
Document 1526G

Salazar, ex-Loaysa—Secondary accounts about Micronesian canoes

Sources: Navarrete, in his synopsis of Loaysa's voyage, vol. V of his Colección, has paraphrased Herrera and Oviedo and described the canoes of Guam. It is to be noted that Oviedo had personally interviewed Urdaneta and Martín de Islares when they passed by Santo Domingo (Hispaniola) on their way to Mexico (and Guatemala) in 1539.¹

The canoes of Guam in 1526

Before the nao anchored at the island, many canoes went aboard with water, that they carried in gourds, salt, fish, potatoes, rice, coconuts, bananas and other local fruits. They did not wish anything other than iron, nails or things with metal tips in exchange for them. All such [iron] things they called "herrero".² They appreciated tortoise shell very much in order to make combs and hooks for fishing.

Most of their canoes were of one piece, although some were composed of many. Usually they were 4 to 5 fathoms in length, were narrow, being two cubits or a little less in width and their depth came up to a man's knee, although there were bigger ones and smaller ones. They fasten the boards of the canoes that are made up of many pieces by drilling the edges and tying one to the other with cords made from tree barks. On the inside, they would have some pieces of wood drilled, upon which they pushed through sticks that they also fastened, in order to strengthen them.³ On the outside, they would caulk them, sealing all the seams with pitch made of lime and oil, so that they did not leak. Every one of them had on one side a counterweight of wood shaped like a tunny fish, almost as long as half the length of the canoe, strongly fastened to two sticks that

1 Ed. note: Herrera's "Historia", Decade III, Lib. IX, Caps. III-VI; Dec. IV, Lib. I, Caps. II-V, Lib. III, Caps V-VI, Lib. V, Caps. VI-IX. Oviedo's Libro XX of his "Historia", and Chapters XV, *et sequitur*.

2 Ed. note: Gonzalo de Vigo must have taught them the right word "hierro" for iron, rather than "herrero" which means blacksmith. However, the true native word was "ruro", or "lulo".

3 Ed. note: Which means that the canoes had thwarts.

projected from it [i.e. the canoe] and kept it [i.e. the float] separated from the side something like one fathom.

Their poops could not be differentiated from their prows, and they carried lateen sails made of mats, very well woven. In order to change direction, they did not tack, but only changed the sail because they made the poop the prow whenever they wanted.¹

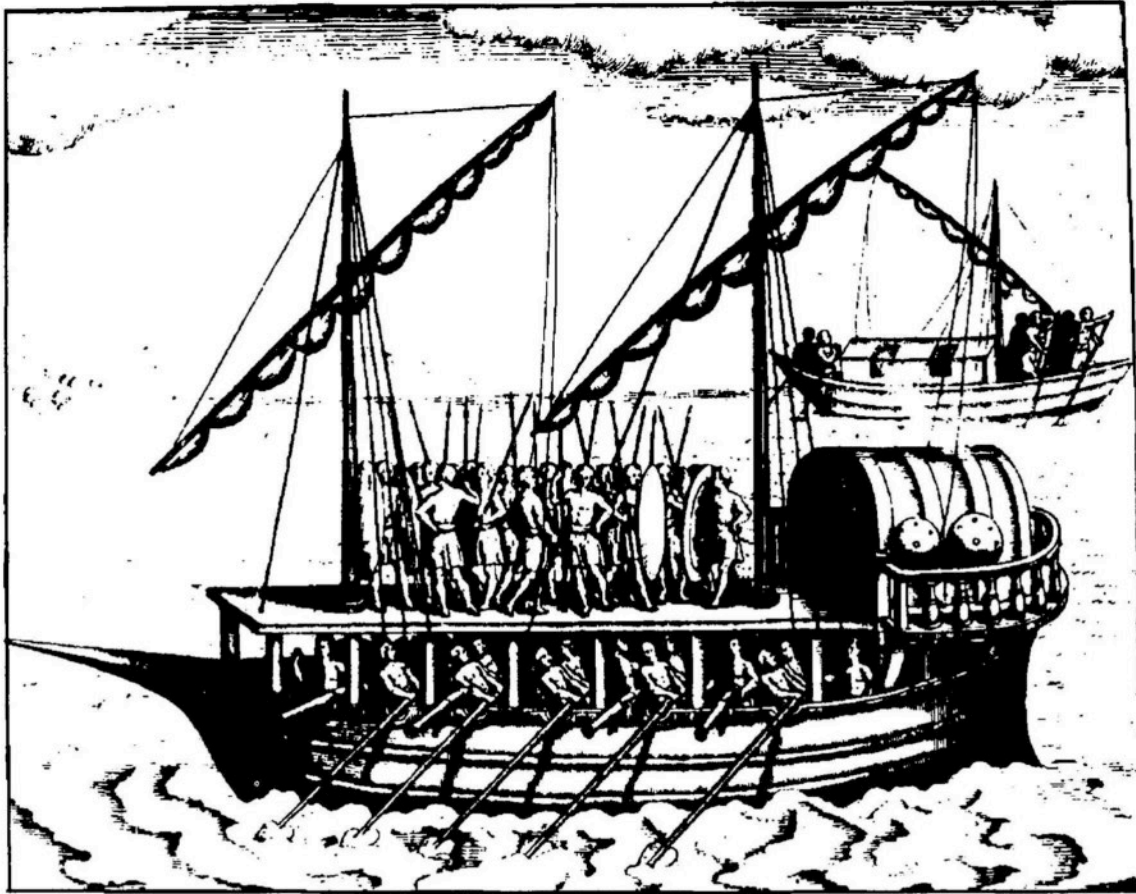


The canoes of Guam and Rota in 1526. (From Amoretti's edition of Pigafetta)

¹ Ed. note: Herrera, Dec. III, Lib. 9, Cap. 6, p. 266. Oviedo, part 2, Lib. 20, Cap. 15, folio 35 verso.



The Battle of Tidore between the Portuguese and Spanish. *It began on 12 January 1527. The Santa María de la Victoria was attacked by a bigger Portuguese fleet. The battle raged on for several days at the end of which the nao was captured and stripped of all equipment and trade goods. Her remains were set ablaze by her own crew and burned to the water's edge. The picture above is not an authentic rendition of that battle, but a similar one for the same period. (BN ms. fr. 6440)*



A galiot like the one the Spanish built at Gilolo in 1527. After the *Victoria* was destroyed, the fifth Captain General of the Loaysa Expedition built a fusta on the west coast of Gilolo (Halmahera) I. The Portuguese tried unsuccessfully to blow her up while she was on the stocks. She was armed with cannon that had been taken ashore earlier from the *Victoria*. She was to capture a big Portuguese galley in May 1528. (From de Bry's "Collectiones ... in Indiam Orientalem", as shown in Morison's "Southern Voyages")