

Work and Play in Kapingamarangi, Past and Present

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Introduction

Physical activity in a human culture may be interpreted in several ways: for example, as a basic need in the human organism; as goal-directed, leading to safety or comfort; or as exploration of the environment. It is possible to study physical activities in terms of their educational value, and their function in preparation for adulthood.

Malinowski (1944) reminds us that we also have a body of organized activities where regulated and established muscular and nervous activities seem to become an end in themselves. They may fulfill certain physiological needs, or may be termed artistic, and may have a definite place in a culture. Many of these activities can be classified loosely as sports, games, and dances. Though recreational activities in general are common to all cultures, they often manifest themselves in a specific way for a given society. They have been developed or adapted to certain needs. They are never meaningless.

“Culture-specific” physical activities, sports, games, and dances are vanishing rapidly. Contact with other peoples changes value systems and, consequently, whole ways of life. The people of Kapingamarangi² were rather isolated until 1914, and thus preserved some of their culture intact. The subsequent period shows that the rate at which the old recreational and physical activities are supplanted by imports has increased, so that at present new games may arrive on the atoll only a couple of years after they have been promoted in the United States or Japan (hula hoops, frisbies).

Still, the Kapingamarangi resist change and adapt new imports to their own concepts of value. They form an interesting example of a society in transition. It is the authors' purpose to describe this transition in the physical activities and recreation of Kapingamarangi by comparing the recent past with the present.

The background information for this research was obtained from the literature. Present conditions were described by informants and personally observed by the

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² A Polynesian outlier atoll at 1° 4' north and 154° 46' east, technically in Micronesia, consisting of islets of which Touhou and Werua contain most of the approximately four hundred inhabitants.

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authors.³ As most descriptions of cultures by anthropologists contain some reference to the games that a people play, it was possible to compare the observations of 1910 and 1950 with what the old people remember. The memories of the atoll dwellers correlated well with those of the Kapingamarangi who left the atoll and now live in two communities on Ponape, 450 miles to the north. From the above sources, then, the following picture has been drawn.

Discussion

WORK

The Kapingamarangi developed a system of cooperation for the type of work that was either too heavy for one individual, or would benefit the community as a whole, or required participation because of ritual obligations.

Lieber (1969) obtained some information on the work groups that existed before 1920. He distinguishes two kinds—kin-based and those organized on other principles. Members of a household, who form the basic unit of food preparation and consumption, worked together in planting taro, caring for children (women), fishing, gathering coconuts (men). Activities sometimes involved kin groups larger than the household, i.e., while nonrelated men cooperated in building a canoe for one of the group, the future owners' relatives would prepare the food.

“Work groups which were not kin-based seem to have been mainly those concerned with ritual work, such as repair of the cult house, canoe construction and fishing groups.” (Lieber, 1969:109)

After passing through a period of changes in the composition of work groups and in the assignment of tasks during the Japanese period the Kapingamarangi have come back to essentially the same forms of cooperation as described above; however, some changes have occurred.

With the chartering of the Kapingamarangi community under the American administration, a chief magistrate, a municipal council, and several judges have been established in an effort to “democratize” the local governments into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Whereas previously it was the king, together with his consultants, who made the decisions on projects (including feasts), it is now the council that decides on the appropriation of funds for public projects (such as bridges, wharves, public water cisterns). It is then the job of the chief magistrate to call a meeting to present the council's decisions to the populace. At this meeting, he fields all questions and criticisms, but he will generally defend the council's view as he has previously consulted with the council and helped them to reach their decisions.

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Traditionally, feasts have been a part of the cooperative effort. The completion of a work project called for a feast, which, in turn, created a new cooperative job: the planning of time schedules, food gathering, assignments, kinds of food to be collected, and cleaning up. Feasts not resulting from a work project include those such as a child's first birthday, a wedding, a funeral, the arrival of a ship, Christmas, and New Year.

Canoemaking. This is a traditional cooperative work project, described in detail by Emory (1965:111): "When a man decides to sponsor such a project, it is expected that he choose an expert canoe maker to supervise the work and that the expert should be a kinsman, if possible". A party of 15-25 men would assemble on an islet in the atoll and start shaping a breadfruit tree that had been felled a few days before. All were skilled in the use of the axe and adze. The "director" of the work was a man who carried much authority.

Emory expresses surprise at the lack of young men in the parties that he observed in 1948. The present authors made the same observation in 1968 and interpreted this as a possible manifestation of a shift in traditional values and authority: young men may no longer think it important to participate. Lieber (pers. comm.) who has studied work and work groups in depth, however, observed that the cooperative effort is as strong as ever and that "young men formed the backbone of the work parties." This seemed to be especially true where community (as opposed to family) projects were concerned. An example was the construction of a municipal office building in 1966.

The task of a few women in the party was to prepare lunch at the site of the canoe shaping, or bring it to the workers. Most of the other women who remained on the main inhabited islets worked all day to prepare for a workers' feast (pigs, chickens, tuna, rice, breadfruit, taro, coffee with sugar, drinking coconuts, and so forth). The men ate before the women could begin eating.

After soaking in salt water for a few months the roughly shaped canoe is towed to one of the inhabited islets and put in a work shed. The "director" works on it with two or three assistants. A feast takes place after the canoe is finished.

House-building. Another activity which traditionally required cooperation is the building of a house. Again, this was done under the leadership of a supervisor, who divided the work. For public housing the assignment to tasks involved groups such as timber workers, thatchers, and rope makers. The women saw to it that the men were fed on the work days, and they prepared food for the feast at the completion of the work.

Recently a Kapinga Housing Coöp was formed along monetary line. The members will roof any house for U.S. \$10. The earned money is a cooperative earning, later to be used for the acquisition of tools, timber, and the like. The work itself resembles the traditional cooperative effort, with supervisor (expert), division of labor, and, of course, a final feast.

Community fishing. One of the major cooperative efforts is that of community fishing, where the driving of fish into nets or traps is undertaken. Plans

and preparations are centered around the men's house, under the community fishing leader, who, traditionally, is held in high esteem. Both Touhou and Werua have such a fishing group, each with its own leader.

The leader is the guardian of the community net, which is kept in the men's house. He sets the times and the division of work. He also offers the prayer of thanks for the catch at the end of the day. He supervises the building of any large public canoe that is used in such drives.

On the day of the drive, between 30 and 60 men may go out in 5 to 10 canoes, depending on the method used in the drive. The canoes rendezvous for a moment of prayer, and the drive is on. Several drives in one day may result in catches totaling 1000 lbs. of fish, enough to feed the community for as long as two or three days. Fish may be preserved for a short period by smoking. This is done when a supply ship is on its way down to Kapingamarangi. The smoked fish is then used as provisions for travelers.

The three above-mentioned major "work party" types of work require a close cooperation during the work, especially when force is needed. For instance, in the hauling of a breadfruit log, only concerted effort of many men can move the log. Therefore, chants were used that have a sustained, heavy rhythm, with the emphasis on key syllables. Some chants varied and were improvised on the spot; but the basic rhythm remained the same, so that all men exerted their explosive force in unison. Today, the unison is still needed, but the chants alternate with loud grunts, or "one, two, three, PULL" (in English).

Lieber (pers. comm.) comments: "Of all male activities, fishing has been (and still is) the most important. The achievement of skill in fishing assures a young man of recognition and respect on the atoll. In fact, masculinity has always been identified with and inseparable from fishing. Even though working for the government, or for the department of education, now carries more material awards, only fishing activities validate one's male identity. Much of Kapinga males' time is spent on fishing or on making, preparing or repairing fishing gear and talking about fishing. Each fishing trip, whether it is done alone or in group, is always the culmination of a good deal of preparation and planning."

During the trip out to the fishing site, the canoes swiftly skim the water with the morning breeze filling their sails. On the way back, the canoes line up about a half mile from the beach, lower their sails, and start a canoe-paddling race to the shore, where the women and children have gathered. The paddling, again needing concerted effort, was usually done to chants such as: "Your paddle eats, bites the water below!" (Emory, 1965). Now these are often replaced by grunts, whoops, or other appropriate rhythm setters.

Often, special tasks such as re-roofing the church or painting the bridge are organized. The mood is festive and the workers don construction helmets, even motorcycle helmets (there are no motor vehicles on the atoll), or bits and pieces of old Air Force or Army uniforms, anything that lends an image of maleness, efficiency, and competence. Also, well-oiled and cherished tools and instruments,

no matter how inapplicable to the job at hand, are displayed conspicuously on the belt loops of the workers' blue jeans. This, and the joyous bantering accompanying the work, indicates that an important status game is being played.

Other work which does not require an elaborate community cooperation is performed by individuals or "on-the-spot" organization. Examples of this are the gathering of coconuts for the production of copra (males), the work in the taro patches (women), etc. It should be noted that work is divided into men's and women's—rarely do they mix.

Training. "Every male had to go through certain initiations in fishing and have received certain titles of achievements before he might participate fully in the activities of men." (Emory, 1965). Graduation from one form of fishing (for a specific type of fish) to another took place. Usually boys 8–14 years of age, two to a canoe, would go out on the ocean with the adults. The canoe (in cooperation of boys with adults) must obtain a certain number of fish (60 in some cases) before the boys would get their title ("diploma"). Failure to acquire the required number of fish on two consecutive nights resulted in a postponement of the next "exam" for as much as two years. Excess in a catch of one canoe was shared with those which were short of their quota, thus helping as many boys as possible to obtain their title. Graduation from lagoon fishing to open ocean fishing followed, where netting flying fish (they "fly" toward a flaming torch), and tuna and bonito fishing were regarded as the highest skills.

The above system of testing has now been abandoned. Young men turn to the task of getting through the U.S. style public school. A boy who shows promise is expected to go to high school in Ponape in the hope of obtaining future employment or a (very small) chance to go to college. Those who enter high school leave the atoll for Ponape. Those who do not make the grade eventually marry, beget children, and are, therefore, using all the tasks of men; i.e., climbing coconut trees, building houses, thatching, fishing.

There is now no formal training of canoe building, fishing, etc. Young men watch, participate, and learn. A foreign observer might think that young men are either in school (not learning the native skills of their elders), or seen lazing about. However, this is not the case. There is no pressure on a boy to learn a specific skill at any given age, for he will take up the task of learning whenever it suits him. He is considered to be mature in terms of the things he learns—i.e., house building, climbing coconut trees, and fishing. The knowledge gained in school is irrelevant when maleness and maturity are considered. The "lazing about" which is sometimes observed may be due to the fact that they do not have the appropriate skills yet. Also, access to canoes and fishing gear may be difficult, because this usually comes about by marriage. A family's canoes and gear are controlled by the in-married men, not by the head of the house (Lieber, pers. comm.). By their early twenties most young men have come around to learning general work such as canoe building or house making.

The case of women is somewhat different. The expectations of females to be

socially mature focuses on an age much earlier than that for males. The reason is that girls are expected to (and do) marry at an earlier age than boys. Even before ten years of age they are almost slavishly bound to household tasks. Cooking occupies a large portion of after-school hours. They help take care of younger children from the age of four, or five, on. Even if a girl graduates from high school, she is expected to know all the skills expected of all Kapinga women. School is regarded as irrelevant for the acquisition of these skills.

DANCING

Although at present almost extinct and forgotten, group dancing at one time occupied an important place in Kapingamarangi life. These dances had a special meaning and were not generally performed just for fun, or for the enjoyment of bodily movements (Eilers, 1934). When a breadfruit season started the event was celebrated with song and dance. At the consecration of children, the preparation of the pandanus leaf for mat weaving, or the making or consecration of a new canoe, as well as on other occasions, dances were performed. Buck (1950) states that it appears that dancing stopped after the acceptance of Christianity. The influence of missionaries is such that dancing by the modern teenager is disapproved of, and consequently occurs rarely, alone or with others, except in privacy. Occasionally, a few adolescents will dance a short, exuberant "victory dance", when their team wins a sports event. This dance includes a lot of rear-end wiggling (aimed at the losing team) and thigh slapping (a teasing insult to the losing team). Old people remember that this is part of a longer dance and often cite the whole dance as an example of the old "special meaning" dances.

Another remnant today—one who has sighted a whale is entitled to stamp in style once he has jumped from his beached canoe. The "underground" dance which teenagers now use are bits and snatches of the "twist" and "hula", learned either from stays on Ponape or from those who have returned from school or work on Ponape.

INTEGRATED WORK AND PLAY

Working together in a group often was accompanied with songs or conversation, and was preceded or finished with games and dances, which were considered part of the activities. Stumpf and Cozens (1947, 1949) record in detail the attitudes of the Maoris and Fijians in this regard and came to the conclusion that the recreational life of these people was, at one time, intrinsically bound up with their social, economic, and religious life.

The following is an account of such integration of work and play on Kapingamarangi—*ti rauhara* was an event which lasted for four days. *Ti ariki*, or high priest, started *ti rauhara* by yelling *tarosohono*. At this signal, all able-bodied men and women were to assemble, dividing themselves up into teams stationed at four different *rauhara* houses; one at the north side of the cult house on Touhou, another

on the south side of Werua islet, another at the middle of the lagoonside beach on Werua, and the last on the north side of Werua. If any man failed to show up, the others had the right to go to his land and carry off all coconuts and breadfruit they desired. Many breaches of responsibility in the old days were compensated by means of food and the above was sufficiently harsh to insure full participation in the event.

The first day, the men gathered driftwood, coconut husks, and dry shrubs and the women gathered pandanus leaves. The second day, the huge heaps of fuel at each house, often as big as the house itself, were lit, and the women laid out pandanus leaves to dry near the spectacular blaze. That evening, the men went out to fish. Each *rauhara* house had a certain number of canoes assigned to it, not necessarily belonging to members of the team assembled at the houses. The chiefs arbitrarily assigned canoes to houses. Escorted out on these evening fishing trips were young boys four to six years of age. They were not expected to help in the actual fishing but to sit and watch the men. If a canoe caught 100 fish that night the young boy in that canoe was considered to be blessed with good luck for his future years. If less than 100 were caught, the boy was, for several years, forbidden to eat the food given to him by his parents; instead, he had to eat with other relatives. The fishing continued all night and the parties came in the next morning.

On the third day, the tips of the pandanus leaves were cut off by the women and again that evening the fishing boats went out with the young boys who had not yet gone aboard.

On the fourth day, the bases of the pandanus leaves were cut off and then all four house groups gathered at the north of Werua. There on the beach they *hai ti rewe* (sang) accompanied by vigorous handclapping. Then they gathered in the northern *rauhara* house where first the four leaders performed a dance. When the latter sat down, all other people went to bathe and decorate themselves with flowers. Nobody ate on this day until late in the afternoon. At that time, four coconuts which were tied together were raised by the *ti ariki* and then placed on the ground. This was the signal for the end of festivities. The women carried the pandanus leaves back to their homes. These were to be used for mats and thatch.

The four-day *ti rauhara* activities carried a festive character. The people sang and laughed and engaged in horseplay while the work of cutting and stripping of the pandanus leaves, the fishing, and the preparation of food went on. Apparently, some rules were broken and then the offenders had to be "punished" by wrestling them. According to Lieber (pers. comm.) this rule-breaking may have constituted a traditional form of taunting called *hakanheenhee*. One of our informants described how on the early mornings when the teams returned from fishing, their canoes had to approach their teams' houses in a line perpendicular to the beach. Approaching on a slant was considered crossing another team's territorial waters. In case this violation was observed, the violated team raised a shout from the shore and paddled out to wrestle the violators and claim their fish. Also, if a

team used another team's canoe, the violated team tried to reclaim their canoe and any fish inside. *Hakanheenhee* is still done at Christmas celebrations.

OLD GAMES

The following are the old games of Kapingamarangi, none of which are played today; they were lost as a result of the coming of Christianity in the early 1920's. Only people over fifty years old remembered them and these acted as informants. Soon, besides the games, the old dances will be lost forever except for the efforts of those who care to record them. Old chants are still being learned by younger people, even children, though the meaning of the words may become obscured.

When older people are asked about pre-Christian Kapingamarangi games, *huihu* is the one they most fondly remember. Eilers (1934) has described part of it. The *huihu* occurred spontaneously on any night when enough people had gathered on *hongo sutua*, a sand spit off Touhou islet. This sand spit area is still there. It is exposed only at low tide and forms an extension of the lagoonside beach that curves inward to the lagoon at the northern tip of the islet. Its area is roughly the size of a tennis court, and because it is clean and soft, it is a suitable place for roughhouse play. Most nights, when low tide occurs shortly after dusk, a few people sit out on the sand spit to star-gaze or chat. However, in the past, on a *huihu* night many more people gathered and anywhere from 10 to 50 joined in the game.

The participants, men, women, and children formed a large circle; they stood, linked together, each person with his arms around the shoulders of the persons flanking him. Usually the sexes arranged themselves alternately. Many old, half-forgotten songs are still associated with *huihu*. They were play songs and had no religious significance. To these tunes the circle of people rotated slowly (*hakanikanika*); sometimes one step is taken concentrically followed by one step eccentrically, but always the circle moved around. This continued for 10 or 20 minutes and as the excitement increased and the tempo quickened, certain members started to call out *sakahanaleda*, *sakahanaleda*. This was a signal for the second game which was the part of *huihu* called *ti pinu*.

At this point all the children had to leave. In fact, *sakahanaleda* may have been called for the sole purpose of weeding out the children so that the adults could keep to their own games. One informant says that the alternate positions of sexes were broken up and the circle reformed. Women made up half of the circle, the men forming the other half. Three, four, or five men from the circle then went to the center, and the men in the outside circle proceed with *huihu*, but this time passing a yellow pandanus key (a part of the pandanus fruit)⁴ from hand to hand. Only the men passed the key while trying to keep it hidden from the men inside. However, once a man in the center was certain he had seen the key, he could choose to

⁴ For notes on the Kapingamarangi cultivated *Pandanus*, see: Stone, B. C. 1966 (1967). J. Polynes. Soc. 75(4): 430-436.

jump on the man in possession and wrestle him for it. Immediately, the attacker was assisted by his teammates from the center, but at the same time the men on the outside tried to block them. If the men from the center won, a new team came to the center. If the center team was not tired out and had not gained possession, they started the *huihu* (and fight) again. No punching or excessive violence was allowed; all was in the spirit of friendly competition.

A variation of the "hidden object" type of game was *hanei saraharu*, a game played at evening, on the same sand spit off Touhou. Men, women, boys, and girls sat down in a large circle with their legs out in front of them and with their knees slightly flexed. Each person started to dig a trench in the sand under his knees and connected it with his neighbor's ditch, until a large circular ditch was formed under everybody's knees. Participants sang and moved their hands back and forth under their knees throwing up sand. Somewhere, a small coconut was being passed back and forth around the circle. In the middle one or two people tried to spot the coconut. This was difficult because of approaching darkness and because of the faking gestures of hands moving to-and-fro in the ditch. Once the coconut was found, somebody else from the outside moved in and became the new searcher.

In a game of strength, *nia peru hu*, one strong man stood with his hands on his knees; another man climbed on top of him; and another. The object was to pile up as many as possible. The building was always done one-on-one, totempole style. The pyramid formation, as we know it in gymnastics, was apparently not known. A five- or six-man stack seemed to have been the limit.

Ti parakhi was a game played only by children. Again, it was played close to the beach, but this time two houses were needed; cookhouses, canoe houses, or whatever was available. The children (boys and girls, ages 5-12), divided themselves evenly into two teams. One team in one house announced that they were "sharks", the other team were "little reef fish". The game started when the "sharks" yelled: *ni aika rhiki, huri ki tai* or, "little fish run to the east!" The "fish" then came out of their house and stood in a group some distance down the beach. The "sharks" tried to tag the scattering "fish", who tried to escape and run back to their home. A tagged, grabbed, or hugged "fish" was considered to have been eaten by the "shark" and he had to go to the "shark's" house. The play ended when no more "reef fish" were in the open water (or beach), some having escaped back to their home—the others deposited in the "sharks" den.

Now, again, the sharks yelled, *ni aika rhiki, huri ki tai*, and the play resumed as before. This was done ten times; the "reef fish" remaining gained the admiration of all for their elusiveness.

It is interesting to note that today, none of the Kapinga can ever remember a shark attack upon a person, but people, and especially children, consider them potentially dangerous. Asked why, they said, "Because of their teeth and because of their smoothness in cruising about."

Ti kamiro was the same as our present-day hide and seek, though the purpose

may have been different. Usually, it was started by young women (15–30 years of age) gathering on the east side of Werua islet. The area was suitable because it was easy to get to from the inhabited areas, yet there were plenty of shrubs and trees to hide in. Two teams were formed, one group claiming to be the “seekers” by yelling *hiri madi kohukohou, hiri madi kohukohou*, the signal for the others to run and hide. Although the above cry is still remembered, our informant was not able to provide a translation for these words, which “belong to the old language”.

Once all were hidden, the hiders yelled, *kamiro*, the signal for the seekers to come and search. After sufficient time had elapsed, and most of the hiders found, the sides switched roles for the next game. However, the women, while playing vigorously, with loud cries and laughter, were waiting for the men to show up and participate. When man met woman in the bush, they secretly departed and left the game area.

In case that the men were late in showing up, the women continued in their game, alternating roles of hiders and seekers. This game was popular with young, single people, but also with older, married people.

One old Kapingamarangi story, based on this game, is called *ti ura mo ti paipai*, or “the lobster and the flounder”. These two animals agreed to play *kamiro*. The lobster was the first to hide. The flounder searched and yelled to the lobster, “give a little whistle, I haven’t found you!” The lobster whistled and the flounder quickly saw him, for the lobster’s antennas were sticking out from a hole in the ocean floor, into which he could not entirely fit, “So there you are, you haven’t concealed yourself well in that hole,” said the flounder. So, it was now the flounder’s turn to hide, and he swam off kicking up a cloud of mud in his trail. Then he secretly circled back to his original starting point, lying hidden a little way to the rear of the lobster. Of went the lobster searching, searching, but he had no luck. Exhausted, he came back to the starting place crying, “I can’t find you. Where are you?” “Here I am,” screamed the laughing flounder, “right behind you.” The startled lobster was so angry that he pounced on the poor fish and trampled him until he was squashed. And to this day all flounders are flat and swim on their side.

A few swimming games are still recalled. *Ti lolei* was named after the *lolei* coral head where it was played. A flat-topped stump of coral stood (and still stands) about fifty yards out in the lagoon off the northwest corner of Werua islet. One person stood on the coral stump and yelled, *Ti lolei ti lolei makoai tera e irli wai*, and then threw up two handfuls of breadfruit seeds. The scattered seeds sank and immediately the boys and girls, who were waiting in the surrounding water, dived for them. The three or four persons who came up with the fewest seeds were obliged to *koni*. This meant—assume a crouching stance with legs widespread and arms rigidly outstretched and stiffly shaking. The performer then yelled or sang something to make everybody laugh. According to a different informant, the person who found one marked breadfruit seed had to *koni*. In the first version the losers *koni*, in the second, the winner. *Koni* was used by the old Kapingamarangi

as an expression of excitement, or joy, and it could occur spontaneously on the road or beach. Eilers (1934) describes it as a circle dance. Few people today know how to *koni* in proper style.

Ti rauwhana was also played in the water, but in deep water, and it was physically more demanding. *Ti lolei* was played by children under 12, whereas only older teenage boys played *Ti rauwhana*. Five or more boys gathered in the lagoon at a spot that was 20 to 30 feet deep, usually somewhere northwest of Werua. One person was known to all as a *tangata hepu* or "person who can dive deep and hold his breath for a long time". Carrying a small, leafy branch of a tree, he dived down and speared the branch into the lagoon bottom so that it stuck. He then surfaced and the rest of the boys dived down to snatch it. The object was not so much a race as it was to see who could match the diving ability of the first diver. When somebody got the branch, he surfaced and waved it, claiming that he had surpassed the others.

Ti tilida (or *ti silida*) was a game played during the work of breadfruit gathering. A small group of young men stood around a breadfruit tree and threw thick sticks, about two feet long, up into the branches in an attempt to knock down the breadfruit. When one fell, a man ran and snatched it up. Then, any other man jumped on him and wrestled him for it, accompanied by loud cheering of the others. After the match, the breadfruit were placed in a basket. The wrestling was more for wrestling's sake than for the ownership of the breadfruit, which all went to the owner of the tree.

Tipitipitipiti is such an old game than none presently living on the island has seen it played, although several informants remembered the general rules. The *tipitipi* was a ball woven out of pandanus leaves.⁵ It was cubical and a little larger than a softball (Eilers, 1934). The game was played on the north end of Werua, on the spot of land that is still called Tipitipi. The game was vigorous, noisy and many men and women were crowded together. A small group of players formed the center of attention. The ball was batted up into the air with the hands (kicking was not allowed), the object being to keep the ball "alive". One man, who was recognized for his strength, stood apart from the crowd. His job was to hold a breadfruit and toss it to any one of the onlookers. The catcher of the breadfruit was allowed to join the game. However, occasionally, a catcher would knead and mash the breadfruit, thereby insulting the thrower and inviting him to a wrestling match. Nearby was a wet, muddy spot, not unlike a taro patch. Wrestling matches usually ended with the stronger man throwing his opponent into the mud while the crowd cheered and laughed.

One legend is based on *tipitipi*: the customary strong man, and the holder of the breadfruit, was named Hereika. Nobody is exactly sure whether such a man actually lived. One day, Hakapeke, though an old man, was sitting in his house when young people passing by talked about their champion, Hereika. Hakapeke, unimpressed, walked to the north end of Werua, where a *tipitipi* was

⁵ Similar balls, often of rattan, are still made and used in Malay villages (Ed.).

taking place. When tossed the breadfruit, Hakapeke mashed it into the ground and Hereika attacked him. But with one hand Hakapeke shoved Hereika's face into the mud; then, with the other, grabbed him and pitched him into the trees. As the old man left, the murmuring crowds parted to make a path.

The final *tipitipi* rule was that as evening approached, everybody yelled: *euahara, euahara*, and all departed immediately for their homes. Anybody left behind or lingering was bound to be attacked by a ghost.

Until recently the pandanus ball (woven by some old man) was used by children for "catch". Brightly colored rubber balls from Ponape (made in Japan) have now been adopted for this purpose.

All the above reported traditional games were large motor movements, involving large body segments. The informants, when asked, could not remember "quiet" games, except whittling a fishhook (not really a game), or making string figures. The latter form of game (our "Cat's Cradle") must not have been observed by the Hamburg Expedition (1908-1910) because they are not mentioned. Buck (1950) however found a wide variety of string figure games in 1947.

MODERN GAMES

The Micronesians today play an assortment of games which were imported by missionaries, the occupying government personnel (Spain, Germany, Japan, and the United States) or by islanders who travelled. Many adaptations were made to these imports because the equipment was lacking, or the terrain was unsuitable, or local customs decreed this.

Recently, on Ponape, during the annual Micronesia Day Games (July 12) the baseball teams, consisting of teachers, government workers, and some students, dressed up in baseball suits, used official baseball equipment and went by the official rules. Track was slightly different—the 440 yard sprint was much shorter, but was called "four-forty" because it was one time around the field. Boys ran in colorful shorts and singlets, the girls in dresses with a full skirt. In swimming races "the 50 meter", was never 50 meters. The "starting blocks" were the edge of a rusty barge (about 6 feet above the water surface) and the "finish line" was a log that floated parallel to the starting line.

American rule books, i.e., dealing with sprints of 110 yards, 220 yards, etc., have now appeared, and an emphasis on abiding by them has increased since the influx of large numbers of Peace Corps Volunteers in the District Center. The present trend is in the direction of local (between islands in the District) competitions, which then culminate in the Micronesia National Games (on Saipan).⁶ These competitions eventually will serve as try-outs for the South Pacific Games.⁷ Stopwatches and measuring tapes are appearing, the International Olympic rule

⁶ The first was held in July, 1969 and was called the 'MicrOlympics'.

⁷ Held every three years. The third occurred in August, 1969, at Port Moresby. No Micronesian team participated, however, because at the time of closing the entries, Micronesia was not ready yet with a national organization.

book (100 *meter* sprint, etc.) is being consulted.

In the past most sports and games that came from the occupying countries probably were altered by conditions on Ponape. Kapingamarangi who travelled to Ponape, to study or work, returned with them, or visitors to the atoll left them behind. Local adaptations were inevitable, considering that the atoll does not have enough space for a field free of coconut trees, or for a track, or money for proper equipment. Because of this, rules were changed and remained flexible until today. Rules are sometimes made up after the fact (i.e., passing on the inside in running is not allowed) or during a game (i.e., a boy who missed the ball 5 times while batting got "this time only", another 3 chances.) It seems then, that the Kapingamarangi are still mainly oriented toward the spirit of the game (a "play for play's sake" type of attitude) and will change rules to fit the situation.

The current drive for a Micronesia-wide competitive system is bound to change this. On Ponape the shift from play orientation to rule orientation is already visible in the increased number of challenges of umpires' decisions that occur in baseball.

One of the most popular games in Kapingamarangi, at present, is a type of rugby called *ti rakau* ("the stick"). It is usually played by boys and girls of 11-16 years of age. One team is on the offense, and has the job of moving a stick (about a foot long) from one side of the beach to the other, where a post stands in the sand. They win by running up to that post and tapping it with the stick. The defense team tries to wrestle the stick away from the offense. By burying the stick into the sand, the defense wins. Teams alternate being on the offense and defense. The team that wins three out of five games wins the match.

There are many strategies. One is that everybody on the offense at the onset of a game will crouch and huddle up while running, each pretending that he or she has the stick, thereby baffling the defense. Another method is for a particularly strong boy to hold up the stick and wave it, thereby proudly thumbing his nose to the defense. "Here it is, now try and get it!" The boy waving the stick is protected by his teammates as he progresses toward the post.

Often as many as six will have their hands on the stick, trying to wrestle it away. One tactician may let such stand-off wrestling proceed for ten minutes, then he will step in, after everybody's hands are tired, and snatch the stick away. Both sexes participate vigorously and amidst fighting and scrambling on the sand, there is much goosing, giggling, and attempts to tear lava-lavas off. The latter slows down the player considerably, as decorum demands that he/she retrieves the lava-lava and wraps it on again before rejoining the fray. The game reportedly came from Ponape, where some football was introduced during the United States administration.

Another game is played only on holidays. About 20 people stand in a circle and an equal number stand in a circle right behind these. Some sections may be even three deep. Somebody is "it" and runs around the circle and then slaps someone's rear. The slapped person must chase the person who slapped him around the circle and slap him back. The "chased" may escape by stopping in front of a

column and then the “chaser” must slap the rear of the person at the back of that line, and so on.

The game is said by the informants to have derived from an old song and dance game that employed the circle formation (probably *ti pinu*), though it closely resembles our “Three Deep” (Anon. 1909), which may have been introduced as a school game. It is played very fast and everyone wants to have as many turns as possible. To make a slow runner or a fat person run after you too long is not considered courteous.

Kick-ball is played by men (15–50 years old) on holidays. Twenty or thirty men stand in a circle and kick a ball (often the size and weight of a volleyball) into the air and try to keep it going. The players clap every time the ball is kicked by crossing their arms and slapping their biceps with the palms of their hands. The rhythm of slapping each time is SLAP-slapslap. Most Micronesians play this game. It was reportedly introduced by the Japanese and is now called *pare-pare* (Lieber, 1969).

A variant of baseball, which the Japanese also introduced, is played here. There are three bases, more or less on one line: homeplate, first (where the pitcher is), and second (behind the pitcher). The bat is a stick sometimes carved to resemble a bat. The ball is a piece of light driftwood (this wood continually drifts in from New Guinea) which is not necessarily round, or a small nut. The latter grows in the mangrove woods on the high islands, and has become hairy in appearance from its long overseas drifting and the batting. Mitts may be made of cardboard or of woven coconut leaves. The batter runs on anything: fousls, balls that stick up in the trees, and so forth. Speed, and keeping the game going are important. Score is rarely kept, fun rather than winning being the object. The batter is thrown out by being hit, i.e., the pitcher throws the ball *at* him, the harder the better. Another player comes to bat also after the current hitter hits the ball a few times or if he never hits it and the general feeling is that it is “time for a change”. Many unconventional tactics are used: base runners may be blocked, a batted ball may be kicked along by a base runner to keep it away from the fielder, etc. Games are rarely mixed, either being all boys (8–13 years old) or all girls (10–16 years old).

Foot races are held on holidays and are popular. In general, they are sprints, longer distances probably being considered “tame” from the spectator viewpoint, and tiresome from the participant’s viewpoint. Relays are popular: sometimes 20–30 participants compete in each team (two teams) and a good runner may run twice. When the difference between the team gets large, a false start (false by 5 to 10 yards!) on the part of the slow pokes seems to be tolerated. When one runner is far ahead and the race is nearly finished it is not uncommon for the one in the lead to slow down, or clown around by tripping, falling, or running into a tree, so that he beats the loser by only a few inches. In a few cases this may cost him the race. When Kapingamarangi teachers were asked about the meaning of this, they indicated that it was considered “bad form” to win with a large lead. The spectators also appreciated the races more when the finish was close. The authors interpreted the

above as a certain lack of concern with winning *per se*. Lieber (pers. comm.), however, points out that the Kapingamarangi are very competitive in all aspects of their life, so it cannot be assumed that they are not competitive in their games and sports, and also that the above is a form of taunting resembling *hakanheenhee*.

The only water game left that is played with any regularity today is one where boys (9–13 years of age) place a rock in shallow water, then run down from the beach, and using the rock as a take-off, do a somersault in the air and land out in deeper water. Boys and girls swim at an early age (a dog paddle, and a combination of crawl arm stroke/scissors leg kick) but apparently no games or competition like *ti lolei* or *ti rauwhan* remain.

An impromptu game may develop for young men of 15–25, when they start a running broad jumping contest on the beach. The games of earlier days which culminated in wrestling have disappeared.

One game which may have its roots in antiquity is a throwing contest. Young boys (4–10 years old) peel the bark off long thin sticks (2–3 feet long) which are then thrown with a crooked forefinger down a path so as to bounce off the ground. The object is to reach the greatest distance to where the reed comes to rest. It requires a lot of practice to be able to throw in such a way and to keep the stick sailing along straight. No one on Kapingamarangi seems to know for sure where the game came from or when it was introduced. It is generally agreed that it was not played in pre-contact times. This game resembles the Fijian game of *tiqua* (or *tinqua*) which was played as a national sport. Williams (1858) already describes this. Stumpf and Cozens (1949) summarize it in detail.

Probably introduced as a school game by the Germans, is the game of hopscotch of which there are many forms played by girls 5–13 years of age. One interesting “adaptation” observed was the use of a large fish drawing, the scales of which were numbered and served as areas on which to place the feet. Children also play Cat’s Cradle, or string figures (*tuwanapeti*) as mentioned previously. Strangely enough this last game may be the only one left that has been played by children since pre-Christian times (Buck, 1950).

Games of a more sedate nature, not involving large body movements, are often centered around the usual meeting places—the men’s house, the copra warehouse, etc. The Japanese introduced a form of checkers which is now the most popular game for the men. It is always (i.e., day and night!) played in the men’s houses on a piece of wood with diagonal lines scratched on it. The playing pieces are placed on the crossing of the lines, not in the squares. One man uses stones, the other uses shells. Often there may be as many as four men on each side who argue over alternative moves. Decisions come quickly, however, as speed is of the essence. Pieces can jump forwards and backwards, and “kings” can move any number of spaces along a diagonal. Hence, there is much emphasis on who can get the first king as he will kingly win. The game is seldom played to the finish; once someone is clearly in the lead it is pointless to continue and so a fresh game is started.

The pieces are often moved with a flourish of gestures and yelps, and if the

other side is slow there are yells of "come on, hurry up!" (in English). An unexpected loss of a piece provokes a loud and laughing stream of fourletter words (also in English). Boys, however, tend to be serious while playing, as they feel they are engaged in a man's game.

Chinese checkers, played with marbles as playing pieces started as a woman's game. It is now played by all, but the old ladies are still the consistent winners.

"Drum", a variant of euchre, is the Sunday (and any other holiday) game. It is played by men and women, usually 24–55 years old. Six people sit in a circle and play alternate cards. The excitement and noise generated by this game are amazing. Players slam their cards down on the mat with vigor. Everybody yelps with each play and if a particularly good card is played, everyone on that side is fired off into a happy frenzy. Some may even get up and dance to the laughter of everybody. One 45-year-old woman was observed to be so excited (when she slammed down a card that clinched the game) that she waddled all of her 250 pounds across the playing mat, and while on her knees, she grabbed the head of her poor opponent (a man), pulled up her shirt and thrust his head between her gigantic breasts!

The game is seldom played seriously; fun, speed, and noise being more important than skill. They would hate bridge!

"Sweep" or "casino" is mostly played by the younger people (8–25), though older people play on Sunday. It is a very interesting game in its social correlates. A "sweep" game takes longer to play than "drum" and requires more skill, strategy, and cooperation than "drum". There are groups of people who regularly play each Sunday. These groups usually consist of 6 or 8 or possibly 10 people who form two stable teams. The team which loses must buy coffee and biscuits for the other team the following Sunday. Money also rides on every week's game. This money, paid as dues to join, and also as loser's debt, goes into a common pool, held for one year (from January through December). The money is used for Christmas gifts and a Christmas feast for the group.

"Drum" does not lend itself as easily to this type of organization for several reasons. It is a fast game which, intrinsically, cannot sustain anyone's interest for very long. Its popularity is based on the speed with which it can be completed and then repeated. Also, the participants in the game fade in and out quickly, i.e., there is a large turnover in players.

Thus "sweep" is played by people on a more organized regularized basis than "drum". It is played by people whose interest will not be diverted by other activities, i.e., people come to a game to play that game.

SUMMARY

Not much is known about games, sports, and physical activities of the Kapin-gamarangi from the period preceding the Hamburg Expedition (1908–1910). The period after this expedition has been reconstructed from the memory of some old

people on the atoll and from the writings of Buck (1950), Emory (1965), and Lieber (1969). Modern activities (1966–68) were observed directly by the authors.

Cooperative and group work was described for canoe building, house building, and community fishing. Feasts were common as terminal activities of the work sessions.

From all available sources the impression is gained that a gradual supplanting of old games has been and is taking place. The large motor movement type of games (i.e., those involving large segments of the body) have largely disappeared. New games have been imported, some of which were adapted to local conditions. Card and checker games are popular.

The general trend at present in Micronesia is in the direction of participation in Western types of games (baseball, track, etc.) and closer adherence to the official rules. Kapingamarangi, being rather isolated, continue to adapt these recent imports to their own atoll and culture, as they have done with most cultural borrowings.

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