

section, “Easter Island & Music”, describes some albums that do contain island music.

The next six-page section, “The Rongorongo Tablets,” follows and it illustrates the glyphs as well as a photograph of the London Tablet and drawings of the glyphs. “Rongorongo in Comic Books” has examples of comics that utilize the script in various mystery scenarios (quickly translated by the hero). Finally, there is a two-page spread about the Birdman Cult that includes a Scooby Doo cartoon strip about that ritual.

The end of the book has a blurb about the Kon Tiki Museum and the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum in Middlesbrough.

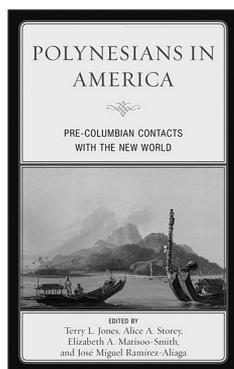
Haun (2010: 212-3), in discussing American comic books, notes a lack of narrative stability in that the comics tend to exhibit ideologically current popular themes. She also cites the lack of islanders in the stories. This is true; in the comics, only statues are to be found and the island is shown as uninhabited and abandoned unless “Things” are present, such as aliens in suspended animation.

Easter Island, Myths & Popular Culture is a fun read, aimed for a youngish audience or at least an audience with a whacko sense of humor and an abiding interest in the many off-beat aspects of Rapa Nui. Whatever you are interested in, be it vacationing aliens or time-travel/space-travel, comic books or slot machines with statues as the jackpot, you’ll find it here.

Reference

Haun, B. 2010. Easter Island in the comics: 65 years of an island’s career in the American imagination. In *The Gotland Papers. Selected papers from the VII International Conference on Easter Island and the Pacific: Migration, Identity and Cultural Heritage*. P. Wallin and H. Martinsson-Wallin (eds.): 205-215. Gotland: Gotland University Press 11.

Jones, Terry L., Alice A. Storey, Elizabeth Matisoo-Smith and José Miguel Ramírez-Aliaga (eds). *Polynesians in America: Pre-Columbian Contacts with the New World*.



Lanham: Altamira Press, 2011. 380 pp. ISBN 978-0-7591-2004-4. US\$85 (hardcover).

Review by Art Whistler,
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I have to admit that I was at first slightly skeptical of the idea of a book on pre-Columbian contact between Polynesians and the

Americas, as my conceptualization of the topic was heavily colored by the famously inaccurate portrayal of such contact as promoted by Thor Heyerdahl. However, once I got into *Polynesians in America*, I found the book fascinating and I read it cover to cover in a few days. It was the most interesting book I have read all year (okay, even if it was the only whole book I have read all year).

The book is divided into fourteen chapters that discuss evidence of the possible ancient Polynesian contact in the Americas, including chapters on human biology (including anatomy of skeletal remains and DNA), zoology (Polynesian chicken DNA in ancient South America), linguistics, myths and traditions, material culture similarities, and the feasibility of ancient sailing routes. Being a layman in this field, I found one or two of the chapters a little difficult to read (for example, the one on “Diffusionism in Archeological Theory”), but this level of technical explanation and terminology is perhaps much more germane to archaeologists or those with some archaeological background, as is to be expected from a scientific book like this.

I found some of the presented evidence compelling, and some of it less so, but the chapter contributors are not dogmatic and present what to me seems to be a balanced account. The text is very well written, especially where there are references in one chapter to aspects of other chapters—i.e., the text is well integrated. The chapter on the artifact record from North America seemed less compelling than some of the others, and the case would have been helped if the authors compared the Chumash Indian sewn-plank canoe with one from Polynesia rather than Micronesia (diagram on p. 3). The fish-hook evidence seems less compelling as well, and similar fish hooks could have been derived independently by “convergent utilitarianism” rather than direct contact. Perhaps some of the materialistic similarities could be explained by drift derelict Micronesian canoes? Equally slim is the linguistic evidence, other than the Pacific-wide names for sweet potato. The most interesting chapter to me was the one on DNA evidence of Polynesian chickens in pre-Columbian South America which really showcased what can be done nowadays with DNA and organic material.

The book would have been well served to include a chapter on botanical evidence of pre-Columbian contact (in the opinion of a botanist). Sweet potato is mentioned frequently, and bottle gourd, cotton, and soapberry references were scattered in the text, but putting all the evidence for these species, and others such as *Waltheria indica*, into one chapter would have given the book a slightly more comprehensive picture of the topic.

In summary, I found the book extremely interesting and I would most heartily recommend it as reading for anyone, laymen or archaeologists, interested in this aspect of Polynesian prehistory.