

Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

Volume 8

Issue 2 *Rapa Nui Journal* 8#2 June 1994

Article 12

1994

Mowawis on TV (Review)

Paul G. Bahn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj>

 Part of the [History of the Pacific Islands Commons](#), and the [Pacific Islands Languages and Societies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bahn, Paul G. (1994) "Mowawis on TV (Review)," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol8/iss2/12>

This Book or Media Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Hawai'i Press at Kahualike. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation* by an authorized editor of Kahualike. For more information, please contact sheila.yeh@hawaii.edu.

Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific. Vol. 1. Monographs of the School of American Research and Museum of New Mexico, N° 24, Part 1, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1961.

¹⁰ A good survey source on the archaeology of the Pacific is Peter Bellwood's, *Man's conquest of the Pacific*, Sydney, Collins, 1978.

¹¹ Tregear *op.cit.*, has a full column on *ahu* and related terms, supporting this meaning. *Marae*, with rather fewer, but more specific, meanings supports the notion of open and sacred space, including a Malay cognate.

¹² *Mata* has eight separate meanings, not unusual with Polynesian polysemy, mostly relating to eye and sight.

¹³ The original source for any research on exchange is, of course, Marcel Mauss's, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques" in his *Sociologie et anthropologie* (first published in 1923-24 in *L'Année Sociologique*). Paris, Presses Universitaires de France. There are translations in various languages. I wrote a general commentary on exchange theory as "Association and power in reciprocity and requital: More on Mauss and the Maori". *Oceania* Vol. 52. 1981. pp. 303-19. I applied this general understanding of reciprocity to Rapanui in my "Kinship and association in Rapanui reciprocity". *Pacific Studies* Vol. 3 (N° 2, Spring). 1980. pp. 1-21.

¹⁴ Tregear *op.cit.*, provides a number of cognates for the Rapanui *kumara*, including *umala uala*, *kumala*, *kumaa*, with an intriguing note that *kumara* in Fijian is the modern name, the traditional one being *A kawai ni vavalagi*, "the foreigners yam". The most complete source on the characteristics and distribution of the sweet potato is D. E. Yen, *The sweet potato and oceania. An essay in ethnobotany*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 236. Honolulu, Bishop Museum Press. 1974.

¹⁵ A good survey of Polynesian maritime technology is Judi Thompson and Alan Taylor, *Polynesian canoes and navigation*, Laie, Brigham Young University, Hawaii campus, 1980.

¹⁶ The historical development of Rapanui, apart from my own work, has been treated well in J. Douglas Porteous, *The modernization of Easter Island*, Western Geographical Series Volume 19, Department of Geography, University of Victoria, Victoria, B. C., Canada. 1981. Porteous is strong especially on the development of the sheep ranch and how it altered the landscape.

¹⁷ Alfred Métraux, *The ethnology of Easter Island*, Bulletin 160, Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1940. p. 153.

¹⁸ JoAnne Van Tilburg has summarised the available material on the *moai* and related architecture in her PhD thesis in 1986. She is preparing for publication by the British Museum a summary of this research. An earlier and important PhD thesis on the *ahu* structures themselves is by William S. Ayres, "The cultural context of Easter Island religious structures", Tulane University, 1973. All USA originating theses, incidentally, are easily available from University Microfilms International, with representatives throughout the world.

¹⁹ William Mulloy and Gonzalo Figueroa, "The A Kivi-Vai Teka complex and its relationship to Easter Island architectural prehistory". *Asian and Pacific Archaeology Series*, N° 8. Honolulu, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Social Science Research Institute, 1978.

²⁰ Based upon an understanding of contemporary Rapanui, and using comparative material, I have suggested a revised view of Rapanui prehistory, including a programme for research on climate change, "Kinship and environment on Easter Island. Some observations and speculations". *Mankind* Vol. 12 (N° 2). 1979. pp. 119-37.

²¹ *Op cit.*, note 11.

²² Patrick Carlton McCoy, "Easter Island settlement patterns in the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods", Unpublished PhD thesis, Washington State University, 1973

²³ Some of this I discuss humorously for the anniversary of a specialist Basque studies journal in a small review, "Lo pirenaico en lo polinesio?". *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Vascos* Nr. 100 (1975). pp. 195-9.

²⁴ A less flattering proposal was made some time ago: that the Rapanui extraordinary development was due to their having nothing else to do and a vigorous social organisation teaming with energy burst into activity. See Marshall D. Sahlins, "Esoteric efflorescence in Easter Island", *American Anthropologist* vol. 57. 1955. pp. 1045-1052.

Review

Mowawis on TV

Paul G. Bahn, Ph.D.
Hull, England

RNJ readers may recall Steve Fischer's review (4[4], Winter 1990/1, pp. 56-58) of a German television documentary about Easter Island in a series called *Terra-X*. American viewers were presented with a half-hour version some months ago, with a commentary by Hal Douglas. In Britain, however, we have had something a little different.

The *Terra-X* series is currently showing on the Discovery channel of our satellite TV, and we too were presented with the half-hour version--one which, therefore, omits the Rongorongo and Heyerdahl sequences mentioned by Steve's review, but which still contains many of the errors he highlighted. However, the British version has a voice-over by none other than Annie Nightingale, an aging disc-jockey from BBC pop radio: for American readers, this can be equated with having Casey Kasem doing the job! Annie may be an experienced DJ, but, sadly, nobody checked her competence at reading a script about Polynesian archaeology.

As a result, the show is filled with her labored pronunciations of many unfamiliar names and terms, and particularly her references to the statues which she thinks are called "Mowawis" (to rhyme with Malawi). The one consolation is that, unlike in Germany where millions watched, hardly anyone in Britain will have caught this sloppy documentary in its tea time slot on an obscure minority channel.