

## FROM THE EDITORS

THIS ISSUE of *Rapa Nui Journal* is the first of the new decade and we are pleased to share with you a great line-up of Polynesian scholars, discussing a variety of Pacific subjects.

*RNJ* for Spring 2010 contains papers that illuminate the past, in different ways. Kevin Butler and John Flenley, Massey University, New Zealand, contribute a paper titled “The Rano Kau 2 Pollen Diagram: Palaeoecology Revealed.” The authors discuss the reed mats in the caldera’s lake and how dates may be obtained from them. Their conclusions—and proposed date of human settlement—are stimulating and insightful.

Steven Roger Fischer’s paper, Part I of a two-part essay on Thomas Barthel’s German-Chilean expedition to Easter Island in 1957-1958, provides a fascinating view of the man as well as his project. Barthel, a seemingly difficult person, had some out-of-the-ordinary adventures on Rapa Nui, including finding several *rongorongo* fragments. Amazingly enough, this is the *first* description of the expedition, revealing the motives, infighting, socializing, and background of what went on during that project. It makes for great reading as well as providing us with a rare glimpse into the principle characters. Barthel’s expedition has been overlooked in the past; much has been written about Routledge’s time on the island, the Norwegian expedition, and that of Alfred Métraux and Henri Lavachery. But this is the first light to shine on Barthel’s adventures on Easter Island. Fischer’s research is, as always, impeccable, focusing the spotlight on the man and his demons. Part 2 of the German-Chilean Expedition will appear in our Fall 2010 issue.

Dale Simpson, Jr., describes and illustrates the extraordinary A.W.F. Fuller Collection of Pacific artifacts in the Field Museum, Chicago. Many are unique pieces, some collected early on by Percy Edmunds. While a few items in this collection are on display at the museum, the bulk of the collection is housed in the Collection Resource Center. It is amazing to read about Fuller’s fixation on collecting Pacific artifacts, including his desire for a bit of old Viriamao’s tattooed skin!

José-Miguel Ramírez-Aliaga first wrote about possible Polynesian/Chilean connections in *RNJ*, twenty years ago, in a paper titled “Transpacific Contacts: The Mapuche Connection” (*RNJ* Vol. 4(4) for Winter 1990-91:53-55). And now, new research and collaboration with Lisa Matisoo-Smith and Atholl Anderson have brought forth further evidence. This is an exciting development in Pacific studies, not only for the origin of the sweet potato in Polynesia, but also the transfer of the Asian chicken to Chile. In addition, there are hints of contact with Santa Cruz Island, off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, lending weight to the research by Terry Jones and Kathryn Klar! Stirring times indeed!

David J. Addison, Christopher W. Filimoehala, Seth J. Quintus, and Tom Sapienza describe the tsunami damage to archaeological sites on Tutuila Island, American Samoa, on 29 September 2009. Their survey teams walked the coasts of the

island, identifying exposed archaeological remains, the majority of which related to basalt tool manufacture. Their survey is important for future cultural heritage management.

Paul Horley’s paper on the Keiti *rongorongo* tablet is a great bit of detective work as he finds evidence that a casting of this tablet may or may not have been made, and tracings made in earlier times may not be accurate.

Our *Look Back* feature returns to the years when American troops were on Rapa Nui, a fact denied by everyone except the Rapanui who recall their presence very well. It is only recently that this covert operation was declassified by our government, so we are now able to hear a bit about the “secret mission” to Rapa Nui. We thank Dick Wilhelm for sharing his memories and some great old photographs.

William Liller, author of *The Ancient Solar Observatories of Rapanui* (1993), has kindly sent us a paper about the upcoming eclipse that will be seen in July on Rapa Nui — or maybe not: Weather prospects are iffy; the average July cloud amount is 56% and, unlike the summer months, the winter skies of July can be fully overcast with the threat of drizzle and blustery winds. We hear that every hotel and *pensione* in Hangaroa is booked solid, and flights to the island are sold out.

Andreas Mieth is the subject of this issue’s feature, *Getting to Know You*. Andreas, whose research focuses on environmental as well as archaeological issues of the island, has a new paper with co-author Hans-Rudolf Bork: “Humans, climate or introduced rats – which is to blame for the woodland destruction on prehistoric Rapa Nui (Easter Island)?” in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* 37(2):417-426 (2010).

A paper by Hunt and Lipo is reviewed in this issue by John Flenley and Paul Bahn. The preparation of the review triggered a longer discussion of the “ratty subject” of the moment by both Flenley and Bahn. It follows the review. Don’t miss this one!

Steven Roger Fischer contributes news of a Festival of Languages, held in Bremen in October; and Brett Shepardson describes his on-going ‘A Pó project to instruct young people of Rapa Nui in the various ways to conserve their own history, and learn about their own past.

Sadly, we have lost a major Pacific scholar, Roger Green, whom so many of us knew and loved. We thank Alice Storey for the obituary. Knut Haugland, co-founder of the Kon-Tiki Museum and last survivor of the Kon-Tiki adventure, also passed away in 2009. Haugland was well known also for his amazing exploits in Norway during World War II, a true war hero. Thanks to Thor Heyerdahl Jr., and Riedar Solsvik of the Kon-Tiki Museum for their obituary and the great historic photograph.

We hope our readers enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed putting it together!

*Georgia Lee and Frank Morin*