Introduction

Ann Arbor, Michigan, July 2007

This book queries the multiple and competing cultural and political stakes—things potentially won, and lost—in the historic and contemporary effort to canonize the seventeenth-century founder of the glorious (or notorious) Spanish Catholic Church on Guam. Why have modern-day Chamorros revived the effort to canonize San Vitores? More pointedly, what does the effort tell us about highly political processes of indigenous cultural and identity construction and historical consciousness, particularly in highly colonized places like Guam? Does it express only the acculturative forces of colonialism—in particular, the tragic demise of indigenous society at the hands of foreign forces? Or might the movement also reflect the remarkable ability of Native culture to survive, even if by adopting or adapting to elements from beyond the island’s shores? Should we lament or celebrate the Cause, and are these the only viable “positions” we can imagine in relation to it? These questions—and the frames of analysis used—derive from an intellectual and political genealogy forged at the intersection of several interdisciplinary fields, namely Pacific area studies, Native Pacific studies, and a composite form of cultural studies (formed in relation to postcolonial studies and feminist studies), especially as they have been “triangulated” into an emergent academic field called Native Pacific cultural studies.1 Though there are by now many strands, the “field” of cultural studies in its most basic self-understanding posits cultural phenomena to be the central site of and for the articulation and rearticulation—the “cobbling together,” as Stuart Hall has theorized—of structures of power as they interpellate or recruit groups of people by appealing to their social and cultural identities and practices.2 Not phenomenally “given,” as (once?) understood in anthropological definitions, however, the culture concept in cultural studies requires critical attention to how culture and identities are produced historically in relation to structures or discourses of power, such as capitalism, imperialism, or modern-state formations. For example, how are culture and identity produced through colonial discourses, including
“post” colonial discourses, or through new forms of oppression in the wake of anticolonial and nationalist achievements of political independence from Western or Asian powers?

These questions are intensely personal for me. A Chamorro writer once described herself as being, like most Chamorros, “born and raised a Catholic at the same time that [she was] born and raised a Chamorro”; I too was born and raised a Catholic on Guam, despite the important fact that I am not indigenous Chamorro. In fact, I grew up among indigenous Catholics whose islands continued to struggle against similar historical and political forces. Later in this introduction, I will return to my personal and intellectual stakes, and to a host of auxiliary questions and projects that are staked on this study; for now, I want to highlight the story of indigenous Catholicism on a heavily colonized island. First I give an overview of the island’s political history, framed generally by the predicament of indigenous cultural survival through competing colonialisms. Next, I provide a shorter overview of the centrality of San Vitores’s mission in this colonial legacy. Finally, I conclude with the other intellectual and political stakes in the Chamorro Catholic story, including the implications for critical scholarship forged in relation to Native Pacific studies, Pacific Area studies, and cultural studies.

Guam: “Where America’s Day Begins”

Guam, or Guåhan in the vernacular, is the southernmost island in an archipelago renamed the “Marianas” by San Vitores in 1665 in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the reigning monarch (and his benefactress), Queen Mariana de Austria (Driver 1972, 41). In his writings, San Vitores indicated he clearly felt that the Chamorros did not deserve the name Ladrones, though the archivist Rodrigue Lévesque surmised that his renaming of the islands “was a smart political move that won [Queen Mariana’s] patronage for this new mission” (Lévesque 1995, 276; San Vitores quoted in Lévesque 1995, 63). As the largest and most populated island in the archipelago—and, significantly, because its presumably most powerful maga’låhi, or chief, Kepuha, first welcomed San Vitores and would later provide key military support for the missionaries—Guam, and its “principal” village, Hagåtña, would become the seat or capital of the Spanish outpost from 1668 to the end of Spain’s rule in the Marianas in 1898, following the Spanish–American War with the United States. Since 1898, American colonial officials, and for a brief stint during World War II, Japanese colonial officials, would follow suit in keeping Hagåtña the island’s capital (map 1). In the century and a half before San Vitores established the mission and a colonial station for the Crown in 1668, Guam (and the Mariana Islands) had been visited, sporadically at first, by European explorers and traders
(Barratt 1996). After Miguel Legazpi in 1565 formally claimed the island for Spain and launched the transpacific galleon trade that connected the Americas with Asia through the Philippines, ships and their cargo in the Marianas began to increase with relative regularity (Barratt 1996), despite galleon captains’ and entrepreneurs’ protestations over the numerous typhoons and the treacherous seas, and, in due time, their perception of the Natives as conniving and duplicitous in their (own) desire for iron and other goods.

The coincidence of Spain’s desire to convert the so-called heathens and to establish a colonial outpost, both to protect the missionaries and to address Crown needs in the *imperio* (empire), is captured in the Spanish term *reducción* (reduction), referring to the evangelical and civilizing impulse, which also revealed the ideological and theological bases of the Crown’s reason for existence: it was not for temporal secular motives but for God that the Crown justified and legitimized its existence (Del Valle 1972; Driver 1988; Velarde 1987). It would not be long before the combination of spiritual and political differences between Spaniards and Chamorros—and differences among Chamorros in addition to differences within the “Spanish” side—would also spell trouble for San Vitores and his companions. In fact, the start of the misnamed “Chamorro–Spanish War” (misnamed in that there were as many Chamorros killed among those who supported the padres as among those trying to oust them) is typically associated with San Vitores’s bloody death at the hands of Maga’låhi Matå’pang in 1672. The war is foundational in canonical narratives of Guam’s cultural and political past inasmuch as it is said to represent, tragically or heroically, the complete termination of indigenous life in favor of a subjugated, Hispanicized, peasantry. Policies during this period included the relocation and socialization of converts into new communities, called *barrios,* first organized around a chapel and out of which grew parishes organized spiritually and socially around a church dedicated to a patron saint. In time, the parish’s Catholic calendar also came to express indigenous cultural values and principles. An especially important transformation was the gradual displacement of the “traditional” social and political powers that Chamorro women enjoyed through a system of matrilineality (if not matriarchy), whereby an individual’s title and access to resources were obtained through his or her maternal lineage. In such systems, the principal male figure of authority was one’s mother’s highest-ranking brother, and not one’s mother’s “husband.” Moreover, children “belonged” to their mother’s clan and not to that of their biological father. This system was challenged directly in the padres’ efforts to institutionalize the sacrament of matrimony, which began a gradual if not insidious process of subordinating matrilineal relations beneath patriarchal, social and political systems (Cunningham 1984, 1992, 2005; B Palomo 2000; PSECC 1996a; Rogers 1995, 75; Souder 1992, 54; Thompson 1941, 100). I return to this historical displacement in
later chapters. Such changes were direct outcomes of numerous measures to ensure “constancy” or guard against converts’ slipping back into paganism, and particularly aggressive campaigns to conquer “hostile” or “rebel” Chamorros. The result of the successful reducciones of the Chamorros has, in the canonical narrative, led to results that have been received ambivalently, even in the eyes of observers who sympathize with the mission project: if the conversion of the Chamorros succeeded, it came at a great price. Between the drastic changes in lifestyle, military skirmishes, and, especially, diseases against which there were no immunities, the pre-mission Chamorro population for the entire archipelago collapsed from an estimated 100,000 individuals on the high end (Carano and Sanchez 1964), or 30,000 to 40,000 on the low end (Cunningham 1992; Hezel 1982), to fewer than 4,000 by 1700. The fact that the Jesuit effort in the Marianas constituted the first Christian mission in all of Oceania, and the reality of the tragic legacy, motivated anthropologist Douglas Oliver to issue his famous and problematic observation, “The rape of Oceania began with Guam” (1979, 334).

Guam’s subsequent history and historiography is basically one of benign neglect and obscurity—the term “sleepy backwater” recurs in present-day popular and even academic press to describe Guam and the Marianas between the start of the eighteenth century and end of the nineteenth century, right up to the Spanish–American War of 1898. As a result of that war, the United States took Guam (it would later pay Spain), and Spain sold the northern islands, and its other Micronesian “possessions,” to Germany (Farrell 1994). This ultimately racist characterization of the Marianas (as a sleepy backwater) is said to derive from the archipelago’s geographic distance from Spain, or its supposed “remoteness” and “insularity” from any other center of social or economic significance, and its size, which was erroneously characterized as diminutive. About thirty miles long and four miles wide at the waist of its footprint-shaped contour, Guam is actually the single largest landmass in all of Micronesia. The epithet also reflects the low regard colonial officials and visitors had for the indigenous people, whom they typically pathologized as semi-civilized, “mongrel” peasants. Indeed, the Marianas, and Chamorro society, are typically depicted as sites of ruin and annihilation (Olive y García 1984, 3), stagnation (Sullivan 1957, 97), and amnesia (Russell 1998, 13). Alternatively, they are depicted as sites of the tragic “loss of innocence” (Rogers 1995, 4), where the typically miserable conditions were compounded by natural disasters (such as typhoons and earthquakes), and almost mitigated by an occasional reform-minded colonial governor, or by the sporadic visits of other European and American whalers and traders, especially in the nineteenth century.

Politically separated from their cousins on the northern islands, the Chamorros of Guam after 1898 had to live under a new colonial ruler in the United States and saw their island slowly transformed into a coaling station and US Navy military outpost. Where Chamorros (and resettled Caro-
linians) in the northern islands experienced sufficiently different histories under German, and later, Japanese, rule, the Chamorros of Guam were subject to what is stereotypically characterized as the benevolent rule of a paternal US Naval government, headed by a commander who doubled as a colonial governor, with a new one appointed every two years. From 1900 until the Japanese invasion and occupation of the island in December 1941, the navy’s basic policy was to maintain a naval station and modernize (read: “Americanize”; see K Camacho 1998) the Chamorro populace through basic education and vocational training (Bevacqua 2004; R Underwood 1987); public-works projects such as road building (Diaz 1998); and health and sanitation (DeLisle 2001; Hattori 2004). Modernizing and civilizing, via Americanizing, effectively meant “the work of regeneration” (Guam Newsletter 1911a, 1). But until the outbreak of World War II, naval colonial officials were still lamenting that their efforts had not fully succeeded. Modernization and Americanization didn’t have the traction that US officials thought they should, especially among the common folk, who seemed to prefer speaking the Chamorro language to speaking English, and who appeared more interested in their supposedly “sleepy” ways of subsistence farming, fishing, and hunting. The navy also repelled, or at least obstructed, and at times absorbed local elite agitation for political reform. Moreover, the navy’s process of Americanization did not include granting American citizenship (Bordallo Hofschneider 2001; Dames 2001), but rather consisted only of a benevolent and paternalistic effort to “modernize” the “mongrel.”

But the “Americanization” of the Chamorros (and the quest for US citizenship) received a big boost from the Japanese. The Japanese invasion, and especially Chamorro memories of the brutal occupation, accomplished in less than three years what US Naval officials could not do in almost fifty, and what took the Spanish padres almost three centuries—that is, they fused the Chamorros to their colonial overseer, with religious zeal and cultural prescriptions of gratitude and loyalty. Indeed, the bloody American recapture of the island in 1944 was almost universally regarded by grateful Chamorros as an act of liberation, understood in religious terms of salvation and redemption. Despite an oral and written archive of dissatisfaction, complaints, and outright refusal to comply when it came to the postwar military government’s indiscriminate land grabs, Chamorros were deeply grateful, and thus were forged feelings of loyalty and kinship to “Uncle Sam” for “liberating” them from a Japanese occupation consistently remembered as cruel and brutal (K Camacho 2005; C T Perez 1996; Souder 1989). Yet again, despite these sentiments of loyalty and patriotism, members of the Guam “Congress,” an advisory body that in fact had no legislative powers, staged a “walkout” during one of its sessions in 1949 to protest the absence of democratic rule and the tyranny of military governance (Hattori 1995). The wire services reporting this “revolt” in the very backyard of a country that espoused the principles of democracy and self-
determination resulted in widespread national and international coverage. This, perhaps more than any other factor, led directly and quite rapidly to the passage of the Guam Organic Act of 1950, which established home rule; clarified and defined, for the first time, Guam’s political status as an unincorporated territory (a status that limited the reach of the US Constitution in favor of congressional plenary powers); transferred executive oversight of the island to a civilian department (the US Department of the Interior); and, finally, conferred on Chamorros in particular a special, circumscribed, form of legislated US citizenship. Under American hegemony, the passage of the Organic Act is celebrated as a significant political milestone within a political teleology of gradual democratization (Skinner 1997). Other “milestones” include the 1962 lifting of the US military’s requirement that everyone undergo security clearance for passage in and out of the island, and, in response to new rounds of local agitation by Guam’s political leaders in the 1960s, the implementing of a succession of more federal laws that permitted Guam to send a nonvoting delegate to the US Congress and to hold gubernatorial elections beginning in 1970. Subsequent federal legislation, again in response to local Chamorro political clamoring, sought to resolve the issue of Guam’s colonial status—an issue that still remains unresolved. These local and federal activities resulted in a series of political plebiscites (1976, 1982), a constitutional convention (1976) whose pro–United States constitution was defeated (1979), and a short-lived movement (1982–late 1990s) to change Guam’s unincorporated-territory status to an enhanced commonwealth status that included provisions sympathetic to the specific cause of Chamorro (as opposed to “Guamanian”) self-determination. In the late 1990s, this movement was killed by “Bush-league politics,” a local reference to former President George H W Bush and his administration’s refusal to entertain Guam’s wishes (Ada and Bettis 1996).

From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, Guam experienced one of the world’s fastest rates of economic and social growth and transformation, owing principally to contemporaneous Asian development and especially to the wild success of a tourism industry that catered to Asians—primarily Japanese young adults—but also Korean and Taiwanese honeymooners and other youngsters, seeking fun, sun, sex, and duty-free shopping on American soil. Subsistence farming and fishing from the prewar days was replaced almost overnight by a cash-based, wage-earning consumer economy, while ancestral lands became real estate, and English was mastered at the expense of the Chamorro language, which soon lost status as the island’s lingua franca. Following the 1980 census results, Chamorros for the first time found themselves totaling less than 50 percent of the island’s resident population, although they remained the single largest “ethnic” group, followed by Filipinos, Asians, Caucasians, and other Pacific Islanders. In 1960 there were 34,762 Chamorros (52 percent) and 32,282 non-Chamorros (48 percent). In 1980 there were 47,845 Chamorros (45 percent) and 58,134
Felixberto C Flores was the first Chamorro to be ordained a bishop and, later, an archbishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Flores championed the effort to canonize San Vitores, and died one week after San Vitores's beatification in 1985, leading one observer to remark after his death that Guam now has a second “intercessor” in heaven. Photo courtesy of Dr Lawrence Cunningham.
non-Chamorros (55 percent). In 1990, there were 57,648 Chamorros (43 percent) and 75,504 non-Chamorros (57 percent) (Rogers 1995, 273). The 2000 census showed the continued downward spiraling of the proportion of Chamorros, with the Chamorro segment of the population dwindling to 37 percent.

It is an understatement to say that these demographics have been noted by Chamorros themselves. As early as the 1970s, the more critical and outspoken had begun to openly question the narratives of loyalty and obedience to the United States, while the more militant began to articulate Chamorro social and cultural concerns about Guam’s political status as a colony that had (and still has) yet to exercise the right to self-determination (Alvarez-Cristobal 1990; M P Perez 1997; Perez-Howard 1993; Rivera 1992; Souder and Underwood 1987). As mentioned, these sentiments informed a series of nonbinding plebiscites and political referenda in the late 1970s and 1980s that led directly to efforts to change Guam’s political status to that of a commonwealth, a proposal that included measures such as the call for a future exercise of Chamorro self-determination (as opposed to self-determination for “Guam”); local (Government of Guam) control of immigration; and a “mutual consent” clause that prohibited Guam or the United States from taking unilateral actions (Ada and Bettis 1996; PSECC 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996b). This political clamoring was a direct response to what is generally understood to be the chaos of modernization, specifically as informed by liberal American values, including the opening up of the “floodgates” of immigration and Chamorro emigration (R Underwood 1985).

In this milieu, the island’s Catholic Church hierarchy, now known as the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Agaña (composed of twenty-some parishes), stepped up its efforts to shepherd modern-day Guam and Chamorro culture through the turbulence. Said Archbishop Felixberto C Flores in 1974 (figure 1), “I am extremely concerned about the possible disappearance of our language and culture” (quoted in Pacific Voice 1974a, 1). The Chamorro Catholic force, augmented by a predominantly Catholic Filipino community (Diaz 1995a; de Viana 2004), can be viewed as the heir apparent, the spiritual, political, and cultural descendant of Padre Diego Luis de San Vitores.

The Mission in Guam’s Historiography

As the founder of the Catholic mission in an archipelago whose inhabitants have the dubious distinction of being the first recipients of a Christian mission in the Pacific Islands, and thus having the longest experience of all Pacific Islanders of enduring the yoke of foreign domination, San Vitores occupies a privileged position in both the history of the Marianas and in
the history of Christianity in the Pacific. The story of the Catholic mission figures so prominently in the general history of Guam that it prefigures, as I argue in this book, the range of narrative possibilities and limits of Guam’s imagined cultural and political realities. As the late “Doc” Pedro Sanchez, coauthor of Guam’s first modern general history, used to say, Catholicism in Guam is “more than just religion”—which is to say that it is also a political and cultural force in the lives of the Chamorros and other residents of Guam (Carano and Sanchez 1964; P Sanchez 1989, 416).

Despite continued characterizations of the island as remote and insular, Guam continues to be an important outpost for colonial excursions, for instance in the massive US military buildup for its global “war on terror” following 11 September 2001. The island’s cultural politics will continue to implicate global forces that since 1565 have established the island and region as important sites for their machinations. Indeed, Guam has been an important, if often overlooked or underappreciated, site of global forces, both Western (Spanish and Roman Catholic, followed by American) and Asian, notably Japanese imperial interests during World War II. Since the mid-1970s, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean businesses have also invested heavily in this piece of “American soil.” As Ron Stade aptly demonstrated in his critical ethnography of Guam’s cultural politics (1998), the island has long been subjected to larger “worlding” forces, such as those requiring a fundamental rethinking of the spatiality and valences that comprise the competing layers of “local” Chamorro cultural articulation. In Guam, one finds not the classic remoteness and insularity that is supposed to deliver the specificity and particularity of cultural alterity on which modern anthropology cuts its teeth; instead, one finds the complexity of creolized culture forged out of centuries of intercultural mixing as the principal form of indigenous social and cultural articulation. In fact, Guam has been a particularly important crossroads for an assortment of multinational and multiethnic interests, all of which have left indelible imprints on the island’s social, cultural, political, and natural topographies. Guam was an important stop-over for the so-called Acapulco–Manila galleon runs between the Americas and Asia from the sixteenth century to the second decade of the nineteenth century. From the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, Guam was a fertile field for missionizing, led first by a band of Jesuits actually composed of multinational and multiethnic individuals. In the nineteenth century, Guam was an important watering hole for American and British whalers and traders. In the past four hundred years, Guam has become a new home for immigrant Filipinos, and since the end of World War II (and especially during and since the last quarter of the twentieth century), for citizens of the so-called Freely Associated States—the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and Republic of the Marshall Islands. These histories of “globalization” challenge conventional definitions of indigeneity based on presumptions about cultural purity and insularity, without losing
important dimensions of indigenous political and cultural alterity or difference.¹⁵

Native Catholic Personal Spiritual Stakes

The discrepancy between the island’s more cosmopolitan history and cultures and those described in canonical historiographies and cultural analyses motivates a second set of questions, which are staked on the story of San Vitores’s canonization: How does a critical interrogation of this story, including the processes by which he has been canonized, raise alternative ways of understanding and narrating the cultural past, especially cultural processes like conversion, or even warfare? What do the multiple and competing meanings manifest in the movement to canonize San Vitores—indeed, the very meanings of San Vitores himself—tell us about the indigenous past and present? What do they tell us about indigeneity and about the epistemologies and traditions that have been forged in relation to it and its histories, including the histories of European and American colonialism and political and cultural subjugation? How might we begin to understand indigeneity (which might be defined as the historical condition of being indigenous to a specific region or place and claiming aboriginal status in it) as an indigenously oriented and driven product of complex and often extremely messy entanglements with nonindigenous peoples, places, ideas, and things? How do such histories offer specifically indigenous modes of narrating and analyzing political and cultural pasts and presents? How do these processes shape how we think and understand Native spaces and places? Much as devout missionaries were driven to faraway places to convert, or relocate, “lost souls,” returning them to their “proper” place under God, people from these faraway places have sought to localize new ideas and practices (such as Christianity) within indigenous ways of life. In examining the official and popular stakes in the contemporary and historic effort to make San Vitores a saint for the Chamorros, I query the cultural and political stakes and thereby raise new questions about the history and historiography of mutual but unequal appropriations and displacements between Natives and Christianity in the Marianas. To understand the stakes in the effort to canonize San Vitores is to comprehend Spanish Catholic and Chamorro historical and cultural desires to convert—or to “contract,” as Vicente Rafael has argued of Tagalogs (1993)—the foreign and dangerous into the familiar, the pleasurable, and the valuable. Indeed, the effort to canonize San Vitores involves the historical and political task of constructing, guarding, and transgressing the boundaries between the categories of indigeneity and exogeneity, the local and the global, and tradition and progress, among a host of other terms usually understood as mutually exclusive and logically or inherently oppositional. But the historical and contemporary effort to
canonize San Vitores can furnish us with the materiality to begin to imagine alternative forms of historical and cultural understanding and analyses here in the islands, or there, wherever this book happens to finally wash up. Through this study, I aim to share a sense of the complexity of what might otherwise appear to be simple stories of local faith, or, alternatively, the simplicity of complicated cultural and historical entanglements between local and global forces.

Such a feeling of and for the simultaneously overdetermined and indeterminable cultural conditions as they transgress time and space runs through the subject matter. The effort to canonize San Vitores fuses the systematicity of hagiographic scholarship (devoted and devotional writings about the lives of saints) within a highly formal juridical procedure in the Vatican’s Congregation of Saints, with a rich set of stories bellowing from “below,” that is, from a local, vernacular, observant Catholic community on the island. For the hybrid nature of this process, and for the interest in rewriting the cultural and political history of the Native Catholic Church on Guam along more fluid grounds, I find myself also tacking between the apparently systemic and the whimsical, the academic and the popular, the theoretical and the descriptive. Thus, there is also something admittedly transgressive and disruptive about my objective. Indeed, from the conviction that no single group of people, no one epoch, practice, theory, or method, holds a monopoly over intellectual and critical sophistication and commentary and access to truth, I hope to re-fuse these and other restrictive distinctions as they are theorized and practiced in rituals such as historical scholarship and cultural critique, and in things such as books. Moreover, I am driven as much by a desire to be true, as it were, to the polymorphous realities encountered here as by a desire to reach the equally diverse audience that comprises my personal, intellectual, and political communities on Guam and far away. How does one write for an audience that ranges from scholars and professional intellectuals on one side to friends in the islands on the other side who never attended college, or that ranges equally from Natives exquisitely literate and brilliant on wide-ranging topics, and scholars remarkably ill-informed about matters Native? How does one write for such a diverse range of readers who are nonetheless bound by their refusals to abandon their respective claims to truth and reality? Tacking back and forth between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, between the local tale and the global commentary, between the indigenous and the exogenous reality, between theory and story, this study hopes to articulate—to cobble together—the cultural and political weight of the historic attempt to canonize San Vitores, in order to render a more nuanced understanding of indigenous cultural and political traditions.

That the historic and contemporary effort to canonize San Vitores is led by his spiritual kin also helps us understand the movement’s political stakes in particular, and the stakes that undergird larger efforts to build identity
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and community on the basis of faith in general. Indeed, the current effort to canonize San Vitores constitutes one such virtual voyage of indigenous individual and collective self-fashioning, especially as these adhere to fundamental ideas about good and bad, right and wrong, true and false. The effort to make Blessed Diego a saint—to register his membership in an official list of Church heroes and heroines— involves a historical attempt by a deeply entrenched Roman Catholic Church (begun by Spanish Jesuits; followed later by Spanish, German, and American friars; and led now by religious and secular Chamorro clergy) to galvanize a long-standing bond with the Chamorro people of Guam and the Marianas. But insinuated in the Native clergy’s sponsorship and leadership is the latent interest of the faithful to rediscover and maintain, rather steadfastly, crucial aspects of what is commonly taken to be “traditional” Chamorro culture and identity. In what is locally referred to as kostumbren Chamorro (Chamorro custom or culture), Chamorro “tradition” features a familia system that finds expression in a wide variety of Spanish Catholic rituals such as the nubena (novena, or nine-day devotions), the lisáyu (rosary), and fiestas (feasts) honoring village patron saints (Crumrine 1982; Hinnebusch 1967; McGrath 1985, 5; Meagher 1967, 543; Souder 1987, 8). In celebrating the beatification of Blessed Diego, for instance, the late Most Reverend Felixberto C Flores, DD, the first Native Chamorro archbishop in the Roman Catholic Church, wrote:

[The beatification] brings to reality a dream the people of the Mariana Islands have prayed for. These islands . . . have retained many features of Spanish Catholicism. Fiestas in honor of our patron saints for each village, public processions, rosaries and novenas are all woven into our cultural traditions. All of these are a part of the legacy that Blessed Diego and his successors brought to us—the people of the islands they converted. Today the faith that Blessed Diego brought to the islands is embraced by virtually all the local population of the Marianas. (F Flores 1985, 1)

Although the late archbishop articulated the deep bond between Chamorro culture and Spanish Catholicism, it is crucial to bear in mind that not all have dreamt about or prayed for, much less embraced, the faith brought by Blessed Diego. And, moreover, one must keep in mind that those who did embrace Catholicism did so under a range of political and social forces, coercive and noncoercive, in ways that force us to remember that the benefits, opportunities, and costs of conversion to Catholicism were not always the same, and were not always the same for everybody. While some Chamorros converted (and did so enthusiastically), others did not. Some profited; others lost out. We must also keep in mind that Chamorros did not necessarily view their conversion to Christianity and their Chamorro sense(s) of self as mutually exclusive. Still, following Flores above, we might view the effort to canonize San Vitores as emblematic of a historical intercourse between
the indigenous Chamorro people and Spanish Catholicism, a deep bond that constitutes a significant part of the indigenous Chamorro bid for continuity and survival. If Native political and cultural continuity finds expression within the very intrusive systems typically viewed as hostile toward local tradition, the results can be surprising.

As unlikely as it may seem to supporters and detractors alike, the contemporary movement to canonize Blessed Diego has political and cultural kinship with an upstart Chamorro cultural nationalist movement for political self-determination and cultural stewardship. The movements are coconspirators. Whereas vocal supporters of the cause to canonize San Vitores tend to be conservative Catholics who also favor Guam’s status as a US possession, and detractors regard San Vitores as the key symbol of foreign conquest and hostility, there is nonetheless, or all the more, something of a pious alliance between “traditional” Catholic views and a nascent Chamorro cultural and political nationalism in the face of common foes: liberalism and modernity. In Guam these are synonymous with “America,” which in turn is synonymous with the United States, and which in turn is stereotypically cast as the archenemy of traditional island Chamorro values and customs. At the same time, however, Chamorro Catholicism can also be understood as something of an heir apparent to the social and political regime instituted by San Vitores and company. This has included, as we shall see, an active suppression in the seventeenth century of Chamorro elements that resisted vigorously, for a time at least, the presence of the new order. These tensions are still evident in Guam today, particularly when Chamorro Catholic missionary impulses collide with Chamorro missionary impulses invested in other systems.

Missionary Impulses in Pacific Studies

In this intellectual and political milieu, which is not unlike that of other islands in the contemporary Pacific, any assertion that Chamorro (or any island) culture and tradition has been made or remade—the more contentious term is “invented”—deserves explanation. Indeed, scholarly claims about the invention of island culture or tradition through colonial materiality have not been well received by Native Pacific scholars and activists (to put it mildly). Infamous, for instance, was the heated exchange between Hawaiian activist, scholar, and poet Haunani-Kay Trask (1991) and the late anthropologist Roger Keesing (1989, 1991). Hovering nearby and entering the fray were other anthropologists and other Native and non-Native Pacific Islanders whose scholarly and heated exchanges raise the academic and political antes in Pacific cultural and historical critique. In that particular exchange, Keesing bemoaned contemporary Pacific nationalism, lamenting the inauthenticity of these (more recent) invocations of culture and tra-
dition in the service of the distinctive political agendas of metropolitan elite intellectuals and activists (1989). Trask responded that anthropologists are threatened by Native political expression and empowerment over issues of culture and identity. She asserted that such claims (about the inventedness of culture and tradition) are simply new forms of old-fashioned (academic) racism and colonialism in the islands (Trask 1991). Keesing, later rejoined by another anthropologist, Jocelyn Linnekin (1991b), protested that he was sympathetic to and boasted an honorable track record of championing Native struggles, particularly those outside mainstream, metropolitan, and educated elite circles (Keesing 1991). Trask rebutted anthropologists' presumption of affiliation and solidarity with Native Islanders by invoking the joke about Tonto’s reply to the Lone Ranger’s anxious question when the two find themselves surrounded by restless Natives (Trask 1999, 123): “What do we do, Tonto?” asks the Lone Ranger. Tonto replies, “What do you mean we, white man?”

Islander activists and intellectuals have reacted vehemently against such critical claims by white, expatriate scholars, and have regarded their analyses of cultural invention as hostile denials of the legitimacy of indigenous cultural and historical agency, as disavowals of specifically Native claims to cultural decolonization, or as efforts to reconsolidate white, academic authority amid the historic proliferation of discourses about indigeneity (Diaz and Kauanui 2001; G White and Tengan 2001). On the other hand, nonindigenous Pacific scholars have lamented efforts or strategies to regulate, curtail, or appropriate scholarly and academic inquiry for political or ideological purposes. For a variety of reasons, I choose not to dwell on the exchange, other than to suggest that it reveals the intensely contested nature of scholarship in the contemporary Pacific.

More important, these changes reveal the theoretical and political necessity of moving past the invention paradigm and replacing it, provisionally, with a framework that pays attention to the historical articulations of indigeneity. Drawing from the work of the British cultural studies scholar and activist Stuart Hall, Teresia Teaiwa (2001a, 2001b) and James Clifford (2001, 2003) have each demonstrated the usefulness of viewing Pacific subjectivities as articulated in relation to colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial forces, but in ways that do not posit purity or authenticity, and, more importantly, do not sacrifice the essentially concrete and enduring indigenous determinations that often get lost or theorized away in other critically minded paradigms (Diaz 2006). One way to illustrate a theory of Native articulations is to historicize the processes of conversions to Christianity in terms of Native agencies whose investments in Christianity tactically invert and then displace canonical narratives. These articulations invert the story from “what outsiders do to Natives” to “what Natives do to outsiders” (Hanlon 2001) in ways that reverse and thus unsettle commonplace ideas of conversion as a one-way process (Rafael 1993). What get displaced in the
unsettlement are prevailing historical, cultural, and political ideas about colonialism, Christianity, and indigeneity. What get unsettled, too, are the big ideas about history, culture, politics, and analyses themselves.

The Critique of Chamorro Catholicism

The ongoing history of Chamorro conversion to Catholicism signals the transformation and the multiplication of indigenous notions of personhood and community. Following Vicente Rafael’s seminal study of early Tagalog conversion to Christianity in the Philippines (1993), Chamorro submission to Catholicism can be shown to be simultaneously a colonial process of rearticulating Spanish Catholic ideas and practices and circumscribing its colonizing reaches in socially layered ways—ways analogous to those by which Tagalogs rearticulated themselves through engagement with Christian doctrine and rituals. As part of the Church’s effort to remain pertinent, if not strengthen its position, in places like Guam, the effort to canonize San Vitores can also be seen as an arduous indigenous journey to reconsolidate Chamorro culture and identity through Spanish Catholic doctrine and rituals. This journey continues into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries a legacy of colonial and counter-colonial practice, now rearticulated in relation to American (and Asian) patronage and influence in the region. The effort to canonize San Vitores expresses a longer and deeper Native history of invoking and honoring ethereal beings such as patron saints, especially Santa Marian Kamalen, the local Chamorro manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mother, and participating in a host of other Church rituals and practices (Iyechad 2001; Jorgensen 1984; Poehlman 1979). As a powerful expression of traditional culture over the last three centuries, Chamorro investment in San Vitores also reflects contemporary anxieties over the nature and character of Guam’s economic and social development, especially against what are perceived to be the debilitating effects of modern America on Chamorro society, most especially on family values. But these self-conscious, “redemptive strategies” (as James Clifford has observed of such discursive and “spatial practices” employed in modern ethnographic writing and fieldwork [1988, 99; 1997]) are also subverted from within Native Chamorro investments in other intrusive systems. Nonetheless (or all the more) at stake in the effort to canonize San Vitores is the maintenance of the Catholic faith’s privileged position in the makeup of Chamorro and Guam culture. Especially since the end of World War II, there has been a conspicuous articulation between Catholicism and Chamorro culture, a particular indigenous formation of local society that understands it to be the only real antidote to the social ills of modernity found in Guam’s rapid economic and social growth. The making of a “San” Diego is underwritten by this formation.
Saints—as Chamorro Catholics and others believe—are spiritual beings in the presence of God. They are residents of heaven, of paradise, of a place not like earth but better, insofar as earth is filled with loss (Rafael 1993). Saints are individuals recognized by the Catholic Church to have been inspired properly by God. They lived lives of virtue, or died heroic deaths of martyrdom; that is, they gave their lives in the unselfish service of God and Church, gifts that Christ himself is taken to exemplify perfectly. Saints are heroes and heroines, powerful friends in God’s presence. Their lives are seen as inspirational and exemplary, but their intercessory powers can also provide material and temporal favors and assistance for those who seek them, especially in moments of crises. Saints, we might say, reflect and refract earthly images and concerns.

Other “Saints”: Genealogies as Histories

Born and raised on Guam, although not of indigenous Chamorro ancestry, I was named after both my grandfathers. Vicente Diaz and Miguel de la Concepción were Natives of the Philippines and of the Micronesian island of Pohnpei, respectively, and were converts to Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both converted to Catholicism, in their respective cultural and historical situations, for deep spiritual and temporal, even political, reasons. My maternal grandfather, Miguel, was one of the first Pohnpeians from Wone, in the chiefdom of Kittí, to convert to Catholicism at a time when, as David Hanlon recounted (1988, 186), the Catholic and Protestant missions were themselves the objects of intense political interest and opportunity by warring Pohnpeian factions. Miguel’s mother, a member of the powerful Dipwinmen clan, was baptized Teresita. In 1887 she left for the Philippines, a year ahead of her son, and died of an unknown illness before his arrival there. In the Philippines, Miguel was raised by the last of the Spanish Capuchins, though their plans for his religious vocation were thwarted when he fell in love and married my grandmother. Still, his devotion and loyalty to the last vestiges of Spanish Catholic rule in the Philippines were such that when he died he was allowed to be buried in the hooded cassock by which the Capuchinos are recognized worldwide.

Hailing from the Philippine province of Ilocos Sur but raised in the province of Zambales, my paternal grandfather, Vicente, was a self-educated man whose father, Hilario Diaz, was an herbolario, or folk healer, who tended to and idolized noted figures like José Rizal and other ilustrados, the cadre of liberal and “enlightened” men who “fathered” Philippine nationalism and political revolution (Rafael 1989). Like his father, Vicente also joined and quickly moved up the ranks of Philippine Masonry—“the archenemy of the Catholic Church” (Calvo 1991). Unlike his father, who as a provin-
ciano (someone from the province) did not have the means to receive a liberal education abroad, Vicente was able to parlay his self-education into advanced degrees and to become a school principal, and later, an executive assistant to the parade of American governors during the territorial period. As an adult, Lolo (grandfather) Vicente converted to Catholicism, because, family tradition has it, this was the only way that my grandmother would agree to marry him. Unlike Vicente, whose pedigree was provincial and indio, Lola (grandmother) Bibiana was a proud mestiza, which in our family tradition translates to a fierce self-suppression of one’s indigenous heritage. But because Vicente was educated, and because he eventually rose in the ranks of the Catholic Church (in the Knights of Columbus), my grandmother always referred to him (with a wave of her hand) as different from the rest of the indios or provincianos. So pious became this particular indio that his daughter-in-law (my mother) described him as a veritable saint. Indeed, Vicente Diaz and Miguel de la Concepción bequeathed intense traditions of faith and piety to their respective sons and daughters, the likes of which would make their Spanish Catholic namesakes proud, even though neither of these men were Spanish and they became Catholic only later in life. For these reasons, my parents, uncles, and aunts passed on the faith to the next generation, whose upbringing in an increasingly Americanized Guam only intensified the faith’s hold as antidote to the social ills on Guam.

I grew up, then, in this milieu: Catholic schools, lives of saints, and—ringing in my ears—the maxim that “a family that prays together, stays together.” With prayers, too, came admonitions not to act like a provinciano, even as I grew up away from the Philippines. Today, a family that once prayed together struggles to stay together within a modern island context that exerts profound pressures and imposes challenges on traditionally tight-knit clan systems. Such developments tax a family with a staunch Catholic pedigree: six sisters named after the Blessed Virgin Mary, three brothers named after saints, a father who was among the first married men on Guam to be ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church, and who initiated and administered a Sunday-evening televised program, The Family Rosary Hour, for nearly two decades. My mother, now approaching her ninetieth birthday, continued to teach eskuelan pale’ (padre’s school, or catechism class) until she was in her seventies. If it is not surprising that the themes of Natives, converts, and saints would come to occupy privileged positions in my upbringing, it should also be understandable that they would comprise inextricable elements of my analytic, political, and intellectual project.

This project is also fundamentally transcultural: In Guam, where my parents relocated after the war, and where I was born and raised, I grew up among other families—Chamorros, Filipinos, other Micronesians—with similar histories and values. Because I was born and raised on Guam, and because of the similarities between my heritage and that of Chamorros, Chamorro grew to be a surrogate culture. Despite my appearance and
accent, it often comes as a surprise to many people with whom I grew up that I am not Chamorro. But just as I do not identify myself as Chamorro, I also do not intend to make definitive claims of expertise in Chamorro culture and history. At the same time, I do not want to relinquish organic claims to the common and kindred history of indigenous political and cultural struggles in relationship to Spanish Catholicism and liberal Americanism that I see among Micronesians, Filipinos, and Chamorros. How can this insider/outsider status and my own Asian Pacific Islander, and yes, American, Catholic genealogy “work” to access and understand Chamorro political and cultural history as articulated in Spanish Catholic and liberal American impositions? How can it assist me in comprehending the Spanish Catholic and liberal American histories of my own genealogies? Can Chamorro people (and other folks on Guam) learn as much from me as I have learned about myself through this study of their cultural history? For historical reasons, such as ease of travel to and from the island, immigration, and the infusion of American cultural ideas and institutions, my own histories, values, and beliefs—like those of my Chamorro neighbors, and, increasingly, other Filipino and Micronesian neighbors—have been challenged profoundly. Still a firm believer in saints and prayerful petition, I ask: What indigenous desires underwrite the effort to canonize San Vitores? What model of living and dying does he provide? But equally important: What cultural models of living and dying does the Catholic hegemony of that veneration—whether Roman or Chamorro Catholic—directly and indirectly preempt? In one sense, this study stems from a deeply personal desire to comprehend my own cultural and historical traditions by way of understanding other Islanders’ interests in making a saint for themselves. One might say I am both a historical anthropologist and a kind of missionary, assigned to a particular “field” and reliant on specific archives, except that the latter are also my homes; but I am not an anthropologist, much less a priest, notwithstanding the intensity of my convictions about the history and cultures of Native struggles for self-determination.

**Thick Veneers**

A central objective of this study is to pursue the politics of indigenous articulation and historical narrativization. A secondary goal is to offer a fresh interpretation of cultural change and continuity in Chamorro political history. The literature on cultural change is immense. So, too, is the field of mission history. Yet there is also a venerable tradition of understanding Native Catholicism as folk or syncretic. Often identified with so-called peasant classes or societies (I prefer the term “subaltern”) in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Melanesia, syncretism is generally regarded as a form of acculturation—Fernando Ortiz prefers the term
“transculturation” to describe the two-way flow and impact—whose Native essence is accessed through a figural peeling away of a veneer of Western Christianity. To describe transculturalisms such as Chamorro Catholicism in Guam, I coin the oxymoron “thick veneer.” Thick veneer describes those cultures whose histories of interweaving (Flores’s description of Chamorro culture and Spanish Catholicism) yield no clearly demarcated layers or boundaries of what is and is not Native, in analytic favor of attention to historical and cultural processes of simulation with(in) Christianity. Thick veneer religiosity and spirituality entail historical layerings of Native and non-Native realities that allow us to sense separation and difference, and profound cultural fusions that simultaneously befuddle any attempt at demarcation or disaggregation. The history of thick-veneer cultural production also allows us to witness what we might call the “ferocity of indigeneity.” In the historical context of near genocide that characterized the Spanish–Chamorro Wars of 1671–1694, where radical alterity—radically different customs and practices that are nonetheless understood to be paganistic, infernal—could very well get you killed, those Chamorros who did not initially side with the Spaniards could survive only through eventual processes of simulation and identification. In this context, making the sign of the cross could have meant unburdening oneself of the priest and his soldiers. The sign of the cross literally meant the possibility of life in the here and now (eternal life, in this case, can be appreciated as a nice perk). Where fight and flight, confrontation and fugitivism, reached their strategic limits as oppositional modes of encounter and survival, those recalcitrant Chamorros made a tactical turnabout, and proceeded to embrace Catholicism as a practical if not more successful bid at survival than the resort to arms or feet. Describing a “great change” that overcame the Natives, Jesuit historian Father Charles LeGobien in 1700 equated the “docility” of the Natives with their “embrace” of Catholicism (1949, 125).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, following if not illustrating the profound social changes that came in the wake of the Spanish–Chamorro Wars, we might say that the thickness of the veneer described the intensity of the subsequent interweaving of Christian and non-Christian values and practices. Recalcitrant Chamorros realized the need to relocate Native cultural and spiritual practices (especially those that were denigrated and demonized by the padres) to someplace safe, somewhere they could not be identified and finally destroyed. I think that Chamorros took these values and beliefs with them into the new residential and social sites that the conquistadors built specifically to relocate Natives in efforts of colonial management and surveillance. In Spanish, the term for the theocratic ideology was also the term for the administrative policy of relocation: reducción. But the Spanish process of reducing Natives to Catholicism was simultaneously the Chamorro process of reproducing indigenous spirituality and values. In the barrios that became parishes, in the new Catholic
calendar of rituals and practices, Chamorros found refuge within the Catholic Church. The refuge can also be seen as a virtual “inoculation” against the Church itself, as Rafael has demonstrated of Tagalog discourses of conversion (1993). This history is illustrated well in the ways that the physical structures of the parish churches, conventos, and missionary schools served as literal refuges in times of natural disasters like typhoons (which were understood in providential terms by Spaniard and Native alike) and not-so-natural disasters, like enemy invasions. However, from the seventeenth century to the present, the historical record is also replete with complaints by priests, colonial officials, and ignorant visitors of the superficiality—at best, the “inconstancy”—of the Native brand of Catholicism. Writing in 1700, the French LeGobien observed, “There are Chamorros who embrace the Christian religion and submitted to the Spaniards. But many of them had done so for their interests . . . they wept in secret . . . and only awaited a favorable occasion to vent their hatred and resentment” (1949, 128).

My leading questions about conceptualization are accompanied by questions of approach and method: What narratives and practices can count as concrete evidence for these ideas? “Doc” Pedro Sanchez’s evocation of Guam Catholicism as more than “just a religion” involved historiographical concerns: it is also “a major curator of the past” (1989, 416). If this is so, what better archive is there in Chamorro Catholicism than narratives and rituals of individual and collective piety and devotion? One example of the archival nature of Chamorro piety can be seen in stories of its intensity or, in reverse, its superficiality, as observed by visitors since the seventeenth century. For instance, Jacques Arago, a French Catholic member of the Freycinet scientific expedition to the Marianas in 1819, found among the Chamorro people a “wretched” condition in which “nine-tenths” of them had “been exterminated; and that religion, which ought to have established in them peace and happiness, [had] covered them with a funeral pall” (1971, 1:268). Instead of peace and happiness, Arago found among the living a kind of intense but corrupt piety, which led him to observe, “Nowhere, perhaps, is there so much and so little religion as at Guam” (1971, 1:248). Noting the ubiquity of Catholic figures and statuettes in almost every home, and the frequency of rosaries said throughout the course of a day, Arago exclaimed, “These scenes of devotion are affecting, and would be more so, if we did not know how easily these senseless people forget their religious duties as soon as the moments of prayer are at an end” (1971, 1:246). He was also astonished at the “prodigious numbers of processions and religious ceremonies” and noted that the local observance of Passion Week was celebrated with “superior pomp and greater impositions on the people, . . . here as they [were] at Manila, and at Manila as they [were] in Spain.” The “superior pomp” led him to conclude, “There is no exaggeration, I assure you,” in calling the festival of Easter “the day of scandal.” To Arago, Catholicism on Guam was scandalous for its superficiality and its fanaticism: “The
women bestow their favors for a rosary. The men do not blush to offer you a sister, or some other of their relations, and will immediately after prostrate themselves at the foot of the altar. In the churches the two sexes are separate; and if you see few girls without a veil, you also see few men gazing at them. In church the people behave like Christians; in the city, and in the country, like savages" (Arago 1971, 1:248–250).

What Arago saw as the corrupt forms of Catholicism on Guam in the early nineteenth century can themselves serve as portals into the political and cultural histories of Chamorro Catholic interweaving and simulation. Such moments of tension and contradiction in local Chamorro Catholicism—whether figured as tenuous or inconstant, excessive or fanatical—yield insight into dynamics of exchange and encounter between indigenous and exogenous systems, into processes of cultural continuity and discontinuity. Thick histories of simulation, or histories of interweaving, reveal themselves in narratives that describe the alleged superficiality of Catholicism among the Chamorro people on the one hand, or that describe excess—or what can also be called conversion with a vengeance—on the other. And on Guam such narratives play themselves out predominantly in the familia system, which is the currency (to recall Arago’s horror on meeting men who would offer their sisters or some of their relations) of a contested, layered Chamorro Catholic system. Or, to put it another way, the familia system is the shifting ground on which faith and piety, and Chamorro cultural continuity, express themselves. This is why Catholicism is not just a religion on Guam, and why the Catholic Church and the Chamorro family have enjoyed such a deep intimacy since the seventeenth century. Outside the door, or peering into the interior of a woven Chamorro culture, I wonder how best to avoid the arrogance and the error of presumption that has informed Arago and all those other non-Chamorro voyeurs of Native cultural history.

Whatever the eventual verdict, the effort to canonize San Vitores is driven by a historic tension between the Catholic Church’s desire to reconsolidate its privileged position in local concerns (through the vehicles of beings such as the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints), and indigenous Chamorro cultural and political self-determination. Thus, this hagiography-in-the-making is also holographic: seen one way, it is about the heroic triumph of a seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit. From a different angle, the hero is the Chamorro who survives five hundred years of colonization. However, the holograph is also a prism, refracting light not only on possibilities that are explicitly preempted or negated but also on possibilities that just have not been commented on explicitly. In this study, I grope for different analytical positions from which we might cull alternative meanings of the San Vitores story, meanings that might especially reveal indigenous sensibilities that tend to be occluded by official or conventional perspectives and narratives. Speaking of positions, I need to account for the title of this book, its sections, some of its chapters—and much of its wordplay.
The term “missionary position” is a colloquial expression for conventional face-to-face sexual intercourse, typically connoting heterosexual normativeness, with the man “on top.” Indeed, nonnormative sexual practice can also include the missionary position. One origin for the reference to missionaries has to do with their proselytizing among Native peoples who were consistently stereotyped as lascivious and often engaged in what the missionaries believed to be unnatural and immoral sexual practices, including homosexuality, incest, lewd cultural dances, and a multitude of other activities considered scandalous, abhorrent, and contrary to proper civilized and Christian behavior. Among the Chamorros, for instance, what San Vitores believed to have been socially sanctioned prostitution caused him much pain (Positio 1981b, 197). All these were and are seen as fundamentally sinful in Christian, not just Spanish Catholic, discourse. One joke, from Native circles, takes the phrase as merely descriptive of the preferred and unimaginative position for sexual intercourse as practiced by the missionaries with their wives (as attested to by Native eyewitnesses). Whatever the origins of the phrase, we can be certain that most people will immediately draw some kind of mental image in their heads about sexual acts or practices. This, too, is the predominant image I have in mind, except that the image is also inextricably linked with ongoing histories of the exercise of power and authority—by narrative acts and practices—over what is normative and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, and what happens to those people who are considered abnormal and wrongheaded or living wrongfully, when those in the right can muster state or other forms of power to enforce their story lines.

From the title of this book and a cursory glance at its table of contents, the reader will quickly see similar allusions to sexuality, but in terms of the exercise of power and authority: Activities from “above” reference the making of official perspectives, especially as they presume to speak on behalf of the Almighty God “on high.” Narratives from “below” mark the space of quotidian, rank-and-file perspectives and realities, especially as these are, in Native studies or cultural studies, presumed to be a better place from which to comprehend how power actually operates in society. In this sense, the imagery, narratives, and practices “from behind” can be seen as deliberately and provocatively transgressive. Though it brings immediately to mind that which is colloquially referred to nowadays as “doggie style,” a style that needs no further description, the multiple sexual connotations with reference to power and morality attached to the image most certainly do. Whether it references hetero- or homosexual anal sex or bestiality, the image evokes unnatural, and for many, downright repulsive, behavior. In Christian discourse, these are not only unnatural but are morally reprehensible sins against God’s proper designs for the human body. In this monograph, the referencing to narratives and practices “from behind” involves
matters that consciously do not adhere to prevailing viewpoints, and sensibilities that can be defined as transgressive of them.

Much as they might seem to represent a figurative “sticking it to the man (from behind),” however, in this monograph the actual cultural and historical materials are not largely oppositional, despite the fact that they clearly do not align themselves with prevailing binaries. Indeed, the cultural and historical materials and practices I follow in that section come in most instances from devotional narratives, but I pull and examine their loose threads closely for the competing cultural and political meanings they may reveal. My use of such sexual metaphors, then, is precisely to foreground issues of power and authority that are fundamental to the subject matter. Thus, such apparently sexual metaphors and idioms are more than coy sexual innuendo or indulgent wordplay; I use these metaphors substantively, in direct reference to varying positions of authority, and counter-positions to that authority. But precisely because religious discourse is so deeply intertwined with sexuality, particularly with articulating its rules and regulations and its self-understandings in terms of what is morally wrong and right about sexual practices, it remains virtually impossible to study and engage, in this case, Roman Catholicism, without also quickly rubbing up against deep views about normative sexuality (Kennedy 2001; Maguire 2004).

The specific topics in Catholicism, if not within the wider history of Christianity, are familiar and do not require elaboration here: privileging degrees of sexual purity as virtuous, while seeing impurity as sinful, and holding deep views of the body as a sacred temple of God, not to be desecrated or profaned. Likewise, there is a long history of sanctioned normative heterosexuality, as raised, for example, in the supposed threat that same-sex marriage poses to the Christian-based fundamentalist view of marriage and family; the sinfulness of homosexuality and other nonnormative practices, including marriage of priests and adultery; and even proscriptions against masturbation, insofar as the body as temple of God is holy and, for men, the wastage of sperm is wastage of God’s seed. Women’s bodies, in particular, have been important sites of and for the narrativization of Catholic virtuosity and sinfulness (Eve succumbing to temptation; the primacy of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the supreme model for chastity and purity). These, alone, speak volumes about the deep ways that Church teachings on good and bad are engendered and heavily sexualized. There are also the sexual-like pleasures—bliss and ecstasies—that saturate much of San Vitores’s experiences with God and the Blessed Mother, and sweet innocent children, including adult Chamorros. For example, part of a tool kit of conversion tactics he used, called the “mini-mission,” consisted of hurling holy maxims, called ejaculaciones, at the hearts of the heathen. With such ejaculaciones in particular, according to his hagiographer, Alberto Risco, such mini-missions “allayed the throbbing eagerness” that San Vitores felt in his
desire “to plant the seed of the Gospel” (quoted in Calvo 1970, 65). The “throbbing eagerness” of course referred to the intensity of his piety, which at times is referred to as “ecstasies,” as when experienced during apparitions and visitations or at the precise moment of his death. Such was the particular ecstasy when San Vitores first laid eyes on such “native men,” or “wild savages,” whose “naked, brown, and athletic builds” were also indications of just how “tame and tractable . . . trustful, yet shy” such Natives could be, and thus, just how “attractive they appeared” to San Vitores (Calvo 1970, 73). It was in the company of such pleasingly wild men that San Vitores experienced that bolt of light that called him to evangelize these islands in particular. But these highly sexualized narratives are also sensed in desires and pleasures directed toward San Vitores by many of his companions; certainly the companionship and “male bonding” describe a homoerotic relationship whose legitimacy of course is forged by way of opposing it to the illegitimacy of homosexual love.

Through all these sexual legacies, my continued referencing to positionality also involves a critique of space and an interest in the attendant and consequent spatial practices that come with narrativization. A critique of space is a critique of vantage point and of grounds. The politics and scholarship of grounds is also articulated in feminist calls for “situating” knowledge critically in the appropriate and specific historical and social “sites” of their production.33 In Native Pacific studies, the premium is on indigenous orientations and perspectives, located canonically in the islands and on local, specifically Native, cultural and historical perspectives as the privileged vantage point.34 Insofar as the Native Pacific has been and continues to be colonized, then, the Native position is also one from below, a subordinated or subaltern one, particularly in relation to other Native positions that are empowered by way of capitulating to, or aiding and abetting, colonial determinations and desires. The allusions to above, below, and even behind have to do then with the vantage points privileged in the writing of cultural and political histories. In this book, I switch-hit, so to speak, and try to “ground” myself in these different positions as I seek to comprehend their essential truths as narrativized in their respective sites, or their historical, cultural, and political situations.