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The Interpretation of Site 5-72, an Easter Island Ahu

by Charles Love

Introduction

An unnamed ahu on the south coast of Easter Island at Hanga Hahave was studied in 1979-80. This structure has at least two building phases; the younger of the two is a semipyramidal ahu superimposed upon the remains of an earlier structure.

Obsidian samples that were collected date only the earlier structure; no obsidian was exposed that would enable dating the semipyramidal ahu. The remains of the older structure have been so modified by the building of the semipyramidal ahu that it is now difficult to determine whether there were originally separate left and right structures (as one faces the coast), or if the two halves were separate parts of one structure, or if the whole was simply a single, asymmetric structure.

Earlier Construction

Although there are several possible interpretations, the one most favored by the evidence is that a single older structure was never completed and that the construction process was interrupted. Depending upon how the obsidian data are statistically manipulated, construction probably began in the late A.D. 1300's and certainly ended by about 1450. This places its construction time shortly before and during the peak construction time for 14 other dated ahu, most of which are on the southeast coast. Since large quantities of obsidian flakes are found in the fill of most ahu, the assumption is that ahu construction demanded its use, possibly for cutting or trimming fibers for rope, modifying wood for pry bars, food preparation for laborers, or the activities that would aid in moving and placing boulders weighing up to several tons.

The construction seems to have halted after the following described phases were complete: 1. The clearing of a plaza area, extending inland from the structure some 60 or 70 meters, of surface stones and eroded debris (not shown on map). Surrounding lava flow topography makes this a prudent size. 2. The possible slight leveling of the left side of the plaza. The right side descends somewhat and if plaza leveling were desired, would have required fill. Much of the plaza surface is bedrock. 3. The completion of a rectangular shaped stone foundation with seaward outsets or pavements on the right. Its dimensions are 50 meters long by 4 meters wide and the symmetry is slightly skewed, the angle a little to the left of center. The seaward outsets increase its width to 6 meters. The inland foundation border is made up of long poro formed from

Rapa Nui and the Population Explosion

by Malcolm Clark, Ph.D.

We are well on the way to having a world whose population destroys the environment and pits us almost continually one against the other. There are many examples of both conditions already.

For 10,000 years, the world population grew slowly, doubling each 2,000 years. After about 1650 AD (see Fig. 1), which centers the times of Kepler, Galileo and Newton and signals the growth of a world mercantile system, the population of the planet increased at a vastly accelerated pace. It doubled in 150 years until the late nineteenth century and then, with the technological revolution, doubled in 50 years through the present day.

The consequences of that growth appear to be upon us. Let us examine an inadvertent experiment carried out by nature and a small band of intrepid voyagers, namely the occupation of Rapa Nui. This island and its people constituted in many ways a microcosm of our world. The Rapa Nui experience, which we now discuss, has been examined by Patrick Kirch in an insightful book.

Rapa Nui is set alone in the South Pacific Ocean, today a five hour jet flight west of Santiago, Chile and another five hour flight east of Tahiti. Its nearest populated neighbor is Pitcairn Island more than 1200 miles away. Rapa Nui lay empty until about 400 AD. Then Polynesians, probably from the Marquesas Islands or possi-

Continued on page 18...

Continued on page 20...

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Interpretation of Ahu continued...

The inland facing of a typical image-bearing platform is very often labor intensive since slabs of smoothly pecked basalt 2 to 5 meters long are precisely and vertically fitted as the platform boundary. However, no evidence exists that this particular platform was ever filled with the usual extensive earth, rubble, and stacked boulders, or that it was faced in any way. It seems unlikely that complete recycling and removal of this fill would have taken place during the destruction and later building of the semipyramidal ahu. Less than 1 meter of soil, obsidian, and rubble fill remain on the seaward side. No bone pit or crematory structure seaward of the wall was found, which would typically connote ritual use of the structure. No statues, statue fragments, or powdered tuff could be located, implying none ever arrived. What remains is rubble soil containing obsidian, probably by-products of construction.

This earlier structure as it stands would not have taken long to build if resources and social considerations were taken care of. Ten or twenty men, properly equipped and motivated, could have constructed the whole in probably three months. This is necessarily conjecture, but based on a variety of data. It is at this time, A.D. 1450, that construction began to dwindle on many other ahu, suggesting an environmental and/or social limit had been reached.

Alternative Hypotheses. It could be argued the original structure is an incomplete rectangular ahu. However, most of those known on the island were used for burial cairns and may be much later in the architectural sequence. Most of the rock used in their construction are considerably smaller, few are coastal, and none appears to have a cleared plaza inland from the structure.

Another interpretation of the original ahu is that it was indeed completed and consisted largely of a rectangular foundation pavement with a single line of vertically set, unfitted stones, slightly inland from the seaward foundation edge. If the proximity of the stockpile is ignored, the form would appear similar to marae elsewhere in Polynesia and be contemporaneous. However this type of structure is exceedingly rare on Easter Island, and it lacks the paved inland court typical of many other Polynesian marae.

Destruction and the Semipyramidal ahu. Whether the work crews building the superimposed semipyramidal ahu were responsible for what appears to be deliberate destruction of the older ahu can only be guessed at, but many of the seaward wall boulders were toppled over downslope toward the sea. A few were incorporated into the left half of the semipyramidal ahu. Its construction is simple, with portable “one man” sized rocks having been laid up in overlapping fashion to form the vertical seaward wall, 26 meters long and nearly 2 meters high at its center apex. The wall slopes down to nearly ground level at either end, punctuated by 10 piles of stones, four to the left and six to the right of the apex. It is unusual, however, that the seaward wall of the semipyramidal ahu was constructed landward of the older wall by over a meter, and aligned parallel to the remaining vertical blocks. Most semipyramidal ahu incorporated the seaward wall of the older structure.

The curving landward edge of the semipyramidal ahu is very well shaped and preserved and is about one or two rocks high. The maximum ahu width is just over 5 meters. The reason for the shape of the ahu is not known, but in every case on the island they appear to have served as ossuaries, containing tombs for whole skeletons.
and assorted extra bones. Several whole and framented CaCO₃
algal balls together with a few coral fragments are scattered over
portions of the sloping inland ahu surface. The reason for their
association with burials and other features has not yet been clari-
ified.

Poro of the older foundation border are visible through parts of
the landward edge (C-5, C-7) and have been secondarily and verti-
cally reset, probably as an aid for potential tomb construction. The
left wing of the semipyramidal ahu has recycled both a portion of
the original inland foundation border stones and a few of the vertical
seaward wall blocks, some of which have been realigned horizon-
tally. The bulk of the new structure is made up of rough stone
accompanied by a few beach cobbles. Near the end of the left wing,
careful placement of the surface stones form a modified pavement.
Prehistoric digging of new tombs or historic looting may have
destroyed the remainder of this pavement. One open, rock-lined
tomb, containing the remains of at least three individuals, and three
pits interpreted to be other burial activities are evident. Because
several lines of evidence suggest many if not most of the skeletons
were interred in historic times as the result of interdistrict warfare
or the result of diseases depopulating the island in the 1860s and
1870s, by implication this type of ahu developed late in the
architectural sequence. The context of this semipyramidal ahu is
typical of others on the island: superimposed on the center or the
right side (as in this case) or an older, larger ahu. The time and labor
needed to build this ahu would in all probability have been less than
for the earlier structure.

Without C-14 dates on bone, few techniques seem sure of dating
any part of the semipyramidal ahu. It appears to have been built
without earth fill, and any obsidian with the bones may have been
gathered from a variety of contexts. The semipyramidal ahu ap-
ppears much fresher with little weathering or breakdown, hinting
that it was recently constructed and that much time passed since the
previous construction. The rock used tends to be nearly black like
those on the surface in adjacent fields, rough, and with almost no
lichen as opposed to the boulders of the older structure.

Seaward of the left foundation stones, a group of boulders were
loosely assembled into a small enclosure (C-4). The grouping is
probably late and made by repositioning several of the seaward wall
boulders, including the one beneath from which sample 11 came.

Another feature appears on the map as a cairn constructed of
semipyramidal ahu rocks right off the right end of the ahu. It
contains sheep bones. Its purpose is unknown, but it may be an
historic territorial boundary cairn or a modern fishing ground
alignment marker for offshore fishermen. The small pile of rock
touching the inland border of the semipyramidal ahu (C-5) is of
modern construction with unknown purpose. The scatter of poro 5
meters inland (D-6) may be foundation remains for structures used
in the historically known paina ceremony. Another scatter is nearly
20 meters further inland.

That the semipyramidal ahu was superimposed on an older
structure could suggest the continuity of lineage rights to the site,
conquest, or at the very least, a continuing recognition of the site as
a sacred place. If the paina ceremony is responsible for the inland
collections of poro, lineage association and ritual may have con-
tinued into the 1860s.

Charles Love,
Western Wyoming College

Obsidian Sample Proveniences at Site 5-72

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Descriptions of Samples

[2] The one flake of obsidian comes from the soil beneath a fallen
seaward wall boulder of the first ahu construction. The soil should be
temporaneous with the original construction but could have been
deposited up to the destruction of the wall. The obsidian could be older.

[8] Four flakes of obsidian come from the fill eroding out from between
the first ahu construction foundations and its seaward wall. These should
date to the first construction or be older. One sample is unreadable.

[9] Two flakes of obsidian come from beneath foundation stones for the
first ahu construction. These should date from the first construction or be
older.

[10] One flake from beneath the foundation stones of the seaward wall
should date to its construction, or older.

[11] Two flakes come from beneath a secondarily standing seaward
wall block. They are probably from the original fill, but could date to the
secondary moving of the boulder.

[12] Six flakes come from fill seaward of the foundations of the first
ahu construction. They could be any age, but the bulk of dates should
cluster around the construction time.
bly from the Societies more directly to the west, dared the open Pacific as their ancestors had done before them. They found the tiny scrap of land, Rapa Nui, that was to become a home for them and their progeny. As far as we know they were undisturbed for 1,300 years until 1722 when the Dutchman Roggeveen stumbled on their lonely island. By then Rapa Nui society was coming apart.

The voyagers were few, perhaps only thirty in all. In one two­hulled voyaging canoe, or possibly two or three, they detected the island in the distance, perhaps by the presence of sea birds, or the change in wave patterns as far out as fifty miles, or perhaps by cloud buildup above Mt. Teravaka, at 600m. the highest point on the island. They no doubt landed without difficulty (for there is no fringing reef).

The island found by the settlers was triangular, twelve to fifteen miles on the sides, formed by three volcanoes from under the sea between three and one million years ago. From the time record of tree pollen taken from the peat at the bottom of a crater lake we know that it was well forested. Volcanic boulders lay everywhere underfoot. The climate was windy and unusually chilly for the subropical location. Rapa Nui was a harsh place to start an independent civilization. Yet start one the newcomers did, doubling their population every 150 years until they destroyed their environment and began to destroy themselves and all they had created.

The settlers found themselves living with fewer foods and animals than their ancestors were accustomed to carry into the unknown. After all, it had probably been an unusually long sea voyage (the Marquesas, for example, are over 2000 miles away). Agriculture was difficult since there was little rainfall and no streams or open lakes (except in the volcano craters). Fishing in the sea was possible but not wonderful. Yet the population grew. Their inheritance of the structured hierarchical society, common to all of Polynesia, created a demand for extra production to satisfy the chiefly class and also to support building a monumental array of several hundred ceremonial sites, topped eventually with stone statues so large that arguments still continue over how they could be moved.

The land was brought to a state of exhaustion by demands on agriculture to support the increasing population, and on the forests to support fuel requirements and devices for statue moving. From the ensuing struggle for limited resources arose tribal wars and chaos in which the warriors slaughtered (possibly literally) the chiefly hierarchy. By about 1400 AD, society as it had been known was dead. The mighty stone figures had been intentionally knocked down and broken, lying symbolically around the coast as a constant reminder of the demise of what had been.

Yet it is clear that if the people of Rapa Nui had ignored their inherited societal philosophy and had worked together, they might have devised some solution for their environmental and demographic problems.

In the late twentieth century the world has come to a population alarming trend in the population. Among these are polluted air and terrain, acid rain, ozone depletion, global warming and its likely consequences, increasing vulnerability to epidemics, frequent famines which kill millions, and tribal warfare such as that in the Middle East. The rate at which our resources, most of them unrenuable, are now being exhausted promises to apply further pressure. We are losing our agricultural soils and fundamental ground water. We are also presiding over the destruction of the biological ecosystem —those helpful plants, insects, etc. which ensure our well-being.

Controlling the population alone will not save the day. The way the world is organized and the social heritage of the diverse races and nations are involved as well.

It is premature to say how the global predicament will evolve. There are clearly some similarities between what is happening to the world as a whole and the experience of Rapa Nui. If we could know in more detail what happened there, we might gain valuable clues regarding our own fate and how to influence it.

Greater insight into the Rapa Nui disaster will require substantial further work, primarily in archaeology. Evidence regarding population growth rates and the growth of agricultural and other production systems will only be obtained when we examine in further detail the hundreds of temple and statue sites, the possibly thousands of settlement sites, etc. From that work will come the lessons learned.

There will be a need along the way to assist the research and to archive all the previous and future results. Fortunately the Mulloy Research Library planned by the Easter Island Foundation, in cooperation with Chile and the islanders, promises to fill that need with its collection of all pertinent past work and its facilities for visiting researchers.

There is hope that the Rapa Nui experience will yet reveal clues to an escape from our world problem.


CONFERENCE
The Sixth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics
will be held in Honolulu
May 20-24, 1991

A symposium titled
“External Relationships of Austronesian Languages”
is being organized by W. W. Schuhmacher
Kirkebakken 13, 4621
Gadstrup, Denmark

Interested parties may contact him directly.
Easter Island Rocker Jaws

Following the recent publication of the English translation of Thor Heyerdahl’s new book *Easter Island: The Mystery Solved* (1989), the editors of the *Rapa Nui Journal* requested that I comment on a few of Dr. Heyerdahl’s statements regarding my human osteology work on Easter Island and the issue of “rocker jaws.” His statement which precipitated their interest occurs on page 229 of his book, along with an excellent color photograph of a rocker mandible. The statement reads as follows: “Gill found traits that deviated from the Polynesian norm; many of the crania, for example, had curved ‘rocking-chair’ jawbones, an unPolynesian feature known from the aboriginal population of America.” This unfortunate statement, as some of you have already noted, is in direct contrast to what I said about Easter Island crania and rocker jaws in last year’s BBC TV Easter Island documentary, and in earlier comments in the *Rapa Nui Journal* (Gill 1988:13). The correct part of Heyerdahl’s statement is that I have found many Easter Island crania with the characteristic “rocking-chair jawbones.” The incorrect part of his statement is his assertion that the rocker jaw constitutes an “un-Polynesian feature.” The rocker jaw is in fact, the most characteristically Polynesian skeletal trait known to Physical anthropology. Rocker jaw frequencies on practically all Polynesian Islands from New Zealand to Hawaii to the Marquesas Islands are quite high, ranging from 72.6% to 90%.

Furthermore, the rocker jaw is not well known from the aboriginal population of America. It is actually quite rare among American Indian skeletal samples, just as it is rare among Caucasoid or Negroid skeletal series. High frequencies of the rocker jaw trait seem to occur only among Polynesian populations, and furthermore virtually all Polynesian groups show high frequencies. Therefore this trait is considered by physical anthropologists to be virtually “diagnostic” of Polynesian ancestry.

It is unclear to me how Dr. Heyerdahl might have become confused on this point, but it was not from any statements made by me. He and I have not previously discussed this particular skeletal condition, and the first study of Easter Island rocker jaws made by me was not completed until just after his book was published. I have recently written to Dr. Heyerdahl to clarify this issue and to report to him the results of my recent study of Easter Island rocker jaws. This recent study was, by coincidence, reported at the 1990 meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences at about the time that the English translation of his book was released. Below is a table from my recent paper (Gill 1990) presented at that meeting.

**ROCKER JAWS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polynesian Islands</th>
<th>Percentage Rocker Jaw</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii (Snow)</td>
<td>80.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand (Houghton)</td>
<td>72.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonga (Pietrusewsky)</td>
<td>76.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter Island (Gill)</td>
<td>48.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marquesas (Gill)</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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</table>

Thus, Houghton (1977) reports a frequency of 72.6% rocker jaws among ancient New Zealand Maori, Snow (1974) reports 80% among the early Hawaiians, Pietrusewsky (1969) notes a frequency of 76.4% among Tongans, and my own small sampling among the prehistoric Marquesas Islanders from Nuku Hiva suggests a very high frequency as well. The Easter Islanders, based upon a substantial sampling (n = 167) of adult jaw bones from our own collection on Easter Island, plus ones from the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago, the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Smithsonian Institution, do show a lower frequency than other Polynesians (48.5%), but still a very high frequency by world-wide standards (clearly Polynesian). The lower frequency for the Easter Islanders is most probably due to Founder Effect (random chance in the genetic composition of the original founders), but could of course result from a non-Polynesian element within the prehistoric Easter Island population. This latter possibility appears less likely since the Easter Islanders are clearly typically eastern Polynesians osteometrically. More will be said on osteometry and trait frequencies of other discrete characteristics in future reports.

Thor Heyerdahl’s confusion about the distribution of rocker jaws is very unfortunate for two reasons. It first of all confuses his readers, in general, on a very important physical trait common among Polynesians. Secondly, that particular point of confusion (on that specific trait) weakens the only argument that he himself might have at this time for a non-Polynesian pattern within the ancient Easter Island skeletal series. This is because it is the somewhat lower frequency of rocker jaws on Easter Island (com pared to other Polynesians) that might possibly signify a non-Polynesian element, not the existence of “many” rocker jaws as he asserts. The existence of “many” rocker jaws simply points to Polynesian and not American origins.

References


The Mechanics of Reading Easter Island’s Rongorongo Tablets

“Authors who knew little about what they wrote have created all sorts of mysteries where none really existed. But one remarkable product of the old culture is still enveloped in true clouds of mystery and may remain so forever. This is the Easter Island script.” —S. Englert, 1970

Rongorongo, the hieroglyphic writing of Easter Island, remains undeciphered. Until it is, it will never be known which method of reading was used: from front to back, or as one continuous line encircling the tablet, from top down or bottom up, or even where to begin the reading.

This paper is concerned only with the mechanics of reading rongorongo, not decipherment. An alternate method of reading the script is suggested.

For about 1400 years, the Easter Islanders lived on earth’s loneliest habitation, a tiny island in the midst of 7 million square miles of ocean. In their isolation, the islanders created a unique hieroglyphic script. The glyphs were inscribed on wooden tablets with obsidian flakes, shark teeth, or sharpened frigate bird bones. Barthel (1958) recorded 605 distinct rongorongo glyphs. This large number demonstrates that they were pictographic rather than alphabetic letters and thus the tablets were mnemonic devices used for chants or story telling as an aid to delivering recitation by rote.

Why would a society living on such a small island need to have a written language? Certainly not for communication. According to Englert (1970:76), there were at least three separate classes of inscriptions: hymns in honor of Makemake [the island’s paramount god] and other divine personalities; records of crimes or other deeds of individuals; dedications to the memory of those who fell in wars or other conflicts; and possibly genealogical records. The old name of the boards was ko hau motu rongorongo, which literally means “lines of script for recitation.”

Englert (ibid :74) describes the tablets as being somewhat irregular flat wooden boards with rounded edges, approximately 10-20 inches long, and completely carved with neat rows of tiny incised symbols, each generally from 3/8 to 58 inches long. To make the rows uniform, some tablets were inscribed in shallow, parallel grooves.

Although the estimated number of tablets varies from several thousand in 1864 when the first missionary arrived (Englert 1970:76), only 21 tablets, one staff, and 3 pectoral ornaments remain today (Métraux 1957:183).* The reason for this small remnant is due, according to Routledge (1919:207), to the introduction of Christianity; the natives said they burnt the tablets in compliance with orders from the missionaries.

Rongorongo is written in boustrophedon which literally means turning, like plowing a furrow. It is an ancient form of writing in which the lines turn alternately from one side to the other, then return in the opposite direction. The above is a correct definition for plowing but incorrect for reading reversed boustrophedon. It fails to mention that when the line (L-R) ends, it turns back in the opposite direction (R-L), and the glyphs are upside down. Thus, every other line runs in the opposite direction and those glyphs are then upside down. To make the text readable, when the end of a line is reached the tablet must be turned end-over-end (180 degrees). This reverses the direction of the next line from (R-L) to (L-R) and the glyphs from upside down to right side up. Only Englert (1970:74) correctly calls this “reversed boustrophedon.”

It is possible that there were two methods for reading the tablets: 1) from front to back; 2) reading the lines as continuous, encircling the tablet as if it were a cylinder. Because there are no discernible signs such as punctuation marks or demarcation lines indicating the beginning of the text or which side of the tablet is the front, the “starting point” of the text is unclear.

Both Métraux (1957:190) and Routledge (1919:244) relate examples of natives attempting to read photographs of rongorongo tablets from both directions. However, because most all of the bird and birdman glyphs face to the right, it is assumed that they were meant to be read from the left so that the text flows in the same direction as the bird motif’s face.

As for whether one starts from the top or the bottom, opinions are divided: Métraux (1957:185) claims they were read from the lowest line and Routledge (1919:244) states they started from the top. Most authorities agree the tablets were read from front to back (instead of around the ends); however, we have no clue as to which side was the front. Because the lines are reversible, it first must be determined which edge was intended to be at the top.

As an example, we might assume that a side of a tablet was chosen as the front with the upper edge as the top. In reading boustrophedon script, the tablet is rotated 180 degrees to read the next line (either above or below) so the corners on the right side become the left side corners when the tablet is turned. Thus each side of the tablet has four possible corners from which the text could start and the table has eight such corners.

Barthel (1958) diagrams the lines of script on both sides of 13 tablets. The number of lines range from 10 to 28. If the tablet was being used as a mnemonic device during a recitation, it would have been difficult to keep the continuity while rotating the tablet 10 times and turning it over once from front to back. The difficulty would be multiplied with tablets that run to 28 lines.

There is evidence to suggest that the lines of rongorongo could have been read as continuous lines encircling the tablet as if it were a cylinder. The lines would then start on the left side of the tablet, move to the right hand edge, go around the end, across the back and end, and meet the line where it started. The tablet would then be rotated end over end (180 degrees) which properly positions the next line to be read from left to right. Barthel (1958) shows drawings of a number of lines of script on each side of 13 tablets (9 with an equal number on both sides, 4 with an unequal number). In checking against photographs in Heyerdahl (1975:PL58-59), we see that the lines are continuous and encircle the tablets. In addition, by Robert Koll

Rapanuiophiles Please Note

RNJ has instituted a new page numbering system. Beginning with the Winter issue, each year will have its own volume number and each quarterly issue will be numbered 1 through 4. These four issues will be considered a single volume and so will be numbered sequentially throughout the year.

Continued on following page...
Galapagos Reprise...

Some of Dr. Skjølsvold's remarks were omitted from RNJ 3(4) (Winter 1989/90) in response to "Archaeological Evidence of pre-Spanish visits to the Galapagos Island." Dr. Skjølsvold has requested that his entire text be reprinted.

In her review, A.M. Smith throws doubt on the occurrence of pre-Spanish pottery in the material encountered by the 1953 Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to the Galapagos Islands. Thus she claims that "at this time, no positive evidence exists that people came here before the Spanish in the 16th century." I doubt that scholars familiar with Peruvian pottery will agree with this statement.

I admit that in the material there are many pot-sherds without sufficient characteristics to allow for a secure classification, but there are also abundant samples of characteristic ware, like variants of Black Chimu and Coast Tiahuanaco types.

Since it is unlikely that these sherd have been spread on the Galapagos islands by buccaneers or other post-Spanish visitors, American Indians must have reached the islands in prehistoric times.

Smith points to the fact that since the material was found mixed with European goods, critics have dismissed the claims that the islands were settled in pre-Spanish times. Scholars claiming this must have insufficient knowledge of site stratigraphy. As pointed out by the authors, the sites in question have almost no, or very little, humus covering the cliffs. Under such conditions there will be no stratigraphical separation between old and recent material deposited at the sites. Thus the above statement has no bearing.

The stratigraphical conditions probably also explain why no fishhooks and fishbones were found, as questioned by the reviewer. Exposed to wind and weather osteological material would probably disintegrate. But whatever the reason may be, the fact is that such material did not exist at all, not even from post-Spanish and modern campsites, even though fishing must have been a main occupation throughout all times for people staying in the Galapagos islands.

As pointed out by Smith, no attempts were made to date the aboriginal material, except for stylistical comparisons. Under normal conditions C-14 datings would have been carried out. The stratigraphical situation at the sites, however, made samples of charcoal unsuit for such analysis. Thermoluminescence datings of the actual pot sherds were not performed since such analysis, at least as early as in the fifties, were considered undependable.

The reviewer blames the Norwegian Expedition for not having searched for archaeological sites in the interior of the islands. This is however not true. As stated in our publication the most promising inland localities were visited, like for instance caves and other environments of the well-known water hole in the interior of Floreana (p.12) and the nearby surroundings of the water holes at the foot of Sugar Loaf Hill, 1 km inland from the sites at James Bay on Santiago Island (p.19). Several attempts were also made to explore the garua areas in the interior of the islands, but without success.

However, we agree with the reviewer that much work remains to be done in the Galapagos Islands, since our expedition had very limited time at its disposal.

The authors stick to their claim that the Galapagos Islands were visited by South American Indians in pre-Spanish times. Whether the islands were reached intentionally or by accident is of course difficult to answer with certainty. There is however little doubt that balsa raft navigation was sufficiently developed to allow pre-Spanish South Americans to sail round trip to the Galapagos for the purpose of exploiting their rich fishing grounds (pp.60-61). The possibility should not be ignored that even totora reed boats, so common among the aboriginal high cultures of the Andean coast, might have been used in the long sea voyages of the early Peruvian mariners. Thor Heyerdahl's expeditions with the reed boats Ra and Tigris have shown that these peculiar types of water craft are highly sea worthy and perfectly suited for deep-sea voyaging. It may also be mentioned that a Spanish expedition in 1988 sailed a reed boat from Callao, Peru, to the Marquesas Islands and further to Tahiti. The 6500 km distance to the Marquesas was covered in the course of 57 days.

Dr. Arne Skjølsvold, Kon Tiki Museum, Oslo

References


*Davis-Drake (1989/90:4) lists the following: 14 tablets, 9 tablet fragments, 1 stick/staff, 4 rei-miro, and others for a total of 28.
Juggling Dates and Swivelling Statues

(A.Skjølsvold, ed.)

A. Skjølsvold and G. Figueroa: An attempt to date a unique, kneeling statue in Rano Raraku, Easter Island. pp.7-35, 20 figs.

T. Heyerdahl, A. Skjølsvold and P. Pavel: The “walking” moai of Easter Island. pp.36-64, 19 figs.

This glossy new publication from Kon-Tiki Land displays some of the virtues of Heyerdahl’s recent book (see RNJ 4(1)—good quality paper and illustrations—as well as the same vices: notably an inherent belief in the correctness of its authors’ preconceptions, and a flagrant disregard for the work of other scholars.

The first paper attempts unsuccessfully to pull a date out of the ground for Tukuturi/Tuturi, Easter Island’s answer to Al Jolson (possibly another clue there to contact with the New World??). The authors’ point of departure is their belief, already set out in the 1961 monograph, that this statue represents an early precursor of the classic moai form. In an effort to date it, some excavations were carried out at various points around it, and four radiocarbon dates obtained. At first, hope was fixed on a Triumfetta stick found inside a thin stratum of pulverized moai rock; the excavators thought there was a ‘reasonable chance that it [belonged] to an undisturbed part of the quarry-debris and could date the carving’ (p. 26). There was absolutely no trace of secondary disturbance at the depth where the stick was found (p. 20).

The two C-14 results, however, 180±40 and 230±60 BP, were not to their liking; although archaeologically contemporaneous in the late 17th century AD, a time when statues were still being carved, the dates were apparently unacceptable because Tukuturi was supposed to be early. The fact that the late dates confirm Van Tilburg’s thesis that carvings of this type are among the youngest on the island is not mentioned; indeed, Van Tilburg’s carefully argued case is brushed aside in three lines (p. 32).

Instead, the excavators preferred to attribute the results to invisible secondary disturbance (p. 28); they then dated charcoal from two points in their trenches, which produced far ‘better’ dates of 540±90 and 1040±90 BP. The strange difference in age from two points only 15 cm apart in depth leads them to attribute the upper one (still too young for their taste, apparently) to yet more secondary disturbance ‘even though this could not be observed during the excavation’ (p. 31) and hence to intrusive charcoal. So we are left with the lowest date as the only reliable figure.

Now, it has to be said that no stylistic argument can ever be really solid, and oddball forms like Tukuturi could just as easily be primitive precursors as decadent latecomers; the same problem exists in any kind of prehistoric art lacking superimposition to give time depth. My own feeling is that there are possible links between the statue’s bent legs and those of late birdman figures, and between its rounded head and the shaved dome of the annual birdman who resided not far away; but that’s just a personal hunch. From the stylistic point of view, it is impossible to say whether the Skjølsvold view or the Van Tilburg view is correct. The latter, however, is based on a most thorough survey of the island’s statuary, and therefore is deserving of far better than being practically ignored in this paper—moreover, Van Tilburg’s thesis is listed in the bibliography as concerning the “Stylistic” analysis of Easter Island sculpture, a wonderful neologism that beautifully describes the study of style in stone objects!

To sum up, the excavators obtained two perfectly sound C-14 dates which supported a thesis which was precisely opposite to their own preconceptions. So they dismissed them, had two more done, and picked the one they liked best. Few scholars would agree that this is the best way to proceed, or that Tukuturi has been dated at all. Whether you prefer the statue to be early, classic or late, there is now a date to fit. You want dates—we gottem!

As for the paper on moving the moai, it is at least a slight improvement on the account in Heyerdahl’s book in that it specifies that the experiment moved a moai only 6 meters, and it does not try to ascribe the upright transportation method to all moai on the island, only to the larger ones (p. 63). However, for this paper to be taken seriously as an experiment in prehistoric technology, one would require some illustrations of any wear patterns on the sides and base of the figure in question, before and after the operation, and a comparison with the wear visible on statues in different parts of the island. It goes without saying that an objective paper would also have mentioned the experiments by Love in Wyoming, and Van Tilburg’s careful observations of wear-traces and her view on transportation. Instead, both scholars are totally ignored, although Love’s work adds some grist to the authors’ mill. The old legend about ‘walking’ statues is their starting point and finishing post.

In short, the principal feature of this publication is tautology. The authors make their assumptions. They then look for evidence, pick out the bits they like, ignore the bits that don’t fit, and finally proclaim that their assumptions have been vindicated. This type of behavior is common throughout the world of archaeology as well as in all other disciplines, but it is generally done more discreetly and more skillfully. I have seldom seen it done so blatantly, with such cavalier disregard for objectivity or the work of others.
news Item continued from previous page...

the two "living faces" (one male, one female), and experimented with a new casting process (a cast of the clay faces). The new technique worked beautifully (lighter and more durable) and the faces were a big hit with the Easter Island people. Three natives claimed to be able to identify the lineage of the male subject from his cranial and facial features. George checked them (since he knew the site location for the male skull and the lines of descent of the modern families). They were right! According to the genealogical record the family they mentioned (Hure Veri) is descended from the royal Miru tribe of the Ahu Naunau area (the site that the skull comes from). George says that this is Sharon’s first identification from a prehistoric facial reconstruction!

Response to the Article on the Canadian Expedition of 1964
[See RNJ 3(2) Summer 1989 and 3(3) Fall 1989]

I knew the two principal participants of the METEI expedition very well through correspondence, namely Vice Admiral Dr. Richart Robert and George Nogrady, since at that time I was looking to complete my research on the lineage and descendants of the inhabitants of Easter Island via blood analyses. It was in this way that I established the lineage of the Dutrou Rormier family—through blood analyses done by Dr. Israel Drapkin, who accompanied the French-Belgium expedition of 1934-35 to Easter Island. The physician took blood samples from the entire population of 446 people.

Through Dr. Drapkin I met Prof. Nogrady, so that I might obtain a copy of the blood analyses performed on the inhabitants of the island in 1964 but, unfortunately, only half of these had been published. I attempted to acquire this information by contacting the government of Canada but was told that it was impossible to retrieve the medical dossier from this expedition. I did, however, receive a copy of correspondence between Dr. Skoryna and members of the future expedition.

Later I heard by accident that the file had been microfilmed in Australia. I informed Mrs. Katy Wallace at the Canadian Institute of Technical and Scientific Information about it in 1987. The Pacific Manuscripts, Dept. of Research, School of Pacific Studies in Canberra, Australia, had in its microfilm the following: PBM 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, information regarding the medical expedition, Series 00101, 04109, 041109, 08806, 13003, 13301, 18277, 18208, and 23101.

I never knew what was done with the information that I provided. I wanted to add that a complete file was never made but that various members of this expedition published reports of their personal accounts in different journals.

In spite of intensive research (20 years after the expedition), I never did find the work by Carlotta Hacker.

Eighteen reports were written for their institutions by the following: Boulanger, Gray, Gibbs, Murphy, Haldane, Embil, Wall, Verma, Myhre, Suarez, Farkas, Ekblom, Gjessing, Reid, Etcheverry, Boudreault, Pavilanis, Podoski, Taylor, Chagnon, Hacker, Meier, and Amer.

Years have passed and so many of those involved, including my two information-bearers, have died or disappeared. I never was able to procure the microfilms. Only 231 names have been found of the 416 analyses performed by Prof. Nogrady.

I would like to underline the responsibility of Canadian institutions to satisfy our claims; rarely have we known such reluctance.

François Dederen, Clos du Parc 6, 1420 Braine-L’Alleud, Belgium

Published by Kahualike, 1990
The Brussels Rapanui Exhibition: An enigmatic experience

By Dr. Steven R. Fischer

A group of some 25 Rapanui experts and aficionados from Germany, Denmark, England and New Zealand, gathered together in Frankfurt on 24 March by invitation of Dr. Heide-Margaret Esen-Baur to journey by coach four hours west to Brussels, Belgium: For here we were anxious to visit the bilingual French/Dutch exhibition on Rapanui that the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire had taken over from Frankfurt's Senckenberg Museum (see William Liller's article in RNJ 3, Nr.3:1,7 [Fall 1989] as a newly conceived project by Dr. Francina Forment entitled "L'Île de Pâques: une enigme?"/"Paaseiland: een Raadsel?" which had opened on 26 January and will continue until 29 April.

Seemingly waiting to greet us outside the renowned neo-classic museum as we arrived in Brussels was a modern man-high moai, one of the 15 made of etemite and donated for sale by the firm Echancree from And after threading halls and two stories up, we finally discovered the Exhibition cashier to the left of the dark entrance and the Exhibition catalogues selling at a special stand on the right (French/Dutch translations of the German Exhibition Catalogue, though with many additional photos).

The entrance into the Exhibition is starkly dramatic, with an immediate "pseudo-Rapanui" ambience: For the Vinapu facade (an extremely life-like facsimile in epoxy resin) confronts the visitor in dark, sombre, brooding, mute eloquence. Left, we enter a well-lit hall, the Information Room documenting very briefly in picture and word Rapanui culture, flora, fauna and geology, as well as describing the German project that fashioned the Vinapu wall and the two Rano Raraku moai facsimiles, including a rather abstract white model of Rapanui in miniature that unhappily more resembles a layered wedding cake.

The first room is only the condensed didactic prelude to the combined "esthetic experience" to follow, as conceived by Dr. Forment. For in leaving it, we must once again pass the Vinapu facade, and turn into a large dark hall that is meant to be Rapanui itself—and we are at once confronted with the two huge, dramatically spotlighted epoxy resin moai looming out of the red earth in "enigmatic" aloofness. And all this to a recording of Rapanui bird calls and slapping waves coming from somewhere out of the prehistoric darkness. Prof. Thomas Barthel, standing alongside the author, commented drily that this was more Pierre Loi (19th century) than Rapanui; while Frau Barthel thought these moai were not even the same that had been exhibited in Frankfurt! Truly, the difference in presentation could not have been greater; in Frankfort—didactic reality; here—esthetic fantasy.

From the hall of the two moai, one enters a dark passageway on the left exhibiting, again on the left, behind wire mesh, dramatically illuminated stone faces, many grimacing menacingly as if intentionally placed to heighten the theatrical effect. The excellent wall hangings—sporting Rapanui petroglyph symbols—that had been woven especially for this Exhibition faded unfortunately here (as also elsewhere) into dark oblivion as the result of the sombre illumination.

The next hall, straight on, is largely the realm of free-standing stone figures, some in a showcase on the left wall, smaller stone implements in a long showcase being presented on the right hand wall. Dominating the room is the Englert Museum's moai head, the effect of the whole thing being one of "artificial esthetification," apparently designed more to thrill and to amaze than to share and instruct.

Yet the very next hall must only overwhelm the visitor: For here in the center of this large well-illuminated room stand an entire hare paenga with reed roof, foundation stones, interior appointment, and a spear-toting tattooed Rapanui mannequin in tapa cape and loin-cloth guarding its entrance. Three showcases nearby exhibit original tattooing implements, inscribed stones and three feather hats, while in the left hand corner, behind the hare paenga, towers a brightly painted reconstruction of a rather fanciful widemouthed paina figure of some four meters height—without the arms Gonzales described in 1770 and with "incorrect" eyes and nose [according to Dr. Esen-Baur].

The next dark hall contains priceless wooden kavakava, moai tangata, reimiro, etc., loaned from museums all over the world and exhibited in 19 subtly lit showcases. In each showcase is only a handful of items, thus allowing for individual impact. But, as everywhere, here, too lacks—at least for them more demanding visitor—a satisfactory documentation, and one has to be content with only the meanness of legends.

Then we curve around the back left-hand corner into the Exhibition's "Treasury," an extremely dark room with 11 showcases exhibiting, under strong lights, the "Anakena eye" (from Ahu Nau Nau); Rapanui's wooden and bast artifacts of supreme value; as well as the three rongorongo tablets, "Aruku," "Marmari," "Large Leningrad," the "Paris rongorongo snuffbox" and the "New York Birdman" (tangata manu) also with rongorongo.

Passing through a small hallway showing historical blow-ups, we proceed downstairs, where on the right we find a room dedicated to the modern artistic reception of Rapanui motifs and culture, while on the left is the long garden hallway (beginning with a gigantic model of the Mercator) treating in detail the Franco-Belgium Exhibition of 1934-35, with many priceless Rapanui artifacts and expedition photos (one is a large blow-up of Juan Tepano, carving!).

As if in mute farewell, the ancient moai from Ahu Arongo—this one now the original, removed from Rapanui in 1934-35—brooms tall and silent on the wall, watching as we step suddenly into the shocking world of 18th century European porcelain....

Later, at the souvenir counter, one can purchase little moai, books, slides, postcards, an epoxy replica of the tablet "Echancrée" or a long rapa paddle with elaborated rongorongo borders, or similar modern artifacts by contemporary Rapanui artisans. In a further room, two films are regularly shown: the Franco-Belgium Expedition (20 min.) and a modern Rapanui one (50 min.).

Compared to the 500 square meters of floor space in the Frankfort Exhibition, the Brussels Exhibition enjoys 1500 square meters and contains some 75 additional artifacts. But this cannot be the sole reason for its striking contrast in conceptual design: If Dr. Esen-Baur in Frankfurt presented a didactic exhibit featuring Rapanui culture itself, then Dr. Forment, collaborating closely with her architect here in Brussels, is stressing primarily an "esthetic

Continued on following page ...
Dr. Alfred Métraux
The First Ethnologist on Easter Island

In April 1963, the scientific world was shocked by the news from France that Alfred Métraux, the famous anthropologist and ethnologist, had died. Métraux had not only published his scientific work in Easter Island but also, in a fascinating way, made this isolated island in the Pacific accessible for the general public to read about.

His scientific book about the Island is the *Ethnology of Easter Island*, published by the Bishop Museum in Hawaii. A popular book, *Easter Island: A stone-age civilization of the Pacific*, translated into English by Michael Bullock, was published by both the Oxford University Press and the Book Club Associates; an edition in Spanish, published by Zig-Zag in Chile, was poorly done and had little success.

His other research interests include the Araucanians (particularly in reference to shamanism), Bolivians, Mexicans, Africans, Haitians (*La Terre, les Hommes, les Dieux*); and Voodoo (in Haiti); and the Incas (*Les Incas*). His distinguished career included Director of the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Tucuman, a Fellow of the Bishop Museum, visiting professor at Yale University, and a member of the American Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution.

Before Métraux, only navigators and archaeologists such as Katherine Routledge had studied the island. I believe that Métraux was the first ethnologist who really studied the culture of the islanders. His informants (and friends) were Victoria Rapahango and Juan Tepano. He was absolutely convinced that the inhabitants of Easter Island originated in Polynesia.

His trip to the island, made in 1934, was in the French warship, Rigault-de-Genouilly. With him travelled Dr. Henri Lavachery, former Chief Conservateur of the Brussels Royal Museums of Art. They spent six months on the island, and then visited Pitcairn, Tahiti, and the islands of the Tuamotus, Marquesas and Hawaii.

One must certainly thank Dr. Esen-Baur (Frankfort) and Dr. Forment (Brussels) for their grand, if differing, achievements, truly two presentations themselves of historical magnitude. It will doubtless be many years before we in Europe can enjoy a Rapanui experience of such quality and breadth.

**L'Ile de Pâques: une enigme?**
*Catalog of the Bruxelles Easter Island exhibit, 1990.*
Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. 380 pp. 138 color plates; 271 b/w photographs. 850 Belgium francs.

The catalog of the Brussels exhibit has been somewhat changed and enlarged over the version printed in German for the exhibit in Frankfurt. For Brussels, it is printed in two versions: French and Dutch. These versions are identical to the German except for a few different prefaces and the elimination of some plates. However, much has been added including new photographs of objects that were added to the exhibition (the German version has 154 items in the catalog section; the Belgium has 229).
Letters & Responses

Dear RNJ,

Yoram Meroz of San Francisco writes that “while the string figures of Hawaii and the Marquesas have been studied and documented, those of Rapa Nui have received no more attention than the occasional photograph, although the practice is very common there.” This statement is simply wrong and should be corrected. I refer Yoram and any other interested readers to: “Figures de Hilo Tradicionales de la Isla de Pascua y sus correspondientes salmodias” (Traditional string figures of Easter Island and their corresponding chants). This 106 page monograph by Olaf Blixen appears as Volume II, no. 1 of Moana, Estudios de Antropología Oceánica published in Montevideo in 1979. Copies could formerly be obtained by writing to the Director, Olaf Blixen, Casilla de Correo 495, Montevideo, Uruguay, although I have not recently been in touch with Olaf. The series he has produced over the years, though not well known to many otherwise steeped in Oceanic literature, has numerous publications on Easter Island, including one important one on the Easter Island glottal stop. Similarly anyone writing or doing research into Easter Island string figures and their accompanying chants, would have to start with Blixen’s work which recorded the situation as it was in 1971-78. The string-figures were then referred to as kaikai, but the accompanying chants as patautau, a borrowing from Tahitian of pata’uitau’u.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Roger Green
University of Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

[Editor’s note: Blixen’s address as stated above is current.]

Dear RNJ,

In reference to Bahn’s review of Heyerdahl’s book (see RNJ 4,1:4-5), he corrects a “false accusation” made by Heyerdahl concerning Routledge’s research. Bahn is being too kind; one can find jillions of false accusations, skewed and/or selective evidence and woolly thinking. Let’s face it, The Mystery Solved is a dishonest and self-serving book. Heyerdahl’s smear of Métraux’s work is simply incredible. Please advise your readers, if they must read this, don’t buy the book; borrow a copy.

M. Dodds, Texas

Dear Editor,

Paul G. Bahn, in his review of Heyerdahl’s Easter Island: The Mystery Solved (see RNJ 4(1):1990), is complaining that “there is no mention of who translated the text from the original Swedish edition.” There couldn’t be, as the English text was the original and was translated subsequently in Swedish. Heyerdahl told me so at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark. (From April 6-29, three Aymará Indians from Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, visited the museum to build a 5 meter long balsa boat; Paulino Estabán, who carried out the work assisted by a son and son-in-law, had earlier been engaged in the building of Heyerdahl’s Ra II and Tigris.”)

W. W. Schuhmacher, Denmark

Dear RNJ,

It has come to my attention that the subsidized low-cost housing provided to Easter Islanders by the government is made of a product that contains asbestos in both walls and ceilings. Structures made of this product are prohibited in the U.S. and New Zealand because asbestos is a carcinogen. Why are these potentially dangerous houses being sold to islanders for an extremely low price? Can someone investigate this problem?

(Name withheld by request)

Dear RNJ,

I was quite pleased to receive the most recent issue of the Rapa Nui Journal, and amused to see that one of your articles referenced one of my books (Lost Cities of Ancient Lemuria and the Pacific). This article was “A Layperson’s Guide to Rongorongo” by Alan Davis-Drake, and I enjoyed reading it very much. The reference to Tom Gary and his wild theories of underground gases being used to carve rongorongo tablets is something that I had never heard of, and I was disappointed that there was no actual mention of the articles written or how one might get ahold of such an article to read the “scientific” argument for such a theory. I was equally disappointed to see that my own book, from which Alan was quoting in reference to the relationship between Rongorongo and Indus Valley script and ultimately ancient Dravidian, was not mentioned either.

Tom Gary’s theories aside, the real debate which is dismissed by Rapa Nui Journal, is the theory of Anthropological Diffusion. The debate between Isolationists and Diffusionists on matters of ancient cultures is the most controversial subject in archaeology and anthropology. Thor Heyerdahl has been repeatedly criticized for championing Diffusionism. As your own review of his book Easter Island: The Mystery Solved said, “It is unfortunate that he has allowed his obsession with a South American connection to overshadow the far more interesting and important subjects of the islanders’ cultural history, way of life, and environmental destruction. As a result, we have a superficially beautiful but lopsided book which could have become a milestone in the literature on Easter Island, but instead is more likely to be a millstone around the neck of Easter Island scholarship, or to be, at best, totally ignored by serious researchers.” (Italics mine).

That stone age cultures such as Polynesians and Malagasy could colonize such far-flung and remote islands as Easter Island, Hawaii, and Madagascar is easily accepted by the Isolationists, yet sophisticated navies such as the Phoenicians, Greeks, Chinese or Hindus, they believe could never have navigated vast oceans. Similarly, all American Indians are descended from Ice Age hunters crossing the bring Straits in 12,000 B.C.

Diffusionists, like myself and Heyerdahl, believe that ancient civilizations were not only capable of traveling all over the world, but that they actually did! I would like to also say that the theory of a lost continent in the Pacific has nothing to do with rongorongo writing and its relationship to Ancient Dravidian. The theory of a lost “continent” in the Pacific concerns the geographical debate between Uniformitarian and Cataclysmic geology.

Is RNJ aware that the Rapa Nui’ians own legends are that their

Continued on next page...
island is the remnants of a lost land called Hiva? Does the fact that the word “mana” has an identical meaning in both the Rapa Nui language and Hindu languages suggest anything? It seems that the island’s own accounts of their history have no relevance to the present “Isolationist” view of their island. It is fortunate that the islanders have the “experts” to tell them their own history.

I feel that it is also worth pointing out the theory of moving the statues in a manner similar to walking a refrigerator is hardly Heyerdahl’s theory, but was first proposed by Jean-Michel Schwartz in his book The Mysteries of Easter Island first published in France in 1973 and in English in 1975.

Certainly, I will define myself as a Diffusionist as well as a Cataclysmist. Where does RNJ stand? Clearly in the Isolationist and Uniformitarian camp. This is fine, and is certainly in the mainstream belief. Yet, do the readers of RNJ understand this debate? Has the RNJ stated their position? I would like to suggest that the RNJ do just that! Your publication (which I truly enjoy) should declare itself and state that it endorses the Isolationist theory, though solicits and welcomes views from the other side.

In my opinion, you would be doing a service to your readers, as many may be unaware of the thousands of volumes of literature and scientific debate on the subject of Diffusionism and the theories of Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Indonesian, Egyptian, Phoenician, and Greek exploration into the Pacific and possibly to Rapa Nui. By clearly stating your own view and acknowledging the debate between Isolationists and Diffusionists you would be allowing your readers the option to decide for themselves.

Or perhaps RNJ like other “serious researchers” would rather prefer to “totally ignore” the work of Thor Heyerdahl and other “non-serious researchers”.

David Hatcher Childress, Illinois


Response to Childress
by Paul Bahn, Ph.D., Hull, England

As a professional archaeologist I was unaware that “the debate between Isolationists and Diffusionists on matters of ancient cultures is the most controversial subject in archaeology and anthropology,” but I am willing to take Mr. Childress’ word for it.

However, I fear that where Rapa Nui is concerned, he has misunderstood the situation. Nobody believes that the Easter Island population and culture arose from the ocean along with the island. Everyone agrees that its people and culture diffused from elsewhere; the question is simply whether the diffusion was from west or east.

Heyerdahl is not “repeatedly criticized for championing Diffusionism.” He is criticized for extreme subjectivity, distortion of data, being “economical with the truth,” and ignoring the work of scholars who disagree with him, and even that of some who don’t.

Show me, or any archaeologist, a single shred of reliable evidence of “Phoenicians, Greeks, Chinese, or Hindus” or indeed Eskimos or Watusi, navigating vast oceans, and we will be happy to alter our view of the past. We are currently adopting new findings that people entered Australia at least 60,000 years ago, and the New World perhaps 30,000 or 40,000 BP, dates which would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Many archaeologists, including myself, take a mischievous delight in demolishing the “established myths” of our discipline.

It is not archaeologists who are unwilling to shift position in the face of evidence: blinkered, unyielding dogma remains the hallmark of Heyerdahl and his ilk, and THAT is why such work is not taken seriously. Mr. Childress’ letter, so full of “...ists” (e.g.: I will define myself as a Diffusionist as well as a Cataclysmist”), smacks of the rallying to a flag, the a priori adoption of position, the fixed preconceptions of a political party or religious sect rather than the objective open-minded assessment of data by a serious researcher. Not so much cataclysm as catechism, not so much diffusion as delusion.

Response to Childress, et al
by Alan Davis-Drake, G.P. (Galactic Poet), Old Bridge, NJ

I am certainly not in a position to attempt a discussion of Diffusionism. I speak from the view of one undoubtedly ignorant of the full scope of the “issue.” Still, as a poet, I humbly say that my creative gifts allow more than occasional flights of extra-universal fancy (fantasy) but when it comes to any “scientific” study or discussion, there appears to be the greatest need to follow Dick Tracy’s dictum, “Just stick to the facts, mam.”

Diffusionism or not, it is a serious writer’s responsibility to understand his audience’s mind as much as it is to get the “facts” across. Feeding the “public” (whoever that vague persona is) National Inquirer-style images only damages everyone’s credibility—not to mention carelessly brushes aside the years of hard work put in by field and archive researchers. Orgasmic flights of frivolously interpretive fancy are great for poetry, but serve no purpose when trying to communicate more down-to-earth subjects.

Call it reverse snobbery if you wish, but I do not share the luxury of academicians who have the opportunity to daily discuss abstract subjects. Instead, on my job, I listen to fellow workers discussing the wondrous words of Thor Heyerdahl. Why are they so wonderful? Because they present a colorful image. Because they feed the simplistic leanings in each of us. In a sense, they tell us what we want to hear. Lotsa color pictures and just enough captions to get the point across. Unfortunately, in many minds Easter Island is associated with Thor Heyerdahl.

As for Rapa Nui Journal’s “stand,” I cannot presently help. RNJ is essentially a collection of the papers and opinions sent to its editors and so has no opinions of its own. The Editors themselves continue to publish nearly everything sent to them which might be of interest to people with a love for Easter Island and Polynesia. Some articles are informative, others amusing. We have not yet published any editorials, nor do we intend to in the future. We do not endorse any single position, although if our readers prefer us to, as Mr. Childress suggests, we are ready to re-evaluate our approach. We would appreciate hearing from our readers.
"The Layperson's Guide" Revisited

RNJ recently received a letter from Sergej Rjabchikov of the USSR. It is reproduced here as written:

Dear Editors,

I've read Alan Davis-Drake's paper "A Layperson's Guide to Rongorongo." Part III (RNJ 3(4), Winter 1989-90). I was surprised to read such odd note about my investigations. Cf. comparison between my opinion on old Peruvian problem (paper "Incas on Easter Island?") were submitted to RNJ, but it were not published) and Carroll's erroneous decipherment. Why "a similar approach"? I do not agree that "Guy appears to have a clearer view of the Rapanui language," Sovetskaya Etnografiiya, 1989, N.G.

Sources
(The materials were published in local Krasnodar newspapers, in Russian)


Response
Alan Davis-Drake

Mr. Rjabchikov's letter points out, in part, the difficulties which arise when one has a limited knowledge of languages. Although I am as guilty of this as the next man, at the same time, there continues to be the need to encourage publication of papers (scientific and otherwise) which clearly state the ground and path of their methodology. Singular concepts which float around in an intellectual vacuum, giving the reader few hints as to where they come from or how they were arrived at, leave the reader with little to ponder or discuss. RNJ published three "notes" by Mr. Rjabchikov, none of which elicited comment from our readers. On inquiry it was admitted they were too obscure for popular recognition. Mr. Rjabchikov is again invited to present an expanded, clear explanation of his background, methods and preliminary conclusions.

I would like here to thank the many people who have shown interest in my fledgling presentation of rongorongo.

Mr. Joseph B. Rechen of Berkeley wrote that he viewed a tablet in 1986 at "the Musée de Tahiti et des îles at Punaauia, about 30 km from Papeete." The photograph which he enclosed confirms that the tablet is Ka ihi uiga, or Echanacré. (Dr. Fischer of Meersburg, Germany later told me that it is there on indefinite, long-term loan.) Travelers to Rapa Nui who stop-over in Tahiti should make a point to see this rare rongorongo.

I am particularly grateful to François Dederen for his extensive notes in French which he collected for me for the series. His notes represented "25 years of work on Easter Island, and is the first time that I have done this for a foreign country." Unfortunately a clear, complete translation was unavailable in time to be incorporated into the Pocket Road Guide to Rongorongo. (RNJ 4:1, pp. 11-15.)

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Steven R. Fischer for his extensive comments on the published "Road Guide." A few of my more glaring errors/omissions may be of interest to RNJ readers:

1. The tablets listed as the "Large and small Wiener Tablets" are erroneous duplications of the Large and Small Vienna fragments. This was a grave error on my part, which reduces my counts by one tablet and one fragment, bringing the totals to 13 tablets and 8 fragments.
2. I failed to include "the Paris Snuff-box," a European snuff box with late classical rongorongo script on it. It is clearly listed in 1500 Years.
3. A 'forgery' was overlooked: the "Berlin Staff." It contains 5 glyphs.
4. For visitors to Rome, they should note that the tablets listed as being in Grotaferra, Rome at the Museum of SS.CC. were transferred in the 60's to the Congregatione dei SS. Cuiri, Via Riverone, 85, 00166, Rome. Better late than never.
5. The Stephen-Chauvet fragment is now in the U.S., in private hands.
6. There are doubts that Paymaster Thomson ever possessed the calabash he reportedly observed as having rongorongo glyphs. Recent inquiries at the Smithsonian tell that the calabash never arrived in Washington. If it does exist, it must somehow have found its way into someone's private collection, like so many other precious Rapanui treasures.

The XVIIth Pacific Science Congress, 1991

We have received notice from Dr. Roger Green that the next Pacific Science Congress will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, from May 27th to June 2, 1991 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. The congress is organized under six themes. The themes that may be of interest to Pacific scholars are mentioned below. In the Biological Diversity theme, one of the five subthemes is on People in the Pacific. Three symposia are being organized under this subtheme:

1) Human biodiversity in the Pacific: Mitochondrial DNA diversity and migrations in Pacific populations.
2) Archaeology and biocultural complexity in the Pacific.
3) Physical and cultural relationships of the peoples in Asia and the Pacific basin.

Under the Population, Health and Social Change theme, four subthemes are included. One is IV: Prehistory of the Pacific Basin, colonization and adaptation to changing environments and cultural contexts. Five symposia are planned relating to this theme:

1) Environmental and landscape change in prehistoric Oceania.
2) Evolution of late prehistoric social systems in Polynesia.
3) Hawaiian archaeology.
4) Pleistocene-Early Holocene human occupation of Southeast Asia, Australia, New Guinea and Island Melanesia.
5) Colonization processes in the settlement of Polynesia.

For further information, contact Dr. Nancy Lewis, Secretary-General, XVII Pacific Science Congress Secretariat, 2424 Maile Way, Fourth Floor, Honolulu, HI 96822 USA.
Piedmont Rapa Nui Reunion

Last March, Rapanuiphiles came from Fresno, Sacramento and various local Bay Area towns in Northern California to our first Rapa Nui Reunion fundraiser of 1990. Kihi Haoa hung shell necklaces from the island around the necks of several special guests (e.g. first to RSVP, the one who came the longest distance, etc.) all who had come to the Piedmont home of David and Jane Holland. Following a tasty Mexican dinner, Dr. Georgia Lee enthralled us with a provocative slide lecture about recent archaeological developments on Rapa Nui.

Gary Wirth of Woodland, California, won the free trip to Rapa Nui. Our gratitude to LanChile, the Santiago Holiday Crowne Plaza and Far Horizons Cultural Discovery Trips, Inc. of San Anselmo, California, for making all this possible.

During the evening, the president of the Easter Island Foundation, Dr. Joan Seaver, reported on the progress of the Mulloy Research Library project. Excitement arose when plans were revealed to coincide ground-breaking on Rapa Nui in Fall 1991 with the arrival of a special Society Expedition, Inc. cruise, co-sponsored by the EIF. Originating in Papeete, the deluxe Society Explorer will sail through the Australis, Gambiers and Pitcairn Island to reach Rapa Nui in time to attend these long-awaited ceremonies. Want to come? For details, contact Dr. Seaver, Box 1319, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272 (213/454-7993).

Malibu Rapa Nui Reunion

Southern California’s typical warm breezes washed over the gathering on the deck of a Malibu house, overlooking the Pacific. On June 2nd, approximately 60 Rapanuiphiles from as far away as Michigan gathered for an al fresco supper and to hear Dr. Jo Anne Van Tilburg speak on the symbolism of the Easter Island statues accompanied by her excellent slides. Her talk was far reaching.

A highlight of the evening was the introduction of the elegant new Easter Island Foundation logo designed by Mark Oliver of Santa Barbara which made its first appearance on T-shirts. The shirts are white, with a 3-color logo of slate blue, brick red, and pale yellow. Shirts are available for US $20. Contact Dr. Joan T. Seaver.

The gathering was notified about three upcoming tours to Easter Island in 1991: Far Horizons (February 1991, with an optional extension to northern Chile’s “Nazca Lines”); Phoenix (March 1991, which continues on to Tahiti); and a ship cruise by Society Expeditions (September 28-October 15, 1991). Addresses are below; write for free brochures:

Far Horizons, P.O.Box 1529, San Anselmo, CA 94960; Phoenix, P.O.Box 1755, Newport Beach CA 92663; Society Expeditions, 3131 Elliott Ave., Suite 700, Seattle, WA 98121.

Hawaii Rapa Nui Reunion

Plans are coming together for a Rapa Nui Reunion on the Big Island of Hawaii. The tentative date is October 26th, 1990, which will coincide with the second session of Dr. Georgia Lee’s Hawaiian rock art project. The hostess for the Hawaiian event is Mahina Rapu Leitel. In the meanwhile, let us hear from you. We need your interest, help and advice. But, what’s really needed is your monetary assistance. Don’t be shy about sending what you can. Scrapers are built with little bricks!

Good News from Chile

The new director of Chile’s Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos, Museos, Sergio Villalobos, is enthusiastic about the Mulloy Research Library; there is a strong possibility that the library may be associated with a “centro de cultura” (a cultural center for ethnic groups, in this case, the Rapanui). Sr. Villalobos is a professor of History at the Universidad de Chile.

Recent Publications


Dr. Ricardo Cruz-Coke has been publishing on the physical anthropology of Rapa Nui for over 25 years, in both English and Spanish. He published in 1988 a resumen of Chilean biomedical research done there between 1932 and 1985 titled: “Estudios biomedicos chilenos en Isla de Pascua,” in Revista Medicina de Chile, Vol.116:818-821. His most recent publication is “Los genes del pueblo pascuense,” in Revista Medical de Chile, Vol.117:685-694. For further information, contact:

Dr. Ricardo Cruz-Coke, Director
Genetic Unit; University of Chile Hospital
Santos Dumont 999, Santiago, Chile

The South Sea Digest is a private newsletter on Pacific Islands affairs, published every second Friday (25 issues a year) by John Carter and W. G. (Bill) Coppell. It is available only by direct subscription. The four page newsletter contains business news and notes on current happenings in the Pacific Islands, including economic affairs and social events. For details, write: The South Sea Digest, Box 4245 GPO, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia.


Published by Kahualike, 1990
What’s New in Hangaroa

Don Jacobo Hey Paoa was designated by President Patricio Aylwin Azocar as the new Governor of Easter Island. The new administrator was formerly employed as a Notary in the Court of Letters on the Island. He is the only Rapanui known to have received a law degree. The new Governor is the son of Urbano Edmunds Hey and Carolina Paoa Rangitopa; Urbano (a former Mayor of Hanga Roa) is the son of Henry Percy Edmunds and remembers Katherine Routledge well.

The new Governor promptly called for a law to prohibit the removal of moai and other archaeological treasures from the island. At the same time he inaugurated a campaign for the return of those pieces that are now on the continent, as well as those in museums abroad, including the moai now standing outside the Fonck museum in Vina del Mar.

One of the priorities of the new Governor is the establishment of a system of supply for the island so that the islanders will not be left without essential supplies. The latest shortages have caused many difficulties including higher prices for things that must be sent via air freight; the price of bread and basic items like salt, sugar, rice, etc., have soared. The supply ship finally arrived on 29 April and discharged 1300 tons of supplies, putting a temporary end to the desperate situation. Most serious was the shortage of flour (62 tons of it arrived with the ship). According to the Intendencia of the V Region, the supply problem has been taken care of until next October.

The present mayor of the island, Juan Edmunds Rapahango, was confirmed for this position for the coming term of office.

Word has been received that 50 meters of Te Pito Te Henua street, in that section leading downhill from the church, have been paved with bricks.

Video games have made an appearance on Rapa Nui. Word has been received that the island’s youngsters are wild about them. It is also reported that petty theft is increasing; whether the two are connected is unknown.

The head of the Consejo de Ancianos, Alberto Hotus, has proposed to the new government of Patricio Alywin that a special district be formed for the island with constitutional recognition of the indigenous people. Under his proposal, Isla de Pascua would be an electoral district with its own representative to Congress.

Hotus stated that the island should have its own representative because islanders have their own language, customs, and ways of living, and it is difficult to have a non-islander representing them.

Beginning in September, regular voyages will be made between Valpariso and Easter Island on the ship “Aquiles.” This ship is being transformed into a luxury cruiser that will also carry supplies to the island. The Aquiles is 90 meters long and will take 120 passengers in comfort, with a Luxury suite, First class, and Tourist class; public rooms include a VIP lounge.

Conservation: Ana Kai Tangata
Rapa Nui’s Famous Painted Cave

Over the past year, the Centro Nacional de Restauracion (Santiago) has monitored the paintings on the ceiling of Ana Kai Tangata in a project sponsored by the World Monuments Fund. A panel of experts will review the results of this study and a three day workshop will meet to evaluate different conservation strategies and select an appropriate course of action for preserving the paintings.

The conference will focus on whether the paintings may be conserved in situ or whether the paintings should be moved to the museum on the island, with copies left in the cave. The proceedings from the workshop will be published, with an introduction providing historical and archaeological information about the site.

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Georgia Lee, Ph.D.
Publisher and General Editor

Alan Davis-Drake
Editor and Design

Rapa Nui Journal is an international newsletter published quarterly for the benefit of those interested in Easter Island and Polynesia. Correspondence, articles, photographs, drawings, reviews of books & films, announcements of conferences & publications, and all related materials are invited. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited items or anything submitted without adequate return postage or International Reply Coupon. If possible please send submissions on floppy disk for either IBM or Macintosh—in ASCII format.


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