

OBITUARIES

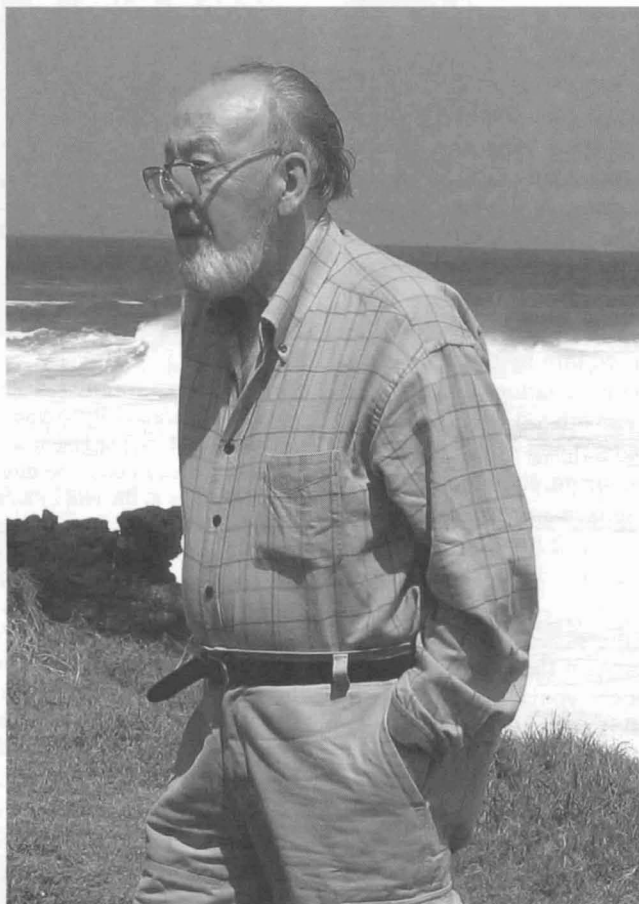
Arne Skjølsvold 1925-2007

THE NORWEGIAN ARCHAEOLOGIST and pioneer in Easter Island archaeology, Professor Arne Skjølsvold, passed away on the 26th of October 2007, after some years of illness.

Arne Skjølsvold had a longstanding career in both Norwegian and Pacific archaeology. In Norway he became curator, chief curator and head of several museums and institutes such as: The National Museum of Forestry, Hunting and Fisheries, Stavanger Museum, and The University Museum of National Antiquities in Oslo. He was also appointed Professor at the Department of Archaeological at Oslo University in 1982. It was this position he held when he was asked to start up the Kon-Tiki Museum Research Department in 1986. Here he held the position as Head of Department which he retired from in 1997. He was also member of the Board of Directors of the Kon-Tiki Museum for over 20 years and to his death he remained a member of the Norwegian Royal Academy of Sciences.

In Norwegian archaeology Arne was a pioneer in studies of Iron Age soapstone quarries. This was the subject of his MA thesis. In his PhD work he focused on yet another subject, namely the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, and he dealt with possibilities of interactions between people with different modes of living such as, hunter gatherers and farmers living in different ecological zones. He also had a longstanding research interest in remotely situated graves in the high mountain areas of South Eastern Norway, where he carried out several interesting excavations.

In 1952, when Thor Heyerdahl inquired to Oslo University for archaeological assistance with his Galápagos Islands' expedition they recommended Arne for the job. This became his first contact with fieldwork in the Pacific. Subsequently, when Heyerdahl arranged his famous "Aku-Aku" expedition to Easter Island in 1955-56, Skjølsvold became the natural choice for Heyerdahl. With his back-



ground investigating Norwegian soap stone quarries, Arne felt right at home conducting investigations at the statue quarries in Rano Raraku. The excavations in Rano Raraku resulted in several discoveries, among them the finding of a new statue type, the kneeling statue with a beard, named Tukuturi. Another excavated statue showed a boat carving on the chest. Arne also carried out the first, and so far, the only radiocarbon dates of the quarry, which dated the use period to ca. AD 1000-1600. He also investigated a site called "Hotu Matua's House" and a circular dwelling where he was the first to find evidences of carbonized prehistoric remains of sweet potato. During the "Aku-Aku" expedition, Arne also carried out archaeological investigations at Ra'ivavae in the Austral Islands, and on Hiva Oa in the Marquesas. In 1963 he, and his good Chilean friend and colleague Gonzálo Figueroa, returned to Hiva Oa on a grant from the Kon-Tiki Museum to excavate a cave site and a *tohua*.

During the 1980s, Arne returned to Easter Island on several occasions, when he re-excavated and dated the kneeling statue, and initiated and conducted the important excavations at 'Anakena. Here Arne discovered the so far earliest dated settlement on the island and among the remains he found bones the Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*).

During the early 1980s Skjølsvold carried out archaeological fieldwork in the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, and he also functioned as co-director of the excavations, initiated by Hey-

erdahl, at the pyramid centre at Tucume, in northern Peru, during the years 1988-94.

Marked by illness, he visited Easter Island a last time in 2004. When we visited Tongariki he gazed to the quarry in the back and said to us, "I have come here so many times so it feels like coming home...." To the people who knew Arne he will be remembered as a man who loved fun and a good time, but also a man of great wisdom. We can still hear the echo of his words when he explained "...as an archaeologist you always need to have an open mind" Arne, from all of us, *Maururu Nui!*

Paul Wallin and Helene Martinsson-Wallin