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Letters

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Rapa Nui Journal (Vol. 13:42-43) reveals that Herbert von Saher is more familiar with the geography of New York than with that of Berlin: the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz was in (then WEST) Berlin; the name ("horrible" according to the author) might have signaled him that this old Prussian institution was not situated in (then East) Berlin!

W.W. Schuhmacher, Gadstrup, Denmark

Dear Editor,

Rapa Nui Journal, Volume 13(1), contained a review by Sidsel Millerstrom of a tourist guide to the Marquesas, in which the reviewer took issue with the authors' assertion that "the ancestral pariah dogs died out", pointing out that dog bones had been found archaeologically from initial occupation to the mid-nineteenth century.

As my contribution to this discussion, the following is reproduced from columns I wrote for the *Sunday Post* (Fiji) newspaper of 13th and 20th July 1997, and follows on from my argument that Mendaña introduced the chilli pepper to the Marquesas in 1595:

Quiros wrote in his account of their visit, in the general summary of the people and their customs, that they have 'pigs, and fowls of Castille [by which he meant chickens]." He did not mention dogs because, apparently, unlike many other Polynesian islands, they didn't have any.

But dogs do put in an appearance in other parts of the narrative. At one point before they landed, "four very daring natives went on board the ship and, while no one was looking, one of them took a small dog, which was the gift of the Camp Master. Then, with a shout, they all jumped overboard with great courage, and swam to their canoes."

Later, when the villagers had fled to the bush, they harassed the Spaniards with arrows and spears for a while, but seeing they were having little effect, began bringing them food, and asking politely when they might have their village back. One of the guards told Mendaña that his dog had been well fed by the temporarily relocated villagers.

So, the Spaniards had dogs with them, and the Marquesan islanders had none, but wanted them. There is no clear record that any dogs were actually stolen by, or given to, the islanders, but there is other evidence to that effect. The word for dog in the language of the Marquesas is *peto*—a word not found in any other Polynesian language, the usual term being *kuri* or *kuli*, related to Fijian *koli*. The most likely source for this word is the Spanish word for dog, which is *perro*. Since the Marquesans, as we noted earlier, have neither *r* nor *l* in their language, they would naturally use the next closest sound, which is *t*. Thus Spanish *perro* was changed to Marquesan *peto*. The same Spanish word for dog seems to have found its way to New Zealand, where both *pero* and *peropero* were used by the Maori, but when and why the word was borrowed is unclear.

In Mangereva the word for dog is *kani*. While this may perhaps have been coined by the French missionaries, it is more likely that it is derived from the other Spanish word for dog, which is *can*, related to the English word canine. No Spanish vessels are known to have called at the Gambier Islands, but a large number were lost in the Pacific

Ocean during the early centuries of exploration, and its not at all improbable that some survivors landed there.

When Cook visited Tonga in 1773, there were no dogs to be found, but the people recognized them, and had a name for them—*kuli*, which is related to the Tahitian *urī* and the Fijian *koli*. They also told Cook that three days sail from Tonga, towards the northeast, lay a group of islands called Fidgee, which abounded with "hogs, dogs and fowls", and much else besides. By the time of Cook's next visit in 1777, a small number of dogs had been imported from Fiji.

It seems to me that loss of dog populations has been a common occurrence in the history of Polynesia. In the case of Tonga, the want was supplied from Fiji; in the case of the Marquesas and Mangareva, from visiting Spanish vessels.

Dr Paul Geraghty

Director, Institute of Fijian Language and Culture

Reviews

An Essay Toward a Dictionary and Grammar of the Lesser-Australian Languages, According to the Dialect used at the Marquesas (1799)

William P. Crook, Samuel Greatheed, and Tima'u Te'ite'i, 1998. H. G. A. Hughes and S. R. Fischer eds.

Monograph 1 of the Institute of Polynesian Languages and Literatures. Auckland. ISBN 1174-4499. US \$18, NZ \$35.

Review by Roger C. Green, University of Auckland

Two hundred years is a long time in which to get one's work properly published. Thanks to H. G. A. Hughes and S. R. Fischer, as the manuscript's editors, it has finally happened. What they have done is first and foremost a very thorough piece of linguistic and historical scholarship, bringing to all in a useful and high standard of current linguistic formats, information that in various ways, usually partial or incomplete versions, has been known for years. This volume thus documents the first fully recorded and sophisticated knowledge of the two regional languages as they were spoken in the Marquesas Islands of Eastern Polynesia in the 18th century AD. All historical linguists of the Polynesian subgroup of Oceanic Austronesian languages will find it of immense interest for comparative purposes. Historians of linguistic analysis and its development within the Pacific will also find it a most worthy source on 18th century attempts to describe Pacific languages. Thanks to Samuel Greatheed's skills in the field of philology, it was an analytical essay describing a Polynesian language that was in many ways ahead of its time. These points are well made in the editorial introduction.

Retaining the term "lesser Australian languages" for the title of the original essay, of course, reflects linguistic views of the 18th century; today we call this family group Austronesian, its central and eastern Pacific subgroup—Oceanic, and the sub-subgrouping for the Marquesan language—Polynesian. But Greatheed already knew what was then called "the Australian language" was in fact related to the languages of Micronesia and those of the islands of Southeast Asia, in particular, the Philippines and Indonesia. Thomas (1986:128) has recently averred that the belief that linguistic variation at the time of European