

PASSAGE 5

BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON

Ancient voyagers who settled the far-flung islands of the Pacific Ocean

A. There is one stubborn question for which archaeology has yet to provide any answers: how did the Lapita accomplish the ancient equivalent of a moon landing, many times over? No-one has found one of their canoes or any rigging, which could reveal how the canoes were sailed. Nor do the oral histories and traditions of later Polynesians offer any insights, for they turn into myths long before they reach as far back in time as the Lapita .

B. 'All we can say for certain is that the Lapita had canoes that were capable of ocean voyages, and they had the ability to sail them,' says Geoff Irwin, a professor of archaeology at the University of Auckland. Those sailing skills, he says, were developed and passed down over thousands of years by earlier mariners who worked their way through the archipelagoes of the western Pacific, making short crossings to nearby islands. The real adventure didn't begin, however, until their Lapita descendants sailed out of sight of land, with empty horizons on every side. This must have been as difficult for them as landing on the moon is for us today. Certainly it distinguished them from their ancestors, but what gave them the courage to launch out on such risky voyages?

C. The Lapita as they thrust into the Pacific was eastward, against the prevailing trade winds, Irwin notes. Those nagging headwinds, he argues, may have been the key to their success. 'They could sail out for days into the unknown and assess the area, secure in the knowledge that if they didn't find anything, they could turn about and catch a swift ride back on the trade winds. This is what would have made the whole thing work.' Once out there, skilled seafarers would have detected abundant leads to follow to land: seabirds, coconuts and twigs carried out to sea by the tides, and the afternoon pile-up of clouds on the horizon which often indicates an island in the distance.

D. For returning explorers, successful or not, the geography of their own archipelagoes would have provided a safety net . Without this to go by, overshooting their home ports, getting lost and sailing off into eternity would have been all too easy. Vanuatu, for example, stretches more than 500 miles in a northwest-southeast trend, its scores of invisible islands forming a backstop for mariners riding the trade winds home.

Questions 32-35

Multiple Choice Question

Choose the correct letter A, B, C or D.

Write the correct letter in boxes 32-35 on your answer sheet.

32 According to the writer, there are difficulties explaining how the Lapita accomplished their journeys because

- A the canoes that have been discovered offer relatively few clues.
- B archaeologists have shown limited interest in this area of research.
- C little information relating to this period can be relied upon for accuracy.
- D technological advances have altered the way such achievements are viewed.

33 According to the second paragraph, what was extraordinary about the Lapita?

- A They sailed beyond the point where land was visible.
- B Their cultural heritage discouraged the expression of fear.
- C They were able to build canoes that withstood ocean voyages.
- D Their navigational skills were passed on from one generation to the next.

34 What does 'This' refer to in the third paragraph?

- A the Lapita's seafaring talent
- B the Lapita's ability to detect signs of land
- C the Lapita's extensive knowledge of the region
- D the Lapita's belief they would be able to return home

35 According to the fourth paragraph, how was the geography of the region significant?

- A It played an important role in Lapita culture.
- B It meant there were relatively few storms at sea.
- C It provided a navigational aid for the Lapita.
- D It made a large number of islands habitable