as well as its natural resources. Preservation, sustainable development, and the dissemination of information about the culture of Easter Island through academic activity, are some of the objectives of the new Centro de Estudios.

José Miguel Ramírez, director, stated that in order to reach these objectives, the Centro will be associated with the Fonck Museum, the Biblioteca Rapa Nui, and the Easter Island Foundation. Working together for academic exchange, publications and seminars, research and public extension are the main purposes, but the more specific common goals are to look for a new building for the Center at the Fonck Museum and the organization of the Sixth International Conference on Rapa Nui and Polynesia at the University of Valparaiso in Chile, in 2004.

The concept of having agreements with foundations and organizations is that it will facilitate the to receiving of support for conservation and sustainable development of the island. “We wish to assume the agreement that signifies Chile’s (and Valparaíso’s) historic connection with Rapa Nui,” Ramírez commented. He noted that there exists scientific information in all fields and that, without doubt, these contribute to the culture of Rapa Nui and its people.

The new Centro de Estudios Rapa Nui is now a part of the Instituto de Estudios Humanísticos of the Universidad de Valparaíso. One of their first projects will be an English/Spanish paper on the history of Rapa Nui from 1888, with Grant McCall. Besides research and publications in English, Ramírez stated that he would like to publish a Spanish-language version of the Rapa Nui Journal.

He also envisions the involvement of the local Rapanui community, including students. The Centro will function under the Faculty of Humanities of the Universidad de Valparaíso, and is located at 1 Oriente 74, Viña del Mar.

“We will work on the interests and the necessities of the island, and in this context, it is equally valuable to make Rapa Nui known to Chileans because, curiously, foreigners know more about the island than we do,” said Ramírez.

The “ceremonia académica” for the official opening of the Centro de Estudios Rapa Nui took place in the Sala Rubén Darío of the Centro de Extensión de la Universidad de Valparaíso, on 22 November 2001.

After a short presentation by Carlos Verdugo Serna, the Director of the Instituto Humanístico, Alma Campbell, the daughter of the late musicologist Ramon Campbell, introduced a choral group which sang one of her father’s songs inspired by the island. A speech by José Miguel Ramírez followed concerning the aims of the Centro.

A new edition of Father Sebastián Englert’s book on the legends of Easter Island, was introduced and this was followed by a dance performance by Karu Henua, a group of young Rapanui students from the University in Valparaíso.

Grant McCall presented a talk concerning the years around 1888 and the take-over of Easter Island by Chile and Policarpo Toro. McCall stated that he has searched in vain for the original document that gave Chile the official right to take charge of the island. However, he showed a contemporary copy that was not, of course, a Xerox (1888!) but was hand-written. It showed that six islanders had signed it with “Xs” after their names. While not quite saying that because the document no longer exists and the whole thing might have been a fabrication, McCall suggested this possibility.

José Miguel Ramírez-Aliaga, Director, Centro de Estudios Rapa Nui, Universidad de Valparaiso, can be reached at: rapanui@uv.cl

WHAT’S NEW IN HANGA ROA

AN EARTHQUAKE OCCURRED ON 15 FEBRUARY some 600 miles Southeast of Hanga Roa, intensity of 6.0 at a depth of ten km. The time was 01:46:38 UTC. The USGS chart below shows the plate boundaries, seismic events since 1990 to the present (dots) and the recent event (star). More information on USGS web site: http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/bulletin/020215014638_H.html

Earthquakes over the centuries surely made an impact on Rapa Nui, and likely caused damage to the archaeological sites. Many think that strong quakes in the past caused some of the island’s statues to fall.

AN ARTICLE IN EL MERCURIO DE VALPARAISO STATED, “Easter Island Could Become Independent, if the ‘Carta Fundamental’ is Altered”. The article explained that congressmen from both parties were analyzing the possibility of administrative independence for the island. It is clear that islanders are in favor of more autonomy. The ‘Carta Fundamental’ was written around 1950, and it defined the twelve regions of Chile; Easter Island was assigned to the Fifth Region (Quinta Region or V Region), and some senators suggested that it was time to make a
change. Underneath the article was a section titled “Islanders”. In it, Mayor Petero Edmunds was quoted as saying that it is inconceivable that island problems are resolved four thousand kilometers away. And then he pointed out that it is ridiculous that a letter takes five hours to go from Easter Island to Santiago, but then it takes 15 days to get to Valparaiso. Edmunds also complained that a gravely ill islander who is flown to the continent lands in Santiago at night, and then reaches a Valparaiso hospital at 1 or 2 a.m. when there are no medical specialists on duty.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 16 October 2001*

A NEW SUPPORT NETWORK FOR ISLA DE PASCUA. “Amigo Rapa Nui” is the name for a group in Chile who love the island and who wish to send support to the island inhabitants in order to strengthen the richness of its culture. The formation of this group was announced by the island’s mayor, Pedro Edmunds Paao, Dr Cristian Ovalle, president of the new group, and Vicente Vidal, administrative chief for UNESCO in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNESCO is backing this initiative.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 9 November 2001*

A WAVE OF ROBBERIES has been cleared up on the island. The carabineros solved some eleven robberies that have affected both residents and tourists. Stolen goods that were recovered included television sets, musical instruments and cameras. These were valued at more than 4 million pesos (US$6000). An 18 year-old man and two minors, aged 16 and 17, were detained. According to authorities, they are still looking for two other members of this band that was operating on Rapa Nui.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 18 November 2002*

THE EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARD was presented to this year’s winner, Alfonso Juan Francisco Rapu Cardinali (“Pancho”) who is studying to become an architect. It was a close contest with many applicants. The applicants were finally narrowed down to five semi-finalists: Jose Dinamarca Tepano (age 24); Jose Hereveri Pate (age 17); Ioan Soler Hotu (age 20); Jorge Zuniga Tuki (age 22); and Alfonso Juan Francisco Rapu Cardinali (age 28). Our congratulations to all the contestants and we wish we could provide them all with scholarships.

The award winner, Pancho Rapu, attends La Universidad del Desarrollo in Santiago where he is a 6th year student. Pancho hopes that the knowledge gained from his studies will contribute to the growth and development of the island. His last workshop report dealt with plans for a new airport at Mataveri and he is now preparing a final thesis for his professional title.

The Governor of Rapa Nui, Enrique Pakarati Ika, who was part of the selection committee, added that the scholarship awards are of great benefit to Rapanui students, representing both important assistance and incentive. Our thanks to Don Enrique Pakarati Ika, Governor; Viki Haoa Cardinali; and Ricardo Tuki Hereveri. We are grateful to Marla Wold of the EIF for her assistance on this project. Please keep in mind that anyone can make a donation (tax-deductible) to the Foundation for a scholarship and we would be delighted to provide assistance to other students.

A MEETING OF MERCOSUR (Market of the South) took place on the island in February, with attendees from Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, plus invited persons from Europe. This 11th Meeting for cultural exchange proposed legislation in favor of cultural and educational initiatives to be applied to Easter Island. Mayor Petero Edmunds Paao and the president of the Consejo de Ancianos, Alberto Hotus Teave urged attendees to avoid the “destruction of Easter Island.” Edmunds stated that “We are a community of more than 3000 inhabitants, we are an ancestral people with 16,000 archaeological sites that need to be protected with a special treaty.” It was urged that a modern constitutional legislation be created, not just a decree that can be “erased when convenient.” Petero Edmunds further said that the Rapanui need to have internal autonomy — still Chilean, but with self-determination. Alberto Hotus agreed, but then Levi Araki Tepano interrupted with shouts, saying that Alberto does not represent *all* Rapanui. Hotus responded by saying he was elected by popular vote, and then put forth petitions asking for land, scholarships for students, and the definition of an electoral district for the island. Mayor Edmunds pointed out that, because everyone is a descendant of Hotu...
Matu’a, all Rapanui think themselves kings. Whether the Cultural Parliament of Mercosur will result in anything concrete for the island is a complete unknown, but people are trying. All Rapanui who spoke agreed that internal autonomy is what is needed, and next week if you don’t mind (Grant McCall).

In March, Following the Mercosur Meeting, the Comisión de la Verdad y del Nuevo Trato, which comes from the Ley Indigena, got moving. A sub-committee of this Comisión is headed by Mayor Edmunds, with Raul Teao and Mario Tuki as associates. They gathered at the Centro del Adulto Major, near the hospital, where they listened to complaints made by Rapanui and wrote them down. Teao listened about laws; Te Ra’i about economic development, Mario about education, and Te pano about bad treatment in the past. On Wednesday nights the results were presented. In May, a final report is to be written and sent to Santiago. And this was requested by the Chilean government! But more: all was conducted in Rapanui. The meetings, the announcements and the comments are all in Rapanui, but the final report will be in Spanish. Some islanders are skeptical of the whole process but this is the first time in 113 years that the Chilean government has asked the Rapanui about their complaints and what they want. Some young adults in the community feel left out as they do not speak Rapanui. These are people who were raised on the continent or abroad and never learned the Rapanui language. So it is the younger and more educated Rapanui who are least likely to speak the language.

(Grant McCall)

Dengue Fever on Rapa Nui. According to the Institute of Public Health, nearly 3% of the inhabitants of Easter Island have caught the dengue virus but that the outbreak is “under control”. This was confirmed following a report that blood samples of 11 persons tested positive and another 160 are in the category of “clinically confirmed”, i.e. with classic symptoms of the disease. Of these, the majority are islanders and only a few are tourists, said the sub-secretary of Health, Gonzalo Navarrete. Continental Chile is the only country in South America where there is no dengue. It’s bad in Brazil where 27 have died this year. The mosquito Aedes aegypti is the culprit, and it appears to have invaded Rapa Nui from Tahiti. US$37,000 has been put aside to fight the outbreak. LanChile always fumigates the planes coming to the continent from the island; apparently not for those coming from Tahiti.

There was a previous dengue alert on Rapa Nui in 2000. Mayor Petero Edmunds accused the Ministry of Health of not taking the mosquito threat seriously when it was first detected two years ago. Edmunds said that fumigation was postponed then because the necessary funding (US$33,000) was not available, and yet they spent $45,000 to bring the sub-secretary of Health and other authorities to the island on an Air Force plane. “This is absurd,” said Edmunds. “They came to tell me what I should do. They could have called on the telephone.”

La Segunda of Santiago, 18 March 2002; El Mercurio de Valparaiso, 20 March 2002

On the Margins of Sustainability, Prehistoric Settlement of Utrók Atoll, Northern Marshall Islands


Review by Felicia R. Beardsley, Ph.D.

On the Margins of Sustainability is a rich portrait of nearly 2,000 years of occupation on Utrók Atoll, a northern atoll in the Marshall Islands archipelago. It is part and parcel of a larger, integrated archaeological investigation conducted by the author, Dr. Marshall Weisler, on Utrók Atoll and three other atolls within the Republic of the Marshall Islands during his tenure as chief archaeologist for this small nation. Weisler’s project was an ambitious one. His intent, as he tells us in the introductory pages to his monograph, is to outline the culture history and regional north-to-south variation throughout the Marshall Islands—from the timing and sequence of initial settlement to the distribution, density and diversity of occupation, along with recurring patterns of traditional social and political patterns continually renewed upon the taming of each newly settled atoll, coupled with the development and expansion of economic networks active in the historic era and only hypothesized for the prehistoric. The overall project, according to Weisler, is part of an archaeological training program focused on the involvement of local people, in part to establish a tangible and direct link between the contemporary population and their ancestral roots, and in part to establish a mechanism by which the local population can begin to take charge of the conservation and management of their own history.

As one of four atolls selected for a comparison between the dry northern groups and wet southern groups, Utrók is the farthest north. Its position is unique among the four, as it exhibited the least amount of average annual precipitation within the group, just barely within the limits of the biogeographical zone where coconuts still remain viable, but exhibit sparse growth and produce small nuts. This is a precipitous position, where any prolonged period of drought can spell disaster for economically important crops like coconuts and breadfruit, not to mention the resident human population. But it is also an important contribution in any comparative analysis such as this one, as it illustrates (and perhaps stretches our own comprehension of) the capacity for human endurance and perseverance within marginal environments. Such occupations force the question, why? How did people manage to survive under such precarious circumstances?

It is clear Weisler appreciates the process of exploration and discovery. He brings us a clear description of an heretofore obscured corner of life at the northern limits of the intertropical convergence zone, where both currents and climate are influenced by those that dominate the subtropical zone further north. His enthusiasm permeates most of the chapters, and is peppered with his own experiences during his stay in the islands.

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