

The Canoe as a Classroom

Recentering Indigenous Knowledge



By Marc Francis Castro, Noelle Hee, Shona McCulloch, Trent McDuffie, Annie Rudge

Hōkūle'a

The Hōkūle'a is a voyaging canoe that helped revitalize the tradition of navigation within Hawaii. Her first voyage was in 1976 from Hawaii to Tahiti, and had onboard, a well known navigator, Mau Piailug. This voyage helped in bringing back this almost extinct cultural tradition.



Far too often the traditional knowledge of Pacific Island scholars go unacknowledged. From a colonial perspective, this knowledge is deemed insignificant when in actuality, the amount of knowledge present in Oceania goes beyond anything you could learn from a history book. Within this poster you will be able to take a small look into the contributions of Pacific Island communities. More specifically, we will explore the role of canoes and the art of navigation, while looking at the influence it has carried on through generations.

"Life skills come with canoes. They are empowerment through tradition. We go to school to learn what we want to become one day, we live in the future now."

-Alson Kelen



Hadar, POW! WOW! artist and co-lead director, painted the mural of Mau Piailug, Micronesian Master Navigator, with students from POW! WOW! School of Art/808 Urban, Hawaii.

"My grandfather tell me not to hold the knowledge to myself; I have to pass it on. Before, some navigators in Micronesia, they never share the knowledge. But me, I share it to everybody, because I know maybe sometime we lose it."

- Papa Mau Piailug



Jitdam, Kapeel departing Majuro. Photo courtesy of Mark Peterson/Redux, 2015.



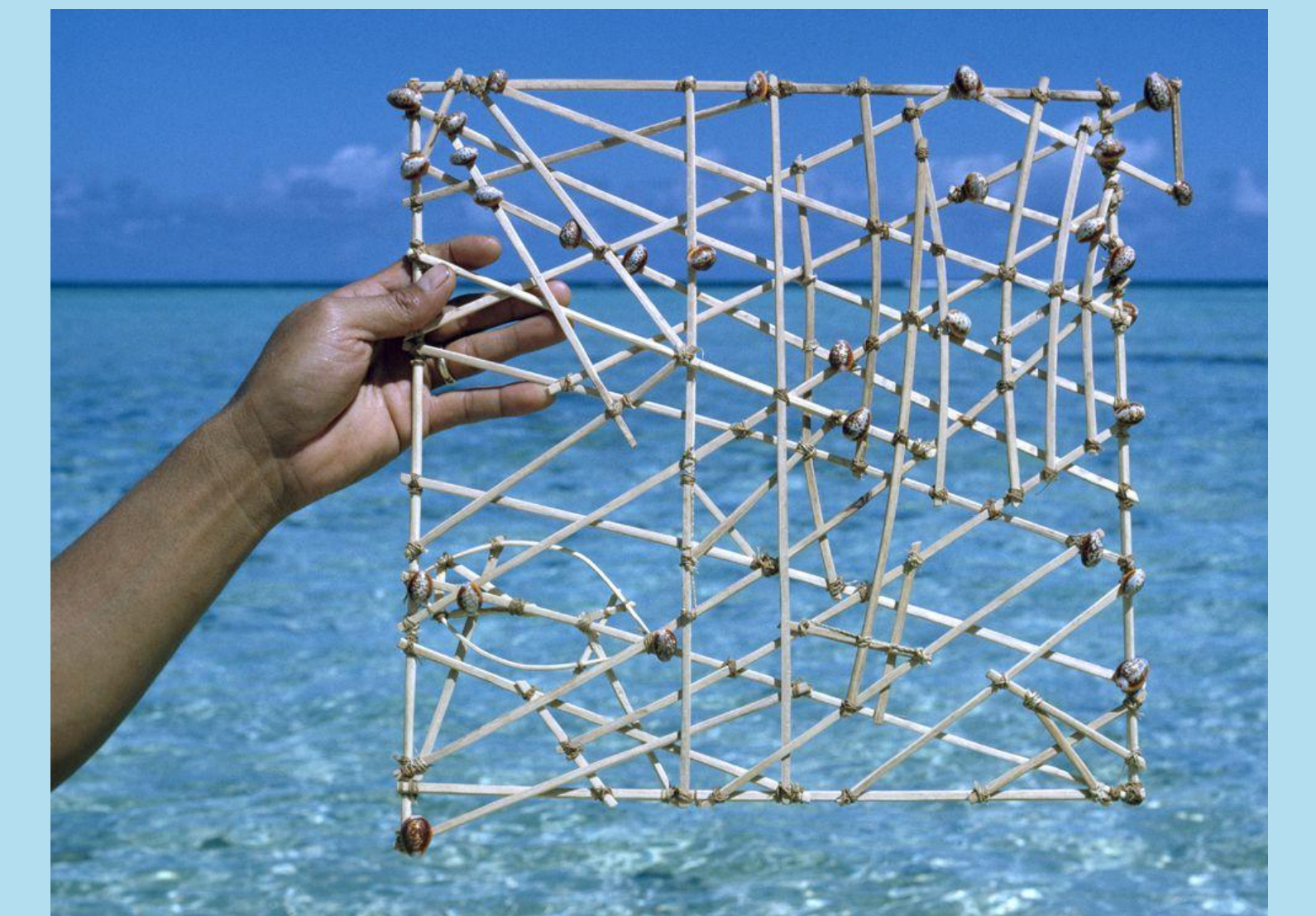
Vaka Taumako, Solomon Islands

The voyagers before you were great navigators of the blue continent, astronauts of the sea, or "micronauts." You can be a **Micronaut** too.

Māori Astronomy

Māori are the Indigenous people of New Zealand. Māori astronomical knowledge is known as *tātai arorangi*. *Tātai arorangi* consists of knowledge of night sky. This means knowledge of constellations, the rising of stars, arrival of comets, phases of the moon and much more. This extensive knowledge resulted in the Māori having a distinct understanding of the seasons which aided in the ancestors of Māori people being able to navigate across the blue continent (Pacific Ocean), without any additional navigational devices.

Marshallese Stick Chart



The stick chart (known as a *rebbelib* in Marshallese) is a device made of sticks and cowrie shells. Usually arranged across a trapezoidal frame. The sticks represent ocean currents, wind patterns, and wave swells known to Marshallese navigators. The cowrie shells represent island groups. In its entirety, the sticks and shells create a precise navigational chart of the Marshall Islands region.

"Captain Koret Joel and his apprentice navigator Alson Kelen symbolically embody both the century-long decline and the recent resurgence of traditional open ocean navigation. Joel's quest to relearn his Rongelapese ancestors' methods of navigation by the waves is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of tradition."

- Joseph Genz

Works Cited

- Kelen, Alson. "Canoes as the Classroom." University of Washington, 15 Oct. 2020, Seattle. Lecture.
- <https://www.frolichawaii.com/stories/new-pow-wow-murals-in-our-kakaako>
- Vaka Taumako, Solomon Islands

- <https://www.maoriastronomy.co.nz/>
- Nash, S. E. (2016, July 25). Lost or Found? A Stick Chart From the Marshall Islands. *Sapiens: Anthropology Magazine*.

- Enlet, Joe. University of Washington, 7 Oct. 2020, Seattle. Lecture.
- Anthony, Na'alehu (2012). "Papa Mau: The Wayfinder." On line: <https://vimeo.com/36522935>.