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We, The Navigators: The Ancient Art Of Landfinding In The Pacific

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Synopsis

This new edition includes a discussion of theories about traditional methods of navigation developed during recent decades, the story of the renaissance of star navigation throughout the Pacific, and material about navigation systems in Indonesia, Siberia, and the Indian Ocean.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Intensely thorough ... An exhaustive examination of the pre-European navigational system which should fill any scholar’s need ... Succeeds admirably.-- "The Northern Mariner"The strength of this work lies with the islanders who instructed Lewis in their techniques of navigation.... Lewis successfully distills abstract navigational concepts into a well-organized and interesting text.... We, the Navigators is a work of great depth, and one of the most detailed investigations of an ancient art that is being lost forever. Through it one gains insight into the rich history of long-distance and inter-island voyaging in the Pacific.-- "Mariners’ Museum Journal"

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inter-island voyaging in the Pacific. (Mariners' Museum Journal)

David LewisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s We, the Navigators highlights the rich navigational history of the people of Oceania. A medical doctor and experienced sailor, David Lewis combined meticulous research with personal experimentation to create a unique narrative illustrating the navigational prowess of the Pacific Islanders. Lewis set out to reconstruct the ancient navigational traditions of Oceania and to better understand how these people were able to travel over long distances without the help of western instrumentation and knowledge. Lewis created a unique book in which he combined personal experience and first-hand accounts with knowledge gained through the study of secondary sources. Lewis recognized that knowledge of the ancient art of seafaring in the Pacific is nearing extinction. He understands the importance of recording and preserving this knowledge for future generations because traditional navigation methods are all but lost. Lewis describes his interviews with surviving navigators who were willing to share their secrets and demonstration them. The lack of written records in Oceania severely hindered Lewis in his task because he was forced to rely on the oral history that has been passed down for generations. Oral histories are tricky because it is possible that they have been altered or information has been lost over the years. Also, as Lewis points out, certain secrets were held by select individuals or families and as those people passed, so did their knowledge. Lewis discussed various traditional navigators (Tevake, Bongi, Hipour) that he interviewed and who agreed to demonstrate their techniques. By using the sun, stars, wind, ocean swells, and bird patters these navigators were able to successfully cross the open sea and reach their intended destination. The success of these experiments supported LewisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ proposed idea that the population of Oceania was not due solely to accidental drift, but rather from intentional navigation. When discussing the technique of using birds to navigate over long distances, Lewis described the use of different species of birds to provide a specific distance from land. For instance, the noddies indicated that land was within 20 miles, while the boobies had a greater range of 30 miles. Further discussion revealed that certain sub-species of booby could travel farther distances, thus providing the ancient navigator with an abundance of knowledge and information with which to find land. Lewis provides a unique and compelling narrative that showcases the ancient art of seafaring in the Pacific. He masterfully combines information from his extensive research with information that he has acquired from his own experimental voyages to create a comprehensive work that itself supports the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s arguments. The passion that Lewis had for this subject is truly reflected on each and every page. It is clear that he sought to preserve the traditions of a people who

mastered the sea without the help of western knowledge. Lewis does not simply paint a picture of the pacific for the reader, but rather, he takes them on adventure.

A great, fun, interesting, read. Tough to slog through at times because this is NOT an adventure tale but a serious academic research. That means at times in the quest for completeness or thoroughness you feel maybe you are getting bogged down in stuff.... but never for long. Because it is part adventure tale too. The author actually goes out and does these passages between islands with some of the traditional navigators. If this sort of stuff interests you this a wonderful book. Definitely now will be counted among my most treasured on the subject of navigation. Fair warning: You will need to brush up on your geographic knowledge of the pacific islands!

This is an absolute classic, full of detail but very readable. I gave my first copy to a Cook Island navigator and am ordering a second copy for myself.

This book is written in an academic style that might not appeal to all readers. It is not just about sailing and navigation, but it introduces and illuminates concepts of amazing cultural knowledge lost to the world because the technologically advanced conquerors devalued the conquered. The author has done us all a service by successfully trying to recreate this body of lost knowledge. Fascinating

Incredible book about and amazing people and absolutely fantastic sound navigation techniques can’t recommend enough for mariners and sea folk

This is fascinating, but I wish it were better written. I’ve plowed through about 2/3 of the book so far and will keep going, but it is written with the detail and dryness of an academic paper so is rather tedious when you really just want to read it for interest. The topic is fascinating enough that it makes it worthwhile to stick with it.

was very satisfied with the book

Very good description of navigation methods used prior to the advent of electronic navigation aids. Reconnects you with the logic of natural, oceanic phenomena that enable navigation without dependence on batteries or sight reduction tables.

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