

graphic interest. It is dated 575 A. D. and has been ably and fully published by Miss Fernald in *Eastern Art* and should notably strengthen the Exhibition, as will to a lesser degree the charming pair of bodhisattva executed in grey limestone and the two gilt bronze statuettes. The great glazed-pottery Lohan (lower right) will, in the London Exhibition, be brought nearer to one of its mates in the British Museum than it has been for a score of years. Of the six extant members of the original set—eighteen in all, made perhaps as early as the T'ang dynasty—ours, and that belonging to the British Museum, seem closest to perfection: visitors to London will have a better opportunity to judge them than has been accorded for a long time.

The seated stone lion, so characteristic of the vigorous animal sculpture of the epochs immediately preceding the T'ang dynasty, its features contorted in a silent and rather benevolent roar, goes to London as a representative of the three outstanding specimens of this sort in the possession of the Museum. His two larger brothers, familiar to all visitors and in monumental artistic importance probably the Museum's greatest possessions, because of their huge weight and the difficulty of handling could not be sent.

Finally, there is the sweet and graceful seated Buddha Meditating, dating no later than the fourteenth century and perhaps executed even earlier. It is not a piece of sculpture to be immediately appreciated at first: its charm and quality increase upon familiarity and there is a strange repose even in the restless swirls of the drapery that enhance the extraordinary sense of far distant thought behind the half-closed eyes.

These pieces make up, we feel, a notable contribution which Philadelphia is making to an Exhibition that will be long remembered.

H. H. F. J.

EASTER ISLAND WOOD CARVINGS

IN proportion to its size of scarcely thirty-six square miles, Easter Island or Rapanui has provoked more discussions and has been the subject of more valiant attempts to solve its mystery than many another larger area of the world. Discovered by Roggoveen in 1772, it has been visited by navigators like Cook, La Perouse, Delano, Liasiansky, by missionaries from Peru, men-of-war from Britain and the United States, and scientific expeditions.

The investigations of Palmer, Thomson, Churchill, Routledge, and J. Macmillan Brown have covered a great deal of factual material. Yet the mere fact that Mrs. Routledge in 1919, after a fourteen months' stay in Rapanui, writes "The Mystery of Easter Island," and Macmillan Brown, in 1924, as a result of his investigations, calls Easter Island "The Riddle of the Pacific," indicates quite clearly that we are very far from a satisfactory explanation of its many unusual characteristics.

It is indeed puzzling that this tiny speck of land, fifteen hundred miles from the nearest habitation, practically devoid of humus, with no vegetation save the tough grass and a few clumps of sandalwood and sophora, with no indigenous fauna except the rat, small lizard, a few shy sea-birds and numerous mosquitoes, without rivers or streams, possessing only a limited supply of fresh water, open to tropical winds and torrents, contains the remains of a unique set of cultural attainments.

Apparently lacking the natural resources to support even a very small group of people and these under most frugal circumstances, Easter Island preserves the gigantic work of thousands of skilled craftsmen and artists such as occurs only in a well-knit and highly integrated society. Its enormous stone statues, its megalithic burial platforms, and its system of writing are unique in the entire area of the Pacific. Its wood carvings are without parallel.

Who were these people whose civilization was so well advanced as to include the necessary organized labor required for the enormous task of cutting, carving and fitting the thousands of tons of hard stone which went for the construction of innumerable stone platforms? Who were the stone carvers who by comparatively simple outlines conveyed majestic grandeur and serenity in upward of two hundred and fifty stone statues, some of which attained a height of thirty feet—achievements unparalleled anywhere in the whole expanse of the Pacific?

Easter Island at present belongs to the Republic of Chile. Its present population speaks a Polynesian language with an influx of Marquesian, Maori and Tahitian elements. Somatologically, likewise, they represent Polynesian broad-headed and Melanesian long-headed types. There are but a few hundred of them left, due to slave raids and epidemics. There is some reason to believe that they represent either the degenerated descendants of the ancient stone carvers, or at least the partial recipients of a now vanished and mostly forgotten cultural heritage. Outside of the body of folk-tales, which contain some explanation of the



A *moai-miro* (ribbed image) from Easter Island, representing a naked male figure worn by starvation and suffering to skin and bone. The deeply carved ribs and generally realistic treatment make this a remarkable example of these carved statues

origin of the stone carvings and platforms, the wood carvings made in the recent past by the inhabitants are practically the only existing certain links between the highly organized society of the ancient artists in stone and the meagre handful of natives degenerated both in culture and language.

The maze of speculations, theories, and hypotheses which range from linking the culture of Easter Island with that of Peru, on the one hand, and Egypt, on the other, and dating it all the way from fifty thousand years ago to within a few centuries, is proof that all is not well. Easter Island remains an enigma, the solution of which, perhaps, never will be found, despite the numerous books, articles, and lectures concerning it. Yet, pending further investigation in the field, it seems advisable to record all available data and material scattered throughout various museums of the world.

The University Museum has a small collection of objects from Easter Island secured by various individuals. In this collection are five wood carvings, one of which was described by Mr. H. U. Hall in the *Museum Journal*, June 1925. The remaining four statuettes form the subject of this article.

These statues are called *moai-miro* by the natives and are known in literature as "ribbed images." Usually they represent a naked male figure about a foot in length, carved of a solid dark wood, *toto-miro* (Edwardsia). Their general aspect is of a creature reduced by long suffering and starvation to skin and bones. The drawn face shows prominent cheek bones and deeply sunken eyes made by the insertion of bone and obsidian. The ribs, collar and shoulder bones, vertebrae, and pelvis jut out through the thin covering of skin. The nose is strongly aquiline; the mouth is grinning; the ears have very long artificially extended lobes. A small tuft of hair adorns the chin. On top of the head of the best examples is a low relief design of a double-headed bird, fish, monkey, or lizard.

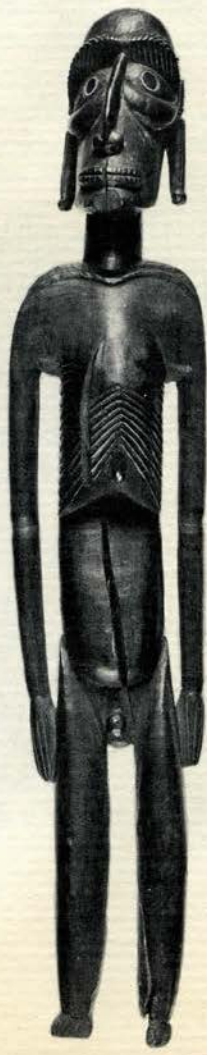
The figurine on Plate VII, one of the best, is a most typical example. It is 42 cc. long and shows remarkable workmanship. The deeply carved ribs are realistically treated, and the long ears, whose lobes are detached from the head, have a well-marked slit and round ear plugs. At the end of the spinal column there is a raised ring and triangle divided by three final vertebrae. The mouth and nostrils are painted reddish-yellow and just below the back of the neck there is a perforated lump.



Left : Another Easter Island figurine. This one shows a lesser skill in workmanship and might be a copy of a finer piece

Below, right : A larger "ribbed image" but quite crudely made. The modeling of the cheekbones and vertebrae is decidedly inferior to that of the other figures

Below, left : A small and almost negligently made figure. Even the wood is of inferior quality and only the ears, the pouches under the eyes and crudely indicated ribs are common feature with the other carvings



The second figurine (Plate VIII, upper left), less ascetic in its general appearance, is not so well made. It gives somewhat the impression of a copy made by an artist who has lost some of the meaning of the features of the original. The whole sculpture is more schematic. The details are either lost or unduly exaggerated, thus somewhat disturbing the fine balance of the older figure. This is evident in the treatment of the nose, mouth, and eyebrows. The ribs are fewer in number and run almost horizontally in the front. The ears have lost the slit and the bump at the back of the head remains unperforated. The conventional ring on the back is lacking. The bas-relief on the head also represents a lizard, but in this case the head is joined upside down to the lizard's body in an impossible position and the hair of the chin becomes the hair of the head. The whole figure lacks the deep color and fine polish of the first figure and may be a later product.

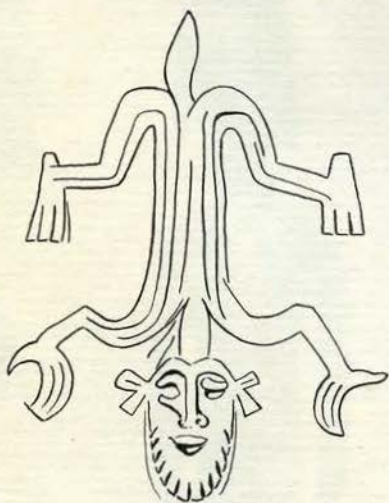


Figure A

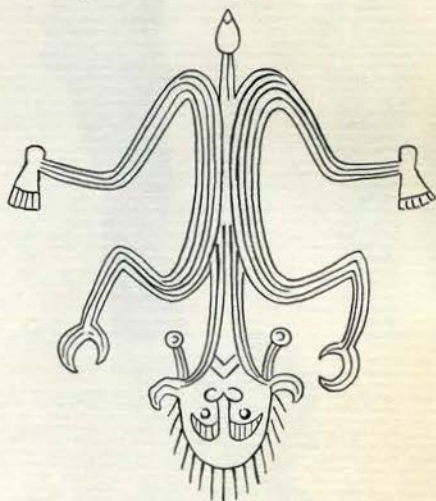


Figure B

The third figure (Plate VIII, lower right), 58 cc. long, is the largest and is far more crudely made than either of the two described above. The fine modeled cheekbones assume the shape of two heavy pouches. The vertebrae are reduced to a row of squares ending with a spatula-like figure. The characteristic warts are preserved only at the wrists. Two red triangles with black borders are painted on the white cheeks. Traces of pigment are seen also on the mouth, nose, and around the eyes and ears.

The last figure, 23 cc. long, is the smallest and is by far the crudest and most negligently made. As in the case of the third, the wood is of inferior quality, which has resulted in its splitting lengthwise. Long ears, heavy pouches under the eyes and five schematically indicated ribs are the only features common with the first three. In its general aspect it is nearer to a set illustrated by Macmillan Brown, as far as one can judge from a very inadequate photograph. One is inclined to attribute it to a negligent carver of comparatively late times, whose technique is far below the maker of the first two statues.

There seems to be no agreement as to the use and purpose of these wooden statues. According to W. J. Thomson, they represent certain spirits and belong to an order different from gods, though accredited with many of the same attributes. They occupied a prominent place in every dwelling and were regarded as the medium through which communications might be made with the spirits, but were never worshipped. Mrs. Routledge states, "These figures were worn by men only and hung around the neck on important occasions; they were parts of the festival dress at *Mataveri* and at the *Koro* (ceremonies)." She later adds, "It appears that they are portraits or memorial figures of which the older may have attained to deification."

The native story explains the origin of these statues, but does not solve the problem of their use. According to tradition, *Tuukoihu*, the great ruler and fellow adventurer of *Hotu Matua*, was the first to make these bizarre representations. On his way home one day he saw two beings in human form, reduced by starvation to skin and bones, fast asleep in the middle of the road. A sudden shout by their clansman, *Moaha*, from the top of the mountain awakened them. Suspicious that the stranger had seen their uncovered ribs, they followed *Tuukoihu* and demanded whether or not he had seen them naked. *Tuukoihu* denied it, but, enraged, the emaciated ones followed him about for several days to make certain that he did not make fun of them. Finally, satisfied with his discretion, they departed. *Tuukoihu* decided that they represented every feature he needed to symbolize the state of the dead. He felt that the ribs with nothing but skin on them and the hip bones jutting out from the sides would easily convey to everyone the idea of an *Akuaku* (ghost, soul, shade). So afraid was he lest any details fade from his memory that he sat down at once and carved the first *Moai Kava Kava* (statue-rib), or image showing the effects of emaciation, which means death.

A certain number of characteristics seem to tie up these *mira-toro* with the stone images of Easter Island. The long ears, resulting from artificial enlargement of the lobes, is markedly emphasized both on stone statues and on wooden figurines. Goatees occur in three or four stone statues and in the head relief on *Motu Nui*.

The conventional ring on the small of the back is puzzling, yet it is found on some of the older wooden carvings and some of the stone statues. One stone image has an extra ring on each of the buttocks corresponding perhaps to the "warts" of the figurines. These rings persist in the culture of the modern natives. Thus, Mrs. Routledge cites the case of a man whose tattooing design included the ring motive on the back. The "Bird Child," one of the most important personages in the annual "First Egg" ceremony, has a similar design painted on his back.

The low relief decorations on the head of the wooden statues furnish another possible link with the stone carvings. The double birds touching each other with their beaks are quite the fashion of the well-known bird motive of "script" tablets and stone carvings. The lizard of our figurines (Figures A and B) is important in the folk-lore of Polynesia in general and likewise occurs both in the "script" and the stone engravings of the older art.

Further comparative study may explain the presence of these splendid carvings in an otherwise artistically poor culture. The technical perfection of execution, the unusual and bold treatment, places them among the finest examples of primitive art.

E. A. G.

OBSIDIAN VESSELS FROM TEPE GAWRA

INTRUSIVE in Level 11 of the Great Mound were discovered last year a number of Libn tombs described from time to time in the *Bulletin*. These tombs were built sometime between the two occupations of Levels 8 and 9—they undoubtedly date about 3500 years before Christ. In one of these tombs were over twenty-five thousand beads, of which nearly eighteen hundred had been cut and polished from natural volcanic glass or obsidian. Besides these obsidian beads were two vessels of obsidian. (Plate IX.)