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"QUEST FOR THE LOST CIVILISATION" (Review)

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clearly people of the highest determination and calibre. Until the time when evil entered their community. . . they had dedicated themselves single-mindedly for hundreds of years to the creation of transcendent [sic] and awe-inspiring works of religious art." (230)

The book is liberally sprinkled with tantalizing questions that usually begin with: "Is it possible. . .?" "Is it a coincidence...?" "Perhaps this is..." and "The implication is . . ." Take the following quote: "Perhaps they used advanced technologies. . . Perhaps they had even learned how to transcend technical solutions and to manipulate the physical world by focussed mental power . . ." (236). The author likes the phrase, ". . . the evidence supports the theory that . . ." But the "evidence" he cites is lifted from spurious sources including various publications by rationally-challenged authors. The legitimate sources he cites give the impression that hey, this guy really read the material, but actually what he does is lift small bits out of context and distort them for his agenda.

Making much out of little, Hancock suggests that the building of an *ahu* over an earlier shrine meant that they were ". . . connected to a grand and mysterious scheme, set in motion all around the globe, and played out over thousands of years, intended to bring about the 'rebirth' of a 'former world'" (232). Grasping for "connections", the author suggest that the Egyptian words *ahh*, *maat*, and *Ra* are related to *ahu*, *mata*, and *raa* on Easter Island (233; 242).

"The possibility . . . here is that the purpose of Easter Island's high initiates may have been connected to the same underground stream of archaic spiritual gnosis that we have identified at Angkor. . ." (230). ". . . Easter Island might originally have been settled in order to serve as a sort of geodetic beacon, or marker—fulfilling some as yet unguessed [sic] at function in an ancient global system of sky-ground co-ordinates that linked many so-called 'world navels'" (254).

As is the usual ploy in books like this, legitimate scholars are bum-rapped as resisting or ignoring such obvious connections, in an "us vs. them" manner that downgrades professional scientists and "orthodox" archaeologists. Hancock writes, "Because Easter Island is a subject bedevilled by an intense academic phobia of what are seen as 'cranky' ideas and of the 'lunatic fringe', every archaeologist strives to outdo his or her colleagues in appearing to be completely sane, rational and 'scientific'" (235); and "Perhaps historians and archaeologists should devote a little less effort to the diligent search for humdrum and prosaic explanations of the mysteries of the human past and pay a little more attention to the extraordinary possibilities that also exist there" (235).

This is the most unkind cut of all. Archaeology is an exciting subject. What is more absorbing than discovering and understanding how people lived thousands of years ago, how they faced problems of shelter and survival, and struggled to understand their universe? Ours is a great history and an amazing cultural heritage. Our ancestors built shrines, shelters, made pottery and wove fabrics, created tools, and objects of metal. They built communities and families, created writing systems, carved statuary, and buried the dead with offerings for the afterlife. Their story is our story. To represent that past falsely—and for money and notoriety—is reprehensible. Serious scholars who

have done breakthrough studies on archaeological sites seldom have the opportunity to see the results of their decades of labor put into print, and then it likely is a short-run paper-cover edition. But let some writer with nutty ideas loose, particularly if the text relates to some theoretical ancient power, mystical wisdom of the a "lost" civilization, or intelligent beings "out there," and books such as *Heaven's Mirror* are the result.

I must add that *Heaven's Mirror* is beautifully illustrated with outstanding color photographs and the production is first-rate. It surely will sell like shave ice on a hot day. And therein lies the problem. Those who read *Heaven's Mirror* and do not have the background to know fact from fantasy will be dazzled by Hancock's very fancy footwork, and clever innuendoes—and yet another batch of misguided followers will be created.

TV REVIEW

"QUEST FOR THE LOST CIVILISATION" (the British TV title for a film treatment of *Heaven's Mirror*)

Review by Dr Paul Bahn, England

IN BRITAIN we recently underwent the unpleasant experience of seeing Hancock's lavish 3-part television series "Quest for the Lost Civilisation" which accompanies the above book. I shall avoid mentioning the endless list of horrors perpetrated by the series—which some TV magazines here described as being presented by "Archaeologist" Graham Hancock (sic). Interestingly enough, however, quite a few TV critics who began by finding this stuff entertaining and at times plausible, soon grew weary of Hancock's unfounded speculations, lack of hard evidence, and reliance on a handful of mostly obscure "talking heads": who all agreed with him—nobody else appeared. Sadly, but inevitably enough, the exposure and publicity ensured that *Heaven's Mirror* shot to the top of the British bestseller list. And although it did not stay there for long (this was, after all, only a short TV series, and true believers had already gullibly gobbled up most of this stuff in Hancock's earlier works), the book has sold well over 20,000 copies in Britain alone.

Here I shall limit myself to Easter Island's role in the TV series. The third and last show, entitled Ancient Mariners, opens with a splendid shot of the restored Tongariki platform, and Hancock's voice dramatically declares "Easter Island's statues could hold the secret of what happened in the world before History began—why did ancient cultures with no known contacts have so much in common? My theory is they all derived from a common source, a single lost civilisation".

We are given quite a lot of footage of the island—presumably to justify this slice of the enormous budget that was wasted on this series—but in contrast to the book, Hancock has very little to say about the island, really. What is more important to him is what he does NOT say—e.g. by not giving any dates whatsoever for human settlement on the island, he is able to imply, without actually saying so, that the *moai* date back to about 10,500 BC, the time when a great flood swept away the lost civilization and forced its surviving mariner-astronomers to go off to other lands.

We see Hancock perched on Orongo, describing how, before the end of the last Ice Age, sea levels were almost 400 feet lower, so that, at this time, an observer on this spot would see

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not endless wastes of ocean but a vista of valleys and mountain peaks stretching to the horizon. He does not bother to mention that, before the end of the Ice Age, there was nobody around to sit on this spot, no matter what the truth of his description of what they might have seen from up there! Nor does he ever explain why the rise in sea level completely drowned all traces of his supposed great civilization—why had it built nothing at all on the higher bits of ground?

In any case, his quest is to seek traces of the survivors of that cataclysm. Tongariki is shown again: "Surrounded by the deeps of the Pacific Ocean, Easter Island is a mystery made of statues". Hancock, now perched on Rano Raraku, tells us that archaeologists see the making of *moai* and the sudden abandonment of this activity as a "great folly" (do we?), "but the ancients weren't stupid and they didn't do all this for nothing"!! So why did they do it? Hancock proceeds to enlighten us, over a shot of Anakena.

"For a start, the sculptures are rooted in astronomy which would have been an essential tool for the navigators who first found this place. The giant statues and the platforms they stand on face the rising sun on specific days of the year (how can this be, when he has just mentioned that they occur almost all round the island!?) and target significant stars. It was part of a massive endeavour to connect sky to ground, and it's a pattern I'm seeing all over the ancient world. But there's no evidence whatsoever of any contact between these early cultures (nice of him to admit it!). Two thousand miles from anywhere, Easter Island is the remotest inhabited spot in the world. Yet it emerges from legend as a place of refuge for the survivors of a terrible flood that had destroyed the earth at the end of a prehistoric golden age (does it??). The only real event that fits the bill is the sudden end of the last Ice Age when melted ice caps flooded the globe. Many coastal areas which could have supported an advanced seagoing civilisation would have been inundated and the people forced to find new homes."

Later in the show, after reminding us of his theories about the astronomy and "star-maps" of 10,500 BC supposedly incorporated in the Giza Plateau and the Angkor temples, he repeats that on Easter Island ". . . the obsession with astronomy surfaces again. Many of the statues line up with the sun and the stars". So he believes that all these sites and others are linked, they are not distributed randomly (as the rest of us poor fools have always thought): no, they are the result of a deliberate plan. "No one could have done this without being able to survey the whole world". These sites, like Easter Island, are all allegedly known as "navels or centres of the world" (and he shows us that famous boulder). They form a network of interconnected sites which the ancients could have used to map and survey the earth! But of course he never explains why this network was made up of such radically different types of monument—quite apart from the irritating little detail of their widely differing dates.

But the bit that really made me laugh out loud was as follows: ". . . and the great statues of Easter Island—surely not accidentally left lying exactly midway between Giza and Angkor?"

And some people actually take this tosh seriously. Oh dear. "New Age" definitely rhymes with Sewage.

WE ARE DELIGHTED to announce that the William Mulloy Library is now scheduled to be up and running on Easter Island by October 1999. A goal of the late archaeologist, William Mulloy, the library has been a major objective of the EIF since the Foundation's inception. The new facility will be housed in one of the recently remodeled buildings at the Sebastian Englert Museum. Generous donations from Foundation supporters will help furnish the library which will house Spanish and English language books, copies of research papers, and scanned materials on CD ROM, as well as a computer. Donations will also fund a salary for a librarian whom we hope will be Rapanui. Those who wish to donate books for the new library should contact RNJ offices.

In conjunction with the Library's scheduled opening, Georgia Lee will lead a special archaeological tour of the island departing in October 1999. Tour participants will be (we hope) on the island for the arrival of the *Hokule'a*, barring any unforeseen delays in the long sea voyage. Interested readers should call Far Horizons Archaeological Tours for more information: 800-552-4575 or by email <journey@farhorizon.com> or <rapanui@compuserve.com>.

The EIF board voted in August to continue support of a sister library at the Fonck Museum in Viña del Mar. This popular library will remain a major Easter Island research center, with rare and irreplaceable books, photographs and electronically stored archival material.

The Foundation needs your continued support for the successful operation of these two libraries, plus scholarships for Rapanui students, and fellowships for Easter Island research. Please remember the "Navel of the Earth" with your holiday gift giving. You may mail a check to the EIF at PO Box 6774, Los Osos, CA 93412.

Pacific 2000

The next conference dedicated to Easter Island and Polynesian studies will take place on Hawai'i Island, August 7-12, 2000. Conference chair is Dr Steven Roger Fischer. The conference venue will be the Hawaii Preparatory Academy at Kamuela (Waimea), Hawaii. Our next issue of RNJ will contain full details and a call for papers.

Moai Sightings

La Depeche (Tahiti) for the 16th September featured a full page ad for Heineken beer that shows the beer logo superimposed on the face of a *moai* at Rano Raraku. Jeez, is nothing sacred? Thanks to Robert Koenig for sending the picture.

Bud Henry of Hawai'i recently returned from Rapa Nui and informed us of an unusual sighting: fuzzy stuffed teddy bear-like *moai*, made of royal blue or golden-colored plush. These are for sale (\$35) in one of the island's stores.