

1997

Archaeological Investigations on Easter Island (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. (1997) "Archaeological Investigations on Easter Island (Review)," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol11/iss4/12>

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.



Easter Island.

Maunga Tari: an Upland Agricultural Complex

by Christopher M. Stevenson

Easter Island Foundation 1997 \$26

Review by Paul G. Bahn

Chris Stevenson is a freak in Easter Island studies. Over the years it seems to have become "de rigueur" that any archaeological investigations on the island should be published only after long delays, or, better still, not published at all. Yet Stevenson persists in publishing regular reports every year on his *Earthwatch* projects on the island. He is also perverse in other ways; for whereas most researchers have tended to focus on the more obvious, spectacular features of Rapa Nui's past, the statues and platforms which are relatively easy to study and attract media coverage, Stevenson chooses to zero in on far more modest traces of human occupation—minor domestic sites, or small upland structures where there is little to be found, but which nevertheless do a great deal to flesh out the somewhat lopsided picture we have of the original islanders' life, based as it is primarily on knowledge of major structures, ritual complexes and cave-sites. And not content with this, he has also pioneered obsidian dating on the island, a major contribution in itself, and in this monograph on some of his excavations he also presents use-wear analysis of some obsidian pieces.

This book is not an easy read—it is an exemplary excavation report, with all the humdrum detail that requires—but it opens with a valuable account of the different phases of the island's settlement system, combining archaeological, environmental and social data into an admirable synthesis. Indeed, Stevenson's perversity knows no bounds, for he then presents a series of hypotheses against which excavation results can be tested in order to evaluate the settlement system model. This man simply has no respect for the traditions of Rapa Nui archaeology—and we should all be deeply grateful to him for that. ■



Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos Handbook

by Michael Buckley

Moon Travel Handbooks, PO Box 2040,

Chico, CA 95927 \$18.95

Review by Kay Kenady Sanger

When I received this book to review, I asked my husband, who spent the better part of 1967 in Vietnam writing about the war for the United States Army, if he would like to read the book and write the piece. "Are you kidding?" he asked incredulously. "I can't imagine going there as a tourist and I have no desire to learn about it either." In his role as an information specialist, he spent some time flying around the country, writing news releases about Army advisors. He saw Vietnam's green beauty, marred by bombings, fires, and huge military complexes. His photos feature men in camouflage uniforms and rows of U.S. aircraft lined up on long asphalt strips.

Later I found him perusing the book with some amazement. The area where he was based in the Central Highlands is now attracting tourists with tours to Montagnard villages

plantations. Clearly, as the book's author, Michael Buckley endeavors to explain in nearly 400 pages about Vietnam, the country has made great strides in its tourism infrastructure since the Americans left nearly 25 years ago.

Battlefields have been turned into tourist attractions (christened "Cong World" by one Western reporter) and it's now possible to cruise down the Mekong Delta on a cargo boat or tour the rain forests by mountain bike with jeep support. Even the "Hanoi Hilton," the infamous prison where American POWs were interned, has been rebuilt as a bonafide 22-story hotel and convention center.

Buckley covers the three major countries of Indochina--Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos--in his 700 page guide. The region has become more easily accessible to American travelers only since the 1994 lifting of the U.S. trade embargo and the recent normalization of relations between Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and China. Tourists may now travel between these countries using roads that follow the old Ho Chi Minh Trail. (Note: the July 1997 coup in Cambodia may upset this picture of diplomatic harmony).

Buckley's candid style is typical of Moon Travel Handbooks. This is not a promotional guide in any respect. He honestly rates some hotels as "fleabags" and offers useful advice on such serious topics as how to avoid land mines and malaria. He serves up detailed route suggestions for bicycle, motorcycle, boat, and walking tours in all three countries and includes more than 100 easy-to-read maps. Charts and special topic sidebars offer short explanations of a wide variety of cultural attractions and history, such as the "The Lost Kingdom of Champa" and the "Betel Nut Chewers." And he tantalizes the reader with suggestions for adventure travel: caving, whitewater rafting, kayaking, and elephant trekking. The bulk of the book covers travel in Vietnam. Chapters on each of the major cities and the surrounding countryside detail the sights, accommodations, food (from *pho* to pizza), nightlife, shopping, and getting around. He readily admits that local authorities tend to overrate some of the country's attractions; many sites that formerly were splendid have since become casualties of the war. For example, the heavily promoted "beautiful Royal Citadel City of Hue" was almost completely destroyed by fighting in 1986.

Buckley's tongue-in-cheek style makes for some amusing reading. One sidebar examines the question of which distinct ethnic tribe, the camera-toting "Homo ektachromo" or the Red Zao women hawking their embroidered wares, is the most astonishing to each other. In another section he admonishes readers to be wary of drug dealers who work with authorities to have drug-buying travelers arrested as a "fundraising venture."

The last third of the book focuses on Cambodia and Laos, which also have been devastated by decades of fighting. Current problems with the Khmer Rouge, corrupt government troops, and an overabundance of land mines advise extreme caution for would-be travelers to Cambodia. In fact, Buckley suggests only a handful of places in Cambodia that are considered reasonably safe for tourists. The author suggests that "remaining a bipod is easy if you are alert to potential dangers . . . and stay on well-trodden trails." A trip to Cambodia is definitely for the adventurous and maybe the foolhardy.