

First-ever educational videos on traditional Carolinian navigation online now

Takuya Nagaoka
Executive Director
Pasifika Renaissance

July 11, 2020

FSM—The first ever series of instructional videos on the art of Carolinian traditional navigation techniques is now available on Youtube. The series includes one two-hour video in English which is available at <https://bit.ly/2ZIZocI>. It also includes 23 videos of daily classes in the Lamotrek, Yap language on a Pacific Renaissance Youtube channel at <https://bit.ly/2ZmFMVO>.



Polynesian double-hulled voyaging canoe Hokule'a.

Largely due to a lack of interest among young islanders and more recently because of growing outmigration in the region (e.g., outer islands to the main islands and U.S. territories), the survival of the art, which has been passed down by their ancestors for hundreds if not thousands of years, faces serious threats.

Although it is secret knowledge generally passed down only to close relatives, discussions on the possibility of producing educational videos on navigation with Master Navigator Ali Haleyalur began in 2017. Ali is a renowned master navigator from Lamotrek Atoll, Yap State and is enthusiastic about passing this fading knowledge to younger generations.

With financial support from a UNESCO Participation Program Grant through the FSM Office of Archives, Culture and Historic Preservation, the Carolinian Traditional



Navigation Course Documentation Project was carried out in May through July of 2019 with five young Micronesians, eager to learn their ancestors' art, participating in the course. The course began only after permission was granted by Yap State Governor, Honorable Henry S. Falan, Director Constantine Yowblaw of Department of Youth and Civic Affairs, and the Council of Tamol (Neighboring Island Chiefs Council). The course was filmed and edited for release.

The videos cover all of the basic topics of traditional Carolinian navigation. They are the first-ever educational videos to be made widely available to public, and particularly to those Micronesians and other Pacific Islanders who are interested in learning traditional navigation. In addition, one especially positive development is that four former students now work for the non-profit organization, Okeanos aboard the Okeanos Waa'qab and the Okeanos Ambassador, which are traditionally-based double-hull sailing canoes. Their jobs will enable them to continue to develop their seafaring skills, including traditional navigation.

It was impressive to observe the navigation knowledge being passed down to members of a young generation. In the current period of modernization and land-oriented lifestyle in many parts of Oceania, this knowledge is very important for all of the Pacific Islands because it reminds us of the great legacy of Pacific islanders' ancestors. It is hopeful that the project will assist in promoting not only the transmission of this valuable art but also in the support of Pacific Islanders' pride as seafarers and their seafaring heritage.

The project will also contribute to the FSM's efforts to inscribe the traditional Carolinian navigation on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, which will showcase this great Micronesian heritage to the world, as has the inscription of Nan Madol on the World Heritage List in 2016.

*I want to have a 26 issue subscription sent by
First Class Mail to:*

Pohnpei Address
Cost includes shipping \$35 for 26 issues