

Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

Volume 21 | Issue 1

Article 13

2007

Rapa Nui, Island of Memory (Review)

Paul G. Bahn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj>



Part of the [History of the Pacific Islands Commons](#), and the [Pacific Islands Languages and Societies Commons](#)

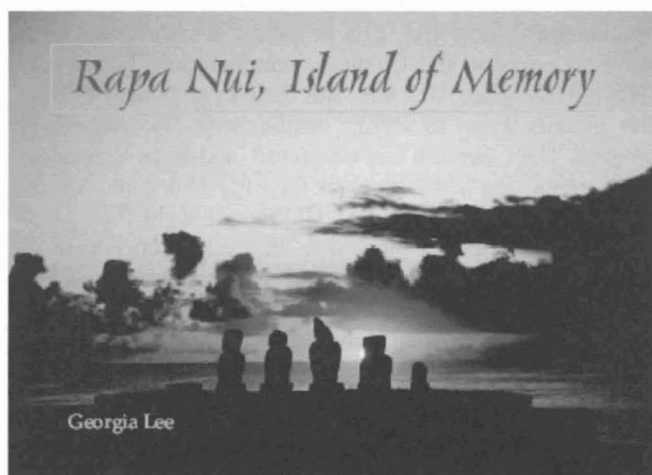
Recommended Citation

Bahn, Paul G. (2007) "Rapa Nui, Island of Memory (Review)," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol21/iss1/13>

This Book or Media Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Hawai'i Press at Kahualike. It has been accepted for inclusion in Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation by an authorized editor of Kahualike. For more information, please contact daniel20@hawaii.edu.

pologists such as Terry Jones, Kathryn Klar, and Roger Green, it is inevitable that the case for Polynesian contacts with the New World will provide data that must be considered within the overall discussion of Polynesian activity in the eastern Pacific. Atholl Anderson, Terry Jones, Kathryn Klar and the other archaeologists mentioned in this review are all working simultaneously to reshape the study of Polynesian prehistory, and it is from the dialogue between their ideas that the future of the discipline will emerge. Chinese proverbs aside, I would say we are lucky to live in interesting times. ❧



Rapa Nui, Island of Memory

by Georgia Lee
Easter Island Foundation, 2006
ISBN 1-880636-23-9

Review by Paul G. Bahn

THIS DELIGHTFUL BOOK is aptly described as a love letter to the people of Rapa Nui and their island. Richly illustrated with photographs and the author's own drawings, it is not a chronological account of her association with the island, but rather a tapestry of tales arranged thematically around a host of characters and topics.

Georgia Lee first visited Rapa Nui in June 1981, at a time when she was emerging from a bad marriage and starting a new life and career. Her research project on Rapa Nui's rock art was to last more than six years, and produced – in addition to a classic monograph – not only an abiding and passionate love for the place and its inhabitants, but also eventually a new man in her life.

Before she arrived, the island's rock art was known from only a few sites: Henri Lavachery, during the Franco-Belgian expedition of the 1930s, had mostly sketched motifs from horseback and reported 209 petroglyphs. Georgia and her crews, through painstaking and often arduous systematic survey of caves, rocks and outcrops, recorded around 4000, as well as thousands of cup-marks. The rock art proved to be so abundant and varied – indeed easily the richest in the Pacific – that she was, alas, unable to include

the *moai* in her study, and had to leave them to the attentions of others.

The book really highlights the changes of all kinds that she has seen on the island over the past 25 years. At the first, there were few, very primitive, amenities and dusty roads. Now it is a very different place in many ways. She tells numerous stories, including that of the infamous Hollywood movie, to illustrate the multiple strange twists and turns of modern Rapa Nui history. There has been damage to the archaeology, such as vandalism of petroglyphs; projects like the Tongariki reconstruction; and all kinds of crazy schemes from lighthouses to revolving restaurants to golf courses.

The author's cascade of memories inevitably revolves around islanders she knows well and loves, but she maintains a healthy skepticism about their frequent tales of lost caves and so forth. She vividly conveys something of the trials and tribulations of running a field project in a remote location, and of the wide range of types who came as volunteers. We also get brief accounts of major names like Mulloy and Heyerdahl, as well as some of the nuttier theories that the island's archaeology constantly inspires.

I believe it is obvious to all specialists and indeed all true Rapanuiphiles that it is Georgia Lee who has become the "matriach" of the island through her unrivalled all-encompassing knowledge of its culture, both past and present; her continuing passion for helping the islanders, not least through the establishment of the Easter Island Foundation; and, of course, through the creation of this *Journal*, unquestionably the single most important source of information about Easter Island. Although she is hugely different in so many ways from the redoubtable Katherine Routledge, one can certainly say that Georgia Lee – in terms of both scholarship and concern for the island – is Routledge's true successor, and her very enjoyable and readable memoirs cannot be recommended highly enough.

Dare one hope that in the future she might produce a second edition in which she names more names and employs less discretion!?

TATTOO TRADITIONS OF HAWAII

by Tricia Allen
Mutual Publishing, Honolulu
2006; ISBN 1-56647-770-0
218 pages, 133 figures, soft-cover. Price \$ 17.95
www.tattootraditions.alohaworld.com

Review by Sidsel Millerstrom

I AM DELIGHTED THAT TRICIA ALLEN, with her unique experiences as an anthropologist and a practicing tattoo artist, has used her wealth of knowledge to weave the complex cultural tapestry of ancient and contemporary tattoo practices into a book. Her sensitivity to Hawaiian socio-cultural issues is evident throughout her work. Research on ancient tattoos is not an easy subject to investigate for tattoo motifs, similar to rock art, have layers of meaning in the Hawaiian