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From "aerial Roots"

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from AERIAL ROOTS

[hila' : tongue : once fly

oceania free

in 'galaide' 'duduli' 'dudings' 'lelek' 'ladyak' 'sakman'

hunggan hunggan hunggan magahet

until fires anchored

in reef in-

sular words

*'without bow or stern**lateen sail of**finely woven**pandamus matting*

[pachot : 'tasi' dreams

hands carved

and cast

keel

*outrigger balancing**does not rely on force**but on ability**to draw water*

'tasi'

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thirty years ago on the island of rota carver and craftsman thomas duenas mendiola gave my father two hand-carved model canoes with hand-woven sails : a galaide and a sakman—the canoes remained on display in our house on guam and i used to day-dream journeys across the pacific with my lego men as sailors—today i called my dad and asked him how he packed the canoes to ship them to california when we moved here fourteen years ago—he said i broke down the sail from the main frame—the hull—then i folded the sail against the body and wrapped in some cloth—but i was too afraid to ship them because they might break—you remember how all our pictures we shipped the glass frames broke—i was afraid of that—and mr mendiola sold many canoes on his ranch to all the rich japanese—the canoes were too valuable you know—many people have offered me money for them but there is no price for them to me—they are even carved from a special wood—i forget the name—but it's the same one they used to make the actual galaide and sakman—so i cut up some cardboard boxes we were using to ship things and i made a special box for each canoe—with the outrigger sticking out of my hand-made box so i could use it as a handle—even on the airplane i didn't check it in baggage but i carried it on—i put one under the seat in front of me and one under the seat in front of you—you don't remember?

[lenguahi : bowsprits cut planks cut
fitted to form
hull—

[bos : voice : teach me
to read the currents

*skin friction and
wave drag
to fly'*

from AERIAL ROOTS

[gofes : lung : if breath
is our only commonwealth

if we are evidence of
what words bury [apuya' : "sakman" i say
it say it
navigates the air—

after measured and form disassembled to sand
—sanding—sanding—sanding—

110 *is remembered the first time i paddled—freshman year at chief gadao academy 1994—
chief gadao is the ancient maga'lahi of the southern village of inalâhan—they say the
village name could sail from the word âla—coconut-leaf woven baskets—which the
village was famous for—or from the word hâlla, which means to pull something or to
move with a rope—in written histories the spanish changed all the l's to r's—inalâhan
became inarajan—*

[pecho : prayers flay
wood treated

to strengthen—
hunggan hunggan hunggan magahet
signs
of crossing—

'mast' 'yard' 'boom' 'sail' 'rigging'—

[patnitos : they can't bury light
even if they burn
our word for light—
even if we have
no nation—

from AERIAL ROOTS

[**tatalo** : i don't remember who told me that the reef around guãhan is made of our bones—burial
in every wave—

is remembered mr flores explained that this was how our ancestors counted "hacha hugua tulu fatfat lima"—i had never heard these numbers before—usually people count in english or in spanish—when my dad counts he switches, tacks between—grandma counts in spanish—when she read my first book she asked what does 'hacha' mean?—i said hacha means 'one'—she looked surprised, asked in what language?—in chamorro, i said—she replied i speak chamorro all my life and i've never heard that word, one is uno in chamorro—no grandma, that's spanish—she looked confused—hacha, hacha, she repeated, feeling the sound in her mouth—maybe you mean 'hatsa,' she said, hatsa means 'to hit'—uno is one—i never heard of hacha—

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[**bihiga** : yet the sail of the sakman pulses—once and now
to let
'puti'on' 'napu' 'pulan' 'manglo' 'paluma'
guide— —[**espinasu** :
to prove 'oceania is still our flag'
to prove 'moving islands'—

[**pahariya** : "saina" hu sangan
say to voice all the way to the sun
hunggan hunggan hunggan magahet

in spanish 'hacha' could mean a large candle, torch, or ax—the gachai, a chamorro traditional stone-tipped adze used to cut and carve wood, is said to sail from the spanish word 'hacha'—

from AERIAL ROOTS

[pulu : we belong to more than a map of remote scars

[talanga : the sakman

drifts offshore

see a thin glow of light that the crew knew was luta was rota—
given water, tow, arrival

hunggan hunggan hunggan magahet

[guetguera : —saina navigates light

frame by frame to locate our most common muscle—

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*is remembered the counting—the repeating—the paddle digging the ocean—to pull to
fly—“hacha hugua tulu fatfat lima” in rhythm—so close to the deep water—so close to
the passing matson cargo ship arriving—its wake disappearing our own*

will we ever grow accustomed will
we wake will
we disappear into

[finatkilu : silence :

our cut hair remains
on the ocean floor nothing
recovered from its nest—ask *why*
don't we have hands anymore
to bury us in?