


WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH (IN ANTHROPOLOGY/ARCHAEOLOGY) ON EASTER ISLAND IN THE FUTURE?

I have so many possible research projects on Easter Island it would make your head spin. If there were five MA students who wanted to work on Easter Island, I could give them each a viable project in the next 6 minutes. Give me five more, and it will take about 10 minutes and a lecture to get them started.

I have four concise ideas about what I would like to do in the future, all small but critical projects to answer one, two, or three straight forward questions about Easter Island's pre-history, but I have also seen that, among several Easter Island researchers, that my ideas have become *their* project and so, reluctantly, I won't mention them at this point. Sadly, I've learned to distrust publicizing one's future plans. Geology, also, is becoming somewhat similar but it has taken two decades to catch up.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

I have just finished "In the Heart of the Sea", by Philbrick, am nearly finished with "Krakatoa" by Winchester, and am starting "White Rivers & Black", by MacCreagh. 

not address Easter Island, he does explore the effects of El Niño on the Pacific Ocean and its associated landmasses. The bottom line is that, despite a long history of overpopulation and deforestation, we still have not learned to live reasonably. We have not learned from the past but have only increased the scale of our vulnerability. Sea levels rise, icecaps shrink, and the world's population is placed in a global experiment of unguessable consequences. Fagan writes, "Civilisation arose during a remarkably long summer... We still have no idea when, or how, that summer will end."



**Between Nature and Culture;
The Burial of the Placenta in French Polynesia
(*Entre nature et culture - La mise en terre du placenta en Polynésie française*)**

Bruno Saura

Haere Po, 2003. P.O. Box 1958 - 98 713 Papeete, Tahiti
Softcover, 162 pages ISBN 2 904-171 54-6

Translation and Review by Ann M. Altman, Ph.D.

REVIEWS

The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilisation

Brian Fagan

Basic Books. Perseus Books Group, New York. 2004

ISBN 0-465-02281-2

252 pp., plus notes and index. Hard cover

Review by Georgia Lee, Ph.D.

THE TITLE OF FAGAN'S BOOK, "The Long Summer..." refers to global warming that began some 18,000 years ago with the end of the last Ice Age, and which has since continued. According to the author, Earth's climate has shaped civilizations. Fagan states: "Climate is, and always has been, a powerful catalyst in human history...."

Well-researched and written, this book is classic environmental determinism: history as shaped by climate – and a study of climate change aimed for those who are concerned with the future of civilization. Never mind Genghis Kahn, climate is the major player in the fall of civilizations.

Climatic studies provide some really dreadful warnings and this book puts them out there for us to ponder. Over millennia, civilizations arose, people ravaged their local habitats, and then found themselves vulnerable to climate shifts; when the climate changed, the civilization ended. Ancient Egypt was once in a benign Sahara – but it was turned into a desert. And, once a society is on the edge of environmental vulnerability, it takes very little to push it over: a change in weather patterns, a drought, or a 500-year cold snap (such as happened in Europe in the 14th century).

This book presents a haunting chronicle of our planet's past, and the impact on our frail species. While Fagan does

THIS BOOK, BY A PROFESSOR at the University of French Polynesia in Tahiti, is both fascinating and frustrating: fascinating because of the subject matter and frustrating because of the presentation. The book deals in exhaustive detail with the custom, widespread throughout the Pacific, of ceremonial disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord after the birth of a child, which often, in Tahiti, occurs in conjunction with the planting of a tree. However, while the details of such practices, comparisons among Pacific islands, and analogies are of great interest, the book is written, somewhat disconcertingly, in three languages, namely, French, English and Tahitian, with frequent inclusion of Tahitian words in parentheses when the text is in English or French. Moreover, while there are numerous subheadings in each chapter, the book lacks an index so that the copious information in each section is relatively inaccessible.

To add to the confusion, there is a brief Summary of topics covered at the front of the book and a more comprehensive Table of Contents at the back. It is only from the Table of Contents that it becomes clear that some of the contributions to the book are not by Saura and that many of them have been published elsewhere. Moreover, some of the material appears in both French and English; some appear only in French; and some appear in both French and Tahitian.

It is certainly kind of Saura to provide translations of some of the material but it is unclear why only some of the text is translated and some is not. For example, one wonders why the lengthy discussion with Robert Koenig (the Director of the Haere po Press), printed in French at the end of the book, is translated into Tahitian but not into English, while one chapter by Saura is translated into English and others are not. A contribution in English by Georgia Lee is translated into French but the work of Pascale Bonnemère is only accessible to those who read French.

But now, having given full vent to my frustrations, I shall focus exclusively on what is admirable and interest-