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Letters

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the possible loss of small pieces of stone. Finally, a cleaning
was carried out to eliminate the dirt that had accumulated over
the years when the moai was exposed to traffic. During the en-
tire process the moai remained under a plastic tarp. The present
good state of conservation should last at least 15 years, and the
process then should be repeated.

The Fonck Museum has a project of remodeling the three
halls dedicated to Easter Island. This remodel will permit the
exposition of the 1,400 items that the museum possesses in a
modern museum site. To better protect the moai, we hope to
place it inside the museum.

The Corporacion Museo Fonck wishes to publicly thank
the Easter Island Foundation and Dr. William Liller and his
wife for their donations of money that permitted this costly con-
servation treatment of the moai from Ahu One Mahiki.

Maururu, Dr Claudio Etcheverry P, President, and
Dr Adolfo Fernandez C., Vice President

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR,

[Enclosed is] a photocopy of a postcard which has the
same image as the photograph of the shipwrecked crew of the
El Dorado (it would have been good if it had been a different
image) [See RNJ 15(1):36]. I bought this card at a postcard fair
a year or so ago. It was an expensive card but I took a leap of
faith and bought it, as, written on the back in pencil, it said
"wrecked off Easter Island". None of the books in my Easter
Island collection mentioned the El Dorado and I put the card
away in a drawer and forgot about it, until reading the journal
last night I find the entire fascinating story. I'm glad I bought
the card. Unfortunately it is not used so there is no definite date
[on the card], and no publisher's name but the instructions are
in English. I would say that from the sepia tone and the "This
space for Correspondence" it is likely to be roughly contempo-
raneous with 1914/15 or so. The fact that there were postcards
probably indicate that the story was well known at the time.
This has spurred me and I will try to do some more research.

Best wishes and keep up the good work.

David Maddock, Hants, UK

Thanks, David, for a fascinating follow-up on the ill-fated
El Dorado. It is assumed that Captain Benson went on the lect-
ercuit after he returned (at least we know that he intended
to do so, and thus took his lifeboat with him on his return from
Tahiti). He likely used the lectures as opportunities to sell his
book, and had the postcards printed as further items to sell to his
audiences. There must be more postcards out there somewhere.
Katherine Routledge mentions the wreck of the El Dorado in
her book, The Mystery of Easter Island (p.126-7). Percy Ed-
monds commented to Routledge that Captain Benson "had been
a whaler in his day." Ed.

DEAR EDITOR,

Last Monday I received 15(1) of Rapa Nui Journal. The
Journal has become an impressive publication, but then it was

before as well. This is particularly so for the article I just read. I
feel it has given me inspiration. This is the short paper by Riet
Delsing “Pacific Voyaging: A Subjugated Knowledge.”

I cannot truly express my feelings about this presentation.
It puts into words many of my thoughts about what I have
called the Nusantao Maritime Trading and Communication
Network. Many archaeologists and prehistorians have
considered my ideas and concept of the Nusantao as total
nonsense. I have had two different feelings about this, one that I
have been unable to explain my concepts of the Nusantao and
the evolution of these concepts and the other that the critics are
right, it is total nonsense. As time goes on, I feel more and more
that my first expressed feeling is correct.

I have attempted to present the evolution of my thoughts
and concepts on the Nusantao in an article that is presumably
coming out this month in the proceedings of a small symposium
that was held in Finland last November. This conference was
organized by Clifford Sather (csather@ieas.unimas.my) with
the water people of Borneo as its subject. I was not able to par-
ticipate in this conference but Cliff very kindly asked me to
contribute a paper explaining my hypothesis of the Nusantao
Maritime Network. I was willing to do this, as over the last year
I have been feeling more confident that my ideas on this subject
are not nonsense.

I include here my latest definition of the Nusantao
Maritime Trade and Communications Network (Solheim, n.d.):

I have defined, redefined and discussed several times the
Nusantao Maritime Trade and Communications Network
2000). Amongst other things I added “Communication” to
the title (Solheim 1994). Also, I originally referred to the
people as the Nusantao and included many different
varieties of maritime orientation as defining these people.
When I use the title “Nusantao Maritime Trade and
Communication Network” I am referring only to a portion
of the Nusantao people, i.e., those involved in maritime
trade. There are no clear boundaries between the many
different maritime orientations of these people as some of
them often change for a time from one orientation to
another and at times are involved in two or more of these
orientations. As an example, a common situation is men
being away from their homes for several months fishing,
and then trading the dried or smoked fish for money or
other materials, but their spouses and children remain at
home and tend to the farming. Always the maritime part of
this is the unifying element of “Nusantao.”

I would like to add here that the “Nusantao people”
who are not maritime traders were and are descended from
the people of the Nusantao Maritime Trade and
Communication Network who were and are active traders
and these Nusantao people were and are still very maritime
oriented.

The origin of my thoughts on the Nusantao Maritime
Trade and Communication Network began through my
development of the concept of the Sa Huynh-Kalanay Pottery
Tradition. This concept has been questioned by many as being
so loose and all-encompassing that it has no meaning. I was
therefore delighted last year to receive a copy of an honors
thesis by Ambika Flavel for the Bachelor of Science Degree
with the Centre for Archaeology of the University of Western
Australia (1997). This statistically tested the concept of the Sa Huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition. I need to thank David Bulbeck for sending me a copy. Details of this thesis are presented in my article to be published in June 2001. I only need to say here that her study demonstrated that the Sa Huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition, as I have proposed it, is real and includes the site of Gua Cha in Peninsular Malaysia. She added several items of description to the definition.

What does Riet Delsing’s article in Rapa Nui Journal have to do with my definitions and evolution of the Nusantao Maritime Trading and Communication Network? One of the difficulties, apparently, with accepting the concept of the Network is in conceiving of a network that is not planned by its members or recognized by them. Delsing’s article, to me at least, points out the difference of viewpoint between a traditional, western anthropologist (archaeologist) and the people being studied. Traditionalist western archaeologists put concepts into a western context, in this case where a network would have to be planned and organized by some sort of leadership. In the case of the Nusantao Maritime Trading and Communication Network there was no plan and no one organized it; it just developed through the expansion of the area through which the Nusantao maritime traders explored and became acquainted, along coastlines and up major rivers.

Delsing is concerned with Polynesian voyagers, navigators, and traders and their folklore which has been taken as myth by traditional western anthropologists. I have hypothesized that the Polynesian voyagers were a part of the expanding Nusantao Maritime Trading and Communication Network and if this is correct, her arguments would apply as well to the Nusantao people of Southeast Asia and elsewhere. One difference, however, is that no one has made any attempt in the very little research on the present-day Nusantao to find out if they have any folk history concerning the origin of their way of life. Because there have been so many changes over the several thousand years of their existence, all folk history of their early origins may be long forgotten. We won’t know until we ask them.

Wilhelm Solheim II
The Philippine Islands

REFERENCES


