

Jakubowska, Zuzanna. *Odkryta przypadkiem, pojęta opacznie. Wyspa Wielkanocna w osiemnastowiecznych relacjach podróżników na tle rozważań o spotkaniu kultur* (Discovered by Chance, Interpreted Amiss: Easter Island in the 18th Century Travel Reports as Seen from Intercultural Encounters Perspective)



Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Iberyjskich i Iberoamerykańskich UW, Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2013. 488 pp. ISBN: 978-83-7901-004-2, 978-83-60875-69-8. PLN\$40 (~US\$12) (softcover) in Polish. Available from [www.mhpr.pl](http://www.mhpr.pl).

Review by Rafał M. Wiczczyk, University of Southern Denmark

This book is a prominent collection of 18th century historical accounts of early European expeditions that visited Easter Island. Most of them have never before been published in Polish. The book consists of three parts. The first, spanning 60 pages, sets the historical stage of European exploration of new worlds and includes sociological observations on the meeting of different cultures. The second and main part is the translation of the original accounts of the Dutch, Spanish, English and French expeditions, which are done mostly by the author herself, with the French account translated by Michał Pirecki. The third part spans 120 pages and is a detailed analysis of the included texts.

The author tries to reach as many primary sources as possible, often working not only with the earliest editions, but also with original manuscripts, which reveal many interesting features. Six sources are presented from the Dutch expedition: the two earliest, and quite fantastic, anonymous accounts of Dutch sailors; Bouman's account, Roggeveen's account and two by Carl Friedrich Behrens, one of which is the earlier and almost unknown poem published in 1728 (this one is also presented in the original German). The Spanish expedition is presented in five sources, three of them are from González de Haedo; one from Juan Hervé, and one from Francisco Antonio Agüero e Infanzón. There are 8 accounts from the English expeditions: one each from Captain Cook, the Forsters, William Wales, John Marra, Charles Clerke, Joseph Gilbert, and John Elliott. The French expedition is represented by the sole surviving account of Captain La Pérouse.

In this work, the author stresses the importance of accessing the original material, stating that all too often, scholars of various backgrounds base their assertions and conclusions on abridged or mistranslated material. This is especially true for the editions published in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. One example given is Carl Friedrich Behrens' account as published in 1923, which for many years was a much more easily obtainable source than the original text from which it came; this was heavily edited and differs significantly from Behrens' original account, which was published in 1737 (Jakubowska 2012). The author very elegantly presents examples of this observation. Captain Cook, when writing his own accounts, based some of his writings on the relation of William Wales; Wales' 'ash' by accident became Cook's 'asp'; a single change of letter, but a completely different species of tree. She goes on to give an example of the earliest English translation of Behrens' narrative (Dalrymple 1771), which was itself based on a very poor French translation and not on the original German. Thus, the metaphorical German expression "nach der Schnur" (lit. "after the cord", meaning very straight or as the crow flies) became a literal description of the way Rapanui people divided their fields with the rope for Cook and G. Forster, but also well into our own times (Wozniak 2005:137). The book abounds in such examples of mistranslations and misunderstandings, which sometimes had far reaching consequences.

The Spanish translations are based on the seminal work of Francisco Mellén Blanco (1986). They are, however, compared with the original manuscripts. This reveals that the account of Agüero as presented by Mellén Blanco has small but abundant omissions compared to the manuscript stored at the *Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia* in Madrid. Yet again, if the English translation is based on Mellén Blanco's version it will repeat those omissions.

From the eight English accounts, five should be well known to the English reader. However, I am not aware of any official English publication presenting the narratives of Cook's officers Charles Clerke and Joseph Gilbert. Thus, their publication, even in a foreign language, should be quite interesting for Easter Island aficionados. The account of William Wales was published previously only in fragments by Beaglehole (1961:776-869).

The author set before herself a very ambitious task of gathering all of the 18th century accounts dealing with Easter Island exploration. Although a monumental work has been performed, the task itself has not been entirely fulfilled. Some of the shorter and lesser known English accounts from Cook's second voyage are not included in the book. It seems there are 19 separate accounts from this expedition (Moreno Pakarati 2013); for example the recently published book with a very

similar scope but directed at the Spanish reader (Foerster 2012) also contains an account by sailor Andrew Sparrman. Admittedly, all of the accounts which are not included in the book are short and would not bring in much new information. Nevertheless, their inclusion would make the present work feel more complete.

Analogously, although the stated goal of the book is to present all 18th century accounts, only the first four expeditions are the subject of the book. There were three more known contacts in the 18th century: in 1793 by Captain Baker in *Jenny*; in 1795 by Captain Bishop in *Ruby*; and in 1797 by Captain Fitch on the whaleship *William* (Richards 2008). Again, the accounts are short, but should be included if one aims at a complete representation of the subject. In particular, Bishop's account is quite interesting, containing some Rapanui glosses and other observations.

Another issue deals with non-textual relations. All of the expeditions have produced not only written accounts, but also drawings depicting what they have seen. One can treat those also as very important documents. Those materials are included only in small numbers as illustrations for the presented text. I understand that those graphics were not the focus of the book, but it would be great at some point to see a publication whose ambition is not only to present all surviving written accounts, but also all surviving drawn or painted accounts.

In many books and articles about Easter Island, one can encounter the famous picture of Rapanui "signatures", which were allegedly drawn by Rapanui chiefs under the Spanish annexation document. This fact is mentioned in some of the Spanish accounts, but neither the annexation itself nor the "signatures" are featured in the present book. This is because the original annexation document has been lost and its existence is known only from secondary sources. However, the "signatures" themselves have survived in a copy drawn by González de la Rosa in London in 1873 (Fischer 1997:6). Because de la Rosa's account agreed with the later rediscovered de Haedo account, de la Rosa's drawing of the "signatures" is generally treated in the literature as authentic (another question is if rightly so). Therefore, one might expect to find it among other accounts of the Spanish visit. However, the issue of the annexation document and of the copy of the Rapanui's signatures is not even touched on or otherwise discussed in the book.

The last remaining issue that one could direct at Jakubowska's book is the split of narratives between the first and third parts of the book. In the first part we have a discussion of the intercultural encounters framed within already "classical" postcolonial discourses. In this approach, European travelers are criticized for their Eurocentrism and imperialism in

dealing with New World cultures. However, in the final part of the book, the author presents a more nuanced and understanding position towards the people of different times and different mentalities, from time to time criticizing other authors for failing to grasp the intricacies of an 18th century mind. It seems that the second position is closer to the author's own opinions and the former discourse is more of a review of the intercultural studies. It nevertheless leaves the reader with a certain feeling of ambiguity.

All in all, the book is an excellent publication on Easter Island's contact with the first foreigners. For the Polish reader, this is a game changer, bringing diligent academic material where before there were almost only popular science positions. All general or "hot" topics of Easter Island, such as the origin of the islanders, the moving of *moai*, ecocide and general cultural description of the Rapanui people are discussed in this book. The author reviews the ecodisaster narratives and clearly states her negative opinion of such a description of Easter Island history. This is important since, until now, the Polish reader could only choose between the work of Diamond (2005) and that of Flenley and Bahn (2003). It will then not be a surprise that ecodisaster is one of the main connotations that Easter Island evokes in the general public. The publication by Jakubowska will bring a different point of view into the picture.

The quality of the publication should set new standards for the way this kind of work is approached. Too often we have to deal with commentary-void translations that fail to explain all important circumstances. Too often we are not aware that even the original manuscripts are preserved in more than one copy, often containing differences. If we want to have a full picture of the original material we must "go back to the beginning" of the texts.

The book includes short summaries in English and Spanish.

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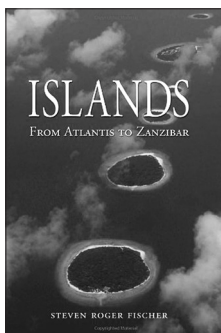
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Chapters 6 and 7, “...of Moons and Sixpence” and “...of Palettes and Pipes” turn to literary and art sources that range from Shakespeare to Homer; the Phaistos Disk to Durrell; island art to music to tattoo. There is much food for thought here as is also in Chapter 8, “... of the Mind” where we explore the fact that, after the 18th century, the perception of an island changed: it could be for personal advancement, adventure, and fun... a psychological space, an Arcadia (p. 254). The realities of course were different – from the murder of Cook to cannibal feasts.

In Chapter 9, “The Last Isle”, we have a thoughtful summing up of the problems, the hopes, and perhaps the hopelessness of islands, as our Earth itself becomes the last isle.

This book is highly recommended.

### Fischer, Steven Roger. *Islands: From Atlantis to Zanzibar*



London: Reaktion Books, 2012. 336 pp., Black and white illustrations. ISBN 978-1780230320. US\$35 (hardcover).

Review by Georgia Lee, Easter Island Foundation

Following his excellent and well-researched book, *Island at the End of the World: The Turbulent History of Easter Island*, Steven Roger Fischer has scored another winner in his most recent effort, *Islands: From Atlantis to Zanzibar*. I thought I knew a lot about islands, but every chapter revealed something new; I had a hard time putting it down. Fischer includes geology, botany, early humans, populations and the effects of war upon them, as well as deforestation, natural disasters, and tourism.

Fischer describes the formation of islands, continents, oceans and seas: “An island can be a bit of an ancient continent, an accretion of ocean sandbank, the first cooled tip of an erupting volcano, and so much more” (p. 11). Nearly all Oceanic islands are volcanic and all land masses had their origin in volcanism. Amongst the information about the formations of islands, we hear of land bridges that have now disappeared, how coral reefs are born, and how they die. While some islands “calve”, others collide, and some fuse with larger islands or continents.