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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE STATUES OF EASTER ISLAND.

SIR,—I have read with much interest the article by Dr. Rivers upon "The Statues of Easter Island" in the December number of *Folk-Lore*, and welcome the expression of his views upon these striking and puzzling monolithic effigies. There are certain points in his paper which invite further discussion, and to these I wish briefly to refer. In the first place, Dr. Rivers, in comparing the Marquisan stone statue seen by F. W. Christian on Hiva-oa and figured by him, with the statues of Easter Island, is surely over-sanguine when he says, "This was about eight feet high and in the position of the arms and *general character of the features* definitely resembled the statues of Easter Island" (the italics are mine). The position of the arms certainly does suggest such resemblance, as, indeed, it does to renderings of the human form from many other regions. But it is difficult to trace any such correspondence in the facial features, the rendering of which is characteristically and peculiarly Marquisan and differs in nearly all its details from the facial type characteristic of the Easter Island monoliths. The Hiva-oa statue, moreover, has the legs represented, and this is not characteristic of those from Easter Island. Apart from its being monolithic and of large size (8 feet high), and having arms and hands which recall those of the Easter Island carvings, the close resemblance to the latter is by no means obvious; in fact, very divergent 'schools of art' are suggested by the comparison. A definite correspondence between the monolithic statues of the Marquisas Islands and of Easter Island would have been welcomed by me, since I am, and long have been, a firm believer in a Melanesian culture influence in the former group, as I pointed out in *Folk-*

Lore (December, 1917, p. 379), and have frequently urged on other occasions. It is the *dissimilarity* in the facial type of the Marquisan and Easter Island statues which strikes me as remarkable, in view of their possibly common origin. Dr. Rivers states (on the authority of Tautain) that "in the Marquesas a great stone is placed as a sign of mourning on the head of the image representing a dead man." We may gather, however, that Tautain was by no means sure of this, since he expressly prefaces his statement by saying "J'ai appris, mais d'un seul informateur . . .," showing that he did not regard the evidence as in any way conclusive.

Next, let me touch upon the "hat" *versus* "hair" theory of the 'crowns' of red vesicular tufa placed upon the heads of some of the Easter Island statues. I will not repeat the reasons which I gave for believing that, *possibly*, they might represent hair, lime-bleached after the Melanesian fashion. I stated those reasons fully in the paper above referred to. Dr. Rivers urges emphatically that these red 'crowns' were intended to represent symbolic hats, but the evidence which he adduces in support of this theory is not as yet sufficiently convincing to warrant the final adoption of his view.

The figures of symbolic 'hats' from the Banks Islands and Santa Maria (*Hist. of Melanesian Society*, i. p. 91, and Pl. iii. Fig. 1), to which he specially refers, bear no resemblance to the Easter Island 'crowns.' He adds, it is true, that "some of the hats are more or less cylindrical," but these he does not figure, so that comparison cannot be made with the special form of crowning stones from Easter Island; and the expression "*more or less cylindrical*" does not suggest any very close resemblance. If Dr. Rivers will publish figures of Melanesian symbolic hats which *do* exhibit the peculiar features of the Easter Island 'crowns,' he may carry conviction. I am no blind adherent to the suggestion which I put forward quite tentatively; all I am anxious for in this connection is the satisfactory diagnosis of the 'crowns,' based upon convincing evidence. Until such evidence is forthcoming, I must continue to recognize the *possibility* of their having been intended to represent hair (or possibly wigs, as suggested by Sir Everard

im Thurn), and that the cylindrical shape was adopted in order to facilitate transport (by rolling) of the huge masses of specially selected red volcanic tufa over the considerable distance intervening between the tufa-quarry and the sites of the statues.

Lastly, Dr. Rivers admits the possible validity of Moerenhout's suggestion that the great statues may have represented minor deities whose duty it was to prevent encroachment of the sea over the land, at any rate as regards the 'hatless' statues erected along the road. But it should be noted that these aligned effigies are situated at a considerable distance from the sea, and that they do not appear to have faced seaward. As for the images erected on the *ahu* along the shore, the fact that all had their backs to the sea seems to militate against Moerenhout's theory as regards *them*. To be effective they should surely have *faced* the encroaching enemy.

I refer to these points in no controversial spirit, but in the hope that, by viewing the available facts as they are and in true perspective, some definite conclusions may be arrived at. I am gratified to find that so distinguished an ethnologist as Dr. Rivers has adopted my *main* point, which I first put forward at the Royal Geographical Society's meeting on 20th November, 1916, during the discussion on Mrs. Routledge's lecture (*Geographical Journal*, May, 1917, p. 345), which I developed in *Folk-Lore* (December, 1917), and which Mrs. Routledge has incorporated in her book (*The Mystery of Easter Island*). This point is that in the Easter Island culture there is evidence of a very strong Melanesian element, and that the Solomon Islands especially furnish valuable clues to that culture affinity.

HENRY BALFOUR.

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