

and REVIEWS

Aku Aku

By Thor Heyerdahl. 384 pp. New York: Rand McNally, \$6.95.

Reviewed by
BYRON FARWELL

Thor Heyerdahl, author of "Kon Tiki" has called his new book "Aku-Aku" with the subtitle "The

Secret of Easter Island." An aku-aku is a personal spirit, one's initiation, or a hero, depending on your own response. On Easter Island everyone has one.

Since Easter Day, 1722, when a Dutch ship first sighted it, Easter Island has fascinated the few who have seen it and thousands who have not. Its huge and mysterious stone heads have become familiar through reproductions in countless encyclopedias, magazines

and books. But strangely enough, until the Thor Heyerdahl expedition of 1955, only two other archeological expeditions had visited the island, and no excavating had been done.

The Heyerdahl expedition was a large one—five archeologists, a photographer, a doctor and a crew of 13 for its ship. It was equipped to excavate on a large scale and stay on the island for a year if the finds were of sufficient interest.

Heyerdahl was interested in proving that the Easter Island images were created by settlers from South America, who found the island by the Kon Tiki route. There is much that points to this theory, but so far the evidence only points it does not prove.

SINCE HEYERDAHL was writing a book about a scientific expedition, he would have heard screams from outraged archeologists had he woven too many of his suppositions into the text. He cannot resist retelling his imaginative theories in the most coy final chapters on record: appropriately entitled "My Aku-Aku Says."

Heyerdahl's aku aku is a talkative one. It will stand for no back talk from these scientists. It knows the statue builders came from South America on balsam rafts. While the reader may have reached the same almost irresistible conclusion himself before this, he may very well, as did this reviewer, find himself—from sheer antagonism at the silliness of the device—picking holes in Heyerdahl's logic.

The Three Edwards

By Thomas B. Costain. 415 pp. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. \$4.75.

Reviewed by
FRED MALLENDER

Thomas B. Costain is best known as the author of such eminently successful historical novels as "The Black Rose," "The Moneyman," "The Tontine" and the recent "Below the Salt." These novels, however, do not represent his total literary efforts.

"The Three Edwards" is a continuation of Costain's projected history of England known collectively under the title, "The Pageant of England." The two previous works in the series, "The Conquerors" and "The Magnificent Century," encompassed the period from the Norman conquest to the late Thirteenth century; at this point in history "The Three Edwards" begins.

The Crusades were losing popular support and Europe generally was in the throes of dynastic and territorial struggles. England was undergoing a period of tension between the kings and the barons, who still wielded formidable power. It was also the period in which the "commons" made their first groping steps towards power.

THE EDWARDS of the title are Edward I (reigned 1272-1307), his son, Edward II (reigned 1307-1327) and the latter's son, Edward III (reigned 1327-1377). All three were true Plantagenets in physical appearance and temperament, but their interests and abilities differed widely.

Edward I was a brash, forceful man with a true ability for kingship. Costain believes he was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, English monarch. He had great ability as a military leader and as a diplomat.

During his reign, Scotland was at least outwardly subdued, and the English choice installed on the Scotch throne. Relations with France were entering a period of steady deterioration which would culminate in the Hundred Years' War.

With these difficulties pressing from the outside, Edward I remained a fair and, for the times, progressive ruler. The barons were

4-8 THE BIRMINGHAM (MICH.) ECCENTRIC Dec. 11, 1958

kept in check, and the system of laws improved.

UNFORTUNATELY, Edward II was a weak, ineffective king, who would have made a better stable boy, and, as such, would have been much happier. His one virtue was his greatest weakness. Unscrupulous men were able to gain his friendship and he never deserted them even when their prodigality and thievery caused parliament and the public to call for their heads. No group of friends ever to abused Edward II as Edward II's did.

Edward III succeeded his father when Edward II was brutally murdered by Mortimer, the lover of Queen Isabella. From the start he showed his abilities which would prove enormous, if erratic. Carefully abiding his time, he succeeded in wresting power from his mother and in trying and executing Mortimer.

During his reign, Scotland was again subdued and France severely beaten at the Battles of Crecy and Poitiers. At one time his wars were so successful that his prisoners included the Kings of Scotland and France, as well as other important royal and noble personages.

CHIVALRY had its Indian Summer and Edward III founded The Order of the Garter. However, Edward as a military leader realized and utilized the archer's value and skill, and, in effect, sealed the doom of the over-equipped mounted knight.

Since history, as a literary subject, is many-faceted and tends to spread in the hands of an inept writer, the best compliment that can be paid to "The Three Edwards" is that it is a cohesive

work. There is no morass of detail that wearies the reader and diverges from the main story. There was obviously a great effort expended to arrange materials so as to keep the many lines of the narrative straight.

In some respects, Costain's style is reminiscent of the Greek historians. His prejudices and biases are clearly stated, and he, too, includes legends while throwing down on their content. This style is very adaptable to the subject and results in highly readable history.

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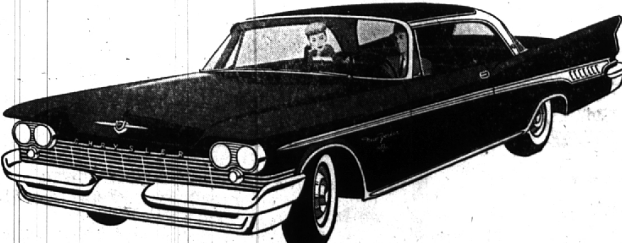
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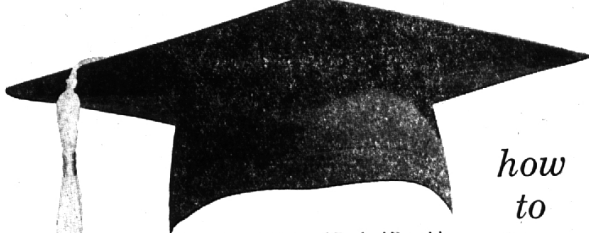
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