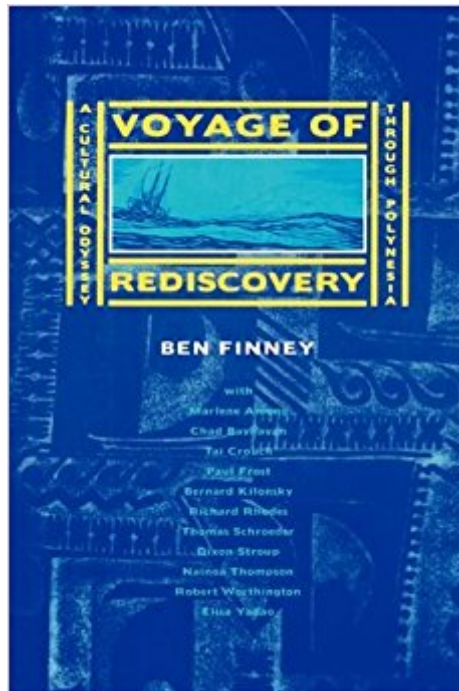




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Voyage Of Rediscovery: A Cultural Odyssey Through Polynesia



Synopsis

In the summer of 1985, a mostly Hawaiian crew set out aboard Hokule'a, a reconstructed ancient double canoe, to demonstrate what skeptics had steadfastly denied: that their ancestors, sailing in such canoes and navigating solely by reading stars, ocean swells, and other natural signs, could intentionally have sailed across the Pacific, exploring the vast oceanic realm of Polynesia and discovering and settling all its inhabitable islands. Their round-trip odyssey from Hawai'i to Aotearoa (New Zealand), across 12,000 nautical miles, dramatically refuted all theories declaring that "because of their unseaworthy canoes and inaccurate navigational methods" the ancient Polynesians could only have been pushed accidentally to their islands by the vagaries of wind and current. *Voyage of Rediscovery* is a vivid, immensely readable account of this remarkable journey through the Pacific, including tales of a curiosity attack by sperm whales and the crew's welcome to Aotearoa by Maori tribesmen, who dubbed them their sixth tribe. It describes how Hawaiian navigator Nainoa Thompson guided the canoe over thousands of miles of open ocean without compass, sextant, charts, or any other navigational aids. In so doing, it documents the experimental voyaging approach, developed by Ben Finney, which has both transformed our ideas about Polynesian migration and voyaging and been embraced by present-day Polynesians as a way to experience and celebrate their rich ancestral heritage as premier seafarers. By sailing in the wake of their ancestors, the Hawaiians and other Polynesians who captained, navigated, and crewed Hokule'a made the journey described here a cultural as well as a scientific odyssey of exploration.

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Customer Reviews

"A work of great importance that will become a standard study to be looked at, and referred to, in connection with any serious scholarship in its field."—Norman Thrower, editor, *The Buccaneer's Atlas*

"A work of great importance that will become a standard study to be looked at, and referred to, in connection with any serious scholarship in its field."--Norman Thrower, editor, *"The Buccaneer's Atlas*

This is another book everybody ought to have in their library. Why?(1) The Polynesian double-canoe was the great voyaging craft of the human race. Not that other boats were not great too, but these people had so little -- little land, only a few precious trees, no metals, no compass -- and yet in a remarkably short period of time they populated a territory of Earth that would astound you. With a stellar navigation system stored in their brains (not on charts or in complicated sextants or chronometers) they found their way across a vast ocean. The double-canoe was the least boat (the least amount of materials, the least environmental impact for a given need for reliable sailcraft) that could be made to do the most work in the harshest of conditions -- just for those reasons the boats and their crews deserve recognition.(2) The book chronicles the several voyages of a reconstructed canoe in order to hypothesize about the ways in which the ancient crews used information about seasonal variations in winds and currents to make destinations that, during some parts of the year, would not have been accessible given the heading angles these boats could sail (about as good as a well-designed European square-rigger, though other Polynesian outrigger canoes -- proas -- gradually developed after the great voyaging period and would eventually sail closer to the wind and astound the early European explorers with their sailing qualities). These voyages were adventures of thinking, training, and sailing a boat of unknown qualities and using a native type of non-instrument navigation -- those adventures are now a testament to the accomplishments of the native people of Oceania. (In a goofy kind of way, you can also remember such accomplishments when you are feeling a bit down on the human race).I hope those are good enough reasons to buy this book. There are others, but I'm tired, and I want you to write a review about the ones I have not covered.Flaws? Who has none? The author rightly desires to document the accomplishments of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, but some cultural/racial tensions arose during this long experiment, which is understandable given the state of things in territories whose historical development was altered by colonization and colonial administration. It was no doubt a difficult thing that some of the first impetus and funding for the adventure came from the

'White'-American "establishment" so to speak. But it would be fair to learn more about the total story of this cultural revival project, both the accomplishments and the tensions. [Note 1/8/08: Finney's later book, "Sailing in the Wake of the Ancestors," which I just received, addresses this issue] --wt

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