

Archaeology of Easter Island. THOR HEYERDAHL and EDWIN N. FERDON, JR. (Eds.) With contributions by the editors and WILLIAM MULLOY, ARNE SKJÖLTVOLD and CARLYLE S. SMITH. (Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific, Volume 1; Monographs of the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico, Number 24, part 1.) New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1961. xi, 559 pp., bibliography, 138 figures, frontispiece, index, 96 plates. \$25.00.

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This book is a compact volume, nicely printed, with good drawings and maps. Unfortunately, the photographs are sometimes mediocre and do not always allow a thorough diagnosis of details, being reproduced in a fading grey. The bibliography is vast,

but not complete, omitting a number of recent papers concerning important topics discussed in this book; it is hoped to make up this deficiency by adding supplementary titles in the course of the following review. The price (11 guineas in Europe!) seems rather prohibitive for private buyers, and so the distribution of this archeological report will be more or less limited to libraries.

The editors present the results of Norwegian-American teamwork carried out on Easter Island from October 1955 to April 1956. Thor Heyerdahl planned and directed the expedition. I start by discussing the results and interpretations obtained by the five authors and continue by mentioning a few general problems of Easter Island research.

In the first place one has to emphasize the excellent digging done by Mulloy. His excavations at the ceremonial center of Vinapu are exact and profusely documented. Mulloy's work appears to be very reliable, and he is very prudent with far-reaching conclusions. His sequence of *ahu* architecture goes back to an early period (dated in the 9th century by C-14) showing "a gigantic open air altar," without statues or burials, but linked with a plaza. It is interesting to read that Smith found a striking resemblance between early Vinapu constructions and the marae of Toa-maora on Timoe, thus pointing towards a first early link to the west. In 1960 Mulloy continued his valuable activities on Easter Island single-handed, excavating Ahu Akivi (*recte* Ahu Ative).

Carlyle Smith's investigation of several ahus is good solid work, resulting in establishing nice temporal sequences. His use of C-14 dates, however, sometimes conflicts with other evidence, and I therefore disagree with such dates as 400 A.D. (the start of his "Early Period") as well as 1100 A.D. (the start of his "Middle Period"). Apart from Vinapu, a reliable and interlocking series of dates for Easter Island does not start before the 15th century, running up to the 19th century. The already famous early date from Poike ditch should be handled with utmost caution, since it diverges 1300 years from the historical destruction of the Hanau-eepe, which took place in the end of the 17th century. Smith is fair enough to point out this and other weak links in his line of reasoning.

Skjölsvold presents many new data from the Rano Raraku, investigating rubblemounds, quarries, and statues in varying positions. His observations regarding the techniques of quarrying, transportation, and erection of stone statues are sober-minded and often plausible; his diagrammatic sketches (p. 340) show minor errors. The name of Statue No. 295 should be spelled correctly "Hiave." When discussing the existence of female stone figures, Skjölsvold does not mention the reviewer's relevant paper ("Female stone figures on Easter Island," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 67: 252-255, 1958). I definitely disagree with his interpretation of the unique "Kneeling Statue" and feel quite unable to see any connection with statues in Tiahuanaco. Furthermore, there is not a shred of evidence for dating this statue in the Early Period; on the other hand, certain details demonstrate a link with great statues of Rano Raraku stemming from the second half of the Middle Period.

To summarize: none of the archeologists mentioned so far could be defined as a "Kontiki partisan." This does not hold true for Ferdon. Ferdon's work is concentrated on Orongo, and his discovery of a hitherto unknown little *ahu*, connected with indications for solar observation, is important for our understanding of Easter Island history. I may add that further decipherment of Rongorongo inscriptions corroborates the solar observation (cf. Barthel, "Rongorongo-Studien," to be published in *Anthropos* 58, 1963). On the whole, however, I feel Ferdon is a bit quick in linking particular data to a complex, when no stratigraphic correlation is given or dates are used merely by implication. Whenever Ferdon starts interpreting archeological observations with the help of ethno-

graphic data, his reasoning becomes slippery. His discussion of the Makemake deity is inadequate (d. Barthel, "Die Hauptgottheit der Osterinsulaner," *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* 15: 60–82, 1957); his evaluation of the boat motives is superficial (the problem of rafts in Oceania is discussed by D. Schori, *Das Floss in Ozeanien*, Gottingen, 1959; a critical evaluation of boat motives on Easter Island is given by Barthel, "Schiffsdarstellungen in der Osterinselnkultur," *Tribus* 11, 1962). His chapter on the house-types of Easter Island lacks important comparative material (d. Barthel, "Rundbauten auf der Osterinsel," *Baessler-Archiv* VII:81–98, 1959). As seen by the reviewer, Ferdon's contributions fall below the general standard of this book.

Regarding Heyerdahl, I gladly admit that his work is considerably better than ten years ago when he published *American Indians in the Pacific*; his former zig-zag course between a missionary and a more scientific attitude has straightened out to a more balanced approach. Although not in the least convinced by his "Kontiki hypothesis," the reviewer likes to point out Heyerdahl's role as a pleasant advocatus diaboli who has provoked a mighty upsurge of archeological field-work in the Pacific area. Thus, in the long run, his "stimulus provocation" tends to modify the too-simple and somewhat schematic picture of Polynesian ethnohistory held a generation ago. We have to be grateful for Heyerdahl's initiative in Easter Island research; many new and valuable data from his expedition will remain, even when all-too-rash conclusions will long have been forgotten.

Heyerdahl's "Introduction" is a smooth compilation with weak spots whenever he trespasses into the fields of traditions and ethnolinguistics. The disputed personality of Tuuko-ihu is discussed without balancing the values of the respective sources, and the intriguing problem of the Hanau-eepe is presented without reference to important contributions (d. Bórmida, "Algunas luces sobre la penumbrosa historia de Pascua antes de 1722," *RUNA* IV: 5–62, 1951; Butinow, "Korotkouchie i Dlinnouchie na Ostrowe Paschi," *Sowjetskaja Etnografija* No.1 :72–82, 1960; Heine-Geldern, "Politische Zweiteilung, Exogamie und Kriegsursachen auf der Osterinsel," *Ethnologica* 2 :241–273, 1960). A few minor details: The meaning of the recitation (p. 23) is ambiguous (d. Barthel, "Rezitationen von der Osterinsel," *Anthropos* 55: 843, line e 3, 1960); yams (p. 29) were a favorite local food esteemed as especially valuable for warriors; the former existence of the pig (p. 32) on Easter Island is still under discussion in connection with the so-called *kekepu* problem; "karau karau" (p. 37) is to be translated as "for centuries," not "200 years." Heyerdahl's assertion that members of Cook's and La Perouse's crews reached the Rano Raraku is palpably wrong; checking the respective reports and knowing Easter Island topography on the spot, it is easy to show that neither reached this important hill. Beheading of great stone statues (p. 510) was an exception, not the rule. Heyerdahl's hypothesis about the statue Hoa-Haka-Nanaia being a prototype is mere guess-work; his interpretation of stone statues being "blind" until their erection on an ahu is quite arbitrary and can be disproved by native traditions: only at the moment when a statue for a deceased noble was to be erected on an ahu, its eye-sockets were carved out to give a mortuary appearance, with deep orbitae, to the monument. I have little to comment on Heyerdahl's treatment of surface finds: *mataa* with short handles (p. 400) were used as daggers (d. Barthel, "Obsidianwaffen von der Osterinsel," *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde Zu Leipzig* 17: 14–21, 1960); grooved-stones (p. 454) were explained to me as ear-pendants; the "stone lamps" (p. 447) could have been used for body painting and/or tattooing with soot. Heyerdahl is wisely reserved about the former existence of pottery on Easter Island. The thorny question of the "secret caves" will be discussed in a future volume.

Now I would like to add a few general remarks.

1. The discovery of an early substratum might well be judged as the most important result of the expedition. Its dating, however, is still extremely vague, and apart from the architectural sequence in Vinapu its specific cultural content remains unknown. Earlier types of neither habitations nor tools can be differentiated so far from those in the Middle Period. We still have no stringent proof that the group of aberrant stone figures actually did belong to the Early Period; some specimens may stem as well from the beginning of the Middle Period, others from the time of decadence during the Late Period. Strange to say, the editors do not use the data on the first settlers on Easter Island which oral traditions offer (d. Barthel, "Wer waren die ersten Siedler auf der Osterinsel?," *Ethnologica* 2: 232–240, 1960). In this connection it is necessary to note that the early elements of a "pre-Hotu-Matuan population" carried well-known Polynesian names pointing to Mangareva, and that motifs in the mythology of these early settlers establish a link with Hiva-Oa.

2. I agree with the traditional view that two cultural strata met on Easter Island. Unfortunately, muddled thinking in many discussions has clouded the meaning of "Melanesian" in this context by confounding race, culture, and language. In the course of still unpublished investigations I have collected evidence that the earlier stratum on Easter Island seems to have come from the Marquesas, in part with "austro-melanid" cultural equipment, and with a Polynesian language of a type which must be dated somewhere between 500 and 1000 A.D. Seen under this time perspective, possible westeast movements should call our attention back to a reappraisal of the well known parallels between Melanesia and South America. I readily admit to being not opposed in principle to some sort of contacts between Polynesia and the western shore of the New World, but I must plead guilty to being still unable to detect any of the alleged parallels with Easter Island in the masonry or stone sculptures of Bolivia and Peru.

3. C-14 dates for the Middle Period form a coherent series starting in the 15th century. Refined analysis of Easter Island genealogies puts the arrival of Hotu-Matua, leader of the Hanau-momoko, at 1400 A.D., within a margin of plus or minus 50 years. These second immigrants came from the Leeward Islands (d. Barthel, "Diskussionsbemerkungen zu einem Rongorongo-Text," to be published in *Acta Ethnographica* 12, Budapest, 1963), with a possible stop at Mangareva and/or Pitcairn. They introduced the Rongorongo writing and the cult of the frigate bird, and formed the final political structure of Easter Island society. The Middle Period became the "golden age" of Easter Island, when the evolution of larger and larger statues in the quarries of Rano Raraku took place, possibly parallel to the Marquesan time scale after 1400 A.D. (Suggs' Classic Period).

The array of new and valuable data in this book is-alas-over-shadowed by its main weakness, viz. a certain lack of methodical rigor in drawing conclusions. Fascinating conclusions become untrustworthy:

– if a point is first mentioned as a conjecture or mere possibility, but used later on as an alleged proven fact serving as the basis for far reaching assumptions;

– if circular reasoning takes place;

– if one deduces from the *sporadic* occurrence of traits in an area that these traits are *non-characteristic* by definition. In contradistinction to this line of reasoning I prefer to judge sporadic occurrences at the periphery of Polynesia as evidence for a considerable age. This is the interpretation I propose, e.g., regarding circular constructions on Easter Island, New Zealand, and in Melanesia; cremation with almost the same distribution; and the "sun-dials" of Easter Island, Mangareva and Hawaii;

– if one passes over in silence published results embarrassing to one's own pet theory. It is not necessary to mention the completely dilettantish treatment of the Rongorongo writing by Ferdon; even Heyerdahl's footnote 49 (p. 72) is wrong in its substance. But why omit recent analysis of genealogies (d. Barthel, "Häuptlingsgenealogien von der Osterinsel," *Tribus* 8:67–82, 1959, and "Zwei weitere Häuptlingsgenealogien von der Osterinsel," *Tribus* 10: 131–141, 1961), why suppress the results of glottochronology (d. Elbert, "Internal relationships of Polynesian languages and dialects," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 9:147–173, 1953), why conceal relevant data from social anthropology (d. Barthel, "Zu einigen polynesischen Verwandtschaftsnamen," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 85: 177–186, 1960), once you are working with a two-strata theory and a considerable time depth? Heyerdahl is an avowed partisan of a complex approach to Polynesian ethnohistory. I agree. But reconstruction can't be done by biased selection.

This book will prove useful for comparisons with present investigations in other parts of Polynesia and obviously points out further necessities on Easter Island. Checking the results from Poike ditch, clearing the earliest quarries at Rano Raraku, and searching for more remnants of the early substratum, should have top priority rank on any future archeological program. I recommend that a new international expedition should go to Easter Island, in close cooperation with Chilean authorities and colleagues, and with a more fruitful cross-fertilization between archeology and ethnology.

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