Foodways, Missionaries, and Culinary Accommodation in the Mariana Islands (1668–74)

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Abstract

The Jesuits played a vital role in the diffusion of crops, animals, agricultural practices, and eating manners throughout the early modern world. In the Mariana Islands (western Pacific), the arrival of the first missionaries in 1668 entailed the introduction of new foods and food-related material culture deemed necessary to establish a self-sufficient mission. However, during the first six years of the mission (1668–74), the resistance and opposition of the native inhabitants—the CHamoru people—to the Jesuits' activities, the unreliability of maritime trade routes, the conflicts that arose inside the Society of Jesus, and the tensions between the Jesuits and the Spanish colonial authorities affected missionaries' expectations regarding diet and cuisine. This article explores the strategies that the Jesuit missionaries followed to adjust their foodways to the social and physical environment of the Mariana Islands and pays attention to the process whereby local foods were adopted. In that sense, it argues that culinary accommodation—or “gastronomic accommodation” as defined by Cristina Osswald—was both a common practice to overcome the lack of Iberian resources and a political strategy to ease tensions and forge alliances with the indigenous population.

Keywords

foodways – Jesuit missionaries – Mariana Islands – diet – culinary accommodation – Manila galleon – CHamoru – Iberian colonialism

1 Introduction

The Jesuit missionaries played a vital role in the dissemination of crops, animals, agricultural practices, and eating manners throughout the early modern world. When founding new missions in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, the Jesuits brought with them familiar foods, as well as the material culture required to produce, prepare, and consume these resources in conformity with the rules of their food culture.¹ Indeed, scholars have underlined the importance of the Jesuits in the globalization of the Catholic cuisine, a process that took place in the context of the Iberian expansion.² The efforts made by the Jesuit missionaries to reproduce their foodways in the overseas missions must be understood in the light of the complex set of medical, social, and cultural meanings attached to food. As scholars have shown, in the strange and challenging environments of the New World, familiar foods helped Spaniards to preserve their health and avoid the unknown effects that local resources could have on their bodies.³ In addition, in the multiethnic societies of the Spanish colonial world, food habits—as well as other bodily practices, such as dress—were powerful symbols of religious affiliation and social status, and were part of the daily activities used to trace cultural boundaries and perform group identity.⁴

1 See Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 186–96; Anthony John R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415–1808: A World on the Move* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 186–96; Cristina Osswald, “Hábitos alimentares dos jesuítas em Portugal, na Índia e no Brasil (séc. XVI–XVIII),” in *Portas adentro: Comer, vestir, habitar* (ss. XVI–XIX), ed. Isabel dos Guimarães Sá and Máximo García Fernández (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid; Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2010), 85.

2 Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 186–96.

3 See Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Heather Martel, “Dirty Things: Bread, Maize, Women, and Christian Identity in Sixteenth-Century America,” in *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*, ed. Ken Albala and Trudy Eden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 83–104; Heather Martel, “Ferocious Appetites: Hunger, Nakedness, and Identity in Sixteenth-Century American Encounters,” in *Poverty and Prosperity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Cynthia Koss and Anne Scott (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 314; Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 191.

4 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 6–10; Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 70; Gregorio Saldarriaga, “Comer y ser: La alimentación como política de la diferenciación en la América española, siglos XVI y XVII,” *Varia historia* 32 (2016): 53–77, here 54; Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 39–40.

This article analyzes Jesuits' attempts to reproduce their foodways in the mission of the Mariana Islands.⁵ Located in the western Pacific, the Mariana Islands caught the attention of the Society of Jesus in the mid-seventeenth century, when the Jesuit Diego Luis de San Vitores (1627–72) requested the support of both the superior general of the Society and the Spanish crown to evangelize the archipelago's native inhabitants, the CHamorus. After years of negotiation with the Spanish royal authorities, in 1668, San Vitores finally arrived in the Marianas with a group of missionaries and lay assistants. During the first years of the mission, food became a central concern for the Jesuits involved in the evangelization of the islands. Considering the lack of familiar resources, they tried to introduce seeds, animals, and food-related material culture to reproduce their food system and create a self-sufficient mission. By focusing on the first years of the mission of the Mariana Islands (1668–74), this article examines how missionaries' plans to reproduce their foodways and create a self-sufficient mission were put into practice once they arrived in the archipelago. In doing so, this article explores the strategies followed by Jesuit missionaries to adjust their foodways to the social and physical environment of the Mariana Islands, and pays attention to the process whereby local foods were adopted.

2 Seeds, Animals, and Material Culture for the First Jesuit Mission in the Pacific

The importance that San Vitores and other individuals ascribed to food when planning the mission of the Marianas can be gleaned from the letters and memorials written during the period 1663–68, when the evangelization of the archipelago was discussed in Madrid, Manila, and Mexico City. Different civil and religious authorities evaluated the feasibility of San Vitores's project, following the Spanish crown's desire to determine the profits—both material and spiritual—that such effort could entail for itself.⁶ While opinions were divided, the individuals involved in this debate agreed that, to successfully evangelize

5 This article is based on the author's doctoral thesis: Verónica Peña Filiu, "Alimentación y colonialismo en las islas Marianas (Pacífico occidental): Introducciones, adaptaciones y transformaciones alimentarias durante la misión jesuita (1668–1769)" (PhD diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2019).

6 Verónica Peña Filiu, "No es menester llevar plata, sino algunos géneros y semillas": Alimentación y cultura material en el proyecto de evangelización de las islas Marianas," *Anos go: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* 28 (2021): 1–15.

the Marianas, it was of uttermost importance to ensure that the Jesuits' dietary habits would be satisfied once they arrived in the archipelago.⁷

For Jesuit Luis Pimentel (1612–89), procurator of the Society in the Philippines, securing the correct supply of the missionaries sent to the Marianas was decisive for the future mission since “the preservation of spiritual matters greatly depended on temporal affairs.”⁸ The absence of familiar foods in the Marianas—especially wheat, wine, and European livestock—was a cause of much concern both for the missionaries and civil authorities. Reports discussing the viability of San Vitores's project considered that the introduction of new plants and animals was pivotal for overcoming the lack of familiar resources in the islands and securing the survival of the missionaries. The need for introducing new foods in the Marianas was clearly expressed in a memorial entitled “Reasons to Avoid Prolonging the Evangelization of the Mariana Islands” (c.1665) that San Vitores sent to the Spanish crown. In this memorial, San Vitores stated that rather than silver, what was important for the mission of the Marianas was to bring some goods and seeds that could bear fruits.⁹ The desire to introduce new foods in the Marianas is also evident in the list of resources that San Vitores requested for the mission to the Marquis of Mancera, viceroy of New Spain (1664–73), and one of the mission's benefactors. In the list, seeds, plants, animals, culinary equipment, tableware, agricultural tools, and fishing gear occupied a prominent place. Most of the foods registered were staple foods in the Ibero-Catholic diet—for instance, wheat, wine, European vegetables, legumes, and livestock—and were usually brought to new colonies and commonly eaten in European Jesuit houses.¹⁰

The introduction of seeds, livestock, agricultural tools, and fishing gear was also a crucial measure to create a self-sufficient mission in the Marianas. For San Vitores and other individuals, agriculture and animal husbandry were expected to become the backbone of the mission's economic system.¹¹

7 Peña Filiu, “No es menester llevar plata,” 5–8.

8 “Carta de Luis Pimentel, de la Compañía de Jesús, al secretario Alonso Fernández de Lorca, remitiéndole el informe que le pidió sobre la evangelización de Islas de los Ladrones,” Seville, November 8, 1667, in Archivo General de Indias [hereafter AGI], *Filipinas* 82, n. 8.

9 “Motivos para no dilatar más la reducción y doctrina de las islas de los Ladrones,” in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [hereafter ASI], *Philipp.* 14, fol. 61r.

10 Heather Trigg, “Food Choice and Social Identity in Early Colonial New Mexico,” *Journal of the Southwest* 46, no. 2 (2004): 223–52, here 228; Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 70; David Gentilcore, “The *Levitico*, or How to Feed a Hundred Jesuits,” *Food and History* 8, no. 1 (2010): 87–120, <https://www.brepolonline.net/doi/pdf/10.1484/J.FOOD.1.100975> (accessed November 21, 2021). A detailed description of the foods and food-related material culture requested for the Marianas can be found in Peña Filiu, “No es menester llevar plata,” 8–10.

11 Peña Filiu, “No es menester llevar plata,” 8.

Likewise, the transformation of the CHamorus' subsistence activities was another important goal in the Jesuits' evangelization agenda. Before the arrival of the first missionaries, the CHamorus were fishers, gatherers, and horticulturalists. From the missionaries' perspective, these subsistence activities were not completely appropriate for a "civilized" lifestyle, primarily because they were perceived as less productive and efficient to obtain large amounts of food. Therefore, to become good Christians, the CHamorus should abandon their traditional activities to engage in agriculture and animal husbandry.¹² Indeed, scholars have shown that, as part of the conversion of native populations, Jesuit missionaries sought to modify local traditional economic activities to support mission life as well as other colonial enterprises.¹³

Different documents from this period show that the Manila galleon route was conceived as the main gateway for introducing seeds, animals, and material culture in the future mission of the Mariana Islands. The vessels that annually crossed the Pacific were expected to provide resources that could not be produced locally and supply the missionaries in times of scarcity. In fact, San Vitores considered that the stability of the route would maintain the Marianas constantly connected to New Spain and the Philippines. By the mid-seventeenth century, this transpacific trade route that linked the Spanish colonies of New Spain and the Philippines had already been functioning for almost a century. During the Acapulco-Manila itinerary, the vessels usually passed near Guåhan (Guam), the largest and southernmost of the Mariana Islands. The galleon's crew used these occasional visits to Guåhan to obtain fresh food and water from the CHamorus, who exchanged these resources for iron.¹⁴ In addition, in the event of food shortages, and while the introduced crops and animals thrived in the new territory, San Vitores maintained that the mission could also be supplied with a *patache* (small merchant vessel) sent from Manila.¹⁵ In other words, in the initial plan to evangelize the Marianas, the external supply of the mission through different maritime routes was an important element to assure the success of this enterprise.

12 Peña Filiu, "No es menester llevar plata," 8.

13 Barnet Pavao-Zuckerman, "Animal Husbandry at Primería Alta Missions: El Ganado en el Sudoeste de Norteamérica," in *Anthropological Approaches to Zooarchaeology: Complexity, Colonialism, and Animal Transformations*, ed. Douglas Campana et al. (Oxford: Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2010), 150.

14 Frank Quimby, "The Hierro Commerce," *Journal of Pacific History* 46, no. 1 (2011): 1–26, here 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2011.573630> (accessed November 21, 2021).

15 "Motivos para no dilatar más la reducción y doctrina de las islas de los Ladrones," n.d. (AGI, *Filipinas* 82, n. 8).

3 Food Encounters in the Mariana Islands: Initial Exchanges and Conflicts

On June 16, 1668, San Vitores and a small group of Jesuit missionaries—Tomás de Cardeñoso (1635–1715), Luis de Medina (1636–70), Pedro de Casanova (1641–94), Luis Martín de Morales (1641–1716), and Lorenzo Bustillo (1642–1716)—and lay assistants from the Philippines and New Spain disembarked in Guåhan to found the first Jesuit mission in the Pacific.¹⁶ According to written sources, the exchange of food played a pivotal role in the first contacts between the Jesuits and the CHamorus. As scholars have noted, in the Spanish colonial world, food exchange and commensality were practices with clear political implications for both colonists and native groups and were used to forge alliances and negotiate power relations.¹⁷ In the Marianas, Jesuit sources reveal that the missionaries acknowledged the importance of participating in the CHamoru rituals of commensality to ensure peaceful relations with them. During the first days in the islands, Antonio Nieto, the captain of the galleon that had transported the missionaries, came ashore and participated in a meal hosted by some CHamoru leaders from Hagåtña, the first native village that the missionaries visited in Guåhan:

Said Nieto leveled and softened the entrance with his special manner and affection to the Indians, lavishing them, hugging them and sitting with them in the floor, as they do, in mats [*petates*], which are their chairs, and they brought plenty of food for him so he could sit and eat with them as a sign of brotherhood; because certainly then Nieto started to call them brothers. And having eaten with them and from their foodstuff in their manners and having lavished the leaders with everything he could to please them.¹⁸

16 “Resumen de los sucesos del primer año de la misión en estas islas Marianas,” Agaña, April 26, 1669 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 5^r). See Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “Colonialismo y santidad en las Islas Marianas: La sangre de los mártires (1668–1676),” *Hispania sacra* 63, no. 128 (2011): 707–45, here 722–24, <https://doi.org/10.3989/hs.2011.v63.i128.289> (accessed December 28, 2021).

17 See, for example, Ken Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 50; Martel, “Ferocious Appetites,” 309; Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría, “Eating Like an Indian: Negotiating Social Relations in the Spanish Colonies,” *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 4 (2006): 551–73, <https://doi.org/10.1086/431526> (accessed December 28, 2021).

18 Translated by the author. The original extract can be found in “Lista de bienhechores de las islas Marianas,” Agaña, March 14, 1691 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 298^v).

According to Bustillo, who recorded the event, by participating in CHamoru rituals of commensality, Nieto established intimate ties with the local leaders and created a positive environment for the arrival of the missionaries and the development of their activities. Food exchanges continued during the following months. When visiting CHamoru towns, the Jesuits were greeted with bananas, coconuts, and other local fruits. In return, the missionaries offered iron and tortoise shells, which were prestige items in the CHamoru precolonial society. Some documents suggest that the missionaries' acceptance of local food and their participation in CHamoru rituals of commensality were sometimes employed as a strategy to maintain peaceful relations with the natives and spread baptism. In fact, in other missions, the Jesuits claimed to have accepted food from the local populations in order to gain their trust and respect.¹⁹ In that sense, Francisco García (1641–85), San Vitores's hagiographer, indicated that during these early exchanges, the leader of the mission accepted food of the CHamorus to avoid displeasing them.²⁰ On another occasion, Luis de Medina explained that, during his visit to northern Guåhan, he decided to eat at the houses of the CHamorus of Tarague in order to baptize some members of the community.²¹ Similarly, Jesuit annual letters show that the missionaries tried to gain CHamoru children's trust and affection by offering them sugar and *bizcocho* (hard-tack), two types of food that they particularly enjoyed.²² In that case, the Jesuits were utilizing food resources to attract the younger members of the CHamoru society and convert them to the Catholic faith.

However, the Jesuits were not willing to accept all CHamoru food practices. While trying to convert the native inhabitants of the Marianas to Christianity, the missionaries also attempted to modify those food-related beliefs and customs that they considered to be superstitions. One of the rituals they intended to eradicate was related to fishing activities. According to early reports on the Mariana Islands, CHamoru precolonial fishing practices were strongly ritualized. Several steps were strictly followed to gather the prey and prepare it for

19 Cintia Rosso and Celeste Medrano, "Alimentación de los grupos mocovíes asentados en la reducción de San Javier (Chaco meridional, siglo XVIII)," *Cuadernos del Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano* 1, no. 1 (2013): 46–59, here 56–57.

20 See Francisco García, *Vida y martirio del venerable Padre Diego Luis de Sanvitores* (Madrid: Imprenta de Juan García Infanzón, 1683), 238.

21 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 62^v).

22 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fols. 61^r, 66^v).

its consumption.²³ San Vitores interpreted these practices as clear invocations of the devil and thus tried to discourage these customs.²⁴

Although first contacts with the CHamorus were friendly, hostilities started shortly after the missionaries' arrival and initial hospitality faded away. The growing opposition to the Jesuits was precisely manifested by the interruption of the food exchanges, which also occurred in the Philippines, where the mistrust felt by some local groups towards the Jesuits was expressed by denying food to them.²⁵ Scholars have interpreted early CHamoru resistance to the Jesuits' presence as a consequence of the missionaries' attempts to modify their ancestral religion, sexual practices, and gender relations.²⁶ In that sense, the adjustment and control of CHamoru food practices could have also triggered a wave of opposition to the missionaries' presence. Certainly, the Jesuits' own food habits aggravated the tension with the local population. In particular, the missionaries' consumption of eels and some river fishes, which the CHamorus did not eat, increased the feelings of suspicion towards them:

[It was said] that Father Luis was a low and despicable man, who ate snakes and river fishes, for which people in this land have a special horror, and for their availability in the river that runs near Hagåtña, the town of our principal residence, we ate them sometimes to satisfy our needs and for lack of other fish and meat [...]. Said reputation of being vile for eating such fish [...] followed him until death. This was one of his shames and why he was chided, as we already said, that the Father [Luis de Medina] and his fellows were bad and evil because they ate such fish.²⁷

23 Juan Pobre de Zamora, *Historia de la pérdida y descubrimiento del galéon "San Felipe"* (Ávila: Institución Gran Duque de Alba de la Diputación Provincial de Ávila, 1997), 443–44. See also Peter Coomans, *History of the Mission in the Mariana Islands: 1667–1673*, ed. Rodrigue Lévesque (Northern Mariana Islands: CNMI Division of Historic Preservation, 2000), 14.

24 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 66^r).

25 John Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 54.

26 Coello de la Rosa, "Colonialismo y santidad," 726; Sandra Montón Subías, "Gender, Missions, and Maintenance Activities in the Early Modern Globalization: Guam 1668–98," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 23, no. 2 (2019): 404–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-018-0470-5> (accessed November 21, 2021); Enrique Moral de Eusebio, "Heterotopías en conflicto: Sexualidad, colonialismo y cultura material en las islas Marianas durante el siglo XVII," in *Entre ciência e cultura: Da interdisciplinaridade à transversalidade da arqueologia* (Actas das VIII Jornadas de Jovens em Investigação Arqueológica), ed. Inês Pinto Coelho et al. (Lisbon: CHAM, IEM, 2016), 229–32.

27 Translation of the author. "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 63^r).

The above quotation reveals the problems that transgressing local food customs entailed for the Jesuits in the Marianas. Aware of the powerful cultural meaning of food, some missionaries decided to avoid eating those animals the CHamorus considered corrupted and whose consumption was prohibited for them. This strategy of culinary accommodation or “gastronomic accommodation,” as defined by Cristina Osswald, was mainly followed by one of the first missionaries to arrive in the Marianas, Luis de Medina.²⁸ According to written sources, Medina decided to avoid consuming some local resources following the example set by Francis Xavier (1506–52), who abstained from eating meat and fish in Japan to prevent conflicts between the missionaries and the Japanese Buddhist monks.²⁹ Likewise, Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) became a strong advocate of accommodating the missionaries’ food practices to the Japanese customs to guarantee the success of the Jesuit’s evangelical project.³⁰ However, in the Marianas, some missionaries decided not to imitate Medina. For them, the CHamorus’ reluctance to eat river fishes and eels was equivalent to the prohibition of eating pork established by Muslims and Jews. In other words, some missionaries considered that these food practices were simply superstitions, and thus decided to rely on those kinds of food to face the absence of familiar resources, but also as strategy to reaffirm their own cultural identity.³¹

Conflicts between the CHamorus and the Jesuit missionaries spread throughout the 1670s. In July 1671, the CHamoru leader Hurao organized an uprising against the missionaries in which thirty-two native villages participated.³² In a letter written by Francisco Solano (1635–72) some days before the attack started, the Jesuit explained that the provisions available at Hagåtña, where the missionaries had established their residence, were not sufficient to feed all the Spaniards that lived there. The existing food rations included a small amount of rice and other resources brought by the Manila galleon, which were notably reduced that year.³³ Consequently, during the assault, the Jesuits

28 Cristina Osswald, “El cotidiano de los jesuitas en la India,” in *Actas del I Congreso Ibero-Asiático de Hispanistas: Siglo de Oro e Hispanismo general*, ed. Vibha Maurya and Mariela Insúa Cereceda, 6 vols. (BIADIG: Biblioteca áurea digital, 2011), 6:505.

29 “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 63^r).

30 George Elison *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 59–60.

31 “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 63^r).

32 Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, *Jesuits at the Margins: Missions and Missionaries in the Marianas (1668–1769)* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 41.

33 “Copia de una carta que el padre Francisco Solano, superior de la misión de los Ladrones, ya Marianas, escribió de dichas islas a la ciudad de Manila” (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 82^v).

and their assistants complemented their diet with local food, such as boiled yams, and relied on some hard-tack that was reserved for times of necessity.³⁴

As native opposition increased, missionaries requested more soldiers to the Spanish crown to protect the mission and subdue the CHamorus.³⁵ Nevertheless, written sources reveal that, during the period 1668–74, the missionaries had limited power over the local population, and that CHamoru opposition prevented the implementation of the mission system as was initially planned. In particular, the missionaries found it impossible to force the CHamorus to provide them with their daily sustenance, nor to modify their traditional subsistence activities.³⁶ Indeed, during these early days, the Jesuits depended on the CHamorus' cooperation to obtain the provisions that came in the Manila Galleons, since whenever the galleon reached the shores of Guåhan, the CHamorus used their boats to help the Jesuits transport the cargo.³⁷ In addition, the missionaries relied on the CHamorus' willingness to trade with them to obtain food resources, as shown in a letter written in 1671, in which San Vitores asked Tomás de Cardeñoso, who at that time was in the island of Tinian, to buy all the rice and other local foods available there in order to supply the missionaries and their assistants living in Guåhan.³⁸

The survival of the missionaries was complicated by the scarcity of introduced resources. Jesuit letters from this period show that the missionaries were not able to completely rely on the plants and animals brought to the islands during these years. While trying to spread the Christian doctrine throughout the Marianas, the Jesuits also explored the territory to identify which lands were the most appropriate to cultivate new plants and raise European cattle. Following the instructions of San Vitores, Alonso López (1646–75) visited the island of Saipan to assess the potential of the territory, and identified some appropriate places to cultivate maize, wheat, *frijoles* (beans), cotton, and other

34 "Copia de una carta que el padre Francisco Solano, superior de la misión de los Ladrones, ya Marianas, escribió de dichas islas a la ciudad de Manila" (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 83^v).

35 Stephanie Mawson, "Rebellion and Mutiny in the Mariana Islands, 1680–1690," *The Journal of Pacific History* 50, no. 2 (2015): 128–48, here 134, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2015.1044484> (accessed November 21, 2021).

36 "Relación de las empresas y sucesos espirituales y temporales de las islas Marianas, que antes se llamaban Ladrones, desde que el año de sesenta y ocho se introdujo en ellas el santo evangelio por los religiosos de la Compañía" (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 169^r).

37 "Relación de las empresas y sucesos espirituales y temporales de las islas Marianas, que antes se llamaban Ladrones, desde que el año de sesenta y ocho se introdujo en ellas el santo evangelio por los religiosos de la Compañía" (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fols. 169^r, 180^r).

38 "Letter from Fr. Sanvitores to Fr. Thomas [Cardeñoso]," Agaña, November 4, 1671, in Lévesque, *History of Micronesia*, 5:393–94.

seeds.³⁹ However, according to the sources, the ability of the missionaries to cultivate these kinds of food seems to have been limited. In a letter written in 1672, Solano confirmed that the missionaries did not have the necessary means to cultivate the land.⁴⁰ Later on, in 1673, Francisco Ezquerria (1644–74) planted some seeds—whose species remains unspecified—in the Jesuit residence of Fuuna, in southern Guåhan, although no further data is provided on whether they thrived or not.⁴¹ As for the animals, Jesuit sources reveal that upon their arrival in 1668, rams, sheep, a bull and a cow were introduced in the islands.⁴² As mentioned before, from the missionaries' perspective, the introduction of livestock was a necessary step to create a self-sufficient mission. Moreover, San Vitores considered that the lack of cattle and other familiar sources of meat in the Marianas signaled the “barbarity” of the CHamorus.⁴³ Nonetheless, in 1671, the leader of the mission explained that European animals—particularly, those to farm the land—were absent in the islands.⁴⁴ According to annual letters, during this period, the missionaries did not have the necessary material resources to build enclosures and keep the cattle in them. In consequence, the introduced animals began to reproduce in the areas that were not under the control of the Spaniards.⁴⁵ At a time when local opposition was growing stronger, leaving the Jesuit residence of Hagåtña to search for these animals was a risky undertaking. Likewise, some CHamoru groups slaughtered many animals that the missionaries introduced in the islands, probably as a strategy to defeat the invaders.⁴⁶

39 “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas del año de 1672–1673,” in *Arxiu Històric de la Companyia de Jesús de Catalunya* [hereafter AHJC], FILPAS 52, n. 24, fol. 252^v.

40 “Relación de las empresas y sucesos espirituales y temporales de las islas Marianas, que antes se llamaban Ladrone, desde que el año de sesenta y ocho se introdujo en ellas el santo evangelio por los religiosos de la Compañía” (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 169^r).

41 “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas desde el año de 1673 hasta mayo de 1674, juntamente con el martirio del padre Francisco Esguerra, muerto por la predicación del Santo Evangelio en el Pueblo de Ati, puerto de San Antonio de la isla de San Juan, una de las Marianas, a 2 de febrero del año de 1674” (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 117^r).

42 “Relación que trata la gran conversión a la fe de Cristo señor nuestro que el padre Diego Luis de San Vitores hizo el año pasado de 1668 en las islas de los Ladrone que ha llamado ahora el padre San Vitores las islas Marianas,” Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereafter AHN], DIVERSOS–COLECCIONES 27, n. 39, fol. 2^v.

43 “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

44 “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fols. 63^r–63^v).

45 “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas del año de 1672 y 1673” (AHJC, FILPAS 52, n. 24, fol. 281^r).

46 “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas del año de 1672 y 1673” (AHJC, FILPAS 52, n. 24, fol. 281^r).

4 Supplying the Mission from Abroad

During this period, several factors hindered the supply of the Marianas as San Vitores and other individuals had initially planned. Although the missionaries had requested a *patache* from Manila to supply the mission when provisions were scarce, no vessel was sent from the Philippines until 1683.⁴⁷ The absence of a direct route connecting the Marianas with the Philippines resulted from the lack of interest that some governors of the Philippines had in the archipelago.⁴⁸ In fact, when the evangelization of the islands was discussed, the project failed to gain the support of the governor of the Philippines, Diego de Salcedo (in office 1663–68), who refused to help San Vitores and disobeyed the royal decree issued by the Spanish crown, in which he was asked to help the Jesuit to advance his evangelization project.⁴⁹ Therefore, during the early days of the mission, the Manila galleon was the only maritime route that supplied the mission of the Marianas.

Disagreements and conflicts among the missionaries themselves affected the shipment of goods to the Marianas and contributed to the irregularity of the mission's supply. In 1672, Joseph Vidal de Figueroa (1630–1703), based in Mexico, communicated to Andrés de Cobián (1671–73), provincial of New Spain, the difficulties he had experienced in supplying the missionaries of the Marianas. As reported by Vidal, Brother Manuel Duarte (1624–89), who managed the provisions that were sent from Mexico to the Marianas, was performing this task negligently, following orders of the Philippines superior provincial, who had openly expressed his opposition to supply the missionaries in the Marianas.⁵⁰ In that sense, Vidal's letters—recently examined by Alexandre Coello de la Rosa—bring light to how the internal conflicts of the Society affected the development of the mission in the Marianas.⁵¹

Other particularities related to the process of purchasing goods also jeopardized the arrival of foodstuffs to the Marianas. In 1671, Jerónimo de San

47 Marjorie G. Driver, "Cross, Sword, and Silver: The Nascent Spanish Colony in the Mariana Islands," *Pacific Studies* 11, no. 3 (1988): 21–51, here 32.

48 Peña Filiu, "Alimentación y colonialismo," 159.

49 "Memorial de Diego Luis de San Vitores, de la Compañía de Jesús pidiendo que se aprueben los 10.000 pesos que le entregó el marqués de Mancera, para ir a las Marianas" (AGI, *Filipinas* 82, n. 10).

50 "Carta del padre Joseph Vidal al procurador provincial Andrés de Cobián," Mexico, March 3, 1672 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 79r).

51 Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, "El peso de la salvación: Misioneros y procuradores jesuitas de las islas Marianas y de la Nueva España, 1660–1672," *Historia mexicana* 71, no. 3 (2022): 1103–48.

Vitores (1596–1677) indicated that the missionaries of the Marianas were paying taxes (*derechos*) on wine, oil, flour, and other goods both in the Acapulco port and Mexico City, where they were acquired.⁵² Due to such irregularities, that same year, the Queen Mariana of Austria (r.1665–75) issued a royal decree asking the viceroy of New Spain to avoid all the practices that were preventing the correct provision of the mission of the Marianas.⁵³ In addition, Jesuit sources reveal that several circumstances affected the delivery of the *socorro* (the goods that were sent from New Spain to support the missionaries in the Marianas) between the years 1668 and 1673. During this time, one galleon went past the Marianas; one *socorro* could not be unloaded completely, and three cargos were completely unloaded, but the missionaries faced some problems when carrying one of them to their residence in Hagåtña.

Despite the irregularity of the *socorro*, during the early days of the mission, the Manila galleon route channeled the arrival of new plants, animals, and tools to the Marianas. Unfortunately, the lists of the provisions sent to the archipelago are scarce. For the mentioned years, there is one list from 1670 that shows the provisions that were prepared in Cavite to be sent to the Marianas through the Manila galleon.⁵⁴ The provisions included wheat, pepper, and farming and cooking utensils. The cargo was complemented by pigeons, turkeys, pigs, and cows that Francisco Solano, who came in the galleon, acquired in New Spain. Among the material culture sent, the missionaries received a grinding mill and some Asian goods, like *bolos*—a kind of machetes used for farming in the Philippines—and *carajayes* (also known as *carajaies* or *carahayes*), a kind of frying pan with a rounded base, similar to a wok, that allowed to cook using different methods: stir frying, roasting, stewing or boiling.⁵⁵ *Carajayes* presented different forms and shapes, with one or two handles depending on their size.⁵⁶ The inclusion of culinary material culture highlights the importance the Jesuits attributed to processing the food following specific techniques.

52 “Carta de Jerónimo de San Vitores Portilla al Procurador de las islas Filipinas en México,” Madrid, October 27, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 70^r).

53 “Real Cédula de la Reina Mariana de Austria al virrey de Nueva España,” Madrid, October 24, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 81^r).

54 “Memoria de lo que el padre Pedro de Espinar de la Compañía de Jesús y su Procurador General en esta[s] islas envía a la misión de Ladrones en las naos Capitana y Almiranta que este año de 1670 hacen viaje a Nueva España a cargo de las personas siguientes” (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fols. 94^r–94^v).

55 Rene Javellana, S.J., “Global Exchange: Glimpses of an 18th-Century Colonial Kitchen in Manila,” *Kritika kultura* 24 (2015): 35–88, here 35, 53.

56 Chenchen Fang, “Naufragio, colonización y comercio: Relaciones entre Filipinas y Taiwán en los siglos XVI y XVII,” *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos de Kyoto* 14 (2014): 33–49, here 47.

5 Local Resources, Iberian Food, and Jesuits' Culinary Accommodation

As explained in the previous sections, during the first six years of the mission in the Marianas, a set of circumstances hindered the Jesuits' initial plans to reproduce their desired cuisine in the islands and rely on introduced plants and animals. The missionaries' letters from this period contain many references to the absence of familiar foods in the archipelago, which offer insights to understand how they experienced this situation. In particular, the Jesuits were concerned about the lack of bread, wine, and meat, which were essential ingredients in the Ibero-Catholic diet. Similar reactions also occurred in other Jesuit missions in which these resources were absent or limited.⁵⁷ For Antonio María de San Basilio (1643–76), the lack of bread, wine, and meat in the Marianas could bear severe consequences for the missionaries' health.⁵⁸ Forced to consume local foods, the Jesuit considered that this situation would put his life at risk.

The missionaries' consideration of the Marianas' local food as less nutritious was also expressed by referring to the scarcity of the islands' natural resources. Luis de Medina's experience is an example of that. According to Jesuit sources, after being habituated to a diet of "good food" in Spain, when the Jesuit arrived in the Marianas, he was forced to get used to the scarcity of the islands.⁵⁹ Importantly, by consuming local food like coconuts or roots—which were considered to be not nutritious enough—both Medina and his companions were proving their spiritual superiority.⁶⁰ Indeed, in some occasions, the Jesuits stated that given the dearth of goods the Manila galleon brought, they decided to make a sacrifice and rely on local food, thus leaving the galleon's provisions to their lay assistants.⁶¹ These examples reflect the missionaries' desire to prove their virtue by rejecting much appealing and familiar food and choosing other resources that were considered less nutritious and appropriate for them.

57 See, for example, Osswald, "Habitos alimentares," 82.

58 "Letter from Fr. San Basilio to Fr. Provincial Valdés," Marianas, April 1673, in Lévesque, *History of Micronesia*, 5:581.

59 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

60 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 62^r).

61 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

But the importance of Iberian food transcended the realm of nutrition. As Rebecca Earle points out, in the colonial world, bread, wine, olive oil, and meat encapsulated the very essence of the Catholic identity and were powerful symbols of civilization.⁶² For the missionaries living in the Marianas, the absence of these resources was also a clear evidence of the lack of civility of the CHamorus and the poverty of the territory. In fact, San Vitores highlighted that even though the natives were welcoming at some points, “nothing could be expected from them since they lived in a land where eating meat was unknown.”⁶³ Years later, when the reduction system started to be implemented in the Marianas, the Jesuits would assess the progress of the mission and the success in civilizing the CHamorus by explaining how some of them had started to rely on poultry meat and other introduced food, like corn.⁶⁴

In the absence of familiar food, during the first years of the mission in the Marianas, the Jesuits made an important use of the local resources. One food that was mostly consumed by the missionaries was the fruit of the breadfruit tree, the *rimai*.⁶⁵ The Jesuits considered this fruit the “bread of the land,” in other words, the food that played the same role in the CHamoru diet as bread in the Iberian cuisine.⁶⁶ Besides occupying this fundamental position in the natives’ food system, some missionaries claimed that *rimai* shared some characteristics with wheat bread: “There is a fruit called *rimay* or *jurao* everywhere, similar in size to small melons, which roasted or boiled offers the same taste, substance and satisfaction as the wheat bread.”⁶⁷ Indeed, San Vitores assured that, thanks to *rimai*, even those Jesuits who recently arrived in the Marianas

62 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 56.

63 “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

64 Peña Filiu, “Alimentación y colonialismo,” 132.

65 “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas del año de 1672–73” (AHCJC, *FILPAS*, vol. 52, n. 24, 218).

66 Lévesque, *History of Micronesia*, 5:391–400. See also “Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas del año de 1672–73” (AHCJC, *FILPAS* 52, n. 24, fol. 283^v); “Llegada del señor gobernador don Manuel de León en la nao de San Joseph a la isla de Guam. Relación de las islas Marianas, hasta ahora de los Ladrones, costumbres de los indios y de lo sucedido en dichas islas al padre Diego Luis de San Vitores y sus cinco compañeros desde 16 de junio de 1668 hasta 17 del mismo mes de 1669” (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 37^v).

67 “Noticia de los progresos de nuestra santa fe en las islas Marianas, llamadas antes de los Ladrones, y del fruto que han hecho en ellas el padre Diego Luis de San Vitores y cinco compañeros de la Compañía de Jesús, en el primer año de su misión desde 16 de junio de 1668 hasta 15 de mayo de 1669, sacado de las cartas que ha escrito el padre Diego Luis de San Vitores y sus compañeros” (AGI, *Ultramar*, 562). Copy available at Micronesian Area Research Center [hereafter MARC]. See also “Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores,” Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fols. 56^r–68^v).

from Spain did not miss wheat bread.⁶⁸ The general acceptance of *rimai* can also be explained by how the fruit was cooked. Apart from its resembling flavor and consistency with wheat bread, the fruit was usually roasted or boiled, two cooking techniques to which the Spaniards were familiar. In that sense, the incorporation of the *rimai* in the Jesuits' diet presents similarities with the integration of other native resources from the New World, for example, corn. In some territories, the Spaniards incorporated this grain into their diet once they recognized its importance in the native diet and its similarities with wheat, especially in the techniques used to prepare it.⁶⁹

Missionaries also included local tubers in their diet, like taros and yams, although with some resistance. Generally, the Jesuits classified these foods in the same category, "the roots of the land." The missionaries understood that these tubers played a crucial role in the CHamoru diet, being their "ordinary bread" during the months when the *rimai* was not available.⁷⁰ Although the Jesuits usually relied on these tubers, its consumption was never popular among them. According to Gregorio Saldarriaga, roots were less attractive to Spaniards because they were mostly obtained through gathering—a subsistence activity that did not have much prestige amid them—and its already low worth decreased even more if the tubers were not processed or cooked to transform them into bread.⁷¹

On the contrary, fish and rice were two local foods the Jesuits esteemed the most. In some documents, the missionaries mentioned that rice was, next to *rimai* and other tubers, the essential element of their diet in the Marianas. They usually obtained rice when they visited the native towns,⁷² but some missionaries regretted that its consumption was limited—as well as the consumption of fish—because CHamorus did not share rice with their guests.⁷³

68 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 62^r).

69 Gregorio Saldarriaga, *Alimentación e identidades en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, siglos XVI y XVII* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2012), 195–99.

70 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

71 Gregorio Saldarriaga, "Comedores de porquerías: control y sanción de la alimentación indígena, desde la óptica española en el Nuevo Reino de Granada (siglos XVI y XVII)," *Hib. revista de historia iberoamericana* 2, no. 2 (2009): 16–37, here 31.

72 "Relación de los sucesos de las islas Marianas desde el año de 1673 hasta mayo de 1674, juntamente con el martirio del Padre Francisco Esguerra, muerto por la predicación del Santo Evangelio en el Pueblo de Ati, puerto de San Antonio de la Isla de San Juan, una de las Marianas," February 2, 1674 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 112^v).

73 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

Another type of local food the Jesuits integrated in their diet was coconuts, although the references to its consumption are limited. Just like roots, missionaries considered that coconuts were not nutritious enough. Certainly, Medina's hagiography proved his moderation by explaining that, while he was in Hagåtña, even though he had other foodstuffs at his disposal, he decided to eat only coconuts and roots.⁷⁴

During this period, Jesuits also relied on local animals and plants that apparently were not part of the natives' diet, like the aforementioned river eels. With regard to plants, they consumed a variety of pumpkins in a *olla* (stew-style meal).⁷⁵ Thanks to the Jesuits' descriptions and the archeological evidence available, it seems safe to assume this squash belonged to the cucurbit family documented in the Mariana Islands in precolonial times, for instance, the *Benincasa hispida* or the *Lagenaria siceraria*, whose fruit is edible.⁷⁶ According to written sources, the missionaries integrated this vegetable by reproducing a characteristic dish of Iberian cuisine, thus showing again the importance that cooking and eating styles had in the process of adopting new resources.

6 Conclusion

As Claudio Ferlan points out, in Spanish America, Jesuits' plans to introduce Catholic cuisine and transform native food practices were usually subject to modification.⁷⁷ That was the case during the evangelization of the Mariana Islands. Despite the fact that missionaries made significant efforts to introduce animals, plants, and material culture to reproduce their foodways in the archipelago, during the first six years of the mission (1668–74) the resistance and opposition of the CHamoru people to the Jesuits' activities, the unreliability of maritime trade routes, the conflicts that arose inside the Society, and the tensions between the Jesuits and the Spanish colonial authorities affected and partially frustrated missionaries' expectations regarding diet and cuisine.

74 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

75 "Noticias de las islas Marianas de los años de 1670 y 1671, por el padre San Vitores," Agaña, April 14, 1671 (ARSI, *Philipp.* 13, fol. 61^v).

76 Darlene Moore, "Foodways in the Mariana Islands: A Look at the Pre-Contact Period," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Archaeology* 27 (2015): 49–58, here 54.

77 Claudio Ferlan, "Ivresse et gourmandise dans la culture missionnaire jésuite," *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 178 (2017): 257–78, here 258, <https://doi.org/10.4000/assr.29531> (accessed December 29, 2021).

Consequently, the Jesuits were forced to make an important use of local food from the Marianas.⁷⁸ Some of the missionaries' reactions to the lack of familiar food—especially of Iberian ingredients—show that, unlike other adaptations propelled by political means, incorporating local resources to their diets was forced by necessity. However, Jesuit accounts reveal that food played an important role in mediating relationships between missionaries and CHamorus. Specifically, missionaries participated in local commensality rituals to establish alliances with local leaders and obtain permission to baptize community members. Likewise, some missionaries also adapted their own diets to CHamoru eating habits to avoid conflicts with them, showing that culinary accommodation was sometimes enacted with political aims.

In addition, during this period, the missionaries' project to transform CHamorus' subsistence activities and, in general, their whole culture according to Christian standards was also frustrated by the strong local opposition. As a result, the missionaries requested the remission of soldiers to subject the CHamorus and force them to modify both their food system and way of living. With the arrival of the first *sargento mayor* (sergeant major) in 1674 and the increasing number of soldiers destined to Guåhan, the Jesuits started to aggressively impose their presence in the islands. In this context of violence, the missionaries finally implemented the reduction system, which dramatically changed the lives of the CHamorus. With regards to food, in the new towns—known as *reducciones* (reductions)—where the local population was forcibly concentrated, the CHamorus were obliged to cultivate and raise new plants and animals, which were mostly consumed by the Spanish settlers. By the beginning of the 1680s, the Jesuits were able to develop their desired food system in the Mariana Islands, but at the expense of the CHamoru lives, whose number dramatically dwindled at the end of the century due to the extreme labor conditions to which they were subject and the violence of the conquest.

78 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 143–44.