

The Achievements of the Early Christian Religious in the Ladrones Islands before Spanish Occupation and Settlement

*Augusto de Viana**

Department of History, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

Abstract: Christians were already present in the Ladrones Islands before a permanent Christian mission was established there in 1668. Now known as the Mariana Islands after the islands were named after Queen Maria Ana of Austria, the Ladrones were discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 while on his way to find the route to the Spice Islands. The islands were formally colonized by Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1565. Since that time, the islands were in the way of the Manila Galleons which plied the route across the Pacific Ocean from Mexico to the Philippines. Despite being on the route of the galleons which brought missionaries to the Philippines, the establishment of a permanent settlement and the founding of a Christian mission to evangelize the natives did not materialize. Economic and practical concerns dictated that the time was not ripe for the establishment of a permanent settlement on the islands. Meanwhile the religious especially those on the way to the Philippines were appealing to the Spanish authorities to expedite the establishment of a permanent mission in the Ladrones. Many of these religious even jumped ship to minister to the natives. Among them were Fray Antonio de los Angeles, Fray Pedro de Alfaro, Fray Juan Pobre, and Fray Pedro Talavera. These religious stayed among the natives and eventually brought to the Spaniards important information about the land and the way of life of the natives of the Ladrones. It would take 66 years later before a permanent mission would be established in the islands which will be named as the Mariana Islands. Through the use of primary and

* Augusto V. de Viana can be contacted at augustodeviana@gmail.com.

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translated sources, we can see the efforts of the early religious to bring Christianity and their views about the inhabitants and their life and customs in the region they considered inhabited by barbarians but also see themselves as workers in God's vineyard.

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Introduction

The Ladrones Islands: Bypassed and Neglected

Christians were already present in the Ladrones Islands (now the Mariana Islands) before the founding of a permanent Spanish settlement in 1668. The islands were discovered in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan who was on his way to discover a westward route to the Moluccas. The expedition arrived in the island of Guam at what appeared to be Umatac Bay on March 6, 1521. Magellan's encounter with the natives was not a pleasant one after the initial contact with the native Chamorros. After giving some gifts of food to Magellan's men, the natives started picking up items aboard the ship that appealed to them. These consisted of pieces of metal, pails, and rope. Magellan's crew tried to stop the natives causing a commotion aboard the flagship, the *Trinidad*. Magellan ordered his men to shoot the natives with crossbows and a number of them were killed. The fleeing natives then untied one of the skiffs of the *Trinidad*, lowered it to the sea, and rowed it towards Guam. To avoid further conflict, Magellan's flotilla of three ships sailed out of the bay for the night. The following day, Magellan's men returned to the bay and landed near a village adjacent the area of their first encounter with the natives. The Spaniards recovered the skiff that was earlier stolen by the natives, seized food from the native houses, and collected water before sailing westward to discover the Philippines on March 9, 1521.¹

The island of Guam was renamed from the initial *Isla de Velas Latinas* because Magellan found so many boats with lateen-like sails to *Isla de Ladrones*. This slanderous name which later applied to the whole archipelago as *Islas Ladrones* and it persisted in European maps for 200 years even after the islands were renamed as *Mariana Islands*, after Queen Maria Ana of Spain. Queen Maria Ana was the Queen

¹ Antonio de Pigafetta and Maximillamus Transylvanus, *The First Voyage Around the World and Molucis Insulis* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1969), p. 21.

Also: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS 5660 and MS 24.224, cited as Document 1521A1 in *History of Micronesia*, Vol. 1 (Dufresne: Levesque Publications, 1997,) pp. 424-451. The *History of Micronesia* series will hereinafter referred to as HM with volume number and page indicated.

Regent of the Spanish empire in 1667 and was considered the benefactress of the permanent Spanish mission in the islands.

After Magellan's death, his now former ship the *Trinidad* under Gonzalo Espinosa again passed by the Ladrones in March 1622 in a bid to find an eastward route to New Spain. Already, it was battered by unfavorable winds and tides and Espinosa's men abducted a native whom they planned to bring to Spain. The ship continued to be battered by storms in the North Pacific forcing it to return to the Ladrones. At the island of Maug, three of Espinosa's men deserted the ship and were later joined by the native they abducted. The expedition then sailed back to the Moluccas. Twenty men died on the way and the rest were captured by the Portuguese.²

The next arrival of Spaniards in the Ladrones was the expedition originally headed by García Jofre de Loaísa. Loaísa died at sea during the voyage. He was succeeded by Sebastian Elcano who also died at sea. Now under Toribio Alonzo de Salazar, the expedition arrived off the island of Rota on September 5, 1526. Upon arrival, one of the deserters from Espinosa's crew named Gonzalo Alvarez de Vigo joined them. By the time of de Salazar's arrival, de Vigo had already lived in the islands for four years. His two other companions had died. De Vigo left with de Salazar's expedition which managed to reach Tidore in the Moluccas where they encountered a large force of Portuguese on January 12, 1527. The battle lasted for days and de Salazar and his remaining men were forced to escape to the hills.³

The next expedition to arrive in the Ladrones was that of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi which arrived on January 22, 1565. It was during the Legazpi expedition that the Ladrones were formally claimed for Spain on January 26, 1565. A cross was planted on the beach and a mass was celebrated in a large native boathouse nearby.⁴

Despite the formal colonization of the islands, the archipelago was never settled by the Spaniards for the next 103 years. During the same year of the arrival of Legazpi in Guam, the Manila galleon trade had started. One of the first Manila galleons, the *San Pablo*, ran aground in 1568 during a typhoon. All 132 people

² AGI (Archivo General de Indias) Seville, General 145, Caj. 7, Legajo 7, *Espinosa's Account of His Attempt to Reach Panama and the Discovery of the Northern Mariana Islands*, cited in HM as Document 1522A in HM 1; 305-322, and *Espinosa's Voyage Primary Account by a Genoese Pilot*, cited as Document 1522C in HM 1; 324-328. Also Scott, Russell, *Tiempon I Manmoko'na Ancient Chamorro Culture and History of the Northern Mariana Islands*. (CNMI: CNMI Division of Historic Preservation, 1998), p. 257

³ Report by Hernando de la Torre with extracts from the book of Martin de Uriarte, cited as Document 1626B in HM, Vol.1:424-451.

⁴ Marjorie Driver, *The Nascent Spanish Colony in the Mariana Islands*, MARC Publications Series No. 12 (Guam: University of Guam, Micronesian Area Research Center, 1993), p. 2.

aboard the galleon survived and a small vessel was built out of the wreckage and sailed safely to Manila.⁵

While Manila grew from a small settlement of a few thousand inhabitants to a city of 40,000 including soldiers, officials, missionaries, and administrators from Spain and Mexico, the Ladrones remained unoccupied by the Spaniards. Ships just stayed offshore to receive provisions from the natives and in many instances the galleons bound for Manila simply bypassed the islands. It was hazardous to sail directly to the Ladrones because of the contrary westward-moving North Pacific equatorial current and the westward winds. The reason for the lack of interest in the archipelago according to Governor Felipe de la Corte y Calderon, writing almost three hundred years later “was the lack of riches” in the islands.⁶

Between 1521 and 1602, around 74 ships, some with as many as 200 and 300 people aboard, passed through the Ladrones usually between Guam and Rota.⁷ Even non-Spanish ships like those of the Dutch and English buccaneers simply waited out in the waters to ambush galleons laden with silver. These non-Spaniards who briefly stayed in the Ladrones included Thomas Cavendish⁸ and Oliver van Noort.⁹

Many missionaries who were aboard the galleons pitied the Chamorro natives who were, although in the path of the galleons, did not have the benefit of knowing the Christian faith. The matter was brought up with the secular authorities. A group of Franciscan missionaries who were sailing to the Philippines in 1577 asked to be left behind in the Ladrones but they were declined by the civil authorities because it was inexpedient to leave them without any military protection.¹⁰ The Governor General of the Philippines Gomez Perez Dasmariñas suggested to the King that a presidio or fort be established in the Ladrones. Later in 1596, the King granted permission to Governor General Francisco Tello de Guzman to leave some missionaries in the islands. They would be accompanied by soldiers for their protection.¹¹ However, for some reasons this order was not followed, prompting some religious to attempt to go to the islands on their own.

⁵ Marjorie Driver, Fray Juan Pobre in the Marianas 1602, MARC Miscellaneous Series No. 8, Guam: Micronesian Area Research Center, 2004, p.1.

⁶ Felipe de la Corte y Calderon, p. 11.

⁷ Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁸ James Burney, *A Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean*, 5 Vols., II, Amsterdam, (1967), p. 90.

⁹ *Ibid*, II, p. 235.

¹⁰ Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*. Vol. 34, (Cleveland: A.H. Clark and Co., 1902-1907), p. 317. This source shall be hereinafter referred to as BR with volume number and page provided.

¹¹ *Ibid*., Vol. 9, 226.

The “Jumping Religious:”

While passing through the Ladrones on the way to the Philippines in 1591, Fr. Antonio de los Angeles, a Franciscan friar, saw the spectacle of the unchristianized Chamorros in the island of Rota trading with the crew of his galleon. He decided to jump ship to bring Christianity to the natives. Two soldiers were ordered to jump after him and to persuade him to return to their ship. Instead, the three men were carried off by the islanders in their canoes. Fr. De los Angeles and the two soldiers stayed in the islands for five years until they were picked up by another galleon in 1597. Fr. De los Angeles wrote what he saw about the Chamorros during his stay in the Ladrones and his account was included as Chapter 19 of the *Historia de las Islas del Archipelago Filipino y Relinos de China, Tartaria, Cochín-China, Siam, Cambodge y Japon* which was published by Marcelo Ribadaniera, OFM, in 1601.¹²

In 1596, another Franciscan named Fr. Pedro de Alfaro jumped ship. He left in account of the Islands and its inhabitants which appeared in Gaspar de Medina’s work, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*. Fray de Alfaro was in the Philippines before he jumped off at Rota that year. Born in the province of Santiago, Spain, he was one of the first Franciscans in the Philippines having arrived with the first members of the order in 1577 and helped found the Franciscan mission in the Philippines.¹³ Fray de Alfaro was described as “a religious of much education and virtue.” Before he boarded the galleon for the Philippines, Fray de Alfaro was the Superior of the Franciscan Order in Mexico. He and his fellow Franciscans replaced those who originated from Seville but died during the voyage to Mexico.¹⁴

According to Guam historian Professor Marjorie Driver, there may have been more religious who arrived between this time and 1602 but their names are lost to history.¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Gaspar de Medina, OSA, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*. Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel Ruiz Murga, 1698. Translated by Luis Antonio Maneru as *Conquest of the Philippine Islands 1565-1661*. (Manila: San Agustin Museum, 1998), p. 777.

Fr. Pedro de Alfaro’s companions were Fr. Juan de Plascencia, Fr. Agustin de Tordesillas, Fr. Juan de Ayoura, Fray Bartolome Ruiz, Fray Juan de Borrás, Fray Esteban Ortiz, Fray Pedro Munique, and Fray Juan Clemente. Fray de Alfaro and his religious companions founded the Province of San Gregorio which was also the name of that narrow street in Manila where the Franciscan mission was headquartered. He laid the foundation of the church and convent of the nascent Franciscan mission in the islands.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

There was a petition to King Philip II made by Fr. Andres de Urdaneta to send religious to the Ladrones Islands. There were other petitions from the other religious orders. The Order of St. Francis was deemed fit to participate in missionary work.

Aside from the religious who were deliberately abandoning the safety of their ships to teach Christianity to the natives, the *Ladrones* was becoming a home for castaways from galleons which ran aground in the islands. In March 1601, the galleon *Nuestra Señora de Santa Margarita* ran aground off the village of Tetito in Rota. The vessel left the port of Cavite in July 1600 and was battered by severe storms in the North Pacific. The ship broke her main mast and lost her pilot. Two hundred sixty of her 300 passengers had died and the survivors were weak from shock, fatigue, and hard work. When the ship ran aground, the crew seized some Chamorros and made them work the bilge pumps. Seeing the weakened condition of the crew, the Chamorros seized control of the ship and dragged out the sick and dying crew and passengers and beat them to death.¹⁶

According to Fr. Juan Concepcion, ORSA, the cruel treatment by the natives was likely a revenge on the Spaniards who routinely kidnapped natives and forced them to do hard work on the ships. There was also the case of a survivor of the *Santa Margarita* who amused himself by shooting Chamorros with an arquebus loaded with dried peas instead of lead balls. He did not think that the dried peas were as deadly as lead balls as some of the natives hit with dried peas were killed. The Chamorros became agitated and clubbed the survivors to death. Later, the gentleman who was shooting with his arquebus loaded with dried peas was found dead with his belly ripped apart by a stone. He was later identified as the nephew of the late archbishop of Manila, Ignacio de Santibañez. Another passenger of the *Santa Margarita*, Rodrigo Peralta had his head smashed on a reef because he refused to give up his gold chain. Of the total passengers and crew of around 300, only 20 or 25 Spaniards and some service personnel survived.¹⁷

Some of the surviving Europeans and Philippine indios were allowed to live in Tetito as the native chiefs wished to ransom them for items like iron. Governor Pedro Bravo de Acuña sent a patache from Manila to fetch the survivors. Only five of them agreed to return to the Philippines. There were other survivors consisting of sixteen males and two females who voluntarily decided to be left behind. They were slaves called *criados* who were treated badly by the Spaniards and upon hearing that a patache had arrived to bring them back to the Philippines, they hurriedly fled to the mountains.¹⁸

¹⁶ Fr. Juan Concepcion, ORSA, *Historia General de las Philipinas Conquistas Espirituales y Temporales de Estos Españoles Dominios Establicimientos*, Vol. 3, Manila: 1788-1792, p. 388, cited as Document No. 1601C, in HM3:143-144.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Aside from the former slaves, there were also three Spaniards who were left behind because the patache could not wait long enough to pick them up. These three were a certain Sosa who was living in the island of Saipan; another one named Diego de Llerena who was living in Tinian, and another named Sancho who was in Guam.

Meanwhile, the issue of sending religious to the Ladrones continued to persist. In 1599, Governor General Tello advised the King that if missionaries were to be sent to the islands, they should be sent from New Spain. Tello was talking from experience because it was very difficult to send religious or soldiers from the Philippines because of the adverse current and winds. Moreover, Tello said that the sending of religious and soldiers should be authorized by the Viceroy of Mexico. Another reason that missionaries and soldiers should be sent from New Spain was that normally galleons leaving the Philippines for Acapulco do not stop in the Ladrones.¹⁹

Fray Juan Pobre and His Sojourn in the Ladrones

In 1602, another Franciscan, Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora,²⁰ jumped ship at Zarpana (Rota). At that time, the need to establish a mission in the Ladrones was long recognized and authorized but the authorities in the Philippines were reluctant to do so. Fray Juan Pobre was a lay brother of the Discalced Friars. He was born in Zamora, Spain and became a lay brother at the Franciscan monastery of Niveles. Before joining the order, Fray Pobre served in the Spanish infantry and fought in Flanders. When he became a friar, he asked to be sent to the Philippines. He was assigned in the province of Camarines.

By the time he jumped ship in 1602, it was his second time in the Ladrones. The first time he was in the Ladrones was in 1594 while on his way to the Philippines. In 1595, he was part of the mission sent to Japan to establish good relationship with the Japanese shogunate. In July 8, 1596, he returned to Manila where he made a report about his mission to Japan which would be sent to the King of Spain. The Franciscan provincial decided that it should be Juan Pobre that would personally bring his report to Madrid so he would be able to give an eyewitness account. Boarding the galleon *San Felipe* on July 12, 1596, the galleon encountered severe storms in the North Pacific and it was intentionally beached in Japan by its Japanese pilots.

¹⁹ BR, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10; 261-262.

²⁰ To avoid confusion with another Franciscan contemporary Juan Diaz Pardo who was also known as Fray Juan Pobre Diaz, Driver added "de Zamora," to Fray Juan Pobre, in reference to his birthplace in Spain.

See Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

The missionaries then preaching in Japan were accused of being agents of Spanish imperialism and were martyred in Nagasaki in 1597. Fray Juan Pobre desperately tried to join the martyrs in their fate but he and his fellow Franciscans were captured and expelled to Macau from which he returned to Manila. He then wrote an account of the loss of the *San Felipe* which formed Chapters 67-75 of his manuscript entitled *Relacion de la Perdida del Galeon San Felipe*. Once again, Fray Juan Pobre was tasked to bring his precious report about the Japanese court to Madrid. He boarded the galleon *Santo Tomas* in January 1598 and was successful in bringing the report which reached Madrid and Rome.²¹

On his second trip back to the Philippines, he jumped ship in March 1602 and stayed in the Ladrões until October of that year when he boarded the galleon that took him to the Philippines. His third and last trip to the Philippines was in 1609. This time, he travelled around the Orient and left for Spain for the last time passing through India. Fray Juan Pobre died at the Convent of San Bernardino in Madrid in 1615.

At the time he jumped ship, Fray Pobre knew that the establishment of a mission was long overdue. Yet he knew that he was not jumping into the unknown. The Spaniards already knew much about the Chamorros and the Chamorros already knew about the Spaniards from their many encounters with them and many Spaniards were actually living among the natives. Fray Pobre's fellow passenger aboard the galleon bound for Manila was Pedro Bravo de Acuña, who would become the new Governor General of the Philippines. Fray Juan Pobre knew that the incoming Governor had orders to drop off missionaries at the Ladrões.²² But like others before him, Acuña believed that the time was not yet ripe to send religious to the Ladrões and he chose to disregard his orders. Thus, the friar's action was not out of impulse but out of willingness to go to the natives even without protection. It was clear that the failure of Spain to establish a permanent mission in the Ladrões was caused by the reluctance of the Spanish authorities.

According to Fray Juan Pobre's writings, as the ship came into view of the islands, the *indios* (the Chamorros) approached them in their *funeis* or boats with the usual refreshments which were offered in exchange for some goods aboard the galleon. Some boats bearing the natives drew near the galleon carrying the Franciscans and Fray Pobre noticed that the crewmen of the galleon were trading items such as pieces of iron for water, coconuts, and tubers of the natives. As stealthily as possible, Fray

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Burney, *Ibid.*

Pobre slipped down to a window below the deck of the galleon and climbed into the opening. He had in his hand a large knife. Knowing the greed of the natives for iron, especially knives, four *indios* aboard a canoe drew near. Fray Pobre called the attention of the *indios* aboard the canoe and showed them his knife. When the canoe was near enough, Fray Pobre jumped into the boat still clutching the knife. Another Franciscan religious, Fray Pedro de Talavera did the same. Hugging the *indios* and coaxing them to kiss the crucifix that he carried, Fray Pobre urged them to hasten to the shore. Aboard the ship, Fray Juan's shipmates shouted and called offering the *indios* large quantities of iron to draw them near. Fray Juan instead pressed them to hurry and soon they lost sight of the ship.

Aboard the ship, Fray Juan's companions informed Governor Acuña what had happened. Instead of organizing a party to recover Fray Juan, the ship continued on its way to the Philippines. In his letter to the King, Governor Acuña wrote that he did not authorize Fray Pobre's action. He said:²³

Fray Juan Pobre, in charge of the discalced religious of his order and one of his lay brother companions jumped from the ship into one of the native boats. As soon as the islanders realized what had happened, they hastened to sail ashore before they could be stopped and before anyone aboard could understand why Fray Juan had taken such action. He had informed me, however, while we were still in New Spain, that he intended to leave a couple of religious in those islands. His actions, however, saddened me and left his friars disconsolate. On the other hand their vessels are so swift (all others are slow by comparison) that there was nothing to do but to entrust him to some of the leaders among the indios. May God take him by the hand and enlighten those barbarous people.

The natives who got Fray Pobre and Fray Talavera were very pleased with their "booty." Upon landing in Rota, a large number of *indios*, as Fray Pobre called them, gathered to see the religious. He was surprised to learn that the small island had a large population. An *indio* took the two friars to his house and kept them there for several days. Since he was one of the *principales* or leading citizens of the island, his house was the best in the *pueblo*, as Fray Pobre called the native settlement.

Fray Pobre Meets the Former Slaves of the Spaniards

While staying with the *indios*, Fray Pobre managed to meet with some blacks whom Fray Pobre called as "*negrillos*" in the village of Atetito. They were the former slaves of some of the Spaniards who had lost their lives from the shipwreck of the *Santa Margarita*. Fray Pobre learned from them that, except for a few, the Spaniards

²³ Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

stranded in the islands had been picked up by the *patache* that was sent by Governor Don Pedro de Acuña and they also told him how many Spaniards remained. He learned that a Spaniard named Sosa remained on the island of Saipan; on Tenian, there was another Diego de Llerena; and on the island of Boan (Guam), which is the largest of all, there was another Spaniard named Sancho. These three Spaniards had been left behind because the *patache* had been unable to wait a half day longer and had sailed off. In spite of their attempts to hurry, these men had been unable to reach the ship as quickly as the others.²⁴

“The Spaniards Were Bad”

There were as many as sixteen male and two female slaves who also stayed on, having chosen voluntarily to remain among the barbarian infidels, as Fray Pobre called the natives of the islands. So great is their fear of returning to the hands of the Spaniards because the Spaniards treated them so badly that they preferred to live among barbarians than among Christians. As an eyewitness, Fray Pobre recounted, “I saw that even there, on that island, they feel unsafe. When they are informed that the ships were coming and they were asked if they want to return to Manila, upon hearing this they fled to the *montes*.”²⁵

Meanwhile, the barbarian islanders, because of their greed for iron, went out and traded with the Spaniards, but the slaves, male and female, could not be persuaded to return to Manila. This is the result of the malicious harshness and cruelty of the Spaniards. Consequently, these fugitive slaves did great harm to the gentle *indios*, as far as their conversion is concerned, and to the good reputation of Christian Spaniards. The *indios* have witnessed the brutality of the Spaniards in this and many other situations, and they did not wish to be converted.

Fray Pobre then wondered why the *indios* killed the Spaniards who were shipwrecked at Rota. In the pueblo of Atetito, as he was told, the islanders killed the Spaniards. For everyone’s good and for the love of God, the Spaniards should not be so exceedingly abusive.

Fray Pobre reached the pueblo of Atetito by walking along the beach of Tasga, the pueblo where he lived. In the way, he met several *indios principales* or leading citizens and their wives who had with them a negro called Periquillo. As he approached, the first thing he said to them was to say that the natives are very, very bad.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁵ Driver, Hitherto Unpublished Accounts of His Residence in the Mariana Islands in *Fray Juan Pobre in the Marianas 1602*, p. 26.

The natives were dumbfounded because they are deeply distressed to be told they are bad. They responded by asking me why they were bad, and Fray Pobre told them, "You are bad because the Spaniards brought a ship to this pueblo, and on board there was much iron and turtle, as well as other things that you treasure, yet you killed some of the Spaniards abroad. That is why you are bad."

Taking one of the negroes by the hand, a woman in the group showed and "You are all much worse. These people are good."²⁶

When Fray Pobre asked why she said we (the Spaniards) were all bad, she answered, "Because you people have done this to them." She showed him the scars on the negro's tortured back. The former slave told them that the Spaniards had treated them very badly and had scarred them with fire and brutal whippings. "This was why the people of that pueblo had treated the Spaniards as the Spaniards had treated the slaves," Fray Pobre concluded.

Fray Pobre learned afterwards that there were Spaniards in Manila who were of the opinion that they should go to Atetito and, because of what the people had done there, took them back as slaves for the galleys. "I do not believe," wrote Fray Pobre, "however, that what was resolved in Manila would have been as easily carried out in Carpana."²⁷

The Natives Wanted to Kill Fray Pobre and the Former Slaves Saved His Life

Later, the *indios* told Fray Pobre that the natives intended to kill him as they did to the others, and that most of those in the group had been among the ones that had killed the Spaniards. Then they showed me where the Spaniards were buried, and told me they had killed them because their savage threats had led them to believe they had come to seize their lands.

Fray Pobre was very afraid they were going to kill him as he learned from the negro that they were planning to do so. But the former slave had told the natives "Look, don't kill this one (Fray Pobre.) Those who go about dressed like him (a friar) never harm us. On the contrary, they are very good to us and, when the others beat us, these men take away, so we will not be harmed. If you kill this man, you will all die a bad death."²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

From then on, whenever they saw Fray Pobre, they were so good that they would share with him whatever they had. At times, however, they would ask. “Why are the Spaniards so bad, and why do they inflict such harm on these *negrillos*, whom we treat as our children?”

This was true, and these negroes were very happy to be with the natives. But at times, Fray Pobre would scold them and tell them that they were not good, as far as refusing to leave on the ships because, as Christians, they ought not to remain to die among these barbarians. They would answer, saying, “These barbarians treat us as Christians, but the Christians treat us like barbarians.”

“Well, my children,” Fray Pobre said, “Commend yourselves to God and pray, and be sure to act like good Christians.”²⁹

Some of the negroes accepted this, while others gradually took on the customs of the island.

Fray Pobre then explains why:³⁰

I am relating this so that Spanish Christians will realize the great harm that results from their unrestrained cruelty to their slaves and servants. In the name of the one and only God and of His Blessed Mother, I beg of those who are of a cruel and brutal nature not to be so violent with their servants. See the harm that comes of it. The more these so-and-sos punish their servants, the worse the servants become. Why? Because the masters themselves are worse yet. Consequently, to remedy this, the masters themselves must first be good, only then will they be good to their servants. Otherwise, there will be much suffering. May our lord, who descended from Heaven for the sake of us all, remedy this.”

Fray Pobre Meets the Spanish Castaway Sancho

Fray Pobre stayed at the home of his “master” Sunama for several days. During that time, Sancho, the Spaniard on the island of Boan, (Guam) had heard from his master say that two Spaniards arrived on Carpana (Rota); one was called ‘Dios,’ the other ‘Padre,’ and that they were in the pueblo of Tazga. It so happened that Fray Pobre frequently repeats the word “Dios” and when the natives ask for his name he would reply “Padre.” Thus in Guam, the natives told Sancho that “Dios Padre” was here. Sancho was determined to go to Carpana to see the two newly arrived Spaniards. He set sail with several *indios* from his *pueblo* who had dealings in

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Carpana. After disembarking at the *pueblo* called Guaco, he walked along the beach until he reached the place where *Fray Juan Pobre* and his companion were staying, which was a great legua distant.³¹

For several days, *Fray Pobre* and *Fray Talavera* were very happy with their companion *Sancho*, who, because of his good life, also showed himself to be religious. All there were given food by *Fray Juan Pobre's* master, *Sunama*, and his wife, *Sosanbra*, as well as by his oldest son, *Moninasaria*. The love and affection shown them was such that their masters treated them as sons, while their children treated them as brothers.

Fray Pobre describes the demeanor of the natives. He writes:³²

Because of their peaceful and docile dispositions, and because of their unpretentious ways, I will discuss later... [Manuscript scratched out]. For the present... [Illegible]

Sancho stayed with the two religious for a long time and, as it was getting late, he decided to return to the *pueblo* of Guaco, where he had left the indios and their boat, and where they expected to stay for several days. After the good *Sancho* had said goodbye to the two religious, *Fray Juan Pobre* decided to accompany him, leaving Brother *Fray Pedro* alone in his master's house.

Fray Pobre and *Sancho* walked along the beach and found some indios who came from Saipan. They asked them about the Spaniard named *Sosa* who lived there. The indios said that *Sosa* had died. He and several indios drowned when the funey which they were sailing from Saipan to Boam was overtaken by a great hurricane. "May God have mercy," said *Fray Pobre*.³³

With the reported death of *Sosa*, *Sancho* said that there were now only two Spaniards counting himself and *Diego de Llerena* who was living in Tinian, living involuntarily in the Ladrones. "Now there are only two of us Spaniards held involuntarily in these islands, besides, the two who have come," referring to *Fray Pobre* and *Fray Talavera*, "as an act of Love, of their own free will, to live among these barbarians. But I am determined not to leave them till I die or until we return to Manila."³⁴

That was what *Sancho* would have done, *Fray Pobre* thought. In a short time he was with him he knew *Sancho* to be a very honest man.

³¹ A legua according to Driver was four miles (actually 3 miles) since it was described as a "great legua," the distance must have been farther.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Now, Brother Sancho, said Fray Pobre, “In all these islands, only Diego de Llerena is left on Tinian”

“My God protect him,” said Sancho, “for he is a good Christian young man. Several male and two or three female slaves also remain. I believe there are as many as sixteen, all told. Most are on the island of Boan (Guam), but they will never return to Manila, because they do not want to return to the control of the Spaniards. Their hate and fear is so great that they would rather stay among these barbarians than go live among such cruel Christians as those who travel these routes, coming and going to Manila. And so, when the ship arrives, their desire to flee is stronger than ours to reach it and, no matter how much we beg them to accompany us, it is impossible to convince them to do so. Instead, they refuse and flee into the *monte*, where, as I have said, even there, they do not feel safe.”³⁵

Sancho is Murdered by a Native Named Sinaro

As it was already mealtime, Fray Pobre and Sancho sat down together and ate a meager meal. They continued talking for a while until they fell asleep around eight in the evening. Sancho had the habit of getting up several times during the night. He would pray, commend himself to God, and sing the matins, as though he were a religious.

On this night, either because he could not sleep, or because it was his accustomed time for prayers, he got up at around 11 o'clock, leaving Fray Pobre asleep. He walked toward the beach, which was about 50 paces from the house, and strolled about for a while. Then he returned, entered a *camarin*³⁶ attached to the house, laid down on the sand, and fell asleep.

Nearby, around 20 paces from Fray Pobre, was a traitorous native, an indio, named Sinaro. He was spying on the careless Sancho. Sancho had escaped death so many times on land and sea. After he had arrived in the islands of the Ladrones, the *indios* had been about to kill him on three occasions, and each time, until now, the Lord had spared him, wrote Fray Pobre. But this would be his last hour, for now there was present for his death and burial, a religious of the order of the glorious Father San Francisco, to whom the good Sancho was very much devoted.

When the traitor saw Sancho sleeping, he recognized his opportunity to strike. Had Sancho been awake, he could not have dared, because he was very much afraid of him. Stealing very close to Sancho, he plunged a spear into his back, near the

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ This was a storehouse or a place to keep the boats of the natives.

spinal column and kidneys, leaving a palm's length imbedded in the good Sancho's body. Then, shaft in hand, the *indio* fled.

Sancho got up and struggled to be with Fray Pobre and said, "They have killed me, my brother, because they have speared my spine."

"My brother, have I not told you not to leave my side?" Fray Pobre asked.

Fray Juan had said this to Sancho several days earlier, when Sancho had got up in the night and someone had thrown a rock at him.

Sancho's wound, which had so many tears, was treated with coconut oil which was the only medicine in the islands. The shank of the spear had stuck to his body and cannot be pulled out without tearing the flesh because it was barbed. The spear point, according to Fray Pobre, must have penetrated the intestines and some of the organs. The wound's worst symptom was that it did not bleed.

The following morning Fray Pobre brought the unfortunate Sancho to the house of his master, Sunama. According to him, it was pitiful to see the poor man so hunched over. Very fearfully, they walked through the pueblo of Guaco, which was where he had been speared. It was a great legua to where Fray Juan's master lived.

Several indios joined them by the time they arrived at Sunama's house. With great tears and sadness, they carried Sancho into the house and informed their masters what had happened to him. Sunama, who had two houses, moved his family to where Sancho was taken and he and his wife treated Sancho as if a son or a brother was stricken.

Fray Pobre then wrote about the care given by Sunama's family and their neighbors:³⁷

The commendable custom of the land detailed earlier was followed during Sancho's illness. When the relatives saw that Sunama had taken Sancho into his place as if he were his son, they brought meals in the morning and in the evening, not only for Sancho, but also for the two religious, for Sunama, his wife and children, and for whoever else was in the house. Although they may suffer hunger for two months around April, May, and until the middle of June, now they brought food in abundance, because it was harvest time during the period of Sancho's illness, and they provided for us abundantly, morning and afternoon.

Friends and relatives would arrange their bountiful gifts in a row of my master's house. Then they would wait beside the gifts until my masters, or his wife or the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

oldest son went down to fetch them and to thank them. Then they would leave for home, and the food would be taken into the house.

Sosanbra, Sunama's wife, would select the best and freshest flying fish, the best and largest breadfruit, and the best and the largest of the camotes (sweet potatoes which have been introduced into the islands by the Spaniards), and coconuts. Then, in their customary way, they would prepare, first of all, the food for the patient.

May the rich and powerful, who believe themselves to be good Christians, yet abandoned their poor relatives and neighbors to die of hunger, learn from these kind-hearted indios.

The usual food prepared for the patient-there was stew for the others-was one or two good fresh baked flying fish, which on that island are more healthful than many fish in Castile. They would bake the fish, remove the head and scale part of the body, then crumble the flesh into small pieces. Next, they would grate one of the best coconuts and mix in the meat with a bit of salt. This mixture was put on the top of the fish and offered to the patient. If it were refused, they would set other items of food before him, one by one.

They would place a beautiful large breadfruit, roasted or boiled, before him. When in season, this is surely the first and best fruit in the world. It is like bread to them and, when it ripens and falls from the tree, it is like majar blanco (also known as rimas by the Tagalog indios).

All these things, as well as three or four very good large camotes, would be placed before the good Sancho. And also the thing they consider their greatest gift of all. To prepare the latter, they pound together a small amount of rice and grated coconut, shaping the mixture into balls. This is possible because the liquid extracted from the meat of the coconut mixes with the rice flour. Among these people, this confection is considered a great gift. They also eat in the place of bread. But it can be made into a drink by diluting it with cold water and putting it into a mortero (mortar or lusong in Tagalog). They drink from a pico of the mortero without touching their lips to it, because it is considered bad manners to drink by allowing the mouth to touch the vessel or receptacle. They drink, therefore, by holding the vessel high and drink from above.

They would place all these things I have mentioned in front of the good Sancho twice a day: at eight o' clock in the morning and at three or four in the afternoon. In between, at all hours of the day, they would ask and beg him to eat, for they themselves are great eaters.

The same things that they do for their sick children, and which they did for Sancho, they also did for their relatives and friends who came from other islands.

As soon as someone arrives, the relatives of the person who has received the visitor into his home take food for the visitor and for those accompanying him and, as I have said, for anyone else in the house.

This is surely a good admirable custom, quite different from that of some covetous, greedy, and avaricious Christian, who might follow the example of the generosity and customs of the indios, by abandoning their ways, and bringing forth and sharing whatever they may have accumulated. After their death, these miserly, unhappy people will find, in hell, very few of the ducats they left locked in their coffers. Such people are quite unlike these indios who are so generous in whatever they have with their relatives and friends, and even with strangers."

Meanwhile Sancho's condition deteriorated. He lived for nine days in excruciating pain. The pain was so great that he could only utter an agonizing cry as the spearhead was embedded in his bowels and his intestines. He passed away on the tenth day.

In paying tribute to his just departed friend, Fray Pobre wrote:³⁸

My friend Sancho lived the nine or 10 days that some indios, who knew not God, had allotted him. His anguish and pain were excruciating during the last night and the day before his death. He had not a single moment's peace, for he constantly writhed from one side to the other. His suffering was so extreme that we were frightened to see his contortions, and we feared that my masters would become angry and would put an end to him to us, as they had to the sick Spaniards in the pueblo of Atetito. But two hours before he died, our Lord granted peace to his afflicted spirit. In great pain, but with a strong desire to confess himself, he died with peace in his very big soul, which by the grace of my Lord, I am confident was received into His holy glory. Amen.

The Burial of Sancho

Fray Pobre learned that the man who speared Sancho was a native named Sinaro. What caused Sinaro to kill Sancho was rooted in a past incident. These indios were great ridiculers but at times he said they can also take offense. The day before Sancho was murdered, They had had words the day before, and I don't know whether Sancho had shoved him or not. At the time it happened. Sancho was not near *Fray Juan Pobre*, who did not see the incident, because he had stepped aside to meet a personal need. Since it was his nature to keep things to himself. Sancho said nothing about it after the brother returned. Sancho was also self-confident and did not believe the *indio* would dare to do what he did.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31

Fray Pobre and Fray Talavera then went about preparing for Sancho's burial. Sunama's relatives prepared the grave in front of his most principal house. They carried the body wrapped in sheets taken from the large supply of white cotton from the *Santa Margarita* and buried Sancho's body in the sand.

The indios then asked if Sancho was a Chamuri or a person of noble birth. That would make him a principal or leading citizen in Chamorro society. When the two brothers said yes, they planted a very long thick pole near his feet, from which they hung a piece of taffeta, like a banner. A short distance from it, they planted another pole and, around the grave, they erected a small tabernacle which resembled a stretcher.

Fray Pobre and Fray Talavera erected a cross at the head of the grave. The Indios tried to hang from its arm an axe and a knife made of wood that were painted black. The two brothers would not permit them to do so but the indios insisted that it was a good thing to do, that it was a sign the deceased was an *hombre principal*, and that those were the insignia they held in highest esteem, therefore they should hang from the arms of the cross.

When Fray Pobre and Fray Talavera already left, they rehung their knife and axe at the arms of the cross. But the two friars learned what they have done, they tried to remove the objects but it was not possible because the first cross was replaced by a very tall one as the indios feared that the friars will remove their objects.

Two days after the death of Sancho, Sinaro, who was accompanied by his friends, walked to Sunama's pueblo to find out how his death has been accepted. Sinaro was immediately identified as Sancho's killer and one of the religious (most likely Fray Pobre himself) ran to him and said something defamatory to him. Sinaro also saw several darts implanted in the ground in front of Sancho's grave. It was an indication that the people of the pueblo of Tazga wishes to avenge Sancho's death against the people of the pueblo of Guaco. Sinaro then fled Rota to the island of Guam.

From time to time, Fray Pobre would go to Guaco and enter Sinaro's house. Not finding him there, he told Sinaro's neighbors that Sinaro was a bad man and the neighbors were very frightened because they felt strongly when they are called that they were bad. According to Fray Pobre, this was not for the sake of vengeance but to make them understand that they have done something bad when they killed Sancho.

Fray Pobre then met an indio principal named Toca. Toca once hosted a Spaniard who gave him a little dog. That dog was the first animal to come to Carpana. As far as Toca was concerned, Sinaro was an evil man and because of this, Sinaro became very frightened and ran away.

From now on, Fray Pobre wrote, the natives would not be so quick in killing Spaniards and from that time on, the natives would be very much honored to have Spaniards in their homes.

Several days after the death of the good Sancho, Fray Pobre and Fray Talavera decided that in order to convert more indios, the two should go to the more populous island of Guam. But Sunama would not allow both of them to leave. It was decided that Fray Talavera remain in Carpana (Rota) while Fray Pobre should go to Boan.

The island of Guam was larger than Rota and Fray Pobre would determine if there is a harbor for ships coming from Manila or are forced to come back, can be guided into a port. According to hearsay, Guam has many rivers.

Around August 1602, Fray Pobre left for Guam and stayed there for the next six months. Before leaving, he left instructions that he would return to Rota for Fray Talavera and proceed to Manila to see what orders the governor general of the Philippines had to send to New Spain.

While staying in the islands, Fray Pobre wrote about the people of the Ladrones. Part of his writings were written when he was still in Rota with Sancho. He wrote:³⁹

On The Islands of the Ladrones and its People⁴⁰

First, my brother, as you must have noted, all men and women go about completely naked from the day they are born until the day they die. This is true on all the islands, of which there are many, for although the navigational charts show only seven or eight (named Goni, Saipan, Guiguan, Tenian [Tinian], Ruta [Rota], La Carpana, and Boan [Guam]- the closest to Manila and the largest), there are many others lying in the direction of the volcano. I have learned from these indios that they number more than twenty and that they have a common language. These indios are among the most robust, and usually among the strongest, of any yet discovered in either the Orient or the Occident. All are born white but, because they are continually out in the sun and in the water, they become swarthy. They customarily anoint their bodies and hair with coconut oil. The men like their hair to be very black; the women, however, have very flaxen hair, which is naturally so since they do not use lye nor bleaches to make it blonde, unlike the sad and miserable women in our country who are not content with what God has given them.

³⁹ The italicized portions here are the translations of Fray Juan Pobre's writings in Driver, Fray Juan Pobre in the Marianas 1602,

⁴⁰ Driver, Fray Juan Pobre, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

As far as their fishing skills and devices are concerned, it would take a very long story to tell about them; consequently, I will only say that they use the same kinds of nets and fishing tricks that our people use, and many more. When it comes to fishing from their funeas,⁴⁵ no better seamen or drivers have ever been known to exist.

Young Boys Are Taught to Sail at an Early Age⁴¹

At the age of four or five, they teach their sons to go out to sea in little boats that they build for them, and which have their own outriggers that are identical to those on their fathers' larger boats. By the age of fourteen, they have become so skilled at using them, that the sons know as much as their fathers; by the time they are sixteen or eighteen, the sons put out to sea to fish alone, as I have seen them do. Alone in his funei, he sets the sails, bails the boat, and fishes with hook and net; if it capsizes, he rights it, so great is their strength. On all the islands, they usually fish for boladores [flying fish; Exocoetidae],⁴⁶ a very good fish. In these islands, they use many different kinds of hooks, which they fashion with unusual skills from strong wood and from shell. Nowadays, however they make them from nails-nails given to them by the people on the passing ships and from those found aboard the unfortunate Santa Margarita, which were so many that the island's supply must have become saturated. When they fish for flying fish, the people of the village gather as a group, and then sail out in their boats, each carrying ten or twelve calabashes. A very thin cord with a small two-pronged shell hook is tied to each calabash. One prong is baited with tender carne de cos,⁴² the other with a shrimp or some other small fish. The fishermen put all these calabashes in the sea at the same time, each person watching his own. When the calabash wiggles, it is a sign that flying fish has been hooked. The people living along the shores of these islands catch so many fish that they have enough flying fish for everyone-like the sardine catches in Spain. These fish are usually eight inches long, although some are twice that size. The first flying fish is eaten raw; the second is baited on a large hook attached to a line that is cast over the stern of the boat. Many dorados [mahimahi; dolphin fish; Coryphaena hippurus], agujas paladares [possibly blue marlin, or Makaira nigricans], and other large fish are caught in this manner. These people are great enemies of the shark, which they do not eat. Nor do the high status indios⁴³ [principales] eat any tough scaled fish [pescado de cuero] or fish from freshwater rivers. I will conclude the subject of fishing by relating two things that I have observed, and from which the reader will understand why these are the most skilled deepwater fishing people yet to have been discovered.

When the ships pass on their way from New Spain to the Philippine islands, these people go out to them with their usual supply of coconuts, tubers, water, rice, and other

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴² Probably coconut meat.

⁴³ Called among the natives as the magalahi.

miscellaneous agricultural products. They carry out everything possible because of their great desire for iron, which is more valuable to them than gold or silver. In the beginning, their greed for iron was so great that sometimes when a piece was thrown overboard, they would dive after it and grab it before it reached bottom, which was at more than 200 fathoms. On one occasion, an indio got aboard a ship and began looking about for iron, which he coveted with all his heart, like those who covet gold and silver. While he was looking around, as I have said, he spied a harquebus, but he pretended to be looking at a cannon fastened to the deck. Finally, when he thought no one was watching him, as quick as someone throwing a dart- at which these people are highly skilled – he threw the harquebus into the water and dived after it.

When everyone thought that the harquebus had been lost and that the indio had drowned, he miraculously surfaced at a distance of a harquebus shot, showing signs of great glee and mocking those aboard the ship.

What I have just related seems impossible, especially to those who only hear the story and who have no concept of the sea or knowledge of any place other than Castilla la Vieja.⁴⁴ These islanders are expert underwater divers because, from the time they are born, they bathe and swim as much under the water as above it. I will conclude this discussion of their fishing customs by relating something I saw worthy of great admiration, and from which the Christian reader will understand why they are the most skilled fishermen ever to have been discovered.

Sunama's Fishing Skills⁴⁵

My master, whom they called Sunama, went fishing far out to sea. After having eaten the first flying fish [bolador], and after having baited his hook with the second, as I described earlier, a very large blue marlin [aguja paladar] took the hook. His line was very thin and, as he did not want to break it, he hesitated to pull it in. Yet he was very anxious to land the fish; therefore, he very cautiously began playing and tiring it. This took a long time. Meanwhile, a large shark appeared and attacked the blue marlin in the midsection of its back. In order not to let go of his line, the indio allowed his boat to capsize. Then he tied the end of the line to the capsized funei, followed the line through the water to the shark, and diverted him from his catch. Then he brought the blue marlin back to his boat, righted the craft, and sailed home, flying a woven mat as a banner from the masthead. Once ashore, he began to tell us what happened and, like a person who believes he has accomplished a great feat, very proudly strutted pompously along the beach.

⁴⁴ A region and ancient province of Spain, which includes the provinces of Santander, Burgos, Logroño, Soria, Segovia and Avila.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

When these indios return from fishing, they display a signal symbolizing the catch; if they have caught a large fish, the banner is large. They go out in the morning and return at two o'clock. By that time, the fisherman's children and the other children of the village are waiting their fathers and brothers. When they spot the signal or banner, they begin to shout, showing signs of great joy, jumping into the water, and going out to meet them. The catch is thrown into the water, the children grab it and pull it ashore, where they lay it across poles on which they carry it home. As soon as the fisherman comes ashore, four of his sons-provided they are old enough, if not, his brothers or his relatives or his friends-immediately take his funei out of the water and place it beneath a large boathouse that they have for that purpose. Consequently, their boats never remain in the water overnight. Shortly after he returns, the fisherman dives into the water and stays under for a short time. When he comes ashore, his closest friend brings him a large calabash filled with water and, with this; he washes from head to foot while his friend washes his back. After this, he very slowly walks home. In the cleanest spot beside his house, he spreads a well-washed clean woven mat and lays fresh palm fronds on it. On top of this, he places his blue marlin, or his mahimahi, or whatever fish he has caught, and begins to cut it open with a stone knife-though now they all use iron ones. As a special gift, he distributes the blood, entrails fat, and intestines to the children who have carried the fish home for him and places the raw mass in their mouths. They enjoy this as much as children in Castile do when a large pig is slaughtered and their mother distributes the blood sausage among those at home and sends some to others outside. In like manner, these people slice pieces from the back of the fresh fish and send them to their neighbors. The remaining part of the fish is salted according to certain ritual procedures. One of these is that, after the fish has begun to take the salt well, they tie a long cord from the door to a palm tree approximately eight or ten bracas⁴⁶ away. The indios will detour to the other side of the house when they see this sign because they know that there is fish being salted on the side where the cord has been strung.

They call the bolador 'gaga' [flying fish], the dorado 'botague' [mahimahi], and the aguja paladar 'batto; [blue marlin]. This should be sufficient to conclude the subject of fishing.

Sometimes when they return early from fishing, or when they do not go fishing at all, they go to the hillside or jungle to see their farm plots where every able bodied person goes work. Their most common crops are tubers, of which there are four types; (1) some called piga [*Alocasia indica*]⁵¹ that are long and acrid; (2) others, shaped like hands and feet are called dagos [*Dioscoreaalata*]; (3) others that are long and white are called nicas [*Dioscorea esculenta*]; (4) and others that are purplish, hairy, and around are called sune [*Coocasia esculenta*]. The method they use to cook the tubers and orimais [breadfruit; *Artocarpus altilis*], which serves instead of bread and also as gifts for the high status indios, is to bake them as a kind of pie, which they call tazca or tazga. It would be an endless story

⁴⁶ Braza - usually a marine measurement that is equivalent to 1.6718 meters.

to describe it, but at least it is done with less effort than in our country, as you must have noticed during the time you have been with them.

Women's Tasks⁴⁷

Now, I want to tell you what the women do in the house. They are very skilled at making woven mats, which in Castile are called esteras. These are used as mattresses and blankets by both men and women; one is used to sleep on and another as a cover. They use woven mats to fashion various kinds of hats, as tables on which to eat, and as wrappers in which to send presents. Their principal skill and occupation, therefore, is to know how to make mats very well. These are made from a tree similar to a low nipa or palm, which they call nipay. They also bake in the morning and in the evening, whenever possible.

*As women do in many places in Spain, they work in their garden plots, tilling and planting. The soil, however, is very difficult to till because they do not use hoes or any instrument made of iron, which as I have said, they treasure so highly that they will not allow the metal to touch the ground. Therefore, in order to till the soil, they use sticks fashioned from the palma brava [*Heterospatha elata*],⁴⁸ which they call bonga. The end of the stick used to till the soil is shaped like a knife that projects to one side or to the other of the stick and is three fingers wide and two hands long. With this tool, they till and weed their land.*

The Natives' Attitude Towards Laziness⁴⁹

The men and women are hard workers, not lazy, and have little regard for those who do not work. While they are very young, they make their sons and daughters work and teach them to perform their tasks. Consequently, the very young know how to perform their tasks like their parents because they have been taught with great love. So great is their love for their children that it would take a long time to describe it and to sing its praises. They never spank them, and they even scold them with loving words. When a child is offended and angered by what is said to him, he will move a short distance away from his parents and turn his back to them, not wanting to face them. They will then toss sand or pebbles on the ground behind him and, after he has cried for a little while, one of his parents will go to him and, with very tender words, will take him in his arms or raise him to his shoulders and carry him back to where the others are gathered. Then they will always give him some of their best food and, speaking to him as if he were an adult, tell him how he should behave, admonishing him to be good. With such great love, these barbarians raise their children that they, in turn, grow up to be obedient and expert in their occupations and skills.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Anahaw to us Filipinos.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

They are naturally kind to one another. At the present time, they are at peace, but from the time they are very young, they practice to become skilled in the use of their weapons, such as in dart-throwing and in the use of the sling. These are used offensively and defensively against those with whom they may be at war – something that usually occurs between the people of one coast and those of another. They are so peace-loving that, during all the time I have spent with them, as an eyewitness, I have never seen the people of any village quarrel amongst themselves. Surely, this puts the people of our country to shame, for there is hardly a peaceful home, to say nothing of a peaceful village. Indeed, these are such peace-loving people that I hardly know what to say when I see so much of it among savages, yet so little among Christians.

Community Life of the Chamorros⁵⁰

They have other customs that redound to the praise of God and, because of them; I believe he will have mercy on them for they are naturally very compassionate people. On the day an indio is ill and cannot go fishing, his son will appear on the beach at the time the other village fishermen are returning. The latter will know that the father or brother is ailing and, consequently, they will share some of their catch with him. Although he may have a house full of salted fish, they will give him some of the fresh catch so that he will have it to eat that day. The day when the master of house, or his wife, or a child ill, all the relatives in the village will take dinner and supper to them, which will be prepared from the best food they have in the house. This is continued until the patient dies or recovers. At the very least, it is continued nine or ten days. When their house is old, or when they wish to repair or rebuild them, all the relatives and neighbors in the village gather the necessary materials. On the designed day, they will get together to construct it, even though it may be from the ground up, and within a half day, or two or three days, they will complete the house for him. These are the best natives houses I have ever seen because they are all built on stone pillars, which the others do not have. Not only will they build their relative or neighbor's house, they will also provide meals for him and for his entire household, as well as for themselves. The situation is that, what I do for my relatives and friends, they will also do for me.

During the year, they get together at special times or for festive occasions. These gatherings include not just the people of particular village, but those of others as well, and they reciprocate with festivities and banquets, saving their salted fish for such occasions. Two or three thousand people gather for some of these feasts, though usually not more than one or two hundred, possibly a thousand, depending upon the resources of the fiesta's host. They also get together to hold debates; those representing one side meeting in certain barn-like structure [camarines],⁵¹ those of the other side, in others. One debater will get to his

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁵¹ The Spanish term also refers in other Spanish writings as the boat sheds of the natives.

feet and begin to argue, or to make up ballads, or to poke fun at those across from him, who are from another village. When the first group has finished, someone from the opposing side gets up and begins to argue against the first side. In this fashion, as I have said, people from many villages get together to debate from eight o'clock in the morning until two in the afternoon, when they eat. Some individuals bring food, but the usual thing is for the people of the village where the gathering takes place to provide the food. From these debates, animosities are apt to develop (as happens with all disputes) especially when they want to appear as if they know it all. The wisest of the indios gather for these debates, some will have learned the skill, called mari, when very young. These debates are the most spirited of all their events; consequently, dissensions arise, which results in one village challenging the other. When this happens, they proceed to an agreed-upon spot, either quite peacefully or lunging at each other, then they skirmish with their slings, and sometimes they throw darts at each other. Since I have been among them, I have seen several disputes, but all have been settled peacefully.

They are happy people and mockers. They fight and do other things to prove their strength, but all is done peacefully. They can hit the target with their darts at twenty, thirty, forty, and even at fifty paces, some at one hundred or two hundred. They are very skilled at using the sling, for which they fashion marble sling stones that fly as though bewitched. These resemble very large acorns that are flung from their sling in such a way and with such force that it is as though they were fired from a harquebus. They always hit the target with the point of the sling stones, and it strikes with such force that, if hits the head or the body, it will penetrate. From the time they are very young, the boys from a given camarín or from a given village challenge each other. Their slings tones are made of mud and the points of the darts or small lances are blunted, but they get together, threaten each other, and fight. Sometimes they get hurts, but once the fight is over, the two sides treat one another with great affection.

Marriage Practices and the Houses of the Chamorros⁵²

When, Brother Fray Juan, these indios reach the age of marriage, they have a great fiesta and banquet. After their own fashion, the man gives the woman a dowry, which is customary among all other indios that have been discovered. Kinship bonds, or close relationship are kept between first cousin and onward, between their 'godfathers' and 'godmothers' and between close friends. Some ties are so close that when one goes to a friend's house, whether he is at home or not, the visitors will take whatever he wants from there, as if it were his own. In the same way, he freely takes from the produce of his land or of his palm trees, and even from among the things they value most, which are their barcos, their funeas, and their nets. So strong are the bonds among friends that they have a say in everything they do, or do not do. When they meet embrace and walk about the village

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

arm in arm, or one with his arms around the other's neck. Boys make compacts with one another, and promise eternal friendship, all with greatest purity-quite together to construct it even though it may be from the ground up, and within half day or two or three days, they will complete the house for him. These are the best native houses I have ever seen because they are all built on stone pillars which the others do not have. Not only will they build their relatives or neighbors' house, they also provide meals for him and for his entire household, as well as for themselves. The situation is that, what I do or my relatives and friends, they will also do for me.

The Nobility of the Native Barbarians Compared to the Christians⁵³

Contrary to the pitiful and miserable custom that is found in many places in Europe, which is to be regretted, especially among Christians.

Occasionally, Spaniards have inquired of these barbarous whether they engage in any unnatural acts. To this, they have shown repugnance and astonishment and have answered that such things have never been seen nor heard of in any of their islands; nor do they have words to express such things. Furthermore, if any among them were to do such a thing, his relatives would put him to a terrible death.

In truth, Brother Sancho, these people, whom we call barbarous, are naturally so good in some ways that their conduct will serve as the standard against which the lord God will judge us all on Judgment day. Look at what is happening today in many parts of Italy, and even in Spain, sins of which I am guilty myself.

May God protect the Holy office, said Sancho, for had he not established this deterrent defense, Spain would be by now completely lost or, at least, corrupted.

Punishment is not imposed, nor are the indios knowledgeable of any form of it so as impose it. There are, however, one, two, or three leading citizens in each village to whom they show degrees of respect. For example, when one of them returns from fishing, they will remove his boat from the water for him, or when he returns from the farm, they will carry things in their hands or on their shoulders for him. The people of the village who first meet these leaders will take from them whatever they are carrying and carry it themselves. They also show respect for them at their juntas, or gatherings, where they are given the first and best places; and at their banquets, where they receive the first and best food. The same is done for their wives. These leading citizens, or indios principales, are called magaraies or macaraies,⁵⁴ this same respect is shown to the old people even though they may not hold as high status as the other leaders.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁴ Magalahi or the highest level of Chamorro society.

To prove their strength, it is customary for the youths to fight hand to hand in front of these leaders. Sometimes, they take hard falls. When this happens, the friend of the one pinned underneath comes forth and, with great arrogance, says, 'Now, you will have to fight me,' and he begins to fight with the victor. In this way, one follows another and some are so arrogant that they say, 'You are mere children and should fight with children and not with me.' This is the way they prove their strength they will step away from each other and, although they seem to be jesting, they actually are not, as is true in fencing. At ten or twelve paces, they throw darts at each other and, although their aim is very accurate, they are even more adept at deliberately missing the targets and will often snatch the dart in midair. Such a person will say to the one who threw it, 'Do you think I'm blind? Notice that I have good eyes.' He then throws it back at him. This is the way they brag before the leading citizens.

When a Native Kills Another⁵⁵

When one person kills another, if they are from the same village, the assassin will flee and go off to another island so as to avoid being killed by the victim's relatives. He stays away until his father or his mother, or he himself, removes from their own home a piece of turtle shell, which is the greatest treasure among these people. This shell, measuring one or two palmos,⁵⁶ together with some rice and a large fish, is taken to the father, or to the mother, or to the wife of the deceased and is presented as compensation for the death. Once this has been done, the exile is notified and is free to return and go about his village without fear. Such is the punishment that is imposed.

Why Some Spaniards were Killed⁵⁷

Four of the Spaniards who went to the islands of Boan were killed by the indios. It was, however, their own fault. The indios would ask those of us remaining why they had been so wicked, and why did we not want peace with them. They said that, if they had killed our people, it was because we had been very cruel to them, which was true. There had been some Spaniards who, for no reason at all, had stabbed their sons and daughters and had done other terrible things. Finally, the parents, having suffered repeatedly, killed them. From now on, however, they will tolerate them much more, because these indios consider it a great honor to have a Spaniard in their home: also because they can expect to receive a substantial ransom in iron for one of them. Consequently, they will have to be given strong motives before they will kill them. Although they are barbarous, they hold the Spaniards

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ *Palmo* is a longitudinal measurement equivalent to about 21 cm and is assumed to be the length of a man's open hand from the end of the thumb to the little finger.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

*who are well-behaved in high regard. They will say of so-and-so that he is *mastreri*, meaning he is very good. Anyone regarded as dishonest or badly behaved is said to be *areri*, which means, in their language, to be very bad.*

In Cases of Unfaithfulness of a Spouse⁵⁸

As I have said, when a man and woman marry and live together in a house, although they may have been married twenty or thirty years, if the husband is unfaithful to his wife, or takes a mistress, and if it should anger his wife, she will leave the house, taking the children and all the household furniture and effects, and will go to the house of her parents or of other relatives, where she will remain. During all this time, the children will not acknowledge their father, even though he might pass very close to them. Before the wife return to the husband, his relatives will have to go to great lengths and beg her to do so. If the wife is unfaithful to the husband, her relatives do not have to go such lengths because it is easier to obtain the husband's pardon since this is considered less serious for the women than men.

How the Natives Named their Children⁵⁹

When they are very young, they are given the name of a fish, or of one of the trees from which they make their funeas, or of one of the objects that they hold in high regard.

*Whenever they happen to meet, they are very courteous to one another. If they are wearing woven hats, they take them off; then share their wads of betel leaf, nut, and line, which they call *sauos*, and which they always carry in small well-made baskets. Should one meet another after his supply has been consumed, he will offer his good will and show him his little empty basket, thereby giving him to understand that it is all gone because he has shared it with many others. The other person will then offer his betel wad; if he has none, he will do the same as the first person.*

The Populations of the Islands of Guam and Rota⁶⁰

*The island of Boan (Guam), which is the largest of those we have discovered, must have nearly 400 villages, some with as many as 100, 200, or 300 residents. The entire island is populated. It must be approximately fifty leagues in circumferences. There were more than 60,000 people there. The leading people live in two of the largest villages; one is called *Funa* and the other *Motac*.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

The island of Carpana (Rota) has as many as fifty villages and 12,000 indios, more or less. I mention only these two islands because these are where we Spaniards were and this is what we learned. Neither the size nor the population of the others is known, although they are known to be heavily populated. The people living along the shore have an abundance of fish; those who live inland have an abundance of agricultural produce. Consequently, they arrange exchanges, trading fish for rice, for tubers, and for other varieties of fruit that the land produces. They have high regard for the large trees that are called orimayes - with good reason for the fruit provides their daily sustenance, serving instead of bread. They work whatever iron they get by sheer strength, shaping it according to their needs. With their own great strength and some very strong stones, they build, after their own fashion, their boats, their houses, and whatever else they need. The people living along the beaches and close to the sea held to be of higher status than those who live inland."

The Castes of the Chamorros⁶¹

They do not use slaves to farm the land; instead they have criados whom they treat very well. They consider the people who live in the jungles and hills to be of lower status, and they call them mangachanes.⁶² These, in turn, have great respect for the principales who live on the beaches, so much so that, without permission, they not go near the houses, nor their funeas, nor their boats.

I could tell you many other things about the customs and nature of these indios, Brother Fray Juan, but for the time being, that is enough.

You have forgotten two things, brother Sancho, which I should like to know about and that is (illegible).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁶² Already mentioned was the Magalahi. In modern terms a magalahi means ruler such as the highest rank of a state such as a president governor, mayor magistrate, chief, chieftain according to Donald M. Topping and P.M. Ogo. And B.C. Dungca, Chamorro English Dictionary (Honolulu 1975). The lower castes were the mangatchangs. Pobre failed to mention the native castes systematically. The term Chamorri referred to the leading citizens of a village with the Magalahi being the highest of the upper class which was a class of the rulers. The upper class was also called the matua. The nobles were also called ma'gas. Certain professions were reserved only for the members of the matua such as leadership in warfare, canoe-building, and sailing. Below the matua was a demi-class called the atchoat which assists the matua in these professions. The lowest class was the mangatchang. Members of this class cannot engage in the professions of the matua. They should show their inferiority to the matua by bowing and squatting before them when the latter passed by. Members of the matua cannot intermarry, trade, or talk directly to any member of the mangatchang because doing so will dishonor their group. According to Micronesian anthropologists, the mangatchang were probably the original inhabitants of the islands who were subjugated by the matua who arrived at a latter date. It was observed that the mangatchang were physically smaller and less robust than the matua and it can be theorized that their smaller stature was due to their bowing and squatting before the matua.

Religious Practices⁶³

How they worship and how they bury their dead, for those are two occasions for which they have the most rites and ceremonies.

I am happy to tell you what I know. As far as worship among them is concerned, as in the case of punishment, inasmuch as they have neither king nor castle, it follows that they have neither law of any kind nor idols to worship. Apparently, the one thing for which they have high regard are the skulls of their ancestors, especially those their parents and grandparents. Many of these are kept in a high place inside their houses and, toward them, they make a kind of bowing gesture, thereby showing them a degree of respect, for this reason, some say they use fotoques (statues?) and idols. The fact is, they do not use them. Rather, they reverse ancestral locations. While the man goes fishing, he will leave someone in charge who is more given to such ceremonies, such as his wife, his sons, or his daughters, or his criados so that while he is away, no one will go up to where the skulls are. Otherwise, the dead, whom they call anitos, will become angry, which means that he will drown, or he will not catch fish, or he will be unsuccessful in whatever he turns his hand to. Therefore, he will try to keep anyone, even members of his household, from going up to where the anitos and the skulls are kept until he return from fishing. At that time, he first carries up his fish, then removes the skulls from the little boxlike cases and set them in front of the fish and, while performing certain ceremonies, he offers them the flying that he has caught. He speaks to them very softly so that no one can hear what he says. When he has caught a large fish, such as a blue marlin or a mahimahi, or a turtle, or a parbo, which they call taga [snapper; tagafen saddok; red snapper; tagafi], he offers it to skulls. Then he puts the oldest skull on top of the others; then he removes it, and places it on top of whatever he has caught. Then the relatives and closest neighbors are summoned and they make a fiesta for their skulls, drinking ground rice mixed with water or with grated coconut milk. They then make signs and perform ceremonies, as if inviting the old skull to eat. Then, they begin to sing loudly, as if giving thanks to the fisherman. They tell him, 'You are much beloved; this head loves you very much. This skull loves you dearly because he has made you very lucky in fishing and he honors you so much.'

There are among them some indios that are called macana,⁶⁴ which means a man who can heal, who can make it rain, and who knows what the future holds. These macanas have many skulls in their houses and are more wont to talk with them than are other people. When the people of the village need water for their farmlands, they beseech these macanas to make it rain. The latter offer prayers and then report that they have done so. They are then given presents which are joyfully received. So that other indios will know that they have the power to make it rain, they will remove some of the skulls that they talk with and will bury them for two or three days before the conjunction of the moon. Ordinarily, it is apt

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 22-23.

⁶⁴ The macana was interpreted as "priests" or rather shamans of the native religion.

to be damp and rainy at that time, but the barbarous believe that the indios macana has caused it to come about. Although he sometimes makes mistake-more often than not-when occasionally he is successful, they are very impressed with him and, because of this, they give him many presents, which they like very much to do. I, however, am not impressed. Being fond of giving presents, they will share their food anywhere. Very few will deny food to others. The devil seeks the downfall of all men and, although he has all these barbarous under his banner, he also tries to deceive them with his tricks and schemes. He appears to some indios, especially to these macanas who are most intimate with him, in the guise of one of their ancestors whose skull the macanas has in his house and, because he has not performed well the ceremonies that the devil has required of him, the devil abuses them, often leaving them weak and exhausted. At times he threatens them by saying: 'Because you do not see to it that I am respected, and because you do not respect the skulls and because you permit people to go up into your house, I will make sure that you drown. Do not go out fish today or tomorrow because your boat will capsize. You will not be lucky fishing, nor in your plantings, because you have not done what I have commanded you to do.' Then, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, they will usually go about village raving and shouting. The indios who have been awakened then recognize the illness that has struck the ill-fated one. From that time on, this poor person is held in low esteem because the people will say that the anito, which is the skull, is treating him so badly because he did not carry out satisfactorily whatever he had been commanded to do. In order to shame him, they will tell him, 'Go, go away. This has happened to you because you did not do well what you had been told to do.' He is so offended by this that he will return to his house and will not leave it for more than ten days because he is ashamed to be seen.

Although to us, these indios seem to be such savages, they consider themselves to be very wise. The questions they ask and the answers they give indicate that they believe there is no one else in the world wiser than they.

Fray Juan said, 'I do not understand the fact that the most savage people in the world presume themselves to be the wisest.'

'This is understandable', said Sancho, 'and the gentiles should not be surprised by it, for they do not know God, nor do they want to know Him, nor do they fear Him.'

But what frightens me very much is that these possess the light and understanding of our holy Catholic faith may be lost by not living with the fear of God, which is true wisdom. Much of the world has been lost because arrogant and avaricious men, like Luther, Pelagius, and others have wanted to shine as know-it-alls...

'Listen,' said Sancho, 'to the presumptuousness of these indios. They think that there are no people in the world better, nor wiser, nor smarter than they. Listen to the

ignorant answers they give to some of the questions I have asked them. When I asked who made the heavens, they answered that, inasmuch as they can see it, they made it. And when I asked who made the earth, they said: 'How stupid you are. If it is I who plant my rice and set out my tubers, who is to have made if not myself?' They say the same thing concerning the ocean; that inasmuch as they sail and fish on it, they have made it. Such is the foolishness with which they answer our questions, but they often say that we are foolish to ask.

The Nakedness of the Natives⁶⁵

They (the natives) are greatly amused by our clothing and our starched ruffs and cuffs. They are so used to going about naked that they are ashamed to cover their bodies with any kind of clothing. Only the females who are more than eight or ten years old wear an appropriate piece of turtle shell or a plant leaf the size of one's hand to cover their nakedness. Although, as I have said, they go about naked, I have never seen any shameful acts committed between them during the daytime. Such things do occur, however, at their dances and other events. Nevertheless, they are not as wicked as the action between Christians dancing that damned and devilish dance of then [sic], which I do not so much as dare to record here since I do not know what manner of Christian eyes can bear to look at such an immodest and shameful dance.

Music and Burial Practices⁶⁶

These indios also sing and make harmonious music and teach each other how to sing and dance. And now, Brother Fray Juan, I want to conclude with their burial of the dead.

About eight or ten days ago, 'Brother Sancho', said Fray Juan, 'while I was walking through the village of Atetito, which is where they killed our Spaniards, someone called to me from one of the house and invited me to enter. I saw that there was a dead person lying there on a woven mat. It was one of the leaders of the village whom they called Soom. Near this house, they had constructed scaffolding of palms and tress. On top of it, there was a chair in which they placed the already foul-smelling body of the dead indio. The other leaders were gathered around it, some weeping and wailing and saying many things to him that I could not understand. Then they lowered the body and together they carried it down to the beach, where they placed it in front of the house of one of his brothers who was his heir. It seems that among them, it is the brothers and not the children who are the inheritors. They prepared a grave and lowered the body into it. Then they filled it and covered it with

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

a new mat. At the corners of the grave, they placed posts on which they constructed a small platform that they covered with new woven mats in such a way that it resembled a covered bier. Then they that place and accompanied the brother to the house of the deceased where, amidst their tears, they made a great fiesta.

‘That is what is usually done with the leading citizens,’ said Sancho. Soon, whom I knew, was one of the highest-ranking leaders of the village of Atetito. What they ordinarily do with their dead, however, is to cut the hair and wrap the body in a new mat, which serves as a shroud. Two of the deceased’s female relatives arrive, who are among the oldest women of the village, and lay pieces of tree bark or of painted paper on top of the body. Then they begin singing and crying, simultaneously, asking so-and-so-calling him by name- ‘why have you forsaken us? Why have you departed from our sight? Why have you deserted the women who loved you so? Why have you abandoned your lance and sling, your nets and your fishing boat? Why have you left the little basket in which you carried your betel nut wad? Why did you abandon you axe and knife?’ More than two hours are spent in his manner, repeating these and other things. Amidst many tears, his relatives then embrace him and carry him away. Afterwards they return to his house where each one drinks from a mortar filled with ground rice or with grated coconut mixed with water. The dead are buried in front of the most prestigious relative’s house.

When Someone Falls Ill⁶⁷

Should a man or woman be taken ill, the cure and remedy applied is the following: someone will stand on the affected area and, lifting one foot and then will pound on it with his feet. Now and then, one sees a sick person with one indio standing on one thigh, someone else on the other, and a third person standing on his back. Sometimes the stricken person has four indios standing on top of him. Should it be the head that is painful, they will squeeze it with their thumbs since they cannot stamp on it. Such, then, is the customary cure for sick bodies.

No Gold or Silver in These Islands But that will not Hinder the Desire to Spread the Gospel Among These Natives⁶⁸

May God, our Father, Brother Sancho, with all His mercy, heal their souls and bless them with the light of the Holy Gospel.

That will be difficult, Brother Fray Juan, because at the present time, it is not known whether gold or silver is to be found in these islands.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 24.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Neither gold nor silver is necessary in order to bring the light of heaven, said Fray Juan.

My brother, I say this because in order to evangelize these indios, the religious must be brought aboard a ship from Manila or New Spain, and the Spaniards will not want to bring them here unless they are motivated by an interest in gold or silver or in something else of value to them.

'What better motive can there be than to bring about the conversion of souls?' asked Fray Juan. It was for this purpose that the Son of God descended from heaven.

Well, that is certainly true, Brother Fray Juan. But to tell you the truth, if these people of the Ladrones possessed gold or silver, there would be plenty of Christians here already. There would also be many more thieves stealing their gold than there are now indios filching our iron.

'May God, our Father, with his mercy', said Fray Juan, 'so direct the good will of these indios as to prepare them to receive the light of heaven for, although there may never be gold or silver here, if our Lord sees that they are ready, he will send help so that they may become Christians, which is why we have come from Castile.'

Well, the Spaniards do not come for that reason, Brother Fray Juan. They come for the same reason that has caused most of us to have lost our souls already. But now it is time to eat. Let us go to our lodging and then, please tell me about the loss of the ship San Geronimo, to see if it was like ours.

On the Day Fray Pobre Left the Ladrones⁶⁹

By October 1602, Fray Pobre had returned to Rota on the fourth of the month he would board the galleon *Jesus Maria* on the way to the Philippines.

He wrote:

It must have been on October fourth, the feast day of the illustrious Padre San Francisco.⁷⁰

That morning, Fray Juan left the house of his master, Sunama, to stroll toward the beach. Looking seaward, he saw a large ship opposite his house. Then an indio ran past him and said, 'Juan, mames biraco,' as if to say, 'a ship from your country.' It then occurred to Fray Juan that it could be one of the ships sailing to New Spain that had been forced to put

⁶⁹ *Ibid*; pp. 12-13.

This forms Chapter 75 of folio 312 of the manuscript. Also Perez, '*Juan Pobre y su Relacion...*' 25.

⁷⁰ In 1602, Fray Juan Pobre spent seven months in the Ladrones.

in there. Thinking, therefore, that it had arrived under circumstances similar to those of the Santa Margarita, he decided to go out to it, in case it had to put in to shore. If so, he would take the people to Tazga where the indios would not harm them, but which they might do if they were to go other villages.

After making this decision, he went home and told his master that a ship from Castile had arrived. His master already knew and soon began to rig his funey, as everyone else in the village was doing. Fray Juan and his master set sail, accompanied by the master's oldest son and two relatives. Using oars and sail, they set out for the ship, but in spite of their efforts to hurry, there were already many boats from the village of Atetito ahead of them. By the time they were halfway out, a small barangay³⁹ set out from the ship. Aboard were the captain, Juan de Malmaseda, and six or eight passengers who hoped to find Fray Juan Pobre and his companion. They carried harquebuses, halberds, and Japanese pikes. When they met the boat carrying Fray Juan Pobre and saw that it was headed toward the ship, they shouted to him. But Fray Juan's master was determined to sail directly to the ship. Many other canoes swarmed toward the Spanish boat to offer refreshment, and many swimmers approached with coconuts clenched in their teeth or in their hands. The Spaniards were afraid that if the islanders reached their boat and took hold it, they would upset it; consequently, they threatened them with the harquebuses and pikes and would not allow them to come close. As they turned back toward the ship, a strong wind and rain squall came up and, had it lasted an hour, the Spaniards would have drowned. The indios, however, paid little attention. It was God's will that it lasted only a short time. The weather soon cleared and everyone happily returned to the ship. The bell sounded and although there were many boatloads of indios around the ship, no one dared to go aboard. When Fray Juan boarded, however, his master, his master's son, and other indios went aboard with him and all were received with great joy. The indios received pieces of iron and, as a special honor, Fray Juan's master was given a monkey, in addition to iron hoops, knives, and scissors. Fray Juan Pobre found out that, two days earlier, Brother Fray Andres de Nochebuena had set out in a funey belonging to some indios to fetch him on the island of Zarpana, but no one knew which village he had headed for. Fray Juan informed [the Spaniards] that his companion, Fray Pedro de Talavera, had gone to the island of Boan [Guam] and that it was necessary to pick him up as well as Fray Andres because he did not intend to sail without them. At about noon, an hour or so after they had boarded the ship, they were pondering the situation when the wind changed and began to blow from astern, something that it had not done for many days. Once the captain, the pilot, and the others realized that they now had what they had been waiting for (and Fray Juan also saw that the people aboard were healthy and that they had a large supply of provisions) they told him that they had turned back to port because the ship had begun taking on large quantities of water and they were afraid it would sink.

Fray Juan was also very happy that the indios could see that there were many healthy and strong people aboard the large ship, people quite unlike those who had been abroad the Santa Margarita. With the favorable wind blowing from astern, there was nothing the officers could do but (1) to forget about Fray Andres and Fray Pedro, (2) to entice the Indios back into their boats without allowing Fray Juan to go with them and finally (3) to set sail back to Manila. Fray Juan realized that if he were to go after his brother. Fray Pedro, on Boan, Fray Andres would be left on La Carpana and, if he went after Fray Andres, then Fray Pedro would be left.⁴⁰ He also knew the people in the ship did not want to go after either of them, nor did they intend to leave him behind. Therefore, he decided that, with God's blessings, both men would be left behind. He bid farewell to his master, Sunama, and to his master's son, and to his other indio acquaintances. They all returned to their funey and sailed away, carrying the cross and flag that Fray Juan had displayed earlier as a signal.

Meanwhile, those aboard the ship set back to port and, although they suffered mishaps before reaching Manila, they anchored at Cavite on 18 November 1602.

Epilogue and Conclusion

With Fray Juan Pobre's departure for the Philippines in October 1602, two other religious, Fray Andres de Nochebuena and Fray Pobre's companion, Fray Pedro Talavera remained in the Ladrones. Both were from the Franciscan order and they left the islands in May 19, 1603. There may have been other religious who followed the footsteps of Fray Juan Pobre who wished to do evangelical work in the Ladrones islands. Meanwhile, Spain continued to neglect the islands as no permanent Spanish settlement was established there until June 1668.

In 1662, the patache *San Damian* stopped by the Ladrones. On board were 24 Jesuit missionaries among whom was Fr. Diego Luis de Sanvitores who was their superior. When the vessel stopped by the islands, it was surrounded by the canoes of the natives. Fr. Sanvitores went ashore aboard at Rota on one of the native boats. He observed their way of living and noticed how docile they were. He was overcome by the fact that though the Ladrones were in the path of the galleons, the natives do not have the benefit of salvation. He made a promise to St. Francis Xavier, the glorious apostle of the Indies, whom he so admired that he would do everything possible for the conversion of the islanders.⁷¹ He wrote many letters to the King Philip IV and with the intercession of his influential father, Don Jeronimo Sanvitores and Fr. Everard Nithard, S.J., Fr. Sanvitores managed to get permission from King Philip IV

⁷¹ Fr. Ruperto C. Santos, Fr. Ruperto, C. Ed. *Annales Ecclesiastico de Filipinas*. Vol. I. (Manila: The Roman Archbishop of Manila, 1994), p. 207.

to establish the first permanent settlement in the Ladrones islands. In obtaining the royal permission, Queen Maria Ana played an important part for interceding between her husband and the Jesuits. As a way of gratitude for the Queen's intercession, Fr. Sanvitores asked that the Ladrones be renamed the Mariana Islands.

In conclusion, it can be said that the coming of Christian religious to the Marianas was connected to the Christianization of the Philippines. Many of the religious who went to the Philippines passed through the Marianas then known as the Ladrones Islands. But it took more than a hundred years before Spain could establish a permanent settlement in the islands. The presence of thousands of natives left unbaptized in the Ladrones caused many religious to clamor for the establishment of a permanent Christian mission there.

Spain in the 17th century had the means to establish a permanent settlement in the Mariana Islands. However, economic and practical considerations prevented them from doing so. The economic aspect had a greater weight in this decision. The Mariana Islands, then called the Ladrones, had little riches that would warrant the establishment of a settlement. There was no gold not even iron in the islands. There was no silk or porcelain like in China and the islands were far from the major trading areas like Canton or Macau. There were fewer souls to convert unlike the Philippines which had an estimated half a million souls compared to the population in the Ladrones at an estimated 40,000. It was also very difficult to sail directly from Manila to the Ladrones due to the unfavorable west-ward moving ocean current and winds. Galleons coming from New Spain simply stopped for a while to get provisions and in many cases did not stop at all.

With an estimated population of 40,000 souls as the early missionaries estimated, these numbers were not even enough to warrant the establishment of a permanent mission. This figure is even disputed by modern historians who believed that the early religious who stayed in the islands intentionally inflated the estimate of the native population to justify the establishment of a Christian mission. Estimates by non-religious people who came to the islands gave a much smaller figure. Even with the issuance of orders to establish a permanent settlement in the Ladrones, Spanish authorities were reluctant to do so. The Spaniards already knew about the islands and their inhabitants and the inhabitants already knew about the Spaniards. Only the religious were the ones urging the secular authorities to establish a permanent mission in the Ladrones because as long as there are souls to be saved, establishing a mission there was worth it. Fray Pobre wrote that the absence of gold or other riches in the Ladrones would not be an obstacle in ministering to the spiritual needs of the natives. The real wealth would be the souls to be saved by the missionaries. In

the writings by priests like Fr. Sanvitores and Fr. Peter Coomans, these souls were likened to the Lord's harvest and when they die, they presented themselves at the Lord's Table in heaven.⁷²

As part of the western path to the Philippines via the galleon trade, the Marianas were a way station and since there were people living in the islands, the inhabitants there need to be saved by the redeeming power of the Gospel. The coming of the early religious to the Mariana Islands was borne by a sense of mission- to spread the Word of God to the non-Christian world. Aside from being missionaries, the early religious were also explorers and their notes on the land of the Chamorros provided information to latter explorers. Their accounts about the native societies at the early part of western contact proved invaluable in learning about the lives of the inhabitants before the colonization. Their accounts showed the gentle demeanor, hospitality, and sense of honor of the natives which gave rise to the title the Gentle Chamorro. The greatest cumulative achievement of the early Christians in the Ladrões was the consistent pressure on the Spanish leaders including the monarchy to send religious to evangelize the natives and establish a permanent settlement in the islands. This materialized when the Jesuit mission led by Fr. Diego Luis de Sanvitores arrived in Guam on June 16, 1668.

It cannot be escaped however that the missionaries were also cultural invaders who imposed their belief systems on the natives. This cultural invasion will spell the end of native culture. The native religion was totally eradicated and branded as the cult of the Devil. Native shamans will be called professional deceivers and the Devil's agents. Houses which kept the revered skulls of Chamorro ancestors would be torn down and their contents burned. Native customs such as the custom of cohabiting with women would be condemned as institutionalized prostitution. While the missionaries recorded much about the life and culture of the islanders practically none was written about the songs about religion. Though they did not write about it, the missionaries who went to the Ladrões were also representatives of the Spanish empire. Missionaries like Fray Juan Pobre told the natives to stop killing Spaniards and if there were abuses he told the natives to just commend themselves to God.

The eventual establishment of a Christian mission in the islands eventually lead to a cultural clash with the missionaries endeavoring to erase the old native religion and their way of life. As a result, there will be battles between the Spanish

⁷² Peter Coomans, *History of the Mission in the Mariana Islands, 1667-1673*. Trans. Rodrigue Levesque (Saipan: Northern Mariana Islands Division of Historic Preservation, 2000), p. 23-26.

Also ARSI (Archivum Societatis Iesu) Phil. 13., Fol. 5-8, *Resumen de Los Sucesos del Primer Año de la Mision en estas Islas Marianas*, cited as Document 1669 A1 in HM4: 507-527.

missionaries and soldiers and the native population. Missionaries such as Fr. Sanvitores, Pedro Calungsod, Fr. Luis de Medina, Hipolito de la Cruz, and many others will offer themselves as martyrs for the Christian cause while native leaders like Hurao, Aguarin, and Chafae who fought to defend their way of life and their freedom would be branded as villains. The subsequent *reduccion* which forced the natives to abandon their ancestral homes to be concentrated into modern pueblos destroyed their traditional communities. The old sites would become desolate ruins. In these places, only the latte stones which used to be the posts of the houses of the *magalahi* or native nobles remain. Thousands of natives would die in the Chamorro Wars which lasted from 1668 to 1695. By that time, the Chamorros will be decimated not just by wars but by the diseases introduced by the Europeans. By the 1710s, the population of the islands would be only 4,145 and the rich culture of the Chamorros would be practically gone and its place would be a mestizo population that is changed forever.^{PS}

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