
Documents 1668L

Secondary accounts of the Palauan canoe that drifted to the Philippines in 1668

L1. Account by Fr. Delgado

Source: Fr. Juan José Delgado's Historia sacro-profana (Manila, 1892, but written in 1751), p. 117.

Chapter XXXIV — Of other islands of these archipelagos discovered in the last few years.

It is the somber opinion of a few men with experience in these seas that there are over 11,000 islands within the boundaries of these archipelagos, if one counts the small ones, as well as the average and large ones.¹ Besides the ones that I have described in previous chapters, there are many others spread over these open seas, which are being discovered every day, for instance: the Carolines, Palaos, Talaos [= Talaud] and the Chick-pea [= Ulithi] Islands.

In the year of 1761 [sic]² the galleon **Nuestra Señora del Buen Socorro** was coming back from New Spain, and was before Capul³ when those who sailed her saw, at daybreak near the said galleon, a craft with strange lines, painted somewhat the color of ocher and in the style of those of the Marianas. They picked it up with the people it carried and, although they did not understand their language, they recognized it as a craft that had drifted from the neighboring islands⁴ after a long voyage and without a definite course until it got to those islands. They were all pallid and dying of hunger and hardships. Among those in the craft, there was a chief with a long beard and his

1 Ed. note: It is now known more accurately that the Philippine archipelago alone contains over 7,000 of them.

2 Ed. note: Error for 1668 (see a primary account, Doc. 1668K3).

3 Ed. note: An island just inside the Strait of San Bernardino, west of the northern tip of Samar.

4 Ed. note: That is, not from the Marianas, but from islands neighboring them.

body was entirely tattooed with black stripes in the style of drawings. They did not eat anything that had passed over a fire, but only roots and raw fish.

All the adults died soon afterwards, leaving only some boys alive. When the boys were able to communicate (when they were already able to explain), they said they were from some islands, that lied toward the south, and such are the islands that we are now talking about.

In order to give the complete story about their discovery, we will begin with what happened in the year of 1686...¹

L2. Account by Fray Casimiro Díaz

Source: Casimiro Díaz, O.S.A., "Conquistas" (Manila, 1890); translated in B&R 37:255+.

Part 2, Book 3, Chapter xxxii

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In the middle of July 1668, the galleon **Nuestra Señora del Buen Socorro**, in charge of the commander Don Diego de Arévalo, sighted the first land of the Philippines, namely, the Cape of Espiritu Santo. That vessel carried 17 [Augustinian] religious...

I cannot refrain from mentioning what happened to that galleon [Buen Socorro] when it was at Capul, an island of the Embocadero of San Bernardino; namely, that when the 19th of July dawned the galleon was joined by a craft of peculiar shape—somewhat like those used by the Indians of the Mariana Islands, painted with the same color of vermilion earth, but larger than four of their boats. It held six persons, whose entire bodies were tattooed black. But they were so weak that they seemed to be living skeletons, except one of middle age who was fat and robust, tattooed, and with a long beard. They ascended into the galleon without showing fear or distrust; but no-one understood their language, although we had a sailor who knew the language of the Marianas well, as he had been shipwrecked in the galleon **Concepción** in the year 1636 [rather 1638] and had lived for some time in those Islands. It could only be conjectured from the signs that they made that they had come from the south [sic]. They remained in the galleon, where they were relieved in their necessity, which was lack of nourishment. They ate nothing that had touched the fire; but rice and fish, all raw. All of them died except the boys, of whom the commander and pilot took charge.

After some years, when they knew our language, they said that they came from an island near New Guinea—without doubt the Garbanzos, Columnas, Jardines, or others which the maps show; of the islands of the Palaos, in the discovery of which Father Andrés Serrano of the Society of Jesus toiled so much, until he lost his life by drowning, with other religious and many Spaniards, in the year 1711...

¹ Ed. note: The re-discovery of Yap by Europeans did not occur until 1686, by the galleon Santa Rosa, Captain Gonzalez.