

LOAN WORDS IN ULITHIAN

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0. Introduction
1. Spanish loan words
2. German loan words
3. Japanese loan words
4. English loan words
5. Use of native terms for outside objects
6. Conclusion

0. Ulithi Atoll is in the fourth phase of contact culture. Spain (perhaps as early as 1543), Germany (1899-1914), Japan (1914-1944), and, now, the United States, have all taken turns administering the Caroline Islands of which Ulithi is a part.¹ Except for the Americans, the visitors have gone, but even without a history book, it is easy to know that they were there. Each nation has left well documented proof of its presence in the loan words it has given to the Ulithian language. Like tiny monuments, numerous words from Spanish, German and Japanese have been left behind on the atoll, and the list of English loan words is long and growing rapidly.

Loan words at Ulithi make an interesting study for two reasons. They tell us much about materials that were brought in and accepted by the Ulithians and they show how the Ulithian language has exhibited a marvelous resiliency in its ability to absorb words from four contact cultures and yet stay alive, with its structure intact, as a day-to-day medium of communication.

1. Spanish contact with Ulithi could have started as early as 1543 when Ruy Lopez de Villalabos reported finding what must have been Ulithi and Fais.² Although Spanish influence continued in the Carolines until 1899, visits to Ulithi seem to have been rare, especially after the killing of the Spanish Jesuit priest, Cantova, in 1731. However, Ulithians had, over the years, indirect contact through canoe voyages that went forth from the Caroline Atolls to the Marianas Islands where the Spanish Conquest was more thorough. Thus Spain's long sway over the area did affect Ulithian culture and language. This early Spanish influence is still clearly visible today in words for foods, in the names of some animals and artifacts and in numerous religious terms.

Several foods now growing at Ulithi are of Spanish origin. The Spanish camote (potato) is now in Ulithian as kumuti. Calabaza (squash) has become

kalabas. Although corn is not now grown at Ulithi, when imported, it is called mais, after the Spanish maiz.³

Many religious terms at Ulithi, which is predominantly Catholic, reflect the Spanish influence. The Padre offers Missa in the **helesia** (Spanish: iglesia church). The central figure in the helesia is the krud (cruz cross). The religious brother who works with the priest is called ermano, after the Spanish hermano.⁴

Other Spanish words firmly implanted into Ulithian are:

Spanish	Ulithian	English for present day meaning or meanings in Ulithian
gato	hatu	cat
flores	floras	flowers
rosario	rosario	rosary
chivil	chiful	nail, screw
mesa	mesa	table
barco	barko	ship, sailing vessel
azucar	sukar	sugar, candy
cajon	kahol	crate, box
cobre	kobre	copper, copper coin (U.S. penny), any flat metal, e.g. aluminum roofing
carabao	karabau	Oceanic buffalo, any steer or cow, steak, beef, canned corn beef.

2. The Germans, who administered the islands from 1899 to 1914, have given the fewest loan words to Ulithi. Only Weinacht and Mark are commonly used. Although young Ulithians tend to say Christmas, Weinacht (Ulithian Beinag) is still used by most older people to **refer** to Christmas. It is used both as a noun (Si bue rai irel Beinag We'll be happy at Christmas) and as a verb (Si bue Beinag walisu We'll (celebrate) Christmas tomorrow.). The word Mark (Ulithian mak), which originally came with the German coin of that name, is now used to refer to the U.S. half dollar. The answer to the question, How much are the cigarettes? can be Sefas mak Fifty cents.

The only other German word used with any frequency at Ulithi is Schwester, which is used to designate religious nuns. It is rapidly giving way to the English Sister. In Ulithian Schwester becomes sevester.

3. The Japanese administered the Carolines from 1914 until their departure during or after World War II. At Ulithi Atoll there was contact between Japanese and Ulithians before the war due to trade, especially for the copra. There was also a Japanese weather station on Ulithi. In prewar times, a number of boys from Ulithi were selected to attend school on Yap where they learned rudimentary Japanese. It is not at all difficult today to find Ulitheans who speak

and write a bit of Japanese. During the war, Japanese-Ulithian contact was intensified when large numbers of Ulithians were taken to Yap to work on roads, an airfield, and other projects.

By the time the Japanese gave up their Pacific Mandate, they had left many words in the islands. The following list, not meant to be exclusive, shows some of the words of Japanese origin that are commonly used in Ulithi today.

Japanese	Ulithian	English for present day meaning in Ulithian
denchi	denchi	battery
denki	dengki	generator, electricity, flashlight
denwa	dengwa	telephone
hootai	hotai	bandage
shimbun	simbung	newspaper, paper for rolling tobacco
ichikuonki	chukungki	phonograph
ito	ito	thread
kaban	kabang	encasing object
nikki	niki	diary
rajio	rasuo	radio
rekoodo	rokodo	phonograph record
sashimi	sasimi	sliced raw fish
katsudoo	kachido	movie, film strip ⁵

4. There were a few English loan words in Ulithian even before the occupation by U. S. armed forces in 1944. Masta (master), boy (servant), kuk (cook), saiyla (sailor) and sail ho (still shouted today by youth when they see a sail of ship on the horizon) must be residual of early contact with vessels that had English speakers aboard. A brief visit to Ulithi was recorded by British Captain John MacKenzie in 1823.⁶ David O'Keefe, the famous Irish trader, who has a base at Yap, made numerous calls at Ulithi. It does not seem unreasonable to presume that there were visits by other English speaking mariners during the great whaling period of the nineteenth century.⁷

1944 marked the beginning of American influence at Ulithi. The most stunning event in Ulithi's history was the arrival of the U. S. task force on September 20th, 1944. After an unnecessary shelling (the few Japanese who had been there had left), ships, military personnel and materials, in numbers the Ulithians had never even imagined, were moved into the atoll. All inhabitants were moved to the island of Fassarai while the military made use of the lagoon for an anchorage and the remaining islands for supplies and R and R.

While these events were overwhelming, the immediate effect on the Ulithian language was not as great as one might expect because the people were largely isolated from the military. Except for persons such as the doctor and the chaplain there was little contact between the liberators and the civilians. Nonetheless, by the time the war was over the Ulithians did have a start on their list of American loan words. Si ration, beer, milik (milk), kofi (coffee), and

turki (turkey) had all been tasted, enjoyed, and called by name.

After the war, Ulithi fell in with the rest of the Carolines as part of the Trust Territory of the United States, administered by the Navy until 1951, and by the Department of Interior thereafter. Slowly at first, then with gathering momentum, the American influence came, and, with it, a hail of new loan words.

Occasional field trip service brought needed supplies, and some unneeded ones, and new terms caught on. Walki talki (walkie talkie), klok (clock), mota (motor), kerosin (kerosene), flowa (flour), soda, doġa (dollar), stoā (store) and kredit became household terms.

Another group of English loan words in Ulithian can be attributed to the influence of the U.S. Coast Guard (pronounced Kos Kar by Ulithians) who maintained a loran station at Ulithi from after the war until 1964. Words which, almost certainly, came into Ulithian through this contact are: musik (music), movi (movie), kandi (candy), aeskirim (ice cream), friend, kes (kiss), and luv (love).

Perhaps the greatest factor for cultural change at Ulithi has been the school system, elementary and secondary. A constant stream of new words has been flowing in through contract teachers, Peace Corps Volunteers, English textbooks and classes in English. Some examples are:

English	Ulithian
dorm, dormitory	dōrom
house mother	haus mother
house father	haus father
homework	homwork
campus	kampus
class	klas
pencil	pinsan
punish	panis
study	stadi

Dozens of Ulithians have traveled outside the atoll to continue their education at colleges on Guam, in Hawaii and on the mainland. These young people return with more new words such as registrasun (registration) and disko (disco).

Other English loan words, from random sources, are -- for persons: polis (police) and prinsipul (principal) and -- for things: tep (tape), stamp, klōth (cloth), paint, spun (spoon), buk (book), chia (chair), tis (desk), tebol (table), kruba (crow bar), sebil (shovel), ama (hammer), and faraypang (frying pan).

It is evident that the combined number of loan words in Ulithian due to Spanish, German, Japanese and American influences is very large. The above listings are presented, not with any claims to exclusivity, but rather for the purpose of establishing the fact that the Ulithians, and Ulithian, have, to use an understatement, seen some changes.⁸

5. Not every imported object has given its name to the Ulithian language. In quite a few instances, instead of loan words, native terms have been used to designate products brought in. For example, imported fishing lures are called plomb, just as are island made lures. Purchased metal fish hooks are called hai, just as were the now obsolete native hooks which were made from bone or coconut shell. The term chib, used for pincers made from a Palm branch, has been extended to cover pincers, pliers and scissors. Since there are island-made combs for grooming and decorating the hair, western-made combs are called by the same name: makal.

One of the meanings of the word haci is sap of the coconut tree. When fermented haci becomes the native alcoholic beverage. Although the terms beer, wine and whiskey are commonly used, even imported alcoholic beverages can be designated by the generic term haci.

Gurgur, which means citrus fruit, is used to refer to any imported citrus product, even a jar of Tang.

The native term for spear, dodow, has given its name to the western fork and to medical injections. A gun is called ppak, after the Ulithian word for slingshot. Bullets are called hal ppak, literally, food of the slingshot.

A custom once followed, but now extinct, demanded that young women residing at the women's house for their first menstruation cover their heads when walking outdoors. For this purpose they used a plain cloth, made from hibiscus, called tolum. The tolum practice has long been dropped, but the word tolum continues on as the Ulithian term for mosquito net.

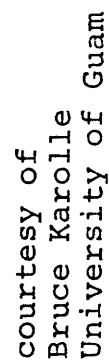
A very interesting area of study is provided by native terms that have been created for foreign objects. If the category exists and excessive circumlocation is not needed, then a native term may be coined for something brought in.

Wa in Ulithian means canoe. (It has also been extended to mean motor boat.) A car, jeep, or truck is called wal wol fului canoe of the land. An airplane is wa yal flying canoe, and a helicopter wa tagulul canoe turning around. A bulldozer is designated as wal borbor canoe that digs (as a pig does with its snout). Sil wa yal mother of the flying canoes, is, aptly enough, an aircraft carrier.

While there are instances, some of them quite fascinating, where native terms are used for foreign materials, the general practice is that the outside name comes with the import. Thus, a high percentage of the words used now in daily conversation at Ulithi are loan words.⁹

6. The long list of Ulithian loan words is a good indicator of what has been imported to Ulithi and shows the many influences on the culture and language there. The loan words also give evidence to a great resiliency. Despite the large number of such loan words, and despite the loss of a good number of native vocabulary items (particularly in the areas of skills such as sailing, handicraft, and medicine) Ulithians have preserved their language. Although heavily laden with loan words, Ulithian remains.

English is used on many occasions at Ulithi now, for example, in classrooms, in conversations with American teachers, and in dealings with Micronesians from other districts, and Ulithian-English bilingualism is developing rapidly.



However, to the Ulithians' credit, Ulithian remains as the regular medium of communication.

How long the Ulithian language will survive is open to question. As change continues, and even accelerates, observers might begin to wonder how long the language will hold out. On Guam, only three hundred miles away, Chamorro is fading fast, even in spite of recent bilingual efforts. However, for the moment, at least, Ulithians retain their language. By doing so they seem to be saying, "We are open to what outsiders have to offer; we accept your foods, your artifacts, and your education; but, at the core, we like our language, continue to be what we have always been — Ulithian."

WORKS CITED

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- Lessa, William A. A Micronesian Design for Living. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (1966).

NOTES

1. For a brief survey of 'those who stopped by' see: William Lessa, Ulithi: a Micronesian Design for Living. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p. 5 ff. (1966).
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. Oral tradition at Ulithi credits the Jesuit Spaniard Cantova with the introduction of corn and papaya. Present day elders admit that Cantova was killed shortly after the departure of his companion, Victor Walter, who went for supplies. Lessa puts the date of Cantova's death as 1731.
4. Two Spanish priests were allowed to make field trips to Ulithi during Japanese times. Early Spanish language influence was probably reinforced and fleshed out by them.
5. The Ulithian word for movie is kachido, which comes from the now archaic Japanese term katsudoo-shyashin. Today Japanese use eiga for movies. Katsudoo is now related to modern usage meaning movement, e.g., peace movement. The authors are grateful to Iris Spade of the University of Guam for her confirmation of the Japanese terms listed and for the westernized script for them.
6. Lessa, op. cit., p. 7.
7. Paul Carano and Pedro C. Sanchez, A Complete History of Guam (Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1964), p. 145. Carano quotes de la Corte who says that British whalers began to stop at Guam about 1823. "Visits by British whalers, in the opinion of de la Corte, 'made annually by thirty ships or more for a period of over thirty years, should have created a new life in the Marianas...'." Since Ulithi is only about four hundred miles from the Marianas, and since oral tradition has mention of random visits by outsiders, it is possible that whalers visited Ulithi, either by design or chance.

Francis X. Hezel, S. J., has documented numerous visits by English speaking whaling ships to Truk and its satellite islands. The list can be found in The Guam Recorder, Vol. 7, 33-38 (1977).

8. There are also numerous loan words in Ulithian from Yapese but since Yap is not foreign, in the strict sense, to Ulithi they are not included in this paper.

9. In present day Ulithian sentences such as the following are not at all unusual: Si bue kachido irel fodou klok? (At what time will we have the movie?)
Sa cholop homework irel weekend le. (We have a lot of homework this weekend.)