Polynesian Maps - Teachers Notes

The tides create swells (currents) and the winds create waves.

Waves take new shape when they strike an island and bounces back.

This can be demonstrated with an old fashioned Over Head Projector (OHP) and a tray of water – make a wave by rocking the tray and then add a heavy object (island)

Polynesian navigators can detect 'Bounce-back' waves 50 km away from small islands, and up to 300 km away from big islands like New Zealand.

Wave patterns divide and curl around an island. Polynesian Navigators can detect this confused wave before the island is in sight.

To read the currents and swells the navigators would watch the angles of trailing ropes in the water behind their Sailing Waka.

Polynesian Maps of the oceans show wind, currents, swells, the position of islands and positions when islands appear on the horizon.

Label the two Polynesian Island Maps on the next page with what you think each part of the map represents?

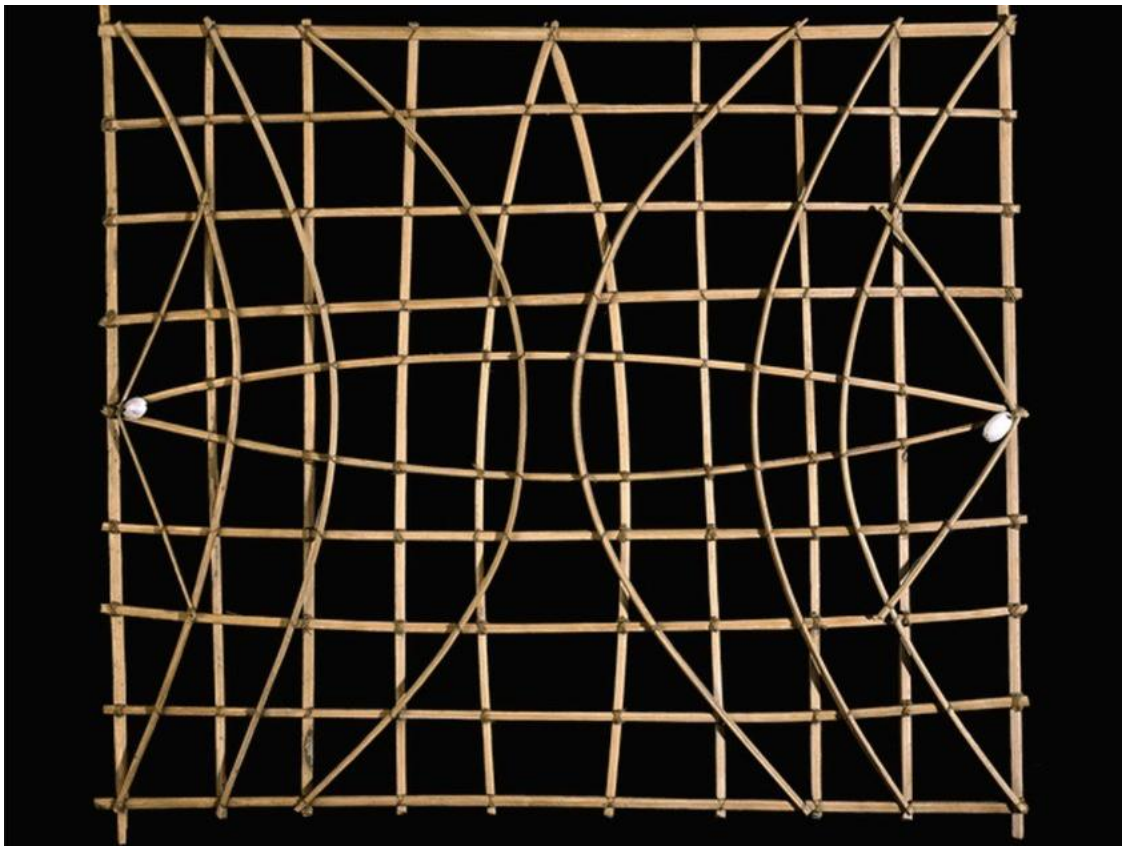
- Currents
- Winds
- Islands
- Positions where an island comes into view

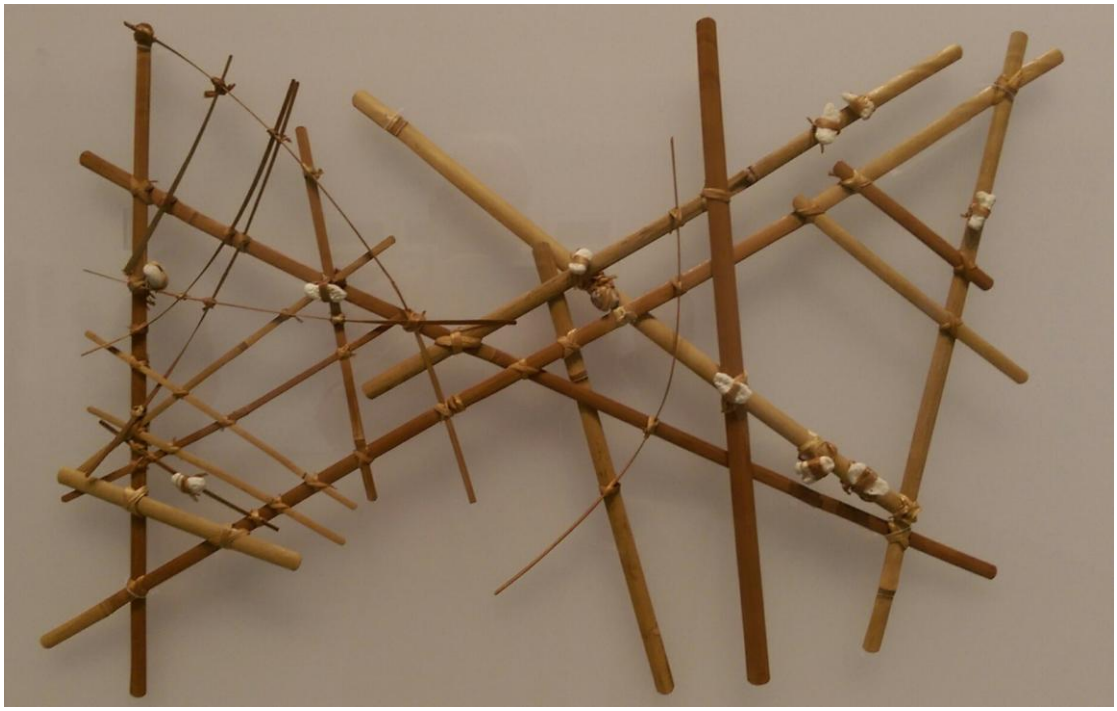
There are no definite answers to this. Deciphering the maps is a good team activity -
The curves are probably prevailing currents and/or winds
The shells or stones could be islands
The shells or stones could also be when islands come into view

Why didn't these Polynesians draw a map on paper?

Answer. *The Polynesians made paper from the bark of a tree. They decorated paper but didn't use a written language. The paper would not have lasted at sea and objects made from shells, sticks and twine were more robost. The natural environment dictates what's made and used. This is the same the world ove. Another example is Inuit's maps made form bones.*

Extension activity - Use a map of your school and plot how some teachers and pupils move around the school at lunch time.





MARK ON THE MAP - Currents [ ] Winds [ ] Islands [ ]
Positions where an island comes into view [ ]