

- Q:** What's the most important thing you'd like visitors to know about Easter Island?
- GL:** That the island is more than just stone statues on an isolated bit of land. There is a living, breathing society there! Some books about the island give the impression that there is nothing but ruins and statues. And, also, visitors need to know that the island is fragile and endangered, and under great stress. The infrastructure is a nightmare of poor planning; livestock is allowed to roam freely, trampling on the archaeological sites; there are (by the thousands) too many vehicles. There are no controls, or if there are controls, no one pays any attention to them. Shacks appear on known archaeological sites. And precious information is lost forever.
- FM:** That the island was populated by Polynesians from the West.
- Q:** What are you currently reading?
- GL:** Well, when not reading Winnie the Pooh to my 3-year old great-grandson, I am reading *Where Fate Beckons. The Life of Jean-Francois de la Pérouse*, by John Dunmore; *Vaka Moana, Voyages of the Ancestors*, edited by K.R. Howe; and *Mission Accomplished or How We Won the War in Iraq* by Christopher Cerf and Victor Navasky.
- FM:** I read investment articles and *The Method of the Siddhas* by Adi Da.
- Q:** Date and place of birth?
- GL:** January 12, 1926; Alameda, California
- FM:** October 10, 1917; Laconia, New Hampshire.
- Q:** Credentials?
- GL:** AA degree, Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri, 1945; BA and Teaching Credential, California College of Arts and Crafts, 1948; MA degree, Art History, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1978; PhD, Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986.
- FM:** BS and MS, University of New Hampshire, 1935 to 1940; PhD *abd*, University of Wisconsin; Member of the Technical Staff, Bell Telephone Laboratories, 1941-1962; Associate Director, Director and Distinguished Fellow, Science Center, North American Aviation 1962-1979.

REVIEWS

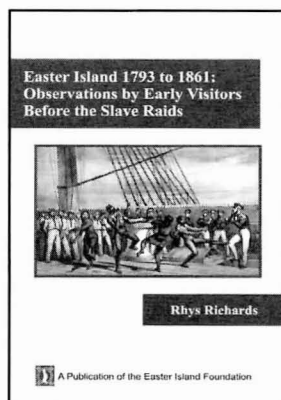
EASTER ISLAND 1793 TO 1861: OBSERVATIONS BY EARLY VISITORS BEFORE THE SLAVE RAIDS

Rhys Richards

Easter Island Foundation, 2008
Soft cover, ISBN 978-1-880636-28-2
\$15.00 U.S.

Review by Paul Horley

Easter Island is a special place that has attracted much attention since Jacob Roggeveen introduced it to European society. In most publications only a few additional visits to Rapa Nui are usually mentioned in significant detail — namely the expeditions of Felipe González y Haedo, James Cook,



Jean François de Galaup (Comte de La Pérouse), Yuri Lisiansky, Otto von Kotzebue, and Abel Aubert du Petit-Thouars, creating the impression that only a handful of ships circumnavigated or anchored at the island in the pre-missionary period. However, the true number of visitors was much higher. Not all of them left detailed accounts; sometimes it was little more than a couple of lines in a ship's logbook, to be found buried in the archives of various libraries. The dispersal of historical sources, not to mention the fact that many appear in different languages, complicates the process of comparative analysis and the generalization of existing data. This situation has significantly improved with the publication of a new book by Rhys Richards which presents extracts and descriptions for more than thirty accounts of early visitors to the Navel of the World.

At 144 pages, the book contains a wealth of historical documentation. To avoid unnecessary repetition and to emphasize key observations, the accounts are properly abbreviated after careful analysis. Several reports are given in full length, such as those of James Wolfe (HMS *Blossom*, 1825), Hugh Cuming (*Discovery*, 1827), and surgeon R. Guthrie (HMS *Seringapatam*, 1830); the last two cases also present additional detailed discussion and comments by Steven Roger Fischer. The account of Abel Aubert du Petit-Thouars (*Venus*, 1838), originally written in French, was specially translated

for this book by Sara-Jean Richards and Ann Altman.

The material presented in *Observations by Early Visitors* allows the reader a remarkable opportunity to compare different observations made over more than a half of a century, offering an enhanced view on the communication between islanders and the crews of visiting ships. In the majority of the sources, the natives are described as a friendly people offering food and artefacts for trade; some of these early collected masterpieces of Easter Island art make it possible to trace even non-documented visits. The situation changed, however, following several sad events when islanders were mistreated or killed; further visitors were usually prevented from landing by a shower of stones. And yet, the disposition of the natives varied, so that ships arriving within the same year might obtain completely contrasting welcomes; it's possible the situation was influenced by conditions on the island itself, such as the quality of harvest, the state of internal peace or warfare, etc.

Numerous accounts mention well-developed plantations, which is especially important to appreciate the agricultural history of the island, as practically all the visiting ships successfully acquired provisions. In some cases, food brought for trading was evidently so abundant that, after the crew declined to buy any more, the islanders cheerfully threw the remaining food overboard before leaving the ship (Hugh Cuming's account, 1827). Thus, the early 19th century records suggest that the islanders had plenty of food, which perfectly agrees with the results of the modern archaeological research revealing strong modification of Rapa Nui terrain for agricultural needs (discussed in detail in a new book by Christopher Stevenson and Sonia Haoa, *Prehistoric Rapa Nui: Landscape and Settlement Archaeology at Hanga Ho'onu*; Easter Island Foundation, 2008). Therefore, despite complicated issues pertaining to deforestation of the island, the natives managed at least for a while to find successful solutions for producing food in quantities sufficient to maintain themselves and to trade provisions with passing ships.

Observations by Early Visitors also features many curious details, such as description of a special ceremony for handing over a wooden carving, turban-like headgear worn by the natives, and aspects of body adornment (e.g., tattooing and body painting). The account of Charles Bishop, captain of the *Ruby* (1795), contains several Rapanui words, including recognizable *new'ee* (nui) for "big", *ear'nee* (ariki) for "chief", and *mo'ae* (moai) — the latter translated to mean "to lie down to sleep"! From the ship *Venus* in 1838 Abel Aubert du Petit-Thouars describes an *ahu* with "four equally spaced red statues, whose tops were covered in white stones", located on the west coast before reaching Cook's Bay.

The book features more than 30 illustrations, including historical paintings and lithographs of early voyages (Cook, La Pérouse, Bishop, Kotzebue, du Petit-Thouars, and Pinart), as well as a map of the island showing territorial boundaries as depicted by Routledge. Two dozen photographs illustrate various Rapa Nui artefacts, such as stone and wood sculptures, adornments like *tahonga* and *reimiro*, fishhooks, and painted bark cloth figurines from collections in various museums.

There is an extensive bibliography, and an appendix listing whaling ships that visited the island between 1840 and 1855 (with references to institutions where the corresponding logbooks or journals are located); this should be of special interest to readers looking for the full sources of the early accounts about Rapa Nui.

Observations by Early Visitors is an attractive book featuring many historical records, interesting discussions, and numerous illustrations — and it contains a lot of important information about the people of Easter Island and their unique culture.

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WHERE FATE BECKONS. THE LIFE OF JEAN-FRANÇOIS DE LA PÉROUSE

John Dunmore

University of Alaska Press, 2007
Soft cover, ISBN 978-1-602230-03-3
\$19.71 from Amazon.com

Review by Georgia Lee

Any student or *aficionado* of Easter Island knows the name of La Pérouse, who landed there in 1786; a prominent bay on the island's north coast is named for him. Their stop at Rapa Nui was short, less than one day, but La Pérouse left behind seeds and animals (goats, pigs, and sheep), maize and other cereals. None were ever seen again.

The *Astrolabe* and *Boussole* sailed toward the Hawaiian Islands, and from there to the Alaskan coast, to California, and then outward into the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Finally they reached Australia and anchored in Botany Bay. A British ship, *Sirius*, agreed to carry letters and reports back to Europe — a serendipitous event for, otherwise, we would know nothing of the amazing experiences of La Pérouse and his crews. Sailing onward, they disappeared from the face of the earth — lost, it seemed, in a horrific shipwreck.

In 1826, an Irish captain found traces of a wreck that had occurred at Vanikoro, but it is only recently that expeditions were created to search for the wreckage of the two frigates, and to learn the story of how the expedition ended.

La Pérouse was born near Albi, France, educated in a Jesuit college, and fought against the British off the coast of North America during the Seven Years War. He was made a commander for defeating an English frigate and, in 1785, he was appointed by Louis XVI to lead an expedition around the world in order to explore the South Pacific. It is difficult to re-

