WHAT'S NEW IN POLYNESIA

Rarotonga
Rapanuiphile Malcolm Clark informs us that a Japanese team led by Professor Masashi Chikamouri claims that Rarotonga was settled earlier than previously believed. They uncovered a marae on a motu in Ngatangiia lagoon which puts Polynesian settlement on Rarotonga at some 1500 years ago (~500 AD). The marae was found underneath another one on Motu Tapu. Both are about 100 metres square. Existing legend has it that Rarotonga was settled about 1000 years ago by Kainuku Ariki and Pa Ariki. Now it seems they were comparative newcomers. (News item dated October 21 1997). Clark adds: “from my supernova studies, the following scenarios are possible:
A. Samoa (64 AD) Tahiti (247 AD) Rarotonga;
B. Samoa (247 AD) Rarotonga;
C. Samoa (76 AD) Nuku Hiva (386 AD) Rarotonga;
D. Samoa (76 AD) Suwarrow (185 AD) Aitutaki (185 AD) Rarotonga.”

Tahiti
France has dismantled two-thirds of the installations at the nuclear test site at Moruroa Atoll. The remainder is expected to be dismantled by July. Some 500 people are employed for this project and it is said that only one platoon of Foreign Legionnaires (30 men) will remain on the atoll. Monitoring is expected to go on for 5-10 years to verify radioactivity levels in the area.

Pacific News Bulletin 12(9) 1997

Fiji
The Department of Literature and Language of the University of the South Pacific has a research project underway, headed by Jan Tent and Dr Paul Geraghty, to study loanwords in Polynesian languages that were introduced by the Dutch. The first Europeans to enter the southern Pacific were Dutch: Le Maire and Schouten (1616); Tasman and Visscher (1643); and Roggeveen (1722). The expeditions spent time in Tonga, plus one of Roggeveen’s ships was wrecked on Takapoto in the Tuamotus (See Rapa Nui Journal 8(3) and 8(4) for more about this wreck). Five of Roggeveen’s men deserted on Takapoto and their presence on the island likely produced a number of linguistic borrowings. One loanword from Malay appears to have been introduced by Tasman into western Polynesia.

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WHAT'S NEW IN HANGA ROA

• There are now 17 taxis on the island. Locals use them as well as tourists who find them an inexpensive way to see or get around the island.

• Two films have been made on the island recently. One, by a French company, is called Les Iles and is directed by Henri Herre. It concerns a French couple that comes to Easter Island to leave the ashes of a brother. Before this project, a special program was filmed for Chile’s Travel Channel. Nueva Imagen is bilingual (English and Spanish), and it is part of a project that includes all of Chile. The Rapa Nui episode lasted 30 minutes and should be seen in Chile next July.

• In November, Sir Edmund Hillary (the first man to reach the top of Mt. Everest) was on the island. Also in November, national television began filming a soap opera about a typical situation: a native Rapa Nui girl and a continental Chilean guy fall in love and try to cope with cultural problems. This soap, called “Iorana”, is a new TV series of TVN (TV Nacional) and one of the most popular programs in Chile. The filming of was not as easy as anticipated. The Consejo de Ancianos #2 demanded 800,000 pesos for permission to make the film there. TVN refused to pay but offered to construct a building for the island community. But this did not satisfy the Consejo #2, which insisted that TVN pay for the “use of their cultural patrimony.”

• Chilean sources have informed us that this year the island expects to have 20 thousand tourists, a significant increase that will stress the available resources.

• The Rapanui canoe club, Mata Hoe Vaka Kahu O Hera, has donated two more outrigger canoes which are on the way to the island from California, courtesy of the Chilean Navy. The newest is dubbed Matarena and was donated by Tito Paoa and Tina Haoa, Rapanui islanders living in California; the other, used canoe, (as yet unnamed) was obtained with the help of