Mowawis on TV (Review)

Paul G. Bahn

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Hast has eight separate meanings, not unusual with Annee Canada. 1981. Porteous is strong societes archaiques” in his Sociologie Ph.D. Pacific. ‘\[20x20\]G Published by Kahualike, 1994


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

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.

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

Polynesian polysemy, mostly relating to eye and sight. There are translations in various languages. Supporting this meaning.

Specific, meanings supports the notion of open and sacred space, including a Malay cognate.

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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.

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

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.


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, incidently, are easily available from University Microfilms International, with representatives throughout the world.

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.