

The Editor's Mailbag

EGYPTIAN-POLYNESIANS

With regard to your comment (PIM, Jan, p 13) "Was grandad a mummy" I guess our society has to do a little public relations work on your side of the Pacific.

Let me assure you that the hieroglyphs not only exist, but can be read, and on the basis of what they said the attention of American archaeologists was directed to points on the west American coast where similar inscriptions, probably dated either 15th or 16th year of the reign of Ptolemy III, ought to be found.

Within eight days of the publication of the find (Nov 21, 1974) Professor George F. Carter of Texas A & M University successfully located the first inscription, carrying the predicted date of Ptolemy regnal year 16 (BC 231).

Since then five more related inscriptions have been found on the west coast of the Americas.

The Polynesian Epigraphic Society has a membership comprising qualified graduates and professors, representing the fields of archaeology, astronomy, physics, geography and linguistics, all of them fields which relate to the highly-technical nature of the ancient inscriptions and calculations.

The West Irian caves contain the oldest-known account of Eratosthenes' calculation of the circumference of the world, as well as much else that has aroused the interest of leading astronomers, here and overseas.

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MISFITS AND BUMS

It is pleasing to note that the nations of the South Pacific are making a concerted effort to tackle the labour problems in the islands (PIM, Jan, p 77). However, one is a little perturbed by the fact that some island nations continue to play hosts to a group of misfits from other societies.

It is difficult to gauge the authorities' decision allowing derelict expatriates as well as beach bums to

remain in the Islands. I cannot, for the life of me, imagine any developed nation welcoming misfits from the Islands. In fact, the ones that want to get out have to stow away and, more often than not, find a cold reception in the quarantine station of the first port of call, followed by deportation and embarrassment to the culprits and relatives in the Islands.

A few have found unofficial economic asylum in the two developed economies of the South Pacific—New Zealand and Australia. The 'economic demonstration effect' and the sheer lack of things to do (whether employed in the modern or the traditional sense) are the main causes why people migrate today, as the South Pacific Commission, the South Pacific Forum, ILO or whatever body charged with the responsibility of undertaking the recommended research will find.

It seems the leaders of the Island nations—for whatever reasons—have agreed or rather been convinced that training in one's own environment is better than training in a foreign environment. Again research is needed to determine the effectiveness (in terms of time and the degree of applicability) of the locational factor in training. The donor nations would undoubtedly favour the least cost approach.

The effectiveness of the Peace Corps and the like should also be questioned. Are these fresh university and college graduates (working within movements instigated by leaders of super-powers primarily for personal glorification) making any positive contribution to the development of the Islands? Are the Island authorities making full use of the trained indigenes, who are more familiar with the problems of the Islands, and making sure that the trained personnel are engaged in areas they were trained for?

The money spent sending out 'raw' human resources to the Islands, could be better spent training indigenes to serve their own communities.

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GREEN SEA TURTLES

Perhaps PIM readers can be of assistance in solving a mystery which has arisen during the course of my studies on green sea turtles at French Frigate Shoals (23°45'N 165°10'W), the only remaining nesting site in the Hawaiian Archipelago.

During 1974, a number of adult male and female green sea turtles were observed that had distinct "U" and "V"-shaped notches cut into the marginal plates of their upper shell. These notches, which ranged between one and two centimetres in width, appeared to be quite old and had apparently been placed there for identification purposes. Unfortunately, no knowledge on the history of these notches exists with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Hawaii State Division of Fish and Game or anyone else I have contacted.

Although tagging studies conducted in recent years strongly suggested that turtles nesting at French Frigate Shoals only travel within the confines of the archipelago, there is still the possibility of international migrations occurring in at least a portion of the population.

I would therefore greatly appreciate receiving from your readers any information on green sea turtle research in the Pacific that involved shell notching, regardless of how long ago it may have been conducted. No reliable information exists on the longevity of sea turtles in the wild, and any clues to the origin of these notches could provide valuable information on the biology of the species.

I might add that I am familiar with the October, 1969 PIM article by Dr H. R. Bustard which describes the clipping of turtle shells for identification purposes on the Great Barrier Reef. After examining photographs, Dr Bustard has assured me that my turtles in question are not those marked during his previous experiments.

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