

Jo Anne Van Tilburg. 1992. *HMS Topaze on Easter Island, Hoa Hakananai'a and Five Other Museum Sculptures in Archaeological Context* (with drawings of Easter Island statues by Cristián Arévalo Pakarati). Occasional Paper 73, Department of Ethnography, British Museum. 207 pp., 12 pl., 87 figs., 1 fold-out table. £12.

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During the first sixty years of the nineteenth century, a deep silence blanketed Easter Island despite visits by numerous ships; this silence was to be shattered by the cries of the victims of the genocide of 1862-63, which unleashed an international reaction. The subsequent work of the missionaries is known from a few dozen pages, extremely precious for the rare information they contain on the islanders' mythology and religion; according to Catholic tradition, Brother Eugène Eyraud is supposed to have received--as a last sacrament on his deathbed, August 19th 1868--the news that the conversion of Easter Island's population was complete (but if this was true, he cannot have been unaware of the fact!). It is against this background that one must place the visit, in October/November 1868, of HMS *Topaze*, in the course of which detailed new "secular" observations were made, 82 years after those of La Pérouse; we owe this new information primarily to J. Linton Palmer, surgeon on the *Topaze*, but also to his commander, Richard Ashmore Powell, the paymaster Richard Sainthill, and lieutenants H.V. Barclay and Colin M. Dundas.

So one can see how fascinating it would be to have a new historical, analytical and critical examination of the data gathered in a society that was actively engaged in restructuring itself, in the context of Christianization and permanent relations with Europeans. Unfortunately, despite its title, this is not the subject of Jo Anne Van Tilburg's work, which devotes only 18 pages to the *Topaze's* stay and its contribution to our understanding of the island's past; and five of these pages are reserved for the "star", one might almost say the pretext, of the whole paper--that is, Hoa Hakananai'a. Indeed the name of this superb statue, displayed in the foyer of London's Museum of Mankind, appears in the subtitle, which it would not be advisable to omit in bibliographies, since the paper is principally devoted to the monumental statues that do not come from Rano Raraku, and especially to six of them which are housed in museums: the British Museum (2 statues), the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, and the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Santiago (2 statues).

Everybody knows Van Tilburg's classic work, *Power and Symbol* (UCLA 1986), on the statues in situ. This new study enables the specialist in Easter Island's monolithic sculpture to remind us of the principal results that emerged from her first work, as well as to take a fresh look at her interpretations, enrich them with linguistic considerations and make

comparisons with evidence from other Polynesian islands (mainly Mangareva in the Gambiers, Mangaia and Pukapuka in the Cook Islands, the Tuamotus, and, where necessary, the Marquesas, Tonga and Samoa) and from Micronesian islands. Basing herself on these arguments (those involving linguistics sometimes seemed very flimsy to me, but I am not a specialist), she emphasizes the different symbolic levels of the crescent motif, the dorsal and lumbar motifs, the forked signs, the representations of vulvas and the meaning of the *pukao*.

A chronology is proposed for the statues carved out of materials other than those of Rano Raraku: according to this chronology, the statues of red scoria, which are already present in the earliest *ahu moai* phase, have the greatest geographical and chronological spread: some were still standing in cult sites at the time of the visits by Palmer and even Alphonse Pinart (1877). The trachyte statues all come from Poike, and their erection in this spot could have been inspired by that of the Spanish crosses in 1770. Some basalt statues seem to be linked both to the island's western area, to the birdman cult and to the depiction of vulvas, and hence, according to the author, to a relatively recent phase in the island's history.

The author's point of view on the chronology of the statues and the evolution of the cults is very interesting, even if the dating of the major events in the island's history or that of artifacts like Tukuturi, for example, remains archaeologically highly conjectural. This is a very solid piece of work in terms of documentation; however, since it deals primarily with art and its interpretation, it is quite naturally filled with subjective judgments: hence, it is purely personal choice that makes the author consider the protuberance placed between the hands of Pou Hakanonoga to be a big clitoris rather than a small penis....



Film Review

Hollywood at the Center of the World:
A Review of *Rapa Nui*
James Hynes

A Tig Productions /Majestic Films Production
Directed by Kevin Reynolds

I

I suppose I ought to begin by saying what this review is not. It is not about the effect of the filmmakers on the life and culture of the island, nor is it about the effect of the filmmaking itself on the island's ecology and archaeological sites. These sorts of things ought to be reported on by those who live there, or by archaeologists and anthropologists who know the island more intimately than I do. I am a novelist, and my interest in Rapa Nui and its history arises from my current project, an historical novel about Jacob Roggeveen, centered around his visit to the island in 1722. I visited the island myself for three weeks in October of 1992; the last week of my visit coincided with the first visit to the island of