2000

EASTER ISLAND. RAPA NUI, A LAND OF ROCKY DREAMS (Review)

Georgia Lee
Equates it with Make Make; where fewer specialists would follow him. However, it is his belief that the moai were built in honour of the birdmen, who were buried beneath them in the platforms, and that the long fingers of the moai should also be equated with the birdman. It seems more likely that the birdman cult followed the moai-building period, and while the two probably had some links, they may not have been as strong as Attenborough believes. That quibble aside, however, this documentary can be recommended extremely warmly as a model of the genre, with meticulous research presented soberly but with the enthusiasm and verve that have become deservedly associated with this great popularizer of science.

Reference
Attenborough, D. 1990. The first figures to be collected from Easter Island, pp. 41-50 in “State and Perspectives of Scientific Research in Easter Island Culture” (H. Esen-Baur, ed.). Courier Forschungsinstitut Senckenberg 125, Frankfurt.

Editor’s Note: Rapanuiophiles who have seen this documentary may be interested to know that the EIF has a replica of this wood carving for sale. Closely resembling the original carving so lovingly researched by Attenborough, it is beautifully carved from miro tahiti wood by Bene Aukara Tuki, one of Easter Island’s most renowned carvers. It can be yours for $400. The figure is 39 inches long and has eyes of shark vertebrae with obsidian pupils. This carving was exhibited at the Maxwell Museum of Art at the University of New Mexico and is illustrated and described in “Ingrained Images: Wood Carvings from Easter Island” by Joan Seaver Kurze. For further information, contact us at PO Box 6774, Los Osos, CA 93412, or by email: rapanui@compuserve.com

Easter Island. Rapa Nui, a Land of Rocky Dreams
By José Miguel Ramírez and Carlos Huber
Alvimpress Impresores, Chile, 2000

Review by Georgia Lee

This is a glorious oversize, hard cover, high quality book that will enhance anyone’s coffee table, but more than that, it is well written, with a wealth of information included in the text by José Miguel Ramírez. The photographs by Carl Huber are, simply, stunning. All photos are in full color. Excellent black/white line drawings are by Rapanui islander Te Pou Huke. The book includes 190 pages, including a glossary and bibliography.

This elegant new book contains some of the best and most dramatic photographs that we have seen of our beloved island. Many are taken from the air, showing unusual vistas that are not normally visible to earthlings—from the cliffs at Orongo to the quarry at Rano Raraku to the eroding peninsula at Poike. There are beautiful vahines and Tapati festival shots, illuminated night shots, and sunsets to die for. The chapter on the Ocean and Fishing has underwater photographs by Michel Garcia, showing us the undersea world of Rapa Nui.

The contents include: Introduction; The Setting; The Origins; Organization of the Ancient Society; Crisis and Adaptation; Megalithic Culture; Archaeoastronomy; Ideology; Wood and Rock Carvings; Rongo Rongo; Rock Art; The Ocean and Fishing; Tattooing, Body Painting and Mutilation; The Living Culture; and Final Words.

Our Final Word: buy this book.

Jose Miguel Ramírez can be contacted at mataverio-tai@entelchile.net for information about purchasing a copy.

The EIF hopes to be handling the US sales of this book in the near future.

The Kon-Tiki Museum Occasional Papers, Vol. 5 Essays in Honour of Arne Skjelsvold, 75 Years

Edited by Paul Wallin and Helene Martinsson-Wallin. The Kon-Tiki Museum, 2000

Review by Georgia Lee

This volume is divided into sections including Preface (by Paul Wallin and Helene Martinsson-Wallin); The Galapagos Islands; Easter Island; Polynesia/Melanesia; Peru; and the Maldives Islands. At the back is a Bibliography of Arne Skjelsvold. The book is paper cover, 177 pages long, with black and white photos, maps and charts.

The section of most interest to readers of RNJ is the one on Easter Island. Included are: The Osteological Evidences for Rapa Nui Origins Reexamined, by Patrick Chapman; Stone Chicken Coops on Easter Island, by Edwin Ferdon; “No Stone Unturned”... A Reflection on the Recycling of Worked Stones on Rapa Nui, by Helene Martinsson-Wallin; and Prehistoric Basalt Mining in the La Pérouse Area of Easter Island, by Christopher Stevenson, Sonia Haoa and Michael Glasock.

Chapman’s paper is particularly interesting; and Ferdon’s ‘take’ on the hare moa is the first sensible thing this editor has ever read about those so-called chicken coops (See page 77-79 of this issue).

In the Polynesia/Melanesia section are papers by Atholl Anderson, Roger Green, Paul Wallin and Matthew Spriggs.

The volume is available from the Kon-Tiki Museum, Bygdoynesveien 36, 0286 Oslo, Norway. (Price not given).