This week, Outrigger Resorts announced that it is providing support and assistance for a test voyage of two seafaring proas (canoes) that will travel around the island of Guam in preparation for the Festival of the Pacific Arts (FestPac 2016), scheduled to take place on Guam in May-June 2016. This announcement comes on the heels of my article last week, describing Outrigger’s significant support for the Polynesian Voyaging Society and its canoes, Hōkūle‘a and Hikianalia.

It is hard to compare today’s trans-Pacific travel to what must have been the experience of the first open-ocean voyagers. Today, most travelers board deluxe aircraft or cruise ships that whisk them back and forth across thousands of miles of open sea. Contrast that with what pioneering voyagers must have endured perhaps as much as 8,000 years ago when they dared to cover the same distances in small, open vessels that took months to complete the exceptionally risky journey.

It is believed that the initial voyagers came from what is now South China and Taiwan. In double-hulled canoes, possibly very similar to the Hōkūle‘a, they crossed uncharted waters to a great many distant islands, and generations later, their descendants eventually reached and populated Hawai‘i. Other early explorers, using outrigger sailing canoes called proas, reached Indonesia, the Philippines and the Mariana Islands, including Guam.

“Thousands of years ago pioneering voyagers crossed uncharted waters in double-hulled canoes.”
“We’ve come a long way, Baby” ... << From 1

The proa is similar in many ways to the Polynesian double-hulled sailing canoe, but instead of bearing passengers and cargo on a structure between two equal-sized hulls, the proa carries its load on a main hull which is stabilized by a smaller outrigger. Both ends of the hulls are pointed and can serve as either bow or stern. The sail is always positioned to take full advantage of the wind when the boat is underway. 4,5,6

The two proas that Outrigger Resorts is supporting bear the names Ulitao and Aguaguat. They were launched in Tumon Bay from the beach fronting the Outrigger Guam Beach Resort earlier this week with a warm sendoff from onlookers for a safe voyage. The canoes were scheduled to call at the village of Merizo at the southernmost tip of the island, then complete their voyage back to Tumon Bay by this weekend.

At FestPac 2016, Ulitao and Aguaguat will be a part of the regionwide festival celebrating various arts and cultures of the Pacific. In fact, voyaging organizer Ron Acfalle and his group Ulitao Inc. are looking forward to escorting a fleet of canoes that will be arriving from different island nations during FestPac 2016.

As FestPac host, Guam will choose events to highlight traditional performances, art and craft displays and demonstrations, music and storytelling. Hosting the event is an important and exciting opportunity to highlight the cultural identity and heritage of a diverse group of Pacific islanders, many of whom share a colonial past and have felt its impact on traditional practices and lifestyles. With 27 island nations represented, FestPac 2016 will be the biggest event of its kind ever held on Guam.

“We are very excited and proud to lend our support to this momentous event,” said Simeon Miranda, Outrigger’s corporate director of operations, Pacific. “One of our own, Edwin Torres, who is the food and beverage director for the Outrigger Guam Beach Resort (OGM), will participate in the second half of this week’s voyage as the canoes sail back from Merizo. We are also very proud to be the first hotel to ever sponsor a Chamorro seafaring canoe launch.” The Chamorros are the native people of Guam.

According to Miranda, this week’s voyage is the first event of its kind in a series aimed at creating that “unique cultural experience” for guests and the community. Outrigger Guam Beach Resort’s Guest (Bisita) Committee is responsible for spearheading all guest activities at the resort, including this test voyage. Their mission says it all – “Local culture meets world-class hospitality.” The event and sponsorship perpetuates Outrigger Guam Resort’s Inafa’maolek values.

“The Outrigger Guam Beach Resort is proud to work with FestPac 2016 in sharing the history and significance of the voyage with its hosts and guests,” said Miranda.

A similar opportunity will be soon be Hawai‘i’s, which has the honor of hosting the next scheduled Festival of Pacific Arts, FestPac 2020. It is likely that Outrigger Resorts will have a significant role in this cultural exchange, bringing together people, reinforcing regional identity, and strengthening mutual appreciation among the cultures of the Pacific.

Outrigger’s connection to the past, present and future is one we are honored and pleased to support as we all look to discover, learn and share information about the precious island we all live on, Earth.

We’ve come a long way, Baby! 😊

For further information, see:
1 Festival of the Pacific Arts 2016: [www.guamfestpac2016.com](http://www.guamfestpac2016.com)
2 Early voyaging among the Pacific Islands: [http://tinyurl.com/earlyvoyaging](http://tinyurl.com/earlyvoyaging)
3 From the word perahu meaning boat in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines
5 The Proa File Primer: [http://tinyurl.com/Proa-2](http://tinyurl.com/Proa-2)