Spanish Colonial Government, Mariana Islands Records

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Diane Dailey and Georgette Dorn

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Collection Summary

Title: Spanish Colonial Government, Mariana Islands Records
Span Dates: 1678-1899
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1795-1898)
ID No.: MSS55319
Creator: Mariana Islands
Extent: 157 items ; 13 containers ; 5.5 linear feet ; 12 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in Spanish
Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Abstract: Royal decrees, court records, orders to and from the governor, circulars, miscellaneous reports, and other documents. Subjects covered include missionary and church matters, public health measures, agriculture, prisons and criminal investigations, the building and repair of roads, bridges, and military installations, education, and local government for all of the islands, but particularly Guam. Includes a report of 1845 on the water supply system of Manila in the Philippines.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Casillas Salazar, José.
Pazos y Vela-Hidalgo, Angel de, d. 1884.

Organizations
College of San Juan de Letran (Hagåtña, Guam)
United States. Consulate (Hagåtña, Guam)

Subjects
Agriculture--Mariana Islands.
Anglo-Spanish War, 1762-1763.
Bridges--Mariana Islands.
Cattle--Mariana Islands.
Church.
Civic improvement--Mariana Islands.
Coffee--Mariana Islands.
Criminal investigation--Mariana Islands.
Criminal procedure--Marianal Islands.
Democracy--Mariana Islands.
Education--Mariana Islands.
Finance, Public--Mariana Islands.
Fisheries--Mariana Islands.
Fortification--Mariana Islands.
Harbors--Mariana Islands.
Hunting--Mariana Islands.
Local government--Guam.
Local government--Mariana Islands.
Manufacturing industries--Mariana Islands.
Mineral industries--Mariana Islands.
Missions--Mariana Islands.
Prisoners--Mariana Islands.
Prisons--Mariana Islands.
Public health--Mariana Islands.
Public welfare--Mariana Islands.

Roads--Mariana Islands.
Schools--Mariana Islands.
Ships--Pacific Ocean.
Shipwrecks--Pacific Ocean.
Vagrancy--Philippines--Manila.
Visitors, Foreign--Mariana Islands.
Water-supply--Philippines--Manila.

Places
Guam--Politics and government.
Mariana Islands--Colonization.
Mariana Islands--Commerce.
Mariana Islands--Discovery and exploration.
Mariana Islands--Economic conditions.
Mariana Islands--Politics and government.
Mariana Islands--Social life and customs.
Mariana Islands--Statistics, Vital.
Spain--Colonies--Oceania.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The records of the Spanish colonial government in the Mariana Islands were transferred to the Library of Congress by the U.S. Navy Department in 1903.

Processing History

The records of the Spanish colonial government in the Mariana Islands were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was completed in 1979 and revised in 2011.

Copyright Status

It is the researcher's responsibility to determine requirements of domestic copyright laws and international treaties and conventions.

Access and Restrictions

The records of the Spanish colonial government in the Mariana Islands are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on twelve reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Spanish Colonial Government in the Mariana Islands Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Organizational History

The Marianas that form a part of Micronesia consist of fourteen single islands and a group of three small islands. They are, from north to south: Pájaros, Maug (3), Asunción, Agrihan, Pagan, Alamagan, Guguan, Sarigan, Anatahan, Medinilla,

Saipan, Tinian, Aguijan, Rota, and Guam. These high, volcanic islands were peopled originally by the same wave of migration from Indonesia that settled the rest of Micronesia.

Guam, Rota, and possibly Saipan and Tinian were discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, and named “Islas de los Ladrones” [Thieves Island] for the thieving proclivities of the inhabitants. Later they were called “Islas de las Velas Latina’s” [Islands of Lateen Sails.] During the next hundred years Spanish galleons plying between Mexico and the Philippines frequently stopped in the Marianas to take on food and water. The islands were formally claimed for Spain in 1564 by Admiral Miguel López de Legaspi, and were rechristened “Marianas” in honor of Queen María Ana, widow of Philip IV of Spain. A Jesuit mission was established on Guam in 1668 led by Diego Luis de Sanvítores, and after a trying period of wars owing to the cultural clash between friars, soldiers, and natives, Antonio de Sarávia was sent to the islands as royal governor in 1681. A fort was built and a garrison of between twenty and eighty men was henceforth stationed on Guam. A royal order of June 1668 required the Acapulco galleons to put in at Guam.

Colonial government began to take shape formally in 1696. The Marianas were subordinate to the Viceroy of Mexico until 1821 when Mexico became independent, and after that to the Captain General of the Philippines. A code of laws similar to the one in the Philippines was adopted in the Marianas. The insular authorities consisted of a crown-appointed governor, his aide, a judge of the court of first instance, a treasurer and auditor, captains of the port, and military personnel. At the local level there were three elected officials in each town, a *gobernadorcillo* (petty governor), *teniente de barrio* (deputy), and *alguacil* (local police). They were elected by barangays (councils of citizens). There was also a justice of the peace. The Spaniards maintained the isolated archipelago which began costing the crown 34,000 pesos a year. They built forts, roads, bridges, schools, and ports, and taught the natives how to read and write. They also made efforts to instruct them in Christianity.

The Marianas were never a source of wealth for Spain. There were no precious metals, spices, or particularly fertile lands on these barren islands. Agaña, the capital of Guam, had a large prison and was used for prisoners from the Philippines and the Caroline Islands. The ports of Guam, Saipan, and Rota were visited by passing ships. The islands had great strategic value, but they were not self-supporting; foodstuffs, clothing and other supplies were provided first by Mexico and later on by the Administration in Manila. Severe typhoons swept the archipelago periodically destroying crops, wooden houses, and often taking human lives.

Spanish rule lasted until 1898 when Guam was captured by the United States during the Spanish-American War. From this point on, the history of Guam (the largest and most important island) diverges from that of the rest of the Marianas. Guam remains an American territory to this date. Germany purchased the other Marianas from Spain in 1899. The Japanese took military possession of these islands in 1914. They were under a League of Nations mandate from 1922 to World War II. The United States has been administering these islands for the United Nations as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands since 1947.

The following list of governors of Guam up to the year 1898 is taken from the records of the island:

Military Commanders

June 16, 1668	D. Juan de Santa Cruz
May 2, 1672	D. Juan de Santiago
June 16, 1674	D. Damian de Esplana

Governors	**Dates**
D. Francisco de Irisarri	June 10, 1676
D. Juan Antonio de Salas	June 21, 1678
D. José Quiroga	June 5, 1680

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Mariana Islands span the period 1678-1899 with the bulk of the material falling between 1795 and 1898. Four periods (1795-1808, 1818-1826, 1870-1898) are represented by particularly strong documentation.

The material consists of 157 items which are a combination of original documents or contemporary copies from original documents. They are arranged in a general chronological flow within item groupings. The dates overlap both within and without these groups.

Item 1 is indexes of royal decrees sent to the Marianas from 1678 to 1843. Although not all the royal decrees are in this collection of documents, the indexes are very valuable and may be used in conjunction with the holdings of the Archivo General de Indias in Seville and the Archivo General de Simancas, Spain.

Items 2-15 include court cases, royal decrees for the years 1856-1865, instructions for the Governor of Marianas (1856-1884), edicts, and ordinances from the governor of the islands to his subjects. These documents cover a wide variety of insular affairs such as missionaries being sent to Saipan and Tinian, the farming and colonizing of the island of Agrigan, public health measures, the building of two hospitals, the establishment of a U. S. Consulate in Hagåtña, Guam, the escape of prisoners, the building of prisons, ports, and numerous reports on the ships which stopped at the ports of Agaña, Umata, Apra, etc. There is a gap in the governors' instructions for the years 1856-1872, but otherwise these items present a view of the islands' administration. *Items 9-15* consist of edicts, ordinances, and regulations from Spanish officialdom (1794-1806) covering the everyday life of the inhabitants. The subject matter of these edicts ranges from the fencing of domestic animals to rules for hunting wild boars and the forbidding of the manufacture of coconut wine by the natives. These last items coupled with *Items 16-19* and *97*, which consist of official correspondence of three governors (1818-1831), present one of the strongest points of these records.

Items 20-24 are orders and circulars issued by the governors between 1870 and 1894 for the *gobernadorcillos* pertaining to the regulation of mining, cockfighting, and other local matters.

Items 25-38 are governors' reports and investigations ranging from 1796 to 1806. There is one 1762 item: an edict communicating to the people of the Marianas that Spain is at war with Great Britain and surveying the men available who could bear arms in case of an invasion. The governors' reports deal mostly with criminal proceedings, the passage of ships through the islands, and 1802 capture of a British frigate. There is an item on an investigation started in 1802 concerning the miuse of public funds by ex-governor Muro.

Items 39-50 span the years 1828-1831 and 1835-1846, and consist of criminal investigations, land grants, military salaries, port fees to be paid by visiting ships, building and repairs of military installations, roads, bridges, the royal palace at Umata, and the Santa Cruz castle.

Items 51-71 span the years 1852-1873 and contain several criminal investigations, including an inquiry into the murder of the captain of a German brigantine which lay offshore (1852), several shipwrecks (1865), the application of an American physician to settle and practice in Guam (1855), the auction of a shipwrecked vessel, and assistance given to an American whaling ship (1859). There are several items on other disabled ships, an investigation into the mysterious disappearance of a party exploring Tinian and Saipan, and a lengthy investigation relating to the escape of two political prisoners aboard the schooner *Scotland*.

Item 72 is a report on tuberculosis. *Items 73-75* contain vagrancy proceedings, plans to build a bridge at Pigo, the building of a new school, and growing coffee in the Marianas (1876-1879).

Items 76 and *77* consist of documents which grant to Mr. Capelle, a citizen of Agaña, exclusive rights to cultivate Agrigan Island, as well as a subsequent lawsuit brought by the grantee against the crew and owners of an intruding British steamer. *Items 78-92* consist of various criminal and administrative investigations covering the last fourteen years of Spanish rule. An important item is 82, which is an investigation of the assassination of Governor Angel de Pazos y Vela-Hildago. Other items in this cluster include reports and plans to build sixteen bridges, vagrancy proceedings, regulation of fisheries, and the slaughter of cattle.

Items 93-96 include garrison order books for the 1795-1806 period - a strong period in the collection - and a variety of decrees, orders, and circulars to local authorities for 1855 through 1892. *Items 98-99* consist of vital statistics taken in several localities, mostly on the island of Guam.

Items 100-103 deal with church matters such as fees for ecclesiastical services, a copy of the "doctrines of the faith" in Carolinian, and other matters relating to church ceremonies and services.

Items 104-107 contain the document which created the College of San Juan de Letrán in Hagåtña, Guam (1789) and rules enacted in the college in 1836. There are also other documents on schools and curricula (1836-1885). *Items 108-113* refer to

health matters, such as vaccinations, meetings of the Board of Public Health, the appointment of physicians and dentists, surveys of blind, physically handicapped, and poor persons needing public assistance.

Items 114-120 relate to prisons. Item 114 is particularly significant as it outlines instructions to the prison warden of Agaña by Governor Felipe María de la Corte y Ruano Calderón. The latter was an important governor and a captain of engineers, whose eleven-year term was a succession of administrative and economic experiments, many of them successful. These items also include rules and regulations governing the inspection of prisons, and inventories for the 1859-1892 period. Included also is an 1895 treasury report.

Items 121-123 are various instructions: to Governor José Casillas Salazar from the Captain General of the Philippines (1843); to the *gobernadorcillos* of the different towns from the island governor (1834-1835); and to the captains of the ports of Apra and Umata from the authorities in Agaña (1834-1857).

Item 124 contains electoral proceedings. Groups of citizens headed by a cabeza de barangay elected three names for *gobernadorcillo* and the governor chose one of the three, the second person then became *teniente de barrio*, and the third *alguacil*. This is an extremely interesting item concerning grass-roots democracy during the last years of the Spanish empire (1887-1899).

Items 125-141 are letters and reports of *gobernadorcillos* (1895-1898), judicial correspondence (1884-1899), and criminal proceedings (1890-1896). *Items 129-141* contain a large number of administrative resolutions (1843-1895) relating to island affairs such as shipping, commerce, school budgets, salaries, public health, price scales, fishing, and agriculture.

Items 142 and *143* are instructions for urban improvements, repair of streets and houses, and directives for harvesting crops (1844 and 1856).

Item 144 consists of orders and regulations regarding foreign travelers arriving at the Marianas, and provisions for lodging and other matters relating to transients.

Items 145-148 are instructions by Governor Felipe María de la Corte y Ruano Calderó relating to the improvement of agriculture on several islands and the acquisition of ships to transport crops to the market places.

Items 149-151 contain military orders and consular correspondence, while *Items 152 through 156* contain miscellaneous materials.

Item 157 is a study, by the department of engineers of the Philippines, of the water supply of the city of Manila, written in 1845.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in a general chronological flow within 157 item groupings in ten broad categories. The dates overlap both within and without these groups.

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