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WORKSHOPS IN PREPARATION FOR THE 12TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

Our Sakman Story

A presentation by

Mario Borja

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Our Sakman Story

One Sentence In History

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Abstract: *This is a story of what one observer, Sir George Anson, the British Commander of the HMS Centurion, witnessed and documented about our Chamorros back in 1742 and which has given our Chamorro history a reprieve for ancestral identity. It is a story about our Chamorros and their “simple” invention of ingenuity; the flying proa, which established a speed record back then and was unmatched for another century. It is a story of a simple scaled drawing presented with such engineering detail unique to the sakman, our Chamorro single outrigger sailing canoe. It is a story of the resolve of a small group of Chamorros to rebuild this sacred vessel of old, fueled solely by very words of this one observers account. It is a story that echoes the same account in the very language of our ancestors. It is a story honoring them for this legacy.*

If we search our written history, peruse all the history books on the shelves, or even



query the Internet, can we find one sentence that can tell us a story about our ancestors? Can we find one sentence that can tell us who we were centuries ago? Or can we find one that captured our identity as a people and even bring pride back to our Chamorros? Can we find just one sentence? The purpose of this Sakman Story is to share this one sentence in history that can do all these. In a few minutes we will be reading this one sentence in history together.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Introduction



My name is Mariano Reyes Borja. I am from the Budoki, Family of Palau and Toliok Family of Saipan. I am a native son, born in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. I am the son of a carpenter and a fisherman

Today we are going to talk story, specifically, our sakman story. This is a story that has been the **fire and focus** of our Sakman Chamorro Project back in San Diego, California. This story stems from this one

illusive sentence in history.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Our San Diego Community



I am here representing CHE'LU - Chamorro Hands in Education Links Unity, and the Sons and Daughters of Guam Community of San Diego. We are a non-profit community with a simple common mission to preserve, promote, and sustain our Chamorro culture and language through education.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Culture Begets Language. Language Begets Culture

We contend that culture begets language and that language begets culture. If we enhance one, the other follows; but if we neglect one, the other will also follow.

This story is about what we are doing as a community back in San Diego to indeed preserve, promote, and sustain our Chamorro culture and language with our sakman outrigger canoe.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Three Chapters

Our Sakman Story contains three chapters. In our First Chapter we look at the building of the canoe, the labor and the product of our hands. Our Second Chapter is all about the passion that is behind this project, this one sentence in history. Then we take a few minutes in the Third Chapter to pay tribute to our ancestors for the legacy they have given us. We will do this in the vernacular, gi “fino Chamorro”.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Our Canoes Of Old

Our ancestors build canoe of various size and purpose. The **galaide** was our smallest canoe, designed for fishing within the reef. It is a paddling canoe without a sail. There were the other larger canoes like the panga, the duduli, the duding and the leklek all equipped with sails for sailing beyond the reef and inter island travel. But the largest of these was the **Sakman**. It was designed for voyaging longer distances as well as deep-sea fishing.

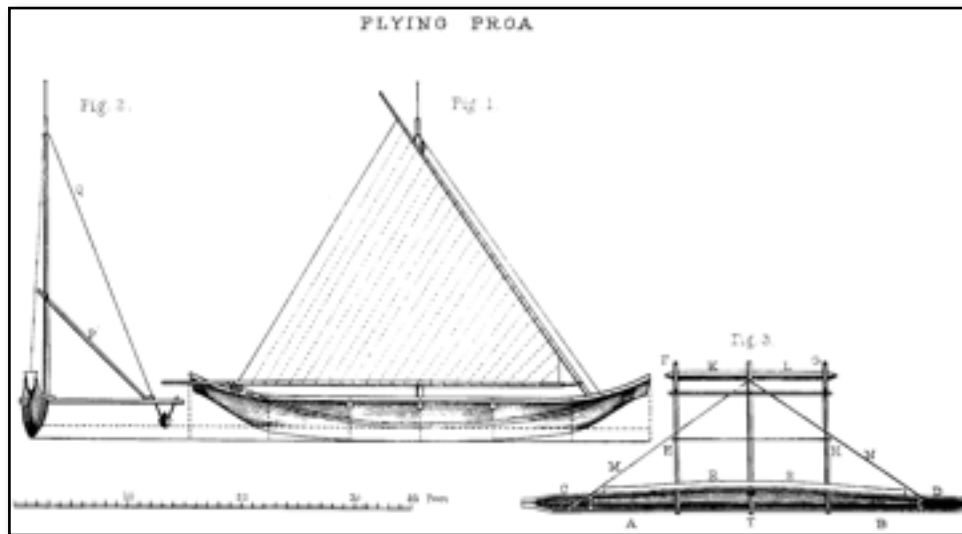


OUR SAKMAN STORY: Building The Sakman

Our Sakman Chamorro Project started with a dream and plan. Here is the dreamer. **Señor Carlos Pangelinan Taitano**. He comes from the Familian Kueto. He was my mentor. When Uncle Carlos saw the 12-ft galaide I build in San Diego back in 1995, he felt convinced I could build the 40-ft Sakman. I did not even know what a sakman was then, but Uncle Carlos would make sure all that would change. Uncle Carlos said to me, “Mario, “Na la’la i taotao tano. Hatsa i Sakman. Hagu i kanai-ta. Ay mohon ya sina gi tiempo-ku. Let live the people of the land. Build the Sakman. You are our hands. Oh, if it could only be during my lifetime.”

From that day on, Uncle Carlos made sure I had all the information on what the sakman is all about. He sent me this drawing the Anson Drawing of 1742.

THE ANSON DRAWING: Our First Look At The Flying Proa



This is the first complete picture we have of our sakman found back in 1742. This picture, this engineering drawing, shows the front view, the side view, and the top view of the canoe our ancestors built centuries ago . And it is even made more complete with the scaling data. With this data we have the dimensions of the canoe our ancestors once built. Now anyone can rebuild the sakman outrigger, larger or smaller, given the resources available.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Learning From A Master Canoe Builder

Starting our project first required real **hands-on training**. In June of 2008 I spent two intense weeks in Maui Hawaii working under master canoe builder, **Chief Bruno Tharngan** of the island of Yap, learning the art of building outrigger canoes. This 23-foot canoe was my primer course on canoe building. The dream was becoming more real, but i was still not ready to build the sakman. This required a structured **step-by-step approach**. This is the plan.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Our Step-By-Step Plan

In building the sakman here in San Diego, we wanted to start small first so we can understand on a small scale what this whole construction is all about. This is our plan: Build small model. Study it carefully. Test it out in the water. Note what we have learned by building the smaller scale, and apply it to build a bigger “small-scale” model. We built a 2-ft model, a 4-ft model, a 5-foot model, even a 6-ft model and, finally, a large 8-ft model.

We started small so we could better identify scaling concerns, get a comfortable feel for the unique asymmetrical hull design of the canoe, identify the tools we would need, and muster the craftsmanship required of us.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: 8-Foot Model

This is the 8-ft model my brother, Tony, and I finally built after completing several smaller scaled models. And it tested well beyond expectation.

Building small models was a great learning experience for us. Not only did we learn the critical parameters of scaling, but we also gained the needed confidence to build the full-scale sakman.



This 8-foot model you see here is named “**Señot Katlos**” in honor of Uncle Carlos P. Taitano, the dreamer and my mentor, who passed away on 25 March 2009. This one is for you, Uncle Carlos. Saina Ma’ase.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Wood = Canoe

An Inuit elder once said: “If you want to build a canoe, you need wood”. How true this is, even for our people in the islands. My primo, Pete Perez, well aware of this

wise man's advice presented me with this challenge: He said, 'Mario, if I got you the wood, would you build our sakman canoe? And I answered with loud affirmation, 'Yes, a thousand times yes, I will.'" History would soon tell the rest of this story.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Emma & Pete Perez



Having a dream is necessary indeed. Making it come true requires commitment, sacrifice, and collaboration with others. Collaboration is sharing the dream. This is what we did. These two wonderful people gave us the means to get the wood to build the sakman ... for this was their dream as well. Thank you, Emma and Pete.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: The Redwood Forest



And for the wood for our sakman canoe, our path led us into the **National Sequoia Forest** in Mendocino, California.

Here it is: **A redwood tree. 125 feet tall.**

OUR SAKMAN STORY: The Log = The Keel

This is a 33-foot section of the tree. It would serve as the keel of our sakman. The rest became our bow, our stern, the belly and sides of the canoe.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: The Log Blessing: 15 Aug 2009

We hauled the logs down to El Cajon, California, where we set up our canoe shop. And before we began work, we gathered and prayed as a community giving thanks and asking for blessings and guidance and a miracle.

Part of our log blessing is spreading sand over the log as a symbol of its destiny as a canoe: Finding landfall ... the beach ... the sand.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Our Construction Team

These are the many hands which started this project. They believed in the project from the get-go:



(l-R) Ray LG “Baut” Sablan, Mario R. Borja (myself), Greg “Galaide” Diaz, Robert “Gualu” Goldkamp, and George “Bonik” Santos. Not shown here are carvers Tony R. Borja and Vince “Bonik” Santos.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Construction Start: 26 Mar 2010

We began construction on 26 March 2010. We used tools of old (the adze, the higam) so we can appreciate the rigors of building the sakman as our ancestors did centuries ago. We also used hand-held power tools to facilitate construction. Our ancestors certainly would have if they had it.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Tools Of Our Trade

Here are the basic tools we used. None of us were really canoe builders when we started. But just look at what we have built.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Setting The Bows

Setting the bow was the trickiest due to the tight alignment tolerances from one bow to the other. With a simple string and a plumb bob we found the center ... exactly the same procedure used centuries ago by boat builders of old.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Work In Progress

Seven months later and here we are. We wanted to show our community how far we have come. Many in our community could not believe the progress we have made. Neither did we believe the work we have done to date.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Just One Year Later

Who would have known that a year after we made our first cut ...we would actually finish the canoe. We did it. 25 March 2011..... here it is. This picture was taken as we assembled the Sakman outrigger in preparation for its first taste of the Pacific Ocean.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Shelter Island, San Diego CA

Building the sakman was indeed a major challenge for us. Yet, it was sailing the sakman that required much more preparation and training. We are not sailors...yet. We know so well that building a canoe does not make a sailor.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Maritime Museum, San Diego CA

This was our first official presence in San Diego Bay. At the San Diego Maritime Museum, adjacent to the HMS Surprise, a replica of a British ship. This picture is very significant in that it could very well be the last image of the Sakman back 270 years ago, when Sir George Anson, aboard the HMS Centurion, lured our Sakman in close by deception.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Spanish Landing, San Diego CA

This picture shows our sakman alone at Spanish Landing in San Diego. Its unique configuration makes it a misfit among the rest of the sailing vessels shown in the background. It is an anomaly, for sure, but the Sakman feels right at home in San Diego. Chamorros live here. Indeed, we are very proud of what we have built in San Diego. The real story is WHY we built it.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Tinian - October 1742

Before we get to this one illusive sentence in history, i must set the stage.
Knowing the circumstances when it was written adds full appreciation to the story.



Location: Tinian, October 1742.

Main character: George Anson aboard the HMS Centurion.

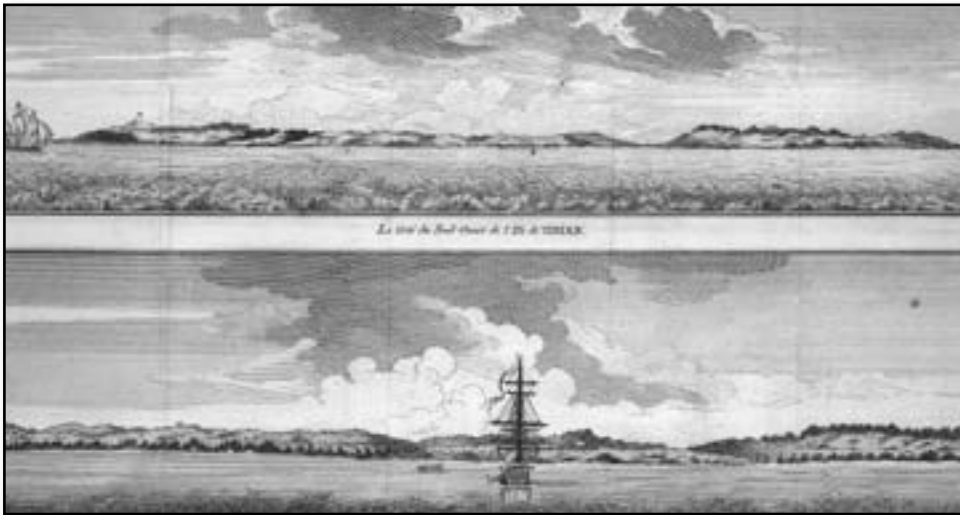
OUR SAKMAN STORY: HMS Centurion

On his voyage around the world, Sir George Anson met near disaster. His ship, the HMS Centurion, severely crippled and heavily damaged, his crew nearly decimated by disease and hunger, Tinian was a blessing in the horizon. Tinian was his only refuge of safety.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: Estimated Speed Of 20 Knots

There he saw this canoe in the horizon. He was fascinated by its agility and performance. There he saw this canoe effortlessly skipping from wave tip to wave tip at an estimated speed of 20 knots, a speed unheard of by European standards. This is equal to 23 miles per hour in land measure. This was a speed unmatched until the mid 19th century. He aptly referred to this vessel as the “flying proa”.



OUR SAKMAN STORY: One Sentence In History

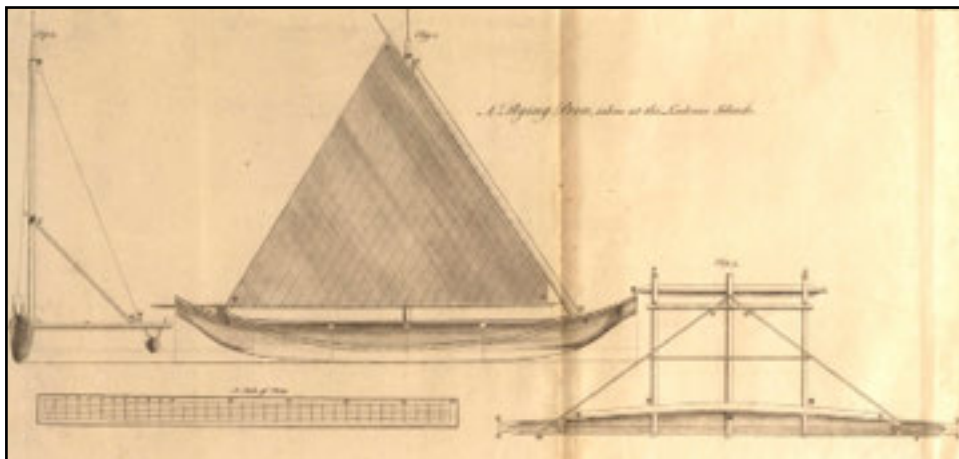
Although in awe of what he saw, he felt fear for it was a canoe flying a Spanish flag. It was the enemy. He was the enemy. He had to capture the canoe for fear that if he was sighted the canoe could easily return to where it came from to report his presence. And by deception he did just this. He raised a Spanish flag and lured the canoe in close. From his own log we find that he destroyed the proa.



But not just yet. Sir George Anson knew that a vessel that could perform like this was something remarkable that he needed to document and tell the world about. It was his discovery. His duty. This he did. **And this is why we are here today.**

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Anson Drawing, 1742

George Anson had his draftsman, Mr. Piercy Brett, prepare this engineering drawing as part of his documentation. This is known as the Anson Drawing of 1742. No where in the rest of Micronesia, all of Melanesia and Polynesia can you find such a detailed drawing of a canoe. This is our Chamorro flying proa, our Sakman.



We are indeed blessed with this data, for our Sakman now lives immortal. This I contend is the greatest gift the British gave our Chamorro people. And there is more ... the ships' log.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: George Anson Article, “One Sentence In History”

Written: October 1742. Published: 1748

As our story continues, we now look at our passion to build the Sakman ... this one sentence in history. This is the sentence Sir George Anson wrote in his ship’s log 270 years ago. This is the **focus of our story** ... the fuel in our blood, ... the fire within our hearts. Yes, it is but one sentence long; a sentence tucked in one paragraph among the many pages in his book; a sentence written in terms rich in meaning and purpose; a sentence that draws out our passion., a sentence and has inspired the work we have done since.

OUR SAKMAN STORY:



The Fuel In Our Blood

The Fire In Our Hearts

Here is this one sentence in history.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: One Sentence In History

"These Indians are no ways defective in understanding, for their flying proas in particular, which during ages past have been the only vessels employed by them, are so singular and extraordinary an invention that it would do honour to any nation, however dexterous and acute, since if we consider the aptitude of this proa to the navigation of these islands, which lying all of them nearly under the same meridian, and with the limits of the trade wind, require the vessels made use of in passing from one to the other to be particularly fitted for sailing with the wind upon the beam; or if we examine the uncommon simplicity and ingenuity of its fabric and contrivance, or the extraordinary velocity with which it moves, we shall in each of these articles, find it worthy of our admiration, and deserving a place amongst the mechanical productions of the most civilised nations where arts and sciences have most eminently flourished."

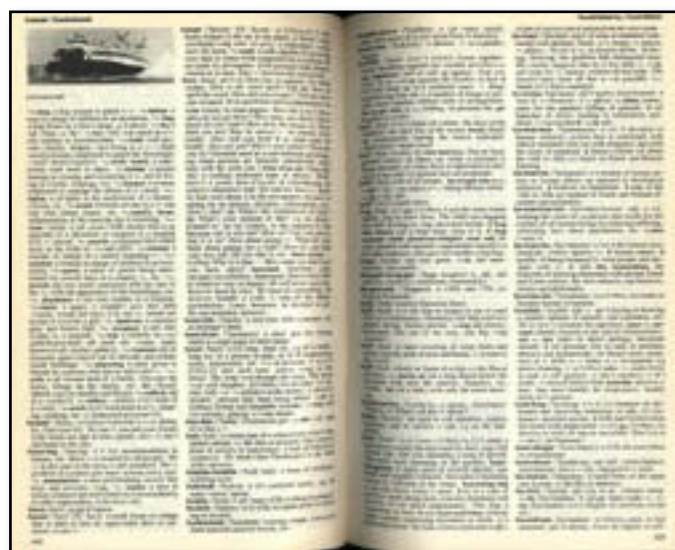
Sir George Anson
October 1742

OUR SAKMAN STORY:

Passion In Our Hearts

Pride In Our Work

Confirmation Of Identity



I must admit that when I first read this sentence I did not understand it fully. I had to read it several times with an Oxford dictionary by my side so I may understand the very words Sir Anson wrote. I know this one sentence has captured the very essence of our passion, infused pride in our work, and reconfirmed our identity. Let me now speak in simpler terms to understand it best. What did words mean then? Singular? Fabric and Contrivance? Aptitude? Dexterous and Acute? Wind upon the beam?



OUR SAKMAN STORY:

Heartfelt Emotion

Unconditional Respect

Humble Admiration

This story is about what happened back in 1742, back in the island of Tinian, just a few miles from where we sit today. This is a story about what one observer wrote on what he witnessed then; a story of the fascination he had of a canoe's agility, speed and performance; a story that captured his heartfelt emotions, his unconditional respect and his admiration of a simple invention.

OUR SAKMAN STORY:

Our Sakman Chamorro Flying Proa

This is a story that tells about who we were as Chamorros, 270 years ago. This is a story of a canoe, our Sakman Chamorro flying proa. And yes, we were gifted canoe builders, and the sakman was our largest sailing canoe. And yes, we sailed with purpose with the wind upon the beam. And yes, we used the heavens, the wind, the ocean, and flight of birds to find our way.



OUR SAKMAN STORY:

Honor To Our Nation

This is a story that highlights the work of our hands, our understanding of nature, and our determination as a people. This is a story that gives credit to our ancestors for the simple gift that they gave us. This is a story that indeed gives honor to our nation, our Chamorro people.

SAKMAN STORY:

One Sentence ... A Full Story

This is but one sentence in history, yet it tells us a full story. This is a story written about us 270 years ago, yet, was never intended for us to read until now. **This is Our Sakman Story.**

OUR SAKMAN STORY



The Fire In Our Hearts

Our Passion

Our Drive

Our Fire

And as we read this one sentence in history together, did you not feel changes within yourselves?

For sure, whenever my crew and I read this every sentence, our chests pushed out, our heads swelled up, even our okolies got bigger, and we indeed stood taller. And yes, our emotions overwhelmed us, and we shed tears of joy.

Yes, we cried for we were filled with cultural pride. Yes, we are very proud of what our ancestors accomplished centuries ago.

So what can we do today? What can we do now? I know what I have to do.

OUR SAKMAN STORY: Chapter 3



Honoring our Ancestors

We must now pause with solemn respect to address our ancestral spirits, i man-naina'-ta antigu, so we may share with them these very words of Sir George Anson in the very language they understand, so they too can hear what was written about them and the simplicity and ingenuity of their invention, this sakman story, this one sentence in history. We do this so we can now give them the credit and the honor they have so rightly earned but have never been extended

them. Today we will. We will let them know what we understand Sir George Anson wrote and meant gi “fino-Chamorro.

TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:



Hita I TaoTao Haya

Hita I TaoTao Islas Marianas

Manaina-hu ...nana antigu yan tata
antigu

Ma'ase Saina. Saina Ma'ase.

Ha-tugi si Señot George Anson gi leblon
batkon-ña tati gi mit siete sientu
kaurenta i dos na sakkan gi i finato-ña
magi gi isla-ta Tinian, esti na palabras.

Ha-tugi na hita, hita, i taotao haya, hita, i

taotao Islas Marianas, ...

TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:

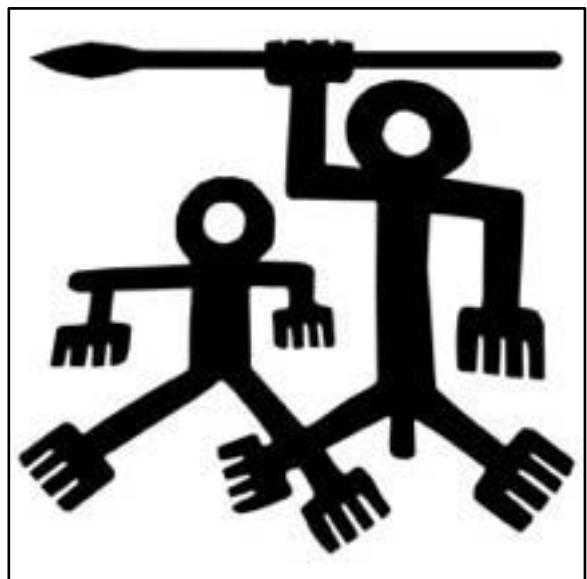
Hita I Man-Chamorro

Hamyu Yan Guahu

Na Ti Man-Difekto Hit Gi Kinomprende

... hita, i taotao, Guahan, Luta, Tinian.

Hita i taotao Saipan. Hita, i man-
Chamoru, hamyu yan guahu, na ti man-
difektu hit, ti man-difektu hit gi
kinomprende. ...



TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:



**I Sakman-Ta, Hagas Ha Ta-U'usa, Sa'sajñge
Tai'parejo, Paire, Mas Ki Otdinariu**

... sa, atan ha esti i sakman-ta ha',
espisia'tmente, ni duranten mapos na
tiempo siha, antes ki i fina'tun taotao otro
tano, esti ha na sãhyan hagas ha ta-
fati'tinas, hagas ha ta-ha'hatsa, yan hagas
ha ta-u'usa, sa'sajñge, ta'iparejo, paire, yan
mas ki-otdinario na nina-juyoñg-ta, ...

TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:

Na U Nina Onra Kuatkiet Na Nasion

... na u nina onra kuatkiet na nasion, ya,
hunggan, ni na o'onra hit i taotao Islas
Marianas, entretanto man-gai minalâte'
hit, yan hunggan, gof-maolek esti i
fina'tinas kanai-ta, ...



TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:



I Ninasiñian Esti I Sakman-ta

... mientras, yanggen ta-konsidera i ninasiñian esti i sakman-ta, para ta-fan-mane'ja entra esti siha na islas-tano'ta, giya Guahan, Luta, Tinian, Saipan, ... hulo Anatahan, Sarigan, Alamagan, Pagan yan hulo mas, ni todo, hagas ha ta-tungu, na-man-la'lailai gi papa i mismo na meti'dian, ...

TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:

I Chin Finala'gun I Manglo

... yan ta'lo, sainan-mame, yanggen ta konsidera i chin finala'gun i mañglo ginen ka'katan. nina-sesi'ta na esti na sahyan-ta siha , yanggen para ta-aprobecha maolek i hinanao-ta, hulo yan papa gi islas tano'-ta siha, ...



TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:



Layak Maolek Yan I Mañglo

... na gi magahit, ufan gof-ma'ok, yan hita lakkue, i taotao i sakman, na tafan mala'te para ta-fan layak maolek yan i mañglo ni malo'lo'fan ta'lo'lo hilo i lucha halom; ...

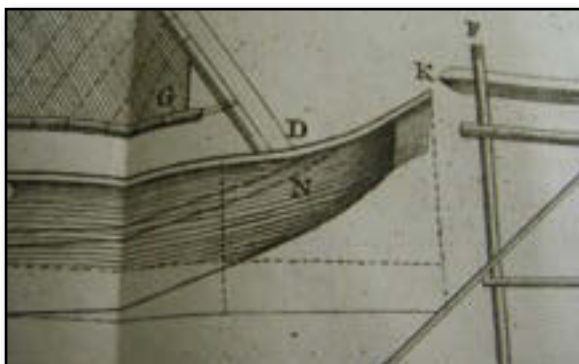
TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:

Chinadek Finala'gugun-Ña

... pat yanggen ta gof-atan maolek taimano i simplikao i finatinas-ta, yan i minalâte na hinaso'-ta gi halom esti i na nina-huyong-ta, pat i mas ki-otdinario na china'dek finala'gugun-ña gi halom hanum,



TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:



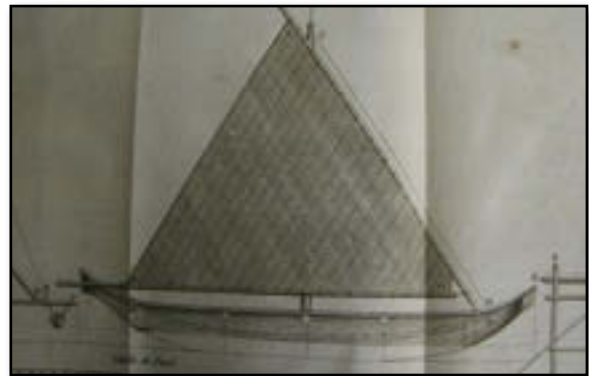
Minaresi Ni Atmiration-niha

... estague, na gi halom kada uno na atikulos na tinige'-niha, ma-sodda ni i taotao Engles na esti i sakman chamorro, esti i finatinas kanai-ta, minaresi ni atmiration-niha, ...

TINIGE SEÑOT GEORGE ANSON:

I Kinalamten I 'Arts Yan Sciences

... yan lokkue, nina-minaresi un lugat...
tatkilo, un lugat suma'saonao yan i otro
siha na fina'tinas tinemtum gi otro siha
na ta'no, ni man gof-respetao yan man-
mo'fo'na na nasion siha, anai gof-la'la i
man gof-tomtum na tiniño gi halom i
kinalamten i 'arts yan sciences' .“



Pinila Señot Mariano Reyes Borja ginen I tinige Señot George Anson, Jan 2013

HUNGGAN, MAGAHIT

I SAKMAN.



Yes, the Sakman is True.

OUR SAKMAN CHAMORRO:

Our Ancestral Legacy, Our Sacred Duty To Pass It On

Sir George Anson has given us a glimpse of our own Chamorro history, 270 years ago, through his eyes, in his words, with this story, this one sentence in history. As we end this particular story, we actually begin another chapter that will tell of the many journeys we will be making with this sakman. We have been given this legacy. It is indeed our sacred duty as a people to pass it on.



NEED MORE INFORMATION? PLEASE CONTACT US USING THE FOLLOWING:

- **OUR WEBSITE:** WWW.CHELUSD.ORG
- **FACEBOOK PAGE:** SAKMAN CHAMORRO
- **GOOGLE:** SAKMAN CHAMORRO SAN DIEGO
- **EMAIL:** mborja49@cox.net

“We greatly appreciate your generous support.”
SAINA, MA’ASE. MA’ASE, SAINA.



Mario Reyes Borja was born in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan, but grew up on Guam where he attended Father Dueñas Memorial High School. He is a retired military officer with 23 years of service in the United States Air Force in the avionics and space surveillance fields of technology. He resides in San Diego, California, with his wife, JoJo, where they actively promote Chamorro culture and language. Mario is a certified court Chamorro language interpreter-translator. He recently led a team in building a 47-ft replica of the sakman sailing canoe, per ancient drawings found in a British journal.



12TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

"What we own, what we have, what we share ~ United Voice of the Pacific"

"Håfa Iyo-ta, Håfa Guinahå-ta, Håfa Ta Pátte ~ Dinanña' Sunidu Síha Giya Pasifiku"

GUAM 2016