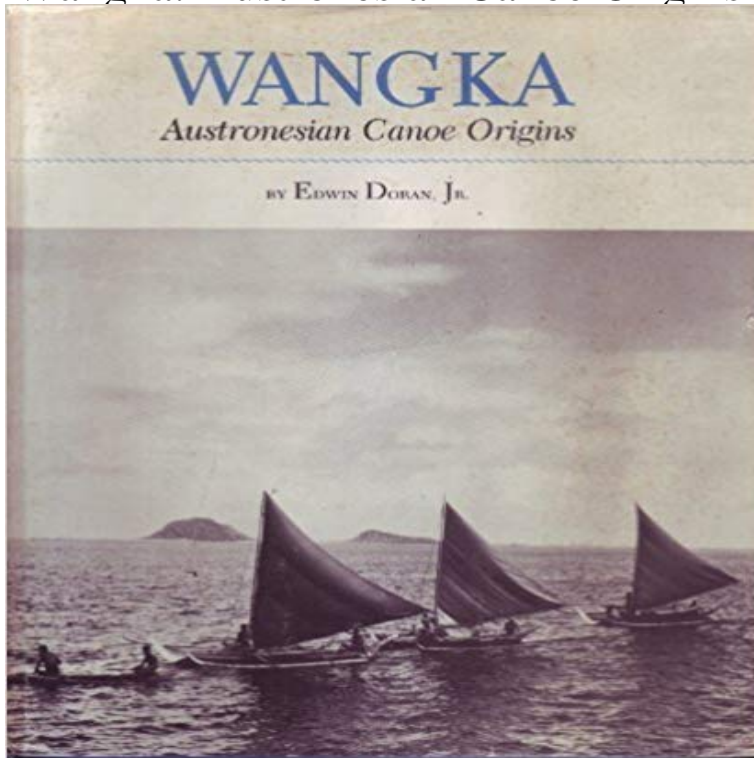


Wangka: Austronesian Canoe Origins



Were the Austronesians hapless travelers on fragile craft, drifted at the mercy of the waves to the far-flung islands of the Pacific? Or were they intrepid seafarers whose exploratory voyages covered much of the great ocean on seaworthy canoes capable of being sailed against the wind? This book addresses these questions in one of the most thorough discussions of Austronesian sailing canoes ever attempted. The canoes themselves are described in detail, and similarities and differences in hull configuration, sails, and sailing techniques are noted. A review of earlier writings on the canoes repeats the earlier understanding of their origins: that the earliest canoes were the double-outrigger type and that single-outrigger canoes came later, followed by the double canoes in which the great voyages from Central Polynesia to such extremities as Hawaii and New Zealand were made. Another chapter summarizes the great advances of recent years in anthropological and archaeological studies of the Pacific. At the heart of the book is a thorough examination of canoe seaworthiness. Doran's conclusions are that Austronesian canoes were amply seaworthy and fully capable of intentional voyages of discovery, and that previous views on the ages of canoe types are just the opposite of the probable sequence. Double canoes seem to be the oldest type; single-outrigger canoes probably were devised somewhat later; and much later, possibly only about 2,500 years ago, double outriggers were developed. Maps showing the distribution of canoe types, sail types, sailing techniques, and the like, illustrate these ideas.

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