



Easter ISLAND

Guide For Inquisitive Minds



Brien Foerster



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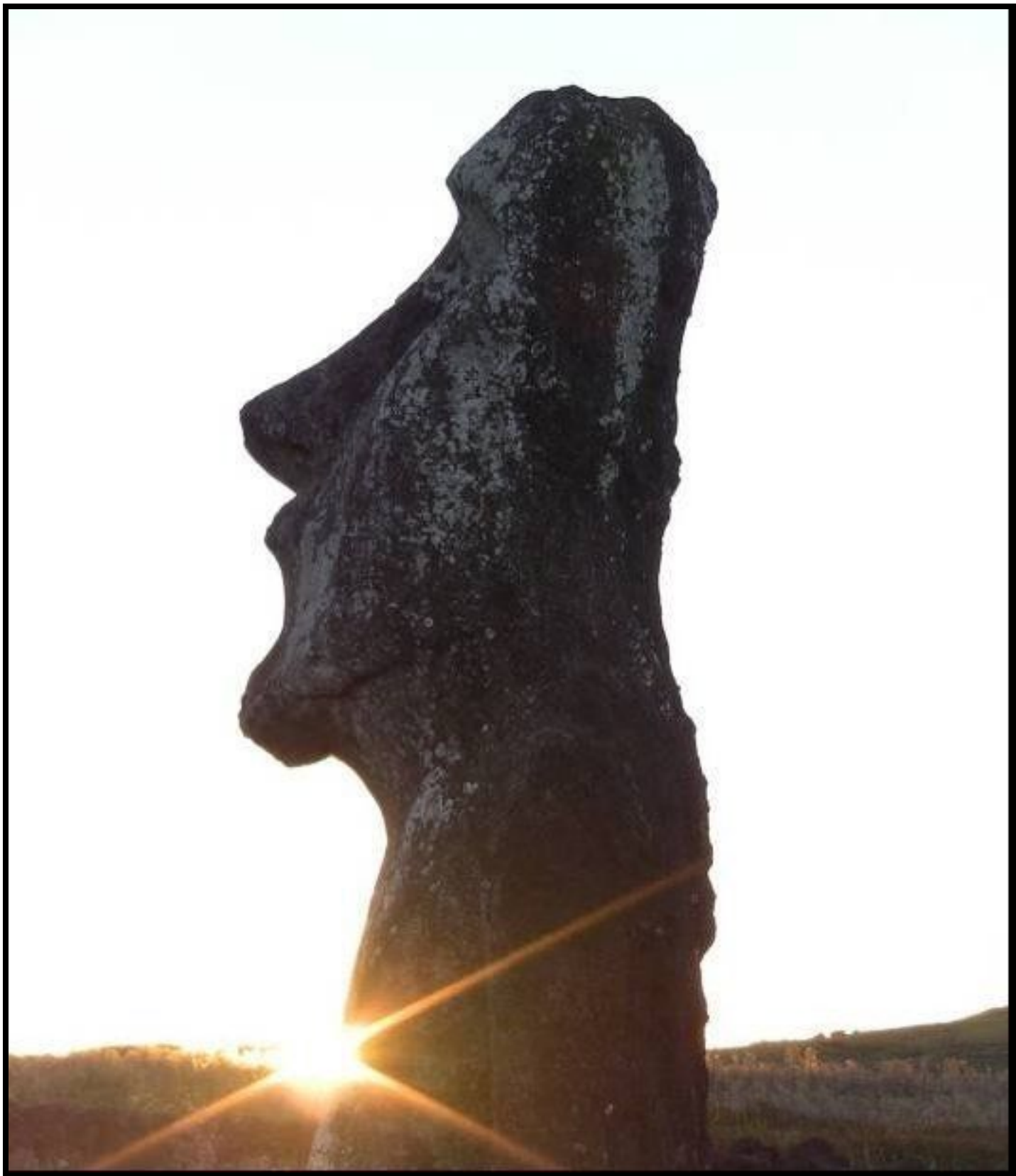
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Disclaimer: All of the content of this book was gleaned from information by other authors, internet sources and personal observations by me during two visits to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) as well as from local informants on the island. Also, all photos were either taken by me, the author, or were found on what are presumed to be copyright free websites.

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I in no way believe that this is the definitive book on the subject of Easter Island, but it is an attempt to present a balanced thesis. The only people, in my opinion, that are the true experts of the history of this place are the Native residents, the Rapa Nui, but as far as I know, at this time, none have written a book on the subject.

Should such a text appear, I will readily wish to read the contents...

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1/ Introduction

Of all of the mysterious places on the planet, and especially of the islands inhabited by people for centuries if not for millennia, Easter Island is one that has captured my imagination and that of many other people since childhood. The most striking features of the island are of course are the huge carved stone heads which scatter the landscape, and of which little is truly understood in mainstream anthropology and archaeology, and far less by the general public.

Ideas that aliens made them, that people who worshipped or even were descended from aliens produced them, that they are remnants of a lost ancient civilization, or the idols of ancestors are common speculations, but what are the facts? Combining the knowledge from both archaeology, and Native oral traditions may provide a logical answer...



The author with Rapa Nui elder, Sr. Jorge, who gave me the head adornment

2/ What Is In A Name?

Easter Island sits 3500 km west of the Chilean coast of South America, and is also known as Isla de Pascua (Spanish) and Rapa Nui (the Indigenous language.) This remote outpost of civilization has fascinated visitors ever since it was first discovered by the Dutch explorer Jakob Roggeveen on Easter Sunday, 1722; he thus named it Easter Island, or more properly *Paasch-Eyland* (18th century Dutch for "Easter Island.") (1) .That name has stuck ever since, much to the consternation of the Native islanders, who have known their home by their own names for hundreds if not thousands of years.

The name Rapa Nui, for example, which is the title best loved by the present day population, who are a mix of Polynesian and Chilean descent, means "Big Rapa," but this term was supposedly coined after the slave raids of the early 1860s, and refers to the island's topographic resemblance to the island of Rapa in the Bass Islands of the Austral Islands group. (2) In the source's own words, he being William Thompson writing in 1891, 'Throughout southeastern Polynesia this island is known as Rapa Nui, but the name is of accidental origin and only traces back about twenty years. When the islanders, kidnapped by the Peruvians, were being returned to their homes, there was for a time a question as to the identity of those from Easter Island. The native name of "Te Pito O Te Henua" was not recognized by the French officials, and finding certain fellow-sufferers hailing from Oparo, an island lying 2,000 miles to the westward, were more successful under the local appellation of Rapa Iti (Little Rapa), the euphonious title was dropped and Rapa nui (Great Rapa) substituted.'

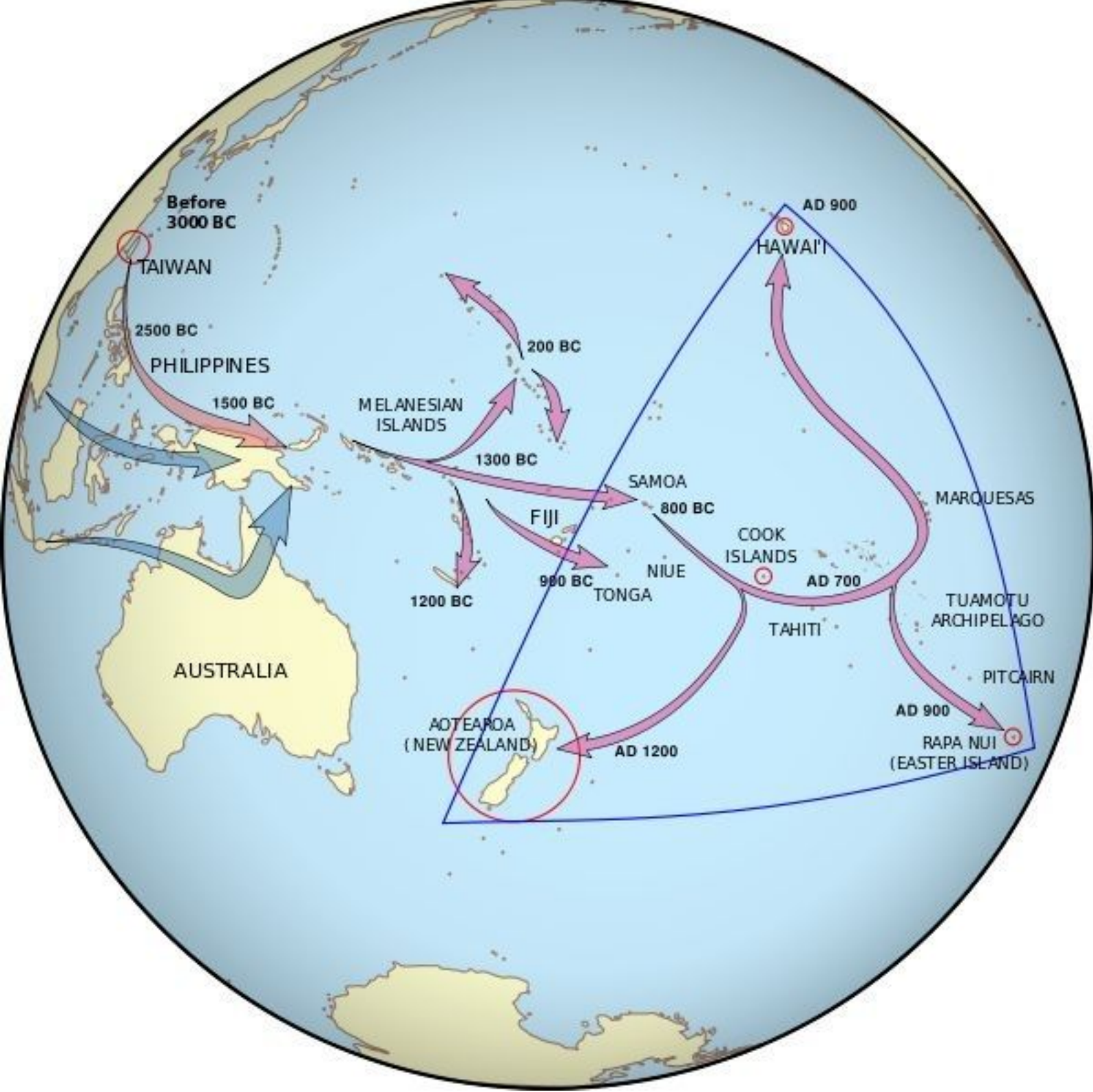


Map of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

Te Pito O te Henua has been said to be the original title of the island since Alphonse Pinart gave it the romantic translation "The Navel Of The World" in his Voyage à l'Île de Pâques, published in 1877. (3) However, there are two words pronounced pito in Rapa Nui, one meaning 'navel' and one 'end', and the phrase can thus also mean "land's end".

Yet another name, that being Mata Ki Te Rangi, means "Eyes Looking To The Sky" and this may be in reference to the famous large stone statues, called Moai, which ring the island and are in the shape of, predominantly, human heads and torsos. At least that is the western interpretation of the name and phrase, whereas local informants have told me that the Moai look towards the villages and descendants, and not the sky. However,

after my second trip there in November of 2012, I tend to believe that at least some of the Moai were made such that their eyes are truly looking skywards, on purpose. And finally, Thor Heyerdahl, the amazing Norwegian explorer best known for his 1947 Kon Tiki adventure, and later the Ra and Tigris expeditions, insisted that Rapa was the original name of Easter Island, and that Rapa Iti was named by refugees from there. (4) Heyerdahl was in fact the first European, and in fact outsider, to conduct archaeological excavations on the island, which is well documented in his book *Aku Aku: the Secret of Easter Island* written in 1958.



Conventional archaeological map of the migration of “Polynesian” people

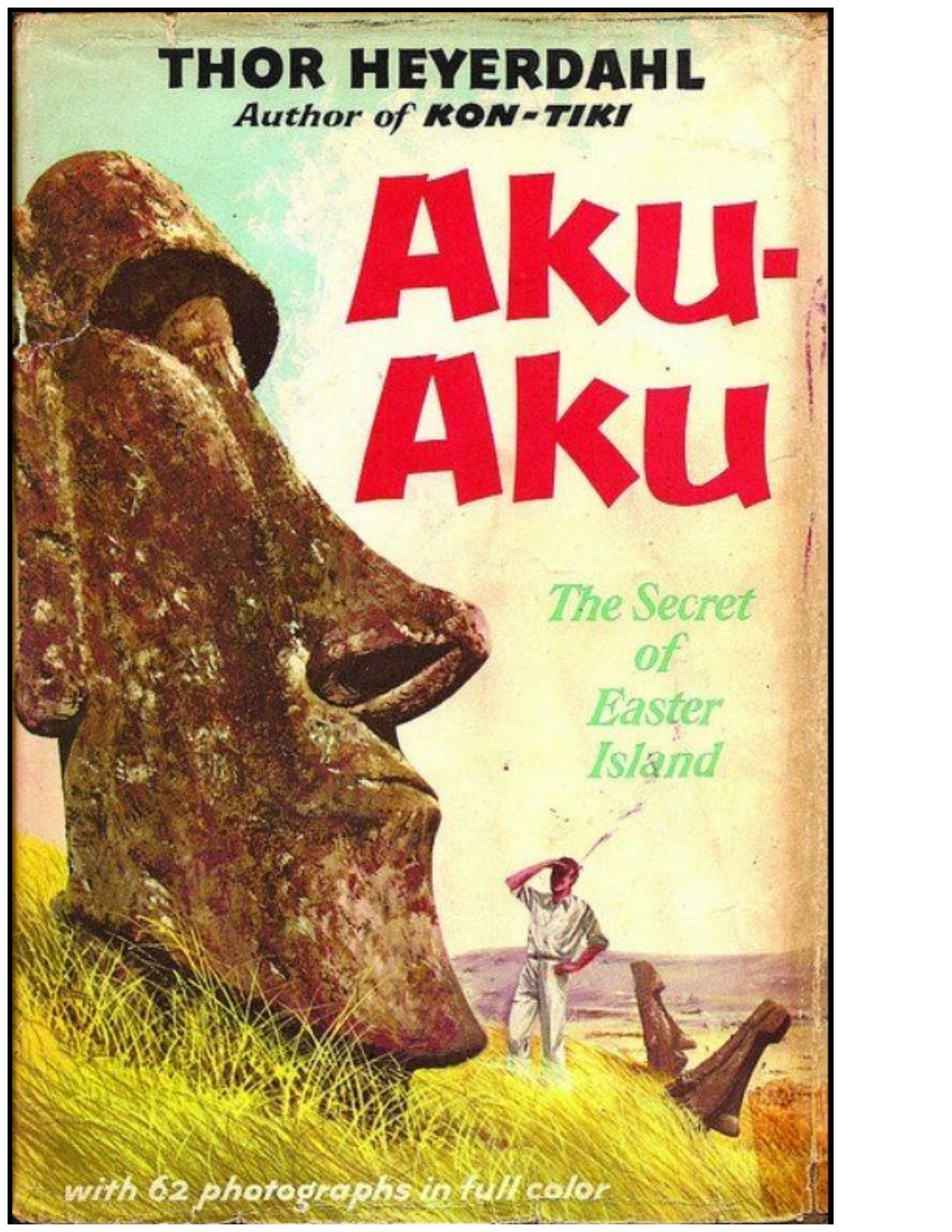
THOR HEYERDAHL

*Author of **KON-TIKI***

AKU- AKU

*The Secret
of
Easter
Island*

with 62 photographs in full color



3/ Evidence Of Two Distinct Cultures

Francis Mazière, who conducted archaeological excavations on the island in 1963, was told by a native elder that ‘very big men, but not giants, lived on the island well before the coming of Hotu Matu’a (the presumed Polynesian founder of the island.) Another related the following legend:

The first men to live on the island were the survivors of the world’s first race. They were yellow, very big, with long arms, great stout chests, huge ears although their lobes were not stretched: they had pure yellow hair and their bodies were hairless and shining. They did not possess fire. This race once existed on two other Polynesian islands. They came by boat from a land that lies behind America.

What is perhaps most intriguing and perplexing about Rapa Nui are the recurring stories of two separate people and cultures cohabiting this small place which Roggeveen was the first outsider to witness in 1722. He states that they were "of all shades of colour, yellow, white and brown" and they distended their ear lobes so greatly with large disks that when they took them out they could "hitch the rim of the lobe over the top of the ear". (5) The latter is in reference to the so-called Long Ears, or Hanau e’epe people, who are generally regarded as having been a high caste group, whereas the Hanau momoko were the Short Ears, and the working class.



Long Ears: these with the distinctive top knots

The Hanau e'epe were theorized by Thor Heyerdahl to have come from South America (6), perhaps being the early Inca or the predecessors, while the Hanau momoko were Polynesians, most likely coming from Oparo or Rapa Iti Island which is in the Australs. Much controversy surrounds the relationships between these people, as well as time lines of conflicts that in fact did occur; however, a full discussion of this will come later.

Roggeveen clearly indicated that he observed two distinct peoples upon his arrival to Easter Island, the Polynesians, and "White" people, whose ear lobes were heavily distended. Not only was their skin colour much lighter than the Polynesians or Hanau momoko, but their hair was also reddish or even blonde. Such hair is depicted in the above photo of the Moai wearing

top knots called Pukao.



Enigmatic possible megalithic remains on Rapa Iti

What Heyerdahl purports in *Aku Aku* is that the evidence exists to show that the island was “invaded” by a white skinned people that arrived on the island about 500 A.D. This race of people had unusual features that included red hair and long thin noses. They were remembered by the natives as the “Long Ears” because they wore large ear rings that elongated their earlobes. They took possession of the island and forced the natives to work as labourers. Descendants of the Long Ears are said to still exist on the island today, though in my travels I never saw a person whose ears were physically that abnormal. They are believed by some western researchers to be predominant families, many of them still with red hair and European facial features that set them apart from the dark haired, dark-

eyed natives. (7)

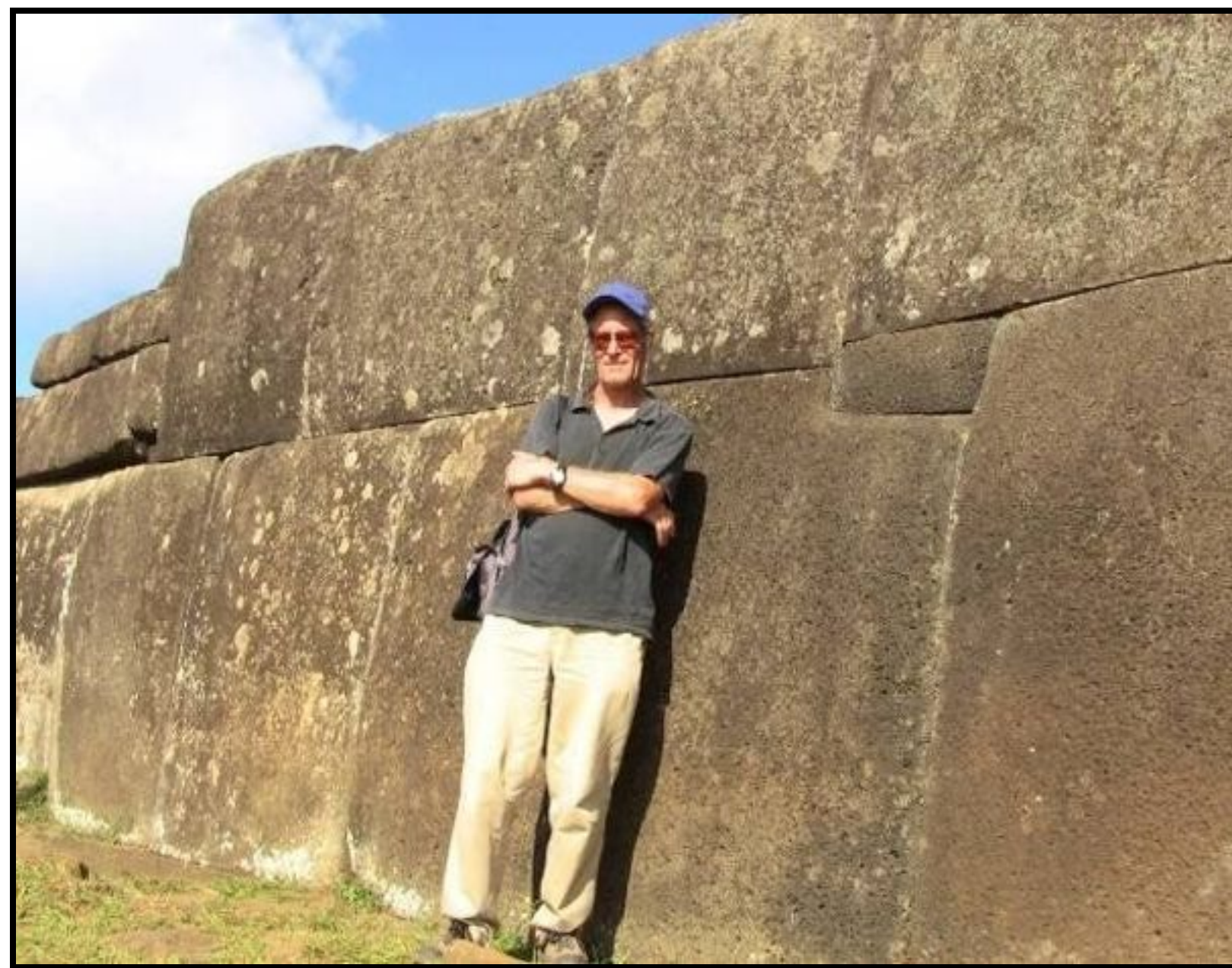
Great disputes arise in the timing and identity of these two groups, the Hanau e'epe (Long Ears) and Hanau momoko (Short Ears.) Conventional wisdom, taken from the loosest of sources, as in Wikipedia, tells us the following: estimated dates of the initial settlement of Easter Island range from 300 to 1200 CE, approximately coinciding with the arrival of the first settlers in Hawaii. Rectifications in radiocarbon dating have changed almost all of the previously-posed early settlement dates in Polynesia. Rapa Nui is now considered to have been settled about 700–1100 CE. An ongoing study by archaeologists Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo suggests a still-later date: "Radiocarbon dates for the earliest stratigraphic layers at Anakena, Easter Island, and analysis of previous radiocarbon dates imply that the island was colonized late, about 1200 CE. Significant ecological impacts and major cultural investments in monumental architecture and statuary thus began soon after initial settlement." (8)

However, such a broad range of dates, even with radiocarbon as a time measure more clutters the situation than defines it, when, again, taking into account the two separate groups that dwelt there, and the Native oral traditions of the Rapa Nui people.

According to Thor Heyerdahl's own words, delivered in a series of lectures to the Swedish Society of Anthropology and Geography in Stockholm: "at some unidentified date prior to AD 380, the first settlers landed on Easter Island, and found a verdant island covered by trees, shrubs, and palms." He proved this to be true from the extensive pollen samples taken from the crater lakes with the aid of 26 feet long cores from the sediments.

His excavations proved that there were 3 separate epochs in the History of Easter Island, which the archaeologists have named Early, Middle and Late Periods. In the Early Period there was no production of giant statues, only altar-like elevations of very large, and most precisely cut and joined stones, which were erected with their facades towards the ocean, and a

sunken court on the inland side. They were astronomically oriented, and constructed by highly specialised stone masons who studied the annual movement of the sun and in their religious architecture.



The author at the megalithic walled platform of Vinapu

Not until the Second Period were the well known giant statues, the Moai quarried and placed on the platforms. Some archaeologists believe that during this period, around AD 1100, the Birdman Cult arrived and marked the commencement of the raising of the large ancestor statues. During a period of less than 6 centuries, more than 600 giant ancestor statues were carved from the quarries on the slopes of Rano Raraku crater after the forests had been cleared. When the statue production reached its peak the

island engineers were able to erect statues up to 40 feet tall, weighing more than 80 tons, and balance a red stone cylinder hat, the Pukao weighing up to 12 tons, on top of its head.

According again to Heyerdahl, about 50 years after Roggeveen first visited Rapa Nui, the Spaniard Don Felipe Gonzales was the next foreigner to describe the people of this island, in 1770. "The Spaniards met on the island tall, fair men. Two of the biggest were measured and were respectively 6 feet, 6 1/2 inches and 6 feet, 5 inches tall. Many had beards, and the Spaniards found that they were quite like Europeans and not ordinary natives. They noted in their diaries that not all of them had black hair: the hair of some was chestnut brown, and in other cases it was even reddish and cinnamon-colored." (9)



4/ Ancient Connections With South America?

‘Polynesian archaeology appears to be dominated by a small, zealous group, who will not permit any points of view other than their own. ... We must bear in mind that nobody, absolutely nobody has the right to claim to know the whole truth about the past; for there are simply too many elements of uncertainty involved.’ Øystein Kock Johansen (9a)

Thor Heyerdahl, who led archaeological expeditions to Easter Island in 1955-56 and 1986-88, opposed the conventional view that Easter Island was first peopled from the west (Polynesia), and argued that it was first settled from the east (South America), as one of the island’s early traditions suggests. He held that the sweet potato, bottle gourd, and totora reed were introduced to the island from South America, while the chicken, banana, and sugar cane, for example, were introduced from Polynesia.

Most researchers dismiss Heyerdahl’s theory of a South American source for Easter Island’s culture, arguing that not a single South American artifact has ever been found in 50 years of intensive archaeology in Polynesia, and that there is no trace of a sudden influx of new cultural influences at any point in Easter Island’s history. They describe his theory as ‘a tottering edifice precariously based on preconceptions, extreme subjectivity, distortions and very little hard evidence’. (9b)

They do, however, concede that there must have been at least sporadic contacts between Polynesians and South America, though they think it was probably the Polynesians who went to South America rather than the other way round.

Contacts of some kind are needed to explain how the sweet potato, for example, reached Polynesia, and why the Inca quipu, a system of knotted cords for remembering facts and especially numbers is used on many island in Polynesia and Melanesia, into Indonesia and through China.

There is archaeological and linguistic evidence that Polynesians landed on the north coast of Chile, among a tribe known as the Mapuche. In graves at Rio Negro in Argentina, human remains have been found that do not belong to any race of South America, but to those of Polynesia. Maori stone implements have been discovered at Cuzco in Peru and at Santiago del Estiro in Argentina. Carved wooden clubs similar to those of the Marquesas have been found in Peru, Chile, Columbia, and Ecuador. (9c)

The official thinking today is that the ancestral Easter Islanders were Polynesians, with no admixture of any other groups. However, the 'scientific' evidence is ambiguous. H.L. Shapiro found that Easter Islanders deviated significantly from the Polynesians in the shape and dimensions of the cranium, but proposed that this might be due to 'selective migration followed by isolation and inbreeding'; the Easter Islanders have been said to be just plain Polynesians of 'a somewhat specialized and exaggerated type'. (9d)

The rocker jaw is the most characteristically Polynesian skeletal trait. Its frequency of occurrence on almost all islands from New Zealand to Hawaii ranges from 72 to 90%, but it is extremely rare among Amerindians; the figure for Easter Island is 48.5%. One researcher found that the Easter Islanders show a few minor Amerindian traits, and suggested this could be due to some Marquesans having sailed to South America. (9e)

Thor Heyerdahl based his theory of emigration from South America in large part on the oral traditions of the people of the Peruvian and Bolivian highlands, especially around Lake Titicaca, which spoke of the characters known as Kon Tiki and Viracocha. Most scholars agree that these two characters were one and the same, and in fact another interpretation of the name is Con Ticci Viracocha.



The Viracocha symbol as used on the Kon Tiki raft

According to "History of the Incas" by Pedro Sarmiento De Gamboa, "The natives of this land affirm that in the beginning, and before this world was created, there was a being called Viracocha. He created a dark world without sun, moon or stars. Owing to this creation he was named Viracocha Pachayachachi, which means "Creator of all things." And when he had created the world he formed a race of giants of disproportioned greatness painted and sculptured, to see whether it would be well to make real men of that size. He then created men in his likeness as they are now; and they lived in darkness."

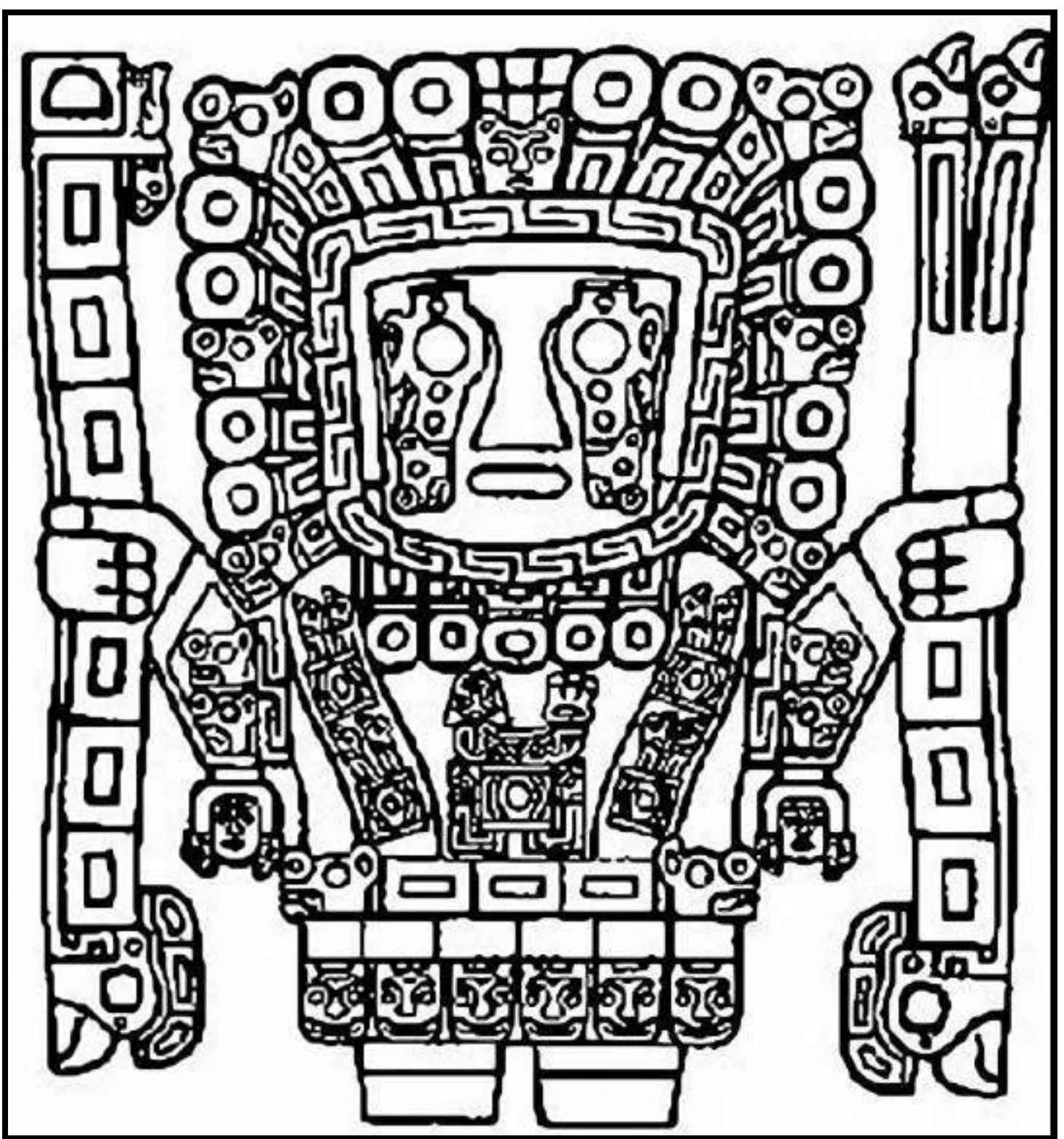


Image of Viracocha on the Sun Gate at Tiwanaku Bolivia

“Viracocha ordered these people that they should live without quarrelling, and that they should know and serve him.” As men became bad, he decided to punish them; he turned them into stone, into things, and some were swallowed up by the earth and others by the sea. A general flood which they call Uñu Pachacuti, meaning "water that overturns the land", came over them. "They say that it rained 60 days and nights, that it

drowned all created things, and that there alone remained some vestiges of those who were turned into stones, as a memorial of the event, and as an example to posterity, in the edifices of Pucara, which are 60 leagues from Cuzco."

"He lived amongst men, and he taught them many arts. He it was, as the priests of those who were here before the Incas say, showed men how to bring streams of water to their crops, and taught them how to build terraces upon the mountains where crops would grow. And when the bird that cries out four times at dawn cried out, and the light came upon the cross he had set up, Viracocha went from amongst men. He went down to the sea, and he walked across it towards the west. But he told those whom he had left behind that he would send messengers back who would protect them and give them renewed knowledge of all he had taught them." (10)

The timeline of Viracocha's exit from the mainland of South America, the departure point most often believed having been northern Peru in the area of the present town of Tumbes, is completely unknown, lost in the fog of time. However, it would have been prior to the existence of the Inca, which most accounts give as beginning about the year 900 AD, when they were forced to leave the Tiwanaku area, near lake Titicaca in Bolivia, and found Cusco, which was to become their capital city. (11)

Here again Heyerdahl comes into play, not in the 10th century, but the 20th. It was his belief, of course, that at least some of the ancestry of Rapa Nui came from the Pacific side of the South American continent, based on the presence of the clearly non-Polynesian Long Ears, but also on many other factors. The idea that Viracocha, or the Viracochas as a people left the shores of northern Peru on some sort of vessel led Heyerdahl to speculate as to what sort of vessel would have been employed, and where it would have gone.
