS. IF THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH LEFTOVERS (AND IN MANY COMMUNITIES FOOD WAS SELDOM OVER ABUNDANT, EXCEPT AT THE HEIGHT OF THE BREADFRUIT SEASON), THE MEN WOULD HASTEN OUT TO COLLECT COCONUTS OR WHATEVER VEGETABLE FOOD WAS AVAILABLE, OR TO CATCH A FEW SMALL FISHES. WHATEVER REQUIRED COOKING WAS FRESHLY COOKED IN THE SIMPLEST POSSIBLE MANNER. IN LOCALITIES WHERE COCONUT PALMS WERE ABUNDANT, SAP WAS COLLECTED FROM CUT BLOSSOM STALKS, CAUGHT IN EMPTY COCONUT SHELLS AND, LATER, BOTTLES, AND THIS SWEETISH FLUID, CALLED JEKARO, USUALLY DILUTED WITH WATER, ADDED MUCH TO THE MORNING MEAL, ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHILDREN.

BREAKFAST WAS SOON OVER, AND THE MEN HURRIED AWAY TO ATTEND TO HEAVIER WORK BEFORE THE HEAT OF THE DAY. TO THE OUTSIDER THERE MIGHT APPEAR TO BE NO ROUTINE, BUT DEPENDING UPON THE NEEDS OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE STATE OF THE WEATHER, THE MEN GATHERED FOOD, CULTIVATED CROPS, WENT FISHING, OR WORKED ON A NEW HOUSE OR CANOE. SOME OF THESE WERE GROUP ENTERPRISES, MAKING USE OF MANY HANDS, AS IN HOUSE BUILDING.

IN YEARS PAST, MANY MARSHALLESE HOUSES WERE SMALL AND RECTANGULAR, PERHAPS 12 BY 15 FEET. THEY WERE BUILT EITHER DIRECTLY ON THE GROUND, THE EARTH FLOOR COVERED WITH WATER-WORN PEBBLES AND MATS, OR WITH A PLANK FLOOR RAISED ABOVE THE GROUND AS MUCH AS FOUR FEET. THE SPACE BENEATH SERVED FOR STORAGE OR AS A COOL WORKING PLACE. THE ROOF WAS THATCHED WITH DRY PANDANUS LEAVES, WHICH MIGHT ALSO BE USED ON THE WALLS, OR THESE MIGHT BE paneled WITH PLAITED COCONUT LEAVES, WITH OPENINGS FOR LIGHT AND VENTILATION. SUCH A HOUSE COULD BE BUILT BY A FAMILY GROUP WITHIN A WEEK. THE HEAVY WORK OF CUTTING, SHAPING AND ERECTING THE TIMBERS TOOK MOST OF THE TIME. IF A LARGER HOUSE WAS BEING BUILT, IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO OBTAIN THE ASSISTANCE OF OTHER HOUSEHOLDS, USUALLY RELATIVES OR NEIGHBORS. COMPLETION OF A HOUSE WAS CELEBRATED BY A FEAST, PREPARED BY RELATIVES OF THE OWNER AND ENJOYED BY ALL WHO HAD SHARED IN THE WORK.

DURING THE WAR, ON SOME ATOLLS SO MANY OF THE HOUSES WERE DESTROYED THAT THEIR REPLACEMENT TAXED THE RESOURCES OF THE ENVIRONMENT. AS A RESULT SHACKS WERE MADE OF A MISCELLANEOUS VARIETY OF SALVAGED MATERIALS, AND WERE NEITHER TYPICAL NOR ATTRACTIVE.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MINIMUM OF FURNITURE IN A MARSHALLESE HOUSE. A PLAIN WOODEN CHEST MIGHT HOLD THE FAMILY POSSESSIONS. MATS SERVED AS A BED, AND WOULD BE ROLLED UP WHEN NOT IN USE. A HAND SEWING MACHINE WOULD BE A PRIZED POSSESSION. A KEROSENE LAMP OR LANTERN WOULD HANG FROM A NAIL. TABLES AND CHAIRS WERE VERY RARE, THE OCCUPANTS PREFERRING TO SIT ON THE MAT FLOOR.

COOKING WAS DONE UNDER A SMALL STRUCTURE OUTSIDE AND USUALLY A FEW YARDS AWAY FROM THE HOUSE. AT ONE END OF THIS WOULD BE THE EARTH-OVEN, A DEPRESSION IN THE GROUND A FOOT OR SO DEEP, CONTAINING CORAL ROCKS. HOW IT WAS USED WILL BE NOTED LATER.

CANOES WERE BUILT IN OPEN SHELTERS ALONG THE LAGOON SHORE. THEIR CONSTRUCTION MIGHT ALSO REQUIRE THE ASSISTANCE OF A NUMBER OF PERSONS.

EVERY MAN IN A VILLAGE COULD HANDLE A CANOE AND WAS ACQUAINTED WITH FISHING TECHNIQUES, OF WHICH THERE WERE SEVERAL. THOSE WHO WERE MORE SKILLFUL OR SUCCESSFUL THAN OTHERS MIGHT EXCHANGE THEIR SURPLUS CATCH WITH OTHERS. ONE OF THE VARIOUS FISHING PROHIBITIONS WAS THAT NO ONE SHOULD EAT A FISH HE HIMSELF HAD CAUGHT.

PERHAPS THE CHIEF METHOD OF CANOE FISHING WAS BY TROLLING A SPECIAL TYPE OF HOOK BEHIND A CANOE. THIS TROLLING HOOK (FIG. 179) WAS MADE OF PEARL SHELL, THE SHANK BEING A BROAD SECTION OF THE HINGE PART, AND THE LONG, SICKLE-SHAPED POINT LASHED TO THE FLATTER END. A HACKLE OF HIBISCUS FIBERS EXTENDS OUT FROM THE END OF THE SHANK BELOW THE POINT, HELD BY THE SAME LASHING THAT HOLDS THE POINT. APPARENTLY THE LINE WAS FASTENED TO THE POINT, BUT WAS ALSO LASHED TO THE OTHER END OF THE SHANK THROUGH A HORIZONTAL HOLE IN A RIDGE ON THE SHELL. THE TROLLING HOOKS MEASURE ABOUT 4 OR 5 INCHES IN LENGTH, AND THE POINT IS TWO INCHES OR MORE HIGH. THEY WERE USED CHIEFLY TO CATCH LARGE FISHES, SUCH AS TUNA.

OTHER HOOK AND LINE FISHING WAS DONE BY WEIGHTED DROP LINES FROM A CANOE, OR CASTING FROM SHORE BY MEANS OF A POLE. FISH TRAPS WERE MADE OF THE SLENDER, WIRY BRANCHES OF SUCH PLANTS AS *Pemphis acidula*, CALLED KENGI OR NGIENGIE OR *Clerodendron inerme*, UJEJ TO THE MARSHALLESE. THESE WERE CYLINDRICAL IN SHAPE, TWO OR THREE FEET LONG AND ABOUT THE SAME IN DIAMETER, CLOSED AT ONE END AND WITH A FUNNEL LEADING IN FROM THE OTHER, THROUGH WHICH THE FISH COULD SWIM IN BUT NOT FIND ITS WAY OUT. THESE COULD BE PLACED BETWEEN TWO CORAL HEADS IN ONE OR TWO FATHOMS OF WATER, NEAR THE EDGE OF A REEF, THE FUNNEL OPENING TOWARD SHORE. THEY COULD BE BAITED WITH COCONUT MEAT, A HERMIT CRAB, AN ALGAE-COVERED ROCK, OR THE FLESH OF VARIOUS FISH. SPENCER TINKER, DIRECTOR OF THE WAIKIKI AQUARIUM, HAS DESCRIBED TWO FISH TRAPS WHICH HE OBSERVED ON LIKIEP ATOLL. HE POINTS OUT THAT FISHING WITH TRAPS DOES NOT REQUIRE A BOAT OR EXPOSURE TO THE SEA; THEY CAN BE TENDED BY ONLY A FEW PERSONS, AND THAT FISHES STAY ALIVE IN THE TRAPS UNTIL NEEDED.

IN RECENT YEARS, MODERN NETS, THROW NETS, LINES, HOOKS AND LURES HAVE TAKEN THE PLACE OF ABORIGINAL FISHING APPARATUS TO A LARGE EXTENT. ALSO, IT IS SAID THAT NOW FISHING OUTSIDE THE ATOLL LAGOON IS MORE FOR SPORT THAN FOR SUBSISTENCE. OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER ARE CONSIDERED THE BEST MONTHS FOR FISHING.

IN OLDEN DAYS, WOMEN NOT ONLY WERE PROHIBITED FROM CANOE FISHING, BUT WERE NOT EVEN PERMITTED TO LOOK ON OR TO DO CERTAIN KINDS OF WORK, SUCH AS PLAATING FIBERS, WHILE THEIR HUSBANDS WERE FISHING.

THERE IS ONE FORM OF SHORE FISHING, HOWEVER, IN WHICH EVERYBODY TOOK PART WITH ENTHUSIASM. HERR HERNSCHEIM GAVE A HUMOROUS ACCOUNT OF THIS IN HIS 1886 HAMBURG LECTURE: - "DURING BAD WEATHER OR ON RAINY DAYS THEY FORGOT ABOUT FISHING...BUT ON BEAUTIFUL DAYS, AND ESPECIALLY AT CERTAIN SEASONS OF THE YEAR, THE CROWNS OF PALM TREES AT THE BEACH WERE OCCUPIED BY BOYS FROM MORNING TO EVENING. AS SOON AS THEIR SHARP EYES DISCOVERED A GROUP OF FISHES THEY GAVE A SIGN AND THE USUALLY PHLEGMATIC PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, TURNED INTO FAST RUNNERS. SOME MOVED THE CANOES INTO THE WATER AND ENCIRCLED THE FISH, CHASING THEM TOWARD THE BEACH; OTHERS CARRYING PALM LEAVES AND SECTIONS OF NET, FORMED A LIVING CHAIN, SURROUNDING THE FISH IN A HALF CIRCLE AS SOON AS THEY WERE IN SHALLOW WATER. THE CHAIN WAS REINFORCED WITH STONES AND LEAVES, AND WHERE THE FISHES TRIED TO BREAK THROUGH, THEY WERE CHASED BACK WITH JOYFUL CRIES. AT EBB TIDE, WHEN ONLY A LITTLE WATER COVERS THE REEF, THE FISHERMEN GRABBED THE FISH, SPEARED THEM, OR USED NETS, BASKETS, HATS OR WHATEVER WAS AVAILABLE TO BRING IN THE CATCH. ALL DIFFERENCES OF RANK WERE FORGOTTEN. KABU, THE KING, JUMPED EAGERLY AND BUSILY IN SPITE OF HIS REMARKABLE WEIGHT, LIKE HIS SERVANTS OR THE AUSTERE MISSIONARY, WHO SEEMED NOT TO NOTICE THE NAKED GIRLS, WHO IN THEIR ENTHUSIASM, USED THEIR DRESS MATS AS NETS AND BASKETS."

IN CERTAIN PLACES, FISHES WERE STUPEFIED BY USING THE GRATED KERNEL OF THE BARRINGTONIA FRUIT (WOIJ OR WUJ), A TREE WHICH NOW IS NOT COMMON IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS.

CANOE BUILDING CONTINUES TO BE AN INDUSTRY OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. SOME WATER CRAFT OF EUROPEAN TYPE ARE BEING MADE. THIS, LIKE HOUSE CONSTRUCTION, CAN BE AN INDIVIDUAL, A FAMILY, OR A GROUP UNDERTAKING, ENDING IN A FEAST.

WESTERN TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS ARE BEING SUBSTITUTED FOR THOSE OF MARSHALLESE MANUFACTURE. ALL BUT GONE ARE SHELL KNIVES, BONE NEEDLES, SHARK'S TOOTH AWLS, RAY-SKIN FILES, AND ADZES MADE OF MASSIVE TRIDACNA SHELL, SHAFTED TO WOODEN HANDLES. OCCASIONALLY ONE WILL SEE A BONE AWL (IN AJ) FOR PIERCING THATCH, A TRIDACNA SHELL POUNDER (RAKEIN NIN) FOR SOFTENING PANDANUS LEAF, A CORAL GRATER (BUKŪ) FOR ARROWROOT OR TARO, A PANDANUS SCRAPER (BEKA), A SHELL BREADFRUIT PEELER (KEKŌR), A COCONUT GRATER OR A BREADFRUIT PICKER, BUT THESE ARE FAST DISAPPEARING INTO THE HANDS OF COLLECTORS. MODERN CARPENTER'S TOOLS FROM JAPAN OR AMERICA HAVE HELPED THE MARSHALLESE TO BECOME EXCELLENT WOODWORKERS. FOREIGN VEHICLES, SUCH AS TWO-WHEELED PUSH CARTS AND BICYCLES ARE POPULAR AND LEND THEMSELVES TO THE DIRT ROADS AND PATHS FOUND IN EVERY VILLAGE.

MEN HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO FILL MOST OF THE NEW POSITIONS, SUCH AS VILLAGE OFFICES, THE PASTOR, SCHOOL TEACHER, STORE-KEEPER, AND MEDICAL AID; BUT WOMEN ARE TAKING AN INCREASING PART IN VILLAGE AFFAIRS.

MEN AND WOMEN COOPERATE IN VARIOUS JOBS, BUT SELDOM WORK TOGETHER. FOR EXAMPLE, WOMEN GATHER PANDANUS LEAVES AND PREPARE THE THATCH, BUT MEN TIE THIS TO THE HOUSE FRAME. MEN GATHER VEGETABLE FOODS AND DO MOST OF THE FISHING, AND WOMEN COOK THESE. IN MAKING COPRA, MEN HUSK THE COCONUTS AND MAY REMOVE THE KERNEL; WOMEN MAY CUT AND DRY THE KERNEL TO COPRA; AND FINALLY MEN SACK THE COPRA AND STORE IT IN WAREHOUSES.

IN GATHERING BREADFRUIT, YOUNG MEN AND BOYS CLIMB THE TREES AND EITHER PICK AND TOSS DOWN THE FRUITS TO PERSONS WAITING BELOW, OR PUSH THEM OFF WITH A POLE HAVING A FORK AT THE END. THEY ALSO CLIMB THE COCONUT PALMS AND PICK THE COCONUTS, ESPECIALLY THE GREEN DRINKING NUTS. HOWEVER, IN THE ABSENCE OF MALES, GIRLS HAVE ALMOST EQUAL ABILITY TO PERFORM THESE TASKS.

BUT TO GET BACK TO THE DAILY ROUND OF WORK. YOUNG CHILDREN PLAYED ABOUT THE HOUSE AND YARD, OR A GROUP OF THEM MIGHT GO TO THE LAGOON SHORE FOR A SWIM. MOST CHILDREN COULD SWIM EVEN BEFORE THEY COULD WALK. AT THIS AGE THEY GENERALLY WORE NO CLOTHING. NOWADAYS THE OLDER CHILDREN ATTEND THE VILLAGE SCHOOL, RETURNING HOME AT NOON FOR AN HOUR'S REST AND A BITE OF LUNCH. THEIR ELDERS SELDOM ATE A NOON MEAL, BUT ALL WHO COULD TOOK A SHORT REST IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY, IF POSSIBLE IN THE SHADE. THEY WERE SELDOM IDLE UNLESS SLEEPING. WHILE SITTING AND TALKING, MEN WOULD TWIST FIBERS INTO ROPE AND FISHLINE.

IN THE AFTERNOON THERE WOULD BE THE RENEWED GATHERING OF FOOD AND OTHER TASKS. THE WOMEN WOULD PREPARE THE EARTH OVEN (UM) AND LIGHT THE COOKING FIRES. THE FAVORITE WAY TO COOK WAS IN AN EARTH OVEN. A FIRE, USUALLY OF THE SHELLS AND HUSKS OF COCONUTS, CHEWED PANDANUS SEGMENTS, AND BITS OF DRY WOOD, WAS KINDLED IN THE CENTER OF THE SHALLOW EXCAVATION, AND THE CORAL ROCKS WHICH LINED IT. BY THE TIME THE FIRE HAD DIED DOWN THE ROCKS WERE HOT. LIVE EMBERS WERE REMOVED AND THE FOOD, USUALLY WRAPPED IN GREEN LEAVES, WAS PLACED AMONG THE HEATED STONES AND THEY WERE PUSHED UP AGAINST AND OVER IT. THE WHOLE DEPRESSION WAS COVERED WITH LEAVES AND MATS - TODAY SACKS. THIS TYPE OF OVEN DID A VERY THOROUGH JOB OF COOKING, EVEN TARO CORMS, WHICH REQUIRED A LOT OF COOKING TO RID THEM OF THE CALCIUM OXALATE CRYSTALS. THE FOOD COULD BE EATEN IN THE COOK HOUSE, OR IT COULD BE CARRIED TO SOME OTHER PART OF THE HOME, AWAY FROM SMOKE AND FLIES.

THE EVENING MEAL, CALLED KAIOTA, WAS THE MAIN MEAL OF THE DAY. NOT ONLY DID ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD EAT, BUT ANY FRIENDS OR VISITORS WHO HAPPENED TO BE PRESENT WERE ALSO INVITED TO PARTAKE. THE PRINCIPAL FOODS INCLUDED BREADFRUIT (IN SEASON) OR PRESERVED BREADFRUIT AT OTHER TIMES OF YEAR, TARO, AND DISHES MADE WITH THE ADDITION OF PANDANUS, ARROWROOT AND COCONUT; FISH COOKED IN VARIOUS WAYS AND OTHER FOODS FROM THE SEA AND REEF. PORK, CHICKEN, AND NOWADAYS RICE, ARE SERVED CHIEFLY AT FEASTS, CELEBRATING SUCH OCCASIONS AS A CHILD'S BIRTHDAY, A WEDDING, THE VISIT OF AN IMPORTANT GUEST, OR THE DEDICATION OF A NEW HOUSE OF CANOE. COCONUT WATER AND JEKARO WERE THE USUAL BEVERAGES. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT AN AVERAGE ADULT WOULD DRINK UP TO 15 COCONUTS A DAY, IF THE SUPPLY PERMITTED. THE IMMATURE KERNEL OF THESE WAS NOT WASTED, BUT WOULD BE THROWN TO THE PIGS AND CHICKENS, AFTER THE SHELL HAD BEEN SPLIT IN HALF.

AFTER EATING, THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD WOULD RELAX. THEY MIGHT TALK, SING, OR EVEN VISIT THEIR NEIGHBORS, BUT THERE WAS SELDOM ANY ORGANIZED FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT. THEY LOVED TO DANCE, BUT DANCING WAS IN CONFLICT WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. THE LAMP OR LANTERN IN THE MAIN HOUSE WAS LIGHTED, AND MIGHT BE LEFT BURNING ALL NIGHT, BUT USUALLY BY HALF PAST NINE ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD WOULD BE QUIET, AND MOST OF THEM ASLEEP.

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, SUNDAY HAS BEEN A DAY OF REST. CHURCH SERVICES ARE HELD IN THE MORNING AND CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR MEETINGS IN THE AFTERNOON. NOT EVERY PERSON WOULD BE A CHURCH MEMBER, BUT A LARGE PROPORTION WOULD GO TO CHURCH, DRESSED IN THEIR CLEANEST AND BEST CLOTHES. NO WORK WAS DONE EXCEPT IN AN EMERGENCY. THE DAY WAS SPENT IN LEISURE AND RELAXATION.

