

# Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

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Volume 21 | Issue 1

Article 21

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2007

## Francesco di Castri (Obituary)

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### Recommended Citation

(2007) "Francesco di Castri (Obituary)," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol21/iss1/21>

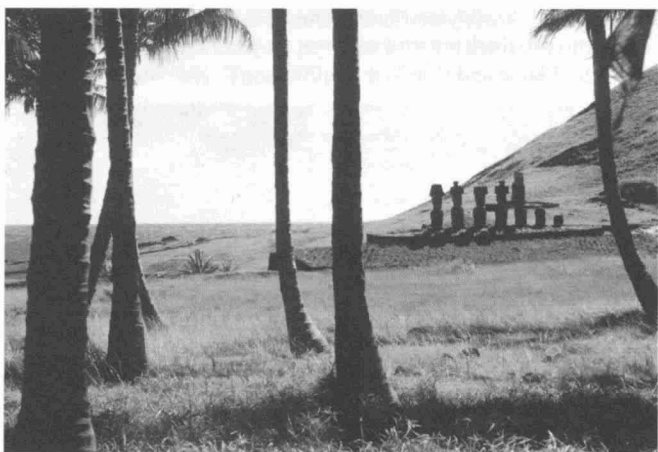
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The sea wall at Ahu Nau Nau is nearly covered with sand, hiding the wall and many petroglyphs. Elaine and Don Dvorak, 2007.



Front view of Ahu Nau Nau. Sand covers the ramp leading up to the *ahu*. Photo by Elaine and Don Dvorak, 2007.



View of 'Anakena and Ahu Nau Nau in 1986. Then, sand was only in the immediate areas of the beach. Now sand covers grass, petroglyphs, reaches to the base of the *ahu* platform, and encroaches on the grassy areas and palm trees. Photo: Georgia Lee.

penhagen, published in the science journal *Biological Bulletin*, called the new species *Eptatretus strickrotti*, honoring the captain of the ALVIN submersible who collected it. Hagfish resemble eels only with a ring of tentacles around their mouths and large slime glands along their bodies that emit a thick slime that sticks to everything. They live on muddy sea floors in groups and, as scavengers, they burrow into dead or dying animals and eat them from the inside (we are not making this up). In Korea, nearly 5 million pounds of hagfish are eaten annually.

A. Gouveia, *Cape Cod Times*, 17 February 2007

#### CHILE

CHILE'S PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY (MOP) announced projects aimed at attracting more tourists to Easter Island as well as to Robinson Crusoe Island, two of Chile's most popular tourist destinations. US\$2.4 million will be spent on road improvements so that tourists can travel from Hanga-roa village to the various island sites. Once completed, the island's roads will have a 46 kilometer tourist circuit.

*La Tercera*, 12 November 2006.

#### OBITUARY

EASTER ISLAND HAS LOST A FRIEND. Francesco di Castri, 74, ecologist, former deputy director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and former president of the World Science Institute, died July 6, 2005. He was the founding director of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program and was considered one of UNESCO's principal contributors in promoting international cooperation on environmental issues. He was the director of the French CNRS Centre for Functional and Evolutionary Ecology, worked as a university professor in Chile, and was an expert on Easter Island. Dr. di Castri authored more than 20 books and 350 articles, his work addressing such matters as soil biology, the convergence of Mediterranean ecosystems and the structure of animal communities from the tropics to Antarctica. He contributed several articles for *Rapa Nui Journal*, including "The Dynamic Future of Rapa Nui" (*RNJ* 17(1), May 2003:44-48; and "A Moai in Michelangelo Marble" (*RNJ* 19(1), May 2005:51-52).

Over the years we were privileged to carry on a lively conversation with Francesco, via email. His letters expressed his love for Easter Island, but also dismay over its seemingly unsolvable problems. In early 2003, he wrote that he had just spent two weeks on the island, reviewing economic and social developments and talking with local authorities and entrepreneurs, operators of tourism, and those with very diverse aspirations. He visited sites for new hotels, new plantations of fruit and flowers, reviewed coastal erosion projects, and gave advice on the enormous erosion at Poike, as well as problems of livestock. He wrote that, "I now understand much better the diverse psychologies and aspirations of islanders. The most impressive change is the land distribution (from Vaihu up to the northern coast) of some 1.900 hectares, which will be followed

soon by another 1.500 hectares. You can find whatever you like in these newly inhabited and cultivated lands, from some decent houses to the most ugly squatters, to just Eucalyptus plantations, or nothing, but certainly an impressive lot of barbed wire fences, padlocks, etc. A large part of the island is, for tourists, now impenetrable. He added that he expected to return to the island the following April to organize a seminar for land development and conditions for island autonomy. But his expectations were not high: "... they change their mind so often, both Rapanui and Chilean, that I really do not know if this will materialize..."

He added, "Of course, some of my conversations with authorities could never be mentioned in a publication because this fragile process would immediately collapse, and we should start again in a dozen years or so. Rapa Nui is in a very dynamic state. According to the laws of thermodynamics, when this process takes place in a non-equilibrium status, it is technically called chaos, and this is precisely the island at present." And he added, "... terrible management problems remain to be solved in Rapa Nui. I think that nowhere else in the world is there an island where, concerning its management, more unprecedented and surprising madness has occurred. It goes from the tragic to the completely ridiculous. Usually, I deal with development issues of such large countries as China, India, Canada or Argentina. But stimulated by a strange mixture of fun and love, I have concentrated a sizeable amount of my time this year (December 2002-January 2003, April and June 2003) on Rapa Nui and Chile."

In December 2004, di Castri wrote, "The situation in Rapa Nui is bad, very bad for its sustainability. In addition to the traffic congestion, including motorbikes and so many taxis (a world record), there is the continuous arrival of poor and uneducated *Continentales*, and the situation of waste disposal and treatment, etc., continues. Land use is a total disaster. Have you realized the level of erosion in Poike (totally eroded) and even around Rano Raraku and Rano Kao? It is also as bad in level parts because of the excess of cattle and horses. All ecosystems in Rapa Nui are under rapid destruction."

Despite frustrations and struggles, we hope that di Castri's valuable contributions to Easter Island's ecological problems may have a positive impact for the future.

## EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION NEWS

### THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As the Spring edition of the *Rapa Nui Journal* goes to press, The Easter Island Foundation is preparing for its annual Board Meeting. Our very active scholarship program continues, and several publications are in the offing. However, our most exciting pending project is the VII International Conference on *Easter Island and the Pacific: Migration, Identity and Cultural Heritage*. The conference, will be held in the Medieval walled city of Visby, Gotland, in

the Baltic Sea, from the 20th to 25th August 2007. The meetings are co-sponsored by Gotland University, Sweden. The conference is developing into a most interesting meeting with several new archaeological and anthropological developments that may alter some of our current thinking about the expansion of the Polynesians across the Pacific. We expect some lively discussions.

The conference is primarily a mechanism to present papers that disclose the latest research results concerning the people of the Pacific Islands, their migrations, and development. However, equally important are the secondary aspects of the conference: meeting face-to-face with colleagues that one might know only from a name on a research paper or perhaps an E-mail. This is an opportunity to meet people from all over the world who share a common interest, and to have extended (or heated) discussions about the latest research or ideas for future research activities. The rapid exchange of ideas over a beer (or two) can be as interesting and productive as some of the formal papers. So, whether you are presenting or not, we encourage all RNJ readers to make every effort to attend the meeting and become part of the formal and informal discussions that will undoubtedly expand the knowledge base for Easter Islanders and peoples of other Pacific islands.

Through the generous assistance of Gotland University, we will have the Conference opening ceremonies at a brand-new conference center, and a Welcome Reception in the Picture Stone Hall at Gotland Museum, arranged by the Municipality of Gotland. In addition, we have not forgotten about those traveling with Conference attendees. Visby, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is surrounded by a 13<sup>th</sup> century wall with ramparts, towers and gates. Some of the activities include guided tours of a cave system; tours to Medieval churches and other structures; the Botanical Gardens; or a picnic at one of the numerous beaches; golf is also available. And we hear the shopping is super!

Following the meeting is a Post-Conference Tour, taking in rune stones, megaliths, petroglyphs, castles, the Kon-Tiki Museum, the Viking Ship Museum, and ending in Stockholm. It promises to be a wonderful adventure.

We hope you all enjoy this edition of the *Rapa Nui Journal* and we look forward to seeing you in person in Sweden.

David L. Rose

### EIF SCHOLARSHIPS

THE MEMBERS OF THE *Comission Fundacion* Easter Island have chosen three Rapanui students to receive the scholarship awards provided by the EIF. The winners are:

**Viviana Ana Hereveri Figueroa** (7th semester of administration of hotels and restaurants, at the Instituto "INACAP"); Viviana received the Nicholas Haoa Sr. Memorial Award.

**Akivi Hanga-Hoonu Atan Soto** (6th semester teaching of Physical Education at the Universidad de Catolica de Valparaíso) won the Easter Island Foundation Award;