

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL HISTORY AND PATTERNS OF RESOURCE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

2. 1. PREHISTORIC PERIOD (PRIOR TO 1521)

2. 1. 1. Introduction; Dates and Origins

The islands of our Mariana Archipelago were probably the first islands in all of Micronesia to be colonized by people. The first human immigrants arrived by sailing canoe, most likely between 2,500 - 2,800 BC, or just about 5,000 years ago.

The exact origin of our first settlers, the “Chamorros”, is uncertain. One hypothesis of **anthropology** suggests that our first settlers came from the major island groups near the Asian continent, probably the Philippines or Indonesia.

In fact, researchers have learned that our islands received several human migrations. A full accounting of what these scientists have learned is beyond this chapter’s scope. Here, and throughout this chapter, we strive to summarize.

We do encourage you, our readers, to explore the disciplines of history, anthropology, geography, archeology, and such other social and physical sciences that critically delve into our past and our origins. Research on your own as much as you can of our islands’ several cultures’ heritages. We assure you, you will find it fascinating.

2. 1. 2. Landscapes and Villages

When the first Chamorros arrived, our island’s landscape was largely a wooded one. Botanists hypothesize that human-set fires, within forests with poor soils underneath them, likely encouraged the development of our grass-covered savanna lands. (See more in Chapter 21, on savannas). When our ancestors arrived, it is likely they changed our islands’ vegetation landscapes to a great extent.

Prehistoric settlement patterns changed over the long period of pre-western contact time. Reflecting the importance of the sea as a source of food, many settlements likely concentrated along the coast.

Archeology has a relatively good record of the Latte Period, the time when our still-visible “latte stones” were built. We understand that, during this time, our Chamorro ancestors lived in villages of fifty to



During the Latte Period, our Chamorro ancestors lived in villages of fifty to one hundred and fifty huts.

one hundred and fifty huts. Our islands' interior villages were smaller. They seldom consisted of more than twenty structures.

2. 1. 3. Early Chamorro Economy

The early Chamorros' economy was based on both the soil and the sea. They hunted, gardened, fished, and collected items and food needed for the family and the village. Farm plots were shifted when the soil became exhausted.

Early Chamorros also used food resources from the forest and the ocean in their diet. They hunted and gathered fruits, roots, and herbs in the forests. The ocean provided several resources, most commonly fish and shellfish.

Bivalve shellfish of the Family Tellinidae were very important to their diet until about 2,500 years ago. By that time, many coastal bays had closed off to form low-lying lagoons. Many of these bays have since silted up to form the current **palustrine** wetlands found in our islands today. This was particularly true for Saipan.

By 1,000 years ago, the population of Chamorros had increased. Social changes and an increased dependence on starchy food occurred, perhaps being a stimulus to the increase of the population. Rice was either grown as a dry crop or in streams and marshes. Breadfruit, coconuts, yams, upland taro, sugarcane, and bananas occupied the higher lands. More intensive fishing techniques can also be tied to the increased population.

By the time of western contact, the Chamorros were proficient open water sailors. Small fleet-sailing outriggers called "flying proas" allowed them to exploit the rich near-island **pelagic** fisheries. Flocks of seabirds guided them to fish schools just as they do for us today.

2. 2. SPANISH PERIOD (1521 - 1899)

2. 2. 1. Discovery (Western Contact)

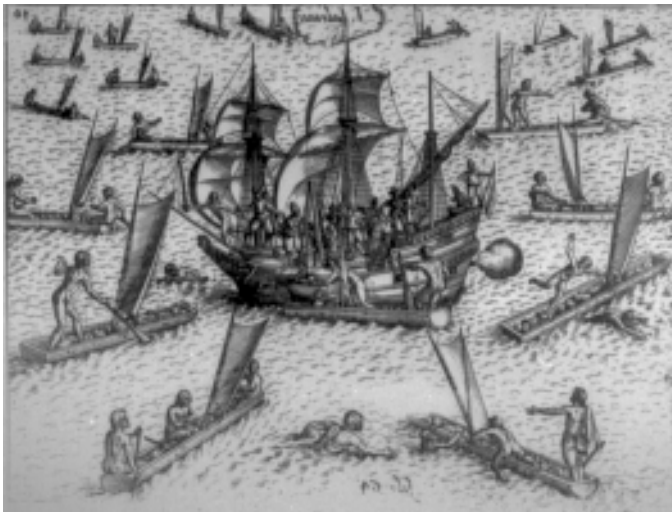
Western contact began when the Mariana Islands were first sighted by the noted admiral/navigator Ferdinand Magellan on March 6, 1521. The archipelago was formally claimed by Legazpi for the Spanish in 1565. At the time of western contact, the Chamorro population in all the Mariana Islands, including Guam, was estimated by later authorities to have been approximately 28,000.

After a misfortunate incident and obvious cross-cultural misunderstanding, Magellan, upon his departure, christened the islands "Islas de los Ladrones" (Islands of the Thieves). The archipelago was later renamed in honor of the Queen of Spain, Queen Mariana.

For over a hundred years after their first contact, the native Chamorro people and the Spanish had very little interaction. A few times a year, Spanish ships would anchor off of Guam or Rota to get water and other supplies. These ships rarely ventured north to Tinian, Saipan, or the Northern Islands. Enthusiastic missionaries, however, did leave the ships to visit our archipelago.



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2. 2. 2. The Conversion Effort and the Mission Period

During the early period of contact, there were minor conflicts between the Spanish and the Chamorro. Jesuit missionaries wanted to convert all the Chamorros to Christianity. A period of increased pressures on the people and on the resources of the Northern Marianas began because of this decision.

2. 2. 3. “Reduccion”

Padre Sanvitores arrived in 1668, leading the first organized Jesuit mission in the Marianas. This was some years after an earlier visit he had made here. This time Sanvitores had been given the mission of the “*Reduccion*” of the Marianas. “*Reduccion*” is a Spanish word that means *causing* the native inhabitants to accept the values and characteristics of a Spanish *pueblo* society.

This mission-life establishment meant entirely changing the traditional Chamorro lifestyle. The Spaniards considered the islander culture a disorganized, uncivilized, pagan community. The new Spanish goal was to establish structured villages within an orderly community.

The missionaries also intended to build churches where **Catholicism** was taught. Gathering the islanders to villages with a priest was deemed essential to acculturate Catholicism. The use of force to do so was determined warranted. A more careful population estimate by the missionaries was done in 1669 which placed the number of Chamorros at just about 20,000.

2. 2. 4. Diseases

Each year Spanish galleons usually visited the Marianas. Epidemic diseases were introduced into the archipelago by contact with those ships’ crews. An outbreak of **smallpox** occurred in the Marianas in 1688, then **influenza** arrived in 1700. These diseases greatly reduced the Chamorro population. Chamorros called these illnesses “sickness of the ships” and even prior to the mission period, took steps to avoid direct contact with the visiting galleons.

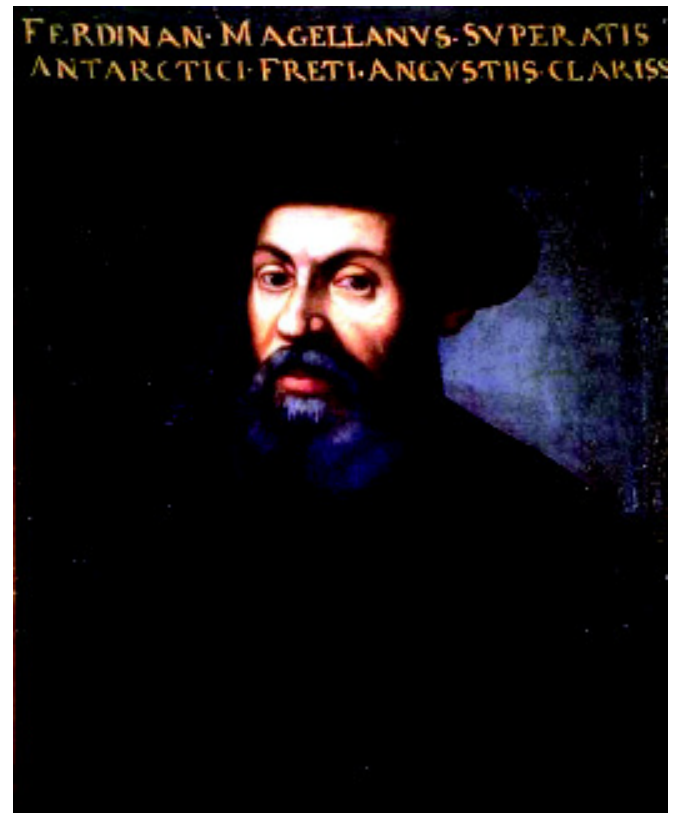
2. 2. 5. Cultural Conflicts

Zealous Jesuit missionaries came into conflict with the Chamorro leaders throughout the Marianas. The Spanish priests could not accept the natives’ customs. The changes demanded by the Spanish missionaries were against the ancient Chamorro way of life. After a few months, these differences caused a tragic period of violence. The Spanish and Chamorros were too intolerant of each other culture, customs, and religion to live together peacefully.

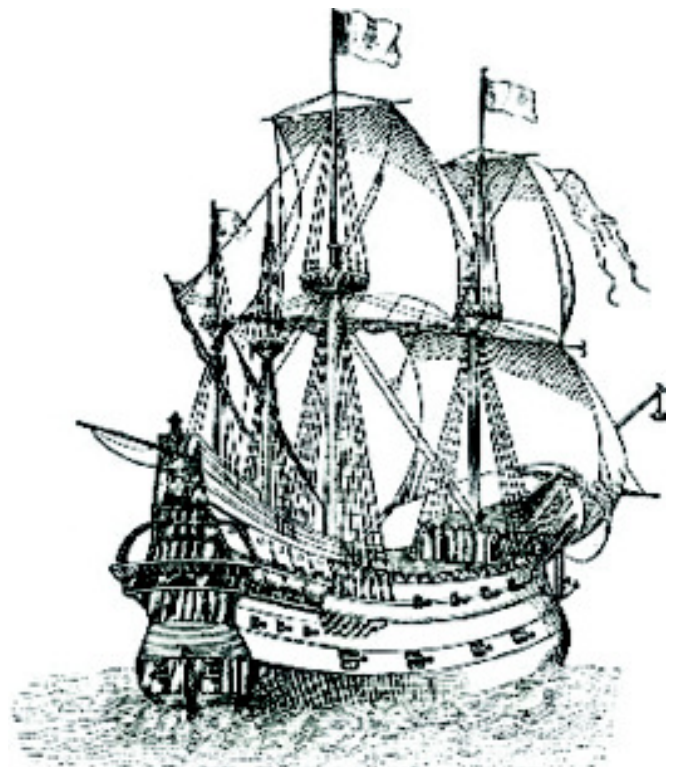
By military decree, the Spanish forced the Chamorro people to resettle to Guam and to subject themselves to Spanish laws and religious rites. Many Chamorros were tortured or killed for resisting these new edicts. The “*reduccion*” decree mandated displacement from our ancestors’ island residences and their cultural lifestyles as well.

2. 2. 6. The Spanish vs. Chamorro War

Episodes of armed Chamorro resistance began. For the next seventeen years, the Spanish and the Chamorros fought for control of Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and the Northern Islands.



Ferdinand Magellan.



Each year Spanish galleons usually visited the Marianas.

Chamorro leaders on Guam murdered the missionary leader, Padre Sanvitores, after he performed an unsanctioned baptismal rite. Shortly after Sanvitores was ambushed and killed, Spanish reinforcements arrived. These reinforcements then mounted an offensive against the Chamorros on Guam.

2. 2. 7. An Overwhelming Military Technology

The Spaniards effectively used lead and gunpowder in battles. They overwhelmed the Chamorros, who used sling stones and spears.

Spanish military expeditions were mounted to our more northern islands as well. These islands' inhabitants were relocated to Saipan and then eventually were moved to Guam. The last holdouts of organized Chamorro resistance were killed or captured on Aguiguan around 1695.

2. 2. 8. Effect on Our Islands' Populations and the Resulting 100 Years of Our Islands' Vacancy (excepting Rota)

The effect on our islands' populations from this period of conflict was devastating. In 1710, the Spaniards conducted the first complete census in the Mariana Islands. By this time, the census showed there were only 3,530 Chamorros left.

In just forty one years, eighty-seven percent (87%) of the Chamorros had been killed from disease, torture, and war. The Spanish mission term of *reduccion* came to have a new meaning, "reduction".

The Chamorros who lived through the abuse and diseases were forcibly moved to mission settlements on Saipan and Guam. The islanders on Saipan had to live within earshot of the mission bells. This way their daily lives were easier for the Spanish to monitor. This also enabled each native to know when it was time for mass and other Catholic rituals. In 1722 the Chamorro population reached its lowest-ever census of 1,936. Only fifty-five percent (55%) of the previous greatly-reduced indigenous population of 1710 remained.

In an effort to ensure complete conversion, the Spanish built two missions on Saipan. Islanders were assigned to the mission closest to their farms. People could only leave the immediate mission area for short periods to tend their gardens.

Shortly after 1740, the missions on Saipan were closed. Everyone was forced to move to Guam. Within ten years, all CNMI islands north of Rota, were basically deserted until the arrival of the Carolinians, 100 years later. Rota remained populated, as did nearby Guam, throughout the Spanish Colonial period.

2. 2. 9. Storm Refugee Islanders Arrive from the Island of Satawal; Other Islander "Tsunami" Refugees Arrive

In the early to mid-1800's, a major typhoon devastated the eastern and western Caroline islands. Led by Chiefs Aghurub and Ngusbul, Carolinians from Satawal asked the Spanish if they could settle in the Marianas. The Spanish governor granted the refugees permission to colonize the then-unoccupied island of Saipan around 1830. These original Carolinians established our islands second indigenous culture.



The Spaniards overwhelmed the Chamorros.



Shortly after 1740, everyone was forced to move to Guam. (Early Painting of Umatac Village on Guam).

In 1849 a tremendous tsunami overswept several Caroline atoll islands. The *tidal wave* was even observed as far north as Guam. Survivors sailed to Guam and were later allowed to go on to settle on Saipan and Tinian.

After their arrival on Saipan, the first Carolinians established the villages of Arabwal (later called Garapan) and Tanapag. Arabwal was settled first, while Tanapag was settled thirty to forty years later. Arabwal was the larger Carolinian settlement.

2. 2. 10. Inter-Island Trade and the Present Day Continuation of an Awe-Inspiring Sea Venture Tradition Led by the Master Navigator, Mao Pialug

Carolinian islanders then undertook regular sailing canoe voyages back and forth from Saipan to the Western Carolines over some 600 nautical miles of ocean. Carolinian adventurers regularly sailed the distance in small hand-built canoes without the aid of modern navigational equipment.

At the time of this book's writing, traditional navigator Dr. Mao Pialug leads the continuation of this, more-than-150-year-old, cultural heritage. As the master navigator, he personally and regularly leads voyages from Satawal to Saipan and back.

In 1999 Dr. Pialug visited Saipan after leading a historic traditional navigation trip from Hawaii all the way across the Pacific. He recently completed the restoration of a sailing canoe, teaching others this skill. He later returned to Hawaii to teach traditional navigation.

Through oral narrative and personal example, he teaches the practice of building, maintaining, and sailing the traditional canoes. He reads—and teaches others how to read—the sea's waves and currents, the stars, the sky, and the ocean's animal life for their telltale signs of location and direction, storm occurrences, and the vicinity of nearby islands.

Dr. Mao Pialug's stories are fascinating and inspiring. Both our younger and older Carolinians and others as well, are strongly encouraged to interact with and learn from this master navigator and his students. Sail with him and his students when you are able. Sail with other traditional navigators. Participate in the making of a traditional sailing canoe. Learn to read the secrets of our marine organisms, our sky, our seas, and our stars. Unless this is done, the orally-passed-on cultural tradition of open ocean sailing without the aid of compass, map, or radio will be lost.

Another historic sailing was led to Saipan by the master navigator of Puluwat island in 1999.

2. 2. 11. More Carolinian Settlement

In 1865, a group of Carolinians went to Pagan as part of an agricultural effort. This was done to increase coconut farming and the export of the newly discovered commercial crop of **copra**. Copra is the dried meat of the mature coconut. The project failed and these people were brought to Saipan in 1869.



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Copra was the economic mainstay of the German Period; In 1903, Germany exported 920 tons of copra to Japan.



It was estimated that at least 50,000 coconut trees were planted between the years 1900 and 1913.

2. 2. 12. Chamorro Resettlement Allowed, and “Arabwal” Renamed-”Garapan”

The Spanish also allowed Chamorros to move to Saipan, originally about five or six families. It is unknown whether they were descendants of the original Saipan inhabitants.

The Spanish introduced corn. It was added to the list of preferred crops for the half acre family plots. Domesticated pigs, cattle, water buffalo, goats, horses, sheep, cats, dogs, and tobacco were also introduced to Saipan. Furthermore, tobacco became a key part of the island’s economy a short time after it was introduced.

In the mid-1800’s the village name of “Arabwal” was changed to “San Isidro de Garapan”. Now it is just called Garapan.

2. 2. 13. Our Islands are Sold to Germany for US \$44.5 Million

Spain continued to maintain control over the Northern Mariana Islands for a short time after it lost Guam to American naval forces in the Spanish-American War in 1898.

Guam, the largest of the Mariana Islands, was captured as a strategic coaling station for the coal-fueled steamship engines. The US did not claim the Spanish-held Mariana Islands north of Guam. From this political split of the archipelago, our islands have since been referred to as the “Northern Mariana Islands” or “Northern Marianas”.

In 1899, Spain sold its remaining interests in the Northern Marianas to Germany for gold and other currency in the equivalent of US \$44,500,000.00.

2. 3. GERMAN PERIOD (1899-1914)

2. 3. 1. The Turn of the 20th Century-Indigenous Population

The native population of our now—sundered—from Guam—Northern Mariana Islands totaled 1,938 at the time of this sale to the German Government.

2. 3. 2. Reason for Purchase

Empire expansion and investment possibilities were the main reasons Germany purchased the Northern Mariana Islands from Spain. After its discovery in the 1860’s, copra was in great demand in Europe, and later in Japan.

2. 3. 3. The Coconut and Coconut Tree Plantations

It was estimated that at least 50,000 coconut trees were planted between the years 1900 and 1913. In 1901, Germany exported 400 tons of copra to Japan. Two years later, 920 tons were exported to Japan. Over the next several years, however, a series of typhoons hit the islands. Copra exports never again reached the high levels reached in 1903.

Soon after landing, a certain German officer noted that the islander people used coconuts in many ways. The coconut supplied natives with food, drink, and oil. The shell was used as a container. The husk was vital for the production of rope.

With a little effort, the juice of the coconut plant produced either fruit vinegar or alcohol. However, even with all of the local knowledge, the work force was far too small to reach the commercial export goals set by German officials.

The Germans tried to attract Chamorros from Guam to move to Saipan, by offering free land and passage in exchange for growing coconut trees. A homestead program was started. The program offered the arriving Chamorros and Carolinians about 2 1/2 acres of land.

Plots were cleared and titles were issued to individual owners rather than to clans or families. The homestead land, along with any other land with good soil, was often confiscated from those families who failed to produce enough copra.

2. 3. 4. Vegetable Plantings and Cattle Grazing

Early in the copra venture, land once used for family gardens had sometimes been taken to grow coconut trees. So, over time, the island people developed a dependence on imported foods.

To lessen the need for imported rice and other foods, the German administration required each family to plant 1/2 acre with edible crops and fruit trees. Islanders were permitted to grow tobacco, cacao, and coffee. However, the Germans did not count these crops in the 1/2 acre required for growing food.

In addition to a garden, most families had several domesticated animals. Almost every Chamorro and Carolinian family owned at least one cow. The cows were fed in the traditional manner; they were tied to a tree in the jungle with a long rope and left to search for food. Twice a day the location of the cow was changed.

The cows produced very little milk and did not have much fat. The Germans considered the meat to be of inferior quality. When they were two years old, the cows were turned into beasts of burden. They were used to pull ox-carts, to transport people and to move goods. Other domesticated animals included oxen, pigs, chickens, pigeons, and dogs.

Some land leases issued during the Spanish administration became a point of concern for the German administration. The most common problems were with land leases issued for cattle grazing. These grazing areas were usually quite large and on fairly level ground. Such areas were also perfect for the production of copra.

If all grazing areas were fenced and a large percentage of the land supported coconut cultivation, the Germans honored Spanish leases. Otherwise, the land was confiscated.

2. 3. 5. Hunting and Fishing

Hunting and fishing were encouraged. Fruit bats were shot in the day and they were captured at night with nets. Using torches, seabirds were caught at night. Coconut crabs were caught by hand, after rotting coconuts, which were used as bait, were placed near the crabs' holes.



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Turtles and turtle eggs were harvested. Turtle shells, particularly Hawksbill turtles, were sold to the German authorities for export. Shark fins were sold as well.

Chamorros usually kept their fishing canoes within or close to the reef. Carolinians continued open water sailing and fishing. The outrigger canoe was made of DOKDOK or LEMAI, two indigenous types of breadfruit trees, and measured 3 to 6 meters long.



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Just as is done today, Chamorros and Carolinians caught fish along the shore using weighted nets. These nets, “talayas”, averaged 4 meters across and were thrown about 8 meters out. Reef flats were gleaned for octopus, crabs, sea cucumber, and other food resources.

Both the Chamorros and Carolinians caught turtles by hand. When female turtles were caught, islanders tied them to the reef to attract the male turtles, which were then likewise caught and eaten.

[2. 3. 6. Conservation Planning Measures](#)

The German administration noticed a drop in the population of several species of animals on the island. As a result, they started our islands’ first conservation plan.

Hunting certain species of animals, like the wild deer, was completely prohibited to allow time for population increases. Limits were put on hunting wild pigs, cattle, chickens, and goats. The Germans patrolled the areas that were frequently used by the protected species. All of these conservation measures were enforced until the end of the German administration.

[2. 3. 7. Traditional and Modern Medicines](#)

Native doctors were never restricted from collecting their medicinal herbs from the jungle. They were even allowed in areas frequented by the protected animals. Island doctors treated their patients with several natural remedies. These medicines came from cuttings from forest trees, plants, and roots. The doctors often ground these ingredients into herbal broths and powders.

In 1900, the islanders were given smallpox vaccinations by German doctors. Smallpox was the disease that had claimed the most lives during the Spanish period. The German administration trained some women as mid-wives, which helped reduce the infant mortality rate.

By 1905, better medical care and cleaner drinking water, which was piped into the villages from wells, caused an increase in the population of the island. These developments had further lowered infant mortality and had lowered the number of deaths from catastrophic diseases. In response, the population grew.

[2. 3. 8. Public Works and Schools](#)

The German period in the CNMI saw many improvements. During the early 1900’s, several buildings and roads were built. Along with local workers mandated by a labor tax system, the Germans built schools, an administration building, and residences for teachers. After damage from an earthquake in 1902, the Germans oversaw the renovation of the Kristo Rai church.



The German period in the CNMI saw many improvements. During the early 1900’s, several buildings and roads were built - German administrative building, circa 1905.

By 1902, six miles of roads from Tanapag to Arabwal were added to the island's infrastructure. Later, that road was extended to Lau Lau Bay. In 1912, the population was 3,097. All the buildings, roads, and bridges were repaired when necessary, and remained in fairly good condition until 1914, when German control ended.

2. 4. JAPANESE PERIOD (1914-1944)

2. 4. 1. The Japanese Mandate

In August of 1914, Japanese Naval Forces, as part of the Allied forces of World War I, peacefully took possession of the German islands. German-controlled islands throughout Micronesia were similarly captured. In 1920, the population of the Northern Marianas was 5,159 (all ethnicities combined).

The Japanese met with the League of Nations to establish international recognition for their control of the former German Micronesian Islands, including the Northern Marianas. In 1920 their request was granted and the islands were mandated to Japan. However, Guam remained part of the United States.

There was only one important restriction put on Japan by the League. Japan could not fortify the islands for military purposes.

2. 4. 2. Business Development

Japanese businessmen had been to our islands for several years before the Japanese Navy's arrival. The first Japanese business was established in 1893, during the Spanish administration.

All of the Japanese businesses during the Spanish period owned their own ships. These ships brought tools, food, iron pots and pans, and other kitchen items. The ships returned to Japan with copra. Large companies continued this practice throughout the Japanese period.

In 1915, Japanese agronomists and fishery scientists were sent here. They examined our land and marine resources for possible business ventures. Japanese doctors came to provide medical attention to island residents. Japanese officials were concerned about the spread of disease to the immigrant workers they intended to bring here.

2. 4. 3. Land Claims, Development, and Leasing Practices

Immigration from the Japanese home islands and from Okinawa and Korea soon began in earnest. The Japanese government authorities claimed all unused lands in the Northern Marianas. Our islands, including government and privately owned lands, were carefully surveyed. In 1930, the population was censused at 19,496. In just five years, it more than doubled, reaching 44,043.

Early in the administration, Japanese individuals could not buy or sell land. They could only rent or lease land for up to ten years. The law was changed in 1931, allowing Japanese citizens to buy private land if they had permission from the government.

2. 4. 4. Changing Island Lifestyles

As more Japanese people moved here, a non-islander, renter class emerged. The Chamorros and Carolinians rented and leased their farm lands to the Japanese mostly for sugar cane agriculture (see



The first Japanese business was established in 1893, during the Spanish administration. Garapan, Saipan during Japanese times.



As much as 75% of the lands owned by the Chamorros and Carolinians were rented or leased to the Japanese. Chalan Kanoa, Saipan during Japanese times.



In 1921, Haruji Matsue, the “Sugar King”, started his massive sugar cane cultivation efforts.



With the help of the immigrant workers and the railroad line, Mr. Matsue sent his first shipment of sugar to Japan.

below). As much as 75% of the lands, owned by the Chamorros and Carolinians, were rented or leased to the Japanese. The islanders kept enough land on their farms for a ranch house and a small garden. Islanders lived from the rent or lease payments, from store credits, by private employment, and by fishing and farming.

Credit given to islanders at Japanese stores became a source of serious problems for a good number of individuals. Since the concept of credit was relatively new to the Chamorros and Carolinians, some built up very large debts. As a result, many either lost their land, or were sent to other islands to work to pay off their debts.

Many islanders received on-the-job training. They became hospital technicians, nurses, schoolteachers, blacksmiths, and carpenters. The majority of the islander population turned from farming to wage-based employment for their livelihood.

2. 4. 5. Producing Sugar

In 1921, Haruji Matsue, the “Sugar King”, started his massive sugar cane cultivation efforts. He had the coconut trees from the German administration removed. He also had other native vegetation removed, which was much of the island’s remaining forest land.

Anywhere it was flat, it was cleared, often by steam-powered bulldozers. Today Saipan, Tinian, and Aquigan’s native forests remain intact only along unplatable cliffline areas, but Rota’s native forests remain even on many flat areas.

To meet his goal of a large first sugar shipment to Japan, Mr. Matsue brought many Japanese and Okinawan tenant farmers and Korean workers to the Marianas.

Unlike the Germans, the Japanese never intended to rely on the local population for commercial agriculture. The Japanese considered Micronesians, in general, as culturally unsuited to commercial agricultural production. Okinawans were especially preferred because they were considerably cheaper than mainland Japanese workers, and they were used to working in tropical settings.

These immigrants worked on land that Mr. Matsue divided into 30-acre squares, with windbreaks and roads along their boundaries. The squares were then divided into 10-acre lots for individual farmers. A majority of this land had to be planted with sugar cane; the rest could be planted in other crops for sale or for family use.

Transportation of the sugarcane to the processing factory quickly showed itself as the weak link in the new sugar cane business. Adding a narrow gauge railroad line solved the problem. With the help of the immigrant workers and the railroad line, Mr. Matsue sent his first shipment of sugar to Japan. Running at capacity, the mills were able to produce 640,000 tons of sugar a year.

2. 4. 6. Distilling Whiskey

In 1926, the company improved the return on its investment. It built an alcohol distillery next to the sugarcane refinery. The distillery

used the molasses left over from the cane refining process. The molasses was used to form sour mash. After a little more processing at the distillery, the system produced whiskey.

As sugar and whiskey production rose, a more efficient harbor was needed to handle the increased shipping traffic. In 1932, work was completed on Saipan's Tanapag harbor. The new harbor allowed ships with a draft up to 28 feet to pull alongside the new jetties. The harbor was also developed to accommodate amphibious aircraft.

2. 4. 7. Developing Fishery Resources

The tuna industry became the second largest industry in the Marianas. Large boats out of Tanapag harbor caught fish using a long-line fishing technique.

Family-owned fishing businesses caught the small tuna called **Bo-nito**. The fish were cleaned and prepared at a processing plant and then shipped to Japan. Other ocean-based industries included harvesting sea cucumbers, collecting shark fins, preparing shark liver oil, and processing hawksbill turtles' shells for buttons and jewelry.

2. 4. 8. Public Works and Community Facilities Development

Garapan (formerly Arabwal) experienced tremendous growth from the completed development of Tanapag harbor. The concentration of government activities also contributed to this growth. The population of Garapan was 15,000. The paved streets of Garapan had heavy foot, bicycle, and automobile traffic.

There were new public facilities on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Some of these facilities included post offices, police stations, a district court, and a prison. The Japanese also built hospitals, community social halls, and public schools. Our islands' infrastructure now included paved roads, docks and wharves, and power and telephone lines.

2. 5. JAPANESE MILITARISM AND WORLD WAR II

2. 5. 1. Japanese Military Government Establishment

Japan was given second class status at an important Washington Naval Disarmament Conference following the end of World War I. The resulting treaty held Japan to building only three capital warships to every five of British or American warships.

In protest to the embarrassment, and blaming their leaders, several mutinies of lower-ranking sailors and soldiers occurred within Japan. Leaders who advocated for peace, democracy, and diplomacy were murdered.

These killings helped put a militaristic government in command of the country in the early 1930's. The new government ordered an unrestricted military buildup and the territorial expansion of the Japanese Empire.

In protest to League of Nations criticism and sanctions, Japan withdrew its membership and declared it was no longer bound to the international body's authority.



The new harbor allowed ships with a draft up to 28 feet to pull alongside the new jetties.



The Japanese also built hospitals, community social halls, and public schools. Public school building, Japanese times, Saipan.



Japanese military forces attacked the American Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941.



Operating from Australia and from Hawaii, American naval, air and ground forces moved against the Pacific islands under Japanese control.

2. 5. 2. Local Effects

The actions within Japan affected our islands as well. Up until 1934, all buildings in our islands were used for non-military purposes. After 1934, there was a newly-established law, the “Military Manpower Law”. It forced island people to work on airfields and other military structures for the Japanese.

In 1937, according to a Japanese census, our Northern Mariana Islands’ population reached 46,708. Of these, about 3,000 were Chamorros and Carolinians.

2. 5. 3. Territorial Expansion and World War II

Japan joined Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in a tripartite military pact. During the late 1930’s and the early 1940’s, Japan aggressively expanded its control over much of western Asia. It also expanded control over the western Pacific Ocean.

Japanese military forces, launched from Saipan, Rota, and Tinian, captured the US island of Guam. This happened on the day after Japan attacked the American Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (7 December 1941).

For a little more than a year, Japanese forces mounted offensive actions throughout the Pacific and Asia. British and Dutch forces in Malaysia and Indonesia fell. The American Philippine Islands fell. Australia was threatened, as was India. China almost succumbed to Japanese land forces.

2. 5. 4. Turning Points and the American-led Counter Offensive

However, the American-led Allied victories at the Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal changed the course of the war. These victories caused the Japanese forces to go on the defensive.

Operating from Australia and from Hawaii, American naval, air and ground forces moved against the Pacific islands under Japanese control. An island-hopping campaign starting from the southern Pacific island of Tarawa (now Kiribati) was carried out, skipping and isolating some islands, but invading others. Airfields were quickly constructed and improved. Airplanes and the mobile fleet aircraft carriers proved to be the Pacific War’s decisive weapons.

2. 5. 5. Targeting the Mariana Islands and Attack Preparations

Our islands became a principle US strategic target during this counter-offensive. The Marianas would be ideal bases for the new US long-range B-29 bombers. The allied-held Chinese airfields proved less than suitable for the bombers due to logistical concerns. From the Marianas, they would be able to attack the Japanese home islands, carrying heavier bomb loads.

Japanese leaders understood this well and did everything possible to reinforce the Mariana Island’s military strength. A naval plan was developed to counterattack the US forces should they attempt to invade these islands.

As the American invasion drew closer, the Japanese took away the rights of the Chamorros and Carolinians. Islanders were often forced to work for the military without pay. Many were also forced out of their homes and into caves. This was done to make room for Japanese troops.

A few days before the invasion, all islander people remaining in the towns were ordered to their farms. All village buildings were confiscated for military use.

2. 5. 6. The Allied Invasion

American-led military forces put Japanese fortifications to the test in early June, 1944. The Marianas Campaign began with the attack on the island of Saipan. Three days of intense carrier-based bombing preceded the American invasion. Airfields and known gun emplacements were targeted.

US Marine and Army Forces invaded the southern beaches first, near present day San Antonio Village, stretching northwards to today's Civic Center Beach. Casualties were high. As late as the year 2005, a couple of Sherman medium tanks remained in the Saipan Lagoon. They are silent reminders of the massive invasion more than 60 years earlier.

The United States also concentrated its bombing on military targets in Garapan and Chalan Kanoa. Tank and artillery units were quickly brought ashore. Combined with the aerial bombing, they effectively leveled these Japanese strongholds. From the mountains and hidden cliff areas, Japanese forces counterattacked with their own tanks and artillery units.

The US assault involved more than 105,000 marine and army troops, and over 500 ships. By June 18th, the US military had control over most of southern Saipan. US Marine Corps P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers soon landed on As Lito Airfield and began flying missions to support the American ground troops.

2. 5. 7. The "Marianas Turkey Shoot"

Shortly thereafter, a major naval air and sea battle ensued just to the west in the Philippine Sea. The Japanese navy put its planned counterattack into effect. The full force of the Japanese fleet attempted to throw back the American invasion. As planned, land-based Japanese planes from Tinian and Guam joined the naval forces in their attack on the American fleet.

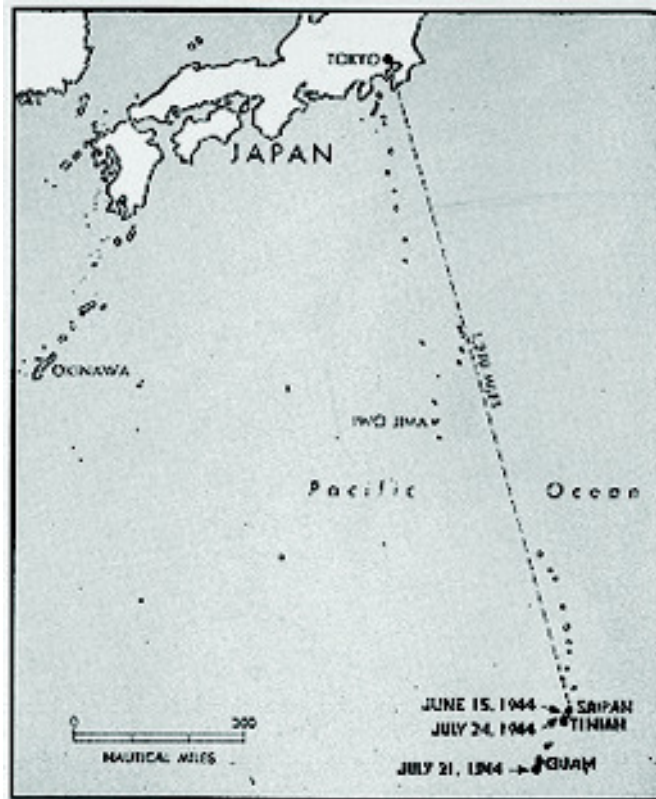
The main battle occurred on June 19, 1944. US carrier-based aircraft, surface ships and submarine forces fought and eventually defeated the still-powerful Japanese naval and naval air forces. US forces decimated the Japanese carrier forces in a series of submarine, air-to-air, and air-to-ship battles. Japan lost almost all of its carrier-based planes and, more importantly, its trained pilots.

This battle, known as the "Marianas Turkey Shoot", sealed Japan's military fate. It was not possible for Japan to recover from this battle's loss of pilots, planes, and ships.

2. 5. 8. A Desperation Banzai Attack

On June 27th, US forces captured Mt. Tapotchau. It was the key strategic height. The Japanese overall commander of Saipan, General Saito, ordered a last ditch *gyokusai* or banzai assault against the advancing American forces.

In preparation, the Japanese consolidated many of their remaining troops close to Matansa Village, near present-day San Roque



The Marianas Campaign began with the attack on the island of Saipan.



The US assault on the Marianas involved more than 105,000 marine and army troops, and over 500 ships.

Village. In the early morning hours of July 7th, between 1,600 and 3,000 men slipped through a gap in the American lines.

Japanese troops fought through forward and secondary defense lines in the night time surprise assault. They attacked the Americans in grueling hand-to-hand combat. The final battle took place in deep-set artillery lines, well behind the front lines. Ultimately, the American forces fought off this last Japanese offensive.



The invasion of Tinian was called “The Perfect Military Operation”.

2. 5. 9. Casualties and Commemorations

U.S. ground forces (i.e., 2nd and 4th Marine and 27th Army Infantry Divisions) suffered 3,126 killed in action on Saipan. The figure for Tinian is 328, and on Guam 2,124. US naval forces also had many casualties as a result of these several battles.

Though not directly part of the Marianas campaign, one of America’s most tragic naval losses occurred when the heavy cruiser “Indianapolis” was sunk by a Japanese submarine after delivering the atomic bomb components to Tinian. Hundreds of sailors died from shark attacks after the sinking.

On the Japanese side, approximately 58,000 soldiers and sailors died. Tens of thousands of additional Japanese soldiers and sailors were also killed when US submarines and carrier- and land-based planes intercepted and sank Japanese troop transport ships heading towards our islands. These ships were attempting to land reinforcements prior to the US invasion.

Two large and one medium Japanese aircraft carriers with much of their 1,000 plus contingent of crews and trained pilots were sunk by US submarines before they ever reached the Marianas battle zone. Headed for battle, the Japanese naval forces could ill afford to wait long to rescue survivors.

An untold number of Japanese civilians perished as incidental casualties of war, and thousands leaped or were pushed to their deaths during mass suicides.

Many Korean and Okinawan civilians never survived the war. Many were killed by American fire or died at their own hands. Others were shot by Japanese troops. A commemorative and somewhat chilling memorial to this is located on Tinian. Today, all official focus has shifted to silent religious commemorations at the Marpi and Tinian Suicide Cliff Peace memorials and at American Memorial Park.

Civilians were rarely involved in the fighting. Unintentional casualties of war, more than 700 Chamorros and Carolinians died during the battle for Saipan. This was almost 20% of the island population.

American Memorial Park on Saipan lists on marble markers all known American, Chamorro, and Carolinian lives lost. The park and these monuments were dedicated during the 50th-year commemoration of the Marianas Campaign.

Visits to our islands by Japanese, Korean, and Okinawan religious leaders commemorate these nations’ loss of human lives. Commonwealth island leaders and American officials regularly join them.



After taking Tinian, American forces re-captured Guam.

2. 5. 10. Saipan and Tinian Mass Suicides

Japanese military personnel forced many Japanese civilians to leap to their deaths. These people jumped from “Banzai Cliff” and “Suicide Cliff” on Saipan and from “Suicide Cliff” on Tinian. The Japanese also forced many Chamorro and Carolinian families to jump. Many Japanese civilians and military men leaped voluntarily.

Men forced their wives and children to leap, youngest first in a line, before they jumped themselves. Many had believed the Japanese military’s propaganda. This propaganda said the Americans would torture and kill survivors of the invasion. American forces at sea and on land did everything humanly possible to prevent the suicides.

2. 5. 11. Other Mariana Islands Attacked and Invaded

After the battle for Saipan, American forces invaded Tinian. They surprised the Japanese by landing at the very narrow Unai Chulu and Unai Babui beaches.

The invasion of Tinian was later called “The Perfect Military Operation”. This was because of the surprise and because the US was able to put ashore so many forces on such small beaches in very little time. It was also called this for the small number of attacking force casualties, compared to previous invasion efforts.

After taking Tinian, American forces bypassed Rota and re-captured Guam. Pagan and our other northernmost Mariana Islands were attacked by air and by off-shore naval gunfire only.

Bypassed Rota was massively bombed by air and shelled by naval gunfire. B-29’s, which for various reasons had to prematurely turn back from their trip to Japan, regularly dropped their full bomb loads on known Rota military targets prior to landing. Island gun emplacement fortifications were shelled by US ships. An intact Japanese gun emplacement which survived the US bombing and naval shelling remains today overlooking Sasanhaya Bay.

2. 6. THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION AND THE WAR’S ENDING

2. 6. 1. The Pacific War Continues

After securing the Marianas, American-led allied forces continued to attack Japanese-held islands in preparation for a final assault on the Japanese home islands. Heavy battles included the Palau islands, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

2. 6. 2. B-29 Airfields and Other Construction

Back in the Marianas, American troops had cleared most of the Japanese forces from Saipan island by mid-July, 1944. Even while the fighting continued in small pockets across Saipan, American engineers began a massive construction task.

US Navy Seabees took control of construction efforts soon after troops secured the islands. They first increased the capacity of “As Lito Airfield”. They renamed it “Isley Air Field” in honor of a pilot killed in the Marianas Campaign.

To prepare for the arrival of the B-29 Superfortress, US forces built two large runways, 186 buildings, and a special road between the



Heavy battles included the Palau islands, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.



To prepare Saipan for the arrival of the B-29 Superfortress, US forces built two large runways, 186 buildings, and a special road between the airfields and a nearby coral quarry.

airfield and a nearby coral quarry. The second runway, “Kobler Field”, honored another flier.

At the height of the field’s construction, trucks left the quarry every 20 seconds, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That operation moved over 4 million cubic yards of rock and coral from the quarry to the airfield.

Naval troops built operation bases, supply and repair depots, field hospitals and Army Air Force bases. Along with the new facilities came a huge influx of military personnel. At one point, over 12,000 men and 180 aircraft arrived with just one new military unit.

After Tinian was secured, six more runways (four at North Field and two at West Field) were eventually constructed. Later Guam also supported B-29 bases.



From the Mariana air bases, increasingly massive bombing raids were launched against Japan’s cities and ports. These culminated in the war-ending atomic bomb explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

2. 6. 3. The War’s End

From the Mariana air bases, increasingly massive bombing raids were launched against Japan’s cities and ports. These culminated in the war-ending atomic bomb explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The last attacks were launched from Tinian. Specially built bomb-loading pits were constructed for the large weapons. These can be visited today at Tinian’s North Field runways.

2. 7. POST WAR PERIOD

2. 7. 1. Safe Area Camps

The battle for Saipan was the first the Americans fought in the Pacific where a large number of noncombatants existed. US forces were well-briefed on this, and every possible precaution was taken to minimize civilian casualties.

US troops relocated surviving island residents into camps for their own safety. During military operations, US policy provided for the containment and protection of civilians. US forces also distributed relief aid. Specially trained US troops quickly began the clearing of dangerous military ordnance from villages and fields.

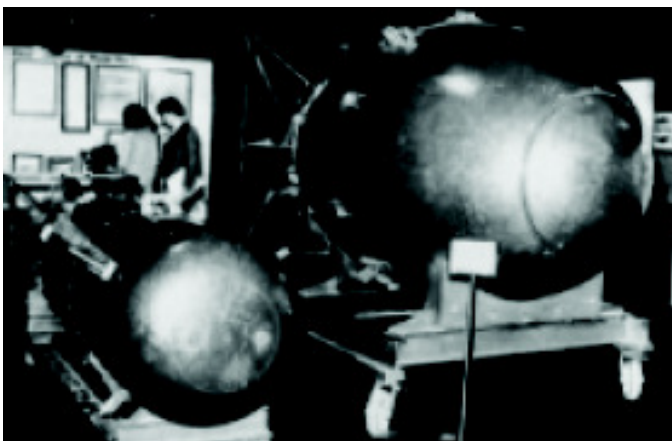
The US established two safe area camps, Camp Susupe on Saipan and Camp Churu on Tinian. The US repatriated surviving Japanese, Korean, and Okinawan citizens shortly after the war’s end.

By necessity, due to the ongoing need to remove unexploded ordnance, Chamorros and Carolinians remained at Camp Susupe until July 4, 1946. The CNMI’s annually-celebrated July 4th Liberation Day celebration coincides with the US Independence Day. On this day, the gates were opened and the islanders left the confines of the camp.

2. 7. 2. Strategic Trust Territory Established

Following the war, a newly established United Nations entrusted the US to oversee a ‘Strategic Trust Territory’ throughout Micronesia. This gave the US responsibility for overseeing our islands’ social, political, and economic development.

Empowering our own people’s capability to recover from the massive destruction caused during the war was the first priority. Public



Specially built bomb-loading pits were constructed for the large weapons. The “Fat Man” and “Little Boy” atomic bombs are shown here.

health, welfare and education were key tasks, as was the development of a self-sustaining economy.

A Micronesian district administration was established and a Congress of Micronesia legislative body was formed. Capitol Hill on Saipan was eventually chosen for its administrative center.

Over time, political status negotiations were begun, and these continued over several years. Our own islands' leaders solicited the US to incorporate our district into the United States of America, and to grant our people US citizenship. This caused a rift in the Congress of Micronesia.

Eventually the idea of separate political statuses was accepted, and each district group chose its own political affiliations. Pohnpei, Yap, Chuuk and Kusaie joined together to become the freely associated Federated States of Micronesia. The Marshall Islands and Belau each became independent republics. The CNMI became a Commonwealth of the United States.

2. 7. 3. Land Stabilization and Tangantangan

TANGANTANGAN (*Leucaena*) plants from farms and ranches quickly spread onto former sugar cane areas burned by military actions. These high seed-producing nitrogen-fixing plants are well-suited for our climate.

An introduced species of TANGANTANGAN, *Leucaena leucocephala*, similar to the native *Leucaena insularum*, effectively reduced soil erosion throughout our war-torn islands. This species was first introduced to the Marianas in the late 1800s.

The cane fields on by-passed Rota reseeded naturally from nearby forest vegetation sources. Only by reference to maps and air photos can one today tell the difference between the undisturbed and the re-grown disturbed limestone forests on Rota.

TANGANTAGAN still covers much of our islands today. Islanders had not seen such a "forested, green, natural state" since prior to the 1920's, when the "Sugar King" started his plantations.

2. 7. 4. Economic and Social Development Actions

US Navy administrators set up military support jobs for islanders after the invasion. They did this to stimulate the economy, because restoring the economy was a high priority. In addition, phosphate mining (in Palau and Nauru) and fishing (region-wide) received attention.

Naval administrators encouraged islanders to grow copra, sugar, and coffee as cash crops. Navy administrators also worked to rebuild trade and industrial facilities. They repaired and rebuilt administration buildings, schools, hospitals, and warehouses. Area-serving teaching and medical training colleges were established in Guam and Hawaii. The Navy established a leprosarium on Tinian.

Numerous elementary and high schools were established throughout the region. US administrators also set up a program to promote agricultural self-sufficiency in our islands, in part to reduce the amount of food the US military had to supply.



The US established two safe area camps, Camp Susupe on Saipan and Camp Churu on Tinian.



Leucaena leucocephala

The first goal was to cultivate 20-25 acres to provide food for the people. In August, 1944, the military divided 500 bomb-cleared acres into 1 hectare lots for family farming. Soon after, they authorized cultivation of 5,000 more acres. With the help of 800 Chamorros brought back from other Micronesian islands, CNMI farms soon produced substantial fruit and vegetable harvests.

Farmers sold much of the food to the large numbers of US military personnel. Soon after the close of the war, however, most US troops went back to their own homes in the states. The demand for local produce declined rapidly.

In 1947, the Navy established the “Island Trading Company.” The company purchased copra and local handicrafts to stimulate an export economy. In 1954, the Navy liquidated the company. They sold it in parts to island businesses.

American administrators closed the island to outside private developers soon after the liquidation of the Island Trading Company. They did this to guarantee islander participation in economic growth. It prevented exploitation of local resources by outside groups.

2. 7. 5. Economic Growth Slow to Materialize

At this time, our island’s population was only about 9,000. Island residents did not have the financial capital needed for any large-scale economic ventures.

Tourism, as an industry, was not then feasible, even with capital. Japan, Korea, China, the US, and Australia all were recovering from war expenditure impacts. Few traveled for leisure. More importantly, the jet age had not yet arrived. Civilians still traveled across vast ocean distances by ships.

Ocean and agricultural resources, though targeted for resource exploitation, were slow to develop. Distances to markets, and the inability to ship with refrigeration, meant only a few dried foods could be exported.

In Saipan, sunken Japanese diesel powered fishing boats were raised, repaired, and put back into service. A fishing base was established and salted fish was marketed.

Mother of pearl oysters and *Trochus*, a marine snail used to make pearl buttons, were harvested and processed. Trepan, the dried and cured meat from certain sea cucumbers, was also harvested. Unfortunately its main foreign market, China, was itself still recovering from the war’s devastation.

Generally speaking, however, there was little outside cash influx. The sugar and whiskey industries were never fully redeveloped. High post-war copra prices did, however, greatly aid our struggling Micronesian economies. Wage and price controls eventually had to be established to control potential copra-related inflation.

Eventually private agriculture and grazing slowly expanded throughout our islands. The U.S. Navy brought in a large shipment of cows specially bred to endure tropical diseases.



In 1947, the Navy established the “Island Trading Company.”



Economic growth in the late 1940s was very slow. Tailor shops proved to be one of the more lucrative enterprises during this period.

The Pacific Science Congress, based at the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, provided assistance in controlling agricultural pests. U.S. entomologists (insect biologists) battled the destructive coconut rhinoceros beetle with parasitic wasps, and malacologists (snail biologists) introduced predatory snails to control the ever-present giant African land snail. Several other natural resource research projects, protection measures, and resource development efforts ensued as well.

2. 7. 6. CIA/Naval Technical Training Period (1952 to Early 1960's)

In 1952, the CIA established the "Naval Technical Training Unit" on Saipan. This unit trained Chinese Nationalists in guerrilla warfare techniques. Many island residents got short-term jobs building the training center. The CIA restricted movement by islanders. They also restricted land ownership within the training areas. The CIA left our islands in the 1960's.

2. 7. 7. Self Determination; the Covenant (1978); US and Foreign Investment in the Northern Mariana Islands

In fulfillment of the UN Strategic Trust goal, a self-determination plebiscite was held in 1976. In 1978, the Covenant establishing our Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) was adopted.

Yearly Covenant funds helped re-establish our islands' infrastructure. Federal grant-in-aid programs provided key financial support for several of our government agencies. Government bonds were used for several large scale developments, such as our airfield and seaport improvements.

Afterwards, the Northern Marianas began to attract foreign investors once again. The new industry of jet travel tourism helped co-develop a construction industry. Though moderated in the late 1990's, both industries still enjoy growth.

Investors financed construction of large hotels and golf courses. Restaurants and shops were built to support the growing tourism industry.

To diversify and further privatize the CNMI economy, U.S. tariff restrictions were lifted from CNMI garment exports. Beginning in the late 1980's, CNMI residents, other Pacific islanders, and guest laborers from around the Pacific Rim began supporting a growing garment manufacturing industry.

By the late 1990's, our factories exported thousands of garments to U.S. stores every year. Most garments were made by an alien worker force that outnumbered the islander population. Tourism, however, is still our largest private economic sector.

2. 8. CONCLUSION

This chapter is not meant to substitute for the excellent historical and archeological books, pamphlets, and other education resources now available to our islands' students. Rather, it is included to whet your appetite for our area's history and archeology, and to set the stage for many of our later chapters' natural history and resource management writings.



This school was established during the Navy technical training period to provide education to children of US government employees.



In 1978, the Covenant establishing our Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) was adopted.



Recall that both history and archeology are subject to our common human flaws of imprecise interpretation.

We encourage you to visit our islands' museums and historic preservation offices. When possible visit those of our other Pacific islands as well. Discuss island history with your elders. Invite guest speakers to your classes. Attend public lectures and conferences.

Like other forms of cultural knowledge, archeological and historical understanding are parts of our rich island heritage. They are meant to be shared with each generation. Doing so, however, can sometimes make one feel uneasy. This is especially true when retelling such tragic events as one's experiences during the devastating times of World War II.

Always be a patient and respectful student of both history and archeology. Show a sincere interest, and do not be judgmental of others' actions in the long distant past. Also recall that both history and archeology are subject to our common human flaws of imprecise interpretation. Try it anyway. Read often. Learning about our past is a discovery and it is fun. Enjoy it.