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GIANTS OF EASTER ISLAND (Review)

David Brookman

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GIANTS OF EASTER ISLAND

A Multimedia Presentation on the Web at:
<http://www.mungopark.com/container.asp?issue=199801&sec=features&page=media_trip/contents.asp>

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Webmaster: Easter Island Home Page: <http://www.netaxs.com/~trance/rapanui.html>

Finding information on the Internet can sometimes be a daunting task. But when the focus turns to Easter Island, locating useful resources is often like finding the proverbial "needle in the haystack." To counteract this "crisis of information," I started the Easter Island Home Page on the internet to organize the relevant data available on the World Wide Web into a coherent unit. Throughout the last two years of coordinating the site, I have come across many web sites relating to aspects of Rapa Nui culture and history; but few, if any, have the breadth and scope that the subject deserves. Well, fellow web friends, I am pleased to announce the unveiling of a web page which not only presents a balanced overview of the various theories pertaining to Easter Island, but does so in a well-designed, engaging and entertaining manner.

"Giants of Easter Island," presented through Mungo Park—a subsidiary of Microsoft's Expedia, offers an overview of Easter Island with accompanying photographs and sound clips to illustrate each section.

Beginning with the earliest accounts of European explorers, we hear entries from the logs of Roggeveen, Cook, La Pérouse and J. Macmillan Brown, who recount their impressions of the island and their theories on the meaning and construction of the *moai*. Since these explorers died long before the advent of recording technology, we can only assume that these audio clips are simulated.

In addition to these posthumous narratives, the creators of this multimedia presentation contacted notable Rapa Nui scholars to contribute their views and theories.

On the meaning of the *moai*, we hear from Joan Seaver Kurze, Ph.D. on the statues serving as a link between the spirit world and the physical realm. Regarding the origins of the islanders, *RNJ* editor Georgia Lee concisely illustrates their Polynesian ancestry, while contesting Thor Heyerdahl's Amerindian theory as well as rebutting some of the more outlandish theories of sunken continents and extraterrestrials. As a counterbalance to this debate, Physical Anthropologist George Gill asserts that while there is at least some physical similarity between Easter Islanders and Peruvians, this is but a minor component.

The various approaches to the transportation of the *Moai* are likewise dealt with, including: Mulloy's sledge and bipod technique, Van Tilburg's roller theory and Pavel's "Walking Moai." Audio clips are presented from Heyerdahl and Lee who describe some of the more "unusual" explanations of statue transport. Ecological concerns are also addressed, with Paul Bahn and John Flenley amply recounting the rise and fall of Rapa Nui culture. A thousand years of relative peace and prosperity which descended into civil war and cannibalism; the islander's destruction of their ecosystem serving as a

metaphor for the modern world.

The presentation ends on a high note; highlighting the fact, that despite the ensuing ravages of slavery, disease and colonization, the Rapa Nui people are in fact experiencing a renaissance of their culture.

There is also a bibliography included, with references for further information which also includes a link to the Easter Island Home Page.

I highly recommend the Multimedia presentation "Giants of Easter Island" for anyone with an interest in Rapa Nui. The material is balanced and well thought out, the design is impeccable and the sound clips really make the information come to life.

N.B. To properly view the multimedia on the site requires installation of Microsoft's "NetShow" which is easily downloaded from a link on the intro page.



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A limited edition replica of the famous *moai* head from Tongariki, cast under the direction of the International Fund for Monuments, is offered for sale at US \$25,000. Half of the selling price will be treated as a contribution to the Easter Island Foundation. This is the last one available (eleven were made; this one is #8). It was cast in 1973. The head is 9 feet high and weighs 7500 pounds.

The casting is of concrete with an aggregate of expanded shale, and then acid washed. It is very close in appearance to the actual volcanic tuff of Easter Island. Please contact the Easter Island Foundation at P.O. Box 6774, Los Osos CA 93412; fax (805-534-9301); or email <rapanui@compuserve.com>.