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Early European Contact with The Western Carolines: 1525-1750

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and
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ALTHOUGH INTENSIVE CONTACT BETWEEN EUROPEANS AND ISLANDERS BEGAN only at the end of the 18th century with Capt. Henry Wilson's shipwreck off Palau, the Western Carolines boasts of a period of initial contact that is much earlier than that of most island groups in the Pacific. Sporadic and brief as it was, however, this early contact cannot be said to have worked profound changes on the island cultures. Excepting a few possible instances of early beachcombers, the longest of the European visits to the islands was no more than four months, while most were of only a few days' duration. Even the numerous Carolinian drift voyages to the Philippines seem to have had no more than a slight impact on the life style of the islanders. We might better think of the first 200 years after Magellan's voyage—and especially the last 50 of these—as a period of gradual familiarization of Europeans and Carolinians before the rapid acculturation of the 19th century. From the fragmentary sources that document outside contact in the Western Carolines during this period we will attempt to sketch the earliest stages of this process of familiarization, especially in so far as they touch upon the expansion of European geographical and ethnographical knowledge of the islands and their people, evidence of early European acculturation on the part of the Carolinians, and evidence as to the extent of information on and contact with one another that the islanders enjoyed during this period.

On 3 May 1522, as Gomez de Espinosa was bringing the *Trinidad* northward from Halmahera in an unsuccessful attempt to recross the Pacific after Magellan's death in the Philippines, he noted the tiny islands of Sonsorol lying at 5° N lat., and thus became the first European to have sighted any of the Western Carolines. It would be too much to expect that foreign dealings with this part of the Pacific should have been limited for very long to a wave from a passing ship and a logbook entry. And indeed when Villalobos put in at the small island of Fais in 1543, he was met to his astonishment by natives who made the sign of the cross and greeted him in his own language, 'Buenos dias, matelotes'. Three days later he stopped at a second island, presumed to be Yap, where he heard the same salutation.

Early historical sources cite two instances of European contact with the Western Carolines in the 30 years that intervened between Espinosa's glimpse of Sonsorol and Villalobos's visit to Yap. Diego da Rocha, who was driven several hundred miles to the north-east of the Moluccas, was reported to have spent four months in 1525 among the 'simple and friendly people' of a group he named the *Islas de Sequeira*.¹ One of the historians who reported on Rocha's journey, João de Barros, suggests that Rocha may have been persuaded to tarry for this unusually long period by the natives' story that there was metal to be found on their island.² The second recorded contact, for which we have only the word of the Portuguese historian Antonio Galvão, supposedly occurred about 1538 when Galvão himself was Governor of the Moluccas. By way of comment on the Spanish greeting accorded to Villalobos, he explains that he had sent a certain Francisco de Castro to bring the faith to the *Islas de Sequeira*.³ There is no mention of how long Castro stayed or what islands he visited; all that remains is the testimony of Galvão that a number of islanders were baptized, and the survival of a single Castillian phrase as evidence of the visit.

Salazar (1526), Saavedra (1527), Legaspi (1565), and Drake (1577) are sometimes also credited with discoveries in the Western Carolines. 'Los Reyes' and 'los Corales', which were discovered by Villalobos and supposedly rediscovered by Legaspi, mistakenly appear on Herrera's map, published in 1601, well to the south-west of the Ladrões Islands in the area of the Ulithi group. Salazar's 'San Bartolome', which Sharp identifies as Taongi in the Marshalls, was also confused with later discoveries far to the west, as were some of the islands sighted by Saavedra during his first voyage. It is a superb illustration of the crude state of longitudinal reckoning of those days that islands which contemporary historians locate in the northern Marshalls should have been charted in the vicinity of the Western Carolines—an error of about 2,000 miles. Francis Drake sighted a group of islands at 8° N lat. which he called the Isles of Thieves, apparently in ignorance of Magellan's bestowal of the name on the Marianas 50 years earlier. Drake's description of the people and their canoes does not support the view that

¹ Sharp identifies Rocha's *Islas de Sequeira* as Yap in *Discovery of the Pacific Islands* (London 1960), 14.

² João de Barros, *Da Asia de João de Barros e de Diogo de Couto* (Lisbon 1563), Decade 3, 259-61. Krämer, on the other hand, relates that Rocha's delay was caused by his waiting for favourable winds.—A. Krämer, *Palau*, (G. Thilenius (ed.), *Ergebnisse der Südsee Expedition 1908-1910*, II, B, 3, Hamburg 1917), I, 4.

³ Both Castro and Rocha were Portuguese. Nowhere do we find an explanation of why Villalobos was greeted in Spanish rather than in the native tongue of the two captains who were supposed to have visited Yap before him. Krämer argues that Castro actually set out on Rocha's expedition in 1525, lost his way, and visited a group of islands to the south of the Carolines without ever touching any of the latter. He supposes that Rocha was the one responsible for teaching the natives of Yap the Spanish phrase.—Op. cit., 6-7.

these islands were the Palaus, as was sometimes supposed.⁴ We can assume, then, that the discoveries of these explorers fell outside of that area which we will refer to as the Western Carolines—that is, those islands extending from the Palau group as far east as Satawal which comprise the present administrative districts of Palau and Yap.

THE latter half of the 16th and most of the 17th century passed without any further record of contact between islanders and Europeans—an interlude that is intelligible when one recalls that Spain established its galleon route at about the 13th parallel so as purposely to miss the islands to the south which were regarded at the time as little more than navigational hazards. When contact was resumed towards the end of the 17th century it would be more accurate to say that it was the Carolinians who rediscovered the Europeans, for a number of accidental canoe voyages to the Philippines brought islanders face to face with the Spanish years before the latter again found the Carolines. Two chance meetings of natives who drifted off their course with Jesuit priests—the first in the Philippines and the second on Guam 25 years later—issued in two of the best early ethnographic accounts that we have and promoted a pair of short-lived missionary ventures in the Carolines that both ended in disaster.

In December 1696 while making a visit to the island of Samar in the southern Philippines, Fr Paul Klein met 30 Carolinians who had been blown off course as they were returning from Lamotrek to Fais and drifted into the town of Guiguan. This event of itself was by no means unique and scarcely even unusual inasmuch as the central and southern Philippines were the termination of many an unlucky Carolinian crew, as we learn from other sources. An interrogation of Spanish officials and missionaries in the Philippines, conducted after Klein's well-publicized letter had drawn attention to the mishaps of other Carolinian canoes, turned up reports of many earlier encounters with islanders who had been stranded there. The testimony preserved in the Archivo General de Indias reveals some fragmentary information about the islands to the east that was obtained well before 1696.⁵ In 1664, a year in which some 30 Carolinian canoes had reportedly drifted to the Philippines, Jesuit missionaries were told by some of the survivors about 50 islands far to the east that were 'as populated as an

⁴ Krämer, op. cit., 10-12, argues that these islands could not have been Palau, but may have been Ngulu or others in the Western Carolines. Sharp, op. cit., 50, expresses considerable doubt that they could be any other than the islands off Mindanao. William Lessa maintains that these islands could not have belonged to the Carolines at all; see W. A. Lessa, 'An Evaluation of Early Descriptions of Carolinian Culture', *Ethnohistory*, IX (1962), 336.

⁵ Seville, Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter AGI), Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, Testimonio de los autos concernientes a la Real Cedula sobre el descubrimiento de las Islas de Pais o Palaos.

anthill'.⁶ They also learned the name of the chief god, Lugeilang, and some details concerning the political organization of the islands. Three castaways who arrived in 1678 told of an island empire that included 32 atolls.⁷ One of these was said to be inhabited by a tribe of Amazons who would travel yearly to neighbouring islands to enjoy male companionship for a short time. Any woman who might deliver a baby boy would be obliged to send it back to the island where she conceived; only girls were kept and reared by the Amazons. Four Carolinians who had landed at Caquirrua in 1674 told of two white men living on their island: a tall bespectacled priest who was busily baptizing their people and another 'short, heavy man'.⁸ Still another castaway reported that seven white men, half dead from hunger, had come to his island a few years before. They were nursed back to health, and subsequently five of the seven married native women.⁹

There are references, each with a date and some specifics, to no fewer than nine different Carolinian landings in the Philippines between 1664 and 1696, and these nine must have represented merely a fraction of the actual traffic during these years. Many of the castaways from the Carolines, of course, would have remained permanently in the Philippines either through choice or constraint. We know that a young Carolinian named Olit, the victim of an early misfortune, had served as Fr Klein's houseboy for some years before the priest met the group of castaways at Samar.¹⁰ Another was a servant in the Colegio de San Ignacio. A young man had established residence in a village of Caraga, while three Carolinian girls were said to be living in a convent in the town of Janda. Of those Carolinians whom Klein met, several were later reported to have stayed on in Guiguan and married Visayan women, and, we may presume, became properly acculturated amid relatively comfortable surroundings.¹¹

THE documentation for the 30 years prior to 1696 leaves no doubt that the accidental voyages to the Philippines and the resultant meetings between Carolinians and Europeans were frequent occurrences. What distinguished Klein's experience at Samar, then, from others' before and after him was the wide publicity that his letter to the Jesuit General in Rome received

⁶ Krämer, *op. cit.*, 14, cites a letter of Fr Andres Serrano to Fr Pedro Robinet, 10 June 1710, as giving this figure. Another letter counts 13 canoes and 300 natives for 1664; see AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 562, Papales de Jesuitas No. 18, Carta del P. Antonio Xaramillo al Rey Carlos II.

⁷ AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 367-71.

⁸ AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 247-52.

⁹ AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 67-75.

¹⁰ Klein later wrote a report on what he learned from Olit, mostly information on the circumstances of his arrival several years before. The report is found in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 67-75, and published in Krämer, *op. cit.* 26-32.

¹¹ AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 209-12.

and the enthusiasm it generated for exploratory voyages into the Carolines. Coming as it did shortly after the discovery of Isla de Carolina in 1686 by Lazeano and the confirmation of this discovery by Juan Rodriguez 10 years later, Klein's letter was bound to arouse new interest in the uncharted archipelago to the south of the Marianas. Its publication, first as an epilogue to Le Gobien's widely acclaimed *Histoire des Isles Marianes* in 1700 and then a few years later as a part of Serrano's 'Breve Noticia del Nuevo Descubrimiento de las Islas Pais o Palaos', helped capture the imagination of the royal and papal courts of Europe. And well it might have, for it was a historical milestone in that it provided the first appreciable ethnographic and geographical data on the natives of the Western Carolines. Klein's letter, therefore, merits examination in some detail here.

Regarding the geographical situation of the 'Pais or Palaos Islands',¹² Klein infers from the similarity of the Carolinians' two sailing canoes to the type found in the Ladrone Islands that their homeland could not lie very far to the south of the latter. The westernmost island in the Palaos lies to the south-east of Samar by a voyage of only three days. The supposed proximity of these islands to the Philippines was in fact an argument often advanced by the Jesuit missionaries for persistence in the Spanish Crown's effort to find them, even when one attempt after another ended in failure. In his letter Klein names 32 islands, three of them uninhabited, as constituting their 'nation'. The map that accompanies the letter, however, shows 87 islands, with very few of the names of the original 32 corresponding to those given on the map. An explanatory note appended to the map in the Archivo General de Indias accounts for this discrepancy by stating that when the Carolinians were subjected to a second more rigorous examination they made a rough chart with pebbles on the beach and named 87 islands, all of which they claimed to have visited, while indicating that there were still

¹²Since the natives were reportedly from the island of Fais, the whole archipelago was called 'Pais' by extension. The name 'Palaos' is thought by some commentators (Semper, Keate) to have been derived from *palos*, the Spanish word for mast, because of the resemblance of the tall palm trees at a distance to the masts of ships. But the preferred etymology is that advanced by Krämer and others who maintain that the term is a corruption of *paraos* (canoes). Originally used by the Spaniards of the distinctive sailing craft seen in the Ladrone Islands and the islands to the east of the Philippines, the term 'Palaos' was applied during the 17th century to the natives of the unknown islands to the east, exclusive of the Ladrone Islands.

By 1710 'Carolinians' was commonly used along with the term 'Palaos' to designate what today are known as the Western Caroline Islands. Burney explains that 'Carolina', the name which was first given in honour of the Spanish King Carlos II to the principal island in the group sighted by Lazeano, 'was afterwards applied to other islands from a simple defect of not knowing one island from another'. Until 1722 when Cantova published a chart containing new information on the islands, the names 'Palaos' and 'Carolinians' were used interchangeably. Other names that gained less common currency sometimes appear on the charts and literature of the period—e.g., St Lazarus Islands (first given by Lazeano to the islands he discovered), and New Philippines (used by Serrano). Hence, the map of Klein's 87 islands that appears in Stöcklein's *Der Neue Weltbott* along with an anonymous letter on discoveries in the area is labelled 'Insulae Palaos seu Novae Philipinae alias Archipelagus S. Lazari vel Carolinae'.

others of which they had some knowledge.¹³ It is probable that in their earlier communication the Carolinians did nothing more than confirm information that the Spanish had already received from an earlier group of castaways.¹⁴ On the map that Klein copied from the natives he has indicated the number of sailing days between islands and the days required to sail around each island.¹⁵ In what is the first explicit reference to the Palau group, Panloq appears on the map as the largest by far of all the islands; according to the natives it took all of 30 days to circumnavigate it. Klein's map suffers from other serious shortcomings as well. Woleai and several other islands lie well below the equator; the islands of the Truk group are arranged in a long regular arc running north and south; most other islands are placed in neat rows with little respect for their location or size. The map's distorted relationships of distance and magnitude might not reflect the precise knowledge of sailing routes that must have been accumulated by traditional navigators in order for them to have made their extensive inter-island voyages, but for all its limitations, Klein's map was the first significant contribution to the cartography of the area since Herrera's chart was drawn in 1565.

On the dress and customs of the Carolinians, Klein observes that both men and women alike wear a lava-lava and a cape of 'coarse linen, which is tied in front and hangs carelessly behind'. All the men were tattooed, he notes; but the son-in-law of the chief, who would have been the senior officer of the party, was more elaborately adorned than the rest. Another widespread custom among Carolinians—painting the body with turmeric for ceremonial occasions—is recorded for the first time, since the natives daubed themselves with the yellow paste as soon as they were informed that they were to appear before the priest.¹⁶ Klein seems to have been surprised at his visitors' obsession with feeding themselves, as is well indicated by his remark that they 'lead a life entirely barbarous, having no other care than to procure food for themselves'. His guests could not have been completely unfastidious, however, for they refused the boiled rice that the townsfolk of Guiguan offered them in the belief that it was tiny worms.

¹³ A copy of Klein's letter and his comments on his map are found in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 345-67. Klein's letter is published in L. Aimé-Martin (ed.), *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l'Asie, l'Afrique, et l'Amerique, avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions et des notes géographiques et historiques*, VI (Paris 1706), 3-30, and elsewhere.

¹⁴ Three Carolinians who had drifted to the Philippines in 1678 told another Jesuit of 32 islands; see AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 170-1.

¹⁵ AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 15, Carta de las Nuevas Philippinas (Palaos) descubiertas debajo del patrimonio de Phelipe V.

¹⁶ In a later source (1710) we learn that the natives greeted each other by rubbing cheeks painted with turmeric, thus streaking the dye on one another's face and mixing it with their own.—Barras de Aragon, 'Las Islas Palaos', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, III (1949), 1086.

Although chickens had apparently been introduced to the Western Carolines by that time, Klein tells us that the natives were startled by the barking of a small dog and became even more alarmed at the sight of a grazing cow. Evidently they were unfamiliar with other quadrupeds as well, with the single exception of the rat. The two Jesuit priests who some 30 years later established the first mission on Ulithi both comment with disgust on the plague of rats that overran the islands then. One of the Jesuits boasts of catching 55 in the space of three hours in a trap that he rigged up.¹⁷ By the time of Kotzebue's explorations in 1815, cats had been introduced to Ulithi, presumably to control the rodent population. Kadu, a Carolinian castaway who was picked up by Kotzebue's ship in the northern Marshalls in 1818, related that many years before a large ship had deposited some cats in Ulithi, from which place they spread to other of the Carolinian atolls.¹⁸

And what impression must their first contact with Europeans have made on the natives? Klein mentions several things as special objects of fascination: church ceremonies, Spanish songs and dances, the white skin of the Europeans, and, of course, weapons and gunpowder. None of these, however, proved quite as much a source of amazement for the natives as the iron tools they saw.

They were greatly surprised, on occasion of a trading vessel which was being built in Guiguan, to see the multitude of carpenters tools employed about her; and viewed them, one after another, with admiration. Their country produces no metals. The Father Missionary having given each of them a pretty thick piece of iron, they discovered more joy at receiving this present than if it had been so much gold; and were so fearful of its being stole, that they laid it under their heads whenever they went to sleep.¹⁹

It is clear that the islanders were already familiar with iron, for among the shell implements they had brought with them was a piece of iron 'of only a finger's length', a keepsake perhaps from an earlier canoe voyage to the Philippines. Upon encountering another group of Carolinians on Guam some years later Fr Juan Antonio Cantova observed that they spent four months building a cache of 'all the nails, hatchets and other iron instruments they could—things which seem to be of infinite value to them'.²⁰ One of the first missionaries to Ulithi reported that the islanders expressed

¹⁷ F. Carrasco, 'Descubrimiento y Descripcion de las Islas Garbanzos', *Boletin de la Sociedad Geografica de Madrid*, X (1881), 263-4.

¹⁸ Otto von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery into the South Sea and Beering Straits* (London 1821), III, 187.

¹⁹ *Travels of the Jesuits*, I (London 1762), 34.

²⁰ Letter of Fr Juan Cantova, 20 Mar. 1722, in *Lettres édifiantes*, XVIII (Paris 1728), 204.

their intense feelings this way: 'As you long for heaven, so we long for iron'.²¹ The literature of the period is filled with similar observations on the sentiment of the natives in this matter. The acquaintance of the Western Carolinians with iron may have pre-dated the meeting between the early Jesuit missionaries and the stranded Carolinians, but experiences such as these certainly provided the natives with strong incentive for further contacts. By 1788 an annual flotilla of Carolinian canoes was sailing to Guam for trade-goods, particularly iron cutlery.²² During this period and for years afterwards the desire for iron would play the same strong role in facilitating further exchanges between Europeans and islanders that fire-arms, liquor, and 'squeaky shoes' would in the mid-1800s.

For his part, Klein appears to be generous in his judgement of the Carolinians. Physically they are 'well-shaped'; temperamentally they are 'merry and content with their lot'. Employing the conventional psychological categories of his day, the priest classes them as ethereal rather than terrestrial: 'They are neither heavy nor stupid, but on the contrary have a great deal of fire and vivacity'. Klein singles out as one of their most noteworthy qualities their remarkably peaceful disposition. The infrequent quarrels that might arise among them would be quickly ended by a blow on the head and order restored. Klein suggests that this gentleness, coupled with an eagerness to accept Western ways, would make them docile subjects of the king and willing candidates for instruction in the faith.

There is a pathetic irony in these comments in the light of events that were to follow. The martyrdom of the first three Jesuit missionaries in the Carolines would soon force abandonment of Spanish plans to evangelize these islands and would cause others to re-evaluate whatever earlier judgements had been made regarding the peace-loving disposition of the islanders. As for their eagerness to accept Western ways, it is reported that just before Cantova was murdered by the Ulithians he inquired of them what he had done to incur their anger. 'You come to destroy our customs' was the reply as they made ready to strike him down.²³

If Klein's letter succeeded in arousing widespread interest in the 'newly discovered Palaos', this was largely owing to the avid and able promoter of his cause that Klein found in the person of Fr Andres Serrano, the Jesuit Pro-

²¹ Letter of Fr Victor Walter, 10 May 1731, in Joseph Stöcklein, *Der Neue Weltbott mit allerhand Nachrichten dern Missionariorum Societatis Jesu* (Augsburg 1726), IV, no. 608.

²² On his visit to Guam in 1817 Kotzebue learned from Governor Torres that the long-standing commerce between the Carolines and Guam, which had been halted for a time by tales of Spanish cruelty in the Marianas, was resumed in 1788. Since then, he writes, 'there comes yearly . . . notwithstanding the distance, a small fleet, which gives the Spaniards shells, corals, and trifles, in exchange for iron'. See Kotzebue, *op. cit.*, 233 ff.

²³ J. Burney, *A Chronological History of Voyages* (London 1817), V, 27; Burney quotes from a *relation* of Don Fernando Valdez y Tamon, Governor of the Philippines.

curator of the Philippines. Serrano's theology professor had met a Carolinian in Manila many years earlier and probably communicated much of his enthusiasm over the apostolic potential of this new field of missionary labours to his student. Moreover, Serrano relates that he himself had seen Carolinian canoes drift in on eight occasions.²⁴ Using Klein's letter and map as the substance of his 'Breve Noticia' of 1705, Serrano publicized the Palaos in the hope of winning the support of Pope Clement XI, and, through his influence, authorization from the Bourbon kings to equip a missionary expedition to these islands. A ship that had been outfitted and dispatched by the Jesuits in 1697 to bring the gospel there had been wrecked off the coast of Samar, and the Jesuits did not have the resources to make another attempt at their own expense.

In his zeal for the conversion of the Palaos—or the New Philippines, as he also dubs them²⁵—Serrano shows an ability to embellish Klein's original account with his own enthusiastic conjectures when they are likely to quicken interest in the islands among the royalty. Serrano writes that the islands are believed to contain precious metals and spices, notwithstanding Klein's express report of the natives' declaration that their islands contained no metal at all. Serrano's statement is founded on the supposition that since the Palaos lie on the same latitude as the Moluccas, New Guinea and other possessions thought to be rich in minerals and spices, they too must be lavishly endowed.²⁶ Like other Jesuits writing of the Palaos, Serrano makes a case for the easy conversion of the islanders there 'because they are neither idolatrous nor contaminated by the Moslem sect'. Furthermore, communication between these islands and the Philippines would be easy to establish, he contends, inasmuch as the frequency of canoe voyages from the Palaos would indicate that sailing distances are short. Serrano's 'Noticia' succeeded in winning the needed support from the Crown and made possible the first missionary venture into the Western Carolines since the early 1500s. As for the reliability of the details furnished by both Serrano and Klein, it should be sufficient to cite here the well-sounded warning of a cautious Englishman about accepting too readily descriptions of the newly discovered islands 'before they have ever been visited by any one man who is capable of giving a description of them'.²⁷

²⁴ Krämer, *Palau*, 14, refers to Serrano's letter to Fr Robinet in which the author gives a good bit of information on his early experiences with Carolinian castaways. This letter, unfortunately, has not been found to date.

²⁵ 'New Philippines', a name that was intended to replace the more familiar 'Palaos', originated with Serrano but survived for only a brief time. Burney, with tongue in cheek, remarks that Serrano's compliment to Philip V, newly crowned King of Spain, was 'paid at the expense of his predecessor and of truth'.

²⁶ Serrano's 'Breve Noticia' is found in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 416-32. It is also published as an appendix in E. Pastor y Santos, *Territorios de Soberanía Española en Oceanía* (Madrid 1950), 127-33.

²⁷ *Travels of the Jesuits*, I, 25.

MEANWHILE the Spanish authorities in the Philippines, under the orders of the Royal Crown but not without first casting an anxious eye on their own fiscal tally sheets, launched two unsuccessful attempts to reach the elusive Palaos.²⁸ Additional impetus was provided by the arrival in 1708 of another canoe load of Carolinians who were soon afterwards brought to Manila for official interrogation about their islands.²⁹ At last in 1710 the islands that had been the subject of so many second-hand accounts were 'discovered' by Don Francisco Padilla, the captain-general of the patache *Santissima Trinidad*. On 30 November he sighted an island that they named San Andreas (Sonsorol), and after four days spent fighting the currents and contrary winds, the ship managed to put in there, without however securing anchorage. The apparent friendliness of the cheering natives who turned out in canoes to offer the Spanish coconuts and fish dispelled any misgivings that Padilla may have had about dispatching a landing party to explore the island. Upon their return to the ship, the members of the party enthusiastically told of their grand reception—how they were carried from the launch by the natives to the very hut of the paramount chief where they were feasted, entertained with dances and songs, and presented with 'finely-woven mats'.

On the following day the ship's launch put out to shore again, this time with two Jesuit priests aboard. Before the launch could return, however, the *Trinidad* was driven out of sight of the island by the strong currents that are always so troublesome around Sonsorol, and a few days later Padilla found himself off the Palau group, some 150 miles to the north of Sonsorol. All subsequent attempts of the *Trinidad* to regain Sonsorol proved fruitless. Two more ships were dispatched the following year to find Sonsorol and rescue the second shore party, but their efforts were also in vain.³⁰ Ten years elapsed before information obtained from some Palauans captured by another Spanish ship verified the worst fears of the Jesuit superiors in the Philippines regarding the fate of their confrères. The

²⁸ In 1708 three Jesuits set out in a *galeota* provided by the Governor of the Philippines, but the ship ran aground off the port of Cavite.—Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la provincia de la Compania de Jesus* (Manila 1749), II, 377. The second of these two attempts, the six-month journey of the *Trinidad* in 1709, is recounted in the diary of Juan Luis de Acosta.—AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 4, ff. 76-147.

²⁹ Klein furnishes information on them in his letter to Governor General Domingo Zabalburu, 17 Nov. 1708—AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 5. Testimonio de los autos concernientes a la Real Cedula fecha en Madrid a los 19 de Octubre de 1705 sobre el descubrimiento de los Yslas de Pais e Palaos y lo ejecutado en el viaje este presente ano de 1711, ff. 67-76.

³⁰ The first of these went down with all hands except two; among these last were three Jesuit missionaries. The second was the galleon *Nuestra Senora* under the command of Don Miguel de Elorriaga, which sighted four tiny islands but was forced to return to Manila without finding Sonsorol.

two priests, the Palauan captives related by signs, had surely been killed and eaten by the natives.³¹

From an ethnohistorical standpoint, Padilla's expedition derives its significance from the fact that it is the earliest documented encounter between Europeans and Carolinians on the latter's home soil. The *Trinidad's* diary, kept by the chief pilot Jose Somera, has been preserved together with three maps that he drew.³² Letters of Br Etienne Baudin, a Jesuit lay brother who accompanied the expedition, and Fr Francisco Calderon, the Jesuit Provincial of the Philippines, furnish some additional information on the voyage.³³ There are also official reports from the Governor of the Philippines to Madrid that have been collected and published by Barras de Aragon in 'Las Islas de Palaos'.³⁴ In all, Padilla's voyage is far better documented than any other of the early contact period. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this fund of early ethnographic material is the contrast it presents between the natives of Sonsorol, whose language and culture were akin to those of the Carolinians who had been drifting into the Philippines for many years, and the Palau islanders, a people who had as yet been unexposed to even such intermittent contact as this. Padilla was in all likelihood the first European to visit Palau and certainly the earliest source of information on this group.

The dress of the Sonsorolese, according to Somera, was much the same as that of the islanders whom Klein had met in 1696; it consisted of a loin-cloth, cape, and conical hat 'of the kind worn by the Sangleys in Manila'. The feathers that were sometimes perched in the hats distinguished the nobility from the commoners. The Palauans, on the other hand, wore no clothing whatsoever;³⁵ but what they lacked in habiliment they more than compensated for in armament. Poison tipped arrows and spears slung from a hurling device are mentioned in the reports, while note is made of the fact that no such weapons were in evidence among the Sonsorolese.³⁶ In a welcome at Palau that proved to be somewhat less amicable than that at Sonsorol the Spanish gained first-hand experience of Palauan ordnance when

³¹ Letter of P. Cazier, 5 Nov. 1720, in *Lettres édifiantes*, XVI (Paris 1724), 368-73.

³² Somera's diary is found in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215 No. 5, ff. 74-164, and published in Krämer, op. cit., 36-58. Two of his maps are also found in Krämer, 68 and 71. The third, a profile of the high islands of the Palau group, is copied in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 17.

³³ Letter of Br Etienne Baudin, 18 Jan. 1711, in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, No. 5, ff. 69-72. Most of this letter is quoted in Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compania de Jesus en la Asistencia de Espana* (Madrid 1912-25), VII, 766-8. Calderon's letter, which relies heavily on Baudin's, is found in Barras de Aragon, op. cit., 1081-9, and in Krämer, op. cit., 59-67.

³⁴ Barras de Aragon, op. cit., 1076-80.

³⁵ The total nudity of the Palauans is mentioned by many other observers. Bernardo de Egui offers the only contrary testimony when he states in the diary of his 1712 voyage that the natives of Palau 'wear only a few leaves for decency'.—Krämer, op. cit., 96.

³⁶ Barras de Aragon, op. cit., 1088.

several natives, who had a few minutes earlier been exchanging gifts aboard the *Trinidad*, let go with a volley of spears and arrows as soon as their canoes were a safe distance from the ship. The Spanish responded with a fusillade of musket fire, but the only damage done in the exchange was to the pride of the ship's officers who must have fumed at letting themselves be taken in by a 'treacherous and ungrateful lot of savages'. When the Palauans returned in all apparent innocence the next day and made it clear that they wanted to board the ship and resume trade, Padilla showed an understandable reluctance to comply with their desires, although he did allow his men to give a particularly enterprising Palauan some food in return for half a dozen coconuts that he swam out to the ship. Padilla also thought it wise to decline the invitation of the natives who beckoned him to launch his skiff and follow their canoes to shore. That evening a stiff breeze arose, carrying the ship once again off to the north, so that Padilla's expedition never did set foot on Palauan soil. Nonetheless, their two days off the coast were sufficient for them to form a largely negative judgement of the Palauans whom they put down as 'coarse and savage' in contrast to the 'kind, polite, and cheerful' Sonsorolese they had met some few days earlier.

But the Spaniards recognized similarities among the two peoples as well. The canoes that were used in both island groups were alike in their design and handling, and of the same kind as those found in the Marianas. Both Palauans and Sonsorolese seem to have impressed the Spanish with their swimming skills even when managing considerable loads—as when one of the natives from Panloq swam from the ship to his canoe with a large plate, a sack of sugar, and a cake without so much as getting his booty wet. That there were surprises on both sides is evidenced by the astonishment that the natives ofonsorol showed when they first came aboard the patache and began to pace off the length of the ship, thinking that it was hollowed out of a single log. But one of the similarities that surely dismayed the Spaniards most of all was the universal readiness of the natives, whether Sonsorolese or Palauan, to appropriate anything they could lay their hands on—a common enough refrain in the journals of Pacific exploration! Within a short time after the first natives had boarded the ship at Sonsorol, one of them was tugging at a chain with all his strength in a futile effort to break it and carry it off with him; another had poked his head into a gun port and was pulling at bed curtains when he was frightened off by an indignant Spanish marine. While others were looking for nails or scraps of iron, one bold islander pulled a sabre out of someone's scabbard and jumped overboard with it.³⁷

³⁷ Krämer, *op. cit.*, 40.

From the accounts of the *Trinidad's* visit to Sonsorol and Palau there is little evidence to suggest previous contact between the islanders and Europeans. Indeed, the surprise of the Sonsorolese at seeing tobacco smoked and their amazement at the size of the ship, which was by the European standards of the day rather small at that, would seem to indicate that Padilla may have been the first European to put in at either island group. The inhabitants' knowledge of other islands in the Caroline archipelago, however, seems to have been quite extensive, judging from a map that Somera drew from information given him by one of the natives.³⁸ Moreover, the Sonsorolese were able to direct Padilla to the Palau islands, give the names and location of two tiny islands to the south (Merir and Pulo Anna), and name another 40 islands—many of which had appeared on Klein's map. When asked about the inhabitants of these islands, a Sonsorolese chief told Somera that they were inhabited by 'good people as far as the large island called Torres or Ugulut' (almost certainly Truk).³⁹ We may assume that Truk, whose distance was not known by the chief but was claimed to be very great, represented the easternmost point in the pre-contact Carolinian trading circuit and the outer boundary of their known world.

THE news that the *Trinidad* had been unable to rescue the two priests marooned on Sonsorol caused Serrano to redouble his efforts to establish communication with the Palaos. His pleas to continue the search on the grounds that the route had already been charted and further contact would thus be a simple matter were countered by a recommendation from the Provincial Treasurer that the expeditions be halted, temporarily at least, because of the expense.⁴⁰ Serrano's persuasive powers had not failed him, though, and late in 1711 he led an expedition from Guam that ended three days later in a watery grave for him and the ship's complement when the vessel foundered in a storm. The decision was shortly afterwards made by the Crown—probably much to the relief of the Governor of the Philippines—that Guam should replace Manila as the base for all further efforts to find the Palaos. This, it would appear, was a polite way of withdrawing support from all such ventures, which had long taxed the patience and resources of the Philippine colony and by this time had doubtless taken on a futile cast, given the long string of mishaps connected with these ventures. Of the eight recorded attempts to find the Palaos between 1697 and 1711, only the *Trinidad* was successful in making contact.

³⁸ The map is copied in Krämer, op. cit., 71. It is decorated with curious drawings of naked Palauans, Sonsorolese in breechclouts, painted house posts, and native canoes.

³⁹ Barras de Aragon, op. cit., 1089.

⁴⁰ Cugat del Vallés, Barcelona, 'Petición del Fiscal ante la Audiencia de Filipinas, Manila, 21 de Enero de 1711', E-I-c5 (K).

The last expedition to set out for the Palaos before the 20 year moratorium that would follow was that of Don Bernardo de Egui, who sailed on the *Santo Domingo* early in 1712. After a week on the seas he sighted 28 low lying islets, the largest of which was less than two miles long. Egui's 'Islas de Garbanzos' can be safely identified as the islands of the Ulithi atoll.⁴¹ Here he was approached by natives who demanded that a hostage be placed in one of their canoes before they came aboard to trade. From there he set a course to the south where he cruised at the latitude given for Panloq until coming upon several high islands that corresponded to Padilla's description of the Palau group. Again navigating by the sightings registered by previous explorers, he came within view of Sonsorol but was unable to find anchorage and soon lost headway before the treacherous currents.

From the two sources quoted in Krämer, Egui's own journal and a *relacion* sent by Governor Lizarraga of the Philippines,⁴² it is clear that the captain of the *Santo Domingo* was occupied for most of his voyage in trying to capture a native or two to guide him through the rest of the islands. When iron nails and Spanish wine failed to induce any of the Ulithians to remain on board, except for a bearded native whom he judged too old to be useful, Egui resorted to the clumsy strategy of deploying men in his launch to sneak up on a native canoe moored near the ship. In the skirmish that followed, the Spanish seaman who had been kept as a hostage on the canoe had his skull split by an oar and three of the natives were killed. According to the version of the incident presented in Egui's diary, however, the seaman suffered no serious harm from the beating he took and none of the natives were so much as wounded by the musket fire. Was Egui deliberately suppressing whatever might have suggested impulsiveness and imprudence on his part? Whatever the facts of the case might have been, all trade with the islanders whom Egui had described as 'cheerful and of a fine temperament' abruptly ceased and the captain thought it better to move on.

Off Palau a few days later Egui found the natives more suspicious than the Ulithians: they refused to board the *Santo Domingo* at all and carried on their trade by throwing up taro, coconuts and shell belts in exchange for the nails and hard tack which the crew tossed down into their canoes. At last Egui managed to lure two young men aboard ship, who were immediately rushed by the crew and subdued after an exceptionally fierce struggle, con-

⁴¹ Krämer, *op. cit.*, 79, lists some of the names of the islands that Egui was given by the natives; they are all in or near the Ulithi atoll.

⁴² Krämer, *op. cit.*, 74-100. The diary is also found in AGI, Ultramar: Filipinas, Leg. 215, Testimonio de los autos concernientes a la Real Cedula sobre el descubrimiento y reduccion de las nuevas Yslas de Pais o Palaos, ff. 43-102. Lizarraga's letter, 'Relacion de la tornavuelta de Marianas del Patache *Santo Domingo*', is published in Barras de Aragon, *op. cit.*, 1089-93.

sidering the odds. Terrified at first that they were to be beheaded and eaten, the captives afterwards let it be known that head hunting and cannibalism were practised in connexion with local wars in Palau.⁴³ This interesting anthropological aside is one of the very few data on the natives that Egui offers, perhaps because the islanders thereafter kept their distance from the ship and its indelicate master as the *Santo Domingo* cruised along the coastline of Palau. Of the captives we are told that one of the Palauans escaped two days later; his companion and the bearded Ulithian were brought back to Manila where we hear nothing more of them.

TEN years after Egui's voyage and the delegation of responsibility for the colonization and evangelization of the Palaos to the Governor of the Marianas, an incident occurred on Guam that was almost a rehearsal of Klein's some years before. On 19 June 1721 a vessel was spotted off the eastern end of Guam 'little different from the Chamorron boat, but higher so that at full sail it was mistaken at first for a frigate'. Its 24 Carolinian occupants, natives of Woleai, were joined within a few days by another six natives whose canoe had landed at the western side of the island. In a well-known letter that is surely one of the most remarkable ethnohistorical records on Micronesia, Fr Juan Cantova gives a detailed account of what he learned during the eight months he spent with the Carolinians on Guam.⁴⁴

Cantova was told by the natives that the islands of the archipelago were divided into five 'provinces', each consisting of several islands united in a hegemony with its own common language. The westernmost of these five was the Palau group, whose cultural distinctiveness from the atolls of the Western Carolines was only recognized since Padilla's voyage and was now confirmed by Cantova's new information. Hereafter, map makers would no longer use the names 'Carolinas' and 'Palaos' interchangeably, but would reserve the latter term for the island cluster that had hitherto been known as Panloq.⁴⁵ The other 'provinces'—Yap, Ulithi-Fais, Lamotrek-Woleai, and Truk—correspond quite well to the politico-economic empires that

⁴³ Barras de Aragon, op. cit., 1091.

⁴⁴ Letter of Fr Juan Cantova to Fr Wm D'Aubenton, 20 Mar. 1722, in *Lettres édifiantes*, XVIII (Paris 1728), 188-246. The letter, which was written to the personal confessor of the King of France, was undoubtedly intended to win support for still another voyage to the Carolines. Although Cantova had been promised a ship and crew by the Governor of the Marianas, he intimates that the proposed expedition might prove unacceptable to authorities in Manila.

⁴⁵ 'The fifth province . . . includes a given number of islands commonly called Palaos, which the natives call Panleu.' Cantova clearly restricts the familiar name 'Palaos' to the islands of the fifth province, but gives the native name of these islands as an alternative designation. Despite the similarity of the two terms, they are not etymologically related, as Krämer, op. cit., 182-3, shows. The derivation of 'Palaos' was discussed above in fn 12. Panleu and its variants (Paleu, Paloc, Panloq, etc.) seem to have been taken from *Pelau* which was the name for Koror, one of the principal islands in the group and the seat of one of the paramount chiefs. The word was later applied to the entire Palau group, probably as a result of the subordination of other islands to Koror.

endured from pre-contact days until only recently. The map that Cantova drew from the information supplied by the Carolinians shows very few islands that had not been previously charted by Klein and Somera, but it far surpasses them in the accuracy of the relative locations it assigns the islands of the Western Carolines.⁴⁶ Apart from obvious distortions in the representation of the Truk and Palau groups, which lay at the extreme ends of the earth for Cantova's Woleaian informants, it is in the estimated size of the islands themselves that the most serious errors are to be found. Yap, for instance, is said to be 100 miles in circumference or well over twice its actual dimensions, and the length of the Ulithi atoll is given as 70 miles instead of 24 miles.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Cantova's map reveals a surprisingly complete knowledge on the part of these Carolinians of an island world that, stretching over 1,500 miles of ocean as it did, must be considered large even for a seafaring people. As soon as it was published, the map superseded previous charts and was regularly consulted by explorers until the cartographic advances of scientific parties in the 19th century rendered it obsolete. Evidence of its durability is found in the fact that Cantova's map was still the best one available to Kotzebue in 1817.

Cantova's letter offers interesting testimony as to how the natives of one island regarded the inhabitants of other islands in the archipelago. The Carolinians whom Cantova met demonstrated that they were no less prone to ethnocentric bias, particularly with respect to the seldom visited islands at the periphery of their world, than Europeans themselves. Beyond Truk, the eastern limit of their *terra cognita*, lay the large island of Falupet (Ponape) 'whose inhabitants worship the shark and are negroid, and whose customs are savage and barbarous'.⁴⁸ The Yapese were judged no less harshly: an uncivilized people of demon-worshippers who contacted the evil spirit through the veneration of a crocodile and acquired the power to work sorcery on their enemies.⁴⁹ As for the Palauans, they were 'the enemy of the human race with whom it is dangerous to engage in even the smallest amount of commerce'. The dread that Palauans appear to have generally inspired in their neighbours would have had some justification if, as the Carolinians asserted, human flesh was eaten on these islands. The information given by the Palauan whom Egui captured and in a letter of Fr Bernardo Messia, now missing but mentioned by Cantova as supporting the Carolinians' testimony, would seem to substantiate the argument that Palauans did at one

⁴⁶ The map is reproduced with Cantova's account in *Lettres édifiantes*, op. cit.; also in Stöcklein, *Der Neue Weltbott* . . . , II, no. 343.

⁴⁷ *Lettres édifiantes*, 213 and 215.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 231-2.

time practise cannibalism. Krämer writes that Chamisso met a Spaniard who had stayed on Palau nine months and accused the natives of cannibalism among other things, but the German historian admits reservations about the worth of this statement.⁵⁰ However much credit is given to this tenuous evidence, one must remember that there is no mention of cannibalism in the narratives of Henry Wilson, Horace Holden, or others who visited Palau from 1783 on. Even Kadu, the Carolinian picked up by Kotzebue who was quick to find in Palauan customs targets for censure, does not speak of eating human flesh.

CANTOVA's letter is a true ethnographic 'first'. Where earlier records left by ships' captains and missionaries contained little more than a few notes on the physical appearance of the people and some of their more curious customs, Cantova gives a rather broad, though sketchy, description of their culture. His is the first attempt to delve into the religion and mythology of the islands and other non-material areas of the culture which would have been necessarily ignored by those before him whose contact was far less prolonged than his own. From him we learn of the dualistic animism that pervaded their religious outlook, the names of principal deities such as Iolofath and Lugeilang, and the honour paid to special lineage spirits. Creation legends and other etiological myths are recounted in the letter as, for example, a legend to explain the respect in which the island of Lamotrek was held. Cantova notes the absence of 'shrines, idols, sacrifices, or other external cultic forms' except in connexion with burial practices. He then proceeds to outline such burial practices in the case of a man of high rank: the painting of the body with turmeric, the women's keening, the funeral eulogy delivered by a relative of the deceased, the kinsmen's watch over the corpse, the food offerings left for the spirit of the dead person, and the eventual internment in a marked grave site that was often enclosed by a stone wall.

Regarding Carolinian marriage customs, Cantova writes that polygamy is a privilege enjoyed only by 'persons of high estate', such as the paramount chief of Truk who reputedly had nine wives. On the subject of authority and political organization Cantova has several observations scattered throughout his letter. Among the signs of status employed by chiefs are long beards, knee length ponchos and decoration of their wooden dwellings with pictures. The *tamol* or chief is entitled to an occasional nightly serenade by a group of village singers who perform until he is asleep and they are told to stop.

⁵⁰ Krämer, *op. cit.*, 133.

Cantova describes the sailing canoes in which his new-found friends travelled to Guam and speaks of a 12-point compass used in navigating; he gives a detailed account of how the islanders go about whale fishing and adds a short list of other sports; he describes the triple-rank battle formation used in inter-island warfare but notes that the fighting is always done in single combat after warriors have paired off against each other.

His letter is a cultural sampler of pre-contact life in the Carolines that contains information on any number of subjects, including the personal hygiene of the natives: 'they bathe three times a day; in the morning, at midday, and in the evening'. It is surprising, therefore, to discover that in 1731 after he finally landed at Ulithi his only known letter *in situ* is a disappointment by contrast.⁵¹ There he records the progress of the faith in the islands and discusses the rat control problem and the process of making coconut toddy in some detail, but offers very little of ethnographic interest. His Jesuit companion, Fr Victor Walter, who wrote from Ulithi the same week, only complains about the lack of respect and obedience shown to the clan chiefs and laments the absence of a figure who could command the allegiance of the entire atoll, for he attributes what he judges to be a woeful lack of motivation and industry among the islanders to an absence of genuine authority.⁵² Walter's letter of 1731 betrays a negativism that contrasts sharply with Cantova's sympathetic understanding—but neither offers much information beyond what is found in Cantova's letter of 10 years earlier.

Cantova found incontrovertible proof of previous culture contact in the physical appearance of some of the Carolinians he met. 'Their skins differ in colour', he wrote. 'The colour of some is like that of pure Indians; there can be no doubt that others are mestizos, born of Spaniards and Indians.'⁵³ These half-castes, he conjectures, were probably descendants of Lope Martin, who was abandoned together with several of his fellow mutineers on an island in the northern Pacific in 1566. Although the atoll on which Lope Martin and the others were marooned is more likely to have been one of the Eastern Carolines or Marshalls, Cantova's observation does point to the possibility that much of the early contact that occurred between the inhabitants of the Western Carolines and Europeans might well have been the product of shipwreck and desertion. The one recorded instance of European castaways is that of the seven white men who landed on Ulithi in 1684. In the absence of further documentation, we can do no

⁵¹ Carrasco, 'Descubrimiento y Descripcion de las Islas Garbanzos', 263 ff., contains Cantova's letter, 12 May 1731.

⁵² Letter of Fr Victor Walter, 10 May 1731, in Stöcklein, op. cit., IV, no. 608.

⁵³ *Lettres édifiantes*, 198-9.

more than assume that such events must have played a large role in the cultural and genetic transformation of the Western Carolines.

With Cantova's murder on Ulithi in that year and Walter's return to Guam, Spanish interest in the Carolines ceased altogether. Recorded contacts between Europeans and Western Carolinians resumed only during the period of English ascendancy in the Pacific some 50 years later. The waves of traders, beachcombers, scientists and blackbirders who added so significantly to the literature on the region all belonged to a new era of steadily accelerating contact and rapid acculturation.



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