

139

# CIVIL AFFAIRS HANDBOOK

## Mandated Marianas Islands

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## 131. Discovery and Early Contacts

**Prehistory.** The Marianas Islands appear to have been peopled originally by the same wave of migration from Indonesia that settled the rest of Micronesia, namely, the Caroline, Marshall, and Gilbert Islands. Many physical and cultural resemblances link the Micronesians to the Polynesian peoples of the remoter parts of the Pacific. Experts now believe that the Polynesians moved eastward into their present habitat by way of the Micronesian islands about 1200 A.D. They may well have represented the first part of the wave of migration which later brought the Micronesians themselves into the area, although they may have found the Micronesians already in possession and moved on to the remoter, unoccupied islands. It is clear, however, that the Polynesians, though resembling the Micronesians in many respects, differ appreciably from them in language and culture, and show fewer similarities to the peoples of Indonesia.

Of the various Micronesian peoples, the Chamorros of the Marianas, and to a lesser extent the natives of Palau and perhaps also of Yap, show the strongest resemblances in physique, language, and culture to the inhabitants of the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. In part this is unquestionably due to early historic contacts with the Philippines, mediated by the Spaniards, and to the resulting racial admixture and cultural borrowing. On the whole, however, the similarities seem to be too fundamental to be thus accounted for, and it is probable that there were still earlier contacts, iniltration, or migration, occurring in prehistoric times but subsequently to the original outward movement of the earliest Micronesians and Polynesians.

Spectacular archaeological remains of an earlier culture are found scattered in abundance through the Marianas, particularly on Guam, Rota, Saipan, and Tinian. They consist mainly of double rows of stone columns 3 to 16 feet high, capped with hemispheric headpieces of coral. These pillars are now generally considered to be the foundations of large Chamorro houses and canoe sheds, some of which were reportedly still standing at the time of the earliest visits by Europeans.

**Discovery and Exploration.** Guam and Rota, and just possibly also Aguijan, Saipan, and Tinian, were discovered by Fernando Magellan on March 6, 1521. Ninety-eight days earlier Magellan's party, already reduced from five to three small ships of not over 130 tons and badly in need of provisions, had sailed from the Strait of Magellan into the Pacific. By the cruelest of mischances, they missed hundreds of South Pacific islands, and when at last they reached Guam many of the crew had died of scurvy and famine, and the rest had been reduced to eating rats and the salt-impregnated leather from the stand-the rigging. Naked natives riding in small outrigger canoes with triangular sails came out to meet the ships and to offer gifts of fruits and other food. The famished Spaniards gladly gave trifles of iron and clothing in return. The natives, emboldened by the weakened condition of the Spaniards, became increasingly curious and rapacious; they soon began to make off with whatever they could remove from the ships, and finally they cut loose the ship's boat and took it ashore. Some 40 of the Spaniards, led by Magellan himself, summoned strength to pursue. They used their firearms and bows and arrows to good effect upon the amazed natives, burned 40 or 50 houses in the village and many boats on the shore, killed 7 or 8 natives who ventured back, retrieved the ship's boat, loaded it with whatever provisions they found in the settlement, and returned to their ship. Three days later, after resting and taking on food and water, the company set sail again, branding the islands "Las Islas de las Ladrones," although they had earlier named them the Lazarus Archipelago, in honor of Saint Lazarus on whose day they had first made land.

In 1524 Magellan's subaltern, Eltano, who had commanded the only one of Magellan's ships which had actually returned to Spain, set out on a second voyage and revisited the island of Rota. The Spanish explorer Loaisa, whose expedition left Spain soon after Magellan's, reached Guam in 1526 and remained there for four days. Loaisa took on food and water and managed also to kidnap eleven natives, whom he compelled to man the ship's pumps. Spurred by glowing accounts of the extent, beauty, and riches of the Pacific islands, King Charles V of Spain dispatched General Ruy Lopez de Villalobos to substantiate the reports. Villalobos did not reach the Marianas, but Admiral Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, who was charged by Philip II with conquest of all the islands reported by Magellan and Villalobos, landed on Saipan in November, 1564, and there proclaimed Spanish sovereignty over the group, which he renamed "Las Islas de las Velas Latinas," after the peculiar sails employed in the region. Legaspi was accompanied by Augustinian fathers, who celebrated mass, set up the cross, and promised the friendly natives to send them preachers of the true religion. Inappropriately, the next visitor was the English pirate Cavendish, who in 1588, bartered with the natives for fresh food and then shot at them to be rid of them. The Spanish explorer Quiros touched at Saipan in 1596. During the next hundred