

The Spanish in Hawaii: Gaytan to Marin

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The Spanish legend, that somehow Spain anticipated all other Europeans in its discovery and presence in most every part of the New World, extends even to the Pacific Ocean area. Spain's early activity in Alaska, Canada, Washington, Oregon, and California reinforces the idea that Spain was also the early explorer of the Pacific Islands. The vast Pacific, from its European discovery in Panama by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, until almost the end of the 18th Century, was part of the Spanish overseas empire. Generous Papal recognition of Spain's early discoveries and an attempt to avert an open conflict between Spain and Portugal resulted in a division of the non-Christian world between those Iberian powers. Though north European nations were not in accord and the King of France even suggested that he would like to see the clause in Adam's will giving the Pope such sweeping jurisdiction, Spain was convinced of its exclusive sovereignty over the Pacific Ocean all the way to the Philippine Islands. Spain strengthened both the Papal decree and the treaty signed with Portugal at Tordasillas by observing the niceties of international law. In 1513, Núñez de Balboa waded into the Pacific, banner in hand, and in a single grandiose act of sovereignty claimed the ocean and all of its islands for Spain. It was a majestic moment in time—nearly one third of the world was staked out for exclusive Spanish control by this single imperial act. And Spain was able to parlay this act of sovereignty into the creation of a huge Spanish lake of hundreds of thousands of square miles, a body of water in which no other European nation could sail in peaceful commerce. After several early explorations, Spain established

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commercial ports at each extremity of its ocean—at San Diego de Acapulco in New Spain and at Manila. Then for over two centuries on a regular basis an overloaded, clumsy galleon made the trip from Mexico to the Philippine Islands and back following the prevailing winds and currents. Is it possible that either the pre-galleon period commanders or the galleon commanders hit the Hawaiian Islands? Conversely, is it possible in hundreds of round trips to have consistently missed the mid-Pacific group?

Spanish tradition indicates some not-well-substantiated discoveries of the *Islas del Rey*, *Islas de los Jardines*, *Islas de las Tablas*, or *Islas de la Mesa*, all or any of which might have been Hawaii. The pre-Captain Cook discovery of the islands finds the historical world divided into two camps, the vast majority denying such a possibility, with a very small group convinced of earlier European contact. Of the minority group most are Spaniards. Juan Gaytan (Gaytano, Gaetano) gets most of the minority vote. As an associate and pilot of Ruy López de Villalobos, one of the early trans-Pacific explorers, and based on his rudimentary account and a supposed map, Gaytan might have hit the *Islas del Rey* while outbound from the coast of New Spain in 1555. Another less well supported candidate for initial honors is Francisco Gali (or Hualde) whose 1582 expedition or expeditions seem to have gone astray both north and south of normal galleon routing. It seems unlikely that he could have “discovered” the Alaska Coast in $57^{\circ} 30'$, the British Columbia Coast in 50° , and also Hawaii, all in the same year; and it is probable that he did none of the above, his merit being confined to running the California coast southward.

All speculations, true or false, concerning an early discovery of Hawaii do not take away from Cook the laurel of being the real discoverer, the one who made the Islands known to the world and the world known to Hawaii. But as positive as this fact seems, one should not overlook the nature of the Spanish pretensions which are:

- 1) That Spain continued to assert its claim to prior discovery and has not yet abandoned this posture.
- 2) That despite Cook, Spain continued to demonstrate an interest in Hawaii based on Spanish claims to the entire Pacific.
- 3) That Spain could not be indifferent to foreign designs on the islands. and
- 4) That Spain considered exercising her right to occupy these strategic islands in an effort to deny their shelter, provisions and manpower to rival nations who were active competitors for control of the Pacific Coast of North America.

Spanish interest in Hawaii was a spin-off from its interest in the Pacific Northwest, an interest which became very evident in the Nootka Sound Affair. It is clear that Spanish activity was associated with its

political fortunes on the international scene. In an effort to forestall Russian and English entry into Spain's hitherto relatively unchallenged domains, Spain explored extensively in the North Pacific and in 1789 established a settlement at Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound on the British Columbia coast. There Estevan José Martínez, a Spanish naval officer, triggered the Nootka Sound Controversy by capturing British Captain James Colnett and his vessels, along with their crews, including Tayana, chief of Hawaii as he claimed to be.¹ Colnett had been using the services of this Hawaiian giant, who now by force of circumstances switched interest to the Spanish, including a name change to José Mariano. From the Hawaiian, Franciscan Father Lorenzo Socies of the Colegio de San Fernando in Mexico City composed a Spanish-Hawaiian vocabulary of 230 words and numbers. It would be hard to believe that the Franciscan was interested in comparative linguistics. Rather it is probable that both he and Martínez had coincidental interests in the Hawaiian Islands, the former for missionization and the naval officer as part of a large scale plan for exploitation of the fur trade that he was on the point of proposing to the Viceroy. The scheme projected by Martínez embraced a wide trade circle with himself in the center. The Pacific Northwest and California were to be linked to the China trade and to the convenient stop of Hawaii in an expansion of Spanish commercial activity. China was to be the insatiable market for furs gathered along the coast, with Nootka as focus of these collecting activities. California would supply more furs and would also provide the beautiful and much desired abalone shells coveted by the Nootkans, Haida, Tlinget, and other Northwest Coast natives. Manila would continue to serve as Spain's oriental emporium, and the increased trade would carry more mercury, spices, silks, Manila shawls, and other exotic products of the Far East. The Sandwich Islands would be occupied by a presidio on Hawaii, while one or more mission establishments among the Hawaiian Indians (as Spain insisted on calling the Polynesians) could be used for refreshment of the vessels on the long Pacific Ocean crossing. At the same time occupation would support the Northwest Coast and provide the tactical advantage of depriving other nations of the convenience of wintering and provisioning there.

Martínez was not alone in his desire to monopolize the Spanish fur trade. Others, perhaps better prepared than he, submitted proposals, such as Vicente Vasadre y Vega and Nicolas Manzanelli, but no other plan was as specific as regards Hawaii's role in the scheme. Martínez stressed the point that occupation of the islands should be based on Juan Gaytan's earlier discovery.² In an effort to promote added interest in his project, Martínez acquired, crated, and sent off to the Viceroy for

forwarding to the Crown Prince, Fernando, a collection of materials from the “Islas de la Mesa” or “Sandwich,” consisting of:

- 2 cloaks woven of fine carmine and yellow feathers of the kind used by Tayana, King of the Island of Hawaii.
- 2 capes for women made of the same feathers.
 - 1 fan of the same.
 - 1 *carpeta* of woven feathers of red, yellow and black stripes.
- 3 head dresses made as helmets of the same feathers and each different from the other.
- 3 dead birds, two red and one black, which are the ones used to weave the cloaks, capes and other curios of those natives of the Islands of La Mesa.³

Unfortunately for Martínez and his plan, a change of viceroys from Florez, reputedly his uncle, to the Conde de Revilla Gigedo, dimmed chances for adoption of his project. Revilla Gigedo opposed occupation on the basis that the natives had treated badly Europeans who had come there. While squelching Martínez’s plan because local aborigines had a bad reputation, the Viceroy did give orders always to treat the Hawaiians well because of the advantage that their alliance could produce “in case of our exploring or Philippine vessels reaching there, so that they may be supplied with food and other things produced in abundance there.”⁴ In support of his plan, Martínez had submitted a Sandwich Island vocabulary which was soon being used in Mexico City by Don Juan Eugenio de Santelizes in an attempt to make a comparative study of the vocabularies of the Nootkans, the Hawaiians, the Mexican and the Spanish languages.⁵

Even before submission of the Martínez plan, Spain intended to explore extensively the islands as part of the mission of the Spanish round-the-world naval scientific exploring expedition headed by Captain Alejandro Malaspina. This expedition which set out from Cádiz in the summer of 1789, projected a three-month reconnaissance in January, February and March of 1791, after which Malaspina had the option of going to the Pacific Northwest Coast or not. However, before arriving on the coast of Mexico, the commander of the naval exploring expedition received word that the King wanted him to go directly to the northern latitudes to search for the Strait of Lorenzo Ferrer Maldonado, the Spanish version of the Northwest Passage, and while there to visit the Spanish outpost at San Lorenzo de Nutka. In order to carry out the new commission Malaspina had to forego the sunny beaches of Hawaii for the glaciers and fog of Alaska and Western Canada. Based on the customary thoroughness of Malaspina’s party, Hawaiian history is less complete but Alaskan history has an added dimension created by the visit of the men of the *Descubierta* and the *Atrevida*. How nice it would

have been to have turned loose artists Tomás de Suria and José Cardero and natural scientists like Antonio Pineda, Tadeo Haneke and Luis Née in the Aloha Islands, or as the Spaniards most frequently called them, the Islands of San Duic!⁶ A curious aside here are the variant spelling versions of English “Sandwich” concocted by contemporary Spaniards—frequently inventing a new saint—San Dwhich or using San Luis.⁷

As for Spanish interest in Hawaii, a substitute naval party was sent and we are deprived of fullsome treatment, for at best San Blas officer Manuel Quimper was a poor substitute for the trained naval scientists. The record of his visits to the islands of Hawaii and Kauai is largely unsatisfactory. The highlight was perhaps the desertion of a sailor, Martín Mariano, whom Quimper believed had been picked up by the aforementioned British Captain Colnett, who by strange coincidence was in Hawaii after many months as a prisoner in Mexico. It is not clear whether or not the deserter really joined Colnett, stayed on the island of Kauai, moved to some other island, or found other transportation away from the islands. Quimper did not make a serious attempt to recover the deserting crew member, but continued on to his destination of Manila in the *Princesa Real* with a cargo of 3356 otter furs. Failure to stow properly these pelts and long delay in marketing them made them almost useless in the oriental trade.⁸ When British explorer George Vancouver paid a visit to Hawaii he found there “the boatswain from Martínez’s ship,” possibly Martín Mariano.

The major figure in Spanish relations with Hawaii soon put in his appearance in the Sandwich Islands. But the exact circumstances of the arrival of Francisco de Paula Marín are obscure. Marín, sometimes in early sources Marino, Marini, Manini and even Manning, was also a deserter from the Spanish navy, more specifically from the Naval Department of San Blas on the west coast of Mexico. Marín became a well-known Hawaiian resident, even to the point of having recently become the subject of a book⁹ including a journal of sorts kept by him. At no place does Marín or his biographers make clear his early life or even much of his early activity in Hawaii. Furthermore, Marín seems to be one of those people who would prefer to lie when the truth might serve equally well. He would well qualify as one of those “Rascals in Paradise” of whom James A. Michener and A. Grove Day wrote so delightfully. Depending upon his audience, Marín could tell a story calculated to please and confound. Yet the little renegade became a key to continuing interest of Spain in Hawaii, with the Iberians willing to consider laying political claim to the archipelago partly on the basis of the dubious advantage created by a deserter.

Marín's origins are vague. Most probably he was born in 1773 at Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, not far from the White City of Cádiz. On another occasion he told the improbable story that he was the son of the hangman of Mataró in Catalonia, that he was involved in the Napoleonic Wars and that he had escaped to America. Though not giving any information on his provenance, contemporary authorities in Mexico do indicate that up until his desertion he was a pilot in the naval department. Careful perusal of the volumes of documents in the Sección de Marina in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and research on Marín in the Museo Naval in Madrid have yielded no file of documents on Marín either as a deserter or as a pilot, suggesting that he was perhaps little more than an apprentice at pilotage. By Marín's own admission he had been with the expedition of the sloops *Sutil* and *Mexicana* in the first circumnavigation of Vancouver Island (1792). These vessels, forming a sub-unit of the Malaspina exploring expedition, visited Nootka a year after the visit of the parent vessels, and were under the command of Dionisio Alcalá-Galiano and Cayetano Valdés. Marín later claimed not only participation in this notable expedition but also a warm friendship with those Spanish naval heroes. The records of the 1792 expedition at no place mention Marín and the pilotage duties were known to have been carried out by José Cardero, the artist and journalist.

According to other archival sources, Marín, who seems never to have been an official pilot, jumped ship at Nootka in 1792, deserting to erstwhile American Revolutionary privateer, turned merchant mariner, John Kendrick, Sr.¹⁰ The U.S. vessel carried Francisco de Paula Marín to Hawaii where the Spaniard joined a growing colony of foreigners, consisting of a rare assortment of weird types, not the least of which was the new arrival.

If one could believe even half the claims made by or for Marín, his name should loom large in Hawaiian history. Doubtless much of it is true, while other information rests on less certain evidence, principally on Marín's own unsubstantiated word. He fought in the army of Kamehameha the great, had been wounded, and bore the scars as permanent testimony. He served as personal physician and counselor to the king. He was a particular favorite of Queen Kaahumanu, who because of her respect for Marín was therefore partial to all Spaniards. Marín introduced cattle, horses, sheep, all with great success, and later owned nearly all the cattle on Oahu. He planted the first vines, produced wine from the fruit, and distributed cuttings so that others might follow his lead. He introduced to Hawaii "all of the fruit trees of California," as well as greens, melons, bananas, and pineapples, brought at his behest from Mexico. He experimented with coffee production. He carried out

the functions of doctor and even missionary. He had the best of two worlds for he “had a truly Spanish soul in an ‘Indian’ body, for he combined the feelings of a Spaniard with the customs of the ‘Indians.’ ”

Some of these claims need qualification. English explorer Vancouver is credited or blamed for transporting California cattle to Hawaii, though a subsequent Spanish report indicated that all of the twelve animals taken in California had died.¹¹ However, four ewes and a ram survived. Another early Spaniard, a Malagueño, also an early resident of Hawaii, is credited elsewhere for vinicultural beginnings, but this pioneer returned to Spain after a short stay in Hawaii. As for being a “missionary,” it is true that Marín taught his several wives to offer devotions in unison, but sired one of the large polygamous families of the historic period in Hawaii. He was also later interested in Catholic mission establishment, but in siding with his traditional co-religionists he became less respected by the dominant Protestants who probably disapproved of him anyway. At death he was buried by the Protestants because he had been denied a Catholic burial, though there is evidence that he personally conducted numerous Catholic baptisms.

We do know that Marín was in contact with prominent early Californians, the Ortegas, Estudillos, Arguellos, De la Guerra, and was at one time seriously petitioning for a private land grant to which he contemplated moving his family. He also corresponded with people in Mexico, and to all of these contacts he placed requests for cuttings, seeds and live plants to be sent to him at his headquarters in Honolulu which apparently included the Pearl Harbor area of Oahu, with Ford Island as one of his livestock ranges. As a shadowy figure, the Spanish authorities were anxious to know more precisely of Marín’s situation in the islands. One specific opportunity arose in late 1798, some six years after Marín’s presumed desertion. Four U.S. seamen of the American Brigantine *Garland*, Basil Worth, commanding, were taken prisoner in Baja California and sent to San Diego where they were interrogated on various subjects relating to their voyage which had included a stop in Hawaii. As regards Spain’s interest in those islands, the key questions were numbers 5 through 11 of a list supplied by the Basque governor, Diego de Borica.

- 5th What vessels frequent most the Sandwich Islands and with what objectives?
- 6th What is the number of Europeans established in said islands, distinguishing between English, Americans, Spanish and others?
- 5th [bis] In what do they employ themselves, if they are married and whatever they know of interest?
- 6th [bis] What European foods they cultivate and in what quantity?
- 7th If they engage in the raising of cattle, sheep, goats and horses and in what number?

- 8th What nation supplies the grains and livestock for them to raise?
- 9th If, because of the settling of strangers in said islands, the Indians have changed their old government, and if any of the former have taken preponderance over the latter and to what extent?
- 10th If the English have any fort on said islands and with what strength and personnel?
- 11th How our deserter pilot named Don Francisco de Paula Marín lives?¹²

The answers as gleaned from the prisoners by Ensign Rodríguez of San Diego presidio were as follows:

- 5th That the ships that most frequent the Sandwich Islands are English with the object of wintering in them because of their warm, mild climate, as well as to provision themselves with some pigs that the natives give along with the fruits that the country produces in exchange for small wares or notions and some cloth.
- 6th That in those islands they haven't noticed there to be any more Europeans than the Frenchmen, 7 or 8 Englishmen, 2 Americans, and the Spanish deserter pilot, who are not employed at anything since the wives that each has maintain them.
- 7th That the European foods that they have are potatoes, cabbage, peppers, and melons in abundance, and among the American ones are bananas, coconuts and sugar cane.
- 8th That they have some cattle, although not many, a few goats and abundance of chickens, but no horses or sheep.
- 9th That the English are those who have supplied said European foods, cattle, goats and chickens.
- 10th That the same method of government that the Indians of the Sandwich Islands have had since time immemorable continues at present, since the small number of Europeans that there are obey the Chief of King Chameame, who is well armed with a large number of guns, powder and ball, in the use of which his vassals are skillful; in addition to which they have two 4-pound cannon and four *pedreros* with corresponding munitions, which the English have provided them in exchange for food supplies.
- 11th That the English don't have any fort or protection where they can make themselves safe.
- 12th That they know our pilot deserter, named Don Francisco de Paula Marín, who is married to an Indian woman by whom he has a son, and who said to the deponents that therefore he didn't want to return to his country.¹³

Marín appeared personally on the California scene and in the archival record again in January 1804 aboard the New England frigate *Hazard* with the rascally James Rowan commanding. With him were "sixteen Indians of San Luis," that is, Hawaiians. According to local Californians the "Aser" [*Hazard*] had an interpreter who was "bastante castellano". He was, of course, Marín "who had learned his languages in Macao and also had learned pilotage at the same time."¹⁴ Marín had been serving Rowan as pilot and interpreter with the Indians of the Pacific Northwest Coast, confirming the adage that a criminal returns to the scene of his crime, on this occasion being that of desertion. Whatever the nature of Marín's contacts on the California Coast, he was recognized by some as a deserter of yesteryear, but was not detained. It is possibly from this

visit along the coast that Marín established lasting contacts and perhaps even obtained some plants for transfer to Hawaii. It was also probably from this cruise with Rowan that a story originates of Marín as purchaser of some religious statues which when unlocked proved to be pornographic.

The continued presence of Marín in Hawaii led to some discussion as to the suitability of Spain laying claim to the area on the basis of its ancient claim to the entire Pacific Ocean, to the primacy of its contacts with the islands, and most recently to the contribution of the Andalusian deserter. The Viceroy felt that the time was not ripe and the opportunity passed. With further passage of time, Spain's hold on its overseas colonies began to slip, though all interest in Hawaii did not disappear. Some fear was evident concerning those islands as late as 1818, almost at the end of the colonial period, when California Governor Pablo Vicente de Solá expressed his certain opinion that Russia had taken possession of Hawaii and had established a fort there. In that same year Argentinian privateer Hipólito Bouchard staged an attack on California from Hawaii as a base. Records of that attacking group speak highly of a Mr. Manning of Honolulu, none other than Marín, who was obviously little concerned for the safety of Spanish California as he hobnobbed with the pirates.

The next year, 1819, artist Santiago [Jacques] Aragó, aboard the French frigate *Urania*, visited Marín and left us the longest single description of the Honolulu chameleon.¹⁵ Marín's home was a bright spot in an otherwise dismal area; and it was quickly evident that Marín's propensity for spinning a great yarn had not diminished with the years. He claimed to be of Catalan background, had been a *guerrillero* in the war of independence, but because of the horrors of war, which he knew first hand, he went off to France. At Bordeaux he signed aboard a Dutch vessel which touched at the island of Hawaii where he asked to be dismissed and where he remained. He subsequently served under "Tamahamat," and latter dedicated himself to raising a vineyard and orchards.

Even after the loss of most of Spain's colonies, there was still some residual interest in the now prominent figure of Marín, a prosperous landowner on Oahu. A glimpse of the aging pioneer is found in the account of Don Juan Manuel de la Mata, a Spanish corsair operating in the Pacific against the vessels of the recently revolted colonies. In April of 1828 on his round-the-world cruise Mata met and talked with Marín, commenting on the contributions the latter had made to the local economy and indicating that for many years Marín had worn no other clothing than a Hawaiian breechclout and that he ate only in local style. Despite his conformity in most regards to local custom, "it was certainly admirable to see the punctual devotion with which these poor 'Indians'

[Hawaiians] come to pray at Marín's house, and notwithstanding many of them being old and still pagans, all crossed themselves devotedly on entering the door of the house as if it were that of a temple."¹⁶ Though others saw him as "a sad old rogue," "guilty of every specie of enormity"—he was Spain's most lasting contribution.

With the departure of Mata, the curtain drops on an era of Spanish interest. In the future Spain would only view those mid-Pacific islands as an exotic tropical paradise, and once in a while see it as a paradise lost.

NOTES

- ¹ Tayana, also known as Mawtaray and as José Mariano, was 6' 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Revilla Gigedo to Valdés, December 27, 1789 in Archivo General de Indias, hereafter AGI, Mexico 1530.
- ² The Martínez plan is in Archivo General de la Nación, hereafter AGN, Historia 65.
- ³ Florez to Valdés, August 27, 1789 in AGI, Mexico 1529.
- ⁴ AGI, Mexico 1530.
- ⁵ Martínez Diary in Museo Naval, hereafter MN, Doc. No. 732. Naval officer Gonzalo López de Haro, an associate but hardly a friend of Martínez, also submitted a vocabulary of similar length. See: AGN, Historia, 31.
- ⁶ The original Malaspina plan had been to leave Haenke and Pineda in Mexico while the main contingent went to Hawaii, then to Cape Mendocino and from there to run south along the well-known coast of California. This would have eliminated all consideration of the Pacific Northwest. AGN, Historia 397.
- ⁷ Without effort some 12 to 20 variant spellings are available. San Wuit, Sanduwich, Sandiwich, Sandwyche, San Dwyche, San Duic, San Duivh, Sandwik, Sanduick, San Luis, S. Luis, Sand wictz, S. Duic are quickly found.
- ⁸ Quimper had left San Blas in February of 1791, visited Kailua Bay on Oahu, Kauai and "Niihaii." He collected a cape, a helmet, and a cloak as gifts from Kamehameha.
- ⁹ Ross H. Gast, *Don Francisco de Paula Marín* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii for the Hawaiian Historical Society, 1973)
- ¹⁰ AGN, California 62.
- ¹¹ Archivo Histórico Nacional, Estado 4287.
- ¹² Diego de Borica, Monterey, December 22, 1798 in AGI, Estado 28.
- ¹³ Manuel Rodríguez, San Diego, January 8, 1799 in AGI, Estado 28.
- ¹⁴ AGN, Historia 31.
- ¹⁵ Santiago Arago, *Recuerdos de un ciego: Viaje al rededor del mundo* (Madrid, 1851), pp. 215–221.
- ¹⁶ "Extracto del diario de navegación de Don Juan Manuel de la Mata," MS, in MN No. 933.