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Speak Rapanui! Hable Rapanui! La Lengua de Isla de Pascua (Review)

Steven R. Fischer

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BOOK REVIEWS

📖 Ana Betty Haoa Rapahango and William Liller, 1996. *Speak Rapanui! ¡Hable Rapanui! La Lengua de Isla de Pascua*. Softbound, 133 pages. Easter Island Foundation, ISBN 1-880636-03-4, \$12. Order from Easter Island Foundation, 666 Dead Cat Alley, Woodland CA 95695, USA.

Review by Steven Roger Fischer

“*Torana! Pehe koe? Rivariva!*” (“Hello! How are you? Fine!”)

What a thrill to be able to speak Rapanui. And now you yourself can learn it at last—right in your very own *hare* ‘home, house’ with the friendly assistance of the delightful booklet *Speak Rapanui!* It’s the brand-new Rapanui language primer by Betty Haoa and Bill Liller of the Biblioteca William Mulloy in Viña del Mar, Chile, and profits from its sale will go to the Easter Island Foundation to promote the study of the Rapanui culture and the preservation of Easter Island’s physical patrimony.

Let me tell you straight off: the “Little Red Book” is sheer fun. Its design, by Tamara Liller and Alan Drake is brilliant. Even the *manu piri* double-bird figure that adorns the front cover proclaims what the marvelous little primer is all about: everything in it is double, with English on each left-hand page and Spanish on each right-hand page...

And pure Rapanui ‘*i te kōna ananake* ‘everywhere’. *Speak Rapanui!* is simple, informative, and entertainingly illustrated. The text is plainly written, the language examples are legion and easy to understand, there is a minimum of old-fashioned grammar and a maximum of enjoyment. The learner progresses from general observations about the Rapanui language to common words and phrases and helpful word lists. At the end, a handy bibliography points out the most useful and informative books and articles on the Rapanui language and mentions international periodicals dedicated to Polynesian language studies.

Speak Rapanui! is intended for the beginner, the tourist, the Rapanuiphile who wants that first thrilling plunge into the exhilarating pool of the *vananga Rapanui* (“Rapanui language”). It’s the modern, living language that *Speak Rapanui!* offers. For example:

To your health!	<i>Manuíá!</i>
Thank you	<i>Maururu</i>
I love you	<i>He mate au kia kóe</i>
It’s okay	<i>Ti tika á</i>

Nearly all significant accents are shown using an accent mark, so that you’ll have no problem placing the correct sentence or word stress. In order to achieve this, a linguistically more “proper” orthography has been dispensed with (for example, *Ti tika á* for *Titika ‘ā*). The presentation of grammar and the orthography—the booklet ignores most glottal stops and all vowel lengths, such as ‘*ā*—follow the 1930s and 1950s models of Sebastian Englert and Jordi Fuentes. Sure, a bit antiquated according to modern linguistics. But it simplifies the difficult task tremendously.

You can learn Rapanui with it, and quickly too.

You learn about “Structures”: the *hare* ‘house’, the *man-avai* ‘circular structure used to shelter plants’, the *tupa* [*tūpa*] ‘hollow stone structure 2-3 meters tall’. You get to know “Places”: the *ana* [*ana*] ‘cave’, the *hanga* ‘harbor, bay’, the *maunga* [*ma’unga*] ‘hill, mountain’, the *rano* ‘lake, crater’. “For Nature Lovers” tells us of the *makohe* ‘frigate bird’, the *moa* ‘chicken’, the *paihenga* ‘dog’, the *miro* ‘tree, wood’, the *moko* ‘lizard’. Similar word lists, from pages 56 to 119 offer useful and historical artifacts, common nouns, persons, titles, time, weather, food and drink, transportation, and a host of other categories that will quickly submerge you in the Rapanui world...and in the Rapanui tongue. —

Ku hanga ‘ā au mo oho ki ‘a Rapa Nui (“I want to go to Rapanui”).

Now all of us can. Like never before.

With *Speak Rapanui! ¡Hable Rapanui!*

📖 David Stanley, 1966. *Fiji Islands Handbook*, Fourth Edition. Moon Publications. Softcover, 263 pages. ISBN 1-56691-038-2. \$13.95. Order from Moon Travel Handbooks, PO Box 3040, Chico, CA 95927; email: travel@moon.com

Review by Kay Kenady Sanger

Writing a guidebook about Fiji, a country with 322 inhabited islands scattered across 1,290,000 square kilometers of the South Pacific is not exactly a breeze. The place is home to seven ethnic groups with separate cultural traditions, dozens of accommodations from swank to dank, and a long list of appealing attractions that can change with the whim of a strong hurricane. The trick is to equip the traveler with plenty of necessary information while taking care to create a volume that is not too big to stuff in a backpack.

David Stanley’s *Fiji Islands Handbook* will probably accompany many a Fiji-bound traveler, since it manages to deliver hundreds of useful details in a compact 5x7 format. Stanley gains a reader’s confidence right up front by requesting current information in an interactive section entitled “Is this book out of date?” As Stanley explains, travel writing is a little like trying to take a picture out of the side of a bus—things change fast.

That said, Stanley presents a list of each and every hotel in the country with prices and useful notes about each one that make it sound like he or a responsive reader actually stayed at all of these places. Neither of the other two Fiji guidebooks consulted by this reviewer were so complete or so honest. For example, Stanley lets readers know which hotel has a pounding disco next door and which of the hostel restaurants is owned by the best fisherman around. Restaurants, bars, night-clubs, and even public toilets and dental clinics are detailed for each island. Thirty-eight maps help readers find these spots.

Up-front sections on history and government, people, and customs should be required reading before a visit to Fiji. For example, Stanley explains Fiji’s strict dress code, warning readers that wearing short shorts or a bathing suit anywhere