The 9th Festival of Pacific Arts took place July 22nd - 31st in Palau’s capital, Koror. The festival featured participants from 24 countries and it’s theme, Nurture, Regenerate and Celebrate, was reflected in displays and performances throughout the ten days. Several art forms not previously displayed at the festivals were included: literary arts, architecture, videography and philatelic arts. Despite heavy rains, steamy heat, and muddy fields, the delegations performed to large and enthusiastic crowds from 10 am to midnight, or later. Among the crowds favorites were the Solomon Island pan pipes and the Rapa Nui group, Kari Kari (see photos). Rapanui participants included Lynn Rapu, Hopu Rapu, Akahanga Rapu, Hetu'u Rapu, Tavita Rapu, Matahonu Tepano, Gabriel Osorio, Pedro Chavez, Miguel Arevalo, Patricia Nahoe, Make Pakarati, Marco Rapu and Jimmy Araki. Formal announcements were made that American Samoa will be the official hosts for the 10th Festival of Pacific Arts in 2008.

Tricia Allen
NAURU

After being forced to abandon plans for a radioactive waste dump on a remote mainland site, Australia’s Prime Minister, John Howard, has proposed sending Australia’s low-level nuclear waste to an offshore Pacific island, perhaps Nauru. The repository was to be built on a sheep farm South Australia but, after years of wrangling, the government dropped the plan. Howard stated that the government would try to find a suitable site by going offshore if necessary, to one of the hundreds of islands around the coast. This proposal was attacked by the Labor opposition as a desperate attempt to solve the nuclear waste problem by creating “Pacific solution II” – a reference to the so-called Pacific solution by which unwanted asylum seekers were shipped to Pacific islands. Critics noted that the very idea of storing nuclear waste on a Pacific atoll or in a country like Nauru is dangerous, and should be condemned.

The Guardian Weekly, 14 July 2004

TUVALU

Tuvalu is the planet’s fourth smallest nation – and it is facing extinction. Rising seas and storms are swamping the islands and some Tuvaluans are getting ready to leave their homeland. Critics claim all this is just to get special recognition for “environmental refugees” who wish to settle in New Zealand or Australia. Regardless of the political rhetoric and controversy (such as deleted sections of the Environmental Protection Agency’s draft report on the environment), the waters are rising. Tuvalu’s islands are low-lying and vulnerable and each storm causes more erosion; buildings that used to be in the center of a village are now beachfront property.

HAWAI’I

Moloka’i. Sea Salt is being harvested from the waters off the Hawaiian island of Moloka’i, and rapidly is becoming the new upscale “designer” condiment. Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck), the distinguished anthropologist stated that Hawaiians were the only Polynesians who evaporated dry salt from the sea. Now this ancient practice is making a comeback, and selling for $2 an ounce. Called “Soul of the Sea”, this is the “signature” and main product of Hawaii Kai Corp. It is claimed that Soul of the Sea contains all of the salts and trace minerals of the ocean which means that it is only about 84 percent sodium chloride, or table salt. Some 3 percent consists of salts of potassium, calcium and magnesium, and the remainder is a combination of some 50 trace elements. This is adding to Moloka’i’s economic base. Rather than a big factory, Hawaii Kai has set up a Salt Masters Guild of Hawai’i, “...providing to selected Moloka’i residents a fulfilling, respectable career consistent with island culture.” In March, the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences awarded Soul of the Sea its Star Diamond Award for Outstanding Quality. The Bellagio in Las Vegas is a buyer, in 50-pound sacks. Even before Soul of the Sea, Hawaii Kai was already selling Palm Island Gourmet salt, touted as “an intriguing grade that combines affordability with many of the taste and mineral benefits of Soul of the Sea.” Future plans are for drinking water, a saline facial and hair hydrating spray, a red alae/black lava bath salt, a range of grilling herbs and, possibly, branded cooking utensils, cross-marketing with other food producers who would use Hawaii Kai salt in their recipes, agricultural salts or mineral supplements.

The unique concept on Moloka’i is to keep the solute in the same container (3-by-4-foot polyethylene trays) throughout, thus capturing everything in the water. Water taken out of the ocean today anywhere (except a few coastal areas) has been mixed “at least a thousand times” and the sodium chloride is unvarying. But the trace minerals have much shorter residence times, and that’s why it matters that Soul of the Sea is harvested between Moloka’i and Lana’i and not elsewhere.

Harry Eagar, The Maui News for May 17, 2004

NEW ZEALAND

Wellington uproar: One of Tonga’s senior officials accused New Zealand of refusing to let her enter the country unless she would submit to a pregnancy test. Meleseni Lomu, Tonga’s acting Secretary for Finance, had intended to accompany Tonga’s finance minister for a 4 day meeting of Pacific Forum economic ministers in Rotorua. However, she cancelled the trip after New Zealand officials told her that she must have a pregnancy test or an interview before receiving a visa. Lomu stated that it was insulting to Tongan women to expect them to take pregnancy tests in order to visit the country, and added that, “Only women in Tonga are going through these tests as far as I know. I don’t know why we had to be penalized for one person who went to New Zealand and had a baby there”.

Paul Swain, New Zealand’s Immigration Minister, said there is no mandatory policy requiring women to undergo a pregnancy test to obtain a visa.

Radio New Zealand International, June 18, 2004

KON-TIKI REPLICA TO SAIL, AGAIN....A replica of the Kon-Tiki raft will sail the Pacific in 2005 to study increasing environmental threats to the oceans since Thor Heyerdahl made his original voyage in 1947. One of Heyerdahl’s grandsons will be among the six-man crew which will depart from Peru and head toward Tahiti. The original voyage landed on Rarotonga atoll 4,970 miles from the coast of Peru. It took the original Kon Tiki 101 days to reach that point. Expedition leader Torgeir Saeverud Higruff stated that he wants to highlight environmental threats. The trip is sponsored in part by the U.N. Environment Program.

Since Heyerdahl’s original trip, there have been many changes. The forest in Ecuador where Heyerdahl found the balsa wood for the raft, for instance, has now been cut down by loggers. And global warming may be killing coral reefs and causing more frequent storms in the Pacific. Biologist Dag Oppen-Berntsen will take water samples to study for traces of pesticides and other human chemicals that can damage marine life. They will test to see if oil pollution has been reduced because of tighter international laws.

When asked why they don’t do this from a proper research ship, they reply that by going on a balsa raft gets them more publicity. The are calling the new raft “Tangaroa” after the Polynesian sea god, and it will include solar panels to help transmit pictures to the internet. The project has a budget of $899,200 with the yet-to-be-built vessel due to leave the Peruvian port of Callao on April 28 – the same day as Heyer-
dahl set out in 1947. The original crew included five Norwegians and a Swede. So far, the new crew are just five, including a Swede. They are one crewman short: they still need a good navigator.

*Reuters, September 6, 2004*

**WHAT'S NEW 'IN HANGA ROA**

**CONSTRUCTION ON THE NEW HANGA ROA CATHOLIC SCHOOL** (Hermano Eugenio Eyraud SS.CC) is scheduled to begin at the end of September, now that construction materials have arrived to the island on the ocean tugboat *Galvarino*. The ship also carried cargo to repair the search-and-rescue launch, *Tokerau*, and also for the Gobernacion Maritima de Hanga Roa.

Repairs to the gym should be completed in August. Village rumors say that some APEC folks will be coming to the island in October for a meeting.

The new public school is supposed to be completed in October. By next March, grades kindergarten through the 6th grade will remain at the old school in town and the upper grades will be going to the new school. The old school in town will be given a “face lift”. So far, the road is not paved to the new school, which is located outside the village where the old leper sanatorio used to be.

There also is talk of building a new hospital and a new airport terminal, including reorienting the parking area, which should be farther from the landing strip than it is now.

**BY THE END OF THIS YEAR, a site for a new village cemetery must be found. Expanding the size of the old cemetery is opposed by those who live close to it, and yet most island residents want the cemetery to be near the village. The Mayor’s plan is to place a new cemetery near the west end of the runway, north of the Hotel Iorana. That area cannot have any construction because it is in the path of incoming airplanes, so it is rather a dead zone anyway (no pun intended).**

**A NEW WEBSITE has pictures of the island’s Mercado, and island carvings: http://www.mercadonui.com/index.htm**

**THE TOUR GUIDES OF RAPA NUI, together with Camara de Turismo and other entities, are in the process of finding a way to certify island guides. There are four workshops scheduled and hopefully, by the end of 2004, guides will be given a certification to be an “official guide”. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. The way things are now, anyone – from a taxi driver newly-arrived from Valparaíso on – can call themselves a “guide” regardless of whether they know anything whatsoever about the island and its history.**

**A MARATHON RUN was held on the island in June. It seems to have been a great success, and plans are to continue this event next June. There were several races including a 10k and a 20k run (starting at ‘Anakena beach). Over 100 people came for the event, including runners from Chile, Europe, USA, Finland, Australia, Japan, and China. Some Rapanui also competed in the races. The finish line was in Hanga Roa, near the old Hanga Roa hotel. This seems a good way to bring in some tourism during the slow winter season.**

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**PUBLICATIONS**


Guerra, A. 2004. El colapso social y medioambiental en Rapa Nui. Relacion hombre-medioambiente. *Revista de Arqueologia* (Madrid), No. 279, pp. 28-35. (Paul Bahn comments that, “This is a terrible article that just sits on the fence, saying that clearly the islanders did terrible things to their environment, but probably it was climate that did them in!!")

