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# From Conquest to Colonisation

*Spain in the Mariana Islands 1690-1740\**

FRANCIS X. HEZEL and MARJORIE C. DRIVER

THE MARIANAS, A CHAIN OF VOLCANIC ISLANDS RUNNING NORTH-SOUTH WITH GUAM at the southern tip, were the first Pacific group colonised by a European nation. Magellan had touched there in 1521 on his celebrated voyage across the Pacific, and other expeditions flying the Spanish flag visited the group later in the 16th century. Although Legazpi formally took possession of the archipelago in the name of the Spanish Sovereign in 1565, Spain had neither the resources nor the inclination to establish a colonial government there and for a century the island group served as nothing more than a reprovisioning stop for Spanish galleons on their yearly run from Mexico to Manila. It was in 1668 that the first steps were taken to colonise the archipelago, and then only at the insistence of Jesuit priests and their influential advocates in Madrid. In June of that year Fr Luis Diego Sanvitores, with five other Jesuits, a group of lay catechists and a company of troops, came to establish a permanent mission in the Marianas.

Almost from the first the mission met with opposition from segments of the local population, and violence erupted within a few months of the arrival of the Spanish. The next several years were marked by sporadic outbreaks of fighting occasioned by local political intrigues and rivalries, grievances suffered at the hands of the Spanish troops, and the programme of cultural reform initiated by the missionaries. This initial troubled period of Spanish colonisation ended with a final major uprising in 1684 and a concerted effort on the part of hostile Chamorro factions to drive out the Spanish once and for all. After some months the Spanish garrison suppressed the uprising with the help of their Chamorro allies, and by 1685 all hostilities were concluded. Twelve priests, perhaps 20 of their lay helpers, and an uncounted number of soldiers and Chamorro warriors died in the periodic skirmishes that occurred over a 17-year period, but the Spanish had completed the first stage of the conquest of the islands.<sup>1</sup>

On Guam, the largest of the islands and the headquarters of both the Jesuits and the troops who came to protect them, Spanish presence had been most strongly felt during these early years. By the late 1680s Spanish administrators began the formal 'reduction' of the island — that is, the relocation of people from

\*This study was made possible by a grant from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Historic Preservation Office and the US National Parks Service.

<sup>1</sup> The authors have attempted to correct what in their opinion are long-standing misinterpretations regarding this initial period of Spanish activity in F. X. Hezel, 'From conversion to conquest', *Journal of Pacific History*, 17 (1982), 115-37.

the scattered hamlets that they had formerly inhabited into villages, where they were to live under the spiritual care of a priest. Over the next several years, at the insistent urging of the missionaries, Governor Damian Esplana, battle-weary and increasingly timorous, made a few desultory attempts to subdue the islands to the north, but with no real success. Within months of Esplana's death in 1694, however, José Quiroga, commander of the garrison for 15 years and now interim governor, struck out for the north in a series of expeditions that brought the remaining islands to submission. Quiroga first took Rota in a bloodless campaign; a year later he subdued Tinian and Saipan, the next in the chain of islands, resettling the people of Tinian on Guam as a punishment for their armed resistance. In 1698 the Spanish mounted a final expedition to demand the submission of the northernmost islands, collectively known as Gani, whose inhabitants were subsequently relocated on Saipan and Guam. By the turn of the century, 30 years after the onset of Spanish colonisation, the reduction of the Marianas was complete and the entire Chamorro population was concentrated on three islands: Guam, Rota and Saipan.

Although the story of Spanish colonisation in the Marianas as presented in the scholarly and popular press usually concludes here, it had in truth only begun. The second stage of colonisation, between 1690 and perhaps 1740, has been generally neglected by historians, partly because it is less richly documented than the preceding years and partly because it lacks the high drama of the conquest. Nonetheless, this period is vital for an understanding of the Spanish colonisation of the Marianas, for during this time were established the essential patterns of foreign administration and colonial village life that would survive in the archipelago for another two centuries. This article is an attempt to rescue this period from the obscurity in which it has hitherto been buried.<sup>2</sup>

Spanish interest and presence in the archipelago was confined to Guam after the pacification; the indigenous population on Saipan dwindled away by mid-18th century and Rota's small colony was left without priest or administrator to fend for itself in virtual isolation. Ever eager to group the local population into manageable units, the Spanish divided Guam into six *partidos*, or districts, each containing a modest settlement that could loosely be called a village. These villages consisted of little more than a church and rectory surrounded by a sprinkling of houses, almost all built of nipa thatch, with 200 or 300 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> The local people, who continued to support themselves by subsistence farming and fishing, divided their time between their ancestral estates and the village settlement, where their lives were increasingly regulated by the church bells that tolled

<sup>2</sup> Thanks are due to the staff of the Micronesian Area Research Center (MARC) at the University of Guam, George Boughton, and George and Martha Haberman for their assistance in this project. The Spanish archival materials consulted are all available at MARC and were graciously made available by this institution.

<sup>3</sup> For population figures for 1690 see William C. Repetti, 'Conditions in Guam in 1690', *Guam Recorder*, 18 (1941), 230-1; figures from the 1710 Spanish census are found in Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage autour du Monde . . . pendant les années 1817, 1818, 1819 et 1820. Première partie: historique* (Paris 1839), III, 331.

for morning mass, afternoon rosary, the Angelus thrice a day, and the De Profundis at a death. Agana, the seat of government and site of the *presidio*, rapidly grew to a town of over 700 and took on some of the features of a Spanish provincial capital. Ringing the town plaza were a coral-block church, the governor's palace, a wooden frame building that housed 14 Jesuit missionaries, a boys' school run by the priests, the military barracks, and a building that served as the government storehouse.<sup>4</sup> The administration of each village was carried out by an *alcalde mayor* appointed by the governor whose main responsibility—since Chamorros were exempt by royal decree from all tribute and tax—was to oversee the use of the extensive Crown lands within each *partido* and supervise work projects. The *alcalde*, normally chosen from among the Spanish and Filipino retired soldiers, shared authority in the village with the parish priest, who not only provided for the spiritual needs of his flock, but often for their economic and social welfare besides.

The peaceful village life in the colony may have been a welcome respite after years of intermittent warfare, but it did nothing to reverse the serious population decline from which the islands had suffered since the coming of the Spanish in 1668. It is impossible to measure the early population loss with precision since the figures given by the early Jesuits for the size of the pre-contact population are so wildly improbable.<sup>5</sup> One of the early governors, on the other hand, put the aboriginal population of the archipelago at 24,000.<sup>6</sup> Although this figure might be a bit low, it is very unlikely that the true number exceeded 30,000 and unthinkable that it should have been greater than 40,000. Moreover, the governor's figure is consistent with other estimates of the population at various stages of the decline: Salgado's estimate of 13,000 in 1683 and Astrain's figure of 9,000 for 1690.<sup>7</sup> Data for the years around the turn of the century when the people had been gathered into villages are far more reliable, since the Jesuits were required to keep a strict count of infant baptisms (in effect, the number of births) and those who died each year.<sup>8</sup> Between 1698 and 1702 there were

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie C. Driver (ed.), 'El Palacio: the Spanish Palace in Agana—a chronology of men and events, 1668-1898', unpub. paper, MARC.

<sup>5</sup> Jane H. Underwood, 'Population history of Guam: context of microevolution', *Micronesica*, 19 (1973), 14-6, reviews these early estimates of the pre-colonial population of the Marianas. In a previous article I suggested a maximum of 40,000 for the 1668 population based on the number of hamlets on Guam and their likely size at this time (Hezel, 'From conversion', 132-3). The pre-colonial population may in fact have been considerably lower than 40,000. Proponents of a higher figure often forget two critical facts about traditional populations. First, a count of house sites can be misleading since on the high islands of Micronesia house sites, even entire villages, were frequently abandoned in ancient times. Second, subsistence agricultural practices required the under-utilisation of available land resources for various reasons. Armchair demographers tend to exaggerate the size of the population that a given land could have supported.

<sup>6</sup> Pimentel, 24 Nov. 1709, Seville, Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter AGI), Ultramar 561, 211.

<sup>7</sup> Francisco Salgado, 29 June 1683, in Maggs Bros, *Bibliotheca Americana et Philippina*, Part 3 (London 1923), 169-70; Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la Asistencia de España* (Madrid 1920), VI, 829.

<sup>8</sup> Priests were required by church law to register the names of all who were baptised. Since all infants were baptised shortly after birth, the number of infant baptisms was tantamount to the number of live births. The pastors also kept careful records of those who died, noting not only those who received the last sacraments, but those who did not as well.

an average of 240 births and 600 deaths a year, yielding a net loss of 1,800 people during these five years alone.<sup>9</sup> Although figures for the following years are much sparser, it appears that there were about 200 births and 350 deaths yearly with an annual population loss of 150. Thus, the decline for the years 1703-20 would have amounted to another 2,700 inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> If these computations are accurate, the Marianas saw a population loss of 4,500 between the final reduction of the islands in 1698 and 1720. Or put another way, the local population decreased by 70% in a matter of 23 years—and this during a time of peace in the islands.<sup>11</sup>

The major cause of the precipitous decline in population is no great mystery, if we are to believe the Jesuit sources from this period. The Chamorro people, already weakened by the years of sporadic warfare and flight and now required to adjust to an unfamiliar mode of life, were repeatedly subjected to the sorts of illnesses that decimated many indigenous peoples at early contact. To make matters worse, they were beset by other demands made by priests and civil administrators alike at the very time that their powers of physical resistance were at their ebb. For years epidemics broke out in the islands shortly after the visit of the annual galleon—with such regularity that the illnesses were known as ‘sickness of the ship’. One such epidemic, which appeared after the arrival of the ship in 1688, was characterised by a ‘bloody rheum and fever’ and infected virtually the entire population of Guam.<sup>12</sup> Another, more deadly outbreak followed the galleon’s arrival the next year, this one bringing with it diarrhoea, chills and high fever. Twenty people died of the sickness in a single week, and by the end of three months more than 80 had succumbed to the disease, we are told in a Jesuit letter.<sup>13</sup> By this time the missionaries, well aware of the frequency of these epidemics and their own powerlessness to provide medical assistance, added to their staff a Jesuit brother trained in pharmacology who treated victims of these periodic illnesses for nearly 50 years. The outbreak of influenza—if it was indeed influenza—that raged on Guam from June to December 1700

<sup>9</sup> See Bustillo, 23 May 1690, Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu (hereinafter ARSJ), Filipinas 14, 76-7; ‘Puntos para la carta annua de 1698’, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia (hereinafter RAH), Cortès 567, leg. 12; ‘Relacion de la ultima reduccion de las islas Marianas llamados de Pani’, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, 92-3; ‘Puntos para la carta annua de 1701’, RAH, Cortès 567, leg. 12; ‘Puntos para la carta annua de 1702’, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, 94-5; ‘Mision de las islas Marianas en 1703’, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, 71-3; J. Tilpe, ‘Carta annua’, 4 May 1709, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, 97-9; F. Muscati, ‘Algunos puntos para la carta annua de la mision’, 19 May 1715, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, 104-5.

<sup>10</sup> The population loss recorded during the interval between the Spanish government censuses of 1710 and 1726 was 1,600, or an average loss of 100 per year. Population loss appears to have been much greater, however, during the epidemic years of the first decade of the 18th century, prior to the first official census in 1710. The scant data that we have suggest a yearly loss of perhaps 200-250 during the period 1703-10. The higher rates during these early years account for our estimate of an overall average loss of 150 for the years 1703-20.

<sup>11</sup> It might be noted that the computations for the population loss presented here would yield a 1698 population of perhaps 6-7,000, a figure quite in line with Astrain’s population estimate of 9,000 in 1690 and Salgado’s 13,000 in 1683.

<sup>12</sup> Charles le Gobien, *Histoire des Isles Marianes, nouvellement converties a la Religion Chrestienne* (Paris 1700), 166.

<sup>13</sup> Bustillo, 23 May 1690, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, ff 76-77.

was probably one of the most severe epidemics of the entire period, 'worse than anything Br. Chavarri had read about in his medical books or seen in the hospitals of Europe', the Jesuit annual report states.<sup>14</sup> There were over 650 deaths reported that year, and though not all resulted from the flu, tradition has it that the corpses were left unburied for lack of people to inter them.<sup>15</sup> Again in 1709 the islands were struck with a serious illness that took many lives, while lesser contagions continued occurring with some frequency throughout the remainder of the period.<sup>16</sup> One of the early governors, whose judgements on many other matters were highly questionable, stated the truth with stunning simplicity when he wrote that 'epidemics are destroying the people of the islands'.<sup>17</sup>

Although open hostility between Spanish and Chamorros had ended, the colony was not without its troubles during the early years of colonisation. In 1702 three men who had been resettled in Guam from other islands conspired to catch the Spanish off guard and seize the government boats, with which they planned to return to their homes. Their hope was that this would trigger a widespread revolt and that the Spanish would be wiped out in the uprising. In their attempts to recruit sympathisers for their cause, word of the plan was carried to one of the priests, who relayed the news to the governor. The watches on the ships were doubled, the plot checked, and the conspirators apprehended and hanged.<sup>18</sup> Some years earlier, at the shipwreck of a galleon off the coast of Guam in 1690, there was similar trouble but from a different source. Twenty convicts from Mexico who were being transported to a penal colony in the Philippines when they were stranded on Guam plotted to seize weapons from the *presidio*, slay the soldiers and missionaries, and flee the island in one of the government boats. Just a few days before the plan was to have gone into operation the conspiracy was discovered, again by one of the priests, and the convicts were executed by firing squad in Agaña.<sup>19</sup> Incidents like these, although rare, only confirmed the worst fears of some of the missionaries as to what might happen if the garrison were ever reduced in size, much less disbanded completely. Hence, the troops remained on Guam in as strong a force as during the years of actual fighting: two companies of Spanish soldiers, drawn in large part from Mexico, and another company of Pampangos from the Philippines.

Even if they were needed, the troops were a constant irritant for the Chamorro people and their pastors through the years. In a strong indictment in 1681, a Jesuit charged that the soldiers were 'Spaniards in name only — cowardly, spoiled,

<sup>14</sup> Anon., 1701, RAH, Cortès 567, leg. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Felipe de la Corte y Ruano Calderon, *Memoria descriptiva é historica de las islas Marianas* (Madrid 1875), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Pimental, 24 Nov. 1709, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 210-22; Bonani, 27 May 1719, in Joseph Stöcklein, *Der Neue Weltbott mit allerhand Nachrichten dern Missionariorum Societatis Jesu* (Augsburg and Vienna 1726-58), I, no. 151.

<sup>17</sup> Pimentel, 24 Nov. 1709, AGI, Ultramar 561, f 210.

<sup>18</sup> Tilpe, 15 June 1702, in Stöcklein, *Der Neue Weltbott*, I, no. 64; and Bouwens, 23 Apr. 1706, in Luis Ibañez y García, *Historia de las Islas Marianas* (Granada 1886), 192-3.

<sup>19</sup> Bustillo, 1 May 1691, AGI, Ultramar 562, 354-90.



and good for very little . . . The crimes of these soldiers are too long to recount . . . They robbed the mission and violated the Indian women.<sup>20</sup> To judge from reports in later years, the soldiers then were no more virtuous than their earlier counterparts. In 1720 José Quiroga, retiring commander of the garrison, judged the 'licentiousness of the troops' to be one of the main scourges imposed by God on the local people as a retribution for their earlier resistance to the faith.<sup>21</sup> The missionaries, no doubt, fully agreed with his assessment, for they related numerous attempts of soldiers to compromise the local women. Often soldiers went so far as to threaten the husbands with physical harm if they did not leave the house and surrender their wives for their pleasure.<sup>22</sup> Even those who retired, married locally and were appointed *alcaldes* often used their influence and relative wealth to seduce women they fancied and, when this failed, simply raped them with impunity.<sup>23</sup>

Back in 1681 Fr Manuel Solorzano had complained that most of those inducted into the garrison were actually criminals from Mexico. This complaint was echoed 40 years later by Quiroga. The latest recruits, he wrote, 'are scum — some chased out by their parents, others simply exiles or vagabonds'.<sup>24</sup> The truth is, however, that a good many of the soldiers seem to have been recruited on shipboard from among the passengers on the galleon who were seeking their fortunes overseas. According to the Archbishop of Manila, who himself crossed the Pacific in 1698, the captains paid to recruit and train troops for the Marianas and Philippines all too often pocketed the money and stayed at home, appointing substitutes to muster whomever they could from the ship's complement to fill the requisite positions.<sup>25</sup> Under such conditions it is no surprise that the troops made as bad a showing as they did. As garrison commander, José Quiroga appears to have taken repeated and rather heavy-handed measures to reform barracks life: he had the troops say morning and evening prayers in common each day and marched them to mass and confession regularly.<sup>26</sup> After one such attempt in 1688, however, the soldiers, who had no desire to live like monks, rebelled and locked up their commander until the return of the governor from the Philippines.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Fr Manuel de Solorzano, 20 May 1681, in Maggs Bros, *Australia and the South Seas*, Catalogue no 491 (London 1927), no 44.

<sup>21</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, ff 18-33 — also found in Ultramar 562, ff 1515-29. Quiroga, who had been in the Marianas 40 years by then, wrote a long letter to the King of Spain describing in vivid detail the abuses that the governors, particular Pimentel, perpetrated on the soldiers and the people of the colony. Although unaccountably neglected by historians, this letter is one of the best sources on this period in Marianas history.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Report by the Audiencia of Manila, 1 July 1726, AGI, Ultramar 561, f 236.

<sup>24</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 27.

<sup>25</sup> Archbishop of Manila to King, 18 Jan. 1698, AGI, Filipinas 17, ff 1-4.

<sup>26</sup> Fr Taillandier, 20 Feb. 1711, in *Lettres de quelques missionnaires de compagnie de Jesus* (Paris n.d.), 133-4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibanez y Garcia, *Historia*, 63-4.

At its roots the problem of the unruly soldiery went far beyond poor recruitment and lack of discipline. For years the soldiers had been underpaid and left to fend largely for themselves in the matter of clothing and other necessities. The salary of the ordinary soldier in 1711 was 315 pesos a year, and the amount of subsidy received from Mexico each year was dependent upon the number of positions, or *plazas*, funded by authorities there, regardless of the actual number serving in the garrison.<sup>28</sup> In 1681 there were only 40 salaried positions for a garrison that then numbered 115 men.<sup>29</sup> Each soldier, then, received an equivalent of one-third of his stipulated wages; to make up the difference he was left to his own devices. Thirty years later, in 1711, the situation had not improved despite the addition of 20 more salaried positions, for the strength of the garrison had been increased to 168.<sup>30</sup> Governors and missionaries pleaded with the King and his ministers to redress this unhappy situation, and the latter issued decrees from time to time ordering an increase in the subsidy, but all to no effect. As the financial pressure on the colony increased, the clothing allotment that the soldiers had once received was withdrawn and they were compelled either to buy material from the government store at very high prices or to beg clothing from the priests.<sup>31</sup> They were a ragtag outfit, not only without uniforms but many of them shirtless and barefoot as well. The lot of the common soldier in the Marianas was not a happy one; and one could readily understand how they might be tempted to prey off the local populace just as they were preyed upon by others.

Not the least of the burdens the colony had to bear during much of this period was the corrupt administration of the governors themselves, who shamelessly exploited troops and local people to make their own fortunes. The governors were probably little different from many higher officials in the Philippines, who seem to have been conspicuously unable to resist the temptation to use their privileged position to enrich themselves through the lucrative galleon trade.<sup>32</sup> Three of the governors—Damian Esplana (1683-94), Juan Antonio Pimentel (1709-20), Luis Antonio Sanchez de Tagle (1720-25)—were especially notorious for their corruption, as the documents of the period well attest. The judicial investigations that were held at the conclusion of a governor's term of office turned up damning evidence on Pimentel and Tagle, while Esplana was spared this disgrace only because he died while still in office. The three of them governed the Marianas for a total of 27 years. Little is known of the practices of the other governors during this time, but many of them were interim appointees who,

<sup>28</sup> Viceroy of New Spain, 8 Jan. 1711, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 1493-4.

<sup>29</sup> Solorzano, 20 May 1681, in Maggs, *Australia*, no 44.

<sup>30</sup> Council of the Indies, 14 June 1712, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 1543-61. For the amount of subsidy legislated in 1711, see the decree of the Viceroy of New Spain, 8 Jan. 1711, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 1493-4.

<sup>31</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 25.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Nicholas Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines* (Manila 1971), 132.



whatever their proclivities, did not have time to work out the contrivances that the three successfully employed for their own gain.

Underlying the corruption of these years was the attraction that speculation on the galleon trade held for provincial governors such as these. Each year one or two galleons left Manila with valuable cargoes of Chinese silks and other luxury items bound for Acapulco, where the goods were sold at a handsome profit in the annual bazaar. On their return voyage to Manila the ships carried payment for the goods in the form of silver bullion, officially limited to twice the declared value of the goods but nearly always in fact many times more than this. Speculators in the Manila trade, then, stood to make profits far beyond the 100% ceiling that was imposed by law. One authority relates that governors of the Philippines, although forbidden by law to engage in trade for personal profit, sometimes accumulated between 300,000 and 500,000 pesos through their investments by the end of a five-year term.<sup>33</sup> Would-be speculators had to obtain tickets (or *boletas*) for shipping freight packages to Mexico, but these could be procured for a price from those Manileños who were entitled to them but lacked the capital to invest in the trade themselves. A reliable agent in Manila and good political connexions there — advantages that Esplana, Pimentel and Tagle enjoyed — were all that were needed to take advantage of this lucrative opportunity.<sup>34</sup>

Finding the wherewithal to invest in the galleon trade was a problem easily solved by a governor with even the slightest imagination. The same galleon that brought speculators from Manila the return on their investment stopped at the Marianas to drop off the yearly subsidy from Mexico to finance the administration of the colony. This yearly subsidy usually amounted to about 20,000 pesos, besides the special mission subsidy of nearly 10,000 pesos, all of it earmarked for salaries: the governor's own salary of about 1,600 pesos, and the military commander's salary of half that amount, as well as the salaries of the troops of the garrison.<sup>35</sup> Since there was no trade to speak of in the colony other than the small amount that was conducted with the galleon for food and other provisions, the annual subsidy constituted the total yearly income for the Marianas. The main objective of the trade-minded governor, therefore, was to work out ways, short of stealing it outright, by which the greatest possible portion of that subsidy might remain in his pocket so that it could be sent on to Manila and invested in the galleon trade. According to later authors, some of the governors were extremely successful in this regard — successful enough to re-acquire nearly

<sup>33</sup> William L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York 1939), 186.

<sup>34</sup> Schurz (*ibid.*, 363ff) shows that the consignment of large sums of money from abroad for investment in the galleon trade had become a common practice from a century before.

<sup>35</sup> Viceroy of New Spain, 8 Jan. 1711, AGI, Ultramar 561, f 1494.

the entire subsidy within a matter of weeks.<sup>36</sup> If the governors could make a few extra pesos through the reprovisioning trade during the short layover of the galleon in Guam, so much the better.

The ease with which governors could gain possession of virtually the entire yearly subsidy for personal investment was due to their direct control of the government storehouse, the only channel of imported goods into the colony. It was left to the discretion of the governor whether the troops were to be paid in currency or materials; but whatever the case, the net result was about the same. Soldiers who needed foreign-made items were forced to buy from the government store at prices determined solely by the governor. In a letter to the Crown complaining of the abuses by the governors, Quiroga reports that the mark-up for the normal food items—chocolate, sugar, biscuits, tobacco, honey and wine—was ordinarily as high as 400 or 500%, and more than double that in years of scarcity when the galleon did not arrive.<sup>37</sup> Cloth, too, fell under the government monopoly, and the sad condition of the troops' dress was attributed to the exorbitant prices that were charged for even the simplest items of apparel in the government store. The governors found excuses to withhold even the small allotment of cloth to which the soldiers were entitled, thus forcing the latter to buy this from the store. The profits from the store went to the governor, who at such prices soon found nearly the entire payroll back in his coffers ready to be reinvested in personal ventures. Governors even as early as Esplana were quick to discover that their own profit margins could be increased by buying supplies at relatively low prices in Manila rather than the more expensive Mexican imports. This undoubtedly accounts for much of the interest that Esplana showed in building boats capable of making the Guam-Manila run, as well as the fact that Pimentel's first request upon becoming governor was for a ship to handle traffic between the two ports.<sup>38</sup> At Esplana's death, nearly 10,000 pesos were discovered to have been sent by the governor to his agent in Manila for the purchase of items that were needed for the garrison.<sup>39</sup> Aware of the potential for abuse in the transfer of large sums of the royal subsidy to business agents, Spanish authorities soon explicitly forbade the practice.<sup>40</sup> Like so many other regulations designed to check government corruption, however, this became a dead letter.

Damian Esplana, the man whom one of the Jesuits referred to as 'God's scourge to the people of the Marianas',<sup>41</sup> accumulated enough wealth during his 11 years

<sup>36</sup> Corte, *Memoria descriptiva*, 64; Otto von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery into the South Sea and Beering's Straits in the Years 1815-1818* (London 1821), III, 84.

<sup>37</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 24.

<sup>38</sup> Pimentel, 24 Nov. 1709, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 210-311.

<sup>39</sup> Audiencia of Manila, 14 June 1689, AGI, Filipinas 15, ff 1-8.

<sup>40</sup> The practice was expressly forbidden in the instructions to Esplana's successor, Jose Madrazo, when he became governor in 1696. See Cruzat y Gongora, 4 June 1696, AGI, Ultramar 562, ff 2-48.

<sup>41</sup> Solorzano, 25 Apr. 1684, in Maggs, *Australia*, no 52.

as governor to keep his relatives busy contesting his estate for another 10 after his death. Born in Peru and a veteran of over 20 years of military service there, Esplana first arrived in the Marianas in 1674 as military commander for two years and returned in 1683 to assume the governorship of the colony.<sup>42</sup> After he was attacked and nearly killed in an uprising the year after he became governor, Esplana begged to be relieved of his duties and allowed to return to the Philippines. When permission was not forthcoming, he left anyway in a small boat that he had built (and later sold for a good profit in Manila), pleading the need for urgent medical attention. The fact that the galleon had not touched at Guam for the two previous years must have added to the governor's distress. Not only was the colony without subsidy and supplies during this period, but Esplana had no way of getting the large share of the subsidy of earlier years that had found its way into his pocket into the hands of his investment broker so that it could be parlayed into even larger gains. Esplana was tried for desertion of his post, but was acquitted and allowed to resume his position as governor. After a year in the Philippines, Esplana's strong desire to find a replacement suddenly cooled and he seems to have been happy enough to return to Guam where he again took up residence in Umatac, the main port and a splendid vantage point from which to oversee his trade interests in the galleon.<sup>43</sup> From then until his death in 1694 his investments appear to have been his sole absorption, even as his relationship with Quiroga and the missionaries, never very warm, deteriorated still further. The man's avarice had overcome the almost pathological fear of a violent death at the hands of the islanders that he showed in later years, and he established an unhappy pattern of commercial manipulation for future governors of the colony.

Governor Juan Antonio Pimentel, who took office in 1709 and held it for 11 years, had a good deal in common with Esplana. Like him he was Peruborn, a long-time resident of the Philippines, and appointed to his position by the Court of Madrid. The two had been old friends, shared a deep dislike for Quiroga, and were unequalled in the degree to which they exploited the poor Spanish colony.<sup>44</sup> Pimentel, if anything, only refined and perfected the methods employed by his predecessor for bilking the troops out of their share of the subsidy. During the fair that followed the arrival of the galleon, according to one of his contemporaries, he had his servants hawking chocolate, biscuits, and other goods at the usual inflated prices.<sup>45</sup> To loosen up those married troops who might have been inclined to put away their savings for their families there was also *aguardiente*, a local fermented drink made from the coconut palm by Chamorros

<sup>42</sup> Driver, 'El Palacio', 5.

<sup>43</sup> It is noted in one of the Jesuit letters that Esplana had built his official residence in Umatac prior to 1690. See Bustillo, 23 May 1690, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, f 79.

<sup>44</sup> Driver, 'El Palacio', 15.

<sup>45</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 25.

and bought by the governor for a pittance. The governor was also said to have organised gambling among the troops, despite the fighting that invariably resulted, with a good percentage of the earnings going into his pocket. For those who had spent their salary Pimentel gladly arranged loans at 100% interest. The governor deliberately encouraged indebtedness among the troops, Quiroga charged, so that he could conveniently withhold part or all of their salaries at the arrival of the next subsidy. As a matter of fact, those who refused to go into debt to the government store ran the risk of having their names withdrawn from the muster list and losing their salary altogether. Consequently, nearly all the Filipinos and Spaniards in the colony were in debt to the store—in effect, of course, the governor—and Pimentel had little trouble claiming for himself virtually the entire government subsidy to use for his own financial ends.

The Chamorro people themselves suffered no less than the troops from the corruption of their governors. Although the natives of the Marianas were expressly exempted from the royal tribute that colonial populations normally paid, the governors routinely imposed labour demands of their own on the people. The villagers were required to plant and tend fields of rice, corn, melons and root crops on royal land, as well as raise pigs and poultry—all of which was supposedly for the support of the troops, but in fact was used for the governor's own table or sold to the galleon or the garrison for his personal profit.<sup>46</sup> Even the women had their compulsory work: they collected copra to feed the pigs, made salt and oil, and plaited sleeping mats and canoe sails of pandanus to be sold in the Philippines.<sup>47</sup> For both men and women this meant perhaps two days a week, and in some cases more, of intense labour at the behest of the governor and the *alcaldes*. As compensation for a full day's work, the villagers were given merely two or three leaves of tobacco grown in the Philippines and priced at double its value.<sup>48</sup> The daily wage amounted to about a 20th of a silver *real*, or an 80th of a peso. At this rate a Chamorro would have had to work four to six months to buy enough cheap cloth for a pair of pants.<sup>49</sup> It was no wonder that the missionaries themselves had to give out clothes to keep their people dressed in what they regarded as a proper manner.

In his letter of 1706, Fr Gerard Bouwens was already complaining about the excessive labour imposed on the islanders. Between the work that was required to rebuild their own houses after the frequent typhoons, the cultivation of their own crops, and the additional demands made by the government, 'their toil is almost continuous', he wrote.<sup>50</sup> A few years later, soon after his arrival in Guam,

<sup>46</sup> Quiroga is quite explicit on this point, and he above all would have been in a position to know. See Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; and Larry Lawcock, 'Extinguish the government', *Pacific Daily News: Islander Supplement*, Guam, 21 Feb. 1982, p5.

<sup>48</sup> Audiencia of Manila, 1 July 1726, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 232-41.

<sup>49</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 26.

<sup>50</sup> Ibañez y García, *Historia*, 189.

Governor Pimentel, himself one of the worst offenders, commented on the excessive burdens borne by the local people, but he attributed much of the misery on the island to the resettlement of the population in villages at the urging of the missionaries and the *corvée* labour that he claimed was imposed by Quiroga.<sup>51</sup> Pimentel's own excesses, which were documented in vivid detail by Quiroga, led to an outcry on the part of the Jesuits in sermons and through their letters to their superiors in Manila and Mexico City. For their denunciation of these abuses from the pulpit two of the missionaries—Fr Ignacio Ibarguen and Fr Antonio Cantova—were banished to the outlying villages by the governor on the charge of sedition.<sup>52</sup> It was only the lack of means to convey them to Manila that prevented their expulsion from the Marianas altogether. Widespread reports of Pimentel's oppressive measures elicited a flurry of correspondence from Spanish authorities in Spain and Mexico and an extensive investigation of his misconduct, although the strongest censure against him at the end of it all was his failure to defend the colony against the British privateers who put in at Guam unchallenged in 1710.

Governor Luis Tagle, Pimentel's replacement in 1720, was admonished by superiors to correct the injustices committed by his predecessors, but the report at the conclusion of his five-year term reads like that of Pimentel. He continued the practice of forced labour under terms very similar to those during Pimentel's time. If anything, the work load seems to have been increased under Tagle, for the missionaries were forced to rescind the church ban on manual labour on feast days so that the people could rebuild their houses after storms and provide sustenance for their families.<sup>53</sup> The charges against him at the end of his term were familiar enough: he had commandeered the government wares and sold them for personal gain; he had forced the islanders to work in the fields for the government in return for a few leaves of tobacco; and he had requisitioned poultry and eggs for private purposes for next to no payment. His major crime, by Spanish standards of justice, however, was to fire upon a Spanish ship in an effort to force it to return to port, and when threatened with arrest he surreptitiously left the Marianas for the Philippines and slipped into a monastery where he found refuge from the authorities. Tagle died before he could be prosecuted.<sup>54</sup>

Throughout all this the Chamorro people were steadily depleted in numbers and strength. So worn down were they by the burdensome work schedule, something to which they were unaccustomed, that some of those who fell ill were reputed to have said that they would prefer to die at once rather than to live

<sup>51</sup> Pimentel, 24 Nov. 1709, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 210-22.

<sup>52</sup> Quiroga, 8 June 1719, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 1529-33.

<sup>53</sup> Audiencia of Manila, 1 July 1726, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 232-41.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* The charges against Tagle are listed together with the verdict on each in AGI, Filipinas 530, ff 1-22.

a life of slow attrition.<sup>55</sup> Spanish reforms, as was often the case in the distant royal colonies, were slow in coming and often ineffective when they were finally imposed. For years Spanish authorities in Manila, Mexico City and Madrid argued over the merits of paying all local people in currency in an effort to standardize wages. In the end this proposal was rejected, although some of the missionaries suggested that a standard salary scale and rates for island products be established, whether the payment be made in money or goods.<sup>56</sup> The governor who succeeded Tagle in 1725 began paying the soldiers each month in cash, which they were to use to buy food from local farmers as well as imported goods from the government store; but this reform did not survive very long.<sup>57</sup> Neither did the elimination of the *alcaldes* and the relegation of their functions to the local Chamorro leaders, another reform initiated at this time. The local leaders evidently proved unequal to the task of organising relief work in the wake of a typhoon that did serious damage to the island in December 1725.<sup>58</sup> An expansion of the role of the church in the administration of the colony was also contemplated as a check against future abuses: the Archbishop of Manila was to be consulted on the choice of future governors of the Marianas, and the Jesuit mission superior was to monitor the distribution of the annual subsidy.<sup>59</sup> Ecclesiastical law, however, forbade the latter and the badly strained church-state relations in the Philippines during this period ruled out the former. Most of the proposed reforms, then, were never implemented, and those that were had a very short life-span. Even so, the mere show of concern to correct the injustices of the past two decades represented a significant step forward. Many of the abuses reappeared throughout the century and later, but the worst was over for the colony.

Spanish attitudes towards the tiny colony in the Marianas had been ambivalent from the very beginning. The Queen Regent Mariana, who lent her name to the island group, had overridden the objections of lesser officials to the initial missionary venture there on the grounds that Spain had a sacred obligation to provide for the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of these islands. There was a certain quaint nobility in the axiom of Spanish imperial policy of the day that maintained that 'a king holds some states because he needs them, and others because they need him'.<sup>60</sup> This principle, which was invoked often enough to justify retaining Spanish interests in the Philippines, was all the more applicable to the Marianas. More than once throughout the early years of armed struggle

<sup>55</sup> Quiroga, 26 May 1720, AGI, Filipinas 95, f 18.

<sup>56</sup> The Jesuit priests Bouwens and Cantova were especially strong proponents of a standardised wage scale and a price list for local goods. See Ibañez y García, *Historia*, 190-1; and Lawcock, 'Extinguish the government', 5-6.

<sup>57</sup> Lawcock, *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Governor Manuel de Arguelles, 24 Apr. 1726, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 745-809.

<sup>59</sup> Andres del Coro Barrutia, 30 Mar. 1722, AGI, Ultramar 562, ff 45-8; Lawcock, 'Extinguish', 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 44.



in the Marianas, the Crown had found it necessary to remind its representatives in Mexico City and Manila that any expenses, no matter how great, must be weighed against the main purpose of their endeavour: the conversion of the islanders.<sup>61</sup> Yet the Spanish were not above seeking such material compensation as they could find to repay their religious zeal; the early Jesuits were instructed to note carefully in their reports back to Spain any indications of spices or valuable minerals.

No hint of gold or spices was ever found in the colony, but from time to time the Spanish thought there might be other ways in which the Marianas could prove useful. For one thing, the rumour of the fabled Islands of Solomon, reputedly rich in gold and gems, survived even after a century and a half of Pacific crossings by Spanish ships.<sup>62</sup> When a Spanish galleon in 1686 sighted an island well south of Guam to which the pilot gave the name 'Isla de Carolina', some of the diehards hoped that this might be the first discovery on a trail that eventually led to the Solomons. Even if it was not, there were surely souls to be saved in the islands that lay to the south, and Spain had a moral responsibility to bring the faith to those people as well. In 1689 Quiroga dispatched Alonso Soon, a Chamorro who had earned a fine reputation for competence and integrity, with eight troops to search for the island. Soon found no sign of that island, or any of the others in the archipelago that soon came to be called the Carolines, either on that occasion or when he was sent again a few months later to cruise the area.<sup>63</sup> The search for the mysterious islands to the south was dropped, to the great relief of Governor Esplana. Although briefly resumed 30 years later after two canoe loads of castaways from the Carolines were washed up on Guam in 1722, the exploration of the Carolines was finally abandoned altogether, and with it ended any hope that the Marianas might serve as a staging area for further exploration of the island world to the south.

In the meantime, Spanish officialdom in the Pacific came to regard the Marianas as a dubious asset to the Crown. The governors of the Philippines, to whom the administration in the Marianas reported, had always looked on the distant colony as little more than a drain on the treasury which they grudgingly endured to humour the Court in Madrid. This was never more true than during the first two decades of the 18th century, a period of financial disaster for the Philippines due to a series of reverses in the galleon trade.<sup>64</sup> There were a number of ships lost during this period, including one captured by the British, and the

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., the reaffirmation in this purpose in the royal decree to the Viceroy of New Spain, 12 Nov. 1672, in Marjorie Driver (ed.), *Documentos relativos a la Micronesia*, MARC Working Papers No 12 (Guam 1979), 59-60.

<sup>62</sup> The possible existence of the Islands of Solomon, for the discovery of which expeditions could be dispatched from Guam, is invoked as a reason for Spain's retention of the Marianas despite the cost in blood and pesos. The document, undated but almost certainly originating in the 1670s or 1680s, is found in AGI, Ultramar 562, ff 322-46.

<sup>63</sup> Gobien, *Histoire*, 166-7; Bustillo, 23 May 1690, ARSJ, Filipinas 14, f 78.

<sup>64</sup> Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 130-1.

bottom dropped out of the Acapulco market. Under circumstances like these, Philippine authorities were not inclined to show much sympathy for the needs of their remote dependency to the east. The captains of the galleons in 1699 and 1700 had secret orders from the Governor of the Philippines to alter their course before reaching Guam and head straight for the Philippines.<sup>65</sup> In half of the years between 1710 and 1720 no galleon put in at the Marianas, and the colony went four successive years (1723-26) without ship or subsidy. There were royal decrees aplenty enjoining the officers of the ship to make their required stop at Guam, but no royal decree could legislate the change in attitude that alone would bring about compliance with these orders. The *patache* from Manila continued to carry goods and passengers to Guam, but this service, unreliable even at its best, grew ever less frequent until it was discontinued altogether later in the century.

What should Spain do with the Marianas? For years this question was vigorously debated at all levels of Spanish bureaucracy. Spain was committed to bringing the faith to the people of the islands, yet it was clear that they were rapidly decreasing in number and could well die out completely within a generation or two. Any hope that the Marianas might serve as a gateway to the rest of the Pacific was being proven baseless. It was too small to count; it had no riches to speak of; it was unnecessary even as a reprovisioning stop for galleons. Moreover, the Mariñas was costly to maintain—at least relative to its size—and difficult to govern well. Notwithstanding the sums of money that Spain had poured into the colony, its people were still suffering and seemed doomed to do so ever afterwards.

Francisco Medrano, who became governor of the Marianas in 1700, made a radical proposal for dealing with the deteriorating situation. He saw no reason for the Crown to continue to bear the financial burden of supporting the colony with its three companies of troops, missionaries and administrative apparatus. In a letter to the king the year after he assumed governorship, he recommended that the few thousand surviving Chamorros be transported to the Philippines and relocated there.<sup>66</sup> He argued that to take this step, far-fetched as it might seem, would simply be the logical conclusion of the reduction of the northern islands that had been carried out a few years earlier. It could be accomplished with little more difficulty than the reduction of the northern Marianas, he maintained, if the people were evacuated a few at a time on the annual galleons. The Jesuits were staunchly opposed to the governor's proposal, which would have terminated their mission, and the Jesuit superior penned a forceful reply listing 28 reasons why the plan was unworkable.<sup>67</sup> The proposal was abandoned

<sup>65</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 248-9.

<sup>66</sup> Bustillo, 14 Apr. 1702, ARSJ, Filipinas 13, ff 324-5.

<sup>67</sup> Bustillo, 10 Apr. 1702, ARSJ, Filipinas 13, ff 326-32.

and Medrano was replaced as governor a couple of years later, but the question of what to do with the diminishing colony was far from solved.

Some years later, after further population decline and the débâcle of the Pimentel and Tagle administrations, another governor presented a plan to reduce drastically the size of the government in the colony. Manuel Arguelles, who had preceded Pimentel as interim governor and returned to the Marianas in 1725 to begin a second term in office, was dismayed at the conditions he found in the colony. A recent census he had taken showed the population to have decreased sharply and he wanted to take action to dismantle the administration and cut costs for the Royal Treasury.<sup>68</sup> The annual subsidy was too small, he maintained, to support the large garrison and provide clothing and other assistance to local people, not to mention the many purchases and repairs that were badly needed. He therefore proposed that, in view of the very small population, the Spanish withdraw their colonial administration from the islands, leaving a custodial force of only 25 troops and an officer to maintain the peace. The number of missionaries could easily be reduced to three if the population of the islands was concentrated in two towns: Agaña and Umatac. The officer of the troops, who would be entrusted with the administration of all military and civil affairs, would be responsible to the mission superior, as was the case in the early years of the colony. If these changes were implemented along with the recommended reduction of salary for the soldiers, the yearly subsidy could be reduced from 20,000 to 3,000 pesos.

Arguelles' proposal, his letter reveals, was conceived in frustration from his own recent experiences as governor. He found it impossible both to comply with the reforms mandated by Spain and to pay the expenses of the top-heavy administration.<sup>69</sup> Spanish aims in the Marianas, he seemed to say, might be noble, but without the assured financial support to carry them out any attempt to reform the government would be doomed in the long run. A smaller and less expensive government would in the end serve Spanish purposes better than a large and less realistic administration in which officials were forced to steal for their funds.

Arguelles' plan was promptly rejected by the Council of the Indies in Madrid. If the garrison were to be removed from the Marianas, the entire archipelago would be prey to Spain's enemies and the galleon route itself endangered. Even if hostile powers did not lay claim to the island chain, the Dutch would be all the more free to take a larger slice of the China trade for themselves, while the English might be encouraged to make forays into the Spanish shipping lanes, perhaps even using one of the islands as a base of operations for their incur-

<sup>68</sup> Arguelles, 24 Apr. 1726, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 745-809. On Arguelles' proposal see also Lawcock, 'Extinguish'.

<sup>69</sup> Arguelles, loc. cit.

sions.<sup>70</sup> The galleon trade was the lifeline of the Philippines, and any threat to the shipping route could cripple Spain's empire in the east. The decisive factor in Madrid's decision, then, was not the value of the colony itself as much as the need to keep its enemies out of an area in which they could inflict considerable damage. The fundamental policy, like that still governing the area today, was one of military denial. The desire to save souls may have brought Spain to the Marianas in the first place, but it was clear from the Council's decision that protection of her military and commercial interests in the Pacific is what kept her there.

If the Marianas were to serve as a defensive outpost for Spanish shipping, the military fortifications on the island would have to be greatly improved. Arguelles had argued in support of his proposal that a large garrison on Guam was useless; it could not possibly defend the island from attack by a hostile ship due to the lack of artillery and poorly located forts. Indeed, the showing of the island garrison against British privateers in recent years was far from brilliant. When Eaton and Cowley put in at Guam in early 1685 at the height of the last major uprising, they found the Spanish too preoccupied with internal problems to make even the semblance of a challenge. Days later, as the governor learned that his English visitors had inflicted some damage on Chamorros in repulsing an attack, he gladly reprovisioned the English and told them that 'he would have been all the more obliged to them if they had killed them all.'<sup>71</sup> A year later Swan and Dampier anchored off Guam, took one of the priests as hostage, and forced the same governor, Esplana, to provide supplies for their ship. They left after two weeks well-provisioned, rejecting an offer by some of the local chiefs to assist them in taking the fort and driving out the Spanish troops.<sup>72</sup> Dampier returned to the Marianas in 1705, this time with Funnell, and carried on lively trade with the people of Rota without being molested in the slightest.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the greatest embarrassment of all, however, occurred in 1710 when the English freebooter Woodes Rogers lay off Guam and demanded provisions of the governor only weeks after he had captured the *Nuestra Señora de Encarnacion*, the first galleon in 130 years to be taken by the English.<sup>74</sup> Rogers generously agreed to pay for his supplies—very likely with pieces of eight that were part of the booty—and Governor Pimentel yielded to the demands of the English on condition that they put ashore the prisoners they had taken from the galleon. Pimentel evidently felt that his 130 troops, many of them without muskets, were no match

<sup>70</sup> The formal reply to Arguelles' proposal is found in a letter of the Council of the Indies of 13 July 1728, AGI, Filipinas 95, ff 34-6.

<sup>71</sup> James Burney, *A Chronological History of the Voyages and Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean* (London 1813, repr. New York 1967), III, 305-6; William Mayor, *An Historical Account of the Most Celebrated Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries* (New Haven 1802), 173-6.

<sup>72</sup> William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (London 1927), 196ff.

<sup>73</sup> Burney, *A Chronological History*, IV, 444; William Funnell, *A Voyage Round the World* (London 1707), 229-30.

<sup>74</sup> Woodes Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (New York 1928), 263-9.

for the 200 men on the three English frigates. Madrid never quite recovered from the shock of learning that a Spanish colony would come to quick terms with an enemy force that had just taken more than a million pesos in Spanish wealth, and Pimentel had to answer for his easy capitulation for years afterwards.<sup>75</sup> Only Clipperton of all the privateers who visited the Marianas met with any real resistance. At his arrival in May 1721 his officers were taken hostage as they were demanding ransom for a Spaniard aboard the English ship, and his ship was damaged by a Spanish shore battery as it attempted to take a vessel at anchor in the harbour.<sup>76</sup>

Dismayed at the impotence of Guam in the face of the enemy, Spanish authorities periodically made attempts to strengthen the island defences. The capitulation of Pimentel to Rogers in 1710 led to orders for the requisition of 200 muskets and enough powder to enable the troops to put into use the cannons.<sup>77</sup> At the replacement of Tagle in 1725 the new governors were ordered to draw up plans for the improvement of island fortifications. To provide a safer anchorage for galleons and supply ships from the Philippines, a new port was opened at Apra in 1737 and a fort overlooking the facility was built the next year. Other short bursts of energy on the part of Spanish officials led to further improvements through the years, but they were without significant effect. By and large, the forts remained out-dated, the artillery inadequate, and the troops sadly untrained. Any real defence against hostile attack was out of the question, but the Spanish maintained the facade of military preparedness for years while they nervously kept watch over their precious shipping route.

The decision to continue Spanish colonial rule in the Marianas necessitated more than the military build-up of the archipelago; it also meant that an effort had to be expended to make the colony more economically viable. For years visitors to the colony had been commenting on the natural abundance of the islands and wondering why the local people did not grow a surplus to sell to the galleons and the garrison. The Archbishop of Manila, who passed through Guam briefly in 1697, estimated that the colony could easily raise and sell enough food supplies to support another 50 soldiers and 20 missionaries without any increase in the subsidy.<sup>78</sup> The burdensome work demands imposed by the governors would have made such a scheme impossible soon after the turn of the century, but the reforms of the late 1720s improved conditions for the villager, at least for a time. Yet the Chamorros, much fewer now and exhausted, were untrained and unmotivated for the intensive labour in the fields required if the colony were to increase agricultural production. Hence the proposal was made

<sup>75</sup> For the final judgement of Pimentel in connexion with this incident see Council of the Indies, 14 June 1712, AGI, Ultramar 561, ff 1543-61.

<sup>76</sup> Burney, *A Chronological History*, IV, 544-6.

<sup>77</sup> Council of the Indies, 14 June 1712, AGI, Filipinas 561, ff 1560-1.

<sup>78</sup> Archbishop of Manila, 10 July 1697, AGI, Filipinas 75, ff 1-4.

that 100 Filipino families be brought to the Marianas, given land, and encouraged to help revolutionise the agricultural methods and the economy of the colony.<sup>79</sup> This request, first made in 1722, was repeated throughout the next 25 years. When it was finally acted upon in about 1748 and the families for migration selected, the ship that transported them to the Marianas was lost with all passengers. Following this disaster no further volunteers could be found in the Philippines and the plan was quietly dropped once and for all.<sup>80</sup>

As administrative policies were debated and plans spawned and discarded, the declining local population had at last begun to stabilise and the lot of the Chamorro improved. The people were better remunerated for the services they were required to perform for the government, even if they found themselves assuming greater responsibility for repair work on their church and rectory now that the soldiers were more occupied with military matters. More importantly, they had grown habituated to the routine of village life after two generations of the *pax hispanica*. The missionaries, however, saw the people as languishing – and themselves with them – during these later years of unremitting tedium. There was, as their letters attest, little excitement other than the arrival of the yearly ship – not the excitement of uprisings with the keen thrill of danger they brought, not the open hostility between representatives of church and state, not even the stimulus of oppression by the colonial administration.<sup>81</sup> Life had settled down in the Marianas so much that the governors had scarcely anything to report and missionary letters were merely a recital of marriages and deaths and favours granted. The festivities celebrated in 1747 in honour of the coronation of Ferdinand VI, whose description filled page after page of Spanish reports, seem to have represented the one bit of glitter in an otherwise dreary procession of years. Yet the silence and tedium was reassuring as well; it testified that the colonisation of the Marianas was completed. Spaniards and Chamorros had at last learned to live with one another.

<sup>79</sup> Coro Barrutia, 30 Mar. 1722, AGI, Ultramar 562, ff 45-8.

<sup>80</sup> Governor of the Philippines, 20 July 1758, AGI, Ultramar 562, ff 910-4.

<sup>81</sup> See e.g., the letter quoted in Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía*, VII, 761-2.