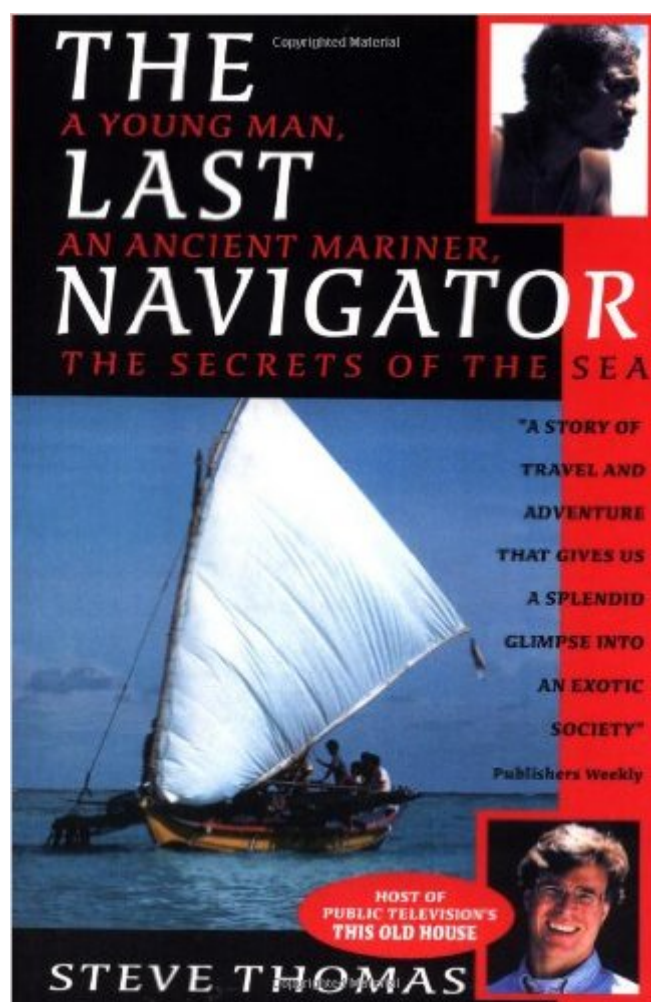


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The Last Navigator



Synopsis

Nonfiction account of a young American man's sojourn in the South Pacific, on the Micronesian island of Satawal in the Caroline archipelago, studying traditional navigation with Mau Pailug, the last of the palus. It was Pailug who navigated a Polynesian vessel from Hawaii to Tahiti without compass or charts, as documented by a PBS film of the voyage. Thomas learns how to navigate by stars, wind, swell, birds, and memory. It is a story of seafaring, a dying culture, and self-discovery.

Book Information

Paperback: 307 pages

Publisher: International Marine/Ragged Mountain Press (October 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0070645744

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Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.9 x 8.9 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (30 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book is one of the few good 1980's attempts to document the voyaging culture of the Caroline Islands of Micronesia. It follows Kenneth Brower's 'Song For Satawal', which is now out of print! Plenty of authentic stuff to make this a good read even if you get queasy at the insecurities and soul-searching and quest for meaning that pervades this account of one man's unique adventure in the Pacific. There is lots of interesting anthropology (or is it sociology?) here, such as the system for ownership and preservation/protection of marine resources. Good background for anyone working in resource management in the Pacific. The image that sticks in my mind after reading this book is the agonizing, slow-motion demise of traditional society in the small islands of the Carolines. The Carolines had centuries of Spanish/German/Japanese/USA stepping on their culture, still they managed to resurrect the voyaging skills, but now face the competition of outboards, charts, technological changes. Their oral tradition recorded vast local knowledge of this part of the Pacific ocean, but the younger generations for some reason don't have the desire to avail themselves.

Youngsters move away, they choose to join the workaday world instead of developing their skills at the traditional systems that proffered self-sufficiency to their ancestors. The youngsters don't want the old way. The few remaining navigators are at a loss how to preserve the sailing traditions, so one of them accepts a student from Boston, Mass.

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