

Roman Klimeš: Symbols of Guam

Abstract: *The island territory of Guam is introduced with geographic and historical overview. The flag of Guam is described from its creation in 1917 through its 1948 modification up to the present. The Guam Coat of Arms, unchanged since 1917 and showing a typical landscape of Guam, is described with its meaning and significance detailed. The Great Seal of Guam, based on the Guam Coat of Arms, is described from 1917 through its a most important change in 1997 to today. The Flag and the Seal of the Governor are briefly introduced, as well as the Seal of the Legislature, the Judicial Seal, and other seals of Guam.*

1. Introduction

Guam is a U.S. territory at the southern end of the Marianas island chain in the western Pacific Ocean, about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines. The island is approximately 74 km. long and ranges from 6 to 13 km. wide; it covers 544 sq. km. It is the largest and the most populous island of the western Pacific, with 170,000 residents in 2006. Indigenous Chamorros make up 57% of the population, Filipinos 25%, Caucasians 10%, and the rest are Chinese, Japanese, Korean and others. Its capital is Agana (Hagåtña), which means “blood” in the Chamorro language [1].

Guam is the most strategic island in the northwestern Pacific, officially an organized unincorporated territory of the United States. It has five airports, 674 km. of roads, and one port, Apra Harbor. There are no railroads [2]. In the 1960s and 70s Guam served as important U.S. military base during the Vietnam War. In the 1980s the inhabitants of Guam rejected a plan to attempt to change the status of Guam to a U.S. state [3].

As early as 2000 B.C. Guam (Guåhan) was inhabited by the indigenous Chamorro people [4]. It was discovered on 6 March 1521 by the



Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan during his voyage around the world. It was the first Pacific island on which Europeans landed. The Chamorros stole a ship's boat, which led Magellan to name the entire Marianas island group "Las Islas de Los Ladrones", which means "Islands of the Thieves" ¹⁵.

New expeditions to the islands ensued. On 21 January 1565 they were claimed by Spain and renamed the Marianas in honor of Queen Maria Anna of Austria, but the name "Ladrones" persisted unofficially into the 20th century ¹⁶. The next year the Spaniards built a port, and on 15 June 1668 Jesuits arrived to start the colonization of Micronesia.

As a result of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States took control of Guam. Under President William McKinley's Executive Order 108-A, dated 23 December 1898, "The island of Guam in the Ladrones is hereby placed under the control of the Department of the Navy" ¹⁷. The island was administered by the U.S. Navy until 21 July 1950, except for the period between 10 December 1941 and 10 August 1944 when it was occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War ¹⁸.

On 7 September 1949, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 10077 which transferred the administration of Guam from the Navy to the Department of the Interior, effective on 1 July 1950 ¹⁹. The order granted Guam internal autonomy as a self-organized, unincorporated territory of the United States, led by a popularly-elected governor.

2. The Flag of Guam

Until 1917 Guam had only flown the flags of Spain and the United States. However, the country's entry into the First World War led to a popular demand for an island flag, and 4 July 1917 Governor Roy C. Smith approved the plan of a Guam flag.



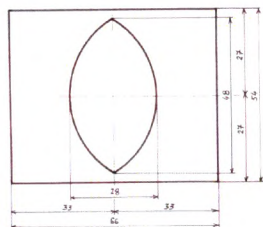
Guam's flag was designed by Mrs. Helen L. Paul, the wife of Commander Carrol E. Paul ^[10]. She made many drawings and sketches of different scenes on Guam, and one of the most outstanding was used as the flag's central image. Her sketch was copied and made into a flag by a home economics class taught by Mrs. Lillian A. Nagel, wife of a Marine sergeant and bandmaster ^[11]. The flag was first officially used by Guam's militia in drills and parades, and later, by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The flag was also raised on 4 July 1918 by Sergeant Ben Zafra, a cadet in the militia, at ceremonies held in Paseo Park, in a connection with a fair ^[12].

The National Geographic Society collections hold a blueprint of Guam's flag dated 4 July 1917, and on file in the office of the Attorney General of Guam is a copy of the original design, giving the dimensions, pattern, and colors of the flag ^[13].

In the center of the flag is a vertical, two-pointed oval with a scene portraying an ancient flying proa (a swift, seagoing, sailing canoe) ^[14] approaching a beach where a river enters into the ocean, with a lone coconut palm in the foreground and a cliff in the background. The letters "GU" and "AM" flank the palm tree.

The colors are listed as follows: The field of the flag, dark blue; the cord and tassel, yellow and blue; inner border, red; the sky, pale blue; water, medium blue; the bluff, grey-blue; the sand beach, yellow; the tree leaves, green; the tree trunk, grey-brown; the boat, grey-brown; the sail, white; GUAM, red ^[15]. The dark blue field of the flag stands for the Pacific Ocean.

The design was drawn on raster paper, therefore we know the exact dimensions of the flag. Its proportions were 54 units by 66 units, or 9:11. The oval in the center of the flag was 48 units high and 28 units wide. The letters in "GUAM" were 4 units high. The border of the oval was 1 unit wide ^[16].



The flag's charge became known as the "Guam Seal", although the designer called it the "Guam Coat of Arms".

The flag was officially confirmed on 12 May 1931, with an order entitled "Flag of Guam" in issue No. 71 of the *Guam Recorder*, a monthly magazine edited and printed under the direction of the naval government, from March 1924 until the Japanese occupation ^[17]. The order read:

1. The Flag shown on the "Plan of Guam Flag", approved July 4, 1917 by R. C. Smith, Governor of Guam, and now on file in the Department of Records and Accounts, is hereby designated as the Island Flag of Guam.
2. The Island Flag adopted by this Order consists of a dark blue field having the Seal of Guam, adopted by Executive Order No. 18, of 4 April 1930, superimposed on both sides of the flag ^[18]. Signed Willis W. Bradley, Jr., Commander, U.S. Navy, Commandant.

While Guam was occupied by Japan from 1941 to 1944, the rising sun ensign of the Japanese Empire was the official flag ^[19].

On 9 February 1948 Guam's naval governor, Vice-Admiral Charles A. Pownall, approved Guam Congress Bill No. 12, creating Chapter VI-A in the Civil Regulations, entitled "Territorial Flag of Guam" ^[20]. Section 1 establishes the official description:

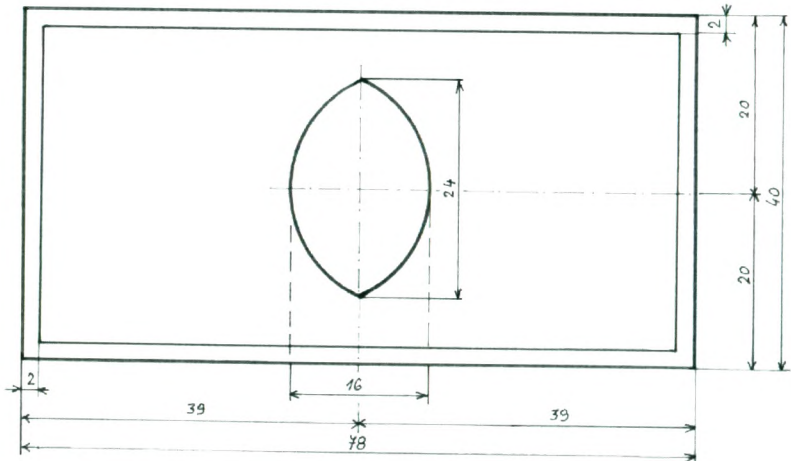


The official territorial flag of Guam shall consist of a rectangular field of marine blue seventy-eight inches long and forty inches wide, trimmed on all sides with a border of deep red two inches

in width and having in its center the Guam Coat of Arms (a two-pointed oval scene twenty-four inches high and sixteen inches wide, which portrays an ancient flying proa (canoe) about to make a landing on the beach near a lone palm tree). The colors of the Guam Coat of Arms shall be as follows: yellow, which represents the sand; brown, the tree trunk and canoe; green, the palm fronds; white, the canoe's sail; gray, the distant flat-topped mountains; red, the letters GUAM

emblazoned across the Coat of Arms. Any deviation from the dimensions as stated herein shall be increased or decreased proportionally [21].

Sections 2 through 7 describe the protocol for displaying the flag.



The most important change to the flag made by Bill No. 12 was the addition of the narrow red border around the edge of the flag.

When the civilian government began in 1950, it maintained the flag and included it in the Code of Guam enacted in 1952, in Section 106, Territorial Flag:

There shall be and there is hereby adopted an official territorial flag of Guam, which shall consist, on both sides, of a rectangular field of marine blue seventy-eight inches long and forty inches wide, trimmed on all sides with a border of deep red two inches in width and having in its center the Guam Coat of Arms, such Coat of Arms to be twenty-four inches high and sixteen inches wide. The territorial flag may be reproduced for unofficial purposes in smaller or larger sizes, but in such cases, the dimensions shall be in proportion to those hereinabove provided.

The official territorial flag of Guam for holiday uses shall be the same design as aforesaid except that it shall be 50% larger but identical in proportions to the flag hereinbefore described. The holiday flag shall be

displayed on official buildings and flag staffs belonging to the government of Guam on all territorial and national holidays [22].

Section 107 of the code governed the display of the flag. Guam's Codes of 1993 and 2003 repeat the same information in Sections 407 and 408 [23].

The flag of Guam is very popular and is used at many official and unofficial events, both on and off the island. Athletes from Guam often carry the flag during the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games and at matches where Guam's soccer team competes.

3. The Coat of Arms of Guam

Guam distinguishes between its coat of arms and its seal. The coat of arms only appears in color [24]; the seal can be in color or black and white. The only word on the coat of arms is "GUAM"; the seal is surrounded by an inscription [25]. While the symbol without the inscription is sometimes mistakenly called a seal, in heraldic terminology it is a coat of arms.

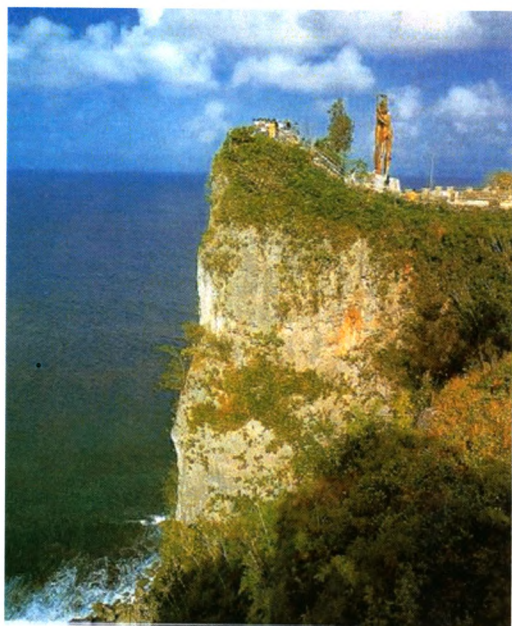
The first information about Guam's coat of arms or seal appeared on the 1917 blueprint of the flag held by the National Geographic Society, bearing the original design of Guam's coat of arms as drawn by Norman School Teacher Mrs. Helen L. Paul. On 4 July 1917, at the same time that he approved the flag for Guam, Governor Smith approved its central image as the "Official Coat of Arms" of the territory, although it became generally known as the "Guam Seal" [26].

The elements of Guam's coat of arms are placed on a shield in the shape of an ancient Chamorro weapon, the slingstone. Fashioned from basalt or coral [27], for many years it was the Chamorros' only hunting weapon and defense against the white man's firearms. The slingstone is a symbol of the protection and endurance the people find in their home government [28].





represents the most important product of the island and symbolizes the bounty of the land [31]. It is also a symbol of survival, by bending but



not breaking in the worst of typhoons, and of determination, because it can grow and thrive in the inhospitable brackish beach sand [32]. The tree symbolizes usefulness, perseverance, courage, and strength [33]. The sailing canoe signifies the courage of the ancient Guamanians who crossed the vast Pacific Ocean in such boats. The early European navigators praised the expert qualities and workman-

ship of these vessels [34]. The canoe represents bravery and skill in making the best of one's own environment [35]. The cliff is an actual landmark called "Two Lovers Point". The legend of Dos Amantes (Two Lovers) tells how two lovers tied themselves

The coat of arms depicts a typical Guam landscape, as seen at the mouth of the Agana River [29] where it formerly emptied into the Philippine Sea in the Navy Yard Reservation [30], and an actual lone coconut tree which once stood there. On the coat of arms, the tree

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together by their hair and jumped over the cliff and drowned in the waters below ^[36], dying rather than be forced to marry others ^[37]. The use of the cliff was also a form of protest against the authoritarian social system ^[38], with “Two Lovers Point” standing for faithfulness to a good cause ^[39].

GUAM (Guåhan) means “we have” in Chamorro ^[40]. The red border surrounding the shield represents the blood shed by Guam’s people during Spanish occupation ^[41]. Despite minor differences in its description, the coat of arms of Guam has remained the same from 1917 to the present.



The official description of the Guam coat of arms was published in the Bill No. 12 of the Guam Congress of 7 February 1948 ^[42], approved by Governor Pownall two days later. In Section 1 of Chapter VI-A, entitled Territorial Flag of Guam, appears the official description of the Guam coat of arms:

“A two-pointed oval scene twenty-four inches high and sixteen inches wide, which portrays an ancient flying proa (canoe) about to make a landing on the beach near a lone palm tree. The colors of the Guam Coat of Arms shall be as follows: yellow, which represents the sand; brown, the tree trunk and canoe; green, the palm fronds; white, the canoe’s sail; grey, the distant flat-topped mountains; red, the letters GUAM emblazoned across the Coat of Arms”.

Soon after, on 16 September 1950, Public Law No. 33 of the Guam Congress modified the description:

A two-pointed oval scene, which portrays an ancient flying proa (canoe) approaching the beach near the mouth of Agana River, with a lone coconut palm tree in the foreground. The colors of the Coat of Arms of Guam shall be as follows: yellow, which represents the sand; brown, the tree trunk and canoe; green, the palm fronds; white, the canoe’s sail; grey, the distant flat-topped mountains; light blue, the sky; dark blue, the water; red, the letters GUAM emblazoned across the Coat of Arms ^[43].

Two years later the description was modified again in Section 105 of the Original Code of Guam enacted in 1952:

Coat or Arms. There shall be, and there is hereby adopted an official Coat of Arms of Guam, which shall consist of an upright two-pointed oval scene which portrays an ancient flying proa (canoe) approaching the beach near the mouth of the Agana River, with a lone coconut palm tree in the foreground. The colors of the Coat of Arms shall be as follows: yellow, which represents the sand; brown, the tree trunk and canoe; green, the palm fronds; white, the canoe's sail; grey, the distant flat topped mountains; light blue, the sky; dark blue, the water; red, the letters GUAM emblazoned across the Coat of Arms; red, the border around the outer edge and surrounding the oval ^[44].

The description was unchanged in Section 406 of the Guam Code Annotated of 19 January 1993 ^[45] and Guam Code Annotated of 5 January 2003 ^[46].

The design of the Guam coat of arms has a great popularity. Native craftsmen use it on bracelets, rings, inlaid wooden trays, and articles woven from "aggag", a species of pandanus leaf ^[47]. The Governor's official car and barge were usually identified by the coat of arms painted on the doors or sides.



The current governor and lieutenant governor have the design painted on their cars' license plates ^[48]. For a short time in 1930, Governor Bradley issued "Guam Guard Mail" stamps featuring the coat of arms; they are now



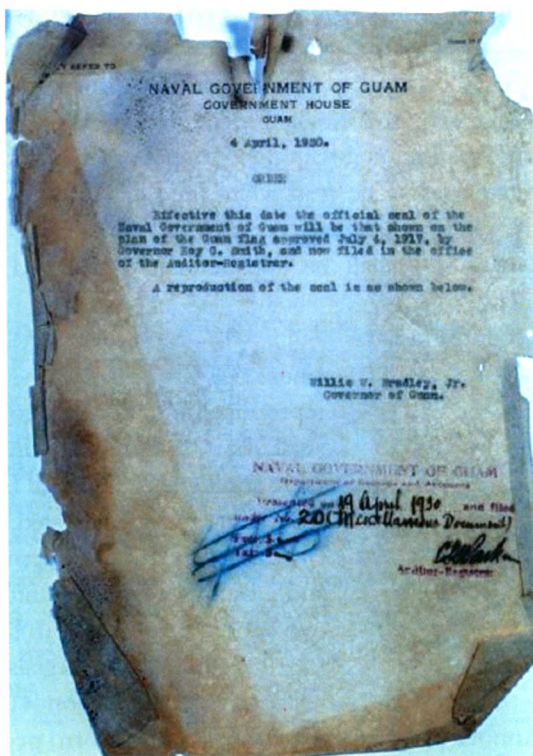
rare and considered collector's items [49]. Today nearly everything symbolizing Guam is decorated with the Guam coat of arms. While its free use may easily promote patriotism, the dignity of the design should be protected and it should not be used with advertising as if it were a brand or a trademark. The Guam coat of arms is deeply cherished by the people of Guam [50].

4. The Great Seal of Guam

Guam's seal was created in 1917 and portrays the same design as the coat of arms. The Guam Seal was confirmed 4 April 1930 by executive order of Governor Bradley:

Effective this date the official seal of the Naval Government of Guam will be that shown on the plan of the Guam flag approved July 4, 1917, by Governor Roy C. Smith, and now filed in the office of the Auditor-Registrar. A reproduction of the seal is as shown below [51].

The original seal has not been seen since the island's liberation on 1 August 1944; it is not known if it was lost or destroyed before the Japanese occupation or confiscated by the enemy. However the island has a new seal with nearly the same design [52]. The original seal was two and five-sixteenths inches high. On 16 September 1950 Governor Pownall approved Public Law 33 of the Guam Congress, "An Act to provide an official seal of Guam" [53], creating



a new Chapter VI-B, in the Civil Regulations, entitled “Seal of Guam”. Section 1 establishes the official description:

There shall be and is hereby adopted a Great Seal of the Government of Guam, Guam, Marianas Islands, which shall consist of the Coat of Arms of Guam, surrounded by the following words, letters, and punctuation, encircling the outer border, of the said Coat of Arms in such a manner as to be read when the Coat of Arms is in a proper position: “Great Seal of the Government of Guam, Guam, Marianas Islands, United States of America” [54].

The size of the seal was not mentioned. The actual seal in use had the encircling inscription “Great Seal of the Territory of Guam, United States of America” [55].



Two years later the law was changed, perhaps to catch up with the actual seal. In the Original Government Code of Guam of 1952, Section 109, Great Seal Description reads:

The Great Seal of the Territory of Guam shall consist of the Coat of Arms of Guam surrounded by the following words, letters, and punctuation, encircling the outer border or the Coat of Arms in such a manner as to be read when the Coat of Arms is in a proper position: “Great Seal of the Territory of Guam, United States of America”. The Great Seal shall be approximately two and five-sixteenths (2-5/16) inches long.

Section 111 says:

In all instances where Great Seal of the Territory of Guam is reproduced in color, the colors of the Coat of Arms shall be as described in Section 105 and the surrounding lettering shall be in black [56].



In Guam Code Annotated, of 19 January 1993, the language of former Government Code Sections 109 and 111 was combined into one section 410 having two subsections (a) and (b).

In 1997 the Guam Legislature passed Bill No. 66 which amended Section 410(a) of the Guam Code

Annotated in order to honor the Chamorro people:

Section 1. Legislative Intent. The Great Seal of the Territory of Guam represents the island of Guam in official matters. Guam is the homeland of the Chamorro, the indigenous people of Guam, who have resided in Guam since before Roman Empire, indeed since at least one thousand years before the birth of Christ. The Chamorro language, in one form or another, has been spoken here for thousands of years. It is noted that other American jurisdictions, including States of the Union, honor native languages in their Great Seals. The State of Hawaii, in its Great Seal, contains a State Motto in the Hawaiian tongue, while the very names of a large number of States are of indigenous, Native American, derivation. Thus, it is only fitting that the Chamorro people and language be duly honored in our Great Seal.

Section 2. Section 410 (a) of Chapter 4 of Title 1 of the Guam Code Annotated is amended to read:

Section 410. Great Seal: Description, (a) The Great Seal of Guam shall consist of the Coat of Arms of Guam surrounded by the following words, letters, and punctuation, encircling the outer border of the Coat of Arms in such a manner as to be read when the Coat of Arms is in a proper position: "Great Seal of Guam, Tano' I Man Chamorro". The Great Seal shall be approximately two and five-sixteenths inches (2-5/16") long ¹⁵⁷¹.



The Guam Code Annotated of 2003 repeats this section unchanged.

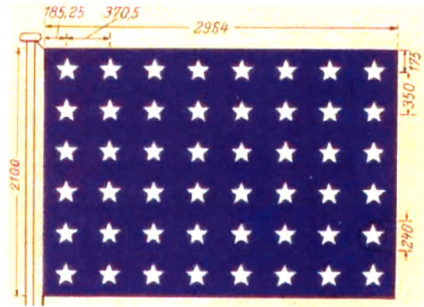
The custody and use of the great seal is described in Section 411:

The Lieutenant Governor of Guam shall have custody of the Great Seal of the Territory of Guam and shall affix the Seal to all executive orders, proclamations, and all other executive documents requiring the seal of the Territory. Source: Former Govt. Code Section 110 amended to reflect the change from Secretary of Guam to Lieutenant Governor. Also, this Section is conformed to similar language in this Title referring to all documents "requiring" a seal. All executive documents do not require a seal and the seal has not, in the past, been used on all executive office documents.

Symbols of the Governor of Guam

4.1 Flag of the Governor

Until 1950 the official flag of Guam's naval governors was the U.S. Naval Jack (a blue field with 48 white five-pointed stars, in proportions of one to the square root of two) [58]. It had been displayed in the bow when governor embarked in a boat on official business. But



unofficially, naval governors generally used the territorial flag fringed in gold and with "GOVERNOR" in gold in a semicircle over the coat of arms. Civil governors continued to use this flag after 1950 [59].

The governor also uses a car flag, created in 1978. It replaces the red border of the territorial flag with a white border, and also includes "GOVERNOR" in gold in a semicircle over the coat of arms [60] [61].



4.2 Seal of the Governor

The governor, as head of government, has a seal, but it is not clear when it was introduced. The governor's seal is circular and depicts a coconut tree and scales of justice in a hilly landscape. A rope cable encircled by "GOVERNOR'S SEAL" (above) and "TERRITORY OF GUAM" (below), separated on each side by a five-pointed star, frames the seal [62]. The coconut tree comes from the Great



Seal of Guam. The scales of justice symbolize the will of the Governor to be righteous to all people. The hilly landscape is typical of Guam.

5. Other Symbols

5.1 Seal of the Legislature of Guam



Until 1997 the seal of the Legislature of Guam combined symbols of the U.S. and Guam. The seal is circular and in color. On the left the U.S. flag and on the right the flag of Guam, both on brown staffs. In the center is the Great Seal of Guam in color. Surrounding this is a blue ring with "GUAM LEGISLATURE" (above) and AGANA, GUAM (below) in white, separated on each side by a white five-pointed star. The blue ring is encircled by a narrow white and blue line [63].

In 1997, the seal of Legislature of Guam changed the colors of the Great Seal of Guam in the center to gold and white, translated the inscription into Chamorro: "ILIHESLATURAN GUAHAN, HAGATNA, GUAM", and removed the white stars [64]. The seal is used today.

5.2 Judicial Seal of Guam

The seal of the Superior Court of Guam is circular, depicting the scales of justice in front of the silhouette of the island. The scales of justice represent justice and the silhouette of the island represents the Court's territorial jurisdiction. The seal is encircled by "JUSTICE FOR ALL" (above) and "SUPERIOR COURT OF GUAM" (below) between two narrow lines [65].



5.3 Other Seals of Guam

Guam Code Annotated, in Section 412, describes other seals of Guam: Other Seals.

- (a) There shall be a Seal for each Court of Record and the Traffic Court of the government of Guam, which seals shall be the same as the Great Seal of the Territory of Guam with the words "Great Seal of the" omitted and in their place the name of the court shall be substituted.
- (b) Any agency of the government which is authorized by law to have and use its own seal, and any other department, section, or agency which the Governor, in his discretion, has authorized to use a seal, shall use a seal in the form of the Great Seal of the Territory of Guam but omitting the words "Great Seal of the" and substituting therefore the name of the agency, department, or section authorized to use a seal.

Any agency or department or branch of the government may design its own emblem representing that department, agency, or branch of the government, but the same shall not be considered its official seal [66].

Through 90 eventful years, the fundamental symbols of Guam have remained virtually unchanged, representing the island territory with appropriate and meaningful imagery.



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11. ELVIDGES, Anita M.: The Guam Flag and Seal, Nieves M. Flores Memorial Library, Agana, Guam, Agana ??, page 1
12. ELVIDGES, Anita M.: The Guam Flag and Seal, Nieves M. Flores Memorial Library, Agana, Guam, Agana ??, page 1
13. Flying Proa, also as prow or prau, fast, sharp-ended rowing or sailing boat that is widely nil used in Malayan waters and was once popular with Malayan pirates. The proa is long and narrow, rigged with one or two fore-and-aft sails. Modern proa are generally open and relatively small. In earlier times the boats were decked and measured as much as 60 feet (18 m) long.
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41. Guam Congress Bill No. 12, Territorial Flag of Guam, Approved February 9, 1948
42. Public Law 33 -10th Guam Congress, Seal of Guam, Approved September 16, 1950
43. Original Government Code of Guam, enacted by P.L. 1-88, 1952
44. Public Law 24-19 Twenty-Fourth Guam Legislature 1997 (FIRST) Regular Session, Bill No. 66 COR)
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Illustrations:

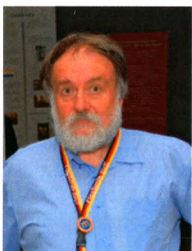
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Roman Klimeš was born 1948 in Prague, emigrated 1976 to Germany, and returned 2003 to Prague, Czech Republic. He studied Slavonic philology and politics at the University of Bonn. Although interested in flags from childhood, he has since 1980 been involved in the methodical study of flags, coats of arms, and seals. Roman Klimes is founder and director of the World Vexillological Research Institute, established in 1992 and a member of FIAV since 1993. Since 1986 he has published the quarterly journal *Flaggen, Wappen und Siegel* (Flags, Coat of Arms and Seals), the publication of which had been taken over by the World Vexillological Research Institute in 1992. He participated in and presented papers at several ICV and wrote numerous articles in vexillological and heraldical journals. He also published a booklet on the symbols of the Free State of Danzig, 1919 to 1939. His main fields of interest are the territory of former Czechoslovakia, Carpatho-Ukraine, Baltic Sea Area, Oceania, Antarctica, and all dependent and autonomous territories in the world.

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