



# Pulan Umatalaf GUAMPEDIA

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S: *Signs spinus*  
CH: Mañåhak ha'tang  
(s); Sesyon  
C: Scribbled rabbitfish

S: *Signs argenteus*  
CH: Mañåhak lesso'  
(s); Hiteng kåhlao  
C: Fortail rabbitfish

S: *Mulloidichthys flavolineatus*  
CH: Satmoneti  
(m); Satmoneti (lg)  
C: Yellowstripe goatfish



S: *Lutjanus bohar*  
CH: Tagåfi  
C: Red snapper



S: *Parupeneus barberinus*  
CH: Satmoneti  
(m); Satmoneti pintu  
C: Dash-and-dot goatfish



## U'meguihan

### Fishing

was so important in ancient CHamoru/Chamorro society that even the calendar was influenced by fishing seasons. With the sinahi (crescent moon) of Umatalaf shining and watching over us like our ancestors over 150 generations, gitafe, commonly known as snapper, is now in season. Additionally, February to April were good months for fishing for sesyon (rabbitfish), ti'ao (baby goatfish) and satmoneti (goatfish).



Early historical accounts of the ancient CHamorus/Chamorros describe the natives as very skilled fishermen. Fish and other foods from the sea not only provided a source of sustenance for the first people, they were also important culturally, providing natural materials for tools and commodities for trade or gifts.

Fray Juan Pobre Zamora, a Spanish friar who jumped ship and lived among the Taotao Luta (people of Rota) in 1602, wrote: "As far as their fishing skills and devices are concerned, it would take a very long story to tell about them; consequently, I will only say that they use the same kinds of nets and fishing tricks that our people use, and many more. When it comes to fishing from their funeas [boats], no better seamen or divers have ever been known to exist."

S: *Scorpaenidae*  
CH: Ñufo'  
C: Stonefish



The analysis of fish bones from sites on Guam revealed that ancient CHamorus/Chamorros caught all of the ordinary reef fishes and even some extraordinary reef fishes. They also caught potentially dangerous fishes, including sharks and rays, moray eels, scorpionfish and barracuda.

S: *Muraenidae*  
CH: Håkmang  
C: Eels



S: *Dasyatidae*  
CH: Afula  
C: Stingrays



S: *Sphyraena spp.*  
CH: Ålu  
C: Barracudas



Customs collectively are the traditions and accepted ways of behaving or doing something. Customs often include ritual practices that people perform in special places or at specific times. They are social acts, repeated and transmitted across generations.

Access to particular fishing grounds was regulated by clans. Different fishing grounds had names and ownership of the area of ocean and associated reefs was organized around matrilineal lines of descent (i.e., inheritance from the female or mother's side). Violation of these boundaries was punishable by death.

Wars between clans were fought to gain access to particular fishing grounds.

Fishing was both an individual and a communal activity for the ancient CHamorus/Chamorros.

Fray Juan Pobre wrote about how the islanders worked together to catch fish and then share their catch with other members of the village.

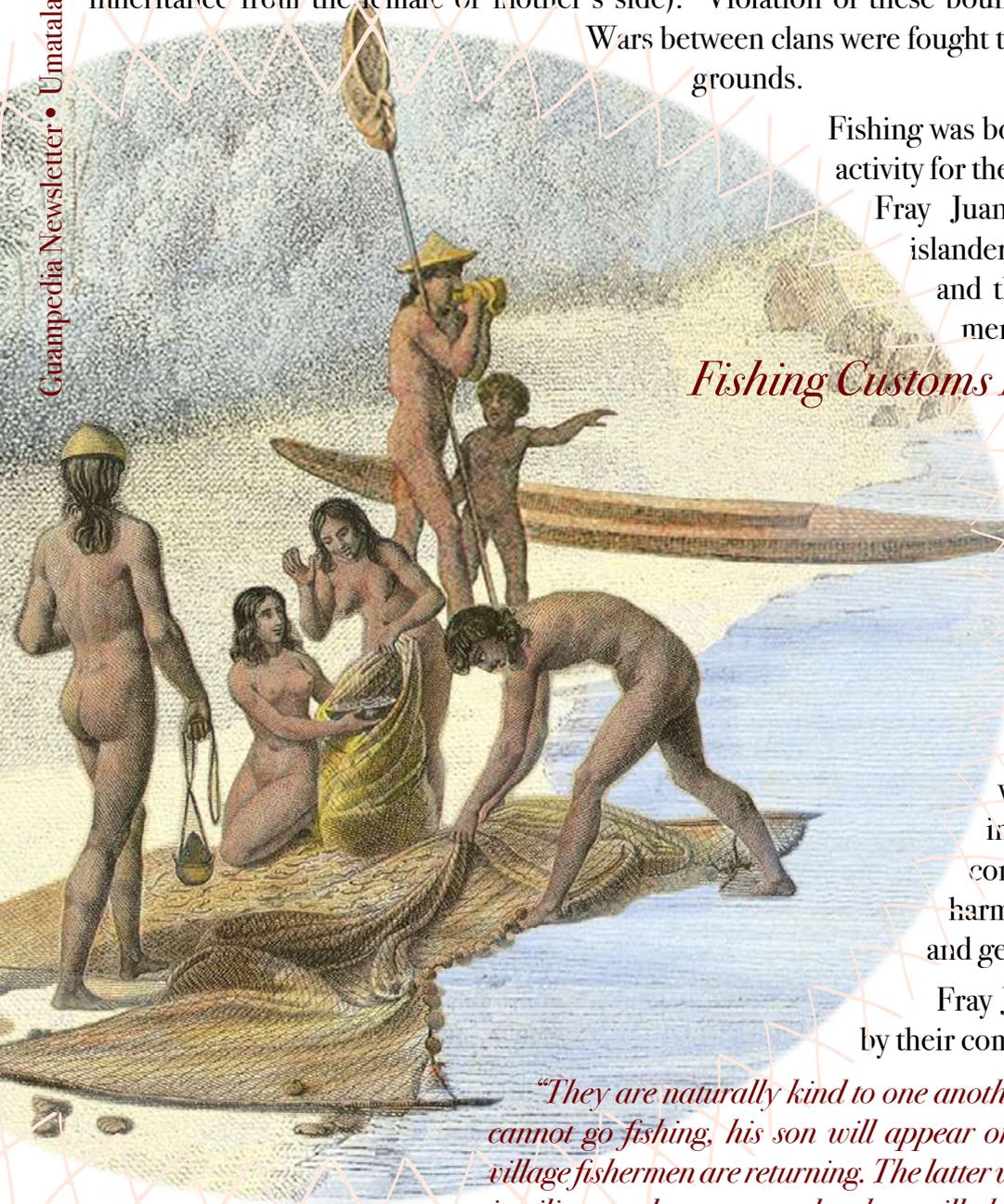
### *Fishing Customs Reflect Cultural Values*

People helped each other with different kinds of fishing activities, whether it was net fishing or float line fishing. Anyone who asked for assistance with fishing, such as for catching mañahak, could not be refused. This reflects the value known as inafa' maolek, which is a recognition of the interdependence of people in the community and the desire to live harmoniously through mutual respect and generosity.

Fray Juan Pobre was especially moved by their compassion. He stated:

*"They are naturally kind to one another... On the day an indio is ill and cannot go fishing, his son will appear on the beach at the time the other village fishermen are returning. The latter will know that the father or brother is ailing, and, consequently, they will share some of their catch with him. Although he may have a house full of salted fish, they will give him some of the fresh catch so that he will have it to eat that day."*

The distribution or presentation of fish or turtle catches also reflected the matrilineal practices and respect for women in ancient CHamoru/Chamorro society. Turtle or large fish catches, such as marlin, would be presented first to the successful fisherman's wife, who in turn sent it to her closest female relative of higher rank. This would continue until the highest-ranking female relative was reached, who subsequently would divide the fish or turtle. Shares were sent to the lower-ranking women through whom the catch had passed.



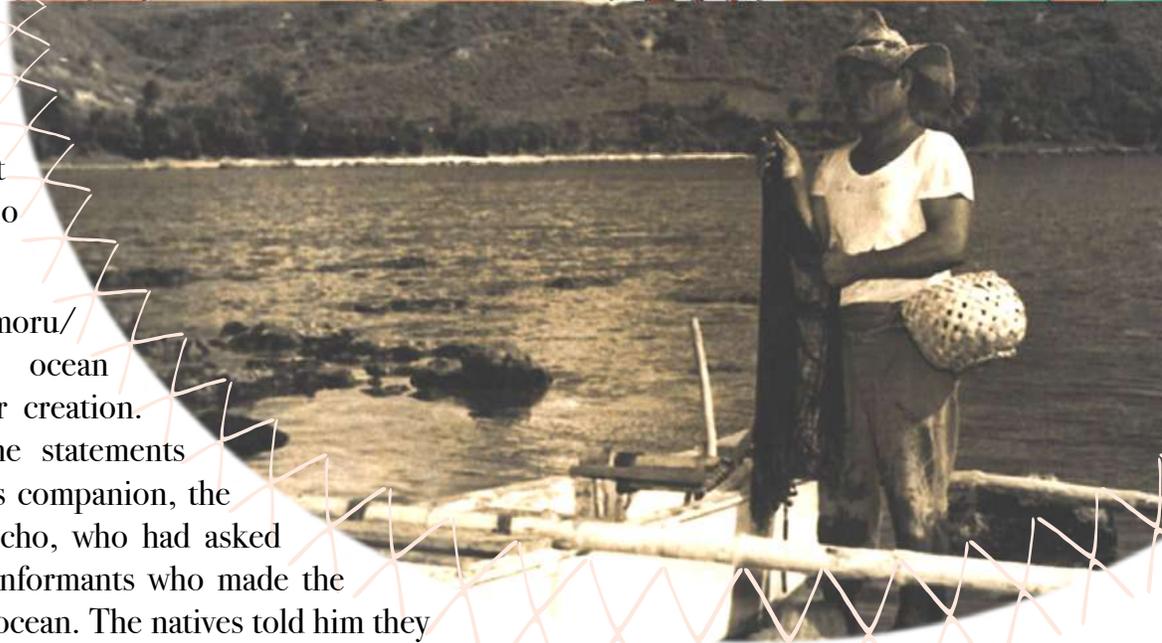
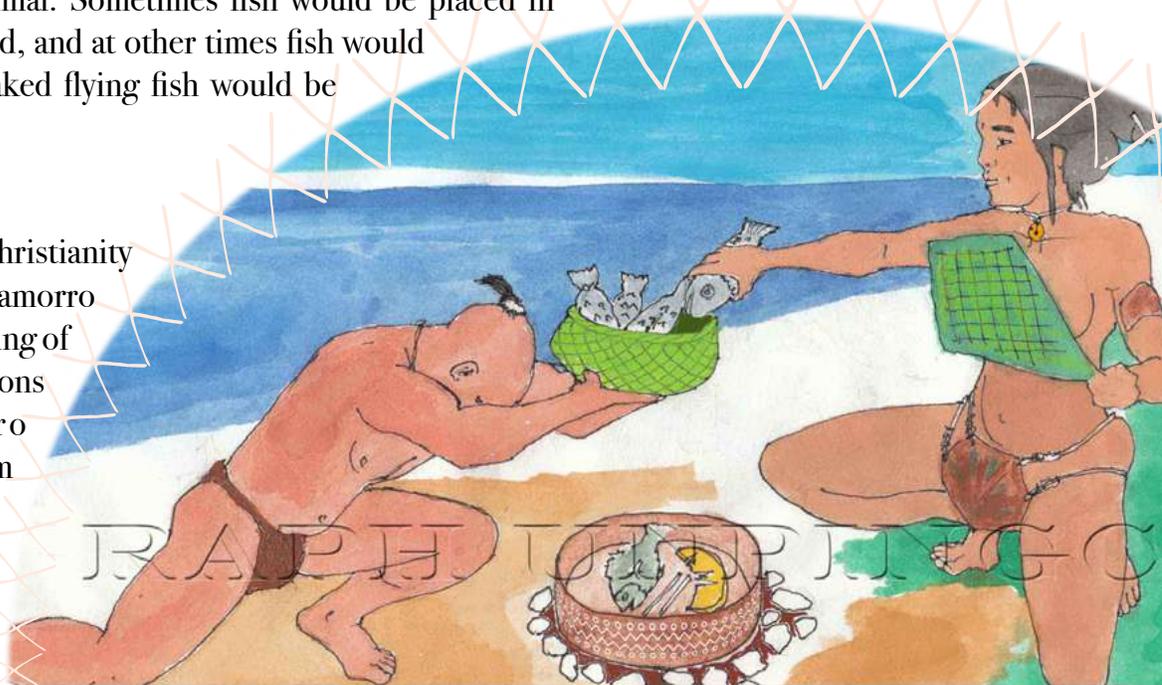
## *Finatinas*

Some fish were kept alive in small ponds until needed. Fish and shellfish were eaten dried or salted. Salted fish, as well as fresh, uncooked fish, were important food items presented at festive occasions or special gatherings. Although salting methods are not described, the ancient CHamorus/Chamorros used salt obtained naturally from the sea to cure fish. Salted fish would be particularly important during the dry season when heavy winds and high seas would make fishing very difficult, and chances for successful fishing expeditions would be minimal. Sometimes fish would be placed in brine instead of being salted, and at other times fish would be baked. In particular, baked flying fish would be served to sick people.

## *Culture Clash*

Conflicts between Christianity and ancient CHamoru/Chamorro culture signaled the beginning of great changes for the traditions of CHamoru/Chamorro fishermen, many of whom would eventually exchange their maritime skills and fishing implements for land-based skills in agriculture and farming tools. Nevertheless, reliance on and respect for the ocean and its resources remains an important part of CHamoru/Chamorro cultural history.

In the ancient CHamoru/Chamorro mindset, the ocean was theirs, a part of their creation. This is exemplified in the statements made by Fray Juan Pobre's companion, the shipwrecked Spaniard Sancho, who had asked his CHamoru/Chamorro informants who made the earth and the sky—and the ocean. The natives told him they made it—"...that as much as they [the CHamorus/Chamorros] sail and fish on it, they have made it. Such is the foolishness with which they answer our questions, but they often say that we are foolish to ask."



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Food Fishes of the Mariana Islands

# Pulan Tasi

Food Fishes of the Mariana Islands

Of the 13 pulans in the ancient CHamoru/Chamorro lunar calendar, there are three moons that are related to fishing, Umatalaf (to catch snapper), Sumongsong (to stay inside and mend nets), and Umagahaf (to catch crayfish or rock crabs).

# Guinahan Tasi

There are more than 1,000 fish and 375 coral species in our reefs

# Ta'tasi

The most extraordinary fishing done by the ancient CHamorus/Chamorros was from their sahyan tasi (sailing canoes) in the open ocean. They caught mahi mahi, marlin and sailfish, swordfish, tuna, and wahoo.

They used acho (stone) for fishing weights that are commonly found in coastal sites. These weights can be recognized by the grooves around their center where natural fiber lines were tied.

The poi'o was used as a chumming device. Made with half a coconut shell attached to a semi-spherical basalt or limestone rock, ground coconut was placed inside the shell and the poi'o was lowered into the sea. Pulling the stone up and down released bits of coconut to lure the fish. The fishermen did this daily for a few weeks, each time shortening the rope until the fish were close enough to catch by net.

Our early ancestors also used community-owned stone fish traps, called gigao, to catch reef fish, such as gadao (grouper), hiteng (rabbitfish), lagua (parrot fish), palaksi (wrasse), and tataga (unicorn fish). Fish would be trapped in the barrier when the tide receded.

