

FROM THE EDITORS

THIS ISSUE OF *Rapa Nui Journal* focuses on both historic and contemporary problems and their connection to prehistoric remains. Ceremonial sites in the Pacific were modified and changed during their 'lifetime' and such changes may provide chronological sequences. Changes occurred because of natural disasters (e.g., tsunami, as the case with *ahu* Tongariki on Rapa Nui, or by hurricanes, as observed in the Society Islands), and various kinds of human actions. Sometimes sites change due to archaeological restorations and reconstructions.

Beverly Haun's *Letter to the Editor* touches upon a serious incident where a contemporary 'artist' with an obvious lack of historical knowledge and respect for past cultural objects, created rock "arrangements" on the Rapa Nui landscape and at ancient *ahu* sites. This was done to provoke the Rapa Nui community (which he succeeded in doing) and to make himself a "name." While the editors agree that societies/things must change to survive, such changes must originate from within, not applied by single actors who only want to make an 'artistic' happening. We strongly reject these actions as being disrespectful toward the people of Rapa Nui as well as to the island as a World Heritage site.

Contrarily, when changes occurred in prehistoric societies, they were deeply meaningful actions and often necessary for the survival of the society. It is those changes that created chronological markers that we, as archaeologists, may detect within the prehistoric remains. This leads us to the articles by Wallin and Solsvik, as well as the paper by Cauwe et al. These papers deal with the classic problem in archaeology: how to date ceremonial stone structures.

Different methods of dating have been used since Kenneth Emory first began archaeological investigations of ceremonial structures (*marae*) in the 1920-30s in east Polynesia. He first used traditional history and genealogies that were sometimes tied to *marae* structures. With this method, he indicated that such structures in east Polynesia might be dated to between AD 1000-1750. Historical observations also helped define the period of use. Ceremonial structures were in use when the first Spanish visitors landed in the Marquesas Islands in the year of 1595, and continued to be mentioned in the missionary reports of the 1820s. Thereafter, everything changed with European colonization; use of these structures was forbidden.

Archaeological excavations in Polynesia took off in the early 1950s due to the possibility of chronological reconstruction that came with the introduction of the C¹⁴ dating method in archaeology. For the first time it was possible to examine the absolute age of prehistoric sites. Excavations were initiated by Kenneth Emory and Yosi Sinoto in Hawai'i; on Rapa Nui by Thor Heyerdahl et al.; and in the Marquesas by Carl Suggs. Quite soon, chronological models were constructed. Unfortunately, many cultural historical scenarios were based on very few dates, and creating a preliminary and shaky foundation. The earliest dates were found in the Marquesas Islands, hence the dispersal center was

placed there and from this region, arrows of colonization went off in all directions. A quite uncritical, or maybe optimistic, view concerning the accuracy of the dated samples made it possible to place the original settlement just before the first century BC in the Marquesas Islands, around AD 300 on Rapa Nui, and around AD 100-200 on Hawai'i.

Recent excavation and re-excavation of old sites and critical examinations of earlier dates have changed this picture. The initial settlement for East Polynesia has, at present, been established to the time period around AD 800-1000 (except for New Zealand, which is later). An important turning point in this discussion was established when ANU scholars Matthew Spriggs and Atholl Anderson published their 1993 article "Late colonization of East Polynesia," and suggested a "Protocol for acceptance or rejection of dates" (Spriggs and Anderson 1993:207) in *Pacific archaeology*. While this approach is widely accepted today, it is, in several instances, difficult to live up to completely. For example, it is recommended that samples should be analyzed for wood species so that only young or short-lived material is used for dating. This avoids built-in age effects from older wood. A complete adherence to the recommended protocol is difficult since the wood may be difficult to identify, and there are only a few people available who can do this type of analysis. Most wood samples, up to quite recent times, have not been sourced, which would lead to rejection of almost all previous dates. This is not realistic at the moment.

Based on these guidelines, Wallin and Solsvik take a critical point of departure in their article on ceremonial *marae* structures in Huahine and come to the conclusion that the earliest construction dates for such structures in this island may be around AD 1450-1500. Their results may impact the discussion of dispersal and influence tied to ceremonial structures in East Polynesia, a point that becomes central and quite evident when comparing the Society Island dates with, for example, Rapa Nui, as shown in the article by Cauwe et al. (see also Skjølsvold 1994: 105-109 and Martinsson-Wallin and Crockford 2002). These data indicate earlier dates on ceremonial structures in Rapa Nui than what we so far can argue for in Central East Polynesia.

As we recently have seen in an article by Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo (2006), a question has been raised, based on new radiocarbon analyses, that Rapa Nui might have been settled as late as AD 1200 which is a date that still needs to be further investigated. But, that is another question, maybe for a future issue of RNJ!

Helene Martinsson-Wallin and Paul Wallin

Chief Editors, RNJ

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ASIDE FROM OUR LEAD PAPERS (Paul Wallin and Reidar Solsvik; and Nicolas Cauwe, Dirk Huyge, Johnny De Meulemeester, Morgan De Dapper, Dominique Coupé, Wouter Claes and Alexandra De Poorter, of Belgium) this issue also includes several diverse and rather eclectic papers, as well as our usual news from Hangaroa that, sadly, continues to amaze and distress us, as more schemes to develop the island are put forward. On the 'up' side, we have news of the appointment of a new governor for Easter Island by Chile's recently-elected president, Michelle Bachelet. The new appointee is Melania Caroline Hotus Hey. We congratulate Rapa Nui's new governor, and wish her success.

This issue contains an update on the pending EIF conference at Gotland University in August 2007. Already we have a stellar collection of major scholars from the Pacific who will be chairing sessions. Clearly, this is one conference that should not be missed! A conference brochure will be mailed out by June. Gotland itself sounds like the perfect place for an archaeological conference. It has Viking hoards, ruins and ramparts, and the end of the conference coincides with a Medieval festival that includes jousting, parades, and plays – all taking visitors back to the 1300s.

Several articles in this issue concern our beloved *moai*. Paul Horley from the Ukraine contributes an interesting short paper regarding the proportions of Easter Island's famous statues and it is followed by a paper from Professor Herbert H. Einstein of Massachusetts Institute of Technology who assigned his engineering class a unique project: figure out how the *moai* were moved. The results are interesting and we include them in this issue. Vincent Lee, who worked with a TV project on moving the *moai*, comments on the methods suggested by the students. As we all know, various approaches work well on a coffee table using a six-inch *moai*. Translated into tons, things change radically.

Jacques Guy of Australia tackles the thorny problem of *rongorongo*, including patterns, composition, and internal structure of those mysterious and endlessly fascinating little glyphs. Guy postulates that some may have had phonetic value.

Australia's Petra Campbell sent us a paper that is a real eye-opener. Petra has studied the problems of the island's infrastructure: the aquifer, the island's garbage dump, and the fact that 95% of the island's homes and hotels have pit latrines. Pollution is clearly a serious problem and needs serious solutions. We hope our readers will consider her report and perhaps be moved to assist with efforts to rectify the situation.

Retired educator, Stephen Pendleton, an expert on Easter Island's postage stamps, describes their history as well as the commemorative covers that depict the island. "Things postal" have certainly changed on the island lately, not the least due to increased flights to and from the island. In 1982, it took me four weeks to get a letter off the island. That winter the post office was out of stamps and I was told to come back after the next flight to the island. The next week I returned to the post office but there were no stamps because someone had neglected to put them on the airplane. Another week passed. Finally the stamps arrived and I was able to post my letters. But the next flight going to Santiago (from Tahiti) didn't land on the island because too few passengers were scheduled to get off; the airplane just flew over and continued on. So another week went by. Finally the plane landed, the mail was loaded on board and sent off. I began to understand why so few Rapanui islanders bothered to write letters. It was just too much trouble.

Our "getting to know you" report features George Gill, University of Wyoming, who needs little introduction to those familiar with Easter Island archaeology. His research has helped clarify many things about the ancient culture, from origins to health issues. And his work continues.

Beverly Haun's contribution, mentioned above, is titled "Aesthetic Aggression." When Haun heard about the acts of vandalism by Montreal artist Bill Vazan, who formed what he calls "landworks" on Easter Island by taking stones from archaeological sites, she was outraged. But when a major art magazine, *Canadian Art* (Fall 2005:110-115) featured his work, thus giving him a public forum for his "artistic" output, she went into orbit. After island authorities discovered Vazan's "efforts," he was fined and his film confiscated, but he managed to smuggle some rolls of film off the island and bragged about it ("My sleight-of-hand rearrangement of the contents...") and he added that some of his rock creations still were undiscovered by authorities. Archaeologists beware! That arrangement of stones you just noted may be one of Vazan's little jokes. Illustrated in *Canadian Art* magazine are Vazan's stone arrangements at Rano Raraku; a "nest of rocks" at Kari Kari; behind the *ahu* at Tongariki; and at the topknot quarry, Puna Pau. Where else on the island might they be? Vazan also mentions that he collected samples of earth and sand from the island for another one of his ongoing projects, but hid these from the police.

Claudio Cristino and Roberto Izaurieta bring us up-to-date on the size of Rapa Nui, using air-photogrammetric digital mapping.

And last – but not least – Doug Porteous, author of *The Modernization of Easter Island* – one of the classic books that should be found in any Rapanuiphile's library – sent us a bit of poetry for this issue.

We, the Editors, thank our many contributors, and we hope our readers enjoy this issue of *Rapa Nui Journal*.

Georgia Lee