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The Day The Stones Walked (Review)

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greater economic prestige, more personal rights for women as equal partners and citizens.

Santa Coloma notes, for example, that still today, in the early 21st century, for proper medical attention the Rapanui will fly to Santiago or Pape‘ete, if they can drum up the substantial funds. There is, even now, no trust in the local hospital.

Death plays a large role in Rapanui life. Indeed, almost constantly on this island where everyone is related to everyone else, at least once a fortnight, some relative will die. Whereupon, like *rigor mortis* itself, the death traditions set in. Accepting stoically, even calmly, life’s last gift, the Rapanui hold communal rites. These are, again and again, re-enacted with public pomp and demonstration—always dignified, respectful. Death is seen as the culmination of life and transition to another world: the hybrid heritage from ancient Polynesia and Catholicism. Santa Coloma describes all this with acute understanding and sympathy. Many more young Rapanui are now dying on the island. due to tragic road accidents, the result of an alarming increase in alcoholism and drunk-driving. More and more graves of the young now adorn the hauntingly beautiful cemetery near Tahai. Most Rapanui who live abroad wish, when they die, to be brought back to the island to lie there, too. But the cemetery is now wall-to-wall.

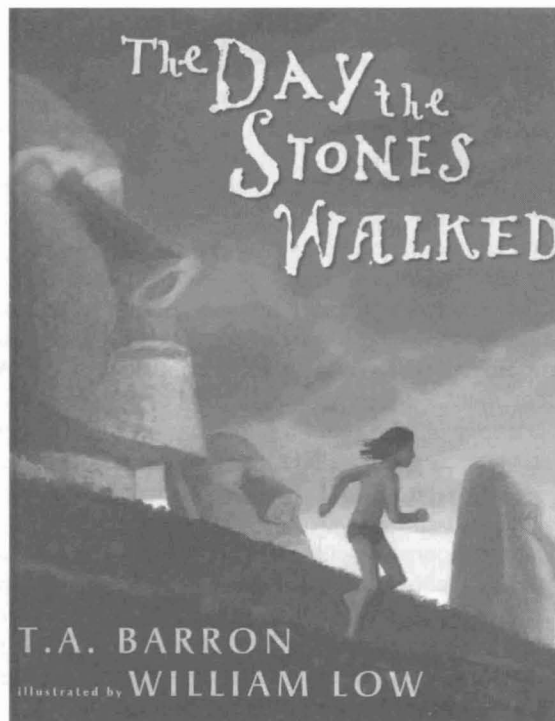
Emigration and immigration as well, their causes and effects, have caused enormous changes on Easter Island. Young Rapanui are now identifying more with Polynesia than with Chile; many declare their preference to study in Hawai‘i or Tahiti. The Rapanui identity, despite growing numbers of mixed offspring, comprises also a surprising rejection of the “Chilean identity”. However, the immediate financial benefits of a Chilean spouse are recognized by the Rapanui, who desire a strong connection to the mainland, as it is a base for better education and a career. Advancement in general is still to be had from the Chilean, not the Rapanui identity.

Language, above all, defines the current “us versus them” mentality on the island. However, fewer young Islanders speak Rapanui: today only 25% of those between 16 and 30 can communicate with one another in Rapanui. “Castellano”—the Spanish language—rules.

Santa Coloma addresses these and many more fascinating topics, with astute observation: deeply, insightfully, authoritatively, personally, realistically, and above all honestly. No, she is no epigone to Grant McCall; she is surely a trailblazer in her own right. Such a study as hers appears only once in a generation. Santa Coloma is to be congratulated ... and immediately translated into English for the larger international audience to read, enjoy, and profit from this splendid achievement.

Rapa Nui: Guardianes de la Tradición is the best of plain speaking. Francis Bacon would be proud.

(Steven Roger Fischer’s latest book is *Island at the End of the World: The Turbulent History of Easter Island*, London: Reaktion Books 2005.)



THE DAY THE STONES WALKED
by T.A. Barron; illustrations by William Low

Philomel Books
ISBN 978-0-399-24263-2
Hardcover, 30 pages

Review by Tom Christopher

FINALLY, SOMEONE HAS WRITTEN an Easter Island book for children that is just that. It's a little story about a boy, Pico, his father (a *moai* carver), and a tidal wave that brings the two together in an appreciation of their heritage. The illustrations by William Low are true to their subject matter and have the powerful feel one gets when viewing the *moai* in person. The story, although fictional, has that same feel, probably due to the author's genuine appreciation for the place, the people, and their marvelous works.

This book even passed the grandchildren test! It held the interest of a five and an eight year old who, up until now, have been reluctant to share their Grandfather's appreciation for all things Rapanui. For that, I thank T.A. Barron and the illustrator, William Low.

**RAPA NUI PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY OF
WILLIAM HYDER**

www.flickr.com/photos/wdhyder/sets/72157594503101797/

Review by Paul Horley

A NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY devoted to Easter Island appeared on the Internet, featuring great photos taken by William D. Hyder in the framework of the Rock Art Recording project directed by Georgia Lee. Detailed information about this project can be found in her wonderful books: