



Paul Bahn sent us this picture of a bottle of vodka that was found in a Moscow store. The moai-shaped bottle has a black rubber top and lettering (in Mongolian) on the front. Photo by Elena Miklashevich.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

What's New in Fiji

PATRICK NUNN, PROFESSOR OF OCEANIC GEOSCIENCE, University of the South Pacific, stated that the ultimate causes of all changes in Pacific societies around AD 1300 appear to be climate-driven, with the environment shaping the way in which societies evolved. In his lecture, "Reefs and Seafood in Ancient Times: Interactions between People and Marine Resources in Pre-modern Times in the Pacific Islands," Nunn pointed out that marine

food resource availability drove the colonization of the Pacific Islands: "People knew when they found an island where no one was living, the food resource on that island would sustain them for generations. That was a powerful pull factor for migration into the Pacific islands." He added that, "There's a fair amount of data which shows that in most parts of the Pacific, coral reefs are not able to keep up with sea level. Sea levels were rising until the last ice age, so sea level reached its maximum about four thousand years ago. And, fluctuations in marine foods ... were associated with changes in environment.

USP Beat, May 2007.

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC announced the publication of a new book, *Pacific Genes and Life Patents*, cataloging unethical research and gene theft in Pacific countries. The book, by Dr Steven Ratuva and Aroha Mead, describes the worst examples of unethical bio-research and patenting of genes by international countries. Researchers harvest and patent genetic resources by simply gathering and taking ownership, and the absence of regulations – combined with naiveté about genetic technologies and patent laws – has made the Pacific a target for bio-prospectors.

USP Beat April 2007.

What's New in Palau

PALAU HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST rates of schizophrenia in the world, affecting 1.7% of its some 17,000 residents at some time in their life. In parts of Palau, men have an even

higher percentage, 2.8%. The disorder manifests itself in hallucinations, delusions, apathy, inability to interact, blunted emotions, and disordered thinking. The percentage is higher in Palau than in other parts of the world. Today, small scale societies seem to aggravate the disorder more than does a modern, industrial society. The situation is worse for young males who get little family/clan support, and have few job options. They become "cultural outcasts." From B. Bower, "Trouble in Paradise. High rates of schizophrenia rate among Pacific Islanders raise cultural questions."

Science News, July 7, 2007, Vol. 172.

What's New in Hawai'i

THE HAWAIIAN VOYAGING CANOE, *Hōkule'a*, departed Yap for Okinawa, Japan, on April 12, 2007, and arrived there on April 22. She continued onward to Amami Island, Kumamoto, Nagasaki, Fukuoka, Iwajima, Oshima, Hiroshima, Uwajima, Muroto, Miura, and Kamakura before completing the voyage with her arrival in Yokohama on June 9.

The *Hokule'a* was transported back to Honolulu on a NYK Shipping Lines container vessel. The canoe got a "lift" because "going upwind against the trades would have taken more than 200 days" and that would have been "impossible".

WHAT'S NEW IN HANGAROA

MASSIVE PROTESTS ON E.I.! Island children were out on the streets demonstrating against cigarettes and their noxious effects. Thirty-five percent of island students between the ages of 11 and 21 smoke. The protest was coordinated by the Director of the school San Sebastián de Aquiles.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, June 1

FIVE SPECIALISTS FROM THE MAINLAND completed 1,899 dental checkups in a dental health program donated by the Chilean Armada. Efforts were concentrated on children and pregnant women. During six days, the five specialists worked in Hanga Roa's hospital. Still to come are some medical doctors including an eye doctor and a nose and throat specialist.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, June 5

INDEPENDENCE" FOR THE ISLAND IS NEAR. The Chilean congress passed, by an overwhelming margin, a bill that would make both Easter Island and Juan Fernandez Islands "special territories". This means independence from the 5th Region so that, instead of having to beg for money from the V Region, islanders can request directly from the government at Santiago. Administratively, the island will be dependent on the Ministry of the Interior. The head of the First Naval Zone, Vice Admiral Cristian Millar, reports that, with the new special territory, nothing will change

insofar as the Navy is concerned because Santiago belongs to the same Naval Zone as Valparaíso.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, June 6

IN ANOTHER CONFRONTATION, strong words were voiced by the regional Intendente, Ivan de la Maza, against the mayor of Easter Island, Petero Edmunds, when asked what effect this new arrangement (of “special territory”) would have. Both the Intendente and the mayor reacted with vehemence concerning the assignment of local resources. De la Maza said, “...there is money available from the Region that the Mayor has not used for the stated purposes. This is a bad quality operation.” And he added, “...[this money] was not used because there wasn’t the opportunity, nor the rapidity, nor the efficiency to carry out good projects... and, proportionately, Easter Island has received infinitely more than the rest of the provinces of the region.” And he agreed that giving the island a special status was a good thing. In response, Mayor Edmunds stated, “...the Intendente, being able to do many things for the island, has not done them and is not doing them, and goes about the region lying to people. The only two times that he has come to the island he lied to everybody. I recorded on television the things he said he was going to do and that never were done. I have presented the projects as he requested, and I never received a yes.” Under the former Intendente, Luis Gustavino, two emblematic projects for the island, the improvement of the municipality and a rehab of the gymnasium, were recommended by the Regional Government, but Gustavino never provided the money. In 2006, the scholastic community told de la Maza it needed a gym, and was informed that the money would be forthcoming. But nothing happened.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, June 6

RAPANUI ARCHAEOLOGIST Sonia Haoa has been appointed as the island representative for the National Council of Monumentos of Chile. Congratulations to Sonia, whose excellent archaeological research on the island is gaining world recognition.

1941: WHAT WAS NEW IN THE PACIFIC -- WORLD WAR II¹

THE TEMPO OF LIFE AFLOAT CHANGED somewhat for the sailors on the Canadian armed merchant cruiser, *Prince Robert*. Their course was set for Auckland when new orders arrived from the New Zealand Navy Board. Intelligence reported that a Japanese vessel was tied up at Los Angeles and was loading spare engine parts for a damaged German raider in the Pacific. It was thought that the enemy supply ship would rendezvous with the raider in a secluded cove at Easter Island.² *Prince Robert*'s task was the familiar “Seek out and destroy”. She immediately took on fuel and sailed east. Guns' crews were exercised vigorously on passage, while following weather pushed her along to her destination 24 hours ahead of schedule. Easter Island was sighted at 0600 7 August 1941. The ship went into action stations,

closed and circumnavigated the island. All coves and possible anchorages were thoroughly investigated, but no ship was seen.

Captain F. G. Hart, with his navigator, the Sub-Lieutenant (Special Branch) for intelligence duties and an interpreter changed into plain-clothes and went ashore to look around. They found no enemy – only the Island's new Governor, Commandante Pasquale Reid, a Chilean of German descent, and the Catholic priest Father Sebastián Englert, a German of course but, as he stressed, no Nazi. The last ship that was seen on the island had been there nine months earlier – the once-a-year visit of the single vessel that came regularly to the Island. This intelligence was believed, and was indeed accurate. The Canadians found the Rapanui very friendly and respectful, though curious – and they formed the opinion that they were essentially pro-British. They would probably have seemed friendly still, just as nosy – and pro-German – had the German disguised raider *Komet* arrived instead of *Prince Robert* to relieve their distant, tranquil monotony.

By 1300 *Prince Robert* was underway again. On the chance that the original information had confused the identity of the island reputedly harboring the German raider, she set course for Sálas y Gómez, a barren rock in the ocean to the northeast of Easter. But they quickly saw that no vessel could possibly anchor there. The *Prince Robert* sailed to Talara, Peru, to refuel before returning to Auckland.

¹ Source: The Prince Ships 1940-1945: CFHQ Report Number 5 (October 31, 1965). Our thanks to Shawn McLaughlin for excavating this bit of history.

² By coincidence (for the message which sent *Prince Robert* on the Easter Island mission was a false hunch) the German raider, *Komet*, did happen to be approaching Easter Island, and was a thousand miles to westward on 7 August.



A dry composting toilet for the UNESCO-listed Rapa Nui National Park at 'Orongo

By Petra Campbell

CEO, International Help Fund Australia

NINETY FIVE PERCENT OF ALL TOILETS in Rapa Nui are pit latrines. That is to say, raw untreated sewerage is released straight into the ground without any form of treatment. Only a few hotels have septic tanks. Tourism grew by 900% over the past eleven years and it is projected to reach 100,000 shortly after 2010. In addition, the current resident population of 3,765 is growing by 3.5% a year. This represents an ecological time-bomb. Chilean authorities have expressed great concern over the impending contamination of Rapa Nui's drinking water supply as a result; the fresh water aquifer at the National Park of 'Anakena Beach has already been closed to human consumption for this reason.