

Dances, instruments, and vocal music in the Jesuit mission of the Mariana Islands (1668–1769)

IRVING, DAVID

ICREA & IMF-CSIC

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Abstract

The Jesuit mission on the Mariana Islands (Micronesia) was established in June 1668 by Diego Luis de Sanvítores (1627–1672). As in the Americas and the Philippines, the missionaries of the Society of Jesus introduced a great variety of vocal and instrumental music, as well as dances of diverse global origins. Many types of liturgical music (masses, litanies, vespers, hymns, prayers, etc.) and paraliturgical music (villancicos, or the singing of the doctrina cristiana) were also performed. An account of the feast of Corpus Christi as it was celebrated in 1677 mentions a procession with the singing of the hymn Pange lingua and the performance of a villancico, with the singers kneeling; it also describes performances of dances: a pavane, canario, and tocotín (which respectively have their origins in Italy, the Canary Islands, and Mexico). A document relating to the expulsion of the Jesuits and the confiscation of their possessions in 1769 exhibits data relating to musical instruments that existed in the Mariana Islands at this point in the eighteenth century.

Keywords

rattles , hawkbells , hawkbells , rattles , flute , bagpipe , shawm , trumpet , harp , guitar , Christmas song (villancico) , bell , small bell , sackbut , small dulcian , violin , the violin family , cornetto , sheet music , traditional dances , traditional songs , clapping hands , Holy Week procession , Pange lingua (hymn) , general procession , litany , rosary , feast of Corpus Christi , pavane , canarios (dance) , tocotín , sermon , mass , colloquy , whistles , trumpet , Diego Luis de Sanvítores (Jesuit) , Juan de Santiago (Indigenous Filipino musician) , Felipe Tocsan (Indigenous Filipino musician) , Andrés de la Cruz (Indigenous Filipino boy treble) , Hipólito de la Cruz (Indigenous Filipino harpist) , Society of Jesus , indigenous , children , disciplinants , music chapel

The Jesuit mission in the Mariana Islands was established by Diego Luis de Sanvítores (1627–72) on 16 June 1668. Sanvítores took with him a team of craftspeople and Indigenous musicians from the Philippines who were practitioners of Hispanised music: they included Juan de Santiago (*cantor*), Felipe Tocsan (*cantor*), Andrés de la Cruz (*niño tiple*), and Hipólito de la Cruz (*harpist*) ["Requirements of the Mission to the Marianas, Dictated by Fr. Sanvítores", in *History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents*, ed. Rodrigue Lévesque, 20 vols (Gatineau, Québec: Éditions Lévesque, 1992–2001), vol. 4, 386; Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, "Colonialismo y santidad en las Islas Marianas: La sangre de los mártires (1668–1676)", *Hispania sacra* 63 (2011): 729]. The musical equipment he ordered for the mission included whistles, hawkbells, rattles, a drum, recorders, bagpipe (*gayta*), trumpet, shawms, harp, and guitar ["Requirements of the Mission to the Marianas, Dictated by Fr. Sanvítores", vol. 4, 382–383]. On the way to the islands Sanvítores studied Chamorro (with help of an interpreter who had previously resided in the Marianas) and reportedly composed villancicos in this language [Francisco García, *Vida, y martirio de el venerable padre Diego Luis Sanvítores* (Madrid: Iuan Garcia Infanzon, 1683), 190].

Singing, dancing, and instrumental music were important parts of cultural life in the Jesuit mission to the Marianas from its foundation until the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from this distant outpost of the Spanish empire in 1769. Instruments continued to arrive with the regular galleons travelling from Acapulco to Manila. In 1669 Sanvítores requested an organ (and someone to play it), as well as church bells, small bells, four trumpets, and multiple hawkbells (*cascabeles*) of big and medium size (however, evidence that these items arrived has not yet been located). Shawms and sackbut were delivered in the late 1670s. A list of musical items among the Jesuit property confiscated by the government at the time of expulsion in 1769 included violins, recorders, harps, a viol, bassoon, cornettos, bells, and sheet music ["Diligencias hechas por S.M. sobre extrañamiento y ocupación de bienes de los Jesuitas en Marianas" (1769-86), AHSIC, FILEXP-11: E.I, d-11: 90, 92, 97, 108, 128].

Following his arrival in 1668, Sanvítores observed how frequently the Chamorro community engaged in singing and dancing, and he joined in with them, clapping his hand and singing texts about Jesus and Mary in their language [García, *Vida, y martirio*, 216]. During his first year there, Sanvítores constructed a church and a school, dedicated respectively to the Dulce Nombre de María and San Juan de Letrán. The Indigenous Chamorro community appears to have adopted introduced musical practices—whether from the Jesuit missionaries or the Filipino musicians—relatively quickly. A description of the celebration of Holy Week in 1669 (in which year Easter Sunday was 21 April) in the report of the first year of the mission lists a full set of ceremonies and rituals, and describes in hyperbolic terms how the Chamorro children ("Niños Marianos") sang "the prayers, the *Doctrina Christiana*, and the *Ave Maria*"

"Con ocasion [sic] de avernos juntado todos los Ministros destas almas menos uno q[ue] queda entre tanto en la mit[a]d de las Islas p[ar]a las conferencias, q[ue] solemnos, y celebrar juntam[en]te con mas decençia los oficios desta prim[er]a Semana Santa q[ue] sea hecho gr[aci]as al S[e]ño[r] y a la Santiss[im]a Virgen en su Nueva Iglesia Mariana como se pudieran hazer en iglesias muy antiguas con su Monum[en]to, Passos, y processiones, diciplinas de sangre y confesiones destos Neophitos aun no de año [sic], y sin faltar su buena Musica desta Capilla de la Santissima Virg[e]n que assi podremos llamar la escuela de los Niños Marianos, con cuyas buenas, y puras voces, y varios modos, y tonos ya lugubres, y alegres de cantar las oraciones, y Doctrina Christiana, y con singular gracia el Ave Maria." ["Resumen de los sucesos del primer año de la Mission en estas Islas Marianas" (26 April 1669), ARSI, Phil. 13, fol. 8r (postscript)]

The description of the festivities for Corpus Christi in 1677 mentions the singing of the doctrine, a procession with the singing of the *Pange lingua*, and the singing of a villancico while kneeling before an altar. It describes the performance of a coloquio by children, as well as three types of dances: a *pavana*, *canario*, and *tocotín*.

"el dia siguiente, despues del sermon, y missa solemne se formo la procession general: delante iban los standartes de las Residencias, y luego se seguian por un lado todos los niños, y por el otro todas las niñas, con el mayor adorno, y aseo, que cada una de las Residencias podia, y todos cantaban la doctrina christiana. A los niños seguian los Indios Principales de los Pueblos, que acudieron a la fiesta bien vestidos, y con velas encendidas en las manos: El Governador en medio de la Procession cerca de la Custodia llebaba un rico guion, o estandarte: y la Comunidad Religiosa con algunos musicos iban cantando el

Pange lingua. Detras de la custodia que llebaba el preste en sus manos, venia la milicia con mucho lucimiento en forma de guerra, disparando a trechos, y bueltas muchas cargas: por ultimo y por todo el campo avia innumerables Indios, q[ue] estaban admirados de ver tal aparato, y se arrodillaban al verse a la presencia del Señor. Al llegar a cada uno de los altares, se colocaba en el la Custodia, y se cantaba un Villancico, arrodillados entre tanto todos, y despues de incensar, y decir la oracion, se proseguia adelante hasta concluir con todo dexando al Señor dentro de su casa. A la tarde se celebrou la misma fiesta con un Coloquio, que representaron algunos niños, mezclandose a tiempos varios generos de bayles, como de Pavana, Canario, y tocotin (q[ue] equivale a los torneos de España) y lo vaylaron despues del Coloquio diez, o doce niños con mucho primor, y destreza, y no fue menos la que tenian en la representacion en lengua Española, con un gracioso, que era de talento superior para las tablas todo lo qual denota la capacidad, y habilidad destos naturales para formar en ellos una muy florida christiandad y republica; especialmente en los q[ue] aora se ban criando; porq[ue] los grandes arrastrados de la pesada cadena de sus vicios de sus barbaras y antiguas costumbres, no son tan aptos para recibir las [costumbres] politicas y Christianas." ["Relacion de lo sucedido en la Mision de Islas Marianas desde 10 de Junio de 1676 hasta mayo de 1677", ARSI, Phil. 13, fol. 220r.]

The *tocotín*, clearly introduced from Mexico, represents the dancing of Aztec emperor Montezuma II. The genre was longlasting and was observed on Guam in 1819. Very little iconography survives from the first Jesuit "century" on the islands (from the beginning of the mission in 1668 until the orders for the expulsion of the Society were carried out in 1769). However, the dance was depicted in an illustration by Jacques Arago (1790–1855) which was published in 1825 within a volume of plates for the *Voyage autour du monde* by Louis Claude de Saulces de Freycinet (1779–1841).

The vocal and instrumental music and the dances introduced by the Jesuits to the Marianas follow patterns similar to those in the Americas and the Philippines. However, the Mariana mission was distinct for its sheer geographical isolation, with the mission relying on annual voyages from Acapulco to Guam, while en route to Manila.

Source:

AHSIC Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu Cataloniae, Barcelona

ARSI Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Roma

García, Francisco. *Vida, y martyrio de el venerable padre Diego Luis Sanvitores, de la Compañia de Iesus, primer Apostol de las Islas Marianas, y sucessos de estas islas, desde el año de mil seiscientos y sesenta y ocho, asta el de mil seiscientos y ochenta y uno*. Madrid: Iuan Garcia Infanzon, 1683.

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Resources



Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772), Mapa de las Islas Marianas (1752)



Jacques Étienne Victor Arago (1790-1855): "Île Guam: Principal personnage des danses de Montezuma"

[External link](#)

["http://www.youtube.com/embed/jh-94sxudul?iv_load_policy=3&fs=1&origin=http://www.historicalsoundscapes.com"](http://www.youtube.com/embed/jh-94sxudul?iv_load_policy=3&fs=1&origin=http://www.historicalsoundscapes.com)

Example of a "Canarios", by Gaspar Sanz (1640–1710)

["https://embed.spotify.com/?uri=https://open.spotify.com/track/1fiXA0ZuhBqrfQihJNedS"](https://embed.spotify.com/?uri=https://open.spotify.com/track/1fiXA0ZuhBqrfQihJNedS)

Example of a "Tocotín" by Antonio Martín de Villegas / Sebastián de Aguirre (? - ca.1720)

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