Across Oceans and Continents: Sonic Imaginations, Låla'i and Basque Intersections in Guåhan, Mariana Islands

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Abstract

CHamoru/Chamorro cultural groups have become crucial storytellers in terms of how music-making, dance, and chant engage in complex processes of negotiation that situates the music practices themselves as formidable forms of knowledge production. This article draws critical connections of Basque influences in the Mariana islands by interrogating the function of låla'i in both CHamoru cultural groups and often-overlooked Basque intersections most notably by Påle' Roman De Vera, who was an important figure in creating hymnology in the CHamoru language. I use music to enmesh the primacy of Basque and Chamorro Catholic influences in broader social-historical impacts that have yet to be considered along musicological fields. I then follow låla'i in terms of how performative modalities function in the context of officially sanctioned celebrations which I argue, offers alternative routes in bringing together seemingly disparate pockets of historical significance. Theorizing the acousmatic, and sonic imaginations offers a way to make sense of the musical and sonic colonial violences that have occurred via the introduction of tonal regimes sanctioned upon indigenous peoples and how låla'i makes known the musical strains of Basque relations in the Mariana Islands. In doing so, I advocate for listening beyond ocularcentric approaches, in favor of more capacious avenues of understanding cultural heritage in the Marianas.

Note on Spelling: Naming indigenous lands and waters is a political act and decidedly more so for naming the peoples themselves. Rather than defaulting to one monolithic term to refer to the islands, peoples, I opt to navigate through several orthographical styles and means of self-identification. By no means is this a self-induced confusion by the author nor for readers, but a tactical move to flesh out multilayered indigenous specificities as well as indicating how naming is implicated in ongoing reclamations of indigenous naming practices and resistance to historical colonial structures and current divisions of island entities.

A Relistening to Chamorro Hymns

In the Mariana Islands, Catholic hymns most widely sung to this day by the Chamorro people include "O Maria Nanamagof", Matuna i Ginasgas-mu", "Iya Bilen", and "San Jose" to name a few. When congregations sing them in the *GumaYu'os*, church, across the villages or in family homes gathered by the *bilen*[57], nativity scene, one can hear how to articulate words, phrases and expressions in the Chamorro language which are seldom heard elsewhere by those who sing them – considering the critical status the indigenous vernacular. In positioning the Church's role in the islands, Vince Diaz aptly describes the missionization of the Marianas saying, "for the Chamorros Guam and the Marianas, one finds not the classic remoteness and insularity that is supposed to deliver the specificity and particularity of cultural alterity on which modern anthropology cuts its teeth; instead, one finds the complexity of creolized culture forged out of centuries of intercultural mixing as the principal form of Indigenous social and cultural articulation" (Diaz, 2010). Most devoted Catholics in the Mariana Islands understand that most *Kantan GumaYu'os*, Church songs, or *Kantan Nubena,* Novena Songs, to be adapted and translated from Spanish hymns, however, a sizeable corpus of these hymns can be

[57] Bilen literally means Bethlehem in Spanish, it can either refer to the city of Bethlehem or, the Nativity scene of the baby Jesus' birth that is decorated in churches and homes during Christmas. Furthermore, Bilen is one way to spell it in Chamorro, the spelling Belén is more recognizable in Spanish.

traced back to the Catholic communities of Basque Country located in several enclaves along the Pyrenees mountains, in the regions of southern France and northern Spain. While historiographical work has done much to unpack the complexities of Chamorro agencies elsewhere (Clement, 2011; Flores, 1999 Perez-Hattori, 2004; Diaz, 2010; Camacho, 2011; DesLisle, 2021), I raise critical awareness to how musical research, acoustic and auditory life have yet to be fully considered in conventional Micronesian discourse most especially when it comes to heritage and the reshaping of it. Attending to the experiential in this way can afford a fresh perspective of how history persists in faculties beyond the written whereby "people come to express their relation to sound and its circulation" (LaBelle, 2010). In this article I interrogate the CHamoru term lålai and its storied function in Native Catholicism in the Marianas by assessing how it has evolved in perpetuating indigenous CHamoru culture both within and beyond religious spheres. I do so to raise the significance of actors who were responsible in developing seminal texts of Church hymns such *as Lålai Hulo Anti-ho Kanta Gumayuus Siha* by the Basque priest Påle' Roman De Vera. I interrelate the diverging applications of the term such as how contemporary actors deploy their own aesthetic formation of lålai in recent contexts which points to conceptual shifts in ever-evolving indigenous heritage practices. The following section interweaves Basque and Chamorro historical experiences.

Wars, Regimes, and Occupation Across Continents and Oceans

The people of Mariana islands had been plunged into the Second World War via the aerial bombing by the Imperial Japanese Army and subsequent occupation of Guam on December 8th 1941-August 1944. About five years earlier, the Basque town of Gernika a vibrant town and region known to be the "ancient town of the Basques" (Steer, 1937) was heavily bombed by the Nazi German Luftwaffe's Condor Legion and the Fascist Italian Aviazione Legionaria. Done at the behest of military general Francisco Franco, the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) resulted in Franco successfully

overthrowing the Second Spanish Republic which would then secure Franco's power as Spain's dictator for nearly forty years. Both in Guam and Gernika, each of these tragic bombings received global attention for their role in how each war would play out, and while they were categorically different conflicts separated by geographic location, highly diverging cultural contexts and geopolitics, certain parallels and critical intersections are worth interrogating. These include faith-driven communities, the music, prayers and rituals that sustain peoples during times of war. When taking into account Spain's imperial presence in the Marianas for over three centuries, since the end of the Spanish-Chamorro Wars (1671-1699), missionaries from many parts of Spain and Europe played a pivotal role in Spain's overseas empire, but I argue that certain Basque influences have made a particular indelible mark on the CHamoru people. For example, complex layers of how on the one hand, Basque's cultural ethnic, cultural, and political repression on the European continent against dominating European powers can create certain affinities between Chamorro and Basque peoples, but how on the other such affinities lose their traction in the context of missionization of the Marianas. Relating these experiences of oppression between Chamorro and Basque peoples does not seek to over-simplify a naivety of shared struggle, nor does it diametrically oppose their participation in colonization just because iconic figures of Basque heritage stood alongside and participated in empire, but rather this article examines these intersections and incongruencies as important positionalities to work through as cultures of commemoration and heritages continue to transform. Chamorros have responded to such transformations for example, by both their revival of cultural performing arts as well as their investment in Catholic faith that ebb and flow between one another. To further flesh out such implausible relations, I take a critical ear to the musical

compilation of traditional Basque Church songs that have since been made into Chamorro Catholic hymns[58]. This formidable repository Chamorro musical heritage is forever etched in their resilience during World War II and commemorations thereafter within the social fabric known as Kustumbren Chamorro. I investigate Påle' (Father) Roman de Vera's musical and Chamorro language contributions to the Chamorro people of the Mariana islands. I do so by introducing well-known Kantan Guma Yu'os (church songs) and kantan nubena (novena songs), many of which were translated and adapted from traditional Catholic Basque hymns into the Chamorro language.

Basque and Chamorro Intersections

"Those who know the Jesuits know that Basque nationalism is completely Catholic."

—Sabino Arana, EL CORREO VASCO, July 29, 1899

Excerpt from "The Basque History of the World," Mark Kurlansky (1999)

In his book *The Basque History of the World* (1999) Martin Kurlansky opens the fourth chapter entitled "The Basque Saint" with the epigraph above. While a thorough reading of Basque history is well beyond this article's scope, one historical experience relevant for both the CHamoru people and Basques is their devotion to the Catholic Church. In further teasing out more complex strains of Basque encounters with the Chamorro people, it would be Jesuit priest Blessed Louis Diego de San Vitores, beginning in 1668 (Rodríguez-Ponga, 2021) who would establish the first Catholic Mission and school, *El Colegio de San Juan de Letran*, in the island of Guam and in Oceania writ large. With this establishment, San Vitores named the patron of the city of

[58] There have been other religious musical influences dealing with the Church in the Marianas such as German Capuchins in the Northern Marianas as well as missionaries from other orders and parts of Spain. This is a rich history, but I respectfully sidestep this because I specifically focus on Basque connections which consists of hymns also used in the islands of Rota, Saipan, and Tinian. While a complete survey of hymns particular to island locales are important, it is not the main focus of the article but rather the longer historical legacy of Basque's role during Spanish colonization, the American Naval period both pre- and post-World War two.

Hagåtña after San Ignacio de Loyola (St. Ignatius of Loyola) a Basque saint and founder of the Society of Jesus or Jesuit Order (Forbes, 2011). Guam's colonial center of power within the capital village of Hagåtña was known as San Ignacio de Agaña by the colonial and Chamorro elite. After centuries of established faith in the Marianas, many CHamorus remain devout Catholics. Before Basques converted to the Catholic faith, they lived in their homelands prior to the Romans entering the Iberian Peninsula and are descendants of the early Vascones and Aquitanians. This heritage makes Basques distinct from the relatively recent Indo-European languages and cultures that arrived in the Iberian Peninsula over 5,000 years ago. Basques have persisted in maintaining a distinct cultural identity in relation to the nation-states they live in, Spain and France. Such efforts in maintaining their way of life did not come without their own respective struggles as well as resistance to concerted efforts by occupying powers to impose various forms of erasure. For example, early on in their history, Basques experienced a period of Christianization, where their belief systems were relegated to archaic mythological paganism. In the 20th century during the Franco dictatorship, *Euskara*, the Basque language, was banned from being spoken in public. While acknowledging the difference in geographic distance and of cultural contexts, comparable punitive punishments can be said to have been experienced by Chamorros and Basques respectively at the hands of suppressive regimes, including being fined for speaking one's mother tongue and in some extreme cases, being jailed (Bitong, 2022). As is the case with marginalized communities, oppressive acts of outlawing mother tongue deeply discouraged intergenerational language transmission. In fact, such language policies in both the Franco regime and the American occupation before and after WWII in Guam coincided during the same period.

Historical processes of epistemicide are important to note, but particularly in terms of how music has the potential to loosen its salience when one's culture is threatened is an important characteristic I aim to flesh out. That is, music's ability to fly

under the radar of outright prohibition brings connections between CHamoru and Basque experiences between different regimes, across continents and oceans so as to assess possible reasons how Basque Capuchin missionaries helped protect CHamoru culture amid changing colonial administrations and even in times of war.

From Guma' Åcho Latte' to Guma' Yu'os: Ringing in Natives in an Island of churches

The Catholic Church in *Guåhan,* Guam, and the Marianas have been one of the only consistent institutions where speaking, singing and cultural agency in the Indigenous language was permitted, even amid American assimilation policies. While lålai has been a vital force in the reclamation in recent CHamoru indigenous heritage initiatives, components of this Indigenous genre such as fino' håya, become complicated when the promulgators of such practices are linked to the longer history of Spanish colonization. Nevertheless, Basque priest's integration of Chamoru language via Basque Catholic hymns into native Catholicism particularly in the 20th century is a primary focus. I argue that by interrogating lålai, which was how Basque Catholic hymns were hitherto understood in a CHamoru context, demonstrates the interplay of CHamoru agencies across multiple generations and, an entryway into broader discourses of the role of the Church during times of war, but first I will first give a brief personal anecdote to introduce sonic imaginations. Recalling how I traveled around the island by car as a child, I was taught to make the sign of the cross whenever we passed a village church which was further by other sonic cues such as the ringing of the bells. Churches in the islands can be a means of orienting oneself and can prove important when navigating from one village to the next. This otherwise innocuous detail opens certain cultural conditionings up for critical reflection, such as how the church building has become a demarcating architectural force that becomes audibly palpable between villages. The subtle habit of me making the sign of the cross compels me to wonder: how long has this practice been present in the islands? To what extent were other variables at play in

positioning the church as a locus of authority? Not only was I frequently reminded by my parents and elders to maintain this tradition, but the ringing of church bells also subconsciously reinforced this practice as well as its presence. The lasting sound connection that churches across centuries evoke can fall under what sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne (2012) calls "sonic imaginations". Sterne explains,

> Sonic imaginations rework culture through the development of new narratives, new histories, new technologies and new alternatives. Sonic imaginations "reproduce cultural understandings at every turn"—there is no knowledge of sound that comes from outside, only knowledge that works from particular limits. These limits in turn work like affordances—baseline assumptions and massive traditions to build from, as well as conventions worth playing with and struggling against. (Sterne, 2012)

I use sonic imaginations here as a way to approach history with memory so as to loosen historiographical evidentiary paradigms to instead, engage in processes that resensitize how CHamorus may have perceived their lived-in sonic worlds and its transformation but also how cultural practices persisted. Running parallel to this, it is also useful to call attention to what sound studies scholars refer to as acousmatic sound (Kane, 2014). Generally speaking, acousmatic is a sound that one hears without knowing what causes it (Kane 2014). Acousmatic sound allows for a certain threshold of acceptance, a tolerance of the ubiquitous presence of many sounds in the everyday, detaching the sources of the sound, which lends oneself unconcerned with the circumstances of its production. Just as I associated my upbringing with never questioning the sign of the cross, I use this term to analyze how the isolation of sound—as in the ringing of church bells—behind the veil of acousmatic sound, can be perceived as critically correspondent to subtle disciplining of CHamoru bodies and, their subsequent removal from ancestral villages to a rough layout of the partitioning of island villages today. Moreover, Kane argues that "the acousmatic character of the

sounds matters, in that the enigma of their source—its invisibility and uncertainty—is a central feature of the experience" (2014). I argue here that a church bell whether visible or not to villagers, did not function as a means to draw attention to itself as a source of sound, but rather far from an aesthetic orientation, the material effects of such foreign audible properties could have very well been initially associated with ideas of forced removal, control and power from the vantage point of a villager. Take for instance such strategies for musical religious control which suggests the earliest machinations of what would be the lukao in Native Chamorro Catholicism,

> This ministry involved sporadic treks to the villages or paths in the hinterlands, where the mission hoped to catch Natives off guard, and attract others to God's word by singing holy verses, often referred to in Spanish as ejaculaciones, which San Vitores himself likened to "holy darts" he would fling expertly into the innocent hearts of otherwise ignorant and unsuspecting indios (Diaz, 2010).

The "holy darts" that Vitores musically threw at my Chamorro ancestors eventually sedimented into the matrilineal transformation and relocation of native womanhood, part and parcel of the thick veener of Native Catholicism. Turning back to my personal vignette, in the village of Hagåtña where my father is from holds the historic distinction of being the first church to be established in the Pacific. The Jesuit priest Father Louis Diego de San Vitores was the first Roman Catholic priest to establish a permanent mission in the islands of Låguas yan Gåni starting in 1668 and after his martyrdom in 1672, the CHamoru/Chamorro people of the 15-island archipelago were embroiled in war with ancillaries of the Spanish colonial enterprise. After almost thirty years, the conflict eventually resulted in a campaign known as the *redducción,* a programmatic process of relocation whereby the native inhabitants were forcibly removed from their ancestral villages and island locales. As Chamorros/CHamorus were concentrated on the southernmost island of *Guåhan*, Guam, the Spanish regime at first found it increasingly difficult to contain native populations owing to their extensive knowledge of

the land and sophisticated ocean-going canoe culture. When it came to leaving at a moment's notice, Spanish galleons stood at a significant disadvantage against agile CHamoru *sakman,* flying proa. A brief example to illustrate this point is Scott Russell's synopsis the CHamorus of Gåni, and their subtle display of navigational prowess as a means to refuse forced relocation,

> Tinian, and Saipan under control (Hezel 1989:8–10). Soon after, canoes bearing the news of the Spanish victory were sent to the Gani islands with orders for their inhabitants to resettle into Fatiguan, one of the newly established mission villages on Saipan (Hezel 1989:10). Although the Gani Chamorros offered no physical resistance to this forced resettlement, it soon became clear to the Spanish that they were not happy with life on Saipan. On a rainy night in July 1697, four hundred islanders abandoned Saipan and returned to their former homes in the Northern Islands (Lévesque 1997:157). Alarmed by this mass exodus, the resident priest on Saipan, Father Gerard Bowens, sought the assistance of Governor José Madrazo (Russell, 1998).

Such a massively executed clandestine exodus under the cover of night bespeaks the level of duress and equally, the amount of navigational skill Gåni CHamorus mustered to get out of colonial confinement even if resistance to the *redduccion* was only temporary. Surely the account above suggests the level of long-voyage navigational skill that eventually became absent after the Spanish-Chamoru Wars. Magellan's burning of the village[59] of Humåtak in 1521 marked the beginning of such altercations between Europeans and the Taotao Tåno [60]. The doing away of canoe transportation can be seen

[59] Every year on Indigenous People's Day, a holiday formerly known as Discovery Day, the southern village of Humåtak in Guam hosts a celebration where cultural dance groups reenact the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer funded by the Spanish monarchy. In this reenactment, performers stage the burning of villages and reflect on the first interaction with Europeans and the colonial impacts of the arrival of Spanish galleons to the Mariana Islands.

[60] This term also refers to the naming of the indigenous Mariana Islanders as the CHamoru/Chamorro people. Its literal translation is "people of the land".

as part of staged plans in the structural transformation of how indigenous populations could move within the boundaries of the regime's newly formed villages whereby the church as an architectural structure stood as locus of power. After CHamorus/Chamorros were subdued militarily, the Church as a physical structure itself emerged as a formidable institution in reshaping social relationships in the islands in ways that molded new modes of listening onto indigenous peoples. By carving out new village locales both physically and sonically, the construction and function of the church transformed the spatial orientation of island environments in ways that were practically conducive to how priests were to administer the new religion to the native population. Perhaps unknown to the clergymen was that along with the hymns and prayers that were taught to their newly acquired local flock, was the introduction of a new technology that participated in forming a new social order that further instilled behaviors of movement conducive to colonial containment. That is to say, if there was a sound that could mark the most significant cultural-institutional shift in the islands of Låguas yan Gåni, and quite possibly the Pacific writ large, the ringing in of the church bells throughout island villages are quite literally towering candidates. Where it was simply not possible for the physical presence of clergymen, large metal cup-shaped resonators with pivoted clappers were part of a new acoustic arsenal that reinforced the territorial domain of colonial municipalities and were exceptional in cutting through the thickness of tropical foliage. Capuchin priest and historian Påle' Eric Forbes even notes that the bell clapper had been given the nickname by Chamorros as chilin kampana or dåmmut kompana (Forbes, 2019), which refers to the male penis and scrotum.

Such playful references to church bells suggest a new type of masculine control, but they also play up indigenous frames of navigating through environment such as paying respect to the taotaomo'na known as Ga'tos[61] who in ancient CHamoru legend, provided passage via his penis or, sought retribution by the swelling this body-part if one disturbed his dwelling. The interruption of natural sounds by church bells situates the notion of acousmatic again by how CHamorus have had to make sense of divergent attributions concerning the divinities heard in the noises. Bells are historically important in their role as an instrument of discipline over the everyday lives as in the ordering of time, where the ringing of church bells over several times a day ushered in a particular quantified time regimen that focused on fixed hours of the day. The deployment of church bells served to take physical account of people in relation to organizational spaces for things like communal prayer and work. Påle' Eric Forbes has written on how Chamorros prided themselves in waking up early at the sound of the *åtba,* the first church bell of the day to ring at four o'clock in the morning (Forbes, 2011).

After the violence of the Spanish-CHamoru/Chamorro Wars, bells were part and parcel of a plea- for islanders to assume their neatly plotted out locales and a subtle warning to permanently stay within the village confines, away from their former ancestral villages and to leave their guma' latte and ancestral relatives who dwelled there behind. I speculate how such historical accounts of forced removal produced various effects of noise and sound wrought on natives that point to how jarring these bells must have sounded when used in the service of colonial biopolitics. A new set of listening capacities arose that focused on maintaining life based on colonial control of native bodies via acousmatic listening. They also evoke a complicated past and present

[61] Michael Lujan Bevacqua writes that, "*Gatos* (100) was a *taotaomo'na* who was known for his large penis. He would travel with other spirits which served as his soldiers, who would use *Gatos'* penis when crossing rivers. If you entered into *Gatos'* territory without permission and were to disrespect him by urinating there, he would touch his penis to you, and you would be unable to *me'me'* (urinate) or *masinek* (defecate)."

that moves beyond oversimplified tales of outright native conversion and demise. While the missionization of the Marianas had violently transformed the islands, Pacific peoples who are a part of the Church today do not necessarily consider their faith as antithetical or a negation of their indigenous heritage. As Pacific peoples began to fill the four walls of church buildings, they also acted dynamically in ways that shaped these new institutions even as they were being shaped by them. Pacific Scholars such as Joakim Peter note, "To varying degrees indigenous people have been shown to be active manipulators of the forces of Christianity, ultimately branding their own signature on the missionization process" (Peter, 1996, 281). Teresia Teaiwa argues that rather than positioning Christian conversion as an indicator of a process of Europeanization, she points to how Vince Diaz has argued that it is also very much a process of indigenization (Teaiwa, 2021). Local lore and legends are enmeshed within the fabric of the islands wherein belief systems are often indistinguishable between Indigenous and Christian. The church as a building and a communal meeting space within the village serves as a nexus for cultural production. For example, throughout the year, village parishes across the island are a focal point for fiestas after their local church's namesake, namely a patron saint celebration which culminates with a village fiesta. While CHamorus/Chamorros were engaged with and affected by assimilation policies of missionization, natives who adhered to the new social structure became equipped with a new means of moral soundness that allowed them mobility. Achieving the goal of Catholic worship ensured unhindered village-to-village traveling that while within the primary purpose of church fiestas, also allowed for cultural practices to graft onto church activities; achieved primarily through the maintenance of extended family relations.

Performing Cultures of Commemoration

CHamorus met Ferdinand Magellan who arrived in Guam in 1521, where his crew consisted of several Basque men among others. Under his command, it is said in oral

history that this crew razed the southern coastal village of Humåtak to the ground after a misunderstanding of trade protocol, which Magellan characterized as theft by Chamorros when they took precious metals and other rare materials Souder, 2021). Most notable of the Basques was Juan Sebastián Elcano, who almost certainly was present throughout this skirmish if not a participant. Elcano, a Basque explorer, finished what Magellan had started, the first global circumnavigation. The celebration of Elcano's accomplishment which is known as "Desembarco de Elcano" takes place every four years in the Basque Country town of Getaria in Gipuzkoa.[62] In Guåhan in 2019, a diverse cohort of scholars and community experts asserted a strong presence as part of events commemorating the 500-year anniversary of the circumnavigation by emphasizing the Chamorro perspective in global discourse in locally organized responses (Rhowuniong, 2019). These included locally driven events such as symposiums, book launches, sling stone competitions, dramatized re-enactments, and formal ceremonies. For example, when the ship Juan Sebastián De Elcano visited Guåhan, many local interventions in this historical discourse took place. For Guåhan and the Marianas, Magellan's arrival has been known in Chamorro history as "Discovery Day." In recent years, however, a shift to prioritize the Chamorro perspective has led to a change of name to "Chamorro Heritage Day", an annual holiday commemorated in story, music, and dance, in the southern village of Humåtak. In February 2021 to commemorate the Magellan-Elcano circumnavigation 500-year anniversary, the "Spanish" (Basque?) ship named Juan Sebastián De Elcano, docked at Naval Base Guam as it retraced the expedition's historic route.

[62] ("Getaria Representa El Desembarco de Elcano Tras La Primera Vuelta al Mundo 500 Años Después" 2022)

This commemoration was met with a strong Chamorro presence that involved indigenous seafaring societies who met the ship in open waters as well as ceremonial greetings in fino' håya[63] by Indigenous chant groups such as *I Fanlålai'an*, Place of Chant. In what musicologist Brian Diettrich has called "a multilayered engagement in saltwater places" (Diettrich, 2018) Master of Chant Leonard Iriarte led I Fanlålai'an in a ceremonial *lålai*, chant. *I acho alutong i taotao-måmi*! (we are the people who are of the alutong stone) one of the chant lines expounds upon the great stone pillars of the ancient Chamorro people. As the Elcano's crew stood reverently at the arrival ceremony, the fact that such historically silenced utterances were chanted again by I Fanlålai'an half a millenium later demonstrates how critical musical heritage is in the reclamation of Chamorro storytelling through the revival of their cosmologies in the face of fraught colonial legacies.

Image 1. I Fanlålai'an Oral History Project greets the Elcano vessel as it arrived for the 500-year anniversary of the Magellan-Elcano circumnavigation in February 2021. Photo source: The Guam Museum.

Image 1. CHamoru Heritage Day in Humåtak Bay March 2024. Various CHamoru Dance groups gather to reenact Magellan's Arrival. They performed Indigenous cosmologies such as the creation story of Puntan and Fu'una. Photo courtesy of Andrew

[63] Ojeya Cruz Banks who has worked with I Fanlålai'an states that, "I Fanlalai'an's distinct approach to chant composition is to use older Chamoru concepts and the language *fino' håya*. This is a native tongue not laden with Spanish vocabulary and is rarely spoken. The group is dedicated to revitalizing *fino' håya* through chant". See her article, *Lålai: Somatic Decolonization and Worldview-Making through Chant on the Pacific Island of Guåhan* for more in-depth analysis on this term.

Påle' (Father) Roman de Vera

The "Men of Navarra" arrived in Guåhan beginning in 1914 (Forbes, 2001). Having taken orders from Rome, Capuchin Friars from the Basque region of Navarra, Spain took up the duty of tending to Guåhan's Catholic faithful (Forbes, 2001). It was during this time when a Basque connection re-emerged in the Marianas, the first since the expulsion of the Jesuits beginning in 1769[64]. The Navarran friars were responsible for building new church infrastructure across the island, while Påle' Roman de Vera[65] played a key role in growing the Catholic faith of the island primarily by learning and teaching fellow priests the CHamoru language. De Vera is responsible for compiling a number of hymns[66] from Basque Country, introducing musical texts that became codified into Chamorro. His work ensured that prayers could be said in CHamoru and that hymns could be used in practically all-important religious occasions from village parishes to Chamorro households. Nubena devotions such as the *Nubenan Niño Jesus* Novena of the child Jesus, *Tres Reyes*, Three Kings, and the Feast of the Immaculate Concepcion with Santa Marian Kamalen[67], the patroness of the Mariana Islands are just a few devotions where one can trace a few to Basque hymns. Forbes has written on the prolific life of Påle' Roman de Vera, an excerpt of Forbes's biography of de Vera biography is as follows,

> Father Roman Maria de Vera (1878 – 1959), a Catholic missionary on Guam from 1915 until 1941, was one of the first important writers in the CHamoru language. Prior to him, there was only a handful of literature published in

[64] After the Jesuits established *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán,* the Spanish Crown expelled the order from Spain and its colonies beginning in 1769 however this took some time to take effect in the colonies.
[65] It is important to note that when someone joins a religious order, their name changes from their birthname. All clergymen mentioned are identified by their religious name.
[66] Påle' Roman de Vera also compiled hymns from the Spanish-Speaking globe, from Spain and Mexico, I however choose to focus attention on Basque hymns because of its underacknowledged significance and, in connection to broader discourses of how marginalized communities struggle under nation-states and regimes; a primary theme as I aim to connect diverging groups via heritage practices in this article.
[67] Santa Marian Kamalen also known as Our Lady of Camarin is the Patroness of Guam, Mariana Islands.

CHamoru. Because the overwhelming majority of CHamorus at the time were Catholic, de Vera's religious works in CHamoru were widely read and became the norm for many in CHamoru orthography. On 30 April 1915, de Vera began his 26-year assignment on Guam. He quickly became the acknowledged expert in the CHamoru language among the Catholic missionaries. All missionaries after him had to learn the language from de Vera and pass a final test by him before they were allowed to minister among the people. As literacy increased in Guam, de Vera appreciated the importance of publishing religious works in CHamoru. By the end of his tenure on Guam, he had translated more than 30 religious works into CHamoru, the first being printed in 1920, five years after his arrival. This was the largest output of literature in CHamoru produced by any individual up to that time, and for many years afterwards. He also published a CHamoru-Spanish dictionary in 1932 Forbes, 2009).


Lalai-Hulo, Antiho.

Kanta Gumayuus Siha

na hapolo gi fino haya

si

Pale ROMAN MARIA DE VERA,

Misioneru Kapuchino

giya Guahan (Marianas).

Mina saia na manahuyong

Digitized 2019 by Lawrence Borja

Image 3. Front page of Pâle' Roman de Vera's publication of Chamorro language Hymns. Photo source: Lawrence Borja

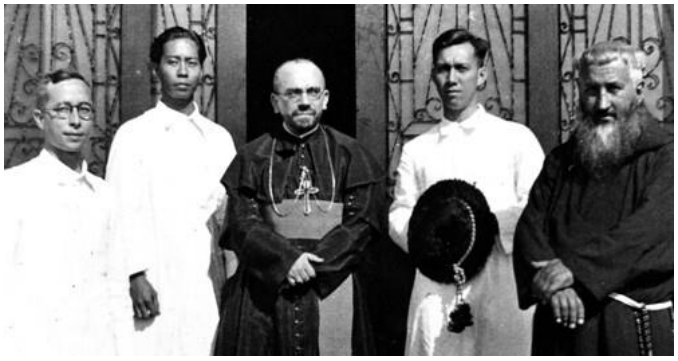

Image 4. Chamorros (all in white garb) Father Jesus Baza Duenas, Jose Manibusan, Bishop Miguel Angel Urteaga Olano, Father (Monsignor) Oscar Lujan Calvo, and Father Román María de Vera; taken in Manila about 1938 when the three Chamorros were still seminarians. Photo source: Guampedia

Most significant among de Vera's output was the many songs he translated into Chamorro language. De Vera compiled one of the most widely used Chamorro songbook publications, *Lalai-Hulo, Antiho: Kanta Gumayuus Siha*.

While more effort needs to be done in terms of calculating an exact number of songs de Vera translated into Chamorro from Basque Catholic songs, Påle' Eric Forbes has been keen to point out many significant ones sung regularly throughout the liturgical calendar in the islands. While the words and expressions embedded in the melodies are oftentimes regarded as an older style of speaking Chamorro, some of the melodies, in contrast, are readily recognizable to Basque Catholics. For instance, in 1985, Chamorro Catholics from Saipan, Guam and the US travelled through Basque Country, attending Mass in Pau, France as well as in Burgos, Spain as part of a pilgrimage to attend Blessed Louis Diego de San Vitores's beatification in Rome. During the Mass Chamorros sang hymns that excited celebrants such as Father Francisco Echeverria (Pacific Daily News, 1985).

Chamorro Hymn	Basque Hymn
San Jose	Himno de San Ignacio
Matuna i Ginasgas-mu	?
Iya Bilen	Oi Bethleem!
Kurason Santos	?
Hu Noni Hao Maria	Ama Maite Maria
Ha' na Gos Piniti hao	Jose Deunaren atsekabe-atsegiñak
O Maria Nanamagof	?
Chamorro Hymn	Basque Hymn

Similar pilgrimages are made by the Chamorro faithful today as well. Below is just a short list of some of the more widely sung Chamorro Hymns, and their Basque counterparts.

While the question marks in the table represent the remaining comparative work yet to be done in tracing Chamorro songs and their Basque counterparts, Påle' Eric Forbes' work is a crucial starting point. He has done significant work in chronicling the contributions of Påle' Roman de Vera and particularly the Catholic Heritage of the Chamorro people. His sharp analysis of Chamorro language in the texts of the Chamorro hymns are a valuable resource and can be found on his personal website paleric.blogspot.com. Returning to De Vera, if one looks at the index section (Fañoda'an) in the 1950 version of the song booklet, clues for what each composition is more widely known as are indicated in parenthesis next to the CHamoru/Chamorro title. The selection of songs in Påle' Roman De Vera's songbook draws from a combination of popular hymns of the time to ones sung around the Asia-Pacific and Micronesia region with annotations that indicate Palau or Saipan for example. His songbook does not contain any Western musical notation, which supports the idea that such forms of musical education simply were not needed for teaching songs to the village people. Thus, a possible teaching style could have been what is often referred to teaching by "rote", a method of musical education regarded as a lower form musical teaching. Such a method would not be an accurate characterization given the oral tradition of Pacific Peoples and in particular, Chamorros who relished in their tenacity of maintaining storytelling practices steeped in auditory memories, stock melodies and vocal singing styles such as Kantan Chamorrita[68]. While many musicians over the generations have set De Vera's songbook to sheet music notation, one edition of notable significance, due the expansive range of hymns it covers, is Lawrence Borja's compilation entitled *Leblon Kanta: Chamorro Sacred Hymns* (Borja, 2021).

Further investigation into the musical underpinnings of Påle' Roman de Vera's life especially in connection to the musical networks available to him at the time may

[68] *Kantan Chamorita* is the contemporary name given to traditional call-and-response, impromptu verse-making. Practitioners refer to the genre as *ayotte',* meaning to throw (verses) back and forth.

reveal hitherto underrecognized motivations and global flows of music worthy of musicological consideration. Initial directions point to a contemporary of Påle' Roman de Vera by the name of Aita (father in Basque) Donostia OFM Cap. (1886-1956), a fellow Basque Capuchin priest, Donostia successfully blended his priestly career by becoming a prolific composer of Basque musical folklore as he ascended to become a prominent musicologist in western music art form. While his residencies took him to metropole centers such as Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid, some of his most treasured arrangements are short song forms like church hymns based in Basque heritage (Ondarra, 2024) . Given both the relation of heritage and of religious order, it would not be far off to suggest de Vera advancing Donostia's music both as a Basque and in service of the Church, nor would it be surprising to discover even more concrete connections between them.

Conclusion

Through lålai, I have attempted to tease out similarities and differences between Basques and CHamorus in order to build connective knowledge and advance relationships between individuals and practitioners through musicological approaches that takes music, sound, and the contexts in which they are apprehended seriously. Some scholars state that fino' håya, is an older Chamoru language that fell out of practice due to colonialism (Cruz-Banks, 2021), while this may be partially true, more explanation is needed because fino' håya did not totally fall out of practice but rather persisted through the institution of the Church and was even promoted by its clergy. Complicating lålai in the storied context of Catholic Chamorro hymns sounds out a multiplicity of practices in unidentical ways. This is not problematic, but rather a richly diverse discourse that seeks to invigorate CHamoru indigenous plurality in the exploration and tracing of vocal music despite historical connections to the very institutions that sought complete erasure, especially in their initial penetration. One can identify other indigenous voices in comparable circumstances. For example, in the

central desert region around Hermannsburg in Aboriginal Australia, choirmaster Morris Stuart led a choir of Aboriginal women to Germany to sing German hymns because they wanted to "take back the hymns that were given to their great grandparents by German missionaries" (MIFF, 2017). One woman from the choir remarked "but they are now our songs, part of our story and identity" (MIFF, 2017). This Aboriginal woman offers a compelling persuasion that alternatively shifts understandings of the all-too-often notion of an "authentic" past that unduly plagues indigenous practitioners whereby they are demanded to produce bullet-proof explanations with unequivocal certainty for the musical expressions they practice. Lålai can be an example of a dynamic exchange between differing communities by way of how sacred liturgical poetry was translated into indigenous languages. Understanding relationships in this way listens for the ways that not only acknowledges the violence of attempted colonial erasure but also the acts of giving that took place albeit of a musical nature. Because such lålai carry significant weight, resounding throughout generations, making a case for investigating Basque and Chamorro relations might then become a more worthwhile pursuit. Integrating Basque people's storied relationship to the Spanish Crown and nationalisms that systematically sought its removal, further compels how such contradictions and convergences should be interrogated in more detail in order to listen for how musical heritage, especially against the backdrop of dramatized narratives such as the ones discussed here, can get at histories and memories in ways that other modes cannot. Sonic imaginations as I have put forth in this article allows for the capacity to shift from one perspective to another to decenter the authoritativeness of the historical canon and include the interpersonal that takes seriously when CHamorus *hasso*—an amalgam of possible temporalities. How cultural transformations occur for the case of Guåhan and the Marianas are replete with movements that aim for indigenous revivals too large to cover here, but by bringing an anomaly to light like the Basque legacy in Guam, it becomes clear just how important vocal music was in maintaining a distinctly rich elevated form of indigenous language. For example, both Påle' Roman De Vera and CHamoru cultural

groups can be cited to have used terms such as fino' håya, although the context of their usage, suggests diverging stances on what these terms mean and their application. Still, individuals participate in both the Catholic Church and expansive cultural dance group networks. Depending on which vantage point one chooses to engage imperial history, a possible Chamorro perspective could conclude that the scale overwhelmingly tips Basque relations as active facilitators of the missionization of the islands, whereby identifying Spanish or Basque actors may not have mattered at all to Chamorro perceptions. Because of centuries of native investment in this sacred musical repertory, however, it is not so easy to villainize the continued legacies and presence of the Church.

In the context of war, journalist George Steer's coverage of the Gernika bombardment in 1937 he writes "The only counter-measure the Basques could employ—for they did not possess sufficient airplanes to face the Insurgent fleet—were those provided by the heroism of the Basque clergy"(Steer, 1937). The same ilk of devoted Basque clergy was dispensed to Guåhan. Under the guidance of Bishop Joaquin Oláiz, the three Chamorro priests of the 20th century were ordained, Påle' Jesus B. Dueñas and Påle' Oscar L. Calvo and Påle' Jose Manibusan. Påle' Dueñas and Påle' Oskåt Calvo were the Chamorro priests that were left to administer the island during the Japanese WWII occupation. Påle' Skåt[69] Calvo and Påle' Jesus Baza Dueñas (image 4) are forever known for their heroism. Along with their ministry, Chamorro songs of prayer created by Basque priests were embraced by Chamorro populations because they were predicated on the insistence of retaining and codifying languages that resulted in sacred songs being translated and sung in native tongue. Throughout generations, most notably during the Second World War, these lålai translated by Påle' Roman De Vera were sung as Chamorro families guarded their statues of village saints; while hiding them from Japanese imperial armies, as warring empires wreaked havoc and bombed

[69] Oscar in Chamorro is pronounced and spelled Oskåt, while many know him with the shortened nickname Skåt, I use Oskåt to clearly render the CHamoru spelling and pronunciation.

villages. Lålai was sung in whispered volumes during occupation and were at times the only means to listen to mother tongue when everywhere else was forbidden. Basque peoples can empathize with these experiences, given their twentieth century history. The repertory contained in Påle' Roman de Vera's book is held in high esteem for Chamorro faithful, while at the same time performing complex entanglements that haunt and provide hope. A thorough assessment on each of the lålai's origin in Påle' Roman De Vera's compilation would be the next natural step in the research presented here. The rich history of Basque musical heritage outside their role in the Catholic Church is deliberately left out here because that sphere requires more in-depth research to successfully incorporate an appropriate analysis. This presents yet more musical trajectories to be investigated. I have focused only on the music associated with the Catholic community of Guam and the Mariana Islands. Considering recent efforts to incite Indigenous renewal such as the 500-year Magellan-Elcano circumnavigation and Chamorro Heritage Day, it is my hope that this musically rich traversal inspires more attentive listening practices to such storied hymns in terms of how they resonate through the ages as part of the persistence of language reclamation and cultural practices despite their relation to colonial legacies. If listened to and sung in this light, fresh opportunities to connect new realms of musical revitalization await in movements across oceans, peoples, continents and archipelagos.

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