First Intrusion

On Wednesday, 6 March 1521, as the sun began to rise over the western Pacific Ocean, a tired and hungry seaman on the dawn watch of Magellan's flagship Trinidad saw a broad, bluish hump slowly materialize out of the dark haze on the northwestern horizon off the ship's starboard bow. Then a smaller dark hump loomed above the rim of the sea just to the south of the first shape. The seaman, who was in the ship's crow's nest nearly sixty feet above water level, waited anxiously, staring hard to make sure that the shapes were not clouds. Convincing the humps were land, the lookout finally raised the cry that would reverberate down through history, “¡Tierra! ¡Tierra!”

Below him on the main deck, the mixed crew of Spaniards, Basques, Italians, Portuguese, Frenchmen, Greeks, and even an Englishman scrambled to the starboard rail, some thanking God, others laughing through gums swollen and cracked by scurvy. Aft on the high poop deck, Captain General Ferdinand Magellan, a lame, heavily bearded, and implacably determined man, limped to the rail and squinted at the horizon to the northwest. Quickly several men gathered beside him; they were his officers and pilots and one extroverted young Italian nobleman, Antonio Pigafetta, who was personal gentleman-in-waiting to Magellan and unofficial chronicler of the voyage. The men on the decks of the ships could see two mesa-like shapes, one small, the other quite large, approximately twenty miles off the ship's starboard bows, but the low peninsula that connected the shapes remained hidden below the horizon, so the land to the northwest looked like two islands to everyone on the decks.

Suddenly, the Trinidad's lookout yelled again and pointed to the southwest. There an oblong shoreline of cliffs glistened low on the sunlit horizon about twenty miles off the port bow of the Trinidad. Although not as high as the first land sighted, the island to the southwest was broader.

Magellan studied the islands with the sharp eyes of an experienced master seaman as the trade winds rose briskly behind his ships in the tropical sun's heat. The daytime winds pushed his three small square-rigged naos (which would evolve into galleons; naos derived from carracks used in Mediterranean trade) up to eight knots per hour in the heavy white-capped swells of the Pacific Ocean. Sails had not been reset for weeks because of the reliable winds out of the northeast, brisas to the Spaniards, and because of the weak state of the crews. The brisas and the north equatorial current had kept the flotilla steady on a westward course along the 14°N latitude. After sighting land, Magellan did not immediately alter course; the flotilla sailed on for

Aliens
1521–1638
another hour or two until the ships were between the islands.

The larger island to the southwest was downwind. Magellan could see that it would be safer to land on its leeward, protected side than on the taller island to the northwest. One of the Victoria’s pilots, a Greek from Rhodes named Francisco Albo, later wrote in his log, probably after talking to his ship’s lookout, as was customary, “And on this day we saw land and we went to it, and there were two islands, which were not very large, and when we came between them we headed to the southwest, and we left one to the northwest.” Although unknown to Magellan and his men, the island first sighted was Rota, which initially appears as two islands when seen from the southeast. The larger island to the southwest toward which they turned was Guam. Years later in Europe, when Pigafetta wrote his vivid chronicle of Magellan’s voyage, he recalled only the two peaks of Rota and the one island of Guam. He thus described that historic first landfall as three islands, not two, as Albo and other pilots recorded. Pigafetta also confused the directions of the islands in his text. These errors by Pigafetta, or by the scribes who copied and translated various versions of his chronicle, puzzled explorers and historians for centuries. They conjectured several alternative landfalls in the Marianas, such as Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, in order to conform to Pigafetta’s account. Albo’s log and the sparse accounts of Magellan’s other pilots, notably that of an anonymous Genoese pilot confirming Albo’s, give a more accurate nautical picture of the landfall on Guam than does Pigafetta’s.

As Magellan’s three ships sailed toward Guam, Albo wrote, “We saw many small sails which were coming to us.” These were the remarkable Micronesian outrigger canoes called proas, each with a single triangular lateen sail. The proas nimbly darted around Magellan’s clumsy ships as they neared Ritidian Point, Guam’s northernmost tip. Pigafetta wrote that the proas were “like dolphins jumping from wave to wave.” The islanders in the proas were darkly tawny, stalwart men, according to Pigafetta. They stood taller than the Spaniards, had straight black hair, and were completely naked. Because the Spaniards were searching for the Indies in the early period of their explorations, they referred to all brown-skinned people by the term indios (Indians) when first encountered in the New World and in the Pacific and Asia. By the time Spain claimed Guam in 1565, the indigenous people of the Marianas would be called Chamorros, the Spanish version of the local term, chamorro, which is what the islanders called members of their high caste. The early Spanish sailors also interpreted chamorro to mean “friend.” Eventually, the local people would be known variously as Marianos, Chamorros, and finally Chamorroos after Father Diego Luis de San Vitores arrived to establish a Jesuit mission on Guam in 1668. The word Chamorro to describe the island’s people is, therefore, apparently indigenous in origin as well as perhaps an adaptation of the old Spanish word chamorro for “bald” or “shorn” (“beardless” in Portuguese), which described some island men who wore only a topknot on an otherwise shaved head. No known records of Magellan’s stay at Guam reported an indigenous name of the island, a curious omission for one of the most significant landfalls in human history.

About noon, as Magellan’s flotilla passed Ritidian Point, the ships slowed to just a few knots speed when the wind dropped in the lee of the high cliffs along the island’s northwest shore. From Ritidian, Magellan cruised cautiously in safe deep water outside low reefs marked by moderate surf. Inside the reefs along the entire coast lie shallow lagoons, each from about fifty to several hundred yards across and lined on shore by narrow, palm-fringed beaches. Behind the beaches are a series of flat enclaves a mile to several miles in width and up to a half mile deep. Each enclave contains lush green coconut groves and freshwater springs or small streams that flow out of the limestone plateau above. Each
enclave also held villages with numerous Chamorros in Magellan’s time. Ahead, down Guam’s northwest coast, Magellan could see a number of rocky points between more enclaves, and, in the distance about fifteen miles away, a large point of land—now Orote Peninsula—juts out nearly five miles due west. Mountains, green with grass-covered summits and heavy jungle on their lower slopes, rise in the south beyond Orote Peninsula.

Hungry, thirsty, and surrounded by prosas with Chamorros full of curiosity beginning to clamber up the sides of the ships, Magellan and his crews were without doubt eager to anchor as quickly as possible to take on water and provisions. It is unlikely that they would have wandered on for another six to eight hours around Orote Peninsula to reach the bay of Umatac on the southwestern coast after nightfall. Later oral tradition among the Chamorros claimed that Magellan landed at Umatac, but this tradition may have derived from the next landing by Europeans, that of Miguel López de Legazpi forty-four years later in 1565 at Umatac, when he stayed for thirteen days, and from the subsequent numerous stops of the Acapulco galleons at Umatac. By late afternoon on 6 March, Magellan’s flotilla was probably off Tumon Bay or Agana Bay, which present calm water and low reefs. Large villages on these bays indicated to the thirsty Spaniards that fresh water was available and that they need not go farther. By this time, Chamorros were swarming over the ships and carrying away anything loose. Magellan ordered his men to clear the boarders from the ships. The Europeans, too weak to manhandle the sturdy Chamorros, started firing crossbows.

The Chamorros had never seen ordinary bows and arrows, much less the metal-backed crossbows. The cultural shock was deadly. Pigafetta relates that, when struck in the body by an arrow, the Chamorros “drew it forth with much astonishment, and immediately afterwards they died.” The crossbows were sufficient to chase off the boarders. Some later historical accounts of the fighting say firearms were used, but neither Pigafetta nor other eyewitnesses report their use, so it appears that the Spaniards did not fire their arquebuses or muskets in this initial encounter.

In the fighting, the Chamorros deftly made off with the small rowboat towed behind the Trinidad. This skiff was important. The crew used it to sound depths with a weighted line ahead of the ship in unknown shallow waters. Angry at the theft and apprehensive of the numerous islanders as the sun began to set, Magellan had the ships tack offshore for the night without anchoring.

The next morning, according to the Genoese pilot’s account, the ships returned and anchored just off the reef where the skiff had been taken. Each of Magellan’s ships carried a fragate, a kind of launch or pinnance, on deck along with a skiff. A fragate held up to twenty armed men who could easily row the launch through the surf over the reef of Tumon or Agana in a medium or high tide in March. The crews lowered two fragates for Magellan and a party of about forty men in armor to go ashore and recover the skiff.

So it was that the first Europeans to land on an inhabited island in the Pacific Ocean stepped ashore on a beach along Guam’s northwest coast on Thursday morning, 7 March 1521. The newcomers were hostile and intent on imposing their will on the local people. Magellan’s men proceeded to burn forty to fifty huts and several prosas. They killed eight Chamorros who resisted, and retrieved the skiff. The Spaniards suffered no casualties.

Despite the violence of that first encounter, some Chamorros apparently continued the next day to exchange food for Spanish goods, particularly for anything of iron. Magellan’s flotilla remained on Guam three days. During that time, Pigafetta and others visited the villages, judging by the brief but detailed description of the Chamorros in Pigafetta’s chronicle. The Chamorros impressed Pigafetta as “ingenious and great thieves.” Communication was only by sign language; none of the eyewitnesses indicate that the expedition’s interpreter, Enrique (a Malay from Malacca or perhaps a Cebuan who was Magellan’s slave), or anyone else in the crews could speak the Chamorro language.

The Europeans were unaware of a traditional
custom among many Pacific islanders whereby new arrivals on an island present gifts to their hosts, who can take whatever they wish from the newcomers. The Chamorros, a communal people, also did not share the European’s concept of individual items as private possessions not to be taken without the permission of the owner. Pigafetta noted that the Chamorros “have no lord or superior” and were not awed by the Europeans, perhaps because the latter appeared weak and bedraggled after their harrowing trans-Pacific voyage.

One result of the episode of the stolen skiff was that Magellan named the islands the Islas de los Ladrones (Islands of the Thieves). This misnomer clung to the archipelago for three centuries despite the later name change to the Mariana Islands by Father Diego Luis de San Vitores in 1668, in honor of Mariana of Austria, the Spanish queen regent who funded a Catholic mission in the islands. To add to the confusion over names, the islands were also initially called the Islands of Lateen Sails by Magellan and continued to be so titled by some later voyagers and mapmakers.

On Saturday morning, 9 March, according to Albo, Magellan’s ships set sail west by southwest
away from Guam. No other islands were seen until the flotilla reached the Philippines. Pigafetta noted that a hundred or more proas followed the Spanish flotilla for miles out to sea and the Chamorros held up fish as if to trade, hurling stones when the ships did not halt. With that bad omen, the first European contact with Pacific islanders ended.

The encounter set a precedent that became a tragic pattern in later Spanish-Chamorro relations. The great cultural differences in the values and behavior of the two sides led repeatedly to hostility and armed conflict. The Spaniards invariably won these clashes because of their disciplined military organization and their more advanced technology in metal, arms, and ships.

* * *
Magellan’s expedition sailed away to the Philippines and to the captain general’s death in battle at Mactan on 26 April 1521. Subsequently, the Concepción was burned at Bohol Island because of insufficient men to crew all three ships. The remaining two ships wandered southward to reach Tidore, one of the five Spice Islands, in November 1521, where cargos of cloves were obtained. The Trinidad by then was leaking so badly it had to have a major overhaul. The steady little Victoria would continue westward under Captain Juan Sebastián de Elcano with Pigafetta and Albo still aboard. It departed Tidore in December 1521 and arrived in San Lúcar de Barrameda, Seville’s ocean port at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, on 8 September 1522, after an agonizing voyage across the Indian Ocean and around Africa. Only eighteen men survived, including Enrique, Magellan’s slave, but the globe finally encompassed became a globe reduced forever after that epic first circumnavigation of planet Earth.

Back on Tidore, the Trinidad took until April 1522 to be repaired. Captain Gonzalo Gómez de Espinosa, with a small cargo of cloves, then attempted to return eastward back across the Pacific with the Trinidad to reach Darien in Panama, where Vasco Núñez de Balboa earlier had established Spanish settlements. This course meant that the Trinidad sailed against the brisas of the northeast trade winds, which proved impossible. The ship struggled against the northeast winds up to the northern arc of the Mariana Islands, reaching on 11 June an island at 18°44′N latitude. The Spaniards named the island Cyco or La Griega, now known as Agrihan. The Chamorros on Agrihan behaved so aggressively that Espinosa could not anchor, but, in a normal European tactic, he kidnapped one of them to augment his crew and provide information.

Beating on against the wind, the Trinidad reached approximately 42°N in the temperate zone, where a storm battered the ship for five days. With the Trinidad’s sails in tatters, the Spaniards were forced to turn back and soon anchored inside a ring of three small islands at about 20°N latitude. The Chamorro captive called the largest island, which had only twenty Chamorro inhabitants, Mao or Pamo, according to the Genoese pilot who was aboard. From its description, the island was present-day Maug. The captive also apparently provided the Spaniards for the first time the Chamorro names for each of the Marianas, including Guahan for Guam. These names appeared on a Portuguese map in 1545, but the map was filed away or kept secret and forgotten until the twentieth century.

At Maug, the Chamorro captive was released, but three European crewmen deserted the jinxed Trinidad. One of these men was Gonzalo (Gregorio in some Spanish accounts) Alvarez de Vigo. Two of the deserters were killed by the Chamorros, but Gonzalo survived, the first of many Europeans to jump ship and become a beachcomber on the lovely isles of Micronesia. The Spaniards would later learn much about the Marianas when Gonzalo was retrieved on Guam in September 1526 by the next expedition to the Pacific, that of General Juan García Jofre de Loaysa.

Espinosa’s information and Gonzalo de Vigo’s later elaboration revealed the significance of the Marianas for the navigation of the eastward passage across the north Pacific. Pushed by the south-west monsoon in June and July, a ship on an east-northeast course from the Philippines passes near the northern islands of the Marianas. Espinosa showed that these islands could serve as landfalls to take on provisions or as landmarks for voyages back to Mexico.

The Trinidad barely limped back to the Moluccas, where it was driven ashore and destroyed by a sudden squall at Ternate in the Spice Islands in October 1522. Eventually, only four of the Trinidad’s brave crew, including Espinosa and the pilot Ginés de Mafra, returned to Spain with information about their voyages. That information would be crucial in future Spanish probes into the Pacific.

Stepping Stone to the Philippines

After the Victoria with its meager but precious cargo of thirty tons of cloves and other spices docked at Seville in September 1522, the Spanish
and the Portuguese kings immediately fell to arguing over which of them owned the spices and the right of access to the Moluccas. The Spaniards parried Portuguese claims based on the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, which divided Columbus’ New World in the Americas between the two kingdoms on a line drawn by Pope Alexander VI in a papal bull in 1493. The problem was that it was unclear from the treaty where the pope’s line of demarcation, the forty-sixth meridian, fell on the other side of the globe among the Molucca Islands in an area that today is part of Indonesia. Within the Moluccas lie the five small Spice Islands so avidly sought by the Europeans in the sixteenth century.

Both kingdoms secretly prepared new expeditions to seize the Moluccas while they negotiated. The Portuguese approach was eastward from bases in Africa across the Indian Ocean to a forward base in Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and then to the Spice Islands. The initial Spanish approach was westward across the Atlantic and south around South America and then westward again across the Pacific to the Moluccas on the route opened by Magellan.

In July 1525, Emperor Charles V sent out a fleet of seven ships from Spain under Juan García Jofre de Loaysa bound for the Moluccas with two charts of Magellan’s route. Elcano was second in command. Both men died on the voyage in the mid-Pacific, and Toribio Alonso de Salazar became captain in the passage through Micronesia. Only Loayza’s flagship, the Santa María de la Victoria, reached Guam on 4 September 1526, after a terrible journey during which forty men on the ship died.

The Victoria approached the eastern, windward side of the island. Because of the rough surf and wind on that side, it took the Spaniards two days to anchor in exceedingly deep water, probably off one of Guam’s small windward inlets now known as Pago, Ylig, and Talofofo. As the Spaniards sought to anchor, Chamorros approached in proas. One man in a proa astounded the Spaniards by welcoming them in fluent Spanish. It was Gonzalo de Vigo, who had deserted the Trinidad at Maug in the northern Marianas four years earlier. He had made his way south to Guam and now joined the crew of the Victoria. Apparently pardoned for his desertion, he provided the information about the Marianas that later appeared on the 1544 map of Sebastián Cabot. The map showed the southernmost island—Guam—as Baham.

The Victoria departed Guam on 10 September. Before departing, Alonso de Salazar kidnapped eleven Chamorro men to work the water pumps on his leaky ship. The expedition next touched at Mindanao before reaching Tidore in the Spice Islands in October 1526. There they were attacked by the Portuguese. The Victoria was burned, and the survivors holed up in a fort at Tidore to await rescue by a new Spanish expedition.

In the meantime, the politics of empire building had changed substantially after Hernán Cortés crushed the Aztecs in 1521 and established New Spain in Mexico. By 1522, Cortés was constructing ships on Mexico’s west coast at the village of Zacatula and was proposing expeditions north and south along the Pacific Coast. In 1526, however, Charles V ordered Cortés to send a third Spanish probe into the Pacific to search for Magellan’s lost Trinidad and for the missing Loayza, this time from Mexico’s west coast to the Moluccas via Guam.

Three ships constructed at Zacatula left the nearby harbor of Zihuatanejo on All Soul’s Day in 1527 under the command of Álvaro de Saavedra Ceron in the leaky flagship Florida. They sailed for Guam but drifted south of Magellan’s route. Only the Florida reached Guam. The other ships disappeared, probably wrecked on the dangerous atolls of what would later be called the Marshall Islands.

Saavedra, like Loayza, approached the Marianas further south than Magellan and sighted the eastern side of Guam on 29 December 1527. He could not anchor and laid off the island to take on provisions from Chamorros in proas. Saavedra then went on to land temporarily on Mindanao before finally making the Spice Islands, where he died in 1529. The ship and crew were eventually seized by the Portuguese, who by then were consolidating their control over all the Moluccas.

Neither the Loayza expedition nor that of Saavedra accomplished its mission. The Spanish goals
Chapter 1

were to trade for spices, spread the faith, rescue survivors of the preceding Spanish probes, and establish, if possible, Spanish authority in the Spice Islands. Instead, by 1528 the Portuguese dominated the Moluccan spice trade and held prisoners from all three initial Spanish expeditions into the Pacific.

These earliest European seafarers in the far Pacific and those who followed them in the next century were tough and courageous men who served their nations well in the face of incredible hardships and constant danger. Usually poor and trained as warriors, they came “to serve God and the King, and also to get rich,” in the blunt words of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who fought under Cortés in Mexico. If they survived, they would go home wealthy and powerful. Should they die, they had the firm consolation of dying in the faith with hope of salvation.

Not all Spaniards at the time accepted this ruthless culture of conquest. The most famous critic, Father Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish Dominican, preached and wrote for many years until his death in 1566 in protest against Spain’s treatment of Indians. Another Dominican, Francisco de Vitoria (1486–1546), a well-known professor of theology at the University of Salamanca in Spain whose work represented an early formulation of what would become international law, wrote that indios had rights under “the rules of international law...[and] they who violate these international rules, whether in peace or in war, commit a mortal sin.”

The king of Spain, however, was more concerned with geopolitics than with the state of his soul. Frustrated by the failure of his Pacific efforts, and preoccupied with European imperial politics, Charles V signed the Treaty of Zaragoza in 1529 with King John III of Portugal. The agreement defined the pope’s line of demarcation in the Moluccas in favor of Portugal. Charles V renounced all Spanish claims to the Spice Islands and to most of the remainder of Indonesia. In return, he received from the Portuguese 350,000 gold ducats and, as it would turn out, enough of the western Pacific for Spain later to claim the Philippines and the islands of Micronesia, including Guam.

There was a pause in Spanish efforts in the Pacific between the Treaty of Zaragoza in 1529 and the next official probe westward in 1542 by Ruy López de Villalobos on a large expedition of six ships constructed in Mexico. Instead of stopping on Guam, he stumbled across several more southerly island groups in Micronesia, probably the Marshall Islands, Fais, and Yap. The expedition disintegrated in the Philippines and the Moluccas, and the remnants of the crews were captured in 1545 by the alert Portuguese in Tidore. López de Villalobos died in Ambon in 1546.

Villalobos, however, accomplished one thing of note: he named the Philippine Islands (they were formerly called the Islands of the West by the Spaniards). Villalobos formally named them Filipinas in honor of the royal heir who would become Felipe (Philip) II, king from 1556 to 1598 during the high tide of Spain’s imperial power. Members of the Villalobos expedition who made it back to Spain reported the name, which appeared on a map by Abraham Ortelius of Antwerp in 1589. After Villalobos’ failure, the Spanish authorities waited two decades before trying again to cross the Pacific. During that time, the prices of cloves and other spices, particularly pepper, rose to new heights. The supply of spices was still short of demand in Europe, and the Portuguese still controlled the sources in the Moluccas. So, when Philip II became king, he decided to open his own source of spices in the Philippines. The Spaniards mistakenly thought cloves grew there. In fact, only a limited supply of cinnamon grew in Mindanao.

In 1559, Philip II ordered the second viceroy of New Spain to colonize the islands that bore the king’s name and to establish a spice trade there. It took five years to construct the ships in Mexico and prepare the expedition. In November 1564, a little fleet of four square-rigged naves sailed from Puerto de la Navidad north of Acapulco under the command of Miguel López de Legazpi, a prosperous middle-aged landowner from Mexico City. With
him on the flagship San Pedro as adviser-navigator was his friend and Basque kinsman, and by then a friar (fray in Spanish, sometimes translated as “brother”) in the Augustinian Recollect religious order, Andrés de Urdaneta, who had sailed with Loaya nearly forty years earlier. The other ships were the San Pablo, the San Juan, and the San Lucas.

The king’s lengthy instructions to Legazpi with respect to the Mariana Islands specifically charged him to “select sites and locations for colonization...[but] not occupy or take possession of any private property of the Indians.” The expedition was essentially New World in composition (i.e., mostly criollos—Spaniards born outside Spain), the first of many with little direct participation by Spaniards born in Spain (peninsulares or gachupines). Mestizos (people of Spanish and Indian blood) and mulattoes (people of Negro and Spanish or other blood) were recruited, but pure-blooded New World Indians were not because they were considered by the Spaniards as unreliable at that time. Unlike earlier Spanish expeditions in the Pacific, Legazpi’s fleet was well provisioned and had little trouble in crossing the Pacific.

During the passage to Guam, one ship—the San Lucas—under the command of Alonso de Arellano, deserted the fleet, although he later claimed to have been lost. The San Lucas missed Guam but stopped at Truk and Pulap in the Caroline Islands before reaching the Philippines. Arellano then turned back, sailed north of the Marianas, and crossed the northern Pacific to land at Mexico in August 1565 ahead of Legazpi’s return ship. The San Lucas was therefore the first ship to complete the round trip the galleons would later follow between Mexico and the Philippines.

While the San Lucas was off on its own, Legazpi’s main contingent reached Guam on 21 January 1565. The three ships approached Guam from a more southeasterly direction than had Magellan and sailed around the tiny island of Cocos, “full of palm trees,” on Guam’s southwestern tip after sunset. The ships tacked off the strange shore during the night and prepared to anchor the next morning, 22 January 1565.

No one on board was quite sure if the island was Guam or one of the Philippines. Urdaneta and Legazpi’s chief pilot, Esteban Rodríguez, in all likelihood knew of Umatac Bay from information furnished by Gonzalo de Vigo. Urdaneta believed the landfall to be Guam. Sunrise revealed to the Spaniards a lovely little bay, free of barrier reefs and nestled between high grassy ridges along a small river that leads back several miles into a deep jungle-filled valley. They could see a large canoe house and some huts near the rocky little estuary of the river outlet. Umatac Bay is only a quarter of a mile wide at the entrance and a third of a mile deep, so Legazpi’s larger two ships, and later Spanish galleons, anchored just outside the bay.

Meanwhile, over 400 Chamorro proas collected about the alien ships, according to the accounts of the voyage. From one of the proas an old man called out, “Gonzalo, Gonzalo.” The Chamorros remembered the name of Gonzalo de Vigo, which confirmed to Urdaneta that they were on Guam. Hernando de Riquel, the expedition’s official notary, described in his account of the voyage how the Chamorros began to trade briskly with the Spaniards, who soon learned to be wary. After a deal was struck by sign language, the wily Chamorros would ask that the agreed payment in the form of iron items, mainly nails, be lowered down from the ships. Then they sent up baskets and large calabashes with some rice and many fruits.

The Spaniards soon found that, below the first layer of produce, the bottoms of the baskets were filled with sand and stones. The Chamorros also offered gourds filled with coconut oil, but below the oil, which floated on the surface, was seawater. The Chamorros merely laughed when caught; their view was that of “buyer beware” in trading. They clearly were in no more awe of Legazpi’s men than they had been of Magellan’s.

As with Magellan, the Chamorros made off with a ship’s skiff, but this time the theft did not provoke a fight. Over the next few days skirmishes broke out repeatedly between Spanish soldiers and Cha-
morro warriors but were settled quickly as the Spaniards filled water casks and obtained provisions. Legazpi himself went ashore six days after his ships had anchored. Riquel described how Legazpi took a sword and cut branches of trees and “caused some crosses to be placed on trees, that is some coconut palms.” An open-air mass was celebrated on the shore. Legazpi then formally claimed the islands in the name of Philip II of Spain. Riquel wrote out and notarized the official affirmation that Legazpi “occupied and took possession” of the island on 26 January 1565. In actuality, the Spaniards would neither “occupy” the islands nor take “possession” of them for another century, although all the European nations recognized Spain’s claim to the islands. There was no consultation with the Chamorros, who were probably unaware of the meaning of the Spaniards’ strange ceremonies.

The fights with Chamorro warriors became serious on 1 February, when a Spanish cabin boy was inadvertently left behind by a shore party. When the Spaniards heard shouts from shore and soldiers went back for the boy, they found him dead on the beach. He had been tied to a cross, stripped, killed by spears, his face skinned, and a stake driven into his mouth. Nearby a group of Chamorro warriors jeered at the angry Spaniards and waved the boy’s clothes before being scattered by the soldiers. Meanwhile other Chamorros in proas continued trading as if nothing was occurring. Calm indifference by some islanders alongside violent actions by others would be observed repeatedly in later years by visitors to Guam. This paradox may have been due to separate clans being involved simultaneously with the Spaniards, with each clan concerned only with its own affairs.

In retaliation for the cabin boy’s death Legazpi sent his tough military commander, Captain Mateo de Sar, ashore the next day with soldiers to punish the Chamorros. Mateo set up an ambush near the deserted village and then set fire to the Chamorros’ prized proas before simulating a return to the ships. When some Chamorro men hastily returned to put out the fires in their canoes, three were wounded and one was captured unharmed by the soldiers hidden in ambush. Mateo promptly hanged the three wounded men from a tree near where the cabin boy was killed. As the soldiers were about to hang the fourth Chamorro, Spanish friars interceded and stopped the execution. In later years, Chamorros would often experience what was to them this curious contradiction in Spanish behavior: the vindictive cruelty of soldiers alongside the merciful forgiveness of the priests.

Following this tragic repetition of Magellan’s scenario on Guam, Legazpi’s ships weighed anchor the next morning, 3 February 1565, and departed to the west-southwest. Ten days later, they reached the Philippines, where Legazpi would succeed in establishing the first Spanish colony in Asia and the Pacific.

One of Legazpi’s legacies in the Marianas was the first recorded use of names that were antecedents of what would evolve into the word Guam. Documents of the Legazpi expedition refer variously to Goam, Goam, and Guan as the name of the island in the language of the Chamorros. By the early eighteenth century, the name had evolved into Guana and Gaahan. In his authoritative 1806 history of early voyages in the Pacific, James Burney consistently used Gaahan as the island’s name. In the 1870s and 1880s, the Spanish governors used the similar title Guajan. Finally, the Americans would officially designate the island as Guam in 1908, over 300 years after Legazpi’s landfall.

Having set up a base at Cebú, one of Legazpi’s most urgent tasks was to establish a return route to Mexico. On 1 June 1565, Legazpi sent the San Pedro, his fastest ship, back to Mexico from the Philippines with his seventeen-year-old grandson Felipe de Salcedo as captain, Urdaneta as adviser-pilot, and Esteban Rodríguez as pilot. Under Urdaneta’s guidance, the San Pedro sailed on a northeast track until well above the Marianas at 39°N latitude. Then Urdaneta had the ship turn east across the north Pacific on about a Tokyo-San Francisco latitude, sailing 200 miles or more above the Hawaiian Islands.
Finally, on 18 September, over three months after departing Cebú, the San Pedro reached California and sailed south to arrive at Acapulco on 8 October 1565. Sixteen of the forty-four-man crew died en route, including Esteban Rodríguez, and four more died after arrival. One of these was a Chamorro, the first to reach the New World, sent by Legazpi with three Filipinos from Cebú. The Chamorro had apparently been abducted when Legazpi had claimed the Marianas nine months earlier. Urdaneta, however, had succeeded where Espinosa, Loysa, Saaavedra, Villalobos, and others had failed. The San Pedro delivered the first cargo of Asian products to Mexico by way of the Pacific.

Urdaneta returned to Spain to report to King Philip II on the Philippines venture and, collecting all the new navigational data on winds, courses, currents, and landmarks, put all such information on a map of the Pacific. This map, held secret for decades by the Spanish and updated periodically, standardized the galleon route as a great circular loop around the Pacific north of the equator. Urdaneta fixed the Marianas as a sure and useful landmark and stopover on the trans-Pacific trade route. The Hawaiian Islands, on the other hand, lie isolated by hundreds of empty miles near the center of the galleon loop around the Pacific and therefore remained unseen by Europeans for over 200 more years until the English explorer Captain James Cook found them in 1778.

The Chamorros’ next experience with aliens was with the return ship from Mexico to resupply Legazpi’s new Philippine outpost. The viceroy of New Spain in Mexico sent the San Gerónimo (or San Jerónimo in some accounts) under Pedro Sánchez Pericón on 1 May 1566 from Acapulco to carry soldiers, supplies, and ammunition to Legazpi, who was under attack by the Portuguese. Salcedo remained in Mexico to await Urdaneta’s return from Spain and to prepare the San Pedro and San Lucas for return to the Philippines in 1567. The voyage of the San Gerónimo to the Philippines turned into a deadly melodrama of several murders, including that of Pericón, and the marooning of mutinous crew members in the Marshalls before the ship reached Rota on 4 August 1566. On Rota, the undisciplined Spanish soldiers killed a number of Chamorros and burned numerous houses before the ship hastily departed to reach Cebú in October.

In August of the next year, Salcedo returned to the Philippines from Acapulco with the San Pedro and the San Lucas loaded with supplies, artillery, and soldiers to reinforce Legazpi at Cebú against the Portuguese. It is not known if Salcedo stopped at the Marianas on his way to Cebú from Acapulco. A year later, in June 1568, Legazpi dispatched back to Acapulco the San Pablo loaded with Chinese silk and porcelain and twenty tons of cinnamon, again under the command of Salcedo. Legazpi ordered the San Pablo to stop first at Guam to see if cloves or pepper grew on the island (they did not; only wild ginger was plentiful). At Guam, the San Pablo dragged anchor when a storm rose at night. The ship was smashed against a reef on 15 August 1568 at an unknown location. It was the first of many Spanish ships to be splintered on the coral reefs of the Mariana Islands. Chamorros attacked the survivors but later treated them with kindness. The survivors saved a ship’s launch and constructed a bark from the remains of the wrecked San Pablo. They then managed the remarkable feat of sailing with all the survivors, numbering 132 people, over 1,500 miles of open ocean back to the Philippines in the makeshift bark.

The persistent Salcedo set out again from the Philippines in July 1569 on the San Lucas and finally reached Mexico late that year. Thereafter, the trans-Pacific route for the galleons was an established fact in the empire of Spain. From the viewpoint of European colonial politics, the Pacific Ocean, except for the East Indies region, became a gigantic Spanish lake.

Galleons, Pirates, and Priests

By the time Legazpi died in 1572, the Spanish conquest of the Philippines was nearly complete. Legazpi made Manila the entrepôt of Spain’s colony in Asia. Manila’s role was to trade the New
World's silver, carried by the galleons from Acapulco, for luxuries brought to Manila by merchants from China and other exotic lands of the Orient. Few products of the Philippines themselves were shipped to Spain in the early decades of the galleon trade. More and more Chinese merchant fleets arrived by May each year in Manila with goods for the galleons. By 1596, there were 12,000 Chinese, called Sangleyes by the Spaniards, living in Manila. They became so intrusive that the Spaniards expelled them all that year. They would nonetheless drift back to become again a sizable minority in the Philippines.

Each year, in May or June, the accumulated oriental luxuries in the warehouses of Manila were crammed aboard the great fat galleons in Manila Bay for shipment over the long northern Pacific route to Acapulco and then across Mexico and the Atlantic to Spain. In the geopolitics of European colonialism, the safer alternative route from Manila to Spain southward through the Straits of Malacca, across the Indian Ocean, and around Africa was blocked to the Spaniards by Portuguese rights under the Treaties of Tordesillas and Zaragoza and then by the Dutch, who displaced the Portuguese.

The eastbound galleons, usually called Naos de Manila by the Spaniards, normally set sail from Cavite in Manila Bay with formal prayers and ceremony in June or July with the monsoon winds out of the southwest. The ponderous naos wallowed for five or more tedious but dangerous months across the chilly northern Pacific. At Acapulco, much of the cargo was sold through a trade fair timed for the galleons' arrival. The ships were then loaded with silver (usually Mexican pesos or reales coins, eight of which were cut from a peso, creating the term “pieces of eight”) and Spanish and New World products to pay for the trade accounts in Manila. They also took on soldiers, merchants, missionaries, and government officials along with mail and supplies. These Naos de Acapulco usually departed in March to catch the northeast trade winds back across the Pacific.

In the Spanish galleon crossings, and in the Portuguese spice trade with the Moluccas, the Europeans avoided Melanesia and Polynesia after the disappointing results of several expeditions into those areas. Of these, only the indomitable Pedro Fernandez de Quirós, pilot of the tragic second Álvaro de Mendaña expedition of 1596 under the command of Mendaña's widow, touched at Guam and Saipan. At Guam, his crew killed Chamorros “by an arquebus, owing to a matter of a piece of cask hoop.” Iron was still worth dying for among Pacific islanders seventy-five years after Magellan's crossing.

The Spaniards also bypassed the islands of Micronesia outside the Marianas. Mostly atolls surrounded by dangerous reefs, these southerly island groups of Micronesia had few natural resources to merit conquest, and their populations were too small to attract sustained Spanish missionary efforts. Therefore, all the traditional Micronesian societies except that of the Chamorros in the Marianas escaped the full brunt of European civilization for nearly 300 more years until the nineteenth century, when whalers, traders, and missionaries would invade the region.

Even the Chamorros were largely spared for another century and a half after the intrusions of Magellan and Legazpi on Guam. The eastbound Naos de Manila, still well provisioned the first weeks out of the Philippines, swung north and avoided the Marianas. The westbound Naos de Acapulco usually passed through the Rota channel (called by the Spanish la Bocana, or “mouth,” because it leads to the Philippines) between Guam and Rota just as did Magellan. The galleons often did not anchor, just slowed with furled sails near one of the two islands, not inside the bays where maneuver room was limited. The yearly passings of the galleons became so routine by the seventeenth century that Rota (Luta in Chamorro) began to appear on early maps and in accounts as La Sarpana, Çarpana, Zarpana, or Harpana, names derived from the Spanish verb zapar (to lift anchor). They took on provisions from Chamorros who flocked in proas to trade for iron.

The presence of Spanish galleons laden with treasures on isolated sea-lanes inevitably aroused
the attention of Spain’s enemies, and it was not long before privateers arrived in the Pacific. Privateers were ships privately owned but commissioned to attack enemy merchantmen. The first English privateer, Thomas Cavendish, reached Guam in January 1588 on his appropriately named ship, Desire. Cavendish did not anchor but “passed near the Island of Guahan” and took on food and water from the proas that surrounded the Desire. When the persistent islanders followed the ship as it departed, Cavendish peevishly raked the proas with muskets but could not tell if he killed any Chamorros because the islanders were so nimble in falling backward off the proas and hiding under water when shots were fired at them. He sailed on to the Philippines and Java on the way to present his plunder to Elizabeth I in 1588, the landmark year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada by England and the

Routes of the Spanish galleons. The Manila galleons—loaded with oriental luxuries—sailed from Cavite in June or July with the monsoon winds out of the southwest, following a northeasterly track to the north of the Marianas. They then turned eastward with the north Pacific current to reach California, where they turned south to arrive in Acapulco in November or December after a journey of nearly 3,000 miles. From Acapulco the cargos went to Mexico City, Havana, and Spain. The same ships, now called the Acapulco galleons, and loaded with passengers, mail, supplies, and silver for the Manila and Guam accounts, normally departed westward in March or April to catch the northeast trade winds along the fourteen-degree north latitude. The Acapulco galleons usually touched at Guam or Rota in May or June before reaching Cavite a week or two later. As a consequence of Spain’s colonies and the great circular route of the galleons, the Pacific Ocean came to be considered an exclusive “Spanish lake” for over 200 years.
beginning of Spain’s long, slow decline in imperial power.

Meanwhile, the priests of Spain, with the deep religious zeal of the sixteenth century, became interested in the pagan Chamorros. Catholic missionary interest in the Marianas was an outgrowth of the church’s rapid conversion of the Philippines. With able leaders and sound politics, Catholicism prospered in the Philippines even when Spanish trans-Pacific trade declined in the late eighteenth century. Manila became known as the Almacén de Fe (the warehouse of the faith) for conversion of infidels in the surrounding regions.

It was Franciscan Discalced (shoeless; they wore sandals) friars who impulsively and without permission undertook the initial missionary efforts in the Marianas. The first was Friar Antonio de los Angeles, who in 1596 was aboard the San Pablo with twenty-two other Franciscans en route to assignments in the Philippines. When the galleon came to a halt in the Marianas, probably off Rota, Friar Antonio asked permission of his superior on board to stay in the islands, and the superior casually agreed, thinking the friar was joking. Soon afterward, Antonio dropped into a proa alongside and signaled the Chamorros to take him ashore. He had only his crucifix and breviary. As he sailed away in the proa, two Spanish crewmen jumped into another proa to bring him back. All three Spaniards were marooned when the galleon had to depart.

Fortunately, the three Spaniards were picked up the following year by the next galleon and taken to the Philippines. There, Antonio de los Angeles
Aliens 1521–1638

wrote a short account for King Philip II of his year-long stay in the Marianas. Friar Antonio was the first missionary in Micronesia. Others would follow him with even greater zeal.

Meanwhile, other European intrusions on Guam were not by Spaniards or the English but by the Dutch. Having gained their independence from Spain in 1579, by the turn of the century the Dutch were replacing the Portuguese in the Spice Islands and challenging Spain for trade. The first Dutch ships to reach the central Pacific came in 1600 from around South America and would proceed on around the world to the Netherlands in 1601. Under the command of Oliver van der Noort in his flagship Mauritius, the Dutch flotilla of four ships spent 15 and 16 September 1600 at Guam, bartering iron nails for provisions before sailing off to do battle against the Spaniards under Antonio de Morga in the Philippines.

Later, Dutch visitors to Guam included Joris Spilbergen, from 23 to 26 January 1616, and the “Nassau Fleet,” which stopped for seventeen days in January and February 1625. They careened their ships at Umatac Bay, according to the Spanish Jesuit historian Francisco García. The Chamorros sold rice to the Dutchmen in bales of seventy to eighty pounds each but invariably included sand and rocks in the bottoms of the bales. The Nassau Fleet, with over 1,200 men on eleven ships, was the most formidable alien presence yet to appear in the Marianas. It was an intimidating omen of the future for the Chamorro people.

In the meantime, the Spaniards had continued to make landfalls in the Marianas in between the Dutch expeditions. In July 1601, after being disabled by a typhoon, the Manila galleon Santa María sank off a northwest reef of Rota. Only a few dozen of the 300 people aboard survived, and some were rescued in March 1602 when a fleet of five Spanish ships arrived at Rota from Acapulco. Aboard one of the Acapulco ships was an energetic and perhaps overly zealous Capuchin friar, Juan Pobre de Zamora, who was leading a group of thirty Franciscan missionaries whom he had recruited in Spain.

While the ships were surrounded by Chamorro proas, Juan Pobre and another friar, Pedro de Talavera, jumped into proas alongside their ship. They signaled that they wanted to be taken to shore, and the obliging Chamorros complied. The new governor-general of the Philippines, Don Pedro Bravo de Acuña, was with the fleet. He later wrote of the incident to King Philip II, saying that the Chamorro proas were too swift to be caught by the Spaniards and there was “nothing to do but entrust him [Juan Pobre] to some of the leaders among the indios.”

The two friars remained on Rota for seven months until October 1602, when the Manila galleon Jesus María, which had sailed from Cavite too late in the season and had to put into Rota in distress, took Juan Pobre aboard. In gratitude that the friar was safe and sound, the Spanish officers presented gifts to the Chamorro headman who had been the friar’s protector. They gave him “a monkey, in addition to iron hoops, knives, and scissors.” The headman, whom Juan Pobre referred to as his “master,” was the first Chamorro to have his name recorded in Spanish accounts. He was Sunama, from the village of Tazga on Rota. This village is assumed to have been on the beach, now uninhabited, called Tatgua on the northwest coast of Rota.

While this reunion was taking place, the wind shifted, and the ship had to depart immediately for the Philippines. The captain kept the zealous Juan Pobre aboard, but in the hasty departure the other friar, Pedro de Talavera, was left behind along with another unfortunate Franciscan who earlier had wandered off from the Jesus María to find Juan Pobre and become lost. The two stranded friars were picked up by the next galleon on 18 March 1603, along with a soldier remaining from the Santa Margarita survivors.

Juan Pobre wrote a detailed and sympathetic account of Chamorro customs. His description showed that, as of 1602, eighty-one years after Magellan’s landfall on Guam, the Chamorros had
not yet been drastically changed by European contact. For the next sixty-six years, the galleons from Acapulco continued to pause about once a year off Guam or Rota. This calm pattern was disturbed in September 1638, when a mutiny occurred on the huge, 2,000-ton, heavily laden Manila galleon Nuestra Señora de la Concepción as it approached the Marianas. As several factions among the crew fought each other, the unattended galleon broached, and the masts broke, carrying the sails off into the sea. Helpless, the great ship smashed into the reef at Aagingan Bay on the south-west tip of Saipan, probably on 20 September. Many of the 400 or so crew and passengers were likely drowned in the wreck. Chamorros then killed most of the remaining people aboard and looted the galleon, this time keeping gold jewelry as well as any object of iron. Some twenty-eight Spaniards and an unknown number of non-Spaniards survived, according to a report of the disaster: “Those who escaped went from island to island to those of Uan [Guam] and Harpana [Rota]...where they have been well treated.”

Six of the survivors, led by Juan de Montoya, the ship's captain, sailed in two proas to the Philippines with two Chamorros provided by a young headman named Quipuha (Kepuha or Kipuhá in Chamorro) on Guam. The voyagers arrived in the Philippines on 24 July 1639, almost dead from the arduous 1,500-mile voyage. Another small group led by Francisco Ramos, a boatswain, made a boat and sailed to the Philippines in 1640, while a few other Spaniards, including the pilot, Esteban Ramos, were apparently picked up by galleons in the early 1640s.

Some of the shipwrecked Concepción Filipinos and Spaniards never left the Marianas; marooned for life, they married Chamorros and raised families. Spanish historians wrote that the Tinian headman Taga was baptized by one of the Concepción’s Spaniards, identified as Marcos Fernandez, after a miraculous appearance before Taga of the Virgin Mary on Tinian. According to some accounts, Taga then protected the Spaniards and may have arranged for Quipuha on Guam to send the six survivors by proa to the Philippines. The wreck of the Concepción also released cats and dogs in the Marianas for the first time, and the animals soon multiplied. Rats had apparently come ashore already from earlier European visits. Chickens were brought later after the galleon trade was established. Chamorros later told Spaniards that the European ships even brought flies and mosquitoes to the islands.

As a result of Chamorro aggressiveness, the Spaniards kept largely to their galleons when they paused briefly in the Marianas. The traditional way of life for the Chamorros in their villages therefore continued with only minor, gradual changes as a consequence of Spanish stopovers. The precontact culture of the Chamorros and the natural ecosystem of the Mariana Islands—called tano’ tasi (land of the sea) by the Chamorros—prior to invasion by the Spaniards in 1668 are worth examining in their own right, for after that year Guam and the other Mariana Islands would be transformed forever. Nevertheless, the cultural roots and the genes of the Chamorro people would prove to be remarkably durable.