

# Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

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## EIF News

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1961). The several passages indexed as "Statuette, stone" give a broader picture. Some portable stone images are again said to be extremely rare. The main Western encounter with them was in 1872 during the visit of the French vessel *Le Flore*. Pierre Loti, who was aboard, figured two small stone figures with torsos (not heads with conical necks) flanking the entrance to a chief's hut. A number of stone heads were purchased by the *Flore's* officers and brought to Europe.

A stone head was seen by Geiseler in 1882 in the wall of an Orongo stone house and a sketch made at the time (Heyerdahl and Ferdon: Figure 12) shows an expression similar to that of C172. Other records noted in the Heyerdahl volume give an overall picture of *moai maea* in the context of households rather than separate religious sites, suggesting they were part of religious practices at a family and private level rather than as part of mass, group or tribal ceremonies.

It is tempting to think of C172 as being brought to Europe on *Le Flore*, turning up 60 years later in the Hotel Drouot auction. However, I am still not convinced that it is not a tourist piece. Heyerdahl noted that when his expedition was on Rapa Nui in 1955-56 a considerable number of 'crude stone heads' was produced for trade, and that was only 25 years after the Breton-Eluard sale. On the other hand, given the number of fakes known to be generated to suit the Paris "Art" market in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, C172 might even have been made in Europe for sale to Breton or Eluard (which then begs the question of where did the faker obtain red tufa).

Since I do not have the more recent and specialist literature at hand I cannot easily pursue the research further. Given the wide interest in Rapa Nui, I cannot believe that *moai maea* have gone unstudied: are there any recent papers on the subject? Someone somewhere may have a file listing the corpus of known examples. If that person has long wondered about the fate of the Breton/Eluard example, then this note has served one purpose. If *moai maea* are indeed a neglected area of study, then it is surely time the situation was rectified: in which case this note may serve a much more useful purpose!

#### FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup> C172 is currently on loan to the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum in Middlesbrough (England) and forms part of a display of items from places visited by the Yorkshire-born circumnavigator.

#### REFERENCES

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- Métraux, A. 1940. *Ethnology of Easter Island*. Bulletin 160, Bishop Museum, Honolulu.

## Easter Island Foundation News

### A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KAY KENADY SANGER:

IN THE MONTHS FOLLOWING the successful Pacific 2000 conference on the Big Island of Hawaii in August, the Easter Island Foundation board of directors has been busy conducting business on-line. Board members have had an opportunity to respond to a proposal that outlined various directions that the Foundation might take in the years to come. A majority of the members voted positively for the following:

- That we continue our focus on Easter Island, with the possibility of future projects on other Polynesian islands
- To keep the name, Easter Island Foundation, An Institute for Pacific Studies
- To maintain the Foundation headquarters in California, at least for the present
- To provide grants for scientific projects on Easter Island and other Polynesian islands
- To provide scholarships to qualified Rapanui students
- To contribute books and educational materials to the island school and to the Indigenous Guides Association on the island
- To continue our support of the William Mulloy Library on Easter Island

The Easter Island Foundation leadership is more organized and focused than ever before and we are looking forward to the future with confidence. We have committees in place with members who are enthusiastic about achieving our goals. We are investigating new ways to contribute to the conservation of Easter Island's unique archaeological heritage. To meet our funding goals for these projects, we need your support, so please keep your financial contributions coming. We also would welcome contributions of time and energy from members who are interested in serving on committees or on the board. However you choose to help the Easter Island Foundation, we want you to know that we appreciate your support and we hope that you agree that we are on the right track in our efforts to assist our favorite island in the center of the world.

Our congratulations to the Museo Antropologia Padre Sebastián Englert (MAPSE) which has received a matching grant from the Andes Foundation to assist with its expansion project, under the able leadership of acting director, Francisco Torres. Our thanks to EIF board member, Fr. Francisco Nahoe, for his excellent job of serving as our new liaison with the Biblioteca William Mulloy and as our representative to the museum (MAPSE) board.

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