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## The Spanish Navy in the Philippines, 1589-1787

FRANCISCO MALLARI, S.J.

There were many letters to Manila and Madrid in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reporting the havoc wrought by Moro pirates on land and sea.<sup>1</sup> The grim picture they portrayed and, sometimes, the distressed call for help they sounded were meant to prod the government into action. There were also proposals for ending the misery of the islands or developing the sluggish economy with prospects of increased royal revenues.<sup>2</sup> They invariably recommended as top priority the pursuit or punishment of the pirates. Such letters, proposals and recommendations helped in rousing the government to formulate punitive policies against the pirates.

Over the years, government launched sporadic expeditions whose punitive intent was unambiguously expressed in communiques and chronicles by the words *para castigar*, *reprimir*, *refrenar*, *perseguir* and *contener*.<sup>3</sup> But these expeditions went to naught. Like a multi-headed hydra, the scourge from the sea refused to die. After recovering from a punishing defeat, Moro vessels would once again fill the seas on

For abbreviations used, see p. 439.

1. Examples of reports are in AFIO 92/7; AGI Filipinas 199, 492, 920; Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería* (Madrid: Imprenta y Fundición de Manuel Tello, 1888), 1: 71. The use of the term "Moro" is not derogatory. The ideal is to use the proper ethnic term but when exact identification is impossible, "Moro" will be used throughout this paper.

2. An example is in the following: AGI Filipinas 199; BR 47: 251-84.

3. AGI Filipinas 183. Juan Delgado, *Historia general* (Manila: Imprenta de El Eco de Filipinas, 1892), pp. 195, 200, 201; Joaquín Martínez de Zuñiga, *An Historical View of the Philippine Islands* trans. John Maver (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1966), p. 103; Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la provincia de Philipinas de la compañía de Jesus* (Manila: Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesus, 1749), p. 33; Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las islas Philipinas* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suarez, 1909), p. 121; Juan de la Concepción, *Historia general de Philipinas* (Manila: Imprenta del Seminario Conciliar y Real de San Carlos, 1788-1792), 12: 231.

their pillaging and enslaving missions. Large sums of money were invested in organizing and arming these Spanish expeditions, some of which scored telling victories but, in spite of all, "... there is no island or nook of an island that is free of Moro *pancos* and *galeras* . . .," wrote the Bishop of Cebu on 17 May 1784.<sup>4</sup> Not even the damage inflicted on their homes and their fleets restrained the Moros from renewed piratical ventures. Nor could the government compel datus and sultans to observe the stipulations of treaties or exact obedience from them.<sup>5</sup>

What was the problem with the government's armed campaign till the end of the eighteenth century? Why did the government not accomplish the results it had hoped for? Was the Sulu Sultan's brag not a brag after all? Sultans Muhammad Mu'izzuddin, ruler of the realm of Jolo on land and sea, wrote to Major Juan Gonzales de Pulgar, Governor of Zamboanga, inquiring how long Spanish killing of "Soloos" would go on so that he would "know what to do about it." He boasted as follows:

although it is true that we may be likened to a dog, and the Spaniards to an elephant, yet the elephant may one day find the dog on top of it . . . The dog cannot vanquish the elephant but it can bar its way to its feeding grounds.<sup>6</sup>

The documents offer several reasons for the frustration of Spanish ambitions. These reasons mostly border on the superficial with only a slight attempt at penetrating the inner cause of the Moro's successful resistance. Among the prominent causes cited was the superiority of the Moro vessels which forced the government to search for remedies to counteract that advantage and led to the formation of the *Marina Sutil* (auxiliary or light navy) to curb Moro piracy.

In 1589 a royal decree ordered the construction in the islands of six to eight fully-manned and well-armed ships called *galeras* for defense.<sup>7</sup> Nine years later the need for appropriate fighting ships was again hinted at. The magistrates and the officers of war, "should have ships that would inspire respect," reported Governor Antonio de Morga for the government ships were then being humiliated by Moro pirates. He

4. AGI Filipinas 654, 440; Vicente Rodríguez García, *el gobierno de Don Gaspar Antonio de la Torre y Ayala en las islas Filipinas* (Granada: Imprenta de la Universidad de Granada, 1976), pp. 197-98; Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963), p. 84; Montero, *Historia de la Piratería*, 1: 71.

5. Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (U) Filipinas 1859-1869, legajo 2959, expediente: Comunicaciones de Ultramar.

6. Concepción, *Historia general* 12: 240-45.

7. Rafael Díaz Arenas, *Memorias históricas y estadísticas de Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta del Diario de Manila, 1850), Cuaderno 14, p. 2

alleged further that the pirates had put these officers in a bad light for their delayed reaction to attacks.<sup>8</sup> Morga's report was not the first of its kind, yet it illustrates early official apprehension at the suggested advantage of Moro vessels.

In 1603, to avenge the massacre of the garrison in La Caldera, Zamboanga, by Moros, the governor despatched a veteran field officer, Juan Juarez Gallinato, at the head of 200 arquebusiers. After interrogation of prisoners and a survey of strategic points of the peninsula, Gallinato formulated a plan to station in chosen points a "small but highly mobile task force" and, with the element of surprise, strike at the Maguindanaos the moment they ventured into Visayan waters. For this purpose, he needed "the fastest sailing vessels" available.<sup>9</sup>

Both Morga and Gallinato obviously saw the need of speed and, it might be added, maneuverability. Their need was well founded. The lack of ships fit for sea warfare "emboldened [the Moros] beyond their wont," wrote Hernando de los Rios Coronel, one-time Procurator General of the islands.<sup>10</sup>

It is almost unimaginable how a major power whose ships sailed the ocean seas on voyages of discovery and colonization would be stalled by frail wooden boats in a remote corner of the globe. But the fact was, the namesis of Spanish naval forces was a light, lean craft called a *caracoa*. From what he saw in the Moluccas and New Guinea in the eighteenth century, Thomas Forrest, an English sea captain, described a Malayan boat called *coro-coro* in this manner:

A *coro-coro* is a vessel generally fitted with outriggers, with a high arched stem and stern, like the point of a halfmoon. . . . They have them from a very small size to above ten tons' burden; and on the crosspieces which support the outriggers, there are often put fore-and-aft planks, on which the people sit and paddle, beside those who sit in the vessel on each gunnel. In smooth water, they use oars, but on the outriggers they always use paddles.<sup>11</sup>

The *coro-coro* or *caracoa* which the Sulus and Maguindanaos employed with devastating efficiency in their slave-raiding expeditions was not a very large vessel but short and deckless. It varied in size

8. BR 10: 93-94

9. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 282-84.

10. BR 18: 334.

11. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., "A Spanish Jesuit Among the Magindanaus," *Comment No. 12* (1961): 26; Thomas Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea & the Moluccas* (London: G. Scott, 1779).

from three to four tons' burden. It carried eighty to a hundred rowers, not counting combatants. Its narrow freeboard above the waterline measured one *palm* (ten inches). Thus it could load less than a fortnight's provision and could not sail into the open when the seas ran high. A sail mounted on a tripod bamboo mast and two or three banks of rowers on each side provided its propulsion.<sup>12</sup>

### THE GALERA

To combat this vessel, the Spaniards drew from their experience in the Mediterranean where the galera had proved of great use over the centuries. From Governor Francisco de Sande's time, they had built these boats for antipiracy campaigns. So great was the Spaniards' trust in the galera that religious as well as civil leaders recommended it.

The Bishop of Nueva Caceres, Fray Antonio de San Gregorio, was one of them. The diocese of Caceres was hard hit by raids. For the protection of Camarines, in particular, Fray Antonio proposed on 18 July 1656 what he believed would be an effective measure. Which had been tested in the defense and clearing up of "the coasts of Spain, Florence, Genoa, Malta and the other European kingdoms." He proposed the construction of two medium-size galeras, the lightest possible, with two rowers at each oar. Each galera would have a dozen musketeers and a cannon mounted on its bow. One or two *sampanes* (Chinese junks) carrying the ships/stores and soldiers' paraphernalia would sail with them. This force would set out of Cavite in spring and comb the entire coast of Camarines in search of the enemy. Fray Antonio had more trust in this small contingent than in Pasacao's offshore maritime force which he considered ineffectual and financially burdensome to the province of Camarines. Whether or not the bishops' proposal was carried out is not known. But 1653 to 1663 were turbulent years in the Bicol region as Moros pillaged and razed coastal towns and settlements and carried Bicolanas in captivity.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning with 1669 the islands enjoyed peace. The Maguindanao marauders were unusually quiet after the tumultuous Cachil Corralat

12. BR 18: 333, 19: 295 and de la Costa, "A Spanish Jesuit" p. 26.

In determining the equivalent of one *palm*, I used the Spanish weights and measures made compulsory since 1 January 1859. *World Weights and Measures* (New York: United Nations, 1966), p. 90. BR 18: 333. See also Francisco Combes, S.J., *Historia de Mindanao y Jolo* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda de M. Minuesa de los Ríos, 1897), p. 786. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu*, p. 59 footnote. BR 2: 246, 29: 295.

13. All information in this paragraph is from AFIO 97/7. For a chronology of raids in Bicol from 1580 to 1792, see Mallari, "Muslim Raids in Bicol, 1580-1792," *Philippine Studies* 34 (1986): 257-86.

adopted a convenient policy of peace till his death.<sup>14</sup> If anything disturbed the peace it was the occasional incursions of the Camucones, a non-Moro ethnic group, whom Fr. Pedro Chirino, S.J., described as harmless boat-dwelling eccentrics. For reasons still unknown, they turned into predators and killers owing allegiance only to the Sultan of Brunei.<sup>15</sup>

To battle these sea robbers, Governor Manuel de Leon y Sarabia ordered the construction of galeras for the fleet. These vessels had performed well in the defense of Manila in the Dutch wars. The governor appointed Pedro Lozano and Jose De Novoa galera skippers. If he needed an actual encounter to rate the galera's performance, he did not have to wait long. Jose De Novoa, a valiant Galician, sought the Camucones. Twice he pursued them and twice his galera wallowed in frustration in the wake of his quarry who mocked him from the safety of their speedy ships.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of their poor performance, support for the galera hardened with the arrival of Fernando de Valdes Tamon to assume, on 14 August 1729, the office of governor and captain general of the islands. He brought with him commendable military experience acquired from the bloody wars of Europe. From the reports of advisers, he obtained a good grasp of the situation in the islands. For defense against enemy attacks, he saw the need of establishing a fleet of galeras and a coast guard to act as a fast strike force in emergencies. He equipped a fleet of four galeras, one *falua* and one *galeota* to impede the hostilities of the Sulus.<sup>17</sup> The galeras, therefore, would not be alone but would be supported by two other vessels with heavier caliber guns. He commissioned General Ignacio de Yriverri commander of the fleet.

The fleet sailed from Manila on 4 March 1731. It called at the forts of Iloilo and Zamboanga where it was augmented by other vessels. Despite the enemy superiority the fleet besieged Jolo in mid-April. It opened up with a preliminary bombardment from six in the morning till Angelus of the same day. The fleet followed up with a successful landing troops. But, for lack of men and water, the troops withdrew to their vessels. The fleet transported the battle-weary troops to Zamboanga and sailed back to Manila after leaving behind two galeras to

14. BR 37: 277.

15. Francisco Colín, S.J. *Labor evangélica* (Barcelona, 1900), 3: 192, No. 2. See also AGI Filipinas 111 and BR 18: 79, 37: 277. I would like to express my gratitude to Robert Nicholl, Honorary Curator of History, Brunei Museum, for his kindness in sending me his notes on the Camucones and Tirones. Contrary to my comments in previous article, it seems clear that the Tirones and Camucones were two distinct ethnic groups.

16. BR 37: 280

17. Ateneo de Manila Microfilm 112, fol. lv, and AGI Filipinas 111.

patrol the Zamboanga coast and disrupt the Joloan trade. Two others were left in Cavite.<sup>18</sup>

This galera coast guard of Zamboanga was soon put to the test. The chief of Tawi-Tawi named Bigotillos seized a *sampan* laden with food-stuffs for Zamboanga and took the seventeen crewmen captives. He launched another attack. Commanding seven ships loaded with 470 men assembled from Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and Jolo, he attempted to take the fort of Zamboanga by surprise. An alert sentinel frustrated his plan but Valdes Tamon's galeras were nowhere.<sup>19</sup>

The situation in the province of Calamianes was not any better. Its inhabitants could not meet their tribute dues, for continuous Moro attacks had disrupted their trading and reduced them to poverty. Representations like this and the Sulu Sultan's reported desire for peace compelled Valdes Tamon to convoke a war council to determine the course of action. Foreseeing Moro fickleness and insincerity, the council unanimously agreed on 9 October 1736 to construct five small galeras of the same tonnage as the galera San Fernando of Zamboanga. They would be ideal for service in the shallows and reefy coasts of the provinces of Mindoro and Calamianes.<sup>20</sup>

Four of the small galeras would serve as a coast guard in the above-mentioned provinces to restrain the pirates. The fifth, in company with the San Fernando, would be assigned to Zamboanga. The two other large galeras, the San Felipe and San Carlos, would do coast guard duty. However, from reports in 1740 of the Augustinian Provincial and other persons, it seems the Moro raids in the three provinces continued with greater vehemence. Inferring from these raids that the constructions of the five small galeras had not even been started, the King expressed his puzzlement to then Governor Gaspar de la Torre. In no uncertain terms he commanded De la Torre to construct them. Either roused at last by the growing temerity of the piratical attacks or jolted into action by the King's command, de la Torre ordered in 1741 the provincial executives of Negros, Cebu, Iloilo and Leyte to construct thirty-six vessels, presumably galeras, capable of carrying eighty armed men and eighteen rowers. He also ordered them to build watch-towers, post sentinels on the coasts and offered rewards for fighting the Moros.<sup>21</sup>

18. All information in this paragraph is from AGI Filipinas 433 and Saleeby, *The History of Sulu*, p. 69.

19. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 270.

20. All information in this paragraph is from AGI Filipinas 111.

21. AGI Filipinas 111 and Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia general de Filipinas* (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de la Viuda e Hijos de Tello, 1895), 1: 475-76.

Governor de la Torre's measures were fruitless.<sup>22</sup> Like his predecessors, he could only rave helplessly against the slippery Camucones whose vessels were too fast for his galeras and whom he, like some Spaniards, mistakenly lumped with the Tirones, an altogether distinct ethnic group.<sup>23</sup> One wonders how he could have subdued an enemy he did not fully know. In a recitation of woes, De la Torre informed the King of how galeras, galeotas and sampanes would scramble from Manila on the receipt of a report of raiders' presence in some place but never catch up with the Camucones. If pressed, the shallow-draft ships of the Camucones could dart into the many inlets, shoaly waters and estuaries which were unnavigable for his galeras and other vessels. His ships were made to appear ludicrous. Since his ships could not encounter the enemy, much less approach within firing range, their armaments were rendered useless. Aggravating these problems was the distance the fleet had to negotiate from Manila to the frequently raided provinces.

To resolve the pesky pirate problem, De la Torre met with councils of war and the Finance Ministry. At the end he chose a new course of action. He decided to enter through the enemy's door and come out his. So he issued orders to victimized provinces to allow towns to build vessels similar to the pirates'.<sup>24</sup> If there was an open admission of the superiority of Moro vessels over the galera, this was it.

By 1745 the situation of the islands had deteriorated. It was principally brought about by the dynastic quarrels in the Sulu Sultanate and the Spaniards' badly contrived intervention. Fortunately for the Christian inhabitants, it was the end of De la Torre's term. Perhaps, as Murillo Velarde wrote, De la Torre deserved to be called Job, the biblical man of unfathomable resignation, for in his administration, misfortunes were disregarded or taken lightly.<sup>25</sup> A more imaginative successor, Juan de Arechederra, took over.

Arechederra continued the fight against the intensifying piracy and slave-raiding. Besides the dreaded Camucones, Maguindanaos, Malanos and Joloans, he had to contain the widespread attacks of another

22. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 110, 447.

23. See J. Hunt, "Some Particulars Relating to Sulo in the Archipelago of Felicia," and Dr. Leyden "Sketch of Borneo," in J.H. Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago* (Singapore 1837 & London 1992), pp. 56, 96. Owen Rutter, *British North Borneo* (London 1992), p. 79. James Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898* (Singapore University Press, 1981), pp. 88-93. BR. 18: 79, 25: 154-55, 41: 51, 42: 156, 47: 247.

24. AGI Filipinas 110, 447.

25. Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Geografía histórica* (Madrid 1752), 7: 50. Rodríguez García, *El gobierno de Don Gaspar Antonio de la Torre y Ayala*, p. 258.

group whom the Spaniards called *Tirones* or *Tidongs*. They came from the east region of Borneo and infested the Visayan and Bicol seas, swooping down on Christian settlements in light and swift caracoas.<sup>26</sup> The killings they committed and captives they took from Mindoro depopulated that island, reported the Augustinian Provincial. Encouraged by their swift ships, they daringly ventured into Manila bay within sight of the city, seized watercraft and assaulted towns close to Mariveles. Arechederra dispatched one fleet after another to drive them away but failed.<sup>27</sup>

What went wrong with the government's campaign? Many things went wrong, as newly appointed Governor Francisco Jose de Ovando found out. The royal navy ships in the Cavite arsenal were termite ridden or unrepairable or defective. There were no more professional Spanish sailors and soldiers in the islands. Rampant corruption and criminal negligence turned provinces into defenseless hunting grounds, for provincial executives (*alcaldes mayores*) employed fighting ships as trading vessels and fort personnel as household help.<sup>28</sup>

The galera was the wrong vessel for Philippine seas. As far back as the seventeenth century, the galera was reported to be no match against the caracoa. It could not "stand the heavy tides or enter the bays in pursuit of the enemy."<sup>29</sup> In calm weather in the open sea it was manageable, but it was almost useless in straits or passages between islands where currents were strong and swift and the winds steady.<sup>30</sup> It was a deep-draft vessel; therefore, unsuitable for shallow waters. It was easily immobilized by a slight contrary wind; therefore, unwieldy. This was true even up to Governor Pedro Manuel de Arandia's time in 1754-59.<sup>31</sup> By the time it has finally put about to seek the enemy, "the latter are at home, and laughing at us," wrote Rios Coronel.<sup>32</sup>

There were other reasons that rendered the galera ineffective in the antipiracy campaign. Up to the time of Gov. Ovando, the Indios did not have incentives to serve well. Drafted as rowers, they were ill treated and poorly paid. They had to leave their farms untended and their families unpovided for. Hence they reacted with apathy to their

26. On the *Tirones*' place of origin, see Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," p. 96.

27. AGI Filipinas 113, 114, 264, 455.

28. All information in this paragraph is taken from Agustín Santayana, *La isla de Mindanao* (Madrid: Imprenta de Alhambra y Compañía, 1862), pp. 31-32 and Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 291.

29. BR 10: 213

30. *Ibid.*, 18: 334.

31. AGI Filipinas 920.

32. BR 18: 334.

misfortunes. Physically they were a weak people who subsisted on a poor diet. This accounted for their feebleness as rowers.<sup>33</sup>

The shortcomings in the antipiracy campaign had to be remedied. Governor Ovando instituted sweeping reforms.<sup>34</sup> Two of his measures are worthwhile commenting on. In 1751 he issued letters of marque authorizing private individuals to seize from the Moros, without any fiscal obligations, as many vessels, gold, silver and pearls as they could and capture and enslave Moro men, women and children. It proved to be self-defeating. In the first place, how could anyone capture a swift Moro ship with slow moving craft? Besides, as Santayana asked:

... what profit could be in store for those who would undertake such arduous and hazardous enterprise as chasing pirates, seizing plank boats devoid of any metal fittings or capturing men whose only wealth consisted in lances and crises ... ?<sup>35</sup>

The second measure illustrated that like his predecessors, Ovando labored under the galera mentality. Convinced that the inability to contain the pirates sprang from the lack of powerful ships capable of mounting sufficient armaments and men to punish them, he ordered a sketch of three medium-size galeras for study. If found feasible, they would be constructed and mounted with newly designed, freshly cast artillery to instil terror in the enemy.<sup>36</sup>

In 1752 he declared a war of extermination against the Joloans, Tirones, Camucones and others. The Moros reacted with fury. Reports of raids all over the Visayas and many parts of Luzon poured in. They repulsed Ovando's expedition to Palawan and captured the galera *Santa Rita*.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of his imaginative measures and armadas, Ovando failed like his predecessors. In 1754, the last year of his administration, the islands experienced the most intense eruption of raids by "Joloans, Mindanaos, Malanaos, Camucones, Ylanos, Tirones and Tamontacas . . ." <sup>38</sup> In that particular year, Mindanao experienced bad harvests.

33. All information in this paragraph is from BR 18: 333-34.

34. His plans for reform are in Javier Ortia de la Tabla Bucasse, *El Marques de Ovando, gobernador de Filipinas, 1750-1754* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1974) pp. 63-64.

35. Santayana, *La isla de Mindanao*, pp. 32-33, 23.

36. Concepción, *Historia general*, 12: 232.

37. Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, pp. 75-76. Montero, *Historia general*, 1: 577-78, and 1: 507.

38. AGI Filipinas 611, 679, 920.

39. Martinez de Zuñiga, *Historical View*, p. 167.

Christian territories, especially in the Visayas, were ill-fortified and undefended, for the Spaniards had their own problems at home which were pushing them closer to the Seven Years War. It was an opportunity for Moro adventures to raid for captives and pillage, for booty, especially food. Of the raiders, Zuñiga wrote:

They entered with fire and sword in all directions, murdering the religious orders, Indians and Spaniards, burning and robbing towns, and making prisoners of thousands of Christians, not only in the islands near to Jolo but in all our dominions, even in the provinces in the immediate neighborhood of Manila.<sup>39</sup>

In the Bicol region alone, 900 Maranaos invaded Bacon in Sorsogon.<sup>40</sup> Moro raiders assaulted a settlement on the northern coast of Catanduanes island and sailed away with many captives.<sup>41</sup> They raided and razed the pueblo of Albay, Caramoan, Camalig, Guinobatan, Libon, Bacacay, Malinao and Tiwi in the provinces of Albay and Camarines.<sup>42</sup>

How should the performance of the galeras and other vessels be rated in Ovando's gallant but lost campaign? It seems that the vessels were not the sole cause of his debacle. The principal problem was the appointment of inept officers and enslaved crewmen. In the expedition to Palawan, the armada of Antonio Faveau Quesada would not have lost a galera and a falua to the enemy, if their skippers had been competent.<sup>43</sup>

Other similar incidents can be cited. For instance, if the skipper were skilled and the crew contended, a galera in Don Miguel Gomez Valdez's squadron of four galeras, five sampanes and one *chalupa* would not have capsized in a slight storm off the coast of Mindoro with the loss of men, artillery and vessel.<sup>44</sup> To compound the irony, though the officer was notoriously at fault, Gomez Valdez put him in command again of another galera. In the Baco river in Mindoro, two galeras at the river's entrance bottled up thirty-five Maguindanao caracoas. The panic-stricken pirates released their captives, decided to abandon their vessels and escape toward the inland forests. But by some quirk of fate, with victory within their grasp, the commander of

40. AGI Filipinas 920. Concepción, *Historia general*, 13: 190. Montero, *Historia general*, 1: 516. Mariano Goyena del Prado, *Ibalón* (Manila: General Printing Press, 1940), p. 186.

41. PNL HDP Catanduanes, p. 3.

42. PNL HDP Camarines Sur, p. 1. AGI Filipinas 920. Goyena del Prado, *Ibalón*, p. 81.

43. AGI Filipinas 601.

44. *Ibid.*; Montero, *Historia general*, 1: 518-19.

the galera task force ordered a turnabout and sailed away, alleging as pretext a heavy wind which they waited to abate before resuming contact with the enemy.<sup>45</sup>

Fleet commanders were worse. They utilized their vessels for their commercial interests. Fighting ships sailed for operations from Manila loaded with more merchandise for trade in the provinces than with war materiel. In fact it was public knowledge that the two commanders, Don Antonio Faveau Quesada and Don Cesar Fallet, owned establishments dealing in articles of trade in the fort of Zamboanga.<sup>46</sup>

It was bad enough that the troops of expeditionary forces were raw recruits. Worse yet, they were insufficient in number for the purpose. So in a landing operation, galera crews usually reenforced the troops, leaving their vessels exposed to attacks of boarding parties. Most pitiful were the galera slaves. They were not criminals serving terms, but ordinary, law-abiding Indios seized by the military and dragooned into service, leaving their farms and families to fend for themselves.<sup>47</sup>

To lay the blame on the vessels is to expect too much from those lumbering hulls. They bore European names but in reality had little or no resemblance at all to their European counterparts.<sup>48</sup> Governor de Arandia described the local galera, galeota and sampan, the three types employed in the war, and pointed out their defects. A European who saw the local galera was reminded of a cargo boat. It navigated by oars and a lateen sail which could not be shifted when the wind altered. Its top sails added weight and made the vessel clumsy to handle. The local galeota was no more than a fishing boat. It was slow, since it had no oars and navigated on only one sail. The sampan, Chinese in name and design, was always unwieldy to steer unless there was a full after-wind.<sup>49</sup> These three were not all-weather vessels. Their efficiency was affected by rough seas, the monsoons, the faraway enemy

45. BR 19: 224-25. On one occasion, a Spanish captain and his crew attacked a fleet of Moros only after the friars on board put them to shame, but by then they had lost the opportunity to destroy the enemy. *Ibid.*, 24: 36-37. There was a fleet commander who retired from combat operations off Mindoro without orders—Pedro Gonzales Madrigal—whom Governor Raon ordered imprisoned. AGI Filipinas 491.

46. Montero, *Historia general*, 1: 536-37. AGI Filipinas 601, 611.

47. BR 18: 333. AGI Filipinas 601.

48. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 920.

49. Pages, a non-Spaniard who reached Samar in the eighteenth century, was impressed by the native *champan* or *samapan*. He thought they were better than the Europeans would concede. Pierre de Pages, *Travels Round the World* (Dublin, 1791), pp. 134-35. Unlike Pages, Arandia could make a credible observation because of his years of residence in the islands and his experience in sending these vessels in combat.

positions and the enemy's superior vessels. The pirates sailed in very fast and light watercrafts unencumbered by decks, unburdened by stocks of supplies and manned by willing crews in contrast to the chained rowers of Spanish ships. Learning from his predecessor's mistakes, Arandia therefore resolved to wage the war like the Moros by employing small vessels and soliciting volunteers to man them.<sup>50</sup>

Against the gloomy backdrop of frustrating reversals, consoling encounters did take place. Spanish vessels performed creditably well when led by dedicated officers, giving credence to previous opinions that blamed the personnel, not the vessels. Arandia himself seemed not to have totally lost faith in these vessels. His report to Spain narrated the fine performance of two galeras and the heroism of their crews.<sup>51</sup>

It was not Arandia alone who expressed confidence in the galera. In 1757 when scores of pirate fleets made Bicol waters a Moro lake, the bishop of Nueva Caceres, Manuel Matos, had no qualms in entrusting the defense of his flock to a pair of galeras. He proposed the stationing of two of them at the present-day Maqueda channel between Catanduanes and Caramoan peninsula to patrol the waters between this point and distant San Jacinto to totally deny the pirates access to Albay province and the northern region. There is no indication that the prelate's proposal was acted upon. Moro vessels continued to roam in his diocesan seas. Sentinels along the coast reported the presence of forty-seven enemy *joangas* on the northern coast of Catanduanes and eighty-two vessels in Sorsogon Bay where the pirates had made themselves at home on deserted Bagatao island at the mouth of the bay, repairing their vessels and watching for hapless prizes at sea.<sup>52</sup>

#### NEW VESSELS, NEW PROBLEMS

The galera victories became isolated incidents in the wake of reported raids of new types of vessels. One was called the *joanga*. The earliest hint of this vessel is in a report of 1627-28 when the Joloans raided the shipyard of Pantao in Camarines "in more than thirty

50. Arandia remains a controversial figure. Having inherited the consequences of Ovando's maladministration, it is hard to see how he could have done otherwise as a military man than pour the resources of his government into the piracy problem that had set the whole country aflame. Whatever his critics say, they cannot deny that he died worn out by hard work. Montero, *Historia de la piratería* 1: 330. Maria Lourdes Diaz-Trechuelo, "Philippine Economic Development Plans, 1746-1779," *Philippine Studies* 12 (April 1964): 218

51. AGI Filipinas 98.

52. AGI Filipinas 490.

caracoas, which are called joangas when they are large."<sup>53</sup> But the frequency of the joanga's appearance is observed from 1754 onwards.

Why did the Moros shift from caracoas to joangas? It could be because of the increased demand for captives in the slave markets down south. The joanga was not only bigger than the caracoa but also faster.<sup>54</sup> Shaped like a shuttle of a loom, it was designed for speed and fast maneuvers. Both ends, forward and astern, were indistinguishable from each other. Both were sharply prowed. For its rudder, it utilized an oar by which it could change course without tacking.

The joanga's size varied. The large ones travelled on eighty oars, forty on each side.<sup>55</sup> The paddlers worked their blades with hand and wrist, half of their body leaning out of the gunwale. They sat between and almost below the long oars to avoid obstructing each other. The crew usually numbered up to 200 and were meagerly provisioned with victuals and drinking water. They had to provide for their necessities along the way.

The joanga was formed of very light, thin tongued and grooved planks caulked with pitch or tallow. It had no keel or frame timbers, but the entire hull was held together by rattan strips. When it took on water, it could be bailed out in a short time. When it needed repair during a voyage, the crew jumped overboard and made repairs while swimming. It had its weaknesses. Because of its frailty, it could not withstand cannon fire or mortar attacks. Because of its low gunwales, it was unsuitable for rough seas. On these two points, the small galeras had an edge but not enough for them to catch up with the joanga in a chase.

The Moros were aware of the disadvantages of their vessel but knew how to exploit its edge in speed to their advantage. In the campaign of 1751 and 1752 in Jolo, the six small galeras did not fare well against the joanga. About a hundred marauding joangas were said to roam the Philippine seas. But they had avoided a confrontation with armed maritime forces. They were even reported to have outsmarted the lookouts of Manila, sacked and burned various coastal towns and carried away more than a thousand captives of all ages and

53. The word *joanga* is said to be a derivative from the Chinese word *chun*, meaning vessel. W.E. Retana, *Diccionario de Filipinismos* (Paris: Casa Editorial Bailly-Bailliere, 1921), p. 108. BR 22: 203. See AGI Filipinas 920 for the numerous raids by *joangas* of Moros in the Bicol region.

54. All information in this paragraph and the next ones, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 464.

55. BR 22: 203. The small ones had twenty to twenty-four oars. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 142.

sexes. They pounced on unarmored sampans and other vessels that plied the domestic commercial routes between Manila and the neighboring provinces.

Another type of Moro vessel that highlighted the futility of the galera fleet appeared later than the joanga. It was the *panco*. By the nineteenth century, the Moros utilized this vessel more and more. Accounts of escaped captives and sea captains describe it as made of wooden ribs and planks, bound with rattan strips, caulked with husks and topped by a bamboo and nipa awning.<sup>56</sup> From bow to stern, it measured eighty to ninety feet. At midsection it had a hull width of eighteen to twenty feet. Propelled by a sail of *petate*-(rush-matting) hoisted on a bamboo tripod mast and two tiers of thirty to forty slave rowers (up to three tiers of rowers in large ones), it could make seven to eight knots by oar power alone, sail against cross currents and skid in the shallows, for it carried no ballast and drew only three to five feet of water. It was equipped for marauding missions with muskets, *sombilines*, bladed weapons, bucklers and cannons.<sup>57</sup> The light calibered cannon mounted on slings and the heavy cannon in the bow behind a rough piece of thick timber. It was a swift and sturdy ship with proven durability for distant expeditions, maneuverability for evasive actions and manageability for fast attack. Sometimes its crew set off with provisions; at times with none at all and lived off the land, sustaining themselves with roots, shellfish and fish. Drinking water was not a problem. They drank from an excavation ashore and even sea water.<sup>58</sup>

The Moros shifted from the capacious joanga to the smaller *panco*, for the nature of their trade and the improvement in quality and

56. PNA Piratas 1: 1, 3, 10; 2: 4-4b, 17; 3: 1b 6. PNA EP Samar, 1749-1848, fols. 137-137b. Santiago Paterno, *Sistema que conviene adoptar para acabar con la piratería* (Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1872), p. 7. Paterno was a navy commander who was in the Philippines for ten years and fought in the "Moro Wars." Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of HMS Dido for the Suppression of Piracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846), pp. 122-23. Keppel was a Captain of the British Royal Navy. Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea & the Moluccas*, p. 228. Charles Wilkes, "Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition: in *Travel Accounts of the Islands, 1832-1858* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1974), p. 104. Emilio Bernaldez y Fernandez de Folgueras *Reseña historia de la guerra al sur de Filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta del Memorial de Ingenieros, 1857), pp. 42-43.

57. *Sombilines* were javelins two or more meters long made from a variety of thin bamboo called *bagacay*. Its barbed point made it look like a "fish gig" but it was effectively used in spearing and recapturing captives who jumped overboard. Edward Belcher, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Samarang* (London: Reeve, Benthams & Reeve, 1848), 1: 252. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, p. 243.

58. All information in this paragraph and the next, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 357, 920.

number of armadillas obliged them to opt for lightness and speed. "Piratical operations whether of pursuit or escape put a high premium on speed . . .," wrote Stevens and Westcott.<sup>59</sup>

With the growing uselessness of the galera, clashing opinion were raised. Among the many voices for or against the continued use of the galera, one in particular deserves attention. This was Francisco Leandro de Viana, a perceptive fiscal of the Royal Audiencia, who indicated the underlying reasons for the failure of armadas to contain Moro marauding.<sup>60</sup> The major reason, he claimed, was the disrepute into which the Spanish arms had fallen, or at least the Moros' lack of fear of the Spaniards' armada. For this he faulted the undisciplined officers, the nonpunishment of offenders and the absence of rewards for the meritorious.<sup>61</sup> As an incentive, he proposed that the junior officers and crewmen should own the captured booty, enslave the captured Moros, be exempt from tribute, enjoy preference for the office of *gobernadorcillo* and promotion to the rank of officer for the deserving.

Viana argued against the Religious provincials' recommendation for more galeras. The Moros' daring stemmed from their mockery of the government armadas that employed galeras. Thus, he asked, "If we build again, how can we be sure that these vessels would not be just like the past?" Besides, it would be impossible to guard the many islands with galeras which are no match for enemy vessels, for they are "unservicable and caseous." Hence Viana recommended the construction of many fast vessels like the Moros' and rewards for officers and men who performed well but punishment for the remiss. After Governors Gaspar de la Torre and Pedro de Arandia, Viana was the third official to propose the construction of Moro vessels to defeat the Moros.

#### THE MARINA SUTIL

On 11 November 1766, the Madrid government urged Governor Jose Raon to consult Juan de Casens, Captain of His Majesty's warship *El Buen Consejo*, and other officials for the purpose of drawing up a

59. William Oliver Stevens & Allan Westcott, *A History of Sea Power* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1942), p. 30.

60. All information in this paragraph and the next, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 611.

61. In the nineteenth century, the government offered attractive incentives by granting rewards to combatants and their widows in the form of pensions and other privileges. PNA Piratas I, fols. 1, 16-17, 23. Archivo Histórico Nacional (U) Filipinas, legajo 5185, expediente 199, fols. 1-9. PNA EP Camarines Sur, 1799-1820, fols. 34-36b. PNA EP Samar, 1848-1882, fols. 124-25.

naval plan for countering piracy.<sup>62</sup> Raon contacted Casens. After a conference with persons of authority in the islands, Casens laid before Raon his recommendation. He proposed the construction of galeras, but like Governor de la Torre, Casens preferred *xebecs* which were fast sailers. These vessels packed powerful fire-power in their batteries of four-pounder cannons, fourteen or sixteen mortars and two eight-pounder cannons. On the other hand, the other officer, Lieutenant Jacinto Serrano, who had observed the coast guard of Caracas, Venezuela, preferred the galeota which was more manageable and more adapted to Philippine seas. Casens' and Serrano's recommendations comprised the plan Raon sent to Spain for approval.

On 1 December 1770 a council in Cadiz composed of high ranking naval officers deliberated upon Raon's naval plan. The members unanimously agreed upon the following: suppression of the heavy and unsuitable galeras and other vessels in the antipiracy campaign; construction of four *xebecs*, four medium galeras, four galeotas by an expert shipbuilder for Spain; delivery of construction materials and armaments from Spain; assignment of army/navy officers, gunnery officers, seamen, artillerymen, pilots/pilot's mate from Spain.<sup>63</sup>

To determine the types of vessels for the composite squadron, the council considered local weather, bodies of water and Moro vessels engaged in piracy.<sup>64</sup> It wanted construction accessories, like rope and iron, excepting ship timber, consigned from Spain because of the scarcity and high price of iron in the Philippines and the belief that abaca does not absorb pitch, but is permeable to rain, too bulky and heavy for the safety of a ship's mast.<sup>65</sup>

But why should the seamen also come from Spain? Because the Indios regarded the Moros' with great dread. Therefore, it would be defeating the purpose of the squadron if the crew would be mostly Indios. In the beginning, the council suggested that a majority should be Europeans whom the Moros dreaded. It also laid down guidelines for the kind of crew, officers, chaplains and other matters for the operation and maintenance of the squadron.<sup>66</sup>

62. All information in this paragraph is from AGI Filipinas 489, 685, 689.

63. All information in this paragraph is from AGI Filipinas 492.

64. For details on these vessels' dimensions, armaments, riggings, supplies, etc., see AGI Filipinas 492.

65. On account of the scarcity of metals, like iron, for shipbuilding, the government employed divers to salvage all assortments of nails from any sunken ship in coastal waters. Anna Maria Prieto Lucena, *Filipinas durante el gobierno de Manrique de Lara, 1653-1663* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1984), p. 44.

66. AGI Filipinas 492.

In the year the Cadiz Council deliberated on the squadron for the Philippines, Simon de Anda took over again as governor and captain general. He pored reports and recommendations on how to curb piracy. He decided to punish the pirates and dislodge them from places they had occupied and fortified. But he badly needed the right vessels to carry that out.<sup>67</sup>

He wrote to the Madrid government of the abundance of good ship timber at the Cavite arsenal but lamented the lack of skilled shipbuilders.<sup>68</sup> When he received the royal order on the resolution of the Cadiz Council, he was pleased. The projected squadron would provide him with the appropriate vessels in the defense of the islands. He nevertheless argued against the sending of European seamen to man the vessels. He believed the natives were capable and courageous seamen, attested to by their frequent victories in sea battles. European crewmen would only make expeditions costly. They would complain much against the provisions in the vessels, and therefore, would have to be allotted European fare. It would be enough, Anda conceded, to send eight or twelve boatswains and the same number of petty officers. He started to work on the vessels proposed by the council. But the usual constraint hampered him—lack of funds.<sup>69</sup> He raised funds from donations. By 1773 the royal coffers had ₱107,203.<sup>70</sup>

Anda acted on Langara's recommendation of the previous year that the galeota was the type of vessel fit to contain the Moro raids. He ordered a galeota constructed in Cavite by master constructor Bartolome Basa and another by Eugenio Valverde. These two vessels were completed. Langara and other competent persons who had known this type of vessel in the Mediterranean agreed that they were just like the Mediterranean models. They gave assurances that these two would be able to overtake Moro vessels. They armed them for the test on which the fate of other galeotas on the planning boards depended.<sup>71</sup> In

67. AGI Filipinas 491.

68. The hundreds of Indio carpenters killed and captured from shipyards by Moro pirates, the hundreds who died cutting and hauling timber from the forest and building ships probably contributed to the lack of shipbuilders. AFIO 97/7. The lack of expert shipbuilders was confirmed by Rodriguez Trujillo in his *Memoria sobre marina en Filipinas* who claimed that there were skilled laborers, but for lack of expert shipbuilders, Philippine built ships were of poorer quality than the American-built. L. Gonzales Liqueste, "The Maritime History of the Philippines and the Old Escuela Nautica," *Philippine Magazine* 27 (July 1930): 80.

69. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 492.

70. AGI Filipinas 685.

71. AGI Filipinas 685. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 681.

1773 Anda wrote to Spain about the lack of funds to construct galeotas, "the only effective means to check the Moros." In response, the King ordered that P50,000 be sent from Mexico to Anda in the first ship to leave Acapulco.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile the islands groaned under the devastating depredations of Moro raiders who took advantage of the sad state of the islands' defenses after the British occupation of Manila. As one example of the many raids, Iranuns launched raiding expeditions from their raiding stations in Burias island and Masbate and sacked towns and *visitas* in Masbate, Camarines and Catanduanes.<sup>73</sup> These attacks could have been restrained or at least minimized, if the government had fast ships to carry intelligence reports. So Anda reacted in 1775 and formed a *Marina Sutil* for the purpose of defending the coastal towns and settlements against Moro marauders and waging war against them if necessary.<sup>74</sup> But the documents are silent on the nature of its composition. In armed operations, he apparently used various types of vessels, like galeras, packet boats, sampanes, faluas, lanchas and the like.<sup>75</sup>

Anda waged an aggressive campaign. He instructed Ignacio Zarra, commanding officer of the armada he commissioned to clean up Burias and Masbate of pirates, to engage the enemy vigorously and ruthlessly, and give them no quarter. Yet the hoped-for effects of Anda's expeditions were not realized. Nor did his light navy achieve its purpose, for it was not light at all. In fact it was useless and was mainly used to transport troops. Even in this task, it was of little value. The vessels were heavy and slow at a time when speed could mean victory and sluggishness defeat.<sup>76</sup>

Probably as a reaction to Anda's failure, on 28 January 1776, the Madrid government ordered him to convoke a council of high-ranking civil and military officials and prominent citizens with "expert knowledge of coasts, ports, coves, rivers and inlets of these islands." Without waste of time, this body was expected to agree on this matter:

. . . the construction of galeras, galeotas and other vessels which may be judged suitable to defend, contain, punish and extinguish the piracies and hostilities of the Moros, forming for this purpose an armadilla or respect-

72. AGI Filipinas 641, 687.

73. AFIO 92/23, fols. 13-13b, 26; 92/28, fol. 31.

74. Montero, *Historia general*, 2: 269. A writer claims, without presenting proofs, that the *Marina Sutil* originated from the *armadillas* which were organized against Moro piracy. Percy Hill, "The Old Moro Datu," *Philippine Magazine* 27 (July 1930): 80.

75. AGI Filipinas 492.

76. AGI Filipinas 360. Manuel Buzeta y Felipe Bravo, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de las islas Filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta de Jose C. de la Pena, 1850), 1: 123-24.

able forces, with a budget stating the number of vessels and men and its yearly expenses. . . .

The urgency of the order was impressed on Anda when he was told to submit to the King what would be agreed upon and seek His Majesty's approval, but to start operations immediately against the Moros without waiting for the approval. Unluckily for the project, this dedicated King's servant died on 30 October 1776, leaving the reins of government to Pedro Sarrio.<sup>77</sup>

Anda was not able to convoke the council. Neither was his successor. Sarrio, however, sought the opinion of Joseph Bermudez, a naval commanding officer, on the type of vessels the council was supposed to agree on.<sup>78</sup> Bermudez's recommendations spoke of this officer's intelligence and years of experience in the islands. He repeated de la Torre's, Arandia's and Viana's proposals for the construction of the type of ships used by the Moros, namely, *pancos*, *binalos* and *vintas*. The slow and deep-draft Spanish ships could not keep up with these vessels in *esteros*, rivers and inlets where they usually sought refuge to shake off their pursuers. Because of the small size and swiftness of these vessels, the forts of Zamboanga, Misamis, Cebu and Leyte successfully used them against the enemy.

To man the *pancos*, Bermudez recommended combat-tested individuals and Zamboanguenos. A division made up of one or two *pancos* and some *vintas* should have one galera to protect them from superior forces and carry most of the provisions and munitions. Each division should have one or more royal navy pilots for hydrographic and navigational assignments and two galeotas to carry the provisions and munitions of the *pancos* and *vintas*.

Bermudez's opinion helped Governor Sarrio arrive at a decision. In 1778 the Moros were on the rampage again, plundering and razing the islands, capturing and carrying Christians to the slave markets. Sultan Muhammad Israel of Jolo had just died and Azim ud-Din ascended the throne. It seems that in the transition, there was a power vacuum. Bands of Samals and Iranuns, feeling no restraining hand, launched these raids. To check them, the governor resolved to do away with the galeras and build a squadron of *vintas*. They were very light shallow-draft vessels which were more suitable than the galeras in fighting the pirates.<sup>79</sup> He gave the squadron the specialized mission of "reconnoi-

77. All information in this paragraph and the next is from AGI Filipinas 687.

78. Ibid.

79. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 352-53. A description of some vessels, like the *panco*, *vinta*, *baroto*, *barangayan* and *bilos* are in MN Ms. 823, fols. 1-5v; Retana, *Diccionario de Filipinismos*, pp. 55, 172.

tering coasts, charting ports, indicating shoals and reefs, sounding seas," besides harassing pirates. For better efficiency, he assigned pilots from the royal navy to each vinta.<sup>80</sup> Sarrio's new measure was totally novel and promising. But it is not known how the squadron fared. What is important was his departure from the galera mentality by constructing Moro vessels and employing professional pilots.

The big break for the government and the long suffering Indios came in 1778. An officer of the Royal Navy named Jose Basco y Vargas was sworn in as the colonial governor over the opposition of the members of the Audiencia who questioned his low rank.<sup>81</sup> This creative public servant tried to solve the Moro problem with an unprecedented approach. He cultivated good relations with Azim ud-Din II, the Sulu Sultan, but continued armed harassment of the raiders. So zealous was he in improving the islands' defenses and organizing armed expeditions that the Bishop of Cebu wrote a letter commending him to the King.<sup>82</sup>

Basco was progressive-minded but not so liberal as to disregard his sovereign's wish. On 18 August 1778, he convened the council which his two predecessors had failed to do. The purpose was to determine, in the shortest possible time, what type of vessels to construct for an anti-piracy armadilla that should be operative as soon as possible, even before the arrival of the King's approval.<sup>83</sup>

Twenty-four members including Basco comprised the council. The plurality agreed to construct vintas and galeotas as the most appropriate vessels for their lightness and speed. That act, in the tradition of Basco's predecessor, Governor Sarrio, completely did away with galeras and approved Basco's plan to establish four divisions of fighting ships.

#### BASCO'S MARINA SUTIL

In the light of what had been agreed upon by the council and the royal decrees, Basco issued a decree on 5 September 1778. He ordered the laying of seven keels at the Cavite arsenal for the main structures of seven armed ships. One would be a galeota with a keel of twenty-two cubits; the others, six vintas, each with a keel of eighteen cubits.

80. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 353.

81. Montero, *Historia general*, 2: 285.

82. Vicente Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas de Filipinas* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1878), p. 132. AGI Filipinas 692.

83. All information in this paragraph and the next is from AGI Filipinas 687.

With this galeota, plus the other one in Cavite, Basco would have eight vessels to compose the Cavite Division.<sup>84</sup>

He wanted these vessels with the built-in qualities of "lightness, resistivity, durability and strength."<sup>85</sup> From stem to stern, the mounted guns would be a three-pound or four-pound cannon, two mortars and, on the starboard and portside, four or six blunderbusses. They were to be finished and armed, ready to sail, by October. He notified royal officials to facilitate what would be needed to avoid any delay. So that the construction would be immediately started, Basco decreed that Joseph Bermudez, commanding officer of the arsenal, should be notified. At the same time, Bermudez should keep a sharp eye on wasteful expenditures, draw up and submit a clear statement on the complement of crew and arms needed for the vessels. Two days after the decree, Bermudez informed Basco of the start of construction and submitted the detailed statement on the crew and arms with additional recommendations.<sup>86</sup>

In November three ships were finished: the galeota *Santa Lucia* and the two vintas *Santa Theresa* and *Santa Barbara*.<sup>87</sup> The cost of construction of a galeota was ₱1,241, five *reales* and ten *granos*; a *vinta*, ₱739, five *reales*. All the other vessels were expected to be launched by December or January, and then all together set out for their mission.<sup>88</sup>

The daily ordinary rations allotted to each one in a crew of twenty-nine cost seven *reales* and one *grano*. Each vessels could carry only a month and a half's provisions for its crew. Multiplied by the number of vessels, these expenditures on rations and salaries would be a real drain on the public treasury. But patriotic *Indios* were not wanting. To help in the war effort, the inhabitants of the province of Bulacan agreed in various councils to underwrite two vintas. They took it upon themselves to pay a voluntary half *real* yearly and added to this a *ganta* of *palay*. Not to be outdone, the *Pampangueños* followed suit for the support of the vintas.<sup>89</sup>

84. All information in this paragraph and the next, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 687.

85. Nicolas Enrile, a young naval officer who saw active service in the nineteenth century and one of the bright assistants of Governor Pascual Enrile, said it could not be ascertained what kind of wood was used in constructing vessels but, regularly, the lightest was preferred without considering its durability. MN Ms. 823, fol. 2.

86. AGI Filipinas 687.

87. AGI Filipinas 923.

88. All information in this paragraph and the next ones unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 687.

89. Montero, *Historia general*, 2: 308-309.

The four fully-equipped and well-armed fighting ships riding at anchor were the delight of the governor. Their expected speed, durability and fire-power gave him satisfaction and high hopes. Basco could not wait to test the mettle of his new war vessels. For their trial runs, he sent out the two *vintas* *Sta. Theresa* and *Sta. Barbara* to scout the inlets and rivers branching out of Manila Bay. They returned after four days without having made any contact with the enemy.<sup>90</sup>

Impatient to advance as early as possible the operations of his projected Marina Sutil, Basco formed the two *vintas* and the *galeotas* *Sta. Lucia* and *Soledad* into a combat squadron. He put in command Joseph Gomez, a navy captain of known probity and valor. On 13 December 1778 the four ships set out carrying the hopes and prayers of a Christian populace for the beginning of their deliverance from the endless harassment of Moro marauders. Their mission was to clear Mindoro of Moro pirates.<sup>91</sup>

The following month, the four other newly finished *vintas* sailed for the same destination on the same mission. On 2 February a strong gust of wind wrecked the *Sta. Engracia* which was skippered by Captain Antonio Estefania. Fortunately for the crew, there was no loss of life. The other three *vintas* which were sailing in close formation picked up the survivors from the choppy waters, then proceeded to rendezvous with the Gomez group to complete the formation of the first division.<sup>92</sup>

Before noon, the desired action finally occurred close to Marin-duque island. Thirty one *pancos* of Iranun raiders, hove into sight. Suddenly the numerically superior enemy veered away from the impending confrontation. But no matter how fast the Moro *pancos* fled, their pursuers dogged them. As the *pancos* rowed hard to escape and only desultorily returned fire, the guns of Gomez's ships inflicted heavy damage on them. The Moros panicked. To lighten their vessels, they jettisoned their provisions. Eventually the evening gloom put them out of sight. Gomez and his men contented themselves with gathering the small long boats the Moros had abandoned in their flight.

The performance of his light navy in its first brush with the enemy elated Basco. It boded well for his fighting force. Patrons of trading

90. AGI Filipinas 923.

91. AGI Filipinas 687, 923.

92. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 687. The first division or Cavite Division was composed of the flagships *Sta. Lucia*, the vice commander's ship *La Soledad*, the *vintas* *Sta. Theresa*, *Sta. Barbara*, *Sta. Engracia*, *Sta. Rosa*, *Sta. Rita* and *Sta. Cecilia*.

ships plying the Visayas-Manila trade route assured him that within forty leagues distant from Manila, they had not encountered any Moros. His attention, however, was called to some defects in his ships. At the news of the *Sta. Engracia's* loss, he immediately ordered the construction of a replacement of the same pattern but with some alterations which were also made in the other vessels. He had the height of the masts and the length of the lateen yards reduced on the complaint of the skippers. Tall masts and long yards, the skippers observed, were navigational hazards in a strong breeze. These could have occasioned the *Sta. Engracia's* disaster.<sup>93</sup>

The proud fighting ships were careened in Cavite.<sup>94</sup> Then they sailed to the Pasig river in Manila where they were provisioned to take to sea again. This division of two galeotas and six vintas had to escort the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary to Cavite where the frigate San Jose was waiting before sailing overseas. After the transfer of the statue to the frigate, Basco wanted his ships to fire their artillery in salute, then leave for a three-month combat cruise in the waters of Tablas, Romblon, Sibuyan and Panay.<sup>95</sup>

In one of his several sorties, Gomez sailed out from Manila to resume operations. He started with the island of Mindoro. He split his force into two squadrons: one galeota and three vintas to a squadron to simultaneously reconnoiter the western and eastern coasts of the island, then rendezvous and meet at a certain point on the southern side, proceed to the coasts of Batangas and Tayabas and swing towards Marinduque, Burias, Masbate, Romblon, Sibuyan, Panay and other parts, the weather permitting.<sup>96</sup>

Off the coast of Capiz, on Panay island, Gomez ran into seven Iranun vessels. The enemy ships had a positional advantage navigating from the windward. Gomez's men were by that time veterans of sea skirmishes. At a signal from their Commander, the eight Spanish ships maneuvered and forced the Iranuns to beach two of their vessels, abandon them and flee to the mountains. Gomez's men burned the two vessels. No mention of what happened to the other five enemy

93. AGI Filipinas 687.

94. Documents say that the frequency of overhauling ships was caused by *anay* or white ants. To get rid of them a little booklet brought to light by Fray Fernando de Sta. Maria, O.P., recommended sulphur, urine, salt water and old iron soaked in a jar for a month or a month and a half and washing the infested parts with this liquid. AGI Ultramar 650. Moderns are more apt to believe that the cause was shipworms that burrowed into wooden hulls below the water line.

95. AGI Filipinas 687.

96. All information in this paragraph and the next is from AGI Filipinas 687.

vessels is made but apparently they escaped, for Basco wrote in his report to Spain the remedy he applied to check the *vintas'* incapacity to catch up with the enemy. On the representation of Gomez, he ordered each *vinta* fitted out with eight more oars and with an equal number of seamen.

The division was hardly in port on 3 February 1780 when Gomez received information about the presence of Moros in the environs of Mindoro.<sup>97</sup> He set out with his ships. After a thorough search, on the 18th he came upon seven Iranun *pancos* in a river exiting out of Looc bay. By then the exploits of the Cavite Division led by Gomez, the "Scourge of Pirates," had become a byword that inspired fear in the Moros.<sup>98</sup> At sight of the Spanish ships, the Moros wavered. It was too late. Gomez began bombarding the massed Moros killing a good number including some chieftains. They offered only token resistance, preoccupied as they were with escaping. To trust in their ships' speed and sail away would be to expose themselves to the incessant firing from Gomez's ships. They withdrew out of the trap and escaped. That ended the armed engagement which was another notch in the string of the light navy's victories at the cost of only one soldier killed by a falconet blast. In recognition of Gomez's personal merits and indefatigable service, the King granted him through a royal order, on 14 June 1784, a monthly salary of ₱100. Four years later, he asked for a raise. Another royal order granted him monthly ₱135.<sup>99</sup>

In their encounters with the Marina Sutil, if Basco is to be believed, the reputation of the Moros as fighters came out sullied. Basco accused them of cowardice. He said they always fled from his Cavite Division or any square-sailed ship.<sup>100</sup> That was not surprising at all. The Moros organized and armed their fleets and set out, not for combat but for plunder and booty. They attacked, usually unexpectedly, only defenseless vessels, like *sampanes*, and *pontines* (coasting vessels). In a picturesque simile, Fray Manuel de la Concepcion likened them to goshawks that appear suddenly in the midst of helpless chicks and little birds. But if their prey, no matter how small, resisted with fire-power matching theirs, they fled from it. Well-armed vessels, however, were known to have been captured either because they ran out

97. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, is from AGI Filipinas 687.

98. For an encounter near Masbate in which the Moros plunged into a miry mangrove swamp to flee from the pursuing Gomez, see AGI Filipinas 928.

99. AGI Filipinas 808.

100. AGI Filipinas 687.

of ammunition or their crew were all thumbs in handling naval armaments.<sup>101</sup>

If the Moros could avoid confrontation, they did so, especially if their vessels were filled with human captives. Their prime concern was the safety of their human booty which they took home to Jolo, the distribution point for captives to the slave markets of Dutch, English, Moro and non-Moro slavers.<sup>102</sup> To elude Spanish armadillas, they employed spies or put up lookouts on island peaks to warn them of danger. In a chance encounter, when rushed upon by Spanish ships, they had a repertoire of escape contrivances. Basco wrote:

They turn their bow to the wind, strike their masts and yards and escape on oars. If they cannot do that, they steer straight for land, and if they have time, they carry their vessel on their shoulders and save it with themselves in the bush where they stay till ours depart.<sup>103</sup>

The most common recourse was to make a run for the shallows where deep-draft Spanish ships<sup>104</sup> could not follow them, or enter rivers or inlets inaccessible to large vessels. They had no difficulty in locating inlets or rivers or estuaries for they had Visayan renegades who acted as guides or pilots.<sup>105</sup> Safe in the shelter of reefs of mangrove swamps, the Moros would indulge in spirited shouting, name-calling and taunting, even to the extent of showing their rumps to their pursuers. Speaking from his experience of more than forty years in the islands, Francisco Xavier Salgado said, "They had no problem doing that, for

101. AGI Filipinas 641.

102. The security measures taken by the pirates to prevent escape are mentioned in PNA Piratas 2, fols. 2b, 6. MN Ms. 467, fol. 300v. AGI Filipinas 686. Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas* pp. 43–44. In his visit to Jolo, Captain Forrest saw the Sulus purchasing captives from Iranun and Maguindanao vessels, and cargoes of slaves were taken to Borneo and Batavia. Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea & the Moluccas*, pp. 320–35. Escaped captives' testimonies of Jolo slave-trading are in PNA Piratas I, fols. 3b, 7–7b, 9, 10b, 15; PNA Piratas 3, fols. 6–6b.

103. AGI Filipinas 510, 687. Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea & the Moluccas*, p. 302.

104. Even when the *Marina Sutil* had already been adopted, there were deep-draft ships. The number of vintas was not enough to cover the various seas of the islands. Some officers were not blind to the weaknesses of the vinta. To complement each vessel's weakness, armadillas were usually a composite group of vintas and other types of vessels. Only six years after Basco's retirement, deep-draft vessels were very much in evidence. In response to a report, in 1793 an armadilla of two *galeotas*, six *lanchas canoneras* (deep-draft ships), six vintas and three *pancos* was dispatched to Sabongcogon, municipality of Mulanay in Tayabas (now Quezon), to combat eighty *pancos* of Moros. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, I: 358.

105. AGI Filipinas 510. Warren *The Sulu Zone*, pp. 151–52, 157, 210. Tomas de Comyn, *State of the Philippines in 1810* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1969), p. 124.

with the exception of two or three chieftains, the rest went in the nude with only loincloth for covering."<sup>106</sup>

Governor Basco eventually saw the fulfillment of his plans. He succeeded in forming four divisions of light, fast, anti-piracy vessels which he strategically stationed in Cebu, Iloilo, Zamboanga and the Calamianes group from which points each division could hopefully respond promptly to emergencies. By 1780 the province of Camarines formed another division of *vintas*.<sup>107</sup>

This light navy proved its worth. From the date of its formation, Basco reported close to 600 Moro vessels captured, and many towns and settlements in Moro territory reduced to cinders.<sup>108</sup> The sweeps it conducted in various seas, bays and rivers repressed Moro marauding for a time and a relative sense of security and relief gradually spread in most parts of the islands. The Samar-Leyte-Manila trade route, only one of the several, came to life after more than ten years of paralysis because of piratical activities. About forty-three trading caracoas loaded with commodities long missed in the city reached Manila in 1779. The Sulu Sultan sued for peace in 1781 and tried to confirm his sincerity by returning a vessel seized off Antique province by one of his *datus*.<sup>109</sup> Yet it should not be overlooked that these and other unrecorded accomplishments could not have been possible without the *Indio* seamen who made up the bulk of naval personnel. Their heroic feats and victories vindicated Simon de Anda's stand against Spain's policy to send European seamen to man the ships.<sup>110</sup>

The euphoria generated by these achievements was short-lived. Basco made the mistake of embarking on the conquest of the storm-swept Batanes islands which were believed worthless at that time to Spanish interests.<sup>111</sup> He suspended expeditions against the Moros. To augment his invading force, he weakened his divisions, exposing the southern flanks of Luzon and the Visayas to renewed Moro raiding. And for all the *vintas'* commendable combat capability, they were not sturdy ships. Warren rightly observed that rough weather tied them up in port; that they were too few to secure the thousands of square miles of islands and seas.<sup>112</sup> Their maintenance costs burdened provincial governments.

106. AGI Filipinas 687.

107. Miguel A. Espina, *Apuntes para hacer un libro sobre Joló* (Manila: Imprenta y Litografía de M. Perez, hijo, 1888), p. 141. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 353. AGI Filipinas 687.

108. AGI Filipinas 687.

109. Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1: 353-54. Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas*, p. 132.

110. AGI Filipinas 492.

111. Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas*, pp. 134-35.

112. AGI Filipinas 510. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, p. 173.

Although Basco ordered province heads to be responsible for the formation and support of vinta squadrons, provinces impoverished by constant depredations could not support their squadrons.<sup>113</sup>

Years later when Rafael de Aguilar assumed the governor's office, he noted the vinta's shortcomings and high upkeep. The vinta fleet alone spent P30,000 from Basco's administration in 1778 to his own in 1793.<sup>114</sup> In spite of the recommendation of the 1784 council to conserve the vintas because the Moros feared and always fled from them, this authoritarian executive did not scruple to discard the vintas. He formed his own Marina Sutil consisting of other types of vessels to contain the raids that had erupted after Basco's term due to active British intervention.<sup>115</sup>

For all his good works, Basco was not above criticism. However, in fairness to him who did more for the economic development of the islands than any one of his predecessors and gave its people the long desired respite from piratical attacks, he did not harbor any delusions of lasting peace and prosperity even at the peak of his navy's efficiency. In his report to the central government in the fifth year of his administration in which he summarized the principal accomplishments of his government, he candidly admitted that it would take many more years and expeditions to Moro territory to restrain and force them to turn away from piracy and slave-raiding.<sup>116</sup> The events in the years that followed confirmed him.

## CONCLUSION

Up to the waning years of the eighteenth century, it seems that the light navy was only a temporary answer to the Spanish search for enduring solutions to seaborne hostilities brought by Moro and non-Moro adversaries. The quest would go on for almost another century

113. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, pp. 172-73. With due respect to Warren, a scholar, this observation of his might not be true in the Bicol region. Only a few years after Basco, Albay towns, generally poor, constructed and maintained armed ships to check Moro hostilities. If they were reduced to poverty by Moro raids, they could not have recovered that fast while raids were still going on. See PNA EP Albay, 1799-1864, vol. 2, fols. 2-50b. There are even itemized lists of supplies given to anti-piracy fleets that called on some Albay towns. If they could supply other fleets, why could Bicol towns not support their own? See PNA Varias Provincias-Albay, XI, fols. 1-9, 18-25, 28-38, 40-48b.

114. Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas*, p. 155.

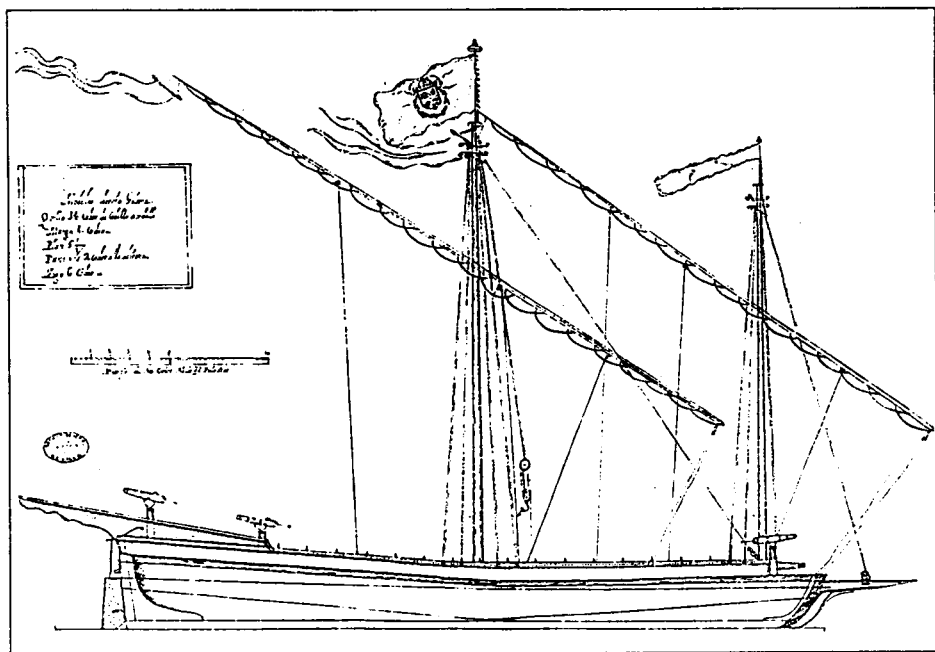
115. AGI Filipinas 510. Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas*, pp. 155-59. Espina, *Apuntes para hacer un libro sobre Jolo*, p. 143. Montero, *Historia general*, 2: 370.

116. AGI Filipinas 687.

up to the introduction of steam gunboats and the decline of the southern sultanates, before the Spaniards and their subjects would gradually start to feel the elusive relief they had long craved for.

Abbreviations used:

AFIO	Archivo Franciscano Ibero-oriental (Madrid)
AGI	Archivo General de Indias (Sevilla)
MN Ms.	Museo Naval Manuscrito (Madrid)
PNA EP	Philippine National Archives, Erección de Pueblos
PNL HDP	Philippine National Library, Historical Data Papers
BR	Emma Blair & James A. Robertson, eds. <i>The Philippine Islands, 1493-1893</i> (Cleveland: Arthur A. Clarke, 1903).



Sketch of a Galeota