

The Native Origins of the Neo-Chamorros of the Mariana Islands¹

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Abstract.—The recent discovery of Spanish census records from the 19th Century challenges the notion that modern hybrid populations of these islands represent descendants of a predominantly alien origin. The persistence of a large native segment of the total population into the 19th Century argues against the extensive, early hybridization with Europeans and Asiatics proposed by most authorities and confirms Howells' (1973) qualifications, suggested by biological evidence, that foreign contributions to the gene pool have been less extensive than hitherto believed.

A persistent problem in the physical anthropology of Micronesia is the apparent discrepancy between biological and ethnohistorical data concerning the composition of the modern hybrid population of the Mariana Islands, or neo-Chamorros. Early visitors to these islands unanimously testified to the precipitous decline in the numbers of natives which followed upon Spanish efforts to resettle the inhabitants of the entire island chain on Guam during the last decade of the 17th Century (Underwood, 1973). The total population of these islands, variously estimated as numbering between 50,000 and 150,000 at the beginning of Spanish missionization efforts in 1668, was reduced to no more than 5,000 by 1699 (Bastian, 1899–1900; Castro, 1933–1934) with all, except for a few hundred refugees on Rota Island, resident on the island of Guam. An official Spanish census for 1710 recorded fewer than 4,000 residents of Guam and Rota and Thompson (1945), who has written extensively on the ethnography and ethnohistory of Guam, contends that 3,197 natives and 417 mestizos comprised the total population of Guam in 1710.

The resident population of Guam and Rota continued to decline, although at a much lower rate, during the 18th century and numbered, according to Freycinet (1829), 3,169, including 1,318 natives, in 1786. A period of rapid population growth occurred between 1786 and 1856, and much of this growth has been ascribed (Underwood, 1973) to natural increase, since immigration during this period did not seem to exceed previous levels. Following the disastrous small pox epidemic of 1856, which reduced the population of Guam by nearly half—from over 9,000 to less than 5,000—a program of government-sponsored immigration began which brought at least 1,000 Caroline Islanders and nearly as many from the Phillipine Islands to the Mariana Islands subsequent to 1856. The population of all inhabited islands of the

¹ This project was supported by a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc.

entire group has increased steadily and dramatically in the 20th Century and, by 1950, included 27,124 "Chamorros" out of a total resident population of 59,498 on Guam. In 1960, Chamorros numbered 34,762 out of a resident population of 67,044 on Guam (18th U. S. Census, 1960).

A number of reports on the early population history of these islands tends to denigrate the relative contribution of indigenes to the gene pool of the neo-Chamorros. Dampier, who visited Guam in 1685, claimed that not more than 100 "Indians" were then living on the island (Purvis, 1880, Safford, 1901; Haswell, 1917; Reed, 1952). Kotzebue, who visited Guam in 1817, claimed that only one native man and his wife, out of a total resident population of 5,386, were then left on the island of Guam (Kotzebue, 1821; Gulick, 1860). Such statements, in the absence of contradictory census reports, apparently led Thompson (1947: 35) to conclude: "The indigenous population of the Marianas continued to diminish until, by the middle of the nineteenth century, no full-blooded natives survived."

The obvious implications of this interpretation of the population history of the Mariana Islands have been recognized by physical anthropologists working in this area of the world, but the lack of congruence between the expected biological attributes of a hybrid population to which the native contribution would have been so negligible and the observed data from anthropometric, osteological and blood studies among neo-Chamorro groups has proven irreconcilable. Hunt (1950), noting resemblances in blood group traits between neo-Chamorros and central Micronesians, voiced reservations as to the extent to which recent admixture with Filipinos, Mexicans or others might account for the distinctive anthropometric averages for neo-Chamorros in comparison with other native Micronesian populations. More recently, Howells (1973: 247) has suggested that the substantial admixture of Europeans or Asiatics with the native populations of the Mariana Islands indicated by historical data is not reflected in the anthropometric, osteological and blood studies now available:

Nevertheless it may be that the Chamorros have not been as fully denatured as this historical data suggests, if the sample measured on Saipan and used in my analysis still takes the position it does. In addition, blood evidence . . . fails to suggest substantial European or Asiatic hybridizing with the Chamorros.

CENSUS REPORTS AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES

Population composition, by ethnic group, was recorded in Spanish census reports prior to 1831, and some of these materials, particularly for occasional years between 1710 and 1790, have been summarized by different writers (Thompson, 1945, 1947; Kotzebue, 1921; Freycinet, 1829; Safford, 1901; Bowers, 1950). A fairly extensive series of such reports, covering much of the critical period of 1790-1830, has recently been located. Microfilm records of documents held by the Ataneo de Manila were generously made available to me at the Australian National Library in Canberra. These provided new information for evaluating the population history of these islands and for reconsidering the apparent conundrum of inter-

Table 1. POPULATION COMPOSITION, GUAM AND ROTA, 1793-1816

Year	Source	Officials and Troops		Spanish and Mestizos		Filipinos and Descendants		Natives		Others		TOTALS		
		Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	All
1793	(1)	147	—	476	485	315	395	894	872			1832	1752	3584
1795	(1)	147	—	245	292	428	470	970	924	11 ^a	13 ^a	1801	1699	3500
1797	(2)	144	—	609				1111		1125 ^b				2989
1799	(1)	142	—	266	325	535	629	1075	999	14 ^a	16 ^a	2032	1969	4001
1800	(1)	139	—	287	255	560	674	1098	1010	18 ^a	19 ^a	2102	1958	4060 ^c
1800	(2)							2206		1752 ^d				
1801	(1)	140	—	291	366	569	705	1131	1011	18 ^a	13 ^a	2149	2095	4244
1802	(1)	139	—	312	364	475	681	1156	995	13 ^a	14 ^a	2095	2054	4149
1816	(3)	147	—	1109		1484		1320	1239	90 ^e				5389

Sources:

- (1) Spanish Census Records, Ataneo de Manila microfilms
- (2) Marche, 1889
- (3) Prowazek, 1913, after Don Medinilla y Pineda

Footnotes:

- (a) listed as "Moreno"
- (b) includes 1097 "mixed" and 28 "others"
- (c) error on original, corrected
- (d) listed as "Mixed"
- (e) includes 38 "Mixed" and 52 Carolinians

Table 2. POPULATION COMPOSITION OF GUAM, ROTA AND TINIAN, 1825-1830 (from Spanish Census records)

Categories	1825		1828		1829		1830	
	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe	Ma	Fe
Officials and Troops			78	—	79	—	70	—
European Spanish			2	—	5	—	5	—
English & descendants			29	13	32	14	33	8
French & descendants			6	2	4	2	4	1
Mestizos ("Mixed")	3218		494	476	512	494	508	499
Filipinos & descendants			1189	1277	1265	1292	1272	1340
Natives (Yndios)	2683		1419	1373	1356	1341	1355	1297
Mulattos			14	22	10 ^c	19	13	22
Malayans			14	14	15	16	15	15
Pacific Islanders			16	10	15	9	22	11
Totals		5901	3261	3187	3293	3187	3297	3193
			6448		6480		6490	

preting the biological characteristics of the modern inhabitants of this area.

Table 1 includes summaries of six Spanish census reports recorded at irregular intervals from 1793 to 1802, as well as population data showing certain ethnic categories reported by Marche (1889) and Prowazek (1913). Spanish census reports for 1825, 1828, 1829, and 1830, which utilized slightly different ethnic categories, are summarized in Table 2. Table 3, based on a compilation of data from the previous tables, shows the composition of the population of the Mariana Islands, by percentage of each major ethnic group in the population, recorded at specific intervals

Table 3. MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS, BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, MARIANA ISLANDS, 1793-1830

Date	Source	Officials and Troops	Spanish ^a and Mestizo	Filipinos and De-scendants	Natives	Others ^b	Mixed	TOTAL NUMBERS
PERCENTAGES								
1793	(1)	4.10	26.81	19.81	49.27	—	—	3,584
1795	(1)	4.20	15.34	25.66	54.11	0.69	—	3,500
1797	(2)	4.82	20.37	—	37.17	37.64	—	2,989
1799	(1)	3.55	14.77	29.09	51.84	0.75	—	4,001
1800	(1)	3.42	13.35	30.39	51.92	0.91	—	4,060
1800	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1801	(1)	3.30	15.48	30.02	50.47	0.73	—	4,244
1802	(1)	3.35	16.29	27.86	51.84	0.65	—	4,149
1816	(3)	2.73	20.58	27.54	47.49	1.67	—	5,389
1825	(1)	—	—	—	45.47	—	54.53	5,901
1828	(1)	1.21	0.03	38.24	43.30	2.17	15.04	6,448
1829	(1)	1.22	0.08	39.46	41.62	2.10	15.52	6,480
1830	(1)	1.08	0.08	40.25	40.86	2.22	15.52	6,490

Sources: Original figures from
 (1)—Spanish census records
 (2)—Marche, 1889
 (3)—Prowazek, 1913

Footnotes:

- (a) "Mestizos" excluded from this category in Spanish census reports for 1828-1830.
 (b) Includes for 1828-1830 census reports: English and descendants; French and descendants; Mulattos; Malaysians; and Pacific Islanders.

during the period 1793-1830. A summary of the information contained in Table 3 is graphically represented in Figure 1, drawn to show the relative contribution of Chamorros, Filipinos, and "All Others" to the total population figures for each of the census reports for which such information was recorded.

It is clear from these figures that the native segment, designated as "Yndios" in the original Spanish records, constituted the largest single group within the total population during the entire period of 1793-1830. Gross discrepancies characterize the figures presented by Marche for 1797 and official data from reports of preceding and subsequent years (1795 and 1799) and, thus, impugn the accuracy of Marche's reports. However, Prowazek's report for 1816 seems congruent with trends reported in earlier official reports, and the total figure of 5,389 is consistent with Gulick's report of 5,386 for the same year (Gulick, Reel 1, AMERICAN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS, microfilm, Item 108) and with Wheeler's report, after Sanchez y Zayas, of 5,406 in 1818 (Wheeler, 1900). If Marche's data are excluded from consideration, a general trend of gradually declining relative dominance of the native segment of the population characterizes the entire period (49.3 per cent in 1793 to 40.9 per cent in 1830), although the absolute numbers of this group increased from 1,766 in 1793 to 2,652 in 1830. During the same period, the Filipino segment of the total population increased from 710 in 1793 to 2,612 in 1830, or from 19.8

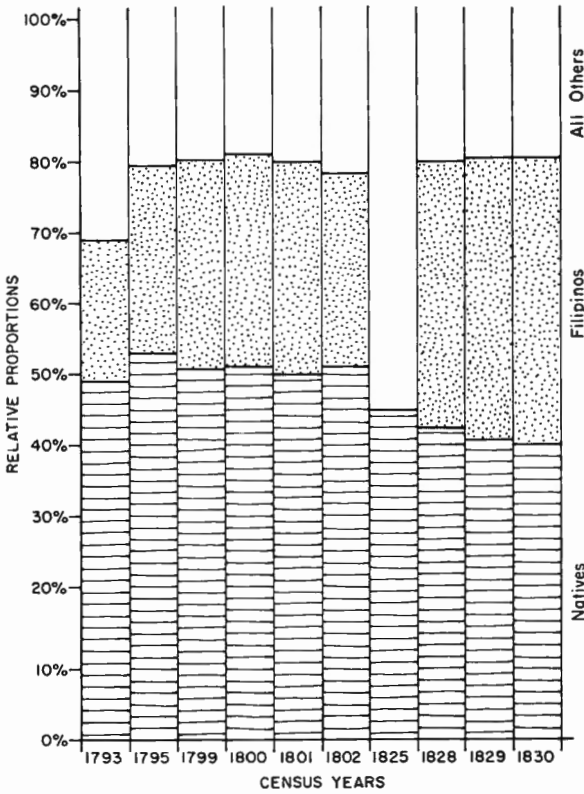


Fig. 1. Relative proportions of Ethnic groups Mariana Islands, 1793-1830. (Spanish Censuses)

per cent to 40.3 per cent of the total population. Obviously, these rates of relative change could not possibly have led to the complete absence of natives among the total resident population by the middle of the 19th Century.

DISCUSSION

Although it is now evident that a sizeable native ("Yndios") component of the total resident population of the Mariana Islands persisted well into the 19th Century, no direct record defines specific criteria used by Spanish authorities in defining membership of this group. However, it seems unlikely that distinctive socio-economic criteria distinguished Filipinos from "Yndios" for, in the 1820's, according to Carano and Sanchez (1964: 144): "The island has no industry or commerce, and the entire population, 3,000 of whom lived in Agana, lived off the products of the soil." Some redefinition in the category of "Spanish and Mestizos" took place between 1802 and 1825, for reports beginning in 1825 exclude "Mestizos". In addition, the annual Spanish colonies grant for Guam was sharply reduced following the liberation of Spanish Colonies in the Americas by 1825 and expectably led to marked decline in the number of Spanish citizens maintained in the Mariana Islands. More-

over, Spanish attention to such fine gradations of census categories as those implied by such distinctions as "Mestizos", "Mulattos", "Malayans", "Morenos" and "Pacific Islanders" strongly suggests that racial and/or genealogical features were recognized and important variables used in census assignments.

Finally, whatever the extent to which Spanish authorities employed biological attributes for census purposes, the alleged "Purity" of some hypothetical ancestral group is a specious issue in unravelling the genetic history of the modern neo-Chamorros. The presence of the Chinese, Choco, in Guam at the time of the arrival of the Spanish mission in 1668 dramatically belies any implied typological notion of formerly undefiled races intermingling in the Marianas Islands since 1521. Archaeological studies in Guam (cf. Reinman, 1973) attest to the numerous sources of influence which had reached these islands long before Europeans arrived, while the Spanish, Mexicans and Filipinos who came to this part of the world in the wake of Magellan's discovery were, themselves, all the products of mixed heritages. Despite the gross decimation of the resident population of the Mariana Islands in the 17th and 18th Centuries, the genes of the survivors of the indigenous population have been passed on through and to their hybrid descendants.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Recently discovered records of Spanish census reports chronicle the persistence of a native group which outnumbered every other recognized group among the total resident population of the Mariana Islands between 1793 and 1830. The finer distinctions of census group categories made in Spanish census reports, as well as the probable absence of marked socio-economic differentials between the two major ethnic groups—Filipinos and natives—suggest that these categories reflected racial and/or genealogical factors of categorization in Spanish census procedures.

These materials also reflect the growing contribution of the Filipino group to the total composition of the resident population of the Mariana Islands during these critical years prior to the 1856 smallpox epidemic. Subsequently, migration certainly contributed to augment their numbers. The rise of a mestizo group was more likely to have involved mixed marriages between Filipinos and natives than a massive infusion of European and Asian genes. In this light, Howell's concern with the absence of biological evidence indicating substantial European or Asiatic hybridizing may be resolved, particularly as the physical anthropology of the Philippine Islands become better known.

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