

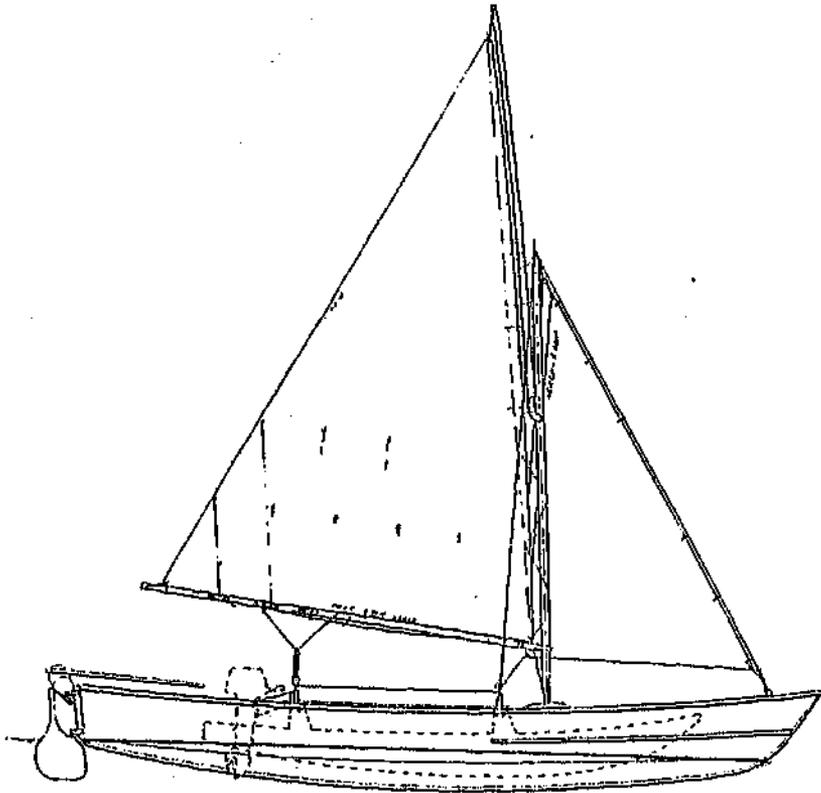
MASTER  
FILE.  
PELASIO.

**AN EVALUATION OF FAO/KIRIBATI CANOES  
IN TOKELAU**

**MOSE PELASIO**



An Evaluation of FAO/KIRIBATI Canoes  
in Tokelau



Mose Pelasio  
Institute of Marine Resources  
University of the South Pacific  
Suva

July 1988

## INTRODUCTION

In January 1988. Two FAO/KIRIBATI canoes were shipped to Fakaofu, Tokelau on board the MV Wairua. At that time, I was spending my holiday at home (Fakaofu). From the experience I gained while I was in Suva from working together with Mr Robert Gillett in the same type of canoe as those in Tokelau, I was asked by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Foua Toloa, to look after the canoes, and to pass on the techniques of operating the canoes to the local people, such as reefing, general sailing and safety. Because the local people have sailing skills from using their traditional canoes which in some aspects are similar to those of the FAO/Kiribati canoes, and also their willingness to work and learn, the job was an enjoyable one.

## USE OF THE CANOES

After some negotiations with the elders of the village, it was agreed that the canoes would be used by any individuals or family in the village for any usage provided that:

- (1) There must be someone from each family going with me so that they can learn from me.
- (2) Because the canoes were powered by a four horse-power outboard motor (Yamaha) in case of calm weather each individual would provide their own fuel (petrol), otherwise the sails are to be used in favourable winds.

During the time of this operation, the sails were always used. In some cases, the individuals who used the canoes got tired of waiting in unfavourable winds and wanted to use the outboard motor, but because of my encouragements the sails were used all the way. In favourable winds, the individuals were not only happy with the fact that they saved their petrol for other purposes but also the fun they had when sailing.

In most cases during the operation the fibreglass canoe was used. As mentioned before, it was up to the individuals to choose which canoe they preferred to use. Some individuals I talked to concerning why prefer the fibreglass canoe, the answer I got was that it is faster, and easier to handle than the plywood canoe.

As the canoes were not allowed to be taken out in the open ocean (because of hazards crossing the reef), the major usage of the canoes by the individuals was therefore to provide transportation between the main village and the plantations which are on the outer islets. Sometime the

fibreglass canoe was used for fishing without the sails or the engine being used, but with the help of the paddles to go to the fishing ground since the fishing grounds are not very far from the main village.

In most afternoons during the time of operations, the canoes were used to provide training for the youth or whoever was interested in how to handle the canoes in the lagoon in front of the main village. These afternoon sessions were very useful to those who did not have chance due to work commitments.

#### THE ADVANTAGES OF ONE CANOE OVER THE OTHER

There are some advantages and disadvantages of one canoe over the other as pointed out by some individuals. Nevertheless, some pointed out that one type is preferable to the other in one purpose and the other canoe for another purpose. These are some of the advantages of the plywood canoe as pointed out by some people:

- (1) Quite big and has a good height to prevent the water from splashing on to the boat, and prevent people from getting wet.
- (2) Has more space than the fibreglass canoe.
- (3) Position of the outboard motor is more favourable than that of the fibreglass, as in rough weather, the position of outboard motor cause less sea water to splash into the canoe.

These are some of advantages of the fibreglass canoe pointed out by some people:

- (1) Fast and makes less leeway than the plywood canoe.
- (2) Easy to paddle.
- (3) Outrigger being able to take more weight than the plywood canoe outrigger.
- (4) The self bailer is very helpful.
- (5) Regarding the sails, both the gaff and the boom have jaws, while the plywood canoe has no jaws on the boom and the gaff.

#### PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

During the time of operations, several problems arose, but were not serious and were fixed before each trip was made. Most of the problems were on the plywood canoe, and only a few from the fibreglass canoe. When the plywood canoe came to Tokelau it did not have any lines or rope for the main or jib halyard, or the main sheet, while the fibreglass canoe did.

When the plywood canoe platform arrived in Tokelau, one wood piece was broken, and after some days of usage, somebody

broke two pieces of wood just by walking on it. I found that the wood on the plywood canoe was much thinner than that of the fibreglass version.

We had some difficulties when the plywood canoe was used because neither the boom nor the gaff had any jaws on them, and that causes the mast to shake and could be very dangerous in times of strong winds.

Despite the above problems, there was no major difficulties.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

I believe during the time of operations, everybody who went out with me on the canoes enjoyed themselves, and learned the techniques of sails such as the canoes, reefing, safety, and general sailing. I believe that anyone who went out with me can now handle or operate the boat themselves. The canoes proved themselves better than dinghies with the outboard motors in terms of economy.

I learned that several people wanted to buy the fibreglass canoe for themselves. They said the canoe would be really nice to use in the open ocean for fishing., I agreed with their thoughts, but we were not able to prove our hypothesis because the canoes were not allowed to cross the reef to enter the open ocean.

I am not aware of the exact financial arrangements for the canoes, but several people mentioned to me that the government should help in arranging canoes (especially the fibreglass type) in which the people who cannot afford a dinghy can use or lease them for some amount. There would be additional savings if the wind is favourable.

The fibreglass canoe using the 4 horse-power outboard motor, can do two trips from the main village to the plantations (outer islets) using 5 litres of petrol, compared to a dinghy which needs more than 5 litre petrol for just one trip.

I think everybody who used the canoes, was quite happy with the results, just as I was very happy with my job.

TABLE: 1 TOTAL HOURS THE CANOES WERE USED

USERS NAME	FIBREGLASS CANOE	PLYWOOD CANOE
Pio Tuia	6	
Mataalofa Neemia	1	
Agriculture Dept.	7	
Fisheries Dept.		2
Fisheries Dept.	2	
Fisheries Dept.		2
Leo Niko		5
Eli Lapana		5
Agriculture Dept.	6	
Tofi Tagata	3	
Feleti Tulafono	7	
Luka Alefaio	7	
Agriculture Dept.	6	
Peau Lui	5	
Agriculture Dept.	6	
Medical team (NZ)		5
Katieli Peleti	4	
Moses Pelasio	6	
Total Hours	66	19

TABLE: 2 USE OF THE FIBREGLASS CANOE

USERS NAME	HRS USED	SAILING	MOTORING	STAND-BY
Pio Tuia	6	1.15		4.45
Mataalofa Neemia	1	1		
Agriculture Dept.	7	1.30		5.30
Fisheries Dept.	2	2		
Agriculture Dept.	6	1		5
Tofi Tagata	3	2		1
Feleti Tulafono	7	2		5
Luka Alefaio	7	2		5
Agriculture Dept.	6	2		4
Peau Lui	5	2		3
Agriculture Dept.	6	1	1	4
Katieli Paleti	4	1		3
Moses Pelasio	6	2		4
TOTAL	66	20.45	1	44.15

TABLE: 3 USE OF THE PLYWOOD CANOE

USERS NAME	HRS USED	SAILING	MOTORING	STAND-BY
Fisheries Dept.	2	2		
Fisheries Dept.	2	2		
Leo Niko	5	1	1	3
Eli Lapana	5	1	1	3
Medical Team (NZ)	5	1	2	2
TOTAL	19	7	4	8

Figure 1 The FAO/Kiribati Canoe

