

A Mariana Islands History Story: The Influence of the Spanish Black Legend in Mariana Islands Historiography

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Abstract

Blessed Diego Luis de San Vitores first introduced the “discourse of poverty” to reaffirm the lack of economic interest in the evangelization process of the Mariana Islanders, presenting the Chamorros as ‘poor’ and ‘humble’. The political competitors of the Spanish Crown used this stereotype, although it did not match the real socio-cultural reality of the ‘Marianos’, to discredit the whole Iberian quest in the light of the violent results of the colonial process. In the 20th century, some U.S. scholars have used this episode - the evangelization and conquest of the Marianos - revitalizing the Spanish “Black Legend” in the Marianas with similar political goals, affecting the Chamorros’ current historic self-understanding.

The Spanish ‘Black Legend’ - *Leyenda Negra* - is the historical propaganda that describes the Spanish Empire enterprise in the Modern era as having been extremely cruel, genocidal, and exploitative. This legend normally receives its first strengths from objective facts that are later transformed to fit the evil stereotype and brutal behavior expected from the ‘conquistadores’. The Mariana Islands have played a remarkable role in the construction and maintenance of this legend.

The evangelization of the Mariana Islands and the subsequent occupation of the archipelago were initiated by the Jesuit priest Diego Luis de San Vitores with a clear philanthropic goal, but the rivals of the Spanish Empire would politically use this bittersweet enterprise to debunk the Iberian country from having any moral right to own those lands and influence peoples for their own colonial purposes. This political use has blurred and conditioned the historiography of the Mariana Archipelago and it may have actually infringed against the historical identity of the present day Chamorro people.

The Mariana, or Ladrones, Islands first appeared in the Western worldview after Ferdinand Magellan's (1480-1521) battered expedition arrived in Cadiz in 1522; at this time, the expedition was captained by Juan Sebastián Elcano (1486-1526), who took charge after several others following the death of the Portuguese captain in Cebu. Accounts by Antonio Pigafetta (1491-1534), an Italian chronicler of the first voyage around the world (see Pigafetta, 2002, p. 232), include the first short description of these islands and their people. The Magellan expedition docked on the 6th of March in 1521 on the island of Guam under deplorable conditions, after several months without having seen land. Magellan and his crew remained on Guam for only a week. This first contact with the Mariana natives was short and confusing. Miguel López de Legazpi (1502-1572) made similar contact in 1565 when he claimed the island for the Spanish crown. The Mariana natives experienced the Janus face of this contact: iron and other products that made some aspects of their lives easier albeit with potential threats from Europeans ships that periodically stopped at the Mariana Islands. The Chamorro people continued to nevertheless feel that they owned their own destiny for many decades; European

ships rarely dropped anchor for more than a few days before continuing their journey to the Philippines without interfering significantly with the lives of the Mariana natives.

From Magellan's short visit in 1521 until the arrival of Diego Luis de San Vitores in 1668 and the founding of the permanent Christian mission in the Marianas, over 100 years passed, during which there were dozens of landings. The route to Manila obliged ships to pass through this archipelago because the return voyage followed a more northerly route to follow the main Pacific currents and to seek west winds (Spate, 1979, pp. 58–109). The Mariana natives were not converted to Christianity over this century of intermittent contact, experiencing only isolated missionary efforts by shipwrecked sailors or temporary visitors like Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora (Driver, 1989; Martinez Perez, 1997, pp. 421–469) or Fray Francisco de los Angeles.

The proximity of the Philippines to the Marianas, the natural tendency of its people to trade with the galleons that stopped there, and their lack of mineral resources did not make their conquest necessary. To prepare to reach the Philippine coast, only a brief stopover on the coasts of Guam, Rota, Tinian, or Saipan was required to re-provision with fresh water and fruit and leave behind the sick and dying who could not tolerate the remaining two or three weeks of travel. The coastal orography of the Marianas made anchoring difficult for Spanish ships, particularly for navigators who lacked experience with the islands. As such, landing on the shores of the Marianas could be dangerous and risky, and ships avoided anchoring or would trim sails enough to slow down and trade some iron objects from the ship with Chamorros who used *proas* (shallow draft boats). These iron products were highly regarded and coveted by Chamorros (Quimby, 2011).

The definitive European occupation of the Marianas was initiated by the Jesuit father Diego Luis de San Vitores (1627-1672). During a technical stop made in Guam on his first voyage to Manila in 1662, he witnessed the people's lack of Christianity, kept away from the possibility of saving their souls through baptism. Before the innocent eyes of the neglected indigenous population, San Vitores felt the voice of the Holy Spirit begging him in the words of Luke (4:18): “*Evangelizare pauperibus misi te*” (García, 2004, p. 136), leading him to attempt to save these forgotten souls. The apostolic fervor of San Vitores, as well as his many political contacts, helped him reach the ears of King Phillip IV himself and, in particular, his wife, Mariana of Austria, who, after the death of her husband, became the regent to the throne of her son Charles.

An apostolic mission to the Marianas was not considered profitable from the standpoint of the Philippines and was rejected by governors of that captaincy on a number of occasions¹. Diego Luis de San Vitores was nevertheless an eloquent, obstinate, and well-trained man. He pressured almost all of the circles of power with zeal, intensifying his arguments and contacts until reaching the ears of the king himself². In an extensive *Memorial signed in 1665 and titled Motives for not delaying further the conquest and the instruction of the Island of the Thieves*; in subsequent letters³ sent to the crown via his father, an official in the House of the Indies; and even through the Jesuit Father Juan Evelardo Nithard, confessor to Queen Maria Ana (Rogers, 1995, p. 44), San Vitores skillfully presented a series of arguments in defense of the Marianas cause, touching on religious, political, and economic aspects.

First, San Vitores emphasized the urgency of evangelization based on the existence of “multitudes of souls on these islands,” as confirmed by Admiral Esteban Ramos, survivor of the *Our Lady of the Conception* shipwreck in 1638 in the Marianas. Ramos's accounting described 20,000 souls living on the island of Guam alone. These people, he reported, remained under the tyranny of the “Prince of Darkness,” even “one hundred years after their conquest, legitimate

through Faith and by the Catholic Majesty with the Royal and true aid of Christ our Sacramental Lord.” Instruction in the Catholic faith alone would justify any expense, and if “it is well-known that [these islands] continue almost infinitely from Japan to Peru, connecting also with the Molucas and Unknown Lands,” there would also be a parallel geostrategic benefit.

It was not only the numerous souls, but their urgent need for evangelization that compelled San Vitores; on these islands, there was “a multitude of children who die before they gain the faculty of reason, and only because there is no one to baptize them, they lose the fruit of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” At the same time, San Vitores defended the objective usefulness of the task, stating “the damned Mahoma sect has not entered into them [...] and they do not have idols nor religion nor any sect to preoccupy them, nor do they worship the sun or moon or other things; they only invoke or take up their dead, which demonstrates that they know of the soul's immortality, and does not harm the introduction of Catholic truths.”⁴ The lack of organized religion was presented as an advantage and demonstration of the purity of the souls of the Mariana natives.

The later beatified priest described the poverty of these islands and the lack of “quality merchandise” as a value for the Spanish Crown. He wrote, “the fewer the temporary uses, all the more shines the truth in works and the piety of the words that your Majesty has declared so many times, and in exchange for but one soul, all your royal efforts on behalf of the Indies and greater treasures will have been well spent.” This argument is essential for our analysis because San Vitores attempted to deny “the calumny of those heretics who have dared to say that the Spanish conquest of the Indies is due less to religious zeal than to the hunger for gold and silver, that where there was none of this there would also be no zeal.” It is on this point that the Marianas carried a great symbolic meaning that would affect the development of the historiography of these islands, connecting them to the Black Legend and making them famous in anti-Spain and anti-Roman Europe.

The evident poverty of the Marianas was also of strategic advantage because “it is highly convenient to not have quality merchandise that attracts the greed of distant nations, moors and heretics seeking them out.” Thus, “only fifteen or twenty Spaniards and a few of those Indians who have long been Christian need go with the priests, not so much for defense, says the Admiral Esteban Ramos, but as a Christian example to be imitated. More prisons and escorts are not necessary, and the aid and merchandise needed, the wheat and wine for the masses and some supplies and clothing that they cannot create from the fruits of the earth may be very easily left by the galleons that come each year from New Spain to the Philippines.” The definitive occupation of this archipelago could provide more practical benefits as well, serving “as some cover for our galleons when they come or go from Castile.”

Finally, the permanent occupation of the Marianas would “offer the Eucharist in every place in the world,” offering God “in any place or climate, from the east to where the sun sets the holiest Host and holy sacrifice of the mass according to Malachi's prophecy.”⁵ San Vitores finally proposed that perhaps the negligent attitude of the Crown toward these islands was the ultimate reason why Spanish sailors still had difficulty sailing from Guam to the Philippines. For a century, they had not completed “the primary obligation of Royal Patronage and Lordship”: to evangelize.

Diego Luis de San Vitores concluded his *Memorial* by prophesying the success of the mission because in “the very poverty and native humility one may see the great pleasure it gives Our Lord Jesus Christ in achieving the salvation of these souls.” Thus, “this will bear much more fruit than in the opulent nations” because “it was especially to the poor that the Son of God said

he was sent to evangelize by his eternal father.” This “poverty” referred to spiritual more than temporary welfare, a poverty that Diego Luis would link to the humility of his people, which the Devil had taken advantage of for so many years. The anointed priest presented the mission in the Island of the Thieves⁶ as an enterprise of great spiritual benefit, of geostrategic benefit, and of little cost. His words and his insistence would achieve their goal in a few short years.

The defense of the pure evangelist intentions of the Spanish Crown in the face of the accusations of the other European sovereigns served as a central element in San Vitores' discourse on the occupation of the Mariana Islands, which were “rich in souls and poor in all else” and where in the natural goodness of its people, there was “such copious and willing harvest”⁷ ready for salvation. Evangelizing in the Marianas, without considering costs or the political-economic pragmatic necessity of the endeavor, would be presented as an important symbol to the world. The number of souls and their humility borne of ignorance or spiritual impoverishment would thus be a fundamental element for justifying the missionary acts of San Vitores and the help he needed to obtain from the Crown. In the same fashion, the success of the mission would have to be praised in order to show the universal predisposition of the human soul to receive the Good News and Salvation guaranteed by Christ. These elements appear in San Vitores' discourse and are faithfully reflected in the hagiography of the beatified priest written by the Jesuit Francisco García (1641-1685) and published in Madrid in 1683 (García, 2004, pp. 136–138). These elements also appear in the first history of the Marianas published in Paris in 1700 by Le Gobien, also a member of the Jesuit Order (see Coello de la Rosa, 2013, pp. 77–95).

It is necessary to remember that, in 1579, the *Brief Account of the Destruction of the West Indies* (1542), by Bartolomé de las Casas, appeared in French editorials and was constantly re-edited throughout the 18th century (Lasa Ochoteco, 2009, p. 121). Similarly, the *History of the New World*, by Girolamo Benzoni, was published in 1565 in Venice, re-edited in 1572 due to its wide acceptance, and translated in the 17th and 18th centuries into various European languages. To these works, the writings of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera (1457-1526), Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), and Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616) must be added. From a variety of perspectives and motivations, these authors collaborated in the development of two fundamental concepts: the Black Legend and the noble savage (Cro, 1990, 1992). Hakluyt, in particular, is an apologist for British Protestantism and considers Catholic, Spanish, and Roman Christianity to be “intolerant, fanatic” and does not recognize man's natural goodness but is instead strongly linked to violence. This description identifies the primitive natives with the European English in the face of the fanatical, pro-Roman, and Catholic Spanish who “have tortured and burned Indians and do the same with Protestants” (Cro, 1992, p. 399).

Under this dynamic, the evangelization of the Marianas would be closely followed in Europe. As we have stated, Le Gobien (1653-1708) published *Histoire des Isles Mariannes* in 1700 and received comments from Voltaire himself (1694-1778). In his *Essay on the habits and spirit of nations* (1756), Voltaire used the Mariana natives to illustrate a pre-civilized state in which individuals live beyond savagery and cruelty without any religion at all (Duchet, 1971, pp. 254–260). Voltaire wrote (1756 Chapter CXLIX)

“The Mariana Islands deserve a further attention. The inhabitants of the island did not know the fire, and it was absolutely useless: they nourished from the abundant fruits produced in their land, specially the cacao, the *sagu* -that is the marrow of palm highly superior to the rice-, and the *rima* -fruit of a big tree called ‘bread fruit’. [...] They say that the ordinary length of their lives is hundred and twenty years. [...] These insulars were not savages nor cruel and they lack not necessity they may desire: their houses build

with cocoa boards industriously worked were clean and equilibrated: they cultivated their gardens with art and it is possible that they were the less unfortunate and less evil of the men [...] There was not among these people any religion, like among the Hottentots, or among other African or American Nations.” (Translated by the author)

This description does not match ethnohistorical accounts; there was a religion among the pre-contact Chamorros that was based mainly on the worship of ancestors and religious leaders, or *macanas* (Haynes and Wuerch, 1995; Russell, 1998), and obviously, they knew and used fire.

However, what interests us here is the symbolic use of the Mariana natives in Enlightenment Europe. The attention they received is due largely to the manner in which the colonizing mission was presented, as we have seen. This presentation was given as an example of how Spain did not seek economic benefit but was instead serving the interests of the Church, thus legitimizing the colonial enterprise in the New World. This “discourse of poverty” (Coello de la Rosa, 2011, p. 782) was used to publicize the pure intentions of the Spanish Crown to the world, drawing the attention of enlightened European Russians and French, particularly at the end of the Napoleonic wars in Europe (Rogers, 1995, p. 91).

The Marianas presented an ideal opportunity for the Spanish to prove the falseness of the Franco-Britannic claims that had spread across Europe in the 18th century; furthermore, enlightened scientific travelers would attempt to “empirically” verify the results of the Spanish New World evangelization of the archipelago. Thus, the Marianas would become a symbol of the failure of medieval fanaticism set against the modern enlightened spirit. It is in light of this great symbolic weight that one must approach the chronicles of the voyages of the 18th and 19th centuries; it is mainly through this confrontation of ideas that the history of the Marianas takes shape.

The naive vision of San Vitores would change a few short months after arriving on Guam and establishing a permanent mission. Confrontations and wars among clans; the obstinacy of some religious leaders, or *macanas*; the existence of bachelors’ houses, *guma uritao*, which were seen by the missionaries as brothels; the resistance – in some cases, violent – of certain natives to baptism; and other matters all blurred the previous image of the “natural humility” of the Mariana natives. This forced the priest to take more drastic measures to assure the protection of the baptized and catechumens and to protect the mission. Diego Luis blamed the Devil for the attitudes he found among the Mariana natives, releasing them from responsibility and blame. The sociocultural reality of the Marianas was anything but poor and simple, as it was first presented, but the stereotype of a poor and innocent people had been established.

In the attitude of San Vitores, we find a worldview widely held among missionaries who ventured in the New World during the 17th and 18th centuries. The chronicler of Captain Pedro de Texeira’s Amazonian⁸ expedition from 1637 to 1639 depicted that South American land as a vast area free of gold and thus free from economic interests, much like the Marianas, but full of innocent yet ignorant and misled souls. The evangelizing enterprise thus presented a fundamental task: the salvation of Indians through Christian training and baptism, which would free them from the lies and power of the demon: “This entire flock is without a shepherd, sold to its vices and subject to the demon, an infinity of souls condemning themselves daily for the lack of evangelical works, leaving the land open to Lucifer to reign in such vast provinces and to be adored by those miserable people who live in darkness and the shadows of death, without anyone who can enlighten them in the light of the Holy Gospel.” (Malfatti, 1952, p. 83)

For Catholic missionaries who made contact with these cultures, the natives or *Indios* were God’s creatures just like the Europeans, the difference being that the former had not

received divine brotherhood through baptism.⁹ As long as the natives did not receive it, they would continue to be misled, and their destiny after death would inevitably lead to hell. In this way, the missionary could discount the possibility that these men were not substantially similar and emphasize that spiritual Christian and Catholic conversion is what marked the fundamental difference between them, that is, between slaves of Lucifer and free men who are children of God.

This worldview is in contrast to the vision that Modern Era enlightenment thinkers would later spread, in which reason was situated as the touchstone for classifying men as rational or irrational and civilized or uncivilized. Christians might be classified as either category, depending on their use of reason to guide their conduct and beliefs. Thus, there would be rational Christians and irrational Christians or civilized and uncivilized, fanatical, intolerant, and superstitious Christians.

The ultimate objective, happiness, does not change, but the path to achieving it does. If, for missionaries, the only possible path is through baptism – providing, at whatever cost, the privilege of the celestial benefit – for the enlightenment thinkers, the path was through scientific and empirical truth.¹⁰ This way of thinking required a prior purging of irrational superstitions inculcated by earlier preachers, who scorned earthly benefits. The former understood dying in God's Grace¹¹ or as a martyr as a benefit, whereas for Enlightenment thinkers, this belief was irrational.

This spiritual poverty, so praised by the first Jesuit missionaries, materialized physically during the first years of the 18th century with the alarming decline of the Chamorro population. Uprisings and anti-colonial repression, epidemics, suicides, abortions, and “collective flight” to other islands (Coello de la Rosa, 2011, p. 786) decimated the native population to just 1,861 inhabitants by 1741 (Coello de la Rosa, 2011, p. 785). This decimation of the native population caused the Mariana to become a unique colony, poor in goods and souls and dependent on outside help. This is the state that it would maintain until 1898 and which in some ways continues even today. It is in this context, after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), that the pressures of British pirates in Pacific waters would influence the decision to maintain the Marianas artificially because of its growing geostrategic value (Coello de la Rosa, 2011, p. 788). Guam would become a primary garrison for maintaining open commerce with the Philippines, and the evangelization of the island would be complete.

In the 18th century, the political situation in Europe changed after the War of Succession and the subsequent Treaty of Utrecht (1701-1713). England began an intermittent struggle with the Spanish Crown for colonial control. The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), the Seven Years War (1756-1763), and the War for the Independence of the North American Colonies (1775-1783), among other conflicts, were the battlefields on which these powers faced off. England began to assume sea dominance in this century, and the Spanish colonies fell under threat. British attacks and plundering had to be “rationally” justified, and it was in this century when the most negative readings of the Spanish evangelization were produced. The Marianas begins to appear as “the Spanish Scandal” (Joseph and Murray, 1951, p. 11) that had to be shown to the world.

One of the first confirmations of this “scandal” would come from Mr. George Anson (1697-1762), an Admiral of the Royal British Navy who was sent to the Pacific to destroy and capture the Spanish fleet. In particular, this fleet included the galleon *Manila*, which he ultimately captured. En route to Manila, Anson stopped off in the Marianas, more specifically,

on the Island of Tinian. Upon arriving, he discovered a deserted island and described for the first time to British readers the consequences of the Spanish Conquest (Barratt, 1988, pp. 16–18), with an emphasis on the liquidation and population displacement that the indigenous population suffered as payment for their evangelization.

Sir James Burney, Captain Cook's partner on some of his adventures, followed up prodigiously on this line. Burney published a multi-volume work in London in 1813 titled *Chronological History of the Voyages and Discoveries of the South Sea* and dedicated Volume Three to missionary works on the islands. This volume is basically an annotated translation in English of Le Gobien's *History*. Where Le Gobien saw spiritual heroism, Burney sees irrational religious fanaticism. This is the version that became popular in England and that was transmitted to Anglo Saxon intellectual minds of the 20th century.

After the opening of the “Spanish Lake” (Spate, 1979) in the 18th century due to the loss of colonial power in the old Spanish Empire, the Marianas were visited more frequently by whalers and by Russian, British, and French explorers. Above all, the French brought the Enlightenment experience of the end of the century and the readings of secondary sources such as Burney and Voltaire. Their diaries clearly reflect the same discourse that empirically attests to the failure and violence brought upon the “poor” Marianas natives by the fanatical and ignorant evangelization of the islands.

Adelbert Von Chamisso, a German naturalist and poet who accompanied Kotzebue on his voyage around the world, noted Le Gobien's ignorance in believing that the Mariana natives did not use fire until the arrival of Spanish missionaries. Chamisso writes “It appears to have been Gobien who first ridiculously claimed that the Mariana Islanders were introduced to the use of fire by Europeans. This assertion is repeated by several of the Manila historians” (Barratt, 1988, p. 29), Spaniards, of course. Chamisso cites Burney as a competent source to contradict the affirmation of Le Gobien. Likewise, years later, Freycinet (Freycinet, 2003, pp. 20–21) critiqued the same anecdote using the same arguments but without directly citing Burney because he had access to the writings of Father Morales collected by Le Gobien in Guam (De Morales and Le Gobien, 2013). Beyond the matter of whether the islanders were familiar with fire, what is being judged here is the veracity of the Jesuit's information, his intellectual capacity, or both; but nothing is said about Voltaire's similar affirmation.

Antoine-Alfred Marche (1844-1898), a French naturalist who visited the Marianas at the end of the 19th century, was surprised to gather in his chronicles the following anecdote of a 20-year-old Chamorro who fell from a tree and broke his arm. Citing a lack of money, the family refused to call the doctor, and after eight days, the youth died of septicemia. During the funeral, a speechless Marche (1982, p. 8) reflected on the splendor of the funeral:

“The family, who had no money for a doctor and for medicines, had a high mass as well as other *ceremonias*, so that the expenses at the church cost approximately seventy-five francs, and, after the religious ceremony, the family invited friends and acquaintances to a *chinchouli* which cost fifty francs. With half that amount of money, the son's life could have been attended to and saved; but though money is found for any kind of revelry, there is none to pay for a doctor and necessary care.”

Marche could not comprehend the generative and symbolic character of the youth's Catholic funeral, leading him to reject the splendor of an event observed superficially. This experience manifested the irrationality of Spanish religiosity transmitted to these men. Marche's empirical observations were those of a 19th century scientist and ignored the sociocultural community factors that were more important than individual life on Pacific Islands.

These same explorers and scientists began to provide information about the pre- and post-contact population. At this time, the myth of genocide developed and spread as “the Spanish scandal” (Joseph & Murray, 1951, p. 11), reaching also U.S. anthropologists and scholars of the 20th century. Nineteenth century scientists and explorers who landed on the Marianas coast encountered a small, mixed, and Christianized population of barely 5,000 inhabitants. Using the Spanish census and few other trustworthy sources, these scholars began to make their calculations. The highest figure estimated the presence of 100,000 inhabitants (Thompson, 1971, p. 3) before the arrival of the Spanish, with the most conservative being 50,000, 40,000, or even 20,000 inhabitants. The conclusions were obvious: the Spaniards directly or indirectly murdered all the indigenous people, as Joseph and Murray (1951, p. 11) state:

“Thirty years of warfare, the disease introduced by the Spanish, and the uprooting of the people from their native soil and crowding them together in villages left the survivors in no state to carry on further resistance. At the time of their arrival in 1668, the missionaries estimated the population of the Marianas at between 70,000 and 100,000. In 1710, at the time of the first census, only 3,672 remained. By the census of 1756 the number of native islanders had been reduced to 1,600.”

In the eyes of Enlightenment thinkers, Spanish religious fanaticism was no doubt responsible for genocidal violence, and as we have seen, the island was colonized and its indigenous people subjugated for purely religious reasons.

Especially for 20th century U.S. scholars, it was important to present the consequences of the works of the former colonial Empire. The matter of numbers is therefore a recurring theme in the anthropological literature to date (Shell, 1999, 2001; Underwood, 1976). We cannot deny that the depopulation of the Marianas is an evident fact, given the numbers available and the main causes of the population decline. Named causes range from cruel wars and indiscriminate murders by “Spanish” captains and soldiers to mass infanticides by the indigenous to save their children from the Spanish and Catholic colonial yoke and finally epidemics (Joseph and Murray, 1951, pp. 18–21)¹².

Calculating the population of the Marianas is not easy because population estimates have played a political role since the beginning of colonial times. One of the figures considered to be most accurate is that made by San Vitores himself and reproduced by Le Gobien in his letters to the Crown and to the provincial leadership in the Philippines only three days after landing. The presbyter affirmed that there were more than 50,000¹³ souls on the island of Guam, and this is the figure that was shared by word of mouth. However, all events take place in a context that can influence the discourse; we will consider some contextual aspects that facilitate the assessment of the figures with a critical eye.

First, San Vitores arrived at the coast of Guam on the 15th of June 1668, and the letters in which he indicates the number of inhabitants are dated the 17th of June. The *San Diego* galleon only remained in the Marianas for three days before continuing its journey to Manila before the rains, and the letters would have to have been written in that time. It is true that when arriving in Guam, Diego Luis met with Pedro, a Spanish survivor of the *Concepción* shipwreck 30 years prior;¹⁴ however, counting people is not an easy task, and it has always been a political matter¹⁵. The priest could not have conducted an accurate census of the population in only two days and thus estimated a figure that would benefit him strategically.

Second, we know that the San Vitores convinced two Jesuit who were not assigned to him, Pedro Cassanova and Luis de Morales, to remain with him on the island due to the “extreme need of these souls” (García, 2004, p. 158). Thus, he writes an extensive epistle to the provincial

governor of Manila to justify the thief of workers who, in theory, should have arrived in the Philippines, where there was also a great need for priests. Obviously, one way to do this was by exaggerating population figures or by rounding them up.

Finally, San Vitores received 10,000 pesos from a Royal concession account in a loan from the Governor of New Spain, under the guarantee of the Saint Francis Xavier Guild. He spent 1,000 pesos in New Spain and brought the rest with him, leaving it under the custody of the Admiral of San Diego, Bartolomé Muñoz. The admiral died during the voyage, and the mission's money was frozen until arriving in Manila, where it would be freed through a legal process. San Vitores knew that it was unlikely the money would be returned, and the mission needed, at a minimum, wheat, oil, and wine, as well as the salaries of the soldiers who accompanied the priests. San Vitores needed to arouse the interest of the Queen to hasten the arrival of the annual concession. This necessity is the context in which he took on two more Jesuits who were not assigned to him; having lost the funds to maintain the mission and with few days to take concrete action, the priest presented his census numbers, and other examples such as these can be found.

Thus, this dance of numbers is an ideological matter, along with the real causes of the depopulation of the Marianas. It is evident that the causes should be associated with contact and not religion. Enlightenment intellectuals try to link violence and Catholicism, when the main causes were natural, that is, rational. Without any doubt, the main cause of the population loss in the Marianas was epidemics (see Hezel, 1982; McDonough, 2004), as in Kosrae, which, without wars or Catholic evangelization, went from 3,000 to 300 inhabitants in just 30 years (Hezel, 1982, p. 122). Similarly, in Yap, a demographic collapse reduced the population from 50,000 to 2,500 in just one century (Morgan, 1996, p. 33). Jonathan D. Hill (Hill, 1996, p. 4) notes a similar demographic collapse for the South American Spanish colonies, with an approximate 90% loss of the indigenous population, and for the British colonies of North America, with a loss of 95%. Regardless, the symbolic weight of the Marianas and of the lands evangelized by the Spanish has been greater due to the political-religious use made of it to this day.

It is clear that the populations of the Pacific Islands and the New World had not developed the necessary antibodies to confront Old World illnesses. Exposure to new viruses may have been increased by traditional Spanish policies of “reducciones” –reconcentration– as well as by indigenous funeral customs that kept the bodies of the dead in contact with the living for a long period. However, the final result hardly varies among different colonies and colonial empires, indicating that the anti-Catholic Black Legend develops in a concrete historical context across the hermeneutic movement of political intentions.

After the U.S. army took Guam in 1898 and its later purchase from Spain until the end of the Second World War, the Spanish Black Legend in the Marianas was well established but dormant. Regardless, some of the first decisions made by the military governors of the island, specifically Captain Richard P. Leary, were directly anti-clerical, anti-Spanish, and thus anti-Catholic. These decisions included the prohibition from celebrating saint feast days in the towns, the expulsion of the last Spanish Catholic priests, the removal of crucifixes and religious images from public centers, and the prohibition of the ringing of church bells (Perez Hattori, 2009, p. 286). The United States of America understood that the Catholicism of Hispanic tradition and its rituals had been deeply rooted in the Marianas population for more than 300 years in a complete syncretic process (Diaz, 1994; Perez Hattori, 2009) and that it was necessary to exorcise it to expel any kind of bond or faithfulness to the old colony.

In this context, U.S. mainland intellectuals were responsible for awakening and reactivating Enlightenment ideas about the Black Legend, particularly after the Second World War. This time, however, the goal was different within a diverse international environment. As Vicente Diaz states, the “international outcry against Spanish tyranny is an ongoing episode of imperial rivalries” (Diaz, 2010, p. 116). The Black Legend in the Marianas originated with British publishers in the bellicose 18th century, a century in which the English and Spanish fought for colonial control. The Black Legend was further developed during the first half of the 19th century, a period of Franco-Spanish conflict, through the pens of French scientists. It then spread during the U.S. period of imperial dominion to justify the colonial claims of a young power.

After the Second World War, colonial domination became progressively and morally unthinkable and was condemned in the international arena. However, the Western security system needed to maintain a stable structure in the Pacific in the face of Asian communism or radical Islam. This need imposed conditions on the political development of the Oceanic nations. One of the strategies that has been used to justify political and military control of areas like Guam has been to foster a sense of victimization demonizing the previous colony and elites in order to maintain a present-day colony and to create a bond with the new colonial power.

One of the most controversial U.S. policies in Guam was the linguistic policy, which harshly repressed the use of Spanish and later of Chamorro. These policies managed to eliminate the former through a stroke of “luck”¹⁶ and have threatened the survival of the latter. For some years now, new native speakers of Chamorro have become uncommon, with English being the only language that new generations speak on Guam. The lack of linguistic aptitude in the two main historic languages has placed conditions on the historiographical development of Guam because many Chamorros only know the part of their history that has been translated into English.

For example, in the 1930s, parts of San Vitores' hagiography written in the 18th century by the Jesuit Garcia were translated into English by Margaret Higgins and presented as a series in the newspaper *Guam Recorder* as *First History of Guam*. This paper was the “the US Navy's organ of expression in Guam.” As Diaz (2010, p. 118) states, “according to Higgins and the editors of the *Recorder*, examining the six-hundred-page work was 'like penetrating a dense forest, where one must make one's own path, selecting as one goes the items of greatest importance as of interest to the general reader, while rejecting for the time being those matters which do not seem important *to our purpose*'”(Higgins cited in Diaz, 2010, p. 118). Diaz adds, “‘our purpose,’ of course, is the US Navy's own missionary impulse to modernize what it considered to be a backward people.” She concludes: “Perhaps it even served to validate the navy's presence or at least its self-perception as a more 'enlightened' form of benevolent if secular missionization.” (Diaz, 2010, p. 118)

This point notice by Diaz may be illustrated by Hornbostel (1930, p. 80) who also embraced this idea in the 1930s, and promulgated it in his studies. In the face of a Spanish government “characterized by harshness and oppression,” where “a desultory war of extermination was carried on for many years,” is an island that “under our flag [the US flag] has progressed, schools, good roads, modern conveniences, sanitation, hospitals, etc... all have added to the people's welfare”.

Similarly Beardsley (1964, p. 133) affirmed that the killing of San Vitores “precipitated a truly general war of decimation against the native population for the island” and this “war of extermination, on and off, lasted nearly twenty five years”. In his *Complete History of Guam*,

Paul Carano (1964, p. 77) anoints the Spanish Sargent José de Quiroga as “the tyrant,” founding his claims on the Le Gobien translation selected and commented upon by Burney years later or on some texts gathered by Freycinet. And finally, just to mention a more recent case, Frank Quimby (2012, p. 41) with a deeper critically approach, still fall under the same stereotypes stating without quotes or cites that “Spanish conquistadors have caused the death of millions through warfare and European diseases and enslaved large swathes of the surviving population to work the seized agricultural lands and gold and silver mines”.

I am far from suggesting here that today there is not a critical historical work on the Marianas,¹⁷ but I think that this biased predisposition to see the Spaniards as criminals, and the lack of linguistic abilities still is present and has led some scholars to commit serious historical mistakes due to a lack of source critics. In the Jesuit Annual Report of 1684 to 1685 of Fr. Gerard Bowens, for example, we can find the account of the Yura or Yula revolt of 1684 that almost erased the mission from the Marianas. At that time, the Spanish Sergeant-Mayor Joseph Quiroga y Losada was in Saipan facing the revolt and thinking that everybody in Hagåtña had been killed. In one moment of the annual report the Jesuit Fr. Bowens wrote:

“[Quiroga] Amenazó a la india no hiciese ruido mas ella comenzó a dar voces diciendo que allí estaban los soldados. Pudo el Sargento Mayor hacer en los indios gran destrozo quitando la vida a más de doscientos hombres, que no obstante las voces no acabaron de despertar, pero movido de piedad y con deseo de ejecutar su primer intento los perdonó contentándose con llegar a casa de un principal a quien prendió y con el otros cinco.”

The correct translation of the paragraph to English should be like this:

“He [Quiroga] threatened the Indian woman against making any noise but she started yelling that the soldiers had come; **could** the Sergeant-Mayor caused havoc among the Indians killing more than 200 men who, notwithstanding the vociferation of his guide, did not wake up; however, moved to pity and wishing to carry into effect his primary object, he pardoned **them** as he reached the house of a chieftain whom arrested together with five others.”

But Levesque, a Canadian scholar well know for his monumental work of translation of Spanish documents about the Marianas, translated the previous paragraph as follow:

“He threatened the Indian woman against making any noise but she started yelling that the soldiers had come; the Sergeant-Mayor caused havoc among the Indians killing more than 200 men, who, notwithstanding the vociferation of his guide, did not wake up; however, moved to pity and wishing to carry into effect his primary object, he pardoned the rest as he reached the house of a chieftain whom arrested together with five others” (Levesque, 1996, p. 354).

Finally in Guampedia.com, a popular web site in Guam, an entry on Quiroga’s life reflects the same mistaken event, since many current scholars rely on Levesque translations:

“Upon reaching her village with Quiroga and his force, the woman cried out, leading Quiroga to cause “havoc among the Indians” killing more than 200 men, many apparently while they slept (men, “who not withstanding the vociferation of his guide, did not wake up”).” (N. Goetzfridt, n.d.)

This biased predisposition or lack of linguistic competence in Spanish is not innocuous, since it can affect the historical self-image of the present-day Chamorro. In the most popular textbooks used in the schools of Guam (Marsh-Kautz, 2002) during the last years, there are almost 300 years of history missing with a severe disequilibrium between pre-contact and American, and Spanish colonial times, even though some important efforts have been done recently to fill this

gap, like the extended historical bibliography of Nicholas Goetzfridt (2011). Meanwhile, *Destiny's Landfall* (Rogers, 1995) with 290 pages and 15 chapters, has only two chapters and 33 pages to cover from 1698 to 1898. *Hinasso' Tinige' Put Chamorro, Insights: The Chamorro Identity* (PSECC, 1993) has 184 pages and 28 Chapters in total and only 20 pages and 4 chapters for Hispanic colonial times. *Guam History Perspectives* (Wuerch, W., L. D. Carter, & R. R. Carter, 1997), Volume I, with 370 pages and 16 chapters, has three chapters and 57 pages for Hispanic Colonial times. Finally, *Kinalamten Pulitikat: Siñenten I Chamorro, Issues in Guam's Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective* (PSECC, 1996) again has no Hispanic colonial history.

However, the acceptance of the new colonial power on the part of the Chamorros came with the liberation of Guam or the expulsion in July 1944 of the oppressive invading imperial forces of Japan. After these violent events, Chamorros developed a sense of loyalty to the U.S. that was not deeply questioned until the 1970s, when people who belonged to a generation that did not live through the Second World War reflected on their neocolonial situation in a theoretically anti-colonialist world (Hattori, 2001).

As a result of this different historical and political framework some local scholars like Anne Hattori (2001, 2004, 2011; 2009) and Vincent Diaz (1993, 1994, 1995, 2002, 2010), and others, began to search for a new understanding of their dynamical past and history. They are incorporating those three hundred years of Spanish colonial contact with its lights and shadows. In a similar way, the Jesuit Priest and scholar Francis X. Hezel has embraced this same quest that has been valuable not only for the Marianas (Hezel, 1982) but all Micronesia (Hezel, 1991). They are all critically re-thinking the U.S. presence in the archipelago, but also the Hispanic heritage that is part of the Mariana Island current identity.

Today, the Chamorro identity continues to experience agitated and entropic times, now increased by the announcement at the beginning of the 21st century of the possible relocation of thousands of soldiers from Okinawa to bases on Guam. The ethno-generative processes on the island are growing in number and intensity, and it is difficult to predict what direction they will take. Hill (1996, p. 3) has noted three main directions in ethno-generative processes on the American continent: some indigenous peoples have revitalized precolonial symbols with ritual power, others have formed new alliances and have formed syncretic cultural identities through the renewal of old independent indigenous religions, and others have appropriated European symbols of ritual power integrated through hundreds of years of colonialism. In the case of Guam, the direction is still undefined, although the Chamorros appear to be embarking on all three routes simultaneously.

Today, the presence of Spanish culture in Guam remains as a symbolic element, even as Catholic Christianity deeply permeates all social structures on the islands and is largely maintained as an element of identity. Catholicism, the veneration of saints – particularly the Virgin Mary – and the funerary ritual system associated with praying the rosary, configure the deepest fabric of identity that binds current-day Chamorro culture. As we have claimed elsewhere (Atienza and Coello, 2012), the local popularity of Catholicism in Guam has preserved unique pre-contact elements and has been, until today, the point of encounter for generations of Chamorros who have suffered colonial onslaught and pressure for almost 400 years.

With respect to demographic catastrophe, the colonization process of the Marianas does not differ from processes developed in other Pacific islands. However, it does differ in its

symbolic value. Diego Luis de San Vitores, with the Spanish Crown behind him, presented the evangelization and thus colonization of the island as an emblem of Christian and Catholic philanthropy. This central and real element in the priest's intentions was publicized across Europe and made Guam and the Marianas the ideal site for linking the praxis of violence and fanaticism with Roman Catholicism. This association is why the “poor” Marianas natives sparked an unusual interest among French Enlightenment thinkers and 19th-century British scientists, an interest that is only understandable if their political motivations are uncovered. This symbolic construction was taken up and expanded upon by U.S. intellectuals (Beardsley, 1964; Carano and Sanchez, 1964; i.e. Hornbostel, 1930), whose studies have continued to produce a historiography of the Marianas that justifies the anachronistic presence of the U.S. in Guam. They have used in different ways the same idea of the ‘poor Marianos’, but have claimed that Chamorro ‘poverty’ was not original, but a consequence of the previous colonial power.

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Notes

¹ See Quimby (2012) for Spanish previous historic failures to establish a permanent settlement in the Mariana Islands.

² The approval of the King was fundamental to assure the provision of at least wheat and wine for the Eucharist, and oil from olives for the anointing during baptism. Without these elements that should be paid through an annual 'situado' (funds coming from the Virreinato de Nueva España) and brought to the islands in the Manila Galleon, the mission was not viable.

³ Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI) Fil. 82-2-54; AGI Fil. 82-2-15 y 37 y 42; Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN) Diversos Documentos de Indias, legajo 385; Real Archivo Histórico (hereafter RAH) 9/2676. The original is in Spanish and has been translated by the author.

⁴ Diego Luis de San Vitores "Motives for not delaying..." 1665 (Fil. 82-2-54).

⁵ "My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty." (Malachi 1, 11)

⁶ The first Europeans to contact the Mariana Islands call them as 'Islas de los Ladrones' (Thief Islands) o de las Velas Latinas (Latin Sails).

⁷ See AGI fil. 82-2-54

⁸ I have selected a chronicle narrating de Texeira's voyage compiled by Cesareo Malfatti (1952), *Tres relaciones de viajes por el río Marañón llamado también de las Amazonas* [Three accounts of voyages on the Marañón river, also called the Amazon], to briefly illustrate the worldview of these men and their alignment with San Vitores' thinking. According to Marcos Jiménez de la Espada's *Castellanos y su Historia del nuevo reino de Granada*, [Juan de Castellanos and his History of the new kingdom of Granada,] Tip. by M.G. Hernández, 1889, 126 p., p. 6., this chronicle was written by one D. Martín de Saavedra y Guzmán. Malfatti op. cit. affirms that it was written by Alonso Rojas, Jesuit Father, in 1639. What is certain is that, in the original manuscript (MN 5859) in the National Library of Madrid, don Martín appears as the author of the manuscript, although the writing style and the spirit of the work is more reminiscent of a cleric than of a secular man.

⁹ It is inside this Catholic missionary narrative that early naïve descriptions of the Chamorros should be read and understood. This is, per example, the case of Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora (Driver 1989) account of the 'Ladrones' Islands with his hidden thesis that the Chamorros were more worthy and capable of receiving baptism than were many Europeans. The same narrative may be found in the *Historia de las Marianas* written by Morales & Le Gobien (2013) but should not be identified with Rousseau's thought (Coello de la Rosa, 2013, p. 79).

¹⁰ In the Spanish colonies the Church became the center of the village life with the school as an extension of the Church.

¹¹ As we have seen, San Vitores ("Motives for not delaying..." 1665) refers to infants baptized before dying as being the "first fruits of the harvest" and speaks, as we have seen, of the souls of the Mariana natives as a "copious harvest." See also (García, 2004)

¹² See Carano and Sanchez (1964) for an example of the spread belief that the main cause of the depopulation was "the killing of the Chamorro by Spanish soldiers" (N. J. Goetzfridt, 2011, p. 76).

¹³ See RAH 9/2676

¹⁴ San Vitores brought also with him two Filipino men that lived in Marianas for twenty years, since the Concepción shipwreck: Don Francisco de Mendoza and Esteban Diaz (See RAH 09/02676/f4).

¹⁵ It is enough to read two opposed newspapers covering a political protest to realize the potential usefulness of population counts. In some cases, these differences are radical, depending on the political weight of the event, with differences greater than 60 or 80%. In this sense, Golovnin, the Russian explorer who arrived in Guam at the

beginning of the 19th century, affirmed that “According to the last Spanish explorer, Malaspina, in 1792 the population of the entire group of islands (the majority of them are uninhabited) was forty thousand. This number was confirmed by the Governor. In Manila I obtained records of the population of these possessions; the number of inhabitants of the Marianas was estimated at only 4,680 in the year 1815. I do not know how to account for this disparity, although both Malaspina in his account, as well as the Governor when talking to foreigners, may well have increased the population figures because of “the dignity of their official position” (Wiswell , 1974, p. 78).

¹⁶ Diaz comments that “the shift from fino’ lâgu [Spanish] to fino’ Chamorro was occasioned, according to Father Julius Sullivan, by a deadly flu epidemic, traced to a Navy transport ship, that hit the island in November 1918. This epidemic killed more than a thousand manâmkô’, or more than 80 percent of the manâmkô’ [elderly] population. According to Sullivan, among the effects was that it 'brought to an abrupt halt the use of Spanish language in Guam.” (Diaz , 2010, p. 102).

¹⁷ There are remarkable accurate works made by U.S historians living in the Mariana Islands like those of Don Farrell (Farrell, 1991), Robert Rogers (1995), Scott Russell (Russell, 1998), or Frank Quimby (2011), among others.