

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

---

*Dr. Donald Cutter, Professor of History, University of New Mexico, presented this paper at the American Historical Association Pacific Coast Branch meeting in Honolulu, August 1979.*

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