

CAROLINIANS IN SAIPAN: SHARED SENSATIONS AND SUBTLE VOICES

Susanne Kuehling
University of Regina

“Invisible Belongings”: What Migrants Take Along

THE HIGH AND FERTILE ISLAND of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) represents a special case of Pacific Islanders' diaspora. For almost two hundred years, Saipan has been the home of migrants from the Caroline Islands (which are today a part of the Federated States of Micronesia [FSM]); these people identify themselves as “Carolinians” and share a common language as well as a sense of unity (*tipiyeew*) and belonging.¹ Despite their long and, at times, apocalyptic history of colonial and postcolonial disempowerment, the Carolinians of Saipan have, at least to some degree, resisted the forces of assimilation. Their continued struggle for a sense of unity provides an example for the re-creation and substitution of salient ideas and practices that they have brought from their former home islands. Such ideas and practices constitute “invisible belongings” that, I argue, can resist changes because they are invisible only to the outsider; for those who share them, they are obvious, normal, even banal.² Invisible belongings travel in every migrant's luggage—they bring along their individual versions of shared principles of spatial organization, kinship and gender roles, cosmologies, moralities, and sensations. The way it feels to live at the home location and the practices that were part of life there are indelibly retained in memory. Many of these belongings cannot be “unpacked” at the end of the journey, but some are

elevated to symbols of shared experience and unity. In this article, I focus on sensory experiences and their capacity to provide shared and hence socially powerful memories. The case of Saipan's Carolinians supports the argument that female spaces and their ineffable characteristics are particularly capable of providing a continuum of meanings and key values across dislocations. Invisible and yet profoundly significant, sensations and everyday interactions in early childhood, for example, in a mother's kitchen, trigger memories and remain largely subconscious. The household, as the site of taken-for-granted daily interaction, still "requires deeper understanding" in the context of diasporic communities (Raghuram 2006, 18). Here I show that the Carolinians of Saipan, in their role as disempowered minorities in a migrant setting, access their invisible belongings when they use flower garlands to maintain a sense of sameness.

The "idea of a single community of people irrespective of locale" (Lieber 1977, 39), the tension of fluidity (routes) and emplaced life (roots) that characterizes Pacific diaspora, is grounded on such invisible belongings. In their shared experiences and memories, migrants aim at continuity in the face of change, on the preservation (and defense) of their shared experiences in spite of the larger, seemingly overpowering, forces of westernization. The locale, as a sense of place, travels along with a migrant; therefore, an analysis of the dynamics between the old and new places and the people who create migratory paths is extremely fruitful, as most of the articles in this issue show (see also Marshall 2004). Invisible boundaries and the sensations of routine paths and special events turn into memory by emplaced and embodied practice (see, e.g., Alkire 1974, 45; D'Arcy 2006, 98). Often, however, places have been perceived as static and only the people were seen as moving along the paths of migration. Pacific Islanders' "notions of indigeneity," argued Michael Perez, are "not limited to being authentically located in place, but rather the location of space across various sites" (2004, 67). In a recent issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, various authors called for an adjustment to the new and complex dynamics of the "diversity of mobilities and subjectivities that constitute fragmented globality," indicating that contemporary research must be "place-based without being place-bound" and calling for approaches that put "place in motion" (McKay 2006, 201).

I suggest that the invisible dimensions of place, as they are carried along when people move, offer a way to accomplish such a dynamic and flexible approach to migration. Migrants' invisible belongings contain their home(s) as "a tangible point in fluidity" (Stewart and Strathern 2003b, 5), as mental representations of being in the world of relations (Jackson 1995, 110). A place like "mother's kitchen," for example, can easily move around the

globe—as long as “mother” re-creates it with her work and presence. The attention that we pay to sensations is filtered by shared principles, as C. Jason Throop has most recently pointed out, demonstrating in relation to pain that such “moral sensibilities” can be viewed as “importantly rooted in the patterning of sensory modalities” (2008, 258; see also Throop 2010).³

This invisible dimension of place is incredibly mobile, put into life by the ubiquitous breeze. Let me try to unwrap some of its key elements.

The Breeze: Meaningful Winds

Invisible belongings are associative and experiential—they contain an assortment of scent and sound as well as particular surface structures, including the memory of objects that are no longer in existence. I believe that a focus on the air in motion is useful as an entry point into this realm of the invisible. This area of study has been neglected so far, but I believe that far from just filling the gaps between objects, the ubiquitous breeze links people with their place and with each other. In line with Tim Ingold (2007) and David Parkin (2007), I argue that the moving air transcends persons and places, creating a sense of place that can be unpacked at new destinations: a landscape of wafting scents, vibrating sounds, and lingering spirits. By accepting the notion that persons and objects are connected and not divided by the surrounding air, we may come to a better understanding of emplaced and embodied experience.

The air in motion, as breath, has long been perceived as link between persons and spirits, as shown by the Latin terms *anima* and *spiritus* (meaning “breath of life”; see Robertson 1991). Classic Greek philosophy acknowledged the significance of air (e.g., Aristotle’s treatise *On the Soul*), but the intangible nature of the breeze did not invite ethnographic description. In the notions of animism and spirituality, anthropology has exoticized cosmologies that include ineffable elements of personhood. Excluding from the concept of person the meaning of breath, of air, and of spirits led to an atomistic Western individual. Consequently, sensations, emotions, and the sense of being one with the world were excluded from analysis; they escaped our attention as they were locked up in the black box of invisibility. Martin Corbett argued that the “denial of the sensuous living body . . . reflects and reinforces the status of the body in Western culture” (2006, 222). The embodied world has only recently become a topic of social theory, and, as David Howes has pointed out, there have been “stimulating developments” in anthropology when authors have “seized the importance of studying how the senses are socialized and how society and the cosmos are sensed” (2003, 28).

While some spiritual interpretation and sensory significance of the breeze seem to be universal (Parkin 2007, 40; see also Boswell 2008: 297–98), local or regional interpretations offer a bonding element, a sense of shared experience that allows people to construct their sense of sameness. Among migrants, this experience appears to be an anchor of ethnic identity, as people make use of their invisible belongings to achieve a feeling of communality.

Identity: The Boundaries of Persons

The air creates our perceptions of color and sound, shadows and surfaces. In this regard, it is not surprising that the breeze informs the idea of person in many ways. As Western individualism emphasizes the physical boundaries of a person, it underplays the element of air that connects persons and their surroundings.

The concept of person in Oceania has been described as relational and partible: a person's skin does not form as definite a boundary as in the Western concept, and persons are regarded not as single entities but as part of their group (see, e.g., Panoff 1968: 278–79). This concept of person builds on the unity of humans, spirits, and land. It implies the direct connectedness of individuals with their land and the invisible boundaries that form their sphere of belonging. The “feel” of settlements, gardening areas, sacred zones, and gendered spaces and the changes brought by the movements of sun, moon, planets, and stars are part of Oceania's invisible landscape. Just as the ocean ties these people together into a “sea of islands” (Hau'ofa 1994, 1998), the breeze constitutes an invisible connection that informs their sense of place beyond the confinements of islands.

Scent: The Smell of Home

Spirits are often identified with particular changes in temperature, with sudden drafts, or with specific scents. Odors have been identified as markers of otherness, as morally charged “social sensibilities” (Classen 1992, 137) that are used in many societies as seemingly objective evidence for discriminating others because they “stink” (see Corbett 2006, 229). Since, however, “fragrance is in the nose of the smeller” (Classen 1992, 138), such categorizations are representations of a stratified order rather than manifestations of olfaction.⁴ Odors are often used as a strategy for creating otherness (Cohen 2000), but I am here concerned with the opposite, namely, the use of scent to form and maintain a group identity in

the context of migration, where shared morals and memories create a powerful yet invisible sense of scent.⁵

While invisible, scents have a material source that links them to the place and provides the bridge between the visible and the invisible world. Although “a smell cannot be re-imagined to the degree that the other senses can, and depends much more on a particular context to be remembered” (Parkin 2007, 45), it can re-create a sense of place in new locations.

In Oceania, the use of perfumed flowers is a salient way to express love and respect. Scent serves to communicate between humans and spirits, as Oceanic concepts of person include both (see Gell 1977; Howes 2003). Women are central figures in this creation of shared identity, as they collect petals, compose the perfume, and braid garlands for their men and children. The “smellscape” of everyday life is enriched by sound, especially the mundane chats in female spaces, where children experience their social world on a daily basis. These conversations consist of the small talk, gossip, and behind-the-scenes decision making that routinely occurs when women are visiting each other and cooperate in cooking, looking after children, cleaning up, and fulfilling their other regular chores, expressing their love and care for the family group while trying to ignore individual desires and complaints.⁶ Songs and proverbs, metaphors and morals, often wrapped into stories and gossip are part of this scene, as are laughter and scolding, steaming food, and delicious treats. Besides tastes, both sounds and scents are part of such childhood memories that may be too subtle to become conscious and verbalized but are nevertheless powerful in their persistent and panethnic effect of bonding in a Pacific Islander’s migratory setting. When speaking about the significance of communal feasts for the creation of a shared identity, Pacific Islanders refer to the process of preparing the meal and decorating themselves just as much as to the actual get-together and the sharing, singing, dancing, and mingling involved (see, e.g., Marshall 2004; Spickard 2002). Their memories of the sensations that these activities create connect them but often escape an outsider. Since such invisible belongings are difficult to capture on paper (Corbett 2006, 230), I suggest here that flowers may serve as a possible net to fish for these ineffable elements of Oceania.

Saipan’s Carolinians

This case study of Carolinian migrants is based on twelve months of fieldwork in 2004, including nine months in Yap State, FSM; two months on Saipan Island, CNMI; and one month on Guam. I explore the “invisible

landscape” of the Carolinians living on Saipan, arguing that the shared experiences and moral values attached to sensations that float on the ubiquitous breeze are connecting the migrants from a large and culturally diverse area, reaching from Palau in the west to Kiribati in the east, if not beyond into Polynesia.⁷ Saipan’s Carolinians bemoan the loss of their group coherence as Western ways promote individualism over group cooperation and the cash economy undermines the former practices of reciprocal exchange among neighbors and family members. Their common grounds have shifted from overt political influence (“loud voices”) to the less visible world, which appears to be more resistant to change, namely, the everyday life of women and their respectfully subtle yet influential voices. Expressions of “Carolinian-ness” can be found in small gestures and women’s everyday activities rather than in outwardly directed statements.

Cooking the same food, arranging the division of living space in line with the old setup, and sharing the sensations of wind, sound, and scent within the family in stories of the past and in everyday discourse keeps the island home alive and helps to create a new sense of place in which elements of the past can once again float on the breeze. Such mundane aspects of female agency have often been neglected in ethnographic studies (Underhill-Sem 2001b, 6).⁸ They are, however, at the root of Carolinian identity on Saipan, where women’s informal decision-making processes—often set in a food-related spatial context where children are brought up to appreciate certain scents as part of their childhood memories and where moral dimensions of olfaction are established—strongly influence the men’s political speeches and public decisions.

As a behind-the-scenes activity of women that creates a specific “smell-scape,” the use of flowers is an apt example of migrants’ invisible belongings (see Underhill-Sem 2001b). The role of flower garlands, for example, offers a variety of analytical levels of experiencing the invisible world (Kuehling n.d.), including Christianity (Sinclair 2001) and social change (Liki 2001; Underhill-Sem 2001a). By mediating between the visible and the invisible world, flowers (much like food) can open new doors to the “inner landscape of the mind” (Stewart and Strathern 2003b, 7), to a sphere of sensations and emotions that migrants carry with them. Flowers and garlands are close to the heart of Pacific Islanders and deserve our attention.⁹ Vicente Diaz’s exclamation that he loves flower garlands and that they “seduce us with the sense and sensibilities of the islands” (2002, 169) is recent evidence that they remain a salient part of his invisible belongings and were unpacked even in the Western academic settings of California and Michigan.

The remainder of this article will demonstrate such an approach, arguing that the significance of flowers has endured among Carolinians on Saipan

despite their near-complete assimilation to the American urban lifestyle that prevails on this most urbanized island in the Northern Marianas. In fact, as discussed later, a flower garland has become the symbol representing the Carolinian population on the official CNMI seal and flag.

Saipan: The Empty Bowl

The Carolinians on Saipan look back to a history of gradual deprivation of their social standing. They began their life on Saipan as the dominant landowning group in 1815, when Saipan was an “Empty Bowl” (Alkire 1984, 279n19), a fertile, large, neglected, and probably completely overgrown island with a sandy beach, a lagoon, a fringing reef, small islets, and an amazingly varied flora—in short, a perfect place to live for anyone whose previous home was also a Pacific island.

The first Carolinian settlers in Saipan came from the Central Caroline atolls, where typhoons and tidal waves have always been a serious threat and where navigators had developed a complex system of knowledge that included sailing instructions for the long journey north (see Flinn 2000: 159–62). This ancient trading route had, however, been abandoned when the Spanish colonizers waged war against the Chamorro people of the Northern Marianas, depopulating Saipan completely. Because of the elaborate principles of secret knowledge, the sea-lane from the Central Carolines to the Mariana Islands was not forgotten, and when the Central Carolinian atolls were devastated in 1815, the survivors took a chance and sailed north. Carolinian oral tradition established an “arrival story,” a version of the past featuring a navigator named Chief Aghurubw from Satawal and his people.¹⁰ With the permission of the Spanish administration on Guam, who had by that time deported the surviving Chamorros to their administrative center on Guam and was now keen to use these skilled seafarers to improve their colonial infrastructure, the “first fleet” of Carolinian migrants began to reinstall their social setup along Saipan’s lagoon coast. The Spanish largely left them alone, as international politics attracted their attention elsewhere; the Spanish-American War led to a near total neglect of marginal places like Saipan.

As migrants to an unpopulated but large and fertile island, the Carolinians maintained their way of life. Word of the new land spread through the sea-lanes, and more Caroline Islanders arrived. After fifty years, a Spanish captain reported to the *London Nautical Magazine* that Garapan (founded by the first fleet of Carolinians) was a flourishing village (Krämer 1937, 127). The abundant resources of Saipan allowed for the peaceful integration of newcomers, and the Carolinian settlers from Palau to Chuuk

gradually developed a common language, now called Saipan Carolinian (see Senfft 1905; Jackson and Marck 1991). Central Carolinian languages and Saipan Carolinian are mutually intelligible.

Beginning in the early 1880s, Chamorros from Guam had been encouraged to settle in the Northern Marianas, and as the U.S. Navy's rules in now American Guam were more intense and overbearing than the minimally staffed Spanish administration could afford to exercise, Guamanian Chamorros took the opportunity and contested the Carolinian landownership; by 1886, they "constituted fully one-third of the reported population of 849 on the island" (Alkire 1984, 273). As the Chamorros had been forced to cooperate with European masters for over a century, they were able to take advantage of their acquired skills. Used to Western dress, they took pride in their "civilized" appearance, which was in stark contrast to the topless, garland-wearing attire of the Carolinians (Fig. 1). When the



Marianen. Saipan: Sonntag-Nachmittagstee im Gärtchen des Regierungslehrers. Ein Chamorro-Mädchen in gewöhnlicher Kleidung und ein Karoliner-Mädchen im Tanz- oder Festschmuck.

FIGURE 1. "Marianas, Saipan: Sunday afternoon coffee in the little garden of the government teacher [Dr. and Mrs. Dwucet]. A Chamorro girl in normal clothing and a Carolinian girl decorated for a dance or feast" (Dwucet 1908).

Germans bought the islands of Micronesia (except for Guam) from Spain in 1898, Saipan was, according to census data, settled by 621 Carolinians who lived in Garapan as well as in the exclusively Carolinian village of Tanapag.

During the brief German colonial period (1899–1914), the first steps to the continuing disempowerment of Carolinians were taken, although the force of the colonizers was limited by the small number, as “never more than twelve or fifteen” German administrators and missionaries lived on Saipan (Bowers 2001, 39). Profiting from their “civilized” appearance and the colonial services such as schools and medical care, Chamorros soon outnumbered the Carolinians, buying land with German assistance and accumulating cash as the preferred wage laborers of the colonial powers.

This demographic trend continued. In 1906, there were around 1,600 Chamorros in the German Marianas out of a total of 2,700 Islanders, suggesting that there were roughly 1,000 Carolinians (Schnee 1908, 171; Deeken 1922, 228). One reason for this may be disease, as Carolinians, with their shorter history of contact, were more vulnerable to Western germs than the Chamorros, who had survived several epidemics on Guam (see Hattori 2004, 26; Rogers 1995, 121). If one boat could bring sickness and death to a small atoll, an international harbor like Garapan must have posed a multiplied risk.¹¹ It certainly resonates with the atoll islanders’ experience that very few of the many people who sailed to Saipan ever returned, whether because they chose to stay on Saipan or because they perished at sea or died from disease.

Japanese colonial rule (1914–44) was more intense, as thousands of settlers from Japan flooded the island, taking over the public life and creating a tight governance system that left little space for Carolinian sociality. Neil Bowers reported that “Japanese commercial enterprise and colonization brought a complete change of landscape. All arable land was cleared and platted to fields” (2001, 41). The Saipanese were “submerged under massive Japanese acculturative pressure” (Carucci and Poyer 2002, 205). Sugarcane fields and refineries required space and workers, port facilities were improved, and thousands of Japanese and Okinawans were brought in by the frequent, regular shipping services. During this period of time, the subsistence economy of old could not be maintained, fishing was taken over by Okinawans, and rice became part of the staple diet. The Japanese chopped down most of the coconut trees, not recognizing the multiple uses of the coconut tree for food and material for buildings, thatch, baskets, mats, garlands, and so on (see Carucci and Poyer 2002: 186–87). All these changes led to the abandonment of critical Carolinian institutions, especially the canoe house and canoe voyaging, as well as the erosion of

clan authority and the disruption of the slow motion of everyday island life.

As in German times, the Japanese colonizers discriminated against Carolinians as “kanakas” and dominated public life.¹² The class ranking of the Japanese left the Carolinians at the bottom of society after Japanese, Okinawans, and Chamorros. “Garapan, the administrative and commercial center of the Northern Marianas, grew from a village to a town of 12,827. With the inflow of settlers, the natives became a minority group, numbering 4,145 in the total population of 46,708 in 1937” (Bowers 2001, 44). Meanwhile, diseases continued to spread and threaten the islanders, with yaws, intestinal worms, trachoma, syphilis, and leprosy reported in Japanese statistics (Joseph and Murray 1951, 97).

In June and July 1944, the U.S. Navy attacked the Japanese on Saipan, taking the inhabitants by surprise. The battle lasted for more than three weeks, destroying the island’s infrastructure and causing much bloodshed among the civilian population. According to Bowers, 10 percent of the people were killed (2001, 57). Out of fear, hundreds (some Saipanese say thousands) of Japanese civilians jumped from a high cliff to their deaths, taking children with them. The town of Garapan was in rubble (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001, 316). During the fighting, most civilians fled to caves and hid in the hills together with Japanese soldiers. When they were captured or coaxed with megaphones to deliver themselves to the U.S. Marines, they were in desperate need of help: “Many were ill, wounded, and suffering from shell shock, the strain of constant uncertainty and the lack of food and water. Assembled in stockades, they presented immediate problems requiring day-by-day solutions” (Bowers 2001, 58). Secured by barbed wire, camps were erected, at first with primitive shelters that could not protect the prisoners from the heavy seasonal rains (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001: 247–51). The Carolinians and Chamorros of Saipan were crowded together in these compounds.

The effects of the war and its aftermath on Saipan’s Carolinians were severe, leading to the passive acceptance of U.S. regulations. Joseph and Murray characterized the situation as one of total disempowerment: “The sense of helplessness must have been acute, even before the American invasion, but this violent action changed vague anxieties into horrible reality. The natives of Saipan were overwhelmed by death and destruction as a result of events over which they could have no possible influence. . . . When the fighting was over the Americans did what they could but the damage had been done” (1951, 321).

As I was told, severe damage to Carolinian identity occurred in the spatial restrictions of the camps, which undermined gender roles and forced

them to live together with Chamorros. The competition between these two groups grew as land was redistributed, with tensions aggravated by their different cultural backgrounds. Restrictions on subsistence activities led to American food becoming the staple diet, although Joseph and Murray reported that Carolinians were not as dependent on imported food as the Chamorros (1951, 104); they witnessed the introduction and easy acceptance of high-sugar products: "The Navy free-food rations had to be continued until January 1947, three years after the invasion. These conditions have, of necessity, made the people much more dependent on imports since the advent of the Americans than they were previously, and have helped to develop a taste for American foodstuffs which cannot be produced locally. Soft drinks and ice cream, for instance, are now consumed in large quantities. The United States Commercial Company report for July 1946, enumerating the goods received by the Chamorro Trade Store for that month, mentions \$2,415 worth of foodstuffs and \$2,400 worth of Pepsi-Cola!" (Joseph and Murray 1951, 103).

Despite these circumstances, most Carolinians did not give up their "invisible belongings." The women re-created taro patches, the men fished for subsistence, and the language and a sense of group identity remained alive (see Spoehr 2000, 299). However, their efforts to turn back the clock to prewar conditions were challenged by the presence of Americans and their morals and ideas of development.

Adjusting to the American Way of Life

During this period, Carolinians significantly redefined their identity in order to cope with the new situation. In the past, they had moved from the unstable atolls to the higher grounds of Saipan to prevent famine and death and had established a reliable subsistence economy built on structures that they brought along from the atolls. Now they realized that new rulers were in charge and that new rules were in force. Embracing the American way of life and rejecting their "primitive" ancestry, Saipan's Carolinians attempted to adjust to the new requirements by sending their children to school, wearing clothes, and learning English. Many adults had not mentally or emotionally recovered from the horrors of the war and the camps, and the Carolinian community had lost much of its local knowledge, as many senior members were either dead or too traumatized to resume their roles as informal leaders of their lineages. In most families, important stories of the past, the atolls, and clans of origin, as well as myths and songs, perished with these adults.

As neither the Germans nor the Japanese had ever bothered to prohibit the ritual activities of Carolinians, they had continued to take care of benevolent spirits who lived in their houses. The house posts and the other sacred areas in the house had played an important role in rituals concerning sickness and death in combination with clan-specific chants. But after the war, the dead had not been buried in the appropriate way for a number of years, and the spirits—or the objects symbolizing them and marking their sacred sphere—had been left behind in the houses when people fled into the interior in panic during the assault. When they returned, most houses were rubble, the sacred shrines were gone, and support from spirits could not be expected any longer. A key function of clan identity was gone, too, as were many of the elders who had celebrated the rituals before the war. To fill the void, people converted to Catholicism, erected small altars in their houses, and attended church service on Sundays. A large church was built with local funds raised mainly by Carolinians and Chamorros.

Postwar compensation payments (made to individuals rather than family groups) led to conflicts and jealousy. The “extremely complex tangle” of landownership on Saipan raised “highly troublesome questions” (Spoehr 2000, 72; see also Spoehr 2000: 88, 91, 96; Bowers 2001: 101–2, 249). My impression from interviews is that those with louder voices and better English may have gained opportunities that were closed to others with less knowledge of Western-style negotiation. It is certain that the eventual disentangling of land rights did not satisfy everybody in the Carolinian community. Lino Olopai, a Saipanese Carolinian and activist, said that the payments constituted a fatal blow to the solidarity and one-heartedness of Carolinians on Saipan: “Let’s say my father made the claim for his cousins. When the check came out, it would be made out to my father alone, not to all of them together. Then came the temptation to misuse that money. It was easy to do, because there was no control over how the money was to be disbursed. This was when walls between family members began to be built” (Olopai and Flinn 2005: 218–19).

In 1976, when linguist Jeffrey Marck worked on the Saipan-Carolinian dictionary, he was asked by senior Carolinians to refrain from writing an ethnographic account, as people worried that such a publication could be used against Carolinian interests by the multinational economic and political forces that had entered the scene (Marck 1998, 120). The tendency to “hide out,” reflected in this request, has often been observed among Micronesians (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]).¹³ As many aspects of knowledge (including genealogies, place-names, navigation, divination, and healing) are conceived as guarded property, publication of such data would also devalue the social status of the original owners of this knowledge.

At that time, the status of Micronesia was being negotiated with the United States, and the Carolinians were unable to come to a consensus on their political future (Alkire 1984, 271). From 1969 until 1982, the islands forming the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands negotiated their conditions. Some people favored the idea of becoming part of the United States like Guam; others opted for a compact of free association. The discussions about the future of Saipan split the Carolinians into supporters of the Popular (Democratic) Party and those of the Territorial (Republican) Party (Alkire 1984: 270, 277–78). The Carolinian minority grew, as more people from the atolls kept moving to Saipan for work, better education, and health care (Hezel 2001, 144). Their numbers were, however, soon dwarfed by a multitude of outsiders. The notion of a tropical island paradise attracted Western investors, and in the rebuilding process, Carolinians became a marginalized group. The Japanese occupants had been deported and were replaced by retired Americans, Asian workers, and tourists from both the United States and Asia. The Carolinians eventually realized that they would have to take steps to actively shape their future role in the increasingly crowded world that once was their “Empty Bowl.”

By the late 1970s, Garapan had grown back into a town as a result of housing developments and mass tourism at nearby Micro Beach, and it was obvious to the Carolinians that they were being deprived of their share of the benefits of development while suffering inconveniences caused by the newcomers (see Alkire 1984, 274n9; Marshall 2004, 7). Social stratification and grievances about land sales and political maneuvers polarized Carolinians and Chamorros and led to new Carolinian solidarity in the shape of political institutions like the United Carolinian Association, established in 1971. The first generation of U.S.-educated adults opposed the authority of the elders, tourism and urbanization altered the landscape, and both group unity and adherence to conservative Carolinian custom were threatened.¹⁴

Today's Carolinians on Saipan follow Western rules of social life, wear fashionable Western clothes, and eat Western food. They watch television, go to work, attend school, and run households. Their Carolinian roots are enacted mainly on weekends when they meet for barbecues on the beach or at funerals and other family events. Their language is still in use, but the younger generation seems reluctant to speak it, and everyone is at least as fluent in English. However, quite a large number of families fly to the atolls during the holidays, attend funerals there, host relatives who come to Saipan for medical or educational reasons, continue to observe cross-sex sibling regulations, and perform traditional gender roles on an everyday basis.

But despite occasional visits and even some remigrations, contemporary Carolinian identity on Saipan is not intimately tied to the atolls; in fact, some people claim that they do not know exactly where in the atolls their ancestors came from. There is also a steady inflow of Carolinians, mostly young and relatively educated, who are searching for employment.¹⁵ Saipan's Carolinians call themselves Refaluwasch, the "people of our land," which is Saipan. They have formalized and redefined their ethnic boundaries, highlighting a selection of characteristics and practices. The revival of canoe voyaging as well as language and genealogy programs are attempts to document common descent and unity, to reassemble forces, and to maintain a distinctive identity (see Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]).¹⁶

In the light of political splintering and competition within the Carolinian community and growing disempowerment of Carolinians in the now "Full Bowl" of Saipan, ethnicity has become a powerful political tool. One of the formal groups that lobbies on behalf of Carolinian interests is the Refaluwasch Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in March 2004 to promote consensus and a sense of the Carolinian community worldwide. Its objectives, as stated in its charter, are directed at the "multi-generations of Refaluwasch people" and include the following: "To help revive and instill . . . a sense of community responsibility and stewardship of land, language, and ideas that are our shared experience and the foundation of our culture," especially "the spirit of 'tipiyeew,' our ancestor's spirit of 'one heart, one mind, one voice'; "lost Refaluwasch traditions"; "arts and music"; "appreciation for cultural diversity within the Mariana Islands community"; by providing "first-hand view and experience of Refaluwasch life in its past and present"; "a forum for the exchange of ideas through language studies, lectures and demonstrations, exhibitions, travel and special events"; "multi-media resources" and assistance in "marketing of cultural and traditional products and services"; "economic activities in the CNMI that provide sustainable development"; as well as the training of "new cultural human resources," fund-raising for scholarships, lobbying, welfare, and networking (Refaluwasch Foundation 2004: 3–4).

Membership is open to "any interested persons of Refaluwasch (Carolinian) descent over the age of 18" (Refaluwasch Foundation 2004, 7). The question of who can claim such descent was discussed at the founding meeting, and it was agreed that at least one grandparent must be Carolinian. A definition by blood may be problematic, however, as intermarriages have always been part of Carolinian reality and a "Carolinian" grandfather may well be part European, part Japanese, and part American. In fact, the genetic determination of belonging is troublesome in many cases, and even those with the right "blood" may not look Refaluwasch.

Population statistics from 1990 show that Carolinians constitute only a small minority on Saipan, steadily losing proportional significance in a democratic system.¹⁷ Their search for an urban version of atoll identity is contested: there are competing versions, some voices louder than others, both intergroup and intragroup messages. Saipan's Carolinians whom I interviewed agreed on the need to fight for their "last resorts" of spirituality but also noted, regretfully, that they were now too diverse to "speak with one voice." The following example demonstrates their struggle to stand up in unity in an intergroup scenario, but it also shows that this struggle is framed by shared symbols and experiences that are recombined to serve intragroup purposes.

Three "Graves" for a Chief

The uninhabited lagoon island of Managaha, where Chief Aghurubw was buried, became a tourist attraction in the 1980s. A popular weekend hangout for Carolinians as well as one of their last sacred places, the island was soon overcrowded by day-tripping Japanese and other Asians who sunbathed, snorkeled, rode banana boats, and watched the reef through glass-bottomed boats. Jet skiing and parasailing added to the excitement for the tourists, but these activities disturbed the Carolinians. The original grave of around 1850 had been washed away by typhoons, and Carolinians could not be sure that this last resort of ancient (and partly secret) spirituality would not be turned into a full-scale tourist center against their will. In fact, when I visited the island in 2005 with Lino Olopai, half of it was overcrowded with snorkeling, snacking, and sunbathing Japanese, and only the eastern coast was quiet. Following a footpath, we came to a small, white wooden cross (Fig. 2). Candles, offerings of coconuts, and a beautiful, fresh flower wreath reminded me of graves on Woleai Atoll.

Nearby, my attention was caught by a tombstone covered in bright red paint, its broad frame featuring white stars and, instead of an inscription in the center, a white surface (Fig. 3). Small plates holding decaying food scraps and small boxes of soft drinks were placed at its base, together with small bags made from coconut leaves. This stone had been the chief's first memorial and, according to Alkire, had in 1970 been inscribed with the following words: "This marker commemorates King Agurup, c. 1785–1850, founder of the first permanent colony on Saipan after the Spanish conquest. The colony was founded in 1815 by settlers from Satawal and was named Seipon. King Agurup's body was laid to rest on this island . . . erected by the clan of King Agurup and friends" (Alkire 1984, 279).



FIGURE 2. A cross for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).



FIGURE 3. A stone for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).

At first, I was perplexed that there was no writing on this stone, its empty face so conspicuously white. Only a few steps further, however, I realized that this grave had lost its original function to an upgraded version. The third monument is an eye-catcher (or eyesore to some), a grandiose display of importance, reminding me of monuments to famous thinkers like Karl Marx or Max Weber in my home country of Germany. If the first stone is a message in Western symbolic language, this monument is a loud call for attention. A larger-than-life painted statue of a muscle-bound man with pale skin stands on a high pedestal with a scroll next to his feet. His legs are tattooed, and he wears a bright red loincloth. An emerald-colored flower wreath crowns his heavily bearded head. His right hand holds a walking stick (which looks a bit like a golf club), while a top hat is tucked under his left arm. The left hand has broken off, but the black metal and crumbled concrete add a dramatic touch to the monument. A copper plate with a picture of an arrival scene and an explanatory text completes this impressive piece of art (see Fig. 4):



FIGURE 4. A monument for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).

In 1815, a man sailed from the Caroline Islands to resettle his people on Saipan after their islands were destroyed by a major typhoon.

The man's name was Chief Aghurubw, of the Ghatoliyool clan and chief of Satawal. Known as a great navigator, he was also a man of great courage and humility. His courage was revealed as he braved unpredictable weather and uncertainties ahead to bring his people to a land of refuge. His humility lay in his decision to first ask for permission from Governor Medinilla for settlement on Saipan.

Chief Aghurubw lies buried on Managaha Island. This monument stands in honor of the chief who changed the course of history in the lives of the Carolinians and who gave himself to shape their destiny.

As an anthropologist who had just returned from the Carolinian atolls, I was immediately struck that this last monument was so non-Carolinian in a number of ways. First, it was too large, too bold, and too proud. No Carolinian chief of old would have wanted to be represented in such a way, and the text would have been a treasured part of the oral history of his clan rather than public information for anybody chancing to pass by. Second, the man was too white, and his flower wreath resembled a Roman laurel wreath; to me, he looked a bit like a tattooed Julius Caesar emerging from the bath, carrying a cowboy hat.¹⁸

Obviously, this monument had cost a lot of money, and I understood that it was a message to the tourists rather than a place for Carolinians to commemorate their ancestors. As such, it may have the right size and form to remind tourists that they are on sacred land. Perhaps the cross and the first stone were too small and a Disneyland kind of statue was required to ensure that the appropriate attitude of respect was maintained. Saipan Carolinians did not seem to perceive the monument as a grave, as I did not see any food offerings nearby.

These three monuments for one chief are a fitting example of Carolinian ingenuity and flexibility. While the wooden cross provides a link between people and the spirits of the place, the first stone manifests continuity and may be seen as a boundary marker. In fact, its erection was part of a Carolinian demonstration of their claims to the island. The Office of Carolinian Affairs had drafted a regulation of the use of Managaha: "The present monument is considered sacred and any construction, cleaning or landscaping to be performed within 200 feet of the monument on the island side or between the monument and the sea will come under special

review . . . by government and Carolinians before approval" (quoted in Alkire 1984, 280).

The statue of Aghurubw speaks to foreigners in a language that even the deaf cannot ignore. Before it was even erected, Flinn remarked that "despite the value [Carolinians] may place down orally through chants and stories, they have learned to stress other types of evidence considered more credible by Western standards" (2000, 166).

The "graves" are both strategically and emotionally significant to the Carolinians, and the offerings give evidence of practiced *awaawa*, or respect (see Lewis 1972, 33; Spoehr 2000: 312–13, 328–30). The tourists' lack of such respectful behavior is a grievance to many Carolinians, and their fear of losing Managaha as a sacred space is justified. Despite the Managaha Marine Conservation Act of 2000, which prohibits all human activities on the island unless they are permitted by regulation, a permit was reported to have been issued for a massage parlor on the island (Olopai 2005).

Mentioning the name of Aghurubw's clan on the large copper plate is also a message of internal significance, as it positions his sister's children and their descendants in a senior position in relation to the other Carolinians. As clan names are a sensitive topic and usually not mentioned to outsiders (to the point of total denial of their existence), the inscription on the copper plate raises questions.¹⁹ The clan name appears as Ghatoliyó'l in the Carolinian dictionary (Jackson and Marck 1991) along with some forty others. Since the clan system, with its internal ranking, was allegedly given up in the twentieth century, people do not know any longer to which clan they belong, and the claim to fame of Aghurubw's clan seems to serve as marketable notion of "tradition" rather than as information on local hierarchies. Since clan membership is not a topic for public discourse, it is likely that this is a statement of ownership, as it is common practice on the Carolinian atolls and elsewhere in the Pacific: "Knowledge of names and naming is often viewed as proof or evidence that assures authenticity of narratives. This implies a shared recognition that naming has the function of recording historical events or historical figures" (Guo 2003, 203).²⁰

Three sets of voices, minds, and hearts seem to have shaped the sacred area of Managaha. A closer look, however, supports the argument that the "graves" also represent common grounds, as the Carolinian women of Saipan have kept up some key elements of their values, especially their reinterpretation of "taking care" and "respect." Both notions are expressed in flower garlands (*mvàâr*), and in fact all three "graves" of Aghurubw were decorated with rather fresh flower wreaths when I saw them. In Saipan, these beautiful and short-lived adornments are still used to express love and respect, to assist in healing, and to beautify people. After the war, Joseph

and Murray observed that wreaths and garlands were worn for dances and that women preferred to be photographed wearing a *mvààr* (1951: 79, 305). Today, they have become a subtle symbol for Carolinian identity that is understood within the community but, I would argue, is misinterpreted by outsiders as an exotic but beautiful “Pacific tradition,” associated with hula girls and pseudo-Polynesian music—the lei. Because of these mental images, the *mvààr* was accepted by all, and by carrying both Carolinian meaning and Pacific flair, it has remained a typical feature of Carolinian life. Ethnographic detail on the cultural salience of flowers among Carolinians has not yet been published. For this reason, I now turn to the way petals are used and conceptualized on the atolls where the ancestors of Saipan’s Carolinians lived, trying to create a sense of scented space that has in many if not all aspects transcended the two centuries of diasporic existence.

Flowers That Matter

Flowers for wreaths and garlands are picked and braided by women and children (Fig. 5). Learning the various methods and compositions is part of the process of growing up for a Carolinian girl, as most women weave them almost every day. The wreaths carry a message of love and care, diligence, skill, and respect. In certain contexts, they have additional meanings, such as sexual attraction, rite of passage, or medical treatment. Flower wreaths are a very visible part of atoll life unless, as a sign of grief, funeral restrictions ban them.²¹ The weaving of flowers is a salient expression of female agency in relation to the land in their matrilocal world of continuity and emplaced identity. Flowers are a local metaphor that is frequently used in songs and stories, as a pseudonym for individual persons as well as a narrative strand that carries the message of love (or, if lacking, of neglect).

The flowers used on Saipan are mostly the same as on the atolls, but better soil conditions give a wider choice. They are still worn as a daily ornament; I once saw a man casually wearing two stems of peppermint, tied together, as a *mvààr*. Festive attire requires at least one flower head wreath and various neck garlands for both men and women. When I walked around wearing a flower wreath, Carolinians noticed and evidently wondered who I was and whose gift of love and friendship I was displaying on my head. In any photograph of decorated Carolinians from past or present and on the CNMI government’s Internet home page, the *mvààr* appears as a decorative sign of belonging and of being Carolinian.



FIGURE 5. Saipanese woman weaving mwààr for me (photograph by the author, March 12, 2004).

The Carolinian dictionary lists twelve terms related to the “lei or garland,” distinguishing between ordinary speech and respect language, between putting it on a person’s head or on a cross or statue in a religious context, between placing and removing it, and between “withering” (made from flowers) and “permanent” garlands (made from glass beads; Jackson and Marck 1991). The colors have a meaning: purple flowers are associated with death, white flowers with peace. New forms of weaving have been developed over time, with plastic bands and synthetic wool replacing pandanus strings. Despite the availability of everlasting commercial garlands from paper or plastic, real flowers are preferred, as they carry more meaning. The deeper meaning of these short-lived decorations is not a topic of public discourse, but it is revealed when particular flowers are burned in mortuary rituals (*abwaat*), while others are used at funerals because of their strong perfume. The scent is carefully composed when more than one flower is used because it is believed that it provides a protection against evil spirits.

Spirits of the Carolinians

In order to better understand the link between flowers and spirits, an ethnographic visit to the Central Carolinian atolls is instructive. Some Carolinians have traveled from Saipan to the outlying atolls to return to their roots. On the atolls, Lino Olopai and others have experienced a complex belief system, that is lingering in Saipan but taken much less seriously today: "Imagine what it was like when people were very close to their beliefs about spirits; there were spirits of breadfruit, spirits of mango trees, for example. Because they were respected and consulted, the spirits were able to show themselves. But it was then. Today because of the introduction of Western religion, these beliefs are no longer practiced. But the knowledge is still there" (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 67).

While the details and the background knowledge of pre-Christian spirituality may have become threadbare among Saipan's Carolinians, there can be no doubt that the spirits of old have found some space—as elsewhere in Christian Oceania. In a wider Pacific context, spirits are known to "linger" (see also Howard and Mageo 1996, 5), and Carolinian spirits are notorious for lingering in the homesteads, where they curiously monitor human activity and perceive scents, colors, movement, and sound. According to Edwin Burrows and Melford Spiro, in the 1950s on Ifaluk atoll some homesteads were so infested with lingering malevolent spirits that death and sickness caused families to move out (1953: 225, 307). Before deciding to move, however, people try to improve the place, through ritually cleansing it, clearing out much of the vegetation to "deface" it (as one of my friends put it), and trying to befriend the spirits by planting scented shrubs and offering flower wreaths and food. Spirits are said to enjoy staying in immaterial places that are the "spiritual doubles" of material places. These places are mostly in uninhabited areas (on small islets like Managaha, in the air, under the sea, and under the ground) because spirits dislike noise (see Käser 1997: 141–42, 168, 222; Metzgar 2004).

In general, benevolent spirits love flower wreaths, as many chants, songs, and stories show. William Lessa was told that spirits lived on flowers and their odor (1966, 111). Burrows and Spiro wrote that on Ifaluk "the people on earth wear flower leis (*marmar*) because they know that the *alus* are fond of them and will smell their fragrant odor, should they descend" (1953, 214). In a story from Pulusuk, the decoration of a magician's canoe with flower wreaths resulted in a constant abundance of food. Hans Damm and Ernst Sarfert noted that, on Puluwat, spirits of the dead sometimes demanded that for four days the women make wreaths every morning and afternoon, hanging them at the spirit's place for offerings (*ran*). Small wreaths were a ritual gift to spirits in the annual fertility ritual (*atomei*).²²

Flowers show affection and assure the maintenance of a caretaking relationship with the spirit of the deceased. Hijikata Kisakatsu observed on Satawal that the weaving of wreaths was embedded in a welcoming ritual for canoes: “The priestess from Fááyen gathered everyone together. She performed the *pwénimwár* (flower-garland weaving) ceremony and had the women prepare food and the men collect young coconuts” (Hijikata 1997, 279).

With Christianity, the power of flowers to communicate this important message has been extended into the church, where the altar and, at times, the statues of saints are decorated with flowers; holy water has become a means to chase away malevolent spirits. In Toon (Chuuk Lagoon), spirits are known to punish (eat, spit at, or bite) humans for wrongdoings, hurting not necessarily the actual wrongdoer but perhaps another member of the group (Käser 1977, 223).²³ Not only can spirits cause sickness and death, but they can also cause unfortunate changes of the weather, plagues, pests, and social complications of island life, like fighting, stealing, and gossip. They are believed to be invisible but perceivable, and they in turn take notice of humans, especially of the odors that surround them.

Spirits may also enter human bodies for a while. States of spirit possession have often been reported for the area, evidencing a weak boundary between humans and spirits. Gifts of flowers and turmeric to the spirit are an important element of these encounters.²⁴ Metzgar reported from Lamotrek that the medium is referred to as the “canoe of the flower wreath,” the vessel for the spirit (2008, 194).

Sickness can be carried on the wind, and healers may wave a coconut frond over a patient while chanting, as on Ifaluk (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 215–16, 219–20). Another healing method is based on special small mats that are bespelled and hung up around the island: “The women retire to prepare the *timās*. The *timās* are mats made of young coconut leaflets, which the young men hang on trees along the shores, encircling both islands. The words of the song cling to the *timās*, and as they sway in the breeze the words are automatically repeated over and over again” (Burrows and Spiro 1953, 231).

Spirits, flowers, and the air belong together. To Carolinians, the ineffable space, the gap that exists between objects in the common Western view, is filled with life in motion, traversed by smells, ephemeral forms, smoke, shade, shape, and shadows. Carolinians believe that they can influence this space by keeping their bodies clean, by following the rules of respect, and by using material objects like flower garlands. The idea that the moving air carries and mediates spiritual elements is a significant aspect of Carolinian identity.²⁵ In a healing chant, the connection between spirits and the soft wind is expressed poetically, as Burrows and Spiro recorded:

The god is not like man, he is like birds.
 He is like the winds,
 he is like the rain,
 that tarry not on the land (i.e. he comes to the earth for a short
 time, and then leaves.)
 He changes his course like the wind.
 Like the wind, he comes from the north,
 and returns to the south,
 the distance between America and the Carolines.
 He is like the Sug bird that travels on land and sea. (1953, 221)

In the song of a mother grieving for her dead son, also collected by Burrows and Spiro, she laments,

his place was over at the seaward side. . . .
 the wind comes against my face
 And blows on my body.
 What if that wind were my boy come back to me? (1953, 309)

In this light, the Carolinian conception of breath as the energy of life is notable. In Ifaluk, life energy (*ngas*) was described as a vaporous substance (this was Burrows and Spiro's translation of their informant's statement that it was "all same wind" [1953, 246]). The soul is believed to leave the body through the mouth (Burrows and Spiro 1953, 308). Similarly, in Ulithi, life is closely linked to breathing: "There is a relationship between the soul and breath. With the last breath the soul leaves the body, usually through the top of the head, but through the legs if the last breath is exhaled rather than inhaled. In either event, it goes from the body and hovers about on earth for a brief time. After four days, the corpse is interred and the soul flies away" (Lessa 1966, 111; see also Alkire 1989). On Pulusuk, wind and air are called by the same term, and breathing literally means "the waving of breath." In Toon, according to Lothar Käser, breath is moved by the pumping motion of the heart (1990: 88, 129, 131). Certainly, the breath is very intimate and personal, as indicated in the gesture of "sniffing" the cheek (the "Pacific kiss").

Garlands and flower wreaths appear to have a particular capacity to be sensed by spirits. The smell of turmeric powder (*rang*) must be overwhelming to Carolinian spirits, as it is greatly used in times of transition and weakness (e.g., birth, death, initiation, school graduation, after a typhoon, and at Easter and Christmas). I suggest that it is not just the smell but also the yellow color and somewhat more iridescent surface of the skin caused by the powder that is perceived by spirits and wards them off (Fig. 6). A



FIGURE 6. Ephemeral protection (photograph by the author, November 7, 2004).

garland of flowers or of crumpled curcuma leaves is a common addition to the turmeric powder. These decorations are protective, because malevolent spirits are believed to be particularly sensitive to bright, shiny, gently moving objects and afraid of smoke and fire (Käser 1977, 217).

The Carolinian interpretation of smoke, scent, and wind is similar to the larger island world. Any resident of a Pacific village will eventually experience that smoke that rises into the air carries information with it, beginning with the kind of firewood used and the food that is being cooked. In a social context, the smoke tells stories about relationships, for instance, who brought the fuel, who provided the food and which kinds, who prepared the meal, and who will get a share of it. Smoke communicates even more information if spirits are concerned, as it tells them to keep out. In mortuary ritual in Chuuk, when all earthly possessions are burned in a bonfire near the house of the deceased, the smoke that rises in the air carries away the spirit of that person (Bollig 1927, 22). This ritual is still performed by Saipan's Carolinians, mostly on Managaha Island.

In food offerings, like those on two of the three "graves," it is believed that the smell that rises from the food reaches the spirits who can consume it "and feel happy." Burrows and Spiro reported that small portions of any meal were offered to the spirits of the compound (1953: 234, 316) and included a recipe of roasted *wot* taro mixed with grated coconut and leaves of *wareng* (hoary basil) and *angorik* (curcuma; 53).²⁶ They were told that the sky gods like *wot* taro (true taro) and that some is cooked as part of medicine (214).

The effect of smoke and fire on spirits is used in local medicine, for instance, with steam baths (Krämer 1937: 138–39), and in midwifery when the weak states of a delivering mother and a newborn baby are protected from malevolent spirits by keeping a constant fire nearby. As local medicine is conceptualized as "hot" and spells often refer to heat and fire in various ways, this points toward the visible rising of hot air and fumes. Burrows and Spiro mentioned a weather magician's spell that included the line "my talk goes to the clouds like fire" (1953, 236). The conception of magical heat is also expressed in healing chants, as quoted by Burrows and Spiro:

My arm made this medicine, hot as fire, to ward off illness
 My medicine is hot as fire. Those who drink will not fall ill
 My arm is hot as fire.
 My medicine is hot. Illness will not come.
 My medicine is very hot. It descends into the oceans. It is very hot.
 My medicine is very hot; it descends into the waters; it ascends
 into the heavens. (1953, 233)

Maurice Leenhardt's statement that "odour, for Austro-Melanesians, plays a role which exceeds any we can imagine" (1984, 48) certainly applies to all Pacific Islanders, where a rich smellscape connects people with each other and with their local spirit beings, whose excellent capacity to smell is mentioned in many ethnographic accounts (see, e.g., Damm and Sarfert 1935: 26, 58, 196–97; Hezel and Dobbin 1996: 208–9; Käser 1990: 188–89). Perfumes and stench communicate a person's social standing and moral qualities to the spirits. Spirits detest the smell of menstrual blood and sex (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 210, 214; Käser 1977: 164, 223). This link can be seen as the reason behind a number of spatial restrictions, especially for menstruating women and new mothers, as well as for men who plan to go fishing, for magicians, and for people engaged in particular mortuary practices (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 48, 210, 214; Damm and Sarfert 1935, 58; Käser 1977, 253).

Smell, of course, is not the only quality of the air between objects. A song for a sea ghost, recorded and translated by Eric Metzgar, begins with the sensation of sound:

Oh, I can hear the sound of the sea ghost coming!
 I got up because I feel it.
 I feel him coming and he smells windy.
 He smells like the light wind of the leaves when they turn yellow.
 (2008, 117)

Spirits are audible in a subtle, intuitive way, like the whisper of leaves or the small sounds of low waves reaching the beach. The third and last lines of the song Metzgar quoted point out another significant aspect, namely, the mediation of smell and sounds by means of a light wind. It appears to me that the movement of air establishes the communication of sound, odor, and sentiment. The light wind presents the omnipresent force that links persons with the objects, plants, and spirits of their world. The Western worldview routinely privileges the visual, concrete world and consequently pays too little attention to the bodily sensations of a breeze.

The breeze may form the missing link between the efficacy of odorous and formulaic magic that has caused Alfred Gell to distinguish between them as separate techniques (1977, 25). Both magical substances and spells travel on the air to reach the spirits; the precise formula, body movements, and the enveloping smells are part of it in the specific context but do not differ in kind. Carolinian sea spirits are ever-dangerous antagonists and require ritual attention for successful fishing and canoe traveling. Both the fishermen and their vessels must be protected by the right smellscape and

(magical) “spellscape” to avoid upsetting them. Spells and smells work together to protect the men and help to fish and to return home.

As the air moves, it carries information on the place and on its inhabitants. The perfume of the flower that I wear reaches out with the breeze, passing on parts of my person, shapes, and colors as additional sensations that position me in the momentary context. The air transmits the information about concrete forms and their movements together with abstract notions like ethical and moral standards, levels of intensity, and emotionality. A sudden cool breeze, for example, can carry sensations of fear or sorrow, as it may give evidence of a dead relative’s spirit nearby. At sunset, when a fresh wind from the ocean waves through the atoll, people believe that their ancestors’ spirits return for the night (Damm and Sarfert 1935, 200). When it is dark on Woleai, children, especially babies, are not taken into the fresh air for fear of malevolent spirits (Douglass 1998, 95). In daytime, a perfumed, warm breeze that showers a person with scent is a strong perception and likely to be associated with a benevolent spirit.

Managaha Island, the sacred space of Saipan’s Carolinians, is permeable to the syncretism of religious practice and certainly a focal point of communal identification. The food offerings and flower wreaths on Aghurubw’s “graves” are a means of communication of the living with the dead and markers of “one-heartedness.” The eternal breeze of Managaha Island retains the deeper meanings that exist on the atolls. Spirits still linger on Managaha Island, fires still send their smoke into the sky, and flowers still saturate the air.

On Saipan, the flower wreath has been turned into a quiet message of “one voice, one mind, and one heart.” Its symbolic career rose into international spheres in the 1970s, when a new official seal and flag for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands were created (Fig. 7). A *mwàâr* was added as the third feature to the white star and the silhouette of a gray Latte stone (the famous ruins of ancient Chamorro architecture). Carolinians were not specifically represented by the symbolism of ocean-blue background with a *taga*-star (a common icon for a country) or the ancient Chamorro house post, although one could read the star as a sign for navigation that would include them. But the *mwàâr* also carries more meaning than an outsider would notice; as one Carolinian told me, “They don’t know what they got on there!” To disclose its complex symbolism is probably not in the interest of the Carolinians of Saipan, but three of the flowers in the *mwàâr* are strongly scented, and at least two of them are used in medicine (one of them for treating small children, for example, when they develop painful swellings after their first trip over the ocean). One of them used to be placed into the pierced septum of the nose of the

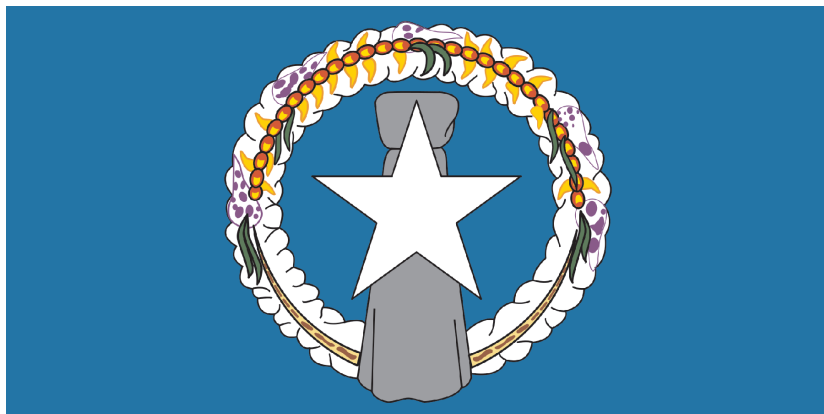


FIGURE 7. Saipan's flag.

women when they cleaned and prepared a corpse for burial to cover up the smell of decay (for Satawal, see Krämer 1937, 117). One flower looks like a dancing fairy and is associated with benevolent spirits. The seal and the flag are thus inscribed with ancient Carolinian principles of love and respect, consensus and knowledge, of women who look after the family and the place, planting flowers to beautify their loved ones, and composing the scents of home that assist people in re-creating present identities: a sense, sensation, and sentiment of being Carolinian in a westernized world.

Discussion: Recombinant Continuity

The “graves” on Managaha Island and their decorations are outward-directed Carolinian answers to Americanization and their marginalization as players in the commercial games of tourism and politics. At the same time, they inscribe notions of identity in ways that are effective within the group but hardly noticed by outsiders. In this way, Carolinians flexibly adjust to new hierarchies in old patterns by keeping a low profile and working on internal consensus rather than promoting individual careers. Consensus, or *tipiyeew*, to “be of one mind,” is the Carolinian answer, or mantra, in an overwhelmingly Western world that increasingly changes from place to nonplace (see Augé 1995; Alkire 1984, 281). Saipan's shopping malls, airports, and classy hotels are void of local meaning; like standardized hospitals and office buildings, they follow global patterns and style. Even though it is less than fully realized in practice, the mantra is significant as a link to the past; *tipiyeew*, one could argue, is alive and well in Carolinians' invisible belongings.

Various groups on Saipan are concerned about environmental impacts of mines, plantations, and factories, and Carolinians are among them. By conforming to values and principles of American culture in the social fields of democracy and consumerism, postwar generations of educated, vocal, and successful activists like Lino Olopai, Jesus Elameto, or Cinta Kaipat are situated in both worlds and try their best to keep their “culture” alive. Chief Aghurubw’s third monument shows the difficulty of the task because by demonstrating their legitimacy they risk sacrificing key ethics like humbleness, generosity, and social balance. The monument represents a frozen past; the “interaction with the gazes of outsiders makes landscape inscriptive rather than a cultural process” (Guo 2003, 189; see also Flinn 2000, 165). This “secondary representation of landscape through another medium” bears resemblance to an open-air museum (Stewart and Strathern 2003a, 230) rather than to a sacred space of burial, but it certainly serves the purpose of being visible and “loud” in an increasingly noisy world.

The temptation to go the easier way is a normal feature of human existence, and Saipan’s Carolinians are no exception to this principle: family ties are regarded as important, but a well-stocked bank account has its own merits and can be kept secret from a needy aunt to a certain degree (see Addo 2012 [this issue]). Alkire pointed out in the 1980s that to atoll dwellers of the Caroline Islands, Saipan was still a “land of plenty” (1984, 282), and my 2004 research confirmed this idealization.

Saipan’s Carolinians appear to be torn between contradictory values, emphasizing the “traditional” while embracing Western comforts. Buying a cheeseburger is easier than cooking a meal of self-cultivated taro and fish caught in the open sea. Western food and alcoholic beverages have changed the bodies of Carolinians and are certainly threatening their health. Joel Robbins pointed out the “creative abilities in choosing which parts of both the traditional and the modern” people accept or reject (2005, 15). The temptations of fast food and sugar seem to be irresistible, however, despite their unhealthy effects. When I showed Krämer’s 1909 photographs to Carolinians, they frequently commented on the slim bodies of their ancestors: “How strong we were!” In Yap, I heard the expression of drinking “silver coconuts” (Budweiser Light), and on the atolls people like to mix liquor with their coconut toddy. Diabetes and alcoholism-related problems are among the negative consequences of the Western lifestyle (see, e.g., Hezel 2001, 24; Marshall 1979; 2004: 55–58).

When clan identity is lost and land has been first defaced and then turned into a commodity that can be leased by foreigners, solidarity is threatened by egoism, as the Saipan case shows. This does not mean that the Carolinians’ sense of place has changed to a sentimental, frozen memory,

rhetoric, or a political tool. Important elements have survived together with kinship relations to the atolls, and the frequent visits from the “poor spaces” of the atolls to the “land of plenty” in Saipan refresh these ties (Flinn 2000, 171). On Saipan, such elements are condensed in a smaller number of identity markers, especially the art of seafaring, cross-sibling relationships, and flower garlands.

With democracy, the time-consuming process of consensus making is likely to be outvoted by pragmatism; in a capitalist economy, the luxury of endless talks is often not an option, and “too much kinship” endangers the existence of any business. Without the matrilineal system, the taro gardens, and the production of woven cloth wealth as a major means of exchange, women have lost many of the bases for their high standing and pride. All these elements are implied in Kaipat’s statement that “the worst thing that has happened to our people is money” (pers. comm., February 2005; see also Flinn 2000, 167). The cash economy is known for diluting Carolinian notions of “respect” (see Hezel 2001, 161).

The contemporary life of Carolinians on Saipan bears little resemblance to the atoll world of their ancestors. “Saipan is very, very developed compared to the rest of Micronesia, let alone the Central Carolines” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 174). The island features at least five golf courses and twenty to thirty textile factories (“sweatshops”), where a large number of mostly Asian workers are employed under exploitative conditions. Tourism has changed the face of its coastline, as Saipan’s beautiful beaches are tourist attractions. In the main shopping mall of Garapan, Japanese women sample the latest collections of designer clothes and can spend as much as \$1,000 on a skimpy summer top. Rich Russians spend the winter months in tropical Saipan; Japanese and Koreans have discovered the island as a nearby hideaway from the hectic life at home.

Carolinians live farther apart from each other, and nuclear families mostly keep to themselves. Olopai complained that “families rarely visit each other: Visits are being replaced by television. People read newspapers to learn what is going on instead of getting together to spread the news. Families are independent because of job security and money from work and leases. When they lease property, they feel they no longer have to depend on other family members. The only time you see an extended family together is when there’s a birthday or a wedding or a funeral—especially funerals. That is when families get together. Or they go to court” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 225).

This lack of interaction leads to egocentric perspectives that contrast starkly with Carolinian principles. Olopai has observed that fundamental ethical rules are easily ignored when individuals are too focused on their

personal profit: “Now, with all the monetary value in land, people have a tendency to make up stories about how properties were acquired to favor their own interests” (2005, 208). Fishing and sailing are recreational activities rather than a food-producing source of male pride and bonding. The world of men has changed more drastically than the world of women, as many women do not have full-time jobs but raise children, prepare daily meals, and maintain closer links to the women of the neighborhood as they spend their days around the house. Women still try to find a quiet spot to keep a garden and decorate their place with flower shrubs. They adorn the Christian icons on the house altar with flowers and speak Carolinian with the children.

The land on Saipan has become a Carolinian place in its own right; its progressive alienation since German times, culminating in the chaotic situation after World War II and subsequent land commoditization, has been a grievance to the Carolinians of Saipan for exactly this reason. The ways of showing respect, of speaking with one voice, and of taking care of each other have not been given up entirely but have undergone an adjustment to modern conditions. Unfortunately, it seems that such a unity materializes only when urgent action is required, as in a demonstration when Managaha was threatened again in 1992 (see Flinn 2000: 168–70). Alkire’s impression in the early 1980s was, “The Saipan Carolinians are not interested in a ‘return to the earth (or sea) movement’ but rather in revitalizing cultural elements that emphasize an ethnic identity. They, as much as the other outer islanders, are interested in gaining or retaining the benefits of much of the new; but they believe that, in order to do so, it is necessary to ‘recapture’ at least some of the old” (1984, 283).

I believe that the last twenty years have not significantly changed this interest, although when I talked to members of the new generation of teenagers, they did not seem prepared to sacrifice their relative independence and liberties for an identity more restrictive of their rights of speech. To these young people, “one voice, one heart, and one mind” was not as attractive a vision as it was for the older generation: “Today we have independent thinking and selfish behavior. ‘This is mine!’ In the past, it was ‘This is ours!’” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 216). A common sense of belonging depends on practice, and families still come together more often than in, say, my own German extended family. Perhaps Olopai is cynical when he complains that only funerals and courts cases bring families together.

My account of Saipan Carolinians halts here, suggesting that the heterogeneity of Saipan’s Carolinians has led to their loss of “one voice.” They are

no longer “one group” but global players who follow disparate paths. Their public displays of community spirit lack the cohesiveness of the past, when consensus-finding strategies enabled the chiefs to announce decisions that were carried by all—ideally, with “one voice, one mind, and one heart.” The three tombs for Aghurubw point into different directions of future bonding; they may be seen as different recombinations of a common past to communicate ownership to strangers. A closer look at the sacred site of Managaha Island and more background knowledge from the distant home atolls, however, can reveal a glimpse into lived Carolinian-ness. The food offerings and the flowers that decorated the “graves” are evidence that fundamental principles of the past are still in place, although perhaps in truncated versions and spiced with Christian detail. The flowers speak of internal agreement on principles of spirituality, of female virtues and the Carolinian ethic of love and care. Although the (public/male/senior) leading voice and the principle of overall consensus have been ceded to democracy and global economy, the hearts and minds still nourish common principles. And as long as the children hang around their mother when she prepares food, are taken along to family meetings, and perhaps are able to visit their relatives in the Carolinian islands for holidays, their sense of being Carolinian may survive, if only encoded in small, almost subversive, objects like a flower garland, a cooked meal, or a song.

Conclusions

Pacific Islands migrants have been described as “insiders without, outsiders within,” as their marginality at the edges of island life and in their new locations creates ambiguous diasporic identities (Perez 2004, 67). Saipan’s Carolinians are no exception, their imagined community covering a large area reaching from southern Micronesia and Guam to outlets in Hawai‘i and the U.S. continent.

Flower garlands, cooked food, and the sensual memories associated with family gatherings that never go without these are forceful (yet barely noticed) elements of Carolinian identity, providing the center of sociality and a stage for shared values. The importance of feasts and local food has often been stressed by diasporic Pacific Islanders (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]). When a certain dish is classified as “delicious,” it tastes like “home”—recalling memories of family, an outdoor lifestyle near the beach, and mothers in the cooking area, creating a certain “air” of love and care while preparing meals, talking to each other, and supervising smaller children.

Jeannette Mageo’s differentiation between different kinds of memory employed in intergroup and intragroup contexts also helps to grasp the

widening gap between “one voice” and “one heart and mind” (2001: 17–18). The political strategies of Carolinians, typically men, in their struggle for a niche on Saipan are a good example for the hierarchically structured intergroup memory that is meant to impress a wider audience. Erecting monuments, demonstrating, and complaining about the loss of unity can be seen as strategies to selectively employ idealized memories of former sociality. In contrast, the intragroup memory includes synthetic elements, as “one sense recalls another,” and excites personal memories. Intragroup memory, according to Mageo, “speaks a private language” (2001, 18).

My focus on private yet shared invisible belongings may help to identify mechanisms of intragroup bonding through shared memories of home. It has been noted that diasporic communities of Pacific Islanders are typically inclusive: “What is important for Pacific Islander American ethnicity is not boundaries but centers: ancestry, family, practice, place” (Spickard 2002, 53). The encompassing identities of Mortlockese are based on their high mobility, ability to shift into larger Pacific Islander identities, and a persistent sense of family: “Namoluk people remain heavily entangled in one another’s lives” (Marshall 2004, 139). Their shared memories of sensual experiences and moral principles form the invisible belongings, and, depending on the context, these memories can be used to create identity, shifting from place-bound to island-bound experiences and thereby allowing a Pacific Islander sense of communality if this is the smallest possible unit of identification because of a lack of closer “relatives.” Food, flowers, and family create the scents, textures, and sounds from the island world that Oceania’s migrants take along and try to unpack at new destinations. The case of Saipan’s Carolinians has shown how resistant and pervasive these invisible belongings can be—especially those that are being safeguarded within the realms of female spaces and quieter voices.

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NOTES

1. “Carolinian” here refers to Pacific Islanders from the Caroline Islands, thereby including persons from various language groups who in the past had limited or no contact. The core of these people consists of families who trace themselves back to the

Central Caroline Islands from Eauripik to Polowat. The term excludes especially Chamorros, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, and westerners (especially U.S. Americans and Russians). While it is assumed that the majority of Saipan's Carolinians came from the Central Caroline Islands, I am not aware that there are statistical data on the place of origin of individuals, and ethnic distinctions have often disappeared through frequent intermarriages.

2. I am grateful to Ping-Ann Addo for suggesting the term "belongings."

3. For an overview of the discussion of these terms in social theory, see Throop 2008: 255–57.

4. Alain Corbin reported that in eighteenth-century France there was a "manifest association between corrupt women and corrupt odors" (quoted in Classen 1992, 143; see also Corbin 1986).

5. Rosabell Boswell's article on fragrance in Zanzibar indicates its important role in creating a "largely tolerant and peaceful society" (2008, 296).

6. For the importance of "home cooking" among Filipinos in Hong Kong, see Law 2005, 234; for culinary nostalgia in postsocialist Lithuania, see Lankauskas 2006: 39–43.

7. The multiethnic identities of Pacific Islanders in the United States of America are discussed in Spickard 2002.

8. In the Pacific Islands, as in Zanzibar, "fragrance is mostly women's business" (Boswell 2008, 300).

9. In Oceania, men and women are fond of floral decorations and as it common to hear comments on the sentiments that they create.

10. See Flinn 2000, 164, for a discussion of different versions of this arrival story; see also D'Arcy 2006: 159, 239n74; Joseph and Murray 1951, 26; and McCoy 1973: 355–56. The film *Lieweila* ("Listen to Our Story") tells a version of this first settlement (Strong and Kaipat 1998; see also Marck 1998).

11. Fritz reported that a German steamship visited Saipan six to seven times per year. The sailing ships of three Japanese companies on Saipan provided a more frequent service to Yokohama and Guam (Fritz 1906, 289). For accounts of epidemics brought by ships to the atolls, see Alkire 1965, 68; Krämer 1937, 10; and Hijikata 1997: 73, 195n, 288.

12. See Costenoble 1905, 73. It is interesting to note that, according to Joseph and Murray, by 1947 the term "kanaka" had "been adopted by both Chamorros and Carolinians as meaning the Saipanese Carolinians and does not seem to carry any depreciatory overtones" (1951, 69).

13. Although I agree with David Hanlon (2009) that the term "Micronesia" is a colonial construct and not a single cultural region, it is too convenient to be given up altogether.

14. See also Alkire 1984: 271, 273; Carucci and Poyer 2002, 205; Flinn 2000, 159; and Poyer 1999: 204–5.

15. According to census data from the 1990s, there were 4,469 migrants from the FSM in the CNMI: “About 1,200 were post-Compact [after 1986], 600 were children of migrants, and another 1,200 were pre-Compact migrants. The other persons were not migrants or their children, but could have been third or later generation persons of Micronesian migrant ethnicities. . . . The number of post-Compact migrants and their children more than doubled between 1990 and 1997, from 2,739 persons in 1990 to 6,550 in 1997” (Office of Insular Affairs 1998: 8, 17).

16. I was told that garland making has also occasionally been offered as a workshop for girls.

17. In 1990, the total population was 38,896 (Chamorros: 10,042; Carolinians: 2,328; and other: 26,526). See Alkire 1984, 273; Flinn 2000, 159.

18. Augustin Krämer spoke highly of the Carolinian art of tattooing and stated that it was widespread except for Lamotrek and Palau (1937, 228). While Johann S. Kubary observed that all the men were covered with tattoos, Krämer saw only a few, but navigators and chiefs were certainly covered in designs on the upper torso. While the patterns varied, the drawing of a Woleaian chief’s tattoos shows that the calves were left free except for a few horizontal lines (Krämer 1937: 225–26).

19. See Marck 2008 for a linguistic analysis of Carolinian clan names.

20. More specific ethnographic data on the three monuments were regarded as sensitive by my interlocutors and cannot be published here.

21. Specific ethnographic data on the creation of flower wreaths were regarded as sensitive by my interlocutors and cannot be published here.

22. See Burrows and Spiro 1953, 221; Damm and Sarfert 1935: 202–5, 221; and Lessa 1966: 73, 112.

23. See Damm and Sarfert 1935: 96–97, 190–92; Goodenough 1978: 111–13; Hezel and Dobbin 1996, 197; Käser 1977: 175, 179; and LeBar 1963, 67. For further studies of Carolinian religion, see, for example, Alkire 1965: 114–23; Burrows and Spiro 1953: 207–18, 344–49; Goodenough 1986; and Krämer 1937: 278–91.

24. See Burrows and Spiro 1953, 239; Damm and Sarfert 1935: 200, 202; Dobbin and Hezel 1996; Hezel 1993; Krämer 1937: 35, 116, 121; Lambek 1996, 241; and Lessa 1966, 112.

25. Among the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea, a certain wind was associated with spirits, and drumming was a form of communication (Whitehouse 1994: 45, 47). Carolinians do not use any drums today.

26. See also Sohn and Tawerilmang 1976: 164, 172 (where *angorik* is spelled “yangoshig”). The scientific name for *wareng* is *Ocimum canum* Sims (also known as basilic camphor); the fragrant oils derived from this shrub are known for their medical properties in many places of the world.

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