

ing. One striking feature of the book, which is accessible to everyone, is its illustrated cover, which shows a painting by Bobby [sic], called "Te hotu e te fenua" (the fruit of the earth). The picture shows a pregnant woman, carrying within her a child who is linked to the earth by its umbilical cord. Attached to the cord is the placenta, which is destined to be buried after the child's birth and is already nourishing the earth, while a fruit-bearing tree is growing from the mother's navel. This painting provides an immediate distillation of the contents of the book.

The book itself begins with these two questions, raised by Saura's students at the University of French Polynesia, "If someone's placenta is not buried in Tahiti, is he or she condemned to be forever a stranger here? If the placenta of a non-Polynesian is buried here, does that mean that he or she becomes a native Tahitian?" These questions led Saura to study the practice of burying the placenta and to examine the roots and cultural implications of this practice. His research revealed the great variety, in Eastern Polynesia, of practices related to the disposal of the placenta and to the nub of the umbilical cord that initially remains attached to and then detaches from the newborn's navel.

The first section of the book deals with the importance of the burial of the placenta in traditional Polynesian culture. This chapter was originally published in English as "Continuity of Bodies: the Infant's Placenta and the Island's Navel in Eastern Polynesia". The paper in English was originally written in French and both the original French article and the English translation are included. The two versions of this work are followed by comments by Georgia Lee, also published previously, and reproduced here in English with a French translation. Lee discusses the similarities between practices in Eastern Polynesia and those in Hawai'i and Rapa Nui. As described in detail by Saura and summarized by Lee, "wide dissemination indicates connections far back across Polynesia."

The second section of the book is entitled, "The Churches' Navels and the Human Placenta in Eastern Polynesia." Saura first discusses the laying of foundation stones or incorporation of a type of time capsule during the construction of Christian and, more specifically, Protestant churches in French Polynesia. Such time capsules might contain a Bible in Tahitian and some trinkets. He then continues with a discussion of ancient religious structures and the practice of placing the placenta and the nub of a baby's umbilical cord in an ancestral vault or on an altar.

With the disappearance of ancestral tombs and ceremonial altars, the placenta was buried inside the baby's home, or in the courtyard of the baby's home, near a tree, or, in some cases, with a tree planted over the burial site. At the end of this section, Saura writes: "These examples from Polynesia also show us how interactions emerge between rites, related to foundations, that are derived from similar constructs. The social importance of a rite that consists of putting relics in a container that is normally placed at the entrance to a place of worship can be explained as an echo, for each person, of the burial of a placenta at the entrance to a house."

The third section of the book, entitled "Evolution of Practices and Their Significance", deals with present-day Ta-

hiti. Saura notes that one woman in two still takes the placenta home after the birth of her child in a hospital setting. In more rural settings, the number of women keeping the placenta rises to nine in ten. For the choice of a burial site, the new mother turns to the baby's father or grandfather. Once the placenta has been buried, at some depth to protect it from marauding dogs, a tree – and it should be a fruit tree and not, simply, an ornamental tree – is planted on the site or a stone slab is placed over the hole, with a bush planted nearby. This section of the book concludes with a piece by Pascale Bonnemère, entitled, "The disposal of the placenta in Oceania – a single practice with many meanings," in which Bonnemère comments on Saura's work in relation to practices in Papua-New Guinea.

The final section of the book, is entitled "Dialogue" in French and "Ha'apatora'a; Te Tanura'a i te pufenua, e peu tumu ora i te ao ma'ohi nei" in Tahitian, which leads me to suspect that something has been 'lost in translation'. No English translation is provided but the crux of the rather free-ranging discussion is the intersection between nature (the expulsion of the placenta) and culture (the burial of the placenta near a tree).

This book, which includes both new and previously published work by Saura and others, provides a wealth of interesting information and speculation, which should be of interest to anyone with a deep interest in Polynesian culture. It is a pity, however, that those who speak only English or Tahitian will be able to appreciate only some of the chapters in the book.



Ra'ivavae. Archaeological Survey of Ra'ivavae, French Polynesia

Edmundo Edwards
225 pages, soft cover
ISBN 1-880636-21-2

Los Osos: Easter Island Foundation, 2003

*Review by Sidsel Millerstorm, Ph.D.
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THANKS TO THE TENACITY of the editors of Easter Island Foundation, Edmundo Edwards' long awaited *Ra'ivavae. Archaeological Survey of Ra'ivavae, French Polynesia*, was published in late 2003. This work is perhaps the first comprehensive archaeological survey of its kind in Polynesia. While John F. G. Stokes, with the Bernice Bishop Museum (Honolulu), worked on Ra'ivavae in 1921, he focused on temple sites of which he "registered 64, observed 47, and mapped 28" (unpublished notes p. 23). He furthermore collected ethnographic data and some artifacts. Both Frank Stimson, of the Bishop Museum and Thor Heyerdahl, director of *The Norwegian Archaeological Expedition*, worked briefly on Ra'ivavae in 1938 and 1956 respectively. What makes this publication unique is that the study is based on an archaeological survey that included the entire island: Edwards and his crew surveyed the island and its 13 offshore islets, for a total of 16 km². The archaeological field survey was carried over a period of eight months.

The volume is organized in five chapters. Chapter One provides the reader with the environmental setting while Chapter Two deals with the history, including oral tradition; the major part of the publication. Chapters Three and Four describe the archeological survey. The general conclusion of the archaeological field survey is discussed in Chapter Five. Appendices such as "Fishes of Ra'ivavae" (Appendix 1, both scientific and local names are listed; "Whaling Ship Log-book" (Appendix 2 not 1 as stated in the text, pp. 17); Land Names"; and "Flora" are useful. The list of fishes however, does not differentiate between inshore, offshore, and pelagic species nor does the list indicate how the data was collected. Generously illustrated, the publication contains 164 figures (Figure 5.8 is mislabeled, pp. 193), 13 tables, and 26 photos.

Little is known about Ra'ivavae's cultural development and how the small prehistoric island society fits into the larger Polynesian settlement pattern, cultural concepts, and island and inter-island exchange network (but see M. I. Weisler, Issues in the Colonization and Settlement of Polynesian Islands, 1998. *Easter Island and East Polynesian History*, P. C. Casanova, ed :73-86. Santiago: Instituto de Estudios Isla de Pascua, Universidad de Chile). For instance, did Ra'ivavae undergo the same social processes as the other small island societies in Eastern Polynesia? Only future archaeological investigation will solve many of these issues. However, Edwards' publication of the archaeological survey sheds light on several aspects of Ra'ivavae's past. Edwards was able to identify the various tribal territories, estimate the size of the territories, and understand how they were spatially occupied. Population size and potential resources were also estimated. With the help of some elders that still remembered the functions of particular structures, Edwards identified the use of numerous types of architectural remains. *Marae* (ritual structures) were recorded throughout the island; most were linked to settlements though some were found in remote locations. Eight of the 80 surveyed *marae* had stone statues (*tiki*) in red tuff. These statues were restricted to the late-prehistoric/early-historic period and were associated with enclosed court *marae* with *ahu* (small house adjacent to *marae*). Some enclosed court *marae* with *ahu* also had an avenue. While both male and female statues were represented, female statues dominated.

The publication suffers from careless editing and some inconsistencies between maps, tables, illustrations, and text. However, this does not detract from the otherwise solid work. Unfortunately Mark Eddowes' name was misspelled (not Eddoes, p. xi). The reference for Gayangos 1776:126 (p. 5) is missing from the bibliography. Many of the scientific names of fauna and flora are misspelled (pp. 2, 3, and 4) and it is sometimes difficult to know if some of the information provided is based on the author's observation or outside sources. There are inconsistencies in the manner in which the various place names are reported; e.g., in Figure 1.2, the mountain is written as Rara Te Repa while in the text it is written as Raraterepa (p. 2). The placename Mahanatoa on page 2 is not mentioned in Figure 2 as stated. Conventionally, plant and animal species that should begin with capital letters are consistently written with lower case letter. The subtitle on page 2 "Ancient Fauna" should perhaps have been labeled

"Native Fauna" since it is uncertain if the present fauna reflects that of the past. "Table 1.1 Ra'ivavae Seabird Sighting" includes a mixture of land birds, shore birds, as well as seabirds.

Generally, the work is largely descriptive pulling together all available written and oral information. I agree with Edwards that one must be skeptical of uncritically accepting oral tradition (p. 9), particularly in view of the loss of people due to epidemics in the 1800s (p. 16) that had devastating effects on the island society. Nevertheless, in concert with the extensive archaeological field survey Edwards' publication provides a baseline from which archeologists can work. Furthermore, the publication offers a valuable insight to Ra'ivavae's past and it enriches Oceanic prehistory. Edwards' book is an important contribution to Oceanic archaeology; it contains a wealth of information and is a book that will entice everyone with an interest in the Pacific.



Early Visitors to Easter Island, 1864-1877. The Reports of Eugène Eyraud, Hippolyte Roussel, Pierre Loti and Alphonse Pinart

Translated by Ann M. Altman, Ph.D.

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143 pages, including Appendix (List of ships that came to the island between 1722 and 1879)

Los Osos: Easter Island Foundation 2004

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

TWELVE YEARS AGO the Easter Island Foundation undertook its first voyage into book publishing; a voyage that would bring to Rapanuiphiles and scientists an unprecedented look at Easter Island and the realms of Oceania; a voyage that one could conceivably trace to the first visitors on Easter Island who described what they saw. For, in the words of Eyraud, Roussel, Loti, and Pinart, the world first became aware of this remarkable little island. And because of the dedicated efforts of Georgia Lee, Frank Morin, and Ann Altman, we can all share those words, that awareness, and those first voyages.

So it's no small surprise that I enjoyed reading *Early Visitors*. Obviously I've read much of this material before, some of it even in extended format as it appeared in back issues of *RNJ* – but it's a real treat to be able to have each of these accounts in one place. It is an amply illustrated volume, with reproductions of engravings and watercolors that reveal as much about Easter Island at the time as the explorers themselves, what they thought was important and what they remembered. The appendix, a comprehensive list of visitors to Easter Island from 1722 to 1879 (generously provided by Grant McCall), serves as a unique reference but also underscores just how much traffic the island has seen over the years, despite its isolation. I especially enjoyed the Loti chapter, as he is by far my favorite "early visitor". Of course, I realize Loti tends towards exaggeration, but his language is unequaled in the literature of Easter Island – evocative, visceral-