
A small moai with pukao and Maria Eugenia Santa Coloma in the Montserrat Museum, Spain. It was donated by a private collector but no other information was available. Photo by Patrick Chapman

WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

The Cunard Line, pioneers of world cruising, will make maritime history in January 2008 when its newest ocean liner, Queen Victoria, sails from New York at the same time as Cunard's Queen Elizabeth 2. The two departures will mark the start of Queen Victoria's "Pathway to the Explorers" cruise and the QE2's start of a 90-day "Pacific and Far East Odyssey." Both ships will sail to Fort Lauderdale for celebrations and then each will head off on different itineraries, reuniting in Sydney at the end of February.

The QE2 will sail around South America, stopping at Valparaiso and then off across the Pacific, with a stop at Easter Island. Note that the ship carries 1,900 passengers plus 1,015 crew. The impact of such a number of people at one time on the island's fragile eco-system stagers the imagination.

LAPITA DESIGNS

The riddle of the mysterious faces on South Pacific artifacts may be solved by research conducted by John Terrell, Curator of Pacific Anthropology at The Field Museum, and Esther M. Schechter, a ResearchAssociate in the Department of Anthropology at The Field Museum. "Lapita" pottery has been found at more than 180 different places on tropical islands located in a broad arc of the southwestern Pacific from Papua New Guinea to Samoa. Experts have long viewed the faces on pottery as human in appearance, and considered them to be a sign that Pacific Islanders long ago may have worshiped their ancestors. But Terrell and Schechter have identified the symbolism on prehistoric pottery excavated at Aitape on the Sepik Coast of northern New Guinea as representing sea turtles. Furthermore, these portraits may be showing us ideas held by early Pacific Islanders about the origins of humankind.

Terrell and Schechter's discovery suggests that a folk-tale recorded on this coast in the early 1970s – a story about a great sea turtle (the mother of all sea turtles) and the origins of the first island, the first man, and the first woman on earth – may be thousands of years old. "Nothing we had been doing in New Guinea for years had prepared us for this discovery," Terrell explained. "We have now been able to describe for the first time four kinds of prehistoric pottery from the Sepik coast that, when considered in series, fill the temporal gap between practices and beliefs in Lapita times and the present day. A plausible reason for the persistence of this iconography is that it has referenced ideas about the living and the dead, the human and the divine, and the individual and society that remained socially and spiritually profound and worthy of expression long after the demise of Lapita as a distinct ceramic style," Terrell added.

Terrell and Schechter acknowledge that more work must be done to pin down their unexpected discovery. Nevertheless, it now looks as if they have deciphered the ancient "Lapita code" and may have rescued one of the oldest religious beliefs of Pacific Islanders from the brink of oblivion. "I was skeptical ... about connecting these designs with sea turtles," Schechter said, "but then a conservation biologist pointed out that some of the designs match the distinctive beach tracks that a green sea turtle makes when she is coming ashore to lay her eggs. Everything made even more sense when we came across the creation story about a great sea turtle and the first man and woman on earth," she added. The story comes from a village only 75 miles away...
from where the Field Museum is working, on the same coast of Papua New Guinea.


**WHAT'S NEW IN FIJI**

FIJI'S TOURIST INDUSTRY IS IN SHOCK over a porno flick filmed at the country's most prestigious resorts. A copy of the film *(The Fijian Sex Story)* was sent anonymously to the *Fiji Times* and the Fiji Police Force has demanded to see it. The cast includes both local and foreign actors. The Australian company that produced it stated that the Prime Minister's Office, Fiji Police Force, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry for Women, Ministry of Tourism, Fiji Audio Visual Commission and the Fiji Visitors Bureau, along with the hotels, all supported the production. However, the president of the Fiji Islands Hotel and Tourism Association said the production made a mockery of the country and that the association did not condone such acts. The Methodist Church's Department of Christian Citizenship called the porno movie "another side effect of tourism" and stated that visitors have no respect for the morals of the Fijians. Police say they will begin inquiries as soon as they get to see the movie.

*Fiji Times: http://www.fijitimes.com October 17*

**WHAT'S NEW IN TONGA**

A NEW VOLCANIC ISLAND has appeared in the Pacific Ocean near Tonga, according to ocean-going eyewitnesses. The crew on board the yacht *Maiken* believe they are the first to see a volcanic island forming off Netafu [Tonga]. As they sailed toward Fiji in August, a crewmember wrote on the yacht's web log: "One mile in diameter and with four peaks and a central crater smoking with steam and once in a while an outburst high in the sky with lava and ashes. I think we're the first ones out here." They had earlier noted pumice floating on the water. Neither Tonga's Ministry of Lands nor the Tonga Defense Service would confirm this new island. Separately, a fishing boat captain, Siaosi Fenukitau, reported seeing the volcanic island arising according to the Matangi Tonga website.

*Matangi Tonga News November 9*

**WHAT'S NEW IN AOTEAROA**

THE DRAMATIC STORY OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST HUMAN MIGRATION is told in a major exhibition, on view from 8 December 2006 to 8 April 2007 at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Incorporating the most recent scientific research in fields as diverse as genetics, linguistics and computer modeling, the landmark Vaka Moana exhibition tells the extraordinary story of the exploration and peopling of the vast Pacific Ocean. In developing this world-class exhibition, Auckland Museum has drawn on its unsurpassed Maori and Pacific collections, as well as the expertise of in-house curators and academic specialists from New Zealand and the Pacific Rim. Some 200 objects from Auckland Museum's collection and other New Zealand and international collections, including rare carvings and a full-size inter-island voyaging canoe, are on display, supported by specially commissioned multi-media installations, interactive displays and a lavish, authoritative tie-in book.

After its Auckland debut, Vaka Moana will go on tour internationally, to the National Museum of Ethnology (Osaka, Japan), the National Museum of Natural Science (Taihuching, Taiwan), the National Museum of Australia (Canberra), and the Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam). The exhibition is also slated to travel to France, the United States and Canada, before returning to New Zealand in 2011. Vaka Moana follows on from the internationally acclaimed Te Maori exhibition of 1984 which signaled the renaissance of Maori culture in New Zealand. It is the most significant touring exhibition to be developed and curated by the Auckland Museum.

**WHAT'S NEW IN TAHIITI**

THE NUMBER OF CONFIRMED CASES of dengue fever in French Polynesia totaled 376 by last November. The epidemic is found in all age groups, but 38% of cases are among young people between the ages of 10 and 19. The dengue virus present in French Polynesia at the moment is serotype 1, which produced a serious epidemic in 2001. The French Polynesia Public Health Ministry said that part of today's population is immune to serotype 1, which should prevent the current epidemic from reaching the same proportions that it did in 2001. Although there are four possible dengue serotypes, there is no cross-immunity between them and no way of predicting which virus will hit from one year to the next. There is no vaccine to protect from the disease. Dengue viruses were reintroduced in the early 1970s after an absence of more than 25 years. Epidemic activity caused by all four serotypes has intensified in recent years with major epidemics on several islands. Dengue is transmitted to humans by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito; it takes between seven and 14 days after a mosquito bite for symptoms to appear. The first symptoms include a high fever, headache, backache, joint pains, nausea, eye pain, and rash. Occasionally dengue produces shock, hemorrhage, and death.

*Teahupresse, November 2*

**WHAT'S NEW ON PITCAIRN**

A DESCENDANT OF FLETCHER CHRISTIAN and two other men have had their sentences upheld for sexual assaults on Pitcairn's young girls. Steve Christian, the great-great-great-great-grandson of *Bounty* mutineer Fletcher Christian, began a prison sentence that rates as one of the
strangest and most disturbing in the world. With his son Randy and a third man, Terry Young, Christian began a three-year term for sexually assaulting young girls on Pitcairn. Together with three other islanders who were also found guilty but escaped prison sentences, the convicts represent almost half the adult male population of the island. Teams of warders from New Zealand, will guard the prisoners over the next few years and British Ministry of Defense police are there to ensure law and order is maintained. As Pitcairn's population is only 47, their presence makes it the most heavily policed place on Earth.

Christian was originally accused with six other men of taking part in systematic sexual assaults on girls as young as eight. The case emerged after a teenage girl told a visiting British policeman she had been raped. The investigation revealed that 35 women had grown up on Pitcairn and many of them had been sexually abused and 31 men, some now deceased, were accused. Seven of the women named Steve Christian, the island's mayor, as their attacker. Eventually he was among those who were tried on Pitcairn. The trial revealed a disturbing picture of systematic sexual abuse. According to one victim, Jacquie Christian, life on the island was pleasant for children: "We could go nice places we wanted to after school, riding our bikes or flying kites." But by the time girls reached 11 or 12, things changed. "Being a girl, we always tried to avoid being anywhere with an adult man...The older you got, the smarter about where you were and who you were with, who was safe to be around and who wasn't. No one spoke out until the police came."

Jacqui, now living in Australia, gave evidence against several Pitcairn men by video link. What happened affected her whole life: "I'm 35 and I still have not been game enough to have children of my own yet." However, a different version was given by other islanders, including Steve Christian, who claimed it was consensual under-age sex. The case, not surprisingly, shattered the community. Some women came forward to report rape while others maintained that under-age sex was part of the culture of Pitcairn. Teenage sex was said to be a consequence of the island's "impassioned ancestry." Merelda Warren, whose brother was acquitted, acknowledged that most women of her generation were having sex at the ages of 12 or 13: "We're Polynesians. In Polynesia we grow up very quickly."

Six of the seven accused were found guilty: Steve Christian, aged 55, got 3 years, his son Randy, 32, received six, and Terry Young, five years. Seventy-nine year-old Len Brown received home detention. All appealed but the verdicts stood and the men began their prison terms. This will not be much of a privation. The men built their own prison, transported in kit form from Britain and specially constructed to house them. It is the most luxurious building on the island and even has indoor plumbing, a Pitcairn extravaganza.

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WHAT'S NEW IN HAWAI'I

HOKULE'A, THE HAWAIIAN VOYAGING CANOE, is on a historic voyage. It has reached Satawal where a 57-foot double-hulled voyaging canoe, Alingano Maisu, was presented to navigator Mau Piailug. The crew's main goal was to deliver the canoe to Piailug, who taught Pacific way-finding to a generation of native Hawaiians and inspired a renaissance in canoe voyaging in Hawai'i. In a ceremony, 16 people were honored as Pwo, master navigators in the sacred brotherhood of Micronesian wayfarers. The Hokule'a will sail on to the islands of Japan.

The Hawai'i sailing voyagers are scheduled to make eight stops at islands or atolls through Micronesia: Pohnpei, Chuuk, Palau, Satawal, Woleai, Ulithi, Yap and Palau, in that order, and through three island nations – the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau – once held as strategic trust territories of the United States under a United Nations mandate after World War II. For the Hawaiian voyaging canoes, the Micronesian islands are part of the reason for the journey, to pay homage to a sister civilization that helped Hawaiians rediscover their ocean navigation tradition.

J. Bruggencate, Honolulu Advertiser

WHAT'S NEW IN LONDON

THE BRITISH MUSEUM HAS HAD an exhibit that is certainly of interest to readers of RNJ. Called "Power and Taboo, Sacred Objects from the Pacific" it concentrates on the Polynesian Triangle, covering the period 1760 to 1860. Displayed are artifacts related to tapu that were collected by Europeans during that time, and used to control the power of the gods. An impressive catalogue, Pacific Encounters, Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1866 by Steven Hooper (288 pages), accompanies the exposition. It contains 72 pages of written text plus 268 photographs, practically all in color. It is splendidly made, with accompanying descriptions and illustrates more objects than are on display.

Some items drew my attention. Of course I first looked at the section dedicated to Rapa Nui and I was a bit disappointed that there was only one small case containing four woodcarvings of birdmen, objects that most of us have seen before. The catalogue, however, illustrates ten objects. (The moai that has been on display in the museum for decades was not moved from its site elsewhere in the building). What struck me was the plank canoe acquired from Nukutavake Island (Tuamotus) by Captain Samuel Wallis during the voyage of H.M.S. Dolphin in 1767; it was donated to the museum in 1771. This is not a model, but a real canoe (without the outriggers), with a length of 3.87 meters. The hull is composed of 45 narrow wooden planks sown together with plaited coir cordage covering battens of split coconut leaf midrib. A carved human figure on the stern is partially broken; only its legs, carved on either side, still remain. But for the rest, this paddling canoe is still in astonishingly good condition.

Of interest was that this canoe, although not from