

CIRITACO, THE BACHELOR'S HOUSE

グマ・ウリタオ 古代チャモロ社会を生きた男たちの世界

구마 우리타오 고대 차모로 시대를 살았던 남자들의 세계

Story by Cindy Hanson



When historians write about the settlements of the ancient Chamorros, they write about the thatched homes that sat upon the latte stone pillars. The latte stones were the foundations of Chamorro homes, lined up in rows to support the hut above. The chief and the highest-ranking female of the clan, the maga

låhi and maga håga, would have lived in huts on taller latte stones. The medicinal healer, or makåna, also would have had a special hut on latte stones, most likely set to the side of the others.

There would be other huts for different purposes, like cooking. The majority of huts would have been about the same height and not all were on latte stones. You might expect the chief to live in the tallest hut in the village, but you would be wrong. The tallest hut in the village was the Guma Uritao, or the Bachelor's House, and it was always built on latte stones. This is the hut where young Chamorro males were sent to learn the skills they needed to become men.

At a certain age, most likely in his mid to late teens, Chamorro mothers sent their sons to the Guma Uritao, or Ulitao, of her village. There her male relatives would oversee the training of her son. He would learn how to fish and hunt, make tools and weapons, and more. The young man would learn about the social norms and cultural practices of the Chamorro people to prepare him to become a husband, provider, and member of the clan. Married men would often spend their day at the Guma Uritao providing opportunities for the younger men to learn from them.

If a man had a special skill, the youngsters could learn by watching and practicing what they saw. If an older man had a particular skill, sometimes a younger man would offer him something in order to learn. An offering of betel nut, or pugua, was an acceptable gift.

However, if offered an alås, or shell money, the older man was obligated to share his knowledge. This is how skills like navigating by the stars, the building of latte stone huts, and superior canoe building were passed on. Often, the young man's uncle would help pay for his lessons.

The ancient Chamorros didn't have many weapons, but what they did have were lethal. The Chamorro spear, or fisga, was made of wood. The tip was either hardened by fire to a deadly point or a piece of bone was attached. The Chamorros would use fish, and sometimes human, bones as spearheads. Bacteria in the bones would cause infections from even the most minor scratch, resulting in death. When the Spaniards encountered the spears in combat, they thought the Chamorros had laced them with poison.

A favorite weapon of the Chamorros was the slingstone. It is not uncommon to still find slingstones in the jungles of Guam, but you are encouraged to leave them where you find them. You can pick it up and look at it, but the jungle prefers to keep its treasures so please put it back for the next person to enjoy. Slingstones, or acho' atupat, are shaped like a football and made from volcanic rock, coral, or clay. They vary in size, but are usually the size of a chicken egg. They're flung with a sling called atupag, made from a





Young Chamorro men making traditional canoe at Valley of The Latte Adventure Park. バレー・オブ・ザ・ラッテ・アドベンチャーパークでは伝統的のカヌー作りを継承している 밸리 오브 더 라페에서는 전통적인 카누 만들기를 계승하고 있다 . Photo provided by Valley of The Latte Adventure Park



Ancient Chamorro life in beach. 漁は生活の糧。男性にとって道具作 りや漁の方法は不可欠なスキル 고기 잡이는 생활의 양식. 남성에게 있 어서 도구 만들기와 고기 잡이는 필수 기술

fibrous material like pandanus.

The Chamorros did not wear armor when they fought. They relied more on their agility and ingenuity to dodge slingstones and spears. They also used ambush and surprise. They would camouflage pits with pointed bamboo stakes for the enemy to fall in, a harrowing technique borrowed in other wars. Fortunately, the Chamorros did not fight long. Most wars were token events and after a minor skirmish, matters were resolved and peace resumed.

At the Guma Uritao, young men learned how to fish. The Chamorros were creative fishermen and devised unique ways to successfully take advantage of Guam's rich abundance in the ocean and rivers. The boys learned how to make special traps that used coconut to lure fish up from the bottom of the sea to the surface where they could be caught more easily. They learned how to suspend nets in the currents to take advantage of the tides to trap large schools of atulai. The teens were taught to weave

lagua', a small net with handles that they could use to simply scoop fish up, and fishhooks out of bones.

Another skill the young men learned was to make tools. An adze was one of the most common tools, it is an axe made of wood with a sharpened shell or rock attached to the end. It was used for a multiple of purpose, including to hallow out trees to make proa, or canoes. Canoe building was another skill the young men learned at the Guma Uritao. The proa and galaide are two of the smaller canoes. The young men would have learned to make sakman, the largest ocean-voyaging canoe used for waging war and traveling between islands.

The Guma Uritao was also a place for learning about romance. The ancient Chamorros had very open minded beliefs about relationships and encouraged the young men to learn about women in order to become better husbands. When the Spanish missionaries arrived in Guam, they were horrified by this aspect of the Guma Uritao and probably the main reason they had them destroyed.

As the largest structure in the village, the Guma Uritao was the best location for village ceremonies and special occasions. It would also become housing quarters for any male visitors to the village. The young men would use the Guma Uritao as their sports center to compete against one another in the skills they had learned. There would be competitions in wrestling,

spear and slingstone throwing. The village weapons were stored in the Guma Uritao and the men would practice their warfare skills.

Young men lived at the Guma Uritao until they married. Then they would leave the Guma Uritao and go to live with their new wife in a home that they would have built for her. The skill of building the hut for his wife would have been learned while he was living at the Guma Uritao. When he became a father, his sons would go to the Guma Uritao in his wife's village and he would begin to spend time at the one in his own village, passing on his skills to the next generation of young Chamorro men.

The importance of the Guma Uritao in the passing on of Chamorro culture, tradition, and skill to young men was invaluable. The only negative aspect appears to be that entrance to this masculine society of learning was only allowed to the upper classes of male Chamorro society. Sadly, outrage over inequality is not what prompted the destruction of this significant element of Chamorro history. The elimination of the Guma Uritao from Chamorro society was due to a difference in culture and values.

Visitors and residents can experience an interactive replica of an ancient Chamorro village, including the Guma Uritao, at the Valley of the Latte Park in Yona. For more information, you can visit valleyofthelatte.com

