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## BOOK REVIEW

Majorie G. Driver & Francis X. Hezel (2004) *El Palacio. The Spanish Palace in Agaña, 1668–1898*. Guam: Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Center. 68 pp; ISBN: 1-878453-65-3

reviewed by

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While there is a plethora of works on the history of the Spanish period in Micronesia, the tangible evidence has been largely disregarded. Indeed, it forms one of the lacunae of historic preservation in Micronesia which is in need of a detailed treatment. There are two ways to deal with this, either through a large-scale, and by necessity quite general overview, or by a series of subregional as well as site-specific treatments. So far, all we have in hand is a general overview (Galvan 1998), which is hampered by its limited distribution, and some commentary in various subregional treatments of archaeological research (cf. Russell 2002).

The volume under review provides a detailed, site-specific treatment of the *Palacio* at Agaña, Guam, the Palace of the Spanish Governor of the Mariana Islands. It arose out of an archaeological study of the remains of the building and its surrounds, carried out in 1984.

Driver and Hezel compile the history of the complex from its establishment in 1668, describing the buildings and its surrounds. But the authors do more than this, as they ground the treatment of the building into the context of the earlier structures at Umatac, and the role

of the *Palacio* in the representation and visual projection of Spanish power in the Marianas.

Unfortunately, the historic knowledge on the *Palacio* is patchy, especially for the period before the nineteenth century. This is an artefact of the documentation available, as some gubernatorial memoria make more reference to the physical structures than others.

The *Palacio* was both a utility structure, serving as the accommodation of the incumbent governor, and later also as gubernatorial administration. As the building changed from a mere accommodation to a *residence*, it attained the role of focal point and symbol of Spanish power in the Marianas. It is sign of the continuity of political symbolism that in 1899 the incoming US administration continued to use the *Palacio* as the gubernatorial seat.

The environment of the Marianas, and in particular its frequent natural disasters, however, were not kind to Spanish structures, necessitating repeated repairs and reconstructions of the building. Driver and Hezel make a nice case in correlating the state of repair of the *Palacio* with the general colonial interest that Spain took in the Marianas across time.

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The volume is well illustrated, showing a series of historic plans and views of the structure as well as its support environment, but the reader is left wondering whether these are all the views that exist. A good locational plan of the *Palacio* in modern-day Agaña, a plan of the *Palacio* in its last incarnation (erected in 1888) and a photograph of the present-day view of the site would have been a welcome inclusion. The image quality of some of the images is left wanting, with pixellation quite evident. This could have been overcome with higher resolution scanning. Such nitpicking issues aside, *El Palacio* is a significant contribution to the ar-

chitectural history of the Spanish period of Micronesia.

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