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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Reclaiming Mana

Repatriation in Rapa Nui

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Culture and Performance

by

Jacinta Arthur

2015

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

## Reclaiming Mana Repatriation in Rapa Nui

by

Jacinta Arthur

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor David Delgado Shorter, Chair

This dissertation presents an intersubjective ethnography of repatriation in Rapa Nui. The central problem addressed in this study arises by recognizing that the debates around repatriation and the “reburial issue” are grounded in an epistemological friction. Throughout this dissertation I contend that Rapanui understandings of *ivi tupuna* or ancestral remains conflict dramatically with the widespread understanding held by non-indigenous, both scientists and beyond. As this study demonstrates, the Rapanui people have their own ontology, according to which they perceive being and beings in the world very differently than those of us influenced by Western worldviews. They understand the ancestors and other beings they co-exist with as persons. For the Rapanui, *ivi tupuna* have thus an ontological status: they are the ancestors, with whom they relate by *haka ara*, genealogy. As persons, they are capable of sharing their distinctive

knowledges and *mana* with other beings, humans included. This genealogical and epistemological relation connects the living and the dead with their history, land, and knowledges. Scholars have very often ignored this distinctive ontology promoting a scholarly tradition that objectifies Rapanui systems of knowing and relating. In doing so, they dehumanize relations between a people and their heritage. The repatriation debate eloquently demonstrates the dramatic consequences of this epistemological conflict. First, repatriation activists have been particularly eloquent in asserting the destructive consequences of Western misinterpretation and appropriation of indigenous ancestors and knowledges. Second, the repatriation of the ancestors and ceremonial materials have helped indigenous communities around the globe maintain and revitalize their traditional systems of knowing and relating, re-connecting peoples with their histories and self-knowledges. Third, the repatriation movement has urged a new paradigm for the careful dealing of indigenous ancestors and living materials, rethinking the scientific endeavor and opening a space for a new generation of collaboration based on greater understanding and respect. This conflict between ontological and objectifying views expands to the broader field of indigenous studies, the repatriation lens working here as a microcosm revealing its grave consequences to indigenous peoples and their cultures.

The dissertation of Jacinta Arthur is approved.

Russell Thornton

Mary Nooter Roberts

Aparna Sharma

David Delgado Shorter, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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*Ko maha ā te hina 'aro.*

*Kia hō kōrua.*

## VITA

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Jacinta Arthur is a PhD Candidate in Cultural and Performance Studies, where she developed a concentration in critical indigenous studies. Her work focuses on Rapa Nui, where she has conducted research for the past eight years, doing regular fieldwork and closely collaborating with community members. Part of her most recent project, she participated in the creation of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program in collaboration with her Rapanui colleagues, among them elders, middle age traditionalists, and young professionals.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation presents an intersubjective ethnography on repatriation in Rapa Nui. The central problem addressed in this study arises from the recognition that Rapanui understandings of *ivi tupuna* or ancestral remains conflict dramatically with non-indigenous understandings, held both scientists and beyond. I will argue throughout this dissertation that the Rapanui people have their own ontology, according to which they perceive being and beings in the world very differently than those of us influenced by Western worldviews. They understand the ancestors and other beings they co-exist with as persons, capable of sharing their unique knowledges, skills and *mana* with other beings, humans included. Scholars have very often ignored this distinctive ontology promoting a scholarly tradition that objectifies Rapanui systems of knowing and relating. In doing so, they dehumanize relations between a people and their heritage. The repatriation debate eloquently demonstrates the dramatic consequences of this epistemological conflict. Because this dissertation takes seriously the reality and personhood that the Rapanui attribute to their interpretations of and relations to the ancestors and their belongings, this study reveals the ontological consequences of repatriation.

For the Rapanui, *ivi tupuna* have an ontological status. They are the ancestors, with whom they relate by *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy). This genealogical relation connects the living and the dead with their history, land and knowledges. In contrast, non-indigenous people usually consider *ivi tupuna* as mere objects, whose importance is solely symbolic. For many, they are valuable specimens for understanding the mysteries of the past; for others they are archaeological residues, “monuments” that feed a nationalistic greed. In these views, *ivi tupuna*



have no inherent value: they have no real connection with living Rapanui nor ontological significance in their present lives. Repatriation opponents hold this understanding.

This conflict in how Rapanui and repatriation opponents understand the ontological status of *ivi tupuna* is a major problem embedded with immoral colonial historical values and impacting the cultural and legal present of the Rapa Nui nation. In many different ways, repatriation opponents represent the interests of Western science and colonial powers. In doing so, they continue to assert the extensive Western history of appropriating ancestors, living materials, and knowledges from the indigenous peoples over whom they have exerted violence and dominance for centuries. In this dissertation I discuss such problem from the particular lens of repatriation because this movement effectively reveals the conflict between ontological and objectifying views of indigenous ancestors and the knowledges associated with them. First, repatriation activists have been particularly eloquent in asserting the destructive consequences of Western misinterpretation and appropriation of indigenous ancestors, living materials and knowledges. Second, the repatriation of ancestors and ceremonial materials have helped indigenous communities around the globe maintain and revitalize their traditional systems of knowing and relating, re-connecting peoples with their histories and self-knowledges. Third, the repatriation movement has urged a new paradigm for the careful dealing of indigenous ancestors and living materials, rethinking the scientific endeavor and opening a space for a new generation of collaboration based on greater understanding and respect. This conflict between ontological and objectifying views expands to the broader field of indigenous studies, the repatriation lens working here as a microcosm revealing its grave consequences to indigenous peoples and their cultures.

Repatriation is intimately tied to colonization, an argument I will advance by revisiting the history of collecting on Rapa Nui. Collecting on indigenous lands was one more agent of the colonizing mission serving at once to reify Western superiority and urge imperial expansion. For early voyagers collecting was an integral part of the empire-building project, providing the means to document discoveries and comparatively assess evolution so as to demonstrate the positional superiority of the West. For missionaries, collecting was an objectification of the triumph of Catholicism over paganism and an indicator of performance proving indigenous worldviews as barbaric idolatry. For collectors sent on museum-mandated missions, collecting was a facet of the modernist project of scientifically demonstrating the inferiority of indigenous peoples in order to facilitate colonial expansion. For ethnographers and archaeologists, collecting has been a means to preserve the vestiges of a vanishing race for the sake of science and humanity. Collecting has historically been a colonial mechanism for disempowering indigenous peoples. Repatriation activists and scholars call for the readdressing and reassessment of this history of exchange, appropriation and simple theft of indigenous ancestors, living materials and knowledges. Stressing that these practices were immoral and illegal, they also demand their restitution.

Internationally, repatriation first began to gain attention in the 1960s when indigenous peoples and other colonized nations started to voice their concerns about the appropriation of their heritage to the public's attention. The main issues brought to the debate were the constant destruction of archaeological sites with the inevitable loss of data; the public denunciation of illicit acquisition of art and artifacts; and increasing nationalistic sensitivities about the loss and appropriation of cultural heritage. Indigenous activism was critical in bringing repatriation to the world's attention. Indigenous peoples from the United States, Canada, Australia and

Aotearoa/New Zealand initiated this activism protesting research on indigenous bodies, as well as their exhibition, storage, and curation. Critically engaging the museum profession, they started demanding more inclusive exhibition production processes, and pressuring for the repatriation of ancestral remains, grave material, and objects of cultural patrimony. Central to this movement was the aim of raising awareness about the history of the relations between indigenous people and museums. Indigenous activists effectively contested stereotypical displays of their histories and cultures; challenged curatorial authority and the imposition of Western perspectives; and impugned the legality of museum collections.

This prolonged and committed indigenous activism for repatriating the ancestors and their belongings has encountered fierce opposition in the scientific community. Claims of world's heritage, universal knowledge, and academic freedom are the most commonly expressed viewpoints. When it comes to defending the retention of the bodies of the ancestors, repatriation opponents claim that ancestral remains should be retained in museums for the sake of universal knowledge as they provide unique information for unveiling the mysteries of the past. As for ethnographic materials, opponents to their restitution assure that artifacts of great artistic and cultural worth are of international interest as they are part of the world's heritage, and belong to all of humankind. At the center of these claims is the insistence on protecting an assumed to be humanity's heritage. A heritage presented to be of greater value to the rest of the world than to its very heirs, its retention seems to serve an also greater purpose: to preserve for humanity the history of great civilizations whose memories seem to live solely in a mummified archaeological past.

It would not be entirely honest to say that all indigenous people subscribe to the repatriation movement. Some individuals do not want their ancestors and living materials back,

yet. I have heard these arguments more than once: the materials in dispute were given away by the very ancestors; communities do not have the infrastructure nor the means to take care of them; heritage is better taken care of in museums; information about funerary rituals is lost; victimization will grant nothing; through these museum masterpieces communities get to show themselves to the world. I respect those who voice these concerns, but I do not agree with them.

Arguments opposing repatriation replicate colonial ideas that motivated collecting on indigenous lands in the first place, reifying racist notions of Western superiority. When repatriation finds opposition within the communities the debate becomes especially emotional and politically charged for it speaks to the various struggles that indigenous groups face as colonized peoples seeking to reclaim their cultural identity. It speaks primarily to the way colonization structured indigenous ways of thinking and transformed the very way they think about who they are. Cultural values and practices seem to have changed and what were once fundamental values to the ancestors are now foreign and too distant to many in the present generation. This colonized generation appears to be more trustful of books and museums where they think they will learn more about their past and will better forge an identity.

The repatriation movement reflects on and responds to this problem very strongly. My Rapanui colleagues put it aptly: repatriation is a means to recover the *mana* of a people. An ontologically charged concept specific to peoples of the Pacific, *mana* is about efficacy, power, and synergy. Recovering *mana* is about restoring relations, re-connecting with self-knowledges, and reclaiming history. Recovering *mana* is, in sum, about re-establishing what colonialism disrupted. As I will contend repeatedly in this dissertation, *ivi tupuna* have *mana*. The return of the ancestors will bring back the *mana* that left with them. But recovering *mana* does not end with the return of the ancestors. As my colleagues explain, re-claiming *mana* comes with re-

establishing the *tapu* by affording repatriated ancestors with culturally consistent care and appropriate funerary rituals; re-connecting the people with their *maramarama tupuna* or ancestral knowledge by conducting and sharing culturally safe repatriation-related research; and re-uniting the Rapanui nation in one shared purpose, a community-based effort to bring their ancestors back home. Repatriation as the return of mana is thus about empowering through revitalization. I hope this dissertation can serve this historically relevant agenda.

I hope, too, that this dissertation can contribute to the debate between scholars committed to the responsible study of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Repatriation has been often criticized as obstructive and anti-science. Those advancing this critique have even claimed that repatriation will end the archaeological profession. I could not agree less. In fact, I am convinced that repatriation signals the beginning of a new generation of research, based on ethical collaboration and greater understanding. More serious attention to the ontological relevance of repatriation can, in effect, provide a substantial way of reevaluating contemporary approaches to the study and curation of ancestral remains and living materials. Returning indigenous values and philosophies to the study of indigenous cultures is critical for understanding the past and contextualizing the present. Acknowledging, understanding and respecting the ontological relevance of museum collections should be seen as an effective way of developing research methodologies based on collaboration and mutual respect that can begin to heal the postcolonial trauma and set the basis of a new path for greater understanding.

This study is committed to expose and counteract the many assumptions that have long demonized the repatriation movement. In so doing, my hope for this dissertation is that it will contribute to the decolonization of the repatriation debate. In his sharp critique of U.S. repatriation legislation, James Riding In (2005: 61) provides some guidelines for the

decolonization of repatriation. His call is directed to indigenous people, who he suggests must: assume responsibility for the proper care of ancestral remains in museums or those that remain in Mother Earth; understand and acquire traditional knowledge regarding the proper treatment of the ancestors; understand the history of scientific grave looting and how it relates to the colonization process; challenge scientific methodologies and principles that violate burial rights, values, and philosophies; comprehend the intricacies of repatriation policies to ensure compliance with indigenous rights and cultural protocols; and collaborate with other Native nations and organizations. Acknowledging the experiences of Native Americans with regard to repatriation and aiming to make a real contribution to Rapanui repatriation efforts, this dissertation is structured around these decolonizing principles.

Because the repatriation movement effectively reveals the continuing history of the colonization of indigenous peoples, this dissertation is also a study about encounter. It deals with the encounters between the Rapanui, the ancestors, and the other beings in their world. It deals, too, with the encounters between the Rapanui and the “other.” Repatriation serves here as a lens to reframe the history of these encounters, and its consequences. Research, too, is central to this history, as it has characterized the encounters between the Rapanui and the rest in subtle and not so subtle ways. Because I take very seriously the impact that research can have on indigenous peoples, I open this dissertation with a prologue on encounters, fieldwork, and research methodologies.

Following the Prologue, in Chapter One I present a brief, ethnographic-based examination of Rapanui funerary and burial rituals. I begin this study on repatriation with this succinct and superficial commentary on a much more complex system so as to counteract from the very beginning a simplistic yet foundational argument opposing the repatriation of the body

of the ancestors: that the Rapanui never did really care about their dead, until now. Further contesting this grave assumption, in Chapter Two I present an exploration of key Rapanui ontological concepts that sit at the core of Rapanui efforts for bringing their *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) back home. This ontological exploration will provide the basis to articulate the arguments in which Rapanui people ground their claims for demanding the return of their ancestors.

Chapters Three and Four deepen this exploration by revising the history of archaeological and bioanthropological collecting on Rapa Nui in lieu of the concepts discussed. The first part of this historical revision, Chapter Three, covers collecting activities from 18th century voyages to 19th century museum-mandated expeditions. I discuss this period focusing on the “race paradigm” trope that came as a scientific justification for colonial expansion. The second part of this historical revision, Chapter Four, covers collecting activities from early ethno-archaeological expeditions to archaeological restoration projects of the late 20th century. I discuss this period attending to the “world’s heritage” trope, which came as an extension of museological values and methods to living persons, their knowledges, artifacts, social worlds, and living spaces, further alienating the people from their heritage and self-knowledge. Focusing on first hand accounts, special attention is given in these chapters to the Rapanui objection to the removal of their ancestors and the collectors’ broad awareness of such objection. This historical revision of collecting on Rapa Nui will provide the basis for destabilizing the arguments that defend the retention of the ancestors in museum collections.

Arguments opposing repatriation occupy Chapter Five, which consists of an intersubjective examination of the repatriation debate. This exploration will prove that claims defending the retention of the body of the ancestors are still deeply rooted in the assumptions that

justified their collection in the first place, thus reifying racist notions of Western superiority. These very notions govern the repatriation debate as the interests of the West continue to override the interests of indigenous peoples: the heritage of a people continues to be the heritage of the world, scientific worth continues to override ontological relevance, Western rights continue to be protected at the expense of violating indigenous rights, and nationalistic legislations continue to overrule consuetudinary rights. Part analytical, part conversational, this discussion includes direct references to how members of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP) respond to each of these arguments.

The last part of the dissertation focuses on the work of the RNRP *Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna* (Give Us Back the Mana of Our Ancestors). The creation of this program involved extensive comparative research on repatriation activism, laws and policies around the world. Chapter Six provides insight into this research presenting an introduction to the history of the repatriation movement and analyzing repatriation legislations and government policies. Because the RNRP policy is greatly informed by the Native American and Māori experiences, this analysis focuses on the cases of the U.S. and Aotearoa/New Zealand. In Chapter Seven I present the RNRP focusing on its repatriation policy, organization and methodologies. Because the RNRP relies deeply on *Haka Tere Tupuna*, Rapanui worldviews and philosophies, I present this program in light of Haka Tere Tupuna principles. Bridging this examination with the discussion that opened this dissertation, this chapter will prove that rather than a simple political maneuver, the work of RNRP is based on an innovative and culturally safe action-research model that is related to being Rapanui, that is connected to Rapanui philosophy, that grants the legitimacy of Rapanui knowledges and the importance of Rapanui language and culture, and that is concerned with the struggle for self-determination, all the above while satisfying the rigors of research.



The final chapter presents a succinct, in-progress case study of RNRP's first repatriation request. A case still developing, this discussion gives special attention to the great obstacles that the Chilean government has placed for this repatriation to happen. Connecting the different arguments explored throughout this dissertation, this final discussion will demonstrate how the retention of the body of the ancestors reproduces colonial attitudes toward indigenous peoples. This case study will demonstrate, too, how the Chilean government, rather than the Rapanui people, is politicizing repatriation, seeing in the head of an ancestor an opportunistic instrument to assert Chilean sovereignty in Rapa Nui.

Resulting from years of intense collaborative ethnographic research, this study privileges Rapanui sources and perspectives over non-Rapanui ones. From a first and foremost intersubjective ethnographic perspective, I present my understanding of Rapanui perceptions of the world, without pretending to be their view of it. To be true to Rapa Nui perspectives the historical reviews, theoretical analyses, and political notes that I present in this dissertation are grounded in Rapanui knowledges and cultural protocols, and interwoven with Rapanui responses to the repatriation debate. Fostering this approach, short interchapters are included that contain Rapanui oral traditions, histories and commentaries that speak directly to their claims for demanding the return of their ancestors. I call these interchapters *Hereēŋa Roŋo*, interweaving messages.

By way of a conclusion I close this dissertation with a discussion of the impact of scholarly writings on indigenous peoples, and the benefits of collaborative, culturally safe research. At times dramatic, such impact often translates into bad government policies, as policy architects usually turn towards scholarly writing for background information. Such a conclusion would bridge all chapters of this dissertation together to make a final argument explaining why

repatriation, rather than an obstruction, signals the beginning of a new generation of collaborative and ethical research from which indigenous peoples, as well as the anthropological, archaeological, and museum professions can benefit greatly. This discussion reviews the main schools of thought that have significantly changed the study of indigenous peoples and their cultures. In this review I give special attention to the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and the interventionary potential of research to positively intervene in “indigenous crisis circumstances” (G. Smith 2001) and contribute to indigenous peoples’ efforts toward self-determination.

A multimodal dissertation, five video essays accompany the written document. As I detail in the Prologue, my video practice has been a central aspect of my research methodologies. My methodologies being an attempt to develop a culturally safe research model that has Rapanui philosophies, values, and protocols at the core of the research project, the five video essays are a reflection on these philosophies, values, and protocols. In this sense, the ultimate goal of these essays is not to contextualize the chapters of the dissertation, but rather to provide a space for my collaborators’ actual voices and presence, also for deeper reflection on the knowledges informing this dissertation. Accordingly, readers should have discretion to view these essays in the order they want and when they want, before, after, or while reading the dissertation. For those who prefer to have some guidelines, however, I provide some viewing suggestions below.

Each of the video essays reflects on five central aspects of Rapanui philosophies: *haka ara* (RAP. genealogy), *te re’o* (RAP. the language), *te hua’ai* (RAP. the family), *tikāŋa* (RAP. protocols), and *te mau hatu* (RAP. kept chiefs; self-determination). While I provide a discussion on each of these principles in Chapter Seven, I suggest that the readers start viewing the video essays earlier in the dissertation. The first two of these essays, *Te Mau Hatu* and *Te Re’o* reflect

on the present of Rapa Nui as both an over-exploited touristic destination and a people struggling to reclaim and re-connect with their history. I suggest these videos are viewed towards the beginning of the dissertation. The third essay, *Te Hua'ai*, provides very specific knowledge on Rapanui understandings of being and beings in the world. Because it can further reflect on Rapanui relations with the ancestors, I suggest viewing this essay after my discussion on Rapanui ontologies in Chapter Two, and before my analysis of the history of collecting on Rapa Nui in chapters Three and Four. Continuing the exploration of Rapanui relations with the ancestors, the fourth essay, *Te Haka Ara*, examines how the ancestors are alive in the land, telling and reliving the history of Rapa Nui through a landscape that speaks to the memory of a people. Because this essay introduces two of the founding members of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP), their work and engagement on repatriation, I suggest viewing this essay towards the second half of the dissertation, after Chapter Four and before Chapter Eight. The last essay, *Te Tikāŋa* follows the visit of members of the RNRP to their ancestors held at the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago de Chile. Because this video bridges all main aspects of this dissertation, among them Rapanui ontologies, the impact of collecting and research on Rapa Nui, the relevance of repatriation for cultural revitalization, and Chilean colonialism and government bureaucracy, I suggest viewing this video at the end of the dissertation.

## PROLOGUE

### ON ENCOUNTERS: EARLY CONTACTS AND PRESENT STUDY METHODOLOGIES

This dissertation is not only about repatriation in Rapa Nui. In a broader sense, this study is also about encounter. It deals with the encounters between the Rapanui, the ancestors, and the other beings in their world. It deals, too, with the encounters between the Rapanui and the “other.” Repatriation serves here as a lens to reframe the history of these encounters, and the consequences of them. First, repatriation claims give an accurate insight into the continued relations between the Rapanui, both living and dead, human and not. In effect, these relations are the basis for such claims. Second, the history of collecting on Rapa Nui tells the story of the encounters between Rapa Nui and the West. In fact, material and immaterial collecting, exchange and simple theft have been the basic form of Western relations with Rapa Nui. Third, repatriation-opposing arguments illuminate the history of colonization in Rapa Nui. A history continued today in the name of science, research is a critical element of this story. Both a form of colonialism and a site of struggle, research has, too, characterized the encounters between the Rapanui and the rest.

Retelling this history of encounters, museums can be very painful sites for indigenous people. Intimately tied to the colonization process, the formation of museum collections is embedded within and speaks to the relations of power between indigenous peoples and the West. The looting of indigenous lands and the disturbance of their burial sites could be possible only because of these power relations. As a colonial apparatus, museums then became sites of power that displayed and organized the colonization of indigenous peoples. The last few decades have witnessed a revaluation of the museum as uncontested holder of power, knowledge, and truth

that has resulted in a paradigm shift bringing intense examination to the founding values and assumptions of the museum institution.

No longer uncontested sites of power, museums are now submitting to scrutiny the history of dominations and power relations that gave them such status. James Clifford (1997) calls this new viewpoint exposing power relations of culture-collecting, a “contact” perspective; and the rethought museum, a “contact zone.” Drawing upon Mary Louise Pratt’s (1992) theory, a contact zone is “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Pratt 1992: 6). When museums are repositioned as contact zones, Clifford explains, “their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship*—a power-charged set of exchanges” (Clifford 1997: 192). The museum working as a contact zone is then grounded in increasingly more democratic principles that challenge and destabilize the hierarchical valuing of boundaries and history.

Indigenous activism has been critical to this reevaluation of the museum institution, where repatriation plays a central role as part of the self-determination and cultural sovereignty movement. As a preamble to this study on repatriation in Rapa Nui, below I present a brief recounting of the history of encounters in Rapa Nui. Because this dissertation deals extensively with the impact that research can have on indigenous peoples, after such a presentation I expose my position as a researcher engaging in these encounters. The second part of this Prologue focuses then on a discussion on the theories informing my research methodologies and a reflection on my fieldwork experience, which I present from the particular lens of my experimentation with observational cinema as a form of embodied and engaged social inquiry.

## Te Pito O Te Kaiya, Rapa Nui



Image 0.1 Map based on a larger and more detailed map on Rapanui toponym by Te Pou Huke

Usually known in the West as “Easter Island,” Rapa Nui is a South Pacific Island marking the southeast most point of the Polynesian triangle. A volcanic island of 166 square km, Rapa Nui is located 3,700 km west of the South American coast and 1,819 km east of Pitcairn Islands. Towards the west, the Island is 4,000 km from Tahiti in the Society Islands. One of the most isolated inhabited territories on earth, the Island was populated by Polynesian immigrants, first visited by Europeans in 1722, and occupied by Chile in 1888. Its indigenous population developed a civilization in conditions of extreme isolation that provoked an over-elaboration and cultural efflorescence. Images of this efflorescence are the famed *moai*, megalithic sculptures

carved to honor the ancestors. Very often referred to as the “world’s biggest out-doors museum,” UNESCO declared Rapa Nui World Heritage Site in 1995.

Volcano craters mark each corner of this triangular island. At the eastern end is Poike; Rano Kau marks the southwest most point, and Rano Aroi the northern end. With no running streams or rivers in the island, freshwater lakes are only found in the calderas of Rano Kau, Rano Aroi, and Rano Raraku. The island’s landscape is formed by lava flows, fields of basaltic stone and others of obsidian, lava tubes, a precipitous rocky shoreline interrupted by two sandy beaches, and numerous small hills. Only two paved roads connect the southwest and northeast ends; one going straight inland from Hahaione to Anakena beach, and the other bordering the south coast. With an airport, three schools, two banks, a pharmacy, two markets and several small businesses, Hahaione is the only town in the island, where most of the population lives today as a result of colonialism and relocation policies.

Both Rapanui oral traditions and Western sciences coincide in identifying the Rapanui as a Polynesian culture. Rapa Nui and its population can be situated culturally and linguistically as one of a set of Eastern Polynesian cultures, a set that also includes Hawai’i, New Zealand, the Marquesas, Societies, Tuamotus, Australs and Cook islands. The discovery and settlement of these eastern Polynesian archipelagoes constituted the final phase in a millennia-long saga of the human conquest of the Pacific islands. By approximately 800 AD, the Polynesians had discovered and attempted settlement on virtually every island and islet in the vast eastern Pacific (Lee 1992: xi). Linguistic analysis, material culture, and C14 dating indicate the Polynesian origins of the Rapanui people and suggest they arrived from the Marquesas Islands (Kirch 1984: 266-68). According to Rapanui oral history, the *ariki* (*RAP.* king) that led the discovery voyage was Hotu Matu’a. The history of the discovery and settlement of Rapa Nui by Hotu Matu’a and

his people is clear in identifying the homeland as Marae Reņa and Marae Tohia in Hiva, islands located to the west of Rapa Nui. Rapanui identify Hiva as part of Te Henua Kenana and Te Fenua ‘Enata, the Marquesas Islands.

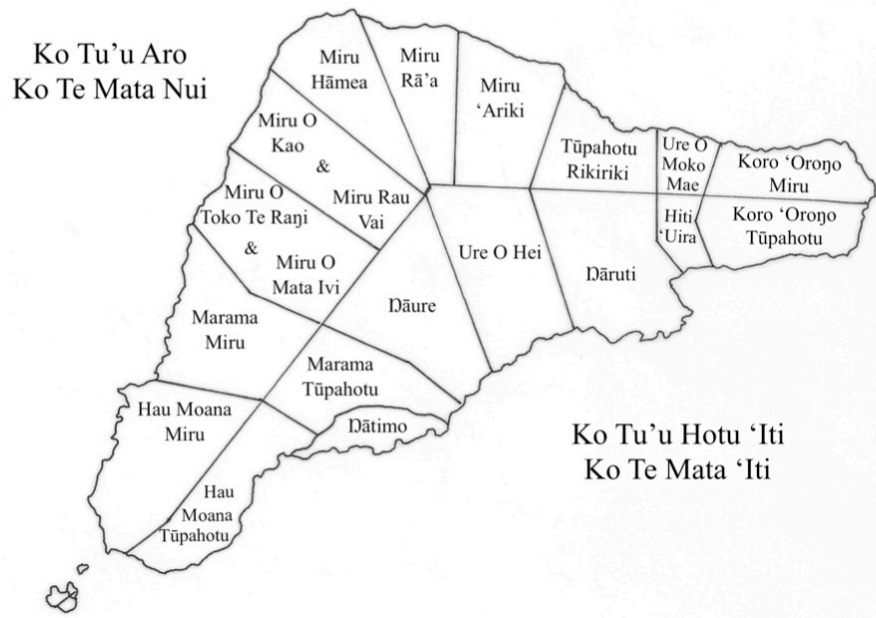
*Polynesian Discovery and Colonization of Te Pito O Te Kaiņa*

In the times of *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Matu’a, a visionary *ariki ma’ahu* (*RAP.* counselor for the king) called Hau Maka advised the *ariki* that a catastrophe would happen that would destroy Hiva, the homeland. They should move to a new land. In his dreams, the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of Hau Maka traveled to this new land in the direction of the rising sun. His *kuhane* visited seven lands until his *mana* led him to an eighth, the land he was searching for his *ariki* (*RAP.* king). Hau Maka inspected the land and named the places. The entire land he named *Te Pito O te Kaiņa A Hau Maka O Hiva* (*RAP.* The Navel of the Land of Hau Maka from Hiva). His *kuhane* came back to Hiva and Hau Maka informed the king. King Matu’a told Hau Maka to send seven explorers to inspect the land and prepare the arrival of the king and his people. Hau Maka should instruct them in how they must sail to see the land. King Matu’a’s orders were that they stayed until next year in the new land. Hau Maka spoke to his sons Ira, his firstborn, and Rapareņa; and also to the sons of Hua Tava—of names Ku’uku’u A Hua Tava, Riņiriņi A Hua Tava, Nonoma A Hua Tava, U’ure A Hua Tava, and Mako’i A Hua Tava. Hau Maka instructed the explorers in how to get to the new land. Ira and the crew launched the canoe and sailed to Te Pito O Te Kaiņa. After several moons the seven explorers reached the new land and prepared it for the arrival of the *ariki* and his people.

Back in Hiva, Matu’a took his royal power, passed it on to his son Hotu Matu’a, and told him to sail to Te Pito O Te Kaiņa. Hotu gathered the people and they launched the canoes with yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, wooden *moai*, and some animals. Hotu Matu’a and his people



sailed, and after several moons, the explorers saw the canoes near the islets. The first canoe to arrive was Hotu's and his wife's, Vakai. Then did his sister's, Ava Rei Pua. Hotu Matu'a and his people stayed on the island and many generations succeeded them. Before his death, king Hotu A Matu'a distributed the island among his sons, forming the clans from which the Rapanui descend.



**Image 0.2** Map indicating tribal distribution. Based on Hotus 1988.

### *Early Encounters and Western Discovery*

On Easter Sunday of 1722, Dutch Admiral Jacob Roggeveen arrived at an island he took to be Davis Land. He named it “Easter Island.” As the ship drew closer, various signs of habitation could be distinguished and the second day the first contact was made between the islanders and the Dutch. In this very first contact, a history of violence and abuse began to write itself. Accounts of sailors and of Roggeveen himself narrate the violent landing of this expedition that

fired in response to the islanders' greeting. This use of violence is recognized and regretted in the diaries of one of Roggeveen's sailors of last name Behrens, but overlooked in Roggeveen's, who attributed it to a crew's misunderstanding. These same accounts narrate that in the midst of the tumult and confusion, the Dutchmen had caught sight of "strange monuments." They wondered how "naked savages" could have put up these colossi; they decided that these "idols" must have been made of clay. The Dutch left that same day.

After the Dutch expedition, Rapa Nui was "discovered" for the second time, in 1770, by Spanish captain Felipe González de Haedo, who anchored there for three days. Before the Spaniards left they took possession of the island in the name of the kingdom of Spain. They named it Isla San Carlos after the king. The accounts of González de Haedo and his crew relate the ceremony in detail. After a procession to Poike, they set up three great crosses, previously kissed by the attending, both Spaniards and Rapanui. Once the crosses were raised, an armed troop formed before the flag and listened to Josef Bustillo's "elegant speech" that "took possession of the Island in the name of the King, as its legitimate owner and lord, preventing any other sovereign to aspire to its possession" (González de Haedo 1770: 111). To the speech followed a salute repeated seven times, then a gunfire salvo and twenty-one cannon shots by each of the two ships. After the bombastic military ceremony, a possession agreement was signed between the "relevant individuals and three Indians" (111) after having read them the document, in Spanish. Leaving on the third day, the crew's last sight was that of the natives up the hill taking down the crosses in the distance, a sailor wrote.

Four years later, Captain Cook visited Rapa Nui for two days. Cook called at Rapa Nui during his second voyage, undertaken with the mission of unveiling the southern continent question. Cook's voyages marked the beginning of a Western tradition of collecting in the

Pacific (Hooper 2006; Thomas 1991). Trading between Europeans and Polynesians began before Cook, though before him trades mostly had a survival motivation. On Cook's voyages not only physical survival motivated exchange relations. Developing scientific interests were taken as an opportunity to acquire natural and artificial specimens. In Cook's second voyage, William Hodges was recruited as an artist and Johann Reinhold Forster as an ethnologist and natural scientist; the latter was accompanied by his son George and sent out on orders of the British government to collect natural curiosities. Aboard the *Resolution* the earliest documented Rapanui artifacts were taken to Europe, among them the wooden hand currently at the British Museum.

In 1786 a French expedition arrived at Rapa Nui. Under the command of Comte La Pérouse, Jean François de Galaup, the expedition was sent on orders of the French crown to discover new lands and explore those recently discovered. La Pérouse and his people introduced to the island a series of new animal and botanical species, like goats, sheep, hogs, and seeds of orange and lemon tree, cotton plant and maize. The French left after twenty-four hours.

In 1808, the first of a series of deliberated crimes was committed on Rapa Nui when a U.S. ship, the *Nancy*, carried off twelve men and ten women after a bloody battle. The captives were taken down into the holds and put in irons. The American traders' intention was to enslave them as seal hunters on Masafuera Island. When the ship was three days' sail from Rapa Nui, the captives were brought up on deck and their chains removed. The moment they were free of their bonds, men and women leapt into the water and began to swim. After unsuccessful attempts to recapture them, the sailors left them to their fate. Disoriented in the middle of the ocean, the twenty-two Rapanui did not make it back to the island. Three years later, American whalers on board of the *Pindos* came to Rapa Nui to rape women. After various sexual abuses, they threw them to the sea. These crimes deeply marked the relations between Rapa Nui and the West, and

Rapanui reaction to new visits.

*Slave Raids and the Missionaries*

In 1862 Spaniard slave raids took more than half of the population to work as slaves in the Islas Guaneras of Peru. At that time, exploitation of the guano deposits on the Peruvian coast was a prosperous undertaking that needed more labor and companies began then recruiting their workmen with the aid of adventurers. These new-style slave-traders made an expedition to Rapa Nui, of all Polynesian islands the closest to Peru. A flotilla arrived on December 12th of 1862. The few islanders that came aboard were seized, chained and thrown into the hold. The slavers then went ashore and drove all the natives they could find to the beach with gunshots or attracting the islanders to the shore by a display of presents to then capture them (Routledge 1919: 205-06; Métraux 1957: 46-7). Over half of the population was removed from the island. Among the prisoners were *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Kai Mako'i, his son Maurata, and some of the principle and most learned men. By the intervention of Bishop Jaussen of Tahiti, the French Government negotiated the liberation of a number of Rapanui who were returned home. However, they had contracted smallpox and out of one hundred who were to be repatriated, only fifteen survived. On their return to the island in 1863 the survivors themselves brought the disease, which spread rapidly among the population.

The following year, in 1864, the first missionaries settled on the island, with their mission benefiting from the disaster. Eugène Eyraud, along with a group of Fathers of the Holy Spirit, left Chile in 1862 to undertake the spiritual conquest of "Easter Island." The group landed first on Tahiti, where they learned of the raid that had just been inflicted in Rapa Nui. The missionaries hesitated to embark on an undertaking that seemed to have become pointless. But Eyraud refused to be discouraged and he set off for Rapa Nui. Pana, a Rapanui who had been

carried off by slavers and managed to escape accompanied Eyraud. The two of them reached the Island on January 2nd of 1864. Hipolyte Roussel would later join Eyraud in the mission.

Together they claimed to have baptized every single Rapanui.

Eyraud, the first white man settled in Rapa Nui, was followed by Jean Baptiste Dutrou-Bornier, a French adventurer who settled on the island in 1868 with the missionaries' permission. Dutrou-Bornier partnered with the Maison Brander Company in Tahiti and established an enterprise of bovine cattle exploitation on Rapa Nui. The memory Dutrou-Bornier has left behind on the Island depicts him as a violent, grasping and unscrupulous man who stole lands and abused the people to found a prosperous agricultural undertaking at Mataveri. The economic and ideological rivalry between the missionaries and the exploiter divided the Island into two bands. By 1871 a war was declared between the two parties, which resulted in the expulsion of the mission and a massive emigration of Rapanui to French Polynesia. Only a hundred and eleven Rapanui stayed on Rapa Nui with Dutrou-Bornier. The nearly three thousand Rapanui living today on the Island are the descendants of this handful of islanders.

### *Chilean Occupation and Neo-colonialism*

On September 9th of 1888 the Republic of Chile annexed Rapa Nui to its territory through a treaty of wills between the Rapanui king, *ariki* Atamu Tekena, and Chilean representative, don Policarpo Toro. As Riet Delsing (2009) explains, the annexation document has raised doubts as to the legality of Chilean occupation, which is being contested today by Rapanui activists claiming autonomy and self-determination. The claims of illegality are based on discrepancies found between the Spanish and the Rapanui versions of the document, which speak to the fact that *ariki* Atamu Tekena did not cede the sovereignty of the Island to Chile. Another argument for these allegations is that the Chilean government never ratified the treaty, for no official

document was issued towards this end.

Soon after the annexation, and in a search for both using and maintaining presence in this insular territory, the Chilean government rented the island to Enrique Merlet, who then associated with Williamson & Balfour Company. In 1895 Rapa Nui became a big sheep ranch under the name of *Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua* (CEDIP). Known as a time of economic flourish, though not one that benefitted Rapanui people, the Compañía period refers also to violence, torture, and imposed boundaries in Rapa Nui. Its first administrator, Alberto Sánchez Manterola, concentrated all the islanders in the six hundred hectares that had originally belonged to the Tahitian mission, and then transferred to the Chilean Catholic church (Delsing 2009: 102). Those who had plantations or animals in their ancestral lands were removed by force and obliged to live within the walls in part of what is today the town of Hanga Roa, the only settlement in Rapa Nui. Their plantations were destroyed, their animals confiscated, and they were forced to live under a regime of surveillance with armed border patrols awaiting any Rapanui attempts to cross the imposed line.

Because of international pressure, the Chilean government terminated the lease to CEDIP in 1915, transferring the island to the Navy. The Navy then took control of the administration of Rapa Nui until the 1960s when the civil administration came after the passing of the *Ley Pascua*. French ethnographer Francis Mazière, who visited Rapanui in 1963, wrote that on the island there were “47,000 sheep, 1,000 cows, some 50 Chilean military men and, in 1964, 1,000 Rapanui survivors, who live in the most incredible misery and without freedom” (Delsing 2009:103). This quote depicts well the situation on the island during the Company and Navy rule in the first half of the 20th century.

In her study of Rapa Nui-Chile relations, Delsing (2009: 77) identifies three periods in the

political history of Rapa Nui after the annexation. As she suggests, in the first period (1888-1950s) the relationship between Chile and Rapa Nui was marked by abandonment and abuse on the part of the Chileans. This first period can be roughly identified with the Company's and then Navy's occupation of the island. In the second period (1960s-1980s), Chile offered administrative integration. The origin of this period is marked by a Rapanui revolt that culminated with the passing of the *Ley Pascua* of 1966, which created the *Departamento de Isla de Pascua*, incorporating the island into Chilean jurisdiction and recognizing the Rapanui as Chilean citizens. In the third period (1990s-today) the government recognizes former mistakes and proposes a special political relationship with its insular territory, though never keeping Chilean sovereignty out of sight. This period is marked by the passing of the *Ley Indígena* of 1990 that created the CONADI, a governmental commission for the development and protection of Chile's indigenous peoples.

The present situation of Rapa Nui is noticeably marked by political, social and cultural tensions between Rapa Nui and Chile, and by the resurgence of a Rapanui national discourse that seeks to fight Chilean neo-colonialism through the restoration of the ancestral law. As Forrest Young (2011) explains, the Rapanui response to Chilean neo-colonialism is based on a conscious "making of culture" through which the Rapanui reinforce their roots and identity as a Polynesian people. Rapa Nui actively destabilizes the coherence of Chilean state discourse by culturally remembering their ancestors, imagining a decolonized future for their progeny, and simply being Rapanui. The articulation of this decolonized future is grounded in both the revitalization of Rapanui worldviews and international law. This combination of local and global discourses empowers the Rapanui's voice through a political rhetoric that asserts their rights as a nation; a separate people inhabiting a specific territory over which they wield some governmental control

or jurisdiction.

In doing so, the Rapanui question the legality of Chilean occupation and claims for self-determination in the recognition of themselves as a preexistent independent nation well in advance of the formation of the Republic of Chile, having a number of integral attributes, including a bounded land base, a governmental system, and sociocultural distinctiveness. The assertion of these integral attributes is presented in a rhetoric that emphasizes Rapanui worldviews and ways of coming to know. In my Master's thesis (2012) I explored the foundations of that rhetoric, which I presented as a relational epistemology in which people and land are understood as inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos. There I discussed these worldviews as a site of resistance through which Rapa Nui is reclaiming control over the land and rights that were taken from them. While Chilean colonial power and the disenfranchising of the Rapanui people operated through the distortion of Rapanui worldviews and transforming the very way they think about who they are, the Rapanui's present work of decolonization is finding its most effective form in the restoration of that disruption and the articulation of an empowered voice that comes with the need for remembering who they actually are, the Rapanui nation.

Rapa Nui is going through a historical moment of unprecedented political achievement. According to the 2012 census, the Rapanui people are no longer majority in the Island. The survey showed a total population of approximately 5,800 people, representing an increase of the 54% in the last ten years. Of the total population, an approximate of 3,000 are Chileans and 2,800 Rapanui (Moreno and Zurob 2012: 27). This violent demographic growth has been a central preoccupation for Rapanui authorities and community, who allege that the massive and un-controlled Chilean immigration to the Island is causing a disastrous cultural, social,



economic, and environmental crisis. During the last decade, the Easter Island Development Commission CODEIPA along with the Rapa Nui Parliament have presented to the government authorities the urgent need for a Migratory Control statute. After almost ten years of working with the government on the statute's draft, the new administration ignored previous agreements and negotiations went back to stage one.

In response, a vindication movement was initiated by the Rapa Nui Parliament that hit straight to the symbol of Chile's economic interest on Rapa Nui, the so-called Rapa Nui National Park. Today, only 15% of the land is in Rapanui hands. The rest of the Island is declared *territorio fiscal*, federal lands. Among these lands is the Rapa Nui National Park, occupying over 40% of the surface of the Island. In 1935 the Land and Colonization Ministry designated Rapanui ceremonial sites as national park. In 1973, free use of the Park was ceded to the Forest National Corporation (CONAF), who since then has administrated the Park and profited from it, the Parliament accuses. CONAF charges an entrée fee to the Park. The income generated on the Island goes to the national budget of CONAF, where it gets redistributed and invested mostly in other parks in Chile. Only a minimal fraction returns to Rapa Nui, resulting in a deficient management. Everyone who has been in Rapa Nui for longer than a five-day tour-trip would agree with the Parliament's allegations. Aside from four or five touristic sites, the rest of the many ceremonial and heritage sites lack any sort of infrastructure and are left abandoned to the many wild horses that abound and irresponsible tourists, also abundant.

On March 26th, 2015 the Rapa Nui Parliament pacifically occupied the accesses to the main archaeological sites of the Park. Stationed at the various road blockages, they impeded the access of CONAF staff, non-Rapanui tour guides, and tourists without a Rapanui companion. They demanded the passing of the much-needed immigration legislation, and that CONAF retire

from the Island, passing the administration of the Park to the Rapanui people. Until then, the Parliament would continue to control the Park. After three weeks of mobilization and negotiations with the Chilean government, an agreement was reached. On April 15, 2015 during a meeting between the Parliament, local authorities and government representatives, the parties agreed that the administration of the National Park is to be transferred to an autonomous Rapanui entity. Until the transfer is formalized, the Rapa Nui Parliament will continue to control the Park and access to it. The proposal for the new administration, presented by CODEIPA and the Parliament, will be voted by the community through a consultation process in accordance with the 169 ILO Convention to begin in May 4th.<sup>1</sup> No mention to the immigration statute was made.

### **Decolonizing research: notes on methodologies**

Because this dissertation deals extensively with research as both a colonial and decolonial apparatus and its impact on indigenous peoples, below I present a discussion on the theories informing my methodologies, which arise from three main schools of thought: the postmodern, postcolonial and decolonizing schools. With all three of them emerging from an important moment of reflexivity in the social sciences, I define my work as an intersubjective ethnography deeply influenced by the ontological turn in the study of indigenous cultures. Committed to the decolonization of methodologies, this dissertation resulted from a research model that combines critical indigenous methodologies with action research so as to translate research into transformative action. Central to this model is the indigenous paradigm informing my research, which arises from the acknowledgment of the “interventionary potential of theory” (G. Smith 2000) and the transformative power of indigenous knowledges. Convinced of the potential of research to positively intervene in “indigenous crisis circumstances” (G. Smith 2000), I hope my

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement document. Parlamento Rapa Nui, April 2015. Unpublished.

work can serve the Rapanui struggle for self-determination. I hope, too, that this dissertation can contribute to scholars and scholarship committed to the responsible study of other peoples and their cultures.

In her exploration of the relationship between knowledge, research, and imperialism, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that colonialism has had a totalizing effect on indigenous self-knowledge, and that such effect continues to impact research on indigenous people. Colonialism, Smith asserts, operated not only through the imposition of Western authority over indigenous lands but also through the imposition of Western authority over all aspects of indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, heritage, languages, and cultures (64). Fed by the voyagers' accounts of discovery, imperial expansionism was deeply influenced by the Enlightenment philosophies. An argument advanced by Smith, she contends that, "the Enlightenment provided the spirit, the impetus, the confidence, and the political and economic structures that facilitated the search of new knowledges" (58). The development of scientific thought was thus a by-product of imperial expansionism. As part of the modernist project, the search for knowledges made Western science the direct beneficiaries of the colonization of indigenous people, which came to scientifically prove Western superiority by promoting a tradition of racializing, dehumanizing and marginalizing indigenous peoples. The form of imperialism that indigenous peoples are confronting today emerged from this historical moment.

Critical understandings of the impact of colonialism on indigenous peoples provoked an important shift in the social sciences. The postmodern (Clifford and Marcus 1986), postcolonial (Deloria 1991) and decolonizing (Smith 1999) schools emerged from this shift. Reflexive and critical on the connections between colonialism and research, scholars from these schools are particularly cautious on the authoritativeness of the ethnographic discourse. They advocate an

ethical ethnographic representation that revisits the history of indigenous peoples as constructed by the West, while exposing the researchers' privileged position within that history. They call for a de-hegemonization of the ethnographic discourse that submits itself to historical critique. Increasingly, scholars adhering to this position are giving more attention to the personal relations that shape ethnographic fieldwork, and advocate for intersubjective writing that reflects those relations. Seizing the native's point of view continues to be the starting point of this critical ethnography, though now it exposes the researcher's position in the elaboration of perspectives that dialogue with each other. By exposing their positional superiority to scrutiny, some hope they can lessen the harmful effects of authoritative ethnographic discourses.

Central to the ethnographic turn and distinctive of the postmodern school in particular is the phenomenological approach to ethnography (Jackson 1998). The phenomenological perspective advocates an intersubjective writing that reflects the relational groundings of ethnographic fieldwork. It calls for the abandoning of abstract framings of anthropological inquiry supported in the dialectic between the particular and the universal for an existential-phenomenological deconstruction of the ethnographic work. Opposing anthropologists' tendency to impose their own analytical concepts in their ethnographic interpretations, the phenomenological approach redirects attention to the microcosmic field of lived interpersonal relationships rather than to the macrocosmic language of social groups and social institutions (Jackson 1998: 153). The focus on intersubjectivity emerged as a critical response to essentializing anthropological interpretations that ignore indigenous ways of explaining experience.

The phenomenological perspective has very often given more attention to the personal experiences through which the researcher came to understand indigenous knowledges than on

these knowledges themselves. In this sense, intersubjective ethnography has become a synonym for self-reflexive self-ethnography. My approach to intersubjective ethnography is somehow different. It emerges from the acknowledgement that Rapanui knowledges are relational, and translates into active collaboration. Throughout this dissertation I will argue that the Rapanui people have their own ontology, according to which they perceive and categorize beings and being very differently than do those of us influenced by the European worldview. The repatriation debate illuminates this conflict between Rapanui and Western-biased understandings of the world. The Rapanui perceive all beings, among them the ancestors retained in museum collections, to be potential persons, capable of sharing their distinctive knowledge and *mana* with other beings, humans included. For this reason they want their ancestors back. For this reason, too, intersubjectivity sits at the core of this dissertation; not to present self-obsessed explorations of an overly subjectivist ethnographic practice, but to offer insight on the ontological relevance of repatriation. The personal experiences through which I came to understand these understandings are thus secondary in this dissertation. The centrality of intersubjectivity to this dissertation is given by the acknowledgement of the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and the interventionary potential of research to make a positive contribution to “indigenous crisis circumstances” (G. Smith 2001). This acknowledgement shaped my methodologies, which I define as action-based indigenous research.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2008: 2) ground their concept of critical indigenous qualitative research in the understanding that all inquiry is both political and moral. As they define it, critical indigenous methodologies acknowledge the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and complement them with critical theory for explicit social justice purposes. Advocates for indigenous research are then committed to “decolonize Western

methodologies, to criticize and demystify the ways in which Western science and the modern academy have been part of the colonial apparatus” (2). Critical indigenous qualitative research is first and foremost emancipatory and empowering.

My stand within the repatriation debate that occupies this dissertation is not neutral. I am an active advocate of the repatriation movement. I consider the retention of the ancestors in museum collections against the wills of their descendants to be unethical, immoral and a grave violation to the rights of indigenous peoples. Some readers may speculate that my experiences bias me toward the Rapanui. Bluntly, I am very sympathetic to the concerns of Rapanui traditionalists and repatriation activists. I admire and respect them greatly. But while I have established a meaningful relationship with many Rapanui traditionalists, my distinct background and education ensure that I maintain some interpretive distance. I did not grow up in the Rapanui community nor was I raised to understand the world as they do. I thus remain an outsider to Rapanui society. This position helps me maintain a scholarly perspective.

Following the indigenous paradigm, I adhere to a research methodology that includes producing scholarship that hopes to serve the Rapanui community; complying with cultural protocols; interrogating existing scholarship critically; rejecting anti-indigenous concepts and languages embedded in existing literature; incorporating Rapanui hermeneutics; and privileging Rapanui and indigenous sources and perspectives over non-Indigenous ones. In doing so, I am committed to critically interrogate from the inside Western academic positivist epistemologies of objectivity and neutrality. These principles governing my methodologies are directly related to the potential of research to intervene in crisis circumstances.

I connect the “interventionary potential of theory” (G. Smith 2000) with action research. Ernest Stringer (2007) has defined action research as “a collaborative approach to *inquiry* or

*investigation* that provides people with the means to take systematic *action* to resolve specific problems” (8). Contesting traditional research that aims to generalizable explanations that can be applied to all contexts, action research focuses on “specific situations and localized solutions” (1). This localized principle of action research aligns with indigenous research in that both revise critical theory as a “localized critical theory” (Denzin and Lincoln 2008: 9; Smith 2000: 229; Stringer 2007: 196). Indigenous research grounds its critique of critical theory in the manners by which the latter failed to address how indigenous histories and epistemologies were sites of struggle and empowerment in themselves. Action research has its own critique in accentuating that critical theory failed to bring its de-hegemonizing efforts to the realm of social action. Failure to translate critical theory into transformative action makes indigenous knowledges into objects of study and commoditization. An action-based approach to indigenous research responds to this problem by reframing indigenous knowledges not as a commodity to be consumed by Western academia but an element of intervention and transformation. In combining indigenous research with action-based methodologies I reposition my role as a researcher as that of a facilitator that functions as a resource person rather than as an expert. From this position the ultimate purpose of my research is to contribute to Rapanui repatriation efforts.

Because this dissertation interrogates research as both a colonial and decolonial apparatus, reflexivity is central to this research. Shaping my methodologies and the very structure of this dissertation, I like to think of my treatment of reflexivity as “deep reflexivity.” A concept that I borrow from David MacDougall (1998), “deep” reflexivity asserts that the author’s position is neither uniform nor fixed. Rather, it exposes itself through a multileveled and constantly evolving relation with the subject. Critical of the overly subjective self-explanatory form that reflexivity has often taken in the anthropological discourse, I follow MacDougall’s

rethinking of reflexivity as “deep” reflexivity, which as he explains it, “requires us to read the position of the author in the very construction of the work, whatever the external explanations may be” (89). In this sense, reflections on my position in this dissertation are given less by personal self-explanatory accounts and more by the way in which this dissertation is constructed to faithfully represent the various voices, knowledges, and agendas that come together in this study.

Integral to this construction and central to its reflexivity are the five video essays that accompany this dissertation. Like the written document, these essays also engage with deep reflexivity. Structured around the main principles of *Haka Tere Tupuna*, Rapanui philosophies, these videos reflect on Rapanui values, knowledges, and relations informing this dissertation. They also reflect on my engagement with my Rapanui colleagues, their culture and activism. A form of social inquiry itself, my video practice is central to my methodologies. In my research, the use of the camera not only provides a medium to record knowledge; more critically, it also opens avenues for conversations and collaboration with research participants. These avenues, in turn, lead to a distinctive knowledge production that exposes the intersubjective and phenomenological nature of the ethnographic fieldwork experience. Both a mediator and activator, the camera serves a variety of purposes in my research, being at once a knowledge-recording tool, a form of creative reflexivity, an activator of memory, a medium for knowledge production, and a contact device. Because this research is deeply concerned with activism, the camera plays here an important role as an apparatus of collaboration, serving research participants as a medium to convey messages, voice their demands, and raise awareness. I detail my engagement with the camera as a form of reflexivity in the next section, where I discuss the centrality of my video practice to my research.



## **On the fieldwork experience: observational cinema**

Scholars have increasingly been conceiving the use of visual media in anthropology and ethnography as an alternative to anthropological ways of knowing from a phenomenological perspective. Almost two decades ago Nichols (1994) pointed out that documentary filmmaking was entering a realm of specificity and corporeality, “of embodied knowledge and existentially situated action” (2). From the field of visual anthropology, David MacDougall (1998) echoes Nichols’s argument by explaining that visual media regenerate “a way of thinking through the body” (49) that contributes to a new field of experiential studies in anthropology, which he identifies as an anthropology of consciousness (272). More recently, Sarah Pink (2009) has proposed a rethinking of ethnography through the senses in what she terms sensory ethnography, a critical methodology that departs from the classic observational approach to “insist that ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process” (8) through which understanding and knowledge are produced. Pink’s refiguring of the ethnographic process aligns with Laura Marks’s exploration of the use of haptic visuality in intercultural cinema as facilitating the representation of a variety of ways of knowing (2000: 1) while encouraging a multisensory relationship with the image (2000: 172; 2002: 3). My experimentation with visual ethnography is based on this scholarship.

As a beginner practitioner, I engage with visual ethnography from the observational approach. Observational cinema is particularly effective in asserting visual ethnography as a form of physical and social engagement with the world before the lens. In doing so, it stresses that the relationship between the subject and the ethnographer-filmmaker is one of shifting intersubjectivity. Further, observational documentaries are embedded within and reflexive of the epistemological, ethical and political grounds of representation. In this sense, the visual

ethnography component of this dissertation fosters my interrogation of the authoritativeness of anthropological discourse (Clifford 1988).

Like intersubjectivity in critical ethnography, reflexivity is central to the observational approach in visual anthropology. The form of reflexivity that the five video essays of this dissertation present is informed by David MacDougall's (1998) "deep" reflexivity. Critical on the external and formalist reflexivity common to the anthropological discourse and traditional ethnographic films, MacDougall has developed a more nuanced notion, where reflexivity is registered in the construction, style and structure of the film. A notion that coincides with my interrogation of the form of intersubjectivity that phenomenological ethnographies often advocate, MacDougall's "deep" reflexivity is neither a meta-commentary anterior to the film nor a self-conscious moment of crisis. Rather, he repositions reflexivity as at once implicit in and intrinsic to the film. In his analysis of MacDougall's deep reflexivity, Lucien Taylor (1998) calls this form of reflexivity "anti-illusionistic." With the ultimate goal of addressing, in the very form of the film, the social nature of representation, its anti-illusionism, Taylor contends, "is an inherent offshoot of its methodological self-scrutiny, which ... is both rigorous and sensitive" (18). Deep reflexivity is thus not simply an aesthetic strategy but an ethical stance.

My first encounter with observational video was nothing but a circumstantial, almost coincidental one. Acknowledging the difficulties of writing about indigenous people, my use of the camera came as an effective medium toward my seeking of speaking with the Rapanui people, as opposed to speaking for them. At first, my use of the camera was intended to, literally and plainly, record knowledge. One particular episode marked this approach.

In 2008 I started working with Papa Kiko, a respected elder and culture keeper considered to be the living master of story telling. When we first met, Papa Kiko was already ill.

Lying on a hospital bed, he still invited me to work together and insisted that I recorded everything. He wanted the new generations to know the stories he would not live, he said, to tell them himself. So day after day I came to the hospital to record those stories. In that hospital room, the observational camera came as an unintentional, circumstantial method. Papa Kiko already having difficulties to speak, I could not interrupt him. Further, the recording of the stories being his expressed wish, I avoided any sort of intervention. I would turn the camera on and let him talk and sing for as long as he wanted to. His performances were astonishing and breathtaking; his was the most compelling voice I have ever heard, as if he lived every single word he pronounced. I thought only an un-interrupting camera would truly and honestly caption that beauty. My work with Papa Kiko and its particular circumstances shaped my engagement with visual ethnography from an observational approach.

The notion of an “un-interrupting” camera must not be confused with an “invisible” camera. As I shall explain next, the observing camera is never invisible but always selective, partial, subjective, and situated. Rather than aiming at invisibility, the observational method here is based on a camera whose presence is not overwhelming in the scenario. My use of small hand-held devices contributing a great deal to this approach, the un-interrupting camera in my practice is first and foremost a form of respect, an ethical stance.

At first, observational cinema was widely criticized for a supposed passion for pretending to be invisible, as the camera was never there. A critique still widely sustained, David MacDougall (1974) and Colin Young (1974) were the first to posit doubts to it. Arguing that observational cinema relies on relations, they proposed this assumed passive approach as an effective, radical approach that came to solve problems of misrepresentation, the interpretive method, and objectification. Furthering MacDougall and Young’s arguments, Anna Grimshaw

and Amanda Ravetz (2009) identify observational cinema as a distinctive mode of inquiry aligning with a sensuous scholarship. As they explain, visual anthropology already poses fundamental challenges to anthropological ways of speaking and knowing; as a phenomenological approach to visual anthropology, observational cinema effectively illustrates this shift. Informed by this debate, I posit my observational video practice as aligning with and integral to intersubjective ethnography. Possible only after active observation, after creating complex relationships with those represented, and after reflecting on these relations, observational cinema is not about mere authorship but about collaboration.

A mode of social inquiry that effectively counteracts the problems of authoritative representation inherent to the anthropological discourse, the observational method is first and foremost a particular ethical stance. Aparna Sharma (2015) defines observational cinema as “a form of ethnographic filmmaking that distinguishes itself from the wider corpus of documentary by emphasizing *seeing*” (Sharma 2015: 3). The act of seeing, she asserts, is a mode of social inquiry. Sharma posits observational cinema as a form that is true to and reflective on the fieldwork experience. Unlike conventional ethnographic films, she explains, observational cinema does not rely on post-production techniques and criteria that are external to ethnographic fieldwork as to steer the film’s narrative. Rather, it relies on “techniques of cinematography, sound and editing to construct and propose filmic meanings and ideas” (2015: 4). Resting on minimal editing, the observational method intends to preserve the spatial and temporal continuities of the fieldwork experience and respect the voice and relations of those observed.

To be true to the fieldwork experience and respectful of those before the lens is not to be confused with objectivity or invisibility. Grimshaw and Ravetz (2009) advance this argument stressing that the camera is always selective, partial, subjective, and situated. Rather than

invisibility, they assert, the observational approach implies a particular ethical stance, “in which ‘to observe’ meant ‘to respect’ or ‘to comply with’” (2009: 10). I learned the value of observation as a form of respect early on when I began working with Rapanui elders. One day during one of our recording sessions at the hospital, one of the patients in Papa Kiko’s room complained. All these days sharing the same room, he said, and he would not tell a thing. But there he was now, telling all these stories to her, “that Chilean.” Papa Kiko did not bother much, “Because she does know how to listen,” he said, and asked me to turn the camera on. When it comes to story telling, Rapanui elders are very strict. If you want to know, you do not interrupt them. Silence is for them a form of respect. Papa Kiko’s words influenced my video practice deeply and his lesson opened my way to work with other elders and traditionalists in Rapa Nui. When they speak, my camera and I remain observers. Silent though always active, partial, and situated, we comply with the multi-layered encounter of knowledge systems we are engaging in. My video practice being reflexive of this epistemological encounter, through the observational approach I offer experiential and interpretive possibilities rather than explanations and definite statements.

Reflexivity sits at the heart of observational cinema. The filmmaker’s compliance with and respect for the world before the lens being at the core of the observational approach, no external criteria are imposed to the film. In effect, observational cinema developed, as Grimshaw and Ravetz (2009) explain, “on repudiation of methods that fragmented ethnographic realities as a preliminary to reassembling them in accordance with a conceptual framework imposed from elsewhere” (4). A result of this repudiation, observational films are structured around the very experience of fieldwork. In doing so, the observational approach relies deeply on relations:

relations between the subjects, the environment and the filmmaker. Reflections on these relations, rather than external criteria, shape the narrative line of observational films.

In my video practice, reflexivity as a structuring principle came later. I mentioned above that my approach to the observational method developed from my work with Papa Kiko. The use of the camera, I mentioned too, being a response to his expressed desire to record oral traditions, I limited my video practice to that of a knowledge-recording tool. A more radical, reflexive approach to the observational method comes over time, with the development of relations. With Papa Kiko I did not have that time. Only a few weeks after we started working together, I had to leave the Island for a few days. The day I came back I learned he was back at home, so I hurried to visit him. On my way to his house, I saw an ambulance passing. And when I reached the house, the ambulance was parked there. Papa Kiko passed only a few weeks after. Deeply affected, I would not use the camera again for a long time. To Papa Kiko I owe the very basis of my video practice, that of a silent, complying camera.

My relations on Rapa Nui growing stronger over the years, my use of the observational approach developed accordingly. After a year of intense fieldwork and collaborative ethnographic research, my engagement in such collaborations shifted from passive observation to radical praxis and advocacy. And in the process, my use of the camera shifted from an invisible knowledge-recording tool to a reflexive, critical and active research methodology. But I must say that this reflexivity came, again, circumstantially. Shooting became collaborative note taking, data analysis and writing, and my video work a reflexive discourse on the politics and ethics of ethnographic collaboration. And it did so out of need. Another episode marked this shift.

In 2009 I met Rapanui traditionalist and activist, Piru Huke. During my various fieldwork stays in Rapa Nui I always heard about her, her work, and her temper. Friends and collaborators

insisted I should meet her, yet none of them would introduce us. They probably feared she would chase me away. A respected activist and attracting character, she had a long history of cultural revitalization work and political activism, also a long history of publicly confronting researchers and Chilean government officials. Later in this dissertation I detail how I came to work with her. I will limit my account here to our first collaborative project, which marked my video practice deeply.

From 2009 to 2011 Piru and I worked together in a project consisting in recording and documenting Rapanui petroglyphs and oral histories associated with them. Together we traveled the island recording petroglyphs and gathering their stories. Most of the places we explored being remote sites, we could only access them by foot or horse. We stayed at the sites for days, even weeks, sleeping in caves and fishing to eat. Working in extreme physically demanding circumstances, I could not stand there with the camera while she did the hard work. More than once I tried, but she yelled at me fiercely. Piru is a tough woman, fierce when she needs to. And fearing her as I did then, I found myself with no other choice than to leave the camera sitting on a tripod for hours, shooting us on the rocks. Working with Piru I, too, became the subject before the lens.

Without any planning, the camera became a vivid witness to our relations, between us and with the environment. Sharma (2015) reminds us in this regard that, “the observational film method equips filmmakers to pursue unexpected and non-scripted encounters” (2015: 55). Observational filmmakers, she stresses, do not go in with a preconceived idea, script or agenda for what they want to capture. In this experience, this sense of spontaneity came out of need. The challenging circumstances and lack of hands would not allow for any preconceived plan. Rather, Sharma continues, observational filmmakers “enter an environment with a camera and use it to

explore and understand that environment, its rhythms, modes of expression and all the factors that give that environment its particular character” (55). In this same sense, the observing camera sitting all alone on the tripod was critical for my seeking of an ethical video narrative. Not only did it open a space to reflect on collaborative ethnography; following the observed with a sense of respect and compliance, it also opened a space to explore relations with the land and the ancestors. This space for reflexivity and exploration shaped the narrative and structure of the video essays I present below. Further, it also influenced deeply my understanding of the ontological relevance of repatriation.

Our work together was all about “living the land” and “knowing the Tupuna,” as she would say. Intense and challenging, through our many road trips I began to understand Rapanui ontological relations. Sleeping in caves I learned about dreaming in Rapa Nui; walking down the cliffs to get the pigment for the recording technique I understood *varua* protection; cooking on the rocks I learned that the ancestors ought to eat too; hiking the many hills to reach the petroglyphs on the top I understood that history and memory are alive in every single rock; listening to Piru talk and sing to every *moai* and petroglyph I learned that they do not represent her ancestors, they are the ancestors themselves. Our work together introduced me to the ontological importance of repatriation. This understanding arose out of my witnessing of and exploration of Rapanui relations with the land. Observing and reflecting on these relations are integral to my video practice.

One of observational cinema’s central principles is that people’s subjectivities are co-extensive with the environments they inhabit. Observational filmmakers explore people’s lives by focusing on the landscapes and environments in which they live. An argument advanced by Sharma (2015), she contends that by “exploring people’s embodied experiences, knowledges,



systems of meanings, practices of work and forms of social and creative expression,” observational filmmakers “seek to understand how people relate with their lived environments” (3). Landscapes and environments in observational cinema, Sharma explains, are not abstract categories. Rather, “they are socially, historically and culturally constructed” (12). By exploring landscapes as social constructions, observational films provide insight into how people interact with and perceive their places in relation to the wider social world. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (2009) attribute the centrality in observational cinema of the idea of social environment to the influence of Italian neo-realism.

The development of observational cinema has been often discussed in relation to the Italian neo-realism of the Post-War. This influence is particularly notorious in observational cinema’s interest in examining peoples’ subjectivities in relation to their environments. The Italian neo-realist filmmakers were committed to rediscovering humanity in what was called the “revolutionary humanism” of Italian neo-realism. They did so by exploring the lives of people who were struggling to re-invent themselves in the midst of ruins. In their analysis of the influence in observational cinema of the Italian neo-realism, Grimshaw and Ravetz explain that for neo-realist filmmakers portraying the Post-War world, “the bomb-scarred city-space that became emblematic of their work served not as a backdrop to human relations but as an integral part of the story itself” (2009: 14). Landscape in neo-realist cinema, they assert, was understood as “expressive not just of geography, history, society—but subjectivity too” (14). This understanding of landscapes as indicatives of the social world has been central to observational cinema.

The observational approach has been central to my exploration of Rapanui social environments and the ontological connections between the people and the land. By social

environment I mean the socially biased relations between the living, the ancestors and other beings in their world and the behaviors these relations engage. My video practice deals greatly with the exploration of these environments. The landscape both shaping and being shaped by social relations, the land is integral to Rapanui social environments. This principle is based on the genealogical connections between the people, both human and not, and the land. Because of these connections, my collaborators always assert that histories are to be told in the places where they happened. Failure to do so may disturb the ancestors and other beings those histories evoke and make them come to you, sometimes after you. Accordingly, road trips have been a substantial method in my ethnographic work. A method developed as a form of compliance with cultural protocols, it resulted in a true aid for me to understand Rapanui knowledges and relations.

Because history is embedded in the land, the landscape acts as an activator of memory. Out in the *campo* (*SPA.* countryside; everything outside the town of Haja Roa) everything evokes history. That evocation very often provokes an innate storytelling. In our road trips, the sight of an islet, hiking a volcano, entering a cave, exploring a burial site, admiring a *moai*, the shape of a cove, reaching the top of a hill, visiting a house or running into a rock are always followed by a story. More significantly, these encounters involve communication with the beings evoked in those stories. Before entering a site, Rapanui traditionalists ask for permission to the ancestors of the place, they call and feed them lighting a fire, and introduce themselves reciting their genealogies. Sometimes these interactions take performative forms; some others, these are internal processes. With the camera, I follow these embodied experiences, knowledges and systems of meanings, which in turn provide the basis of my video narrative.

The videos that accompany this dissertation are an exploration of this embodiment of systems, knowledges and experiences. I opened this discussion on observational cinema stressing that my use of the camera arose out of an interrogation of the ethics and politics of writing about indigenous peoples. Through the observational approach, my video practice became then an ethical stance and an effective medium toward my seeking of speaking with the Rapanui people, as opposed to speaking for them; of presenting an understanding of their perceptions of the world without pretending to be their view of it. The contribution of my collaborators to this dissertation is enormous. In fact, I devise this dissertation as co-authored with them, except for the fact that we did not write it together. The acknowledgements and direct quotes included in this document do not begin to express the hard work and commitment they put in this project. Nor do the video essays. But I hope they can at least provide an insight to how they relate to and engage with this dissertation, and the philosophies and agenda that shaped it.

As visual essays, these videos explore possible video narratives that are reflexive on the work of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP), which in turn reflects on Rapanui values and philosophies. The work of RNRP is based on a collaborative culturally safe action-research model that, having decolonizing philosophies at its center, is related to being Rapanui, is connected to Rapanui philosophy, takes for granted the legitimacy of Rapanui knowledges and the importance of Rapanui language and culture, and is concerned with the struggle for self-determination, all the above while satisfying the rigors of academic research. Central to RNRP is Haka Tere Tupuna, Rapanui philosophy and worldviews, which define the program's organization, policy and research. These video essays reflect on this governing principle.

Repatriation is not simply about bringing the ancestors back but also about re-connecting a people with their *mana* and *maramarama* (*RAP.* knowledge). To this end, a repatriation

initiative could not just reflect on worldviews, values and philosophies, it also needed to be structured around the system that conceptualizes such ontological, axiological and epistemological relations. Haka Tere Tupuna is that system. Haka Tere Tupuna is the conceptualization of Rapanui knowledge. The concept of *haka tere* implying a way of conducting and driving, *haka tere tupuna* implies a way of framing, structuring and transmitting how Rapanui think about and practice knowledge. As a system conceptualizing knowledge, values and relations, Haka Tere Tupuna principles define RNRP's organization and regulate repatriation research and procedures as a means to ensure that they are conducted in a culturally safe manner and that Rapanui values are kept at the center of repatriation efforts.

Five main principles underlie Haka Tere Tupuna: *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy), *te re'o* (*RAP.* language), *tikāŋa* (*RAP.* cultural protocols), *hua'ai* (*RAP.* family), and *mau hatu* (*RAP.* sovereignty). Each video essay corresponds to each of these principles. A detailed definition and analysis of these core concepts is provided in Chapter Seven, where I present the work of RNRP in light of Haka Tere Tupuna. There I also explain that RNRP being pioneer in articulating and applying Haka Tere Tupuna to research and activism, the interpretations that I provide, which I worked through with the RNRP's Advisory Panel, are not intended to be exhaustive of Rapanui philosophies. Rather, they are a first attempt to outline and articulate Haka Tere Tupuna principles. The same applies to the video essays I introduce below. Rather than definite statements, these video essays are a study in five parts on how to develop a video narrative that responds to and reflects on the knowledges, philosophies and values that inform the work of RNRP and, thus, this dissertation.

## The five video essays

### *Te Mau Hatu*, Kept Chiefs

Literally “kept chiefs,” *te mau hatu* is the self-determination principle. A core principle of Haka Tere Tupuna, *mau hatu* asserts Rapanui sovereignty. A notion referring to the precolonial government structure, it reinforces Rapanui governance over all things Rapanui, by Rapanui and for Rapanui. Generally, *te mau hatu* is the basis for critically engaging power relations and counteracting hegemonic impositions from Rapanui understandings. As a research principle, in particular, *mau hatu* determines how research is governed. It asserts Rapanui control over all aspects of research as to ensure a decolonizing, emancipatory research agenda.

This video essay presents a critical examination of the notion of “staging tourism” (Desmond 1999) and its impact on Rapanui self-knowledge. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Rapa Nui is also a very popular touristic destination. The public display of bodies is often a central element in structuring identity, race, gender, and cultural affiliation. In Rapa Nui, spectacles of corporeality are also the basic form of a hugely profitable tourist industry only comparable to Rapanui archaeological tourism. The industry has exploited an image of Rapa Nui as an exotic island of desire, and this image has impacted notions of identity very deeply. The commoditization of Rapanui culture reaches its climax every February, during the Tapati Rapa Nui. Initially a cultural festival, the Tapati Rapa Nui is sold today as a travel package that offers the tourist a unique opportunity to experience the exotic culture of Rapa Nui.

The video follows one of the fourteen days of this festivity, the Nari Nari Carnival, where tourists and Rapanui come together walking through the streets of Haja Roa dancing and singing with their bodies painted and in “traditional” attires. With an observing camera, I follow the parade sometimes joining the crowd, sometimes viewing from the side. Through a perspective

alternating between a spectacular and tactile visuality, the camera examines the contrasting ways in which Rapanui elders, youth, children and tourists engage in this staging of culture. Rapanui traditionalists often complain that people are so worried about pleasing the tourist that they have forgotten who they really are. This video essay reflects on this conflict from one of many possible angles, the exploitation of ethnicity as an embodied notion of how identity is enacted, debated, reinforced, and sold.

### *Te Re'o*, the language

Literally tongue, *te re'o* is also a way of interacting in the world. Rapanui worldviews are embedded in the language, as they are facilitated through it. *Te re'o* Rapanui is, then, a way of knowing in itself, a way of coming to know the world and also a way of interacting in the world. This knowledge and relations being encapsulated in Haka Tere Tupuna, language is also a source of empowerment, as *te re'o* Rapanui is the only language that can access, conceptualize and internalize this body of knowledge. As a research principle, *te re'o* asserts this efficacy of Rapanui language as a site of struggle and resistance.

This video essay offers an examination of Rapanui language as a form of engaging relations ontologically and as a space of empowerment. Like the previous essay, it focuses on the performance of culture, but from a very different perspective. The performance shown here is a demonstration of *takona*, also a competition during the Tapati Rapa Nui. *Takona* is a performative form of story telling consisting in the interpretation of a historical character or episode through body painting. This video documents a *takona* performed by Ma'eha León about the role of women in the ritual of the Tanata Manu, the Bird Man. Very differently from the scenes observed in the previous essay, here a young woman embodies and tells the history of her female ancestors with great solemnity and respect. Avoiding any sort of fragmentation of the

female body, the camera intends to stay true to the reflexivity of this performance where the strength of the performer contrasts with a history charged with complicated gender issues. With no cuts and no editing, the essay maintains the original narration intact in an attempt to reflect how history is embodied, engaged and re-claimed through language.

### *Te Hua'ai, the family*

Literally “extended family,” the principle of *hua'ai* refers to a support structure that has in-built responsibilities and obligations. Referring back to pre-colonial social structure, *hua'ai* is the basis for Rapanui society. As a social core unit, it functions as a support base of shared responsibilities. As a research principle it extends to the research team and beyond. *Hua'ai* is a way of organizing and supervising research; of distributing tasks and reciprocating responsibilities; of sharing knowledge and ensuring that Rapanui values are kept at the core of the research project.

This video essay presents an exploration of relations in Rapa Nui. This dissertation takes seriously the reality and personhood that the Rapanui attribute to the different beings in their world, with whom they engage and interact in every-day life, dreams, and the afterlife. This video essay focuses on one of these person categories, the *varua*. In Chapter Two I discuss this person category as integral to what I analyze as a relational epistemology. There I identify them as “omni-persons” that can protect people, bestow knowledge and skills, and also do real harm. In this video, Miguel “Miha” Pate tells the story of Ko Kuha Ko Rati, two female *varua*. Succinctly and aptly, he explains in a few sentences what I do in several pages. This video examination of *varua*-human relations serves as a preamble to the exploration of relations between the living and the ancestors, a central element of this dissertation. Further, this essay

provides a preliminary insight into Rapanui ways of understanding the world and conceptualizing relations, which are at the core of the work of the RNRP.

*Te Haka Ara*, genealogies

Literally genealogy, *haka ara* is also the most fundamental way in which the Rapanui think about and come to know the world. Haka ara refers to a way of acquiring, storing, and debating knowledge. Echoing Rapanui relational epistemologies, it allows for positioning and contextualizing relations between people, participants, ancestors, land, and the universe as a whole. As a research principle, haka ara organizes research relationships. For repatriation, in particular, haka ara research is critical for demonstrating cultural affiliation and determining final resting places.

This video essay explores how the Rapanui relate with the land to which they are genealogically connected. With a moving camera that travels from the town of Hana Roa to the campo and walks through different landscapes of the Island, this essay focuses on the embodied experience of fieldwork in collaborative ethnography. The video introduces two members of RNRP, Piru Huke and Te Pou Huke; both of them key research collaborators. Observing how they relate with the land and what that relation provokes in them, this essay examines how people's subjectivities are co-extensive of their lived environments. In Rapa Nui, this co-extension has an ontological meaning. In very different ways, the land defines the people; it tells them their history, how to act, who they are, and where they come from.

Piru and Te Pou characterize for living a Rapanui culturally informed life. And they do so not only for the Tapati Rapa Nui or to impress some person. Having known them and lived with them for years, I have seen how Rapanui values and philosophies dictate their way of understanding the world and interacting in it in every-day life. Piru and Te Pou are also well



known for their work as culture bearers. An artist and a “heritage worker,” as Piru defines herself, through their work they are committed to pass on their knowledge to the new generations and revitalize Rapanui values and philosophies. Their work being an embodiment and expression of their relations with the land, the ancestors and the history, this video essay seeks to reflect that commitment.

### *Te Tikāŋa*, cultural protocols

Literally “to point at the past,” *tikāŋa* are the principles that govern social and customary practices in Rapa Nui, and through which actions are judged as *titika*, or correct. As a code of ethics, *tikāŋa* are the protocols and processes that define, mediate and guide relationships. Intersecting all principles, but this one in particular, are the concepts of *mo’a* and *tapu* as forms of deep respect. The breaching of *tapu* having real consequences, *tikāŋa* is intimately related to the idea of safety. As a core research principle for the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program, compliance with *tikāŋa* Rapanui means that all repatriation research and procedures are undertaken following appropriate Rapanui cultural protocols as to ensure that research and repatriations are all and at all times culturally consistent and safe.

This video essay follows the visit of members of RNRP to their ancestors held at the National Museum of Natural History, in Santiago de Chile. I requested this visit repeatedly for over a year, but the museum director refused to meet me due to my work on repatriation. In October 2014, the RNRP was invited to present at the Latin American Association of Biological Anthropology Congress, held in Santiago. A unique opportunity of traveling to Chile with four other members of the RNRP, I tried again. After much insistence, the new request was approved and with only one-day notice, museum officials informed me that we were welcome to visit the

ancestors. Such short notice gave us no time to prepare for the visit. This video follows this spontaneous, sensible, and longed-for encounter between the ancestors and their descendants.

The order in which I introduce these five video essays is not intended to provide a hierarchy of Haka Tere Tupuna principles. Nor is this structure correspondent to the structure of this dissertation. With the ultimate purpose of reflecting on the Rapanui values and philosophies informing this study, these essays can be viewed before, after or while reading the dissertation. Now, if the reader does decide to follow the order I suggest here, the video essays can serve a second purpose, that of reflecting on my engagement with research and my position as an outsider researcher.

In my revision of the theories informing my methodologies I discussed the centrality of reflexivity to the ethnographic and ontological turn of the social sciences. Reflexivity has been critical to interrogating the authoritativeness of the ethnographic discourse. The adoption of a phenomenological approach to the ethnographic practice, I contended there, has been central to this self-reflexive moment and has often taken the form of an intersubjective writing that echoes the relational groundings of ethnographic fieldwork. The video essays that accompany this dissertation reflect on the centrality of intersubjectivity in my research. They do so in two different ways. First, they examine Rapanui epistemologies as inherently intersubjective. Second, they posit intersubjectivity as integral to collaborative ethnography.

I debated earlier that the phenomenological perspective has very often given more attention to the personal experiences through which the researcher came to understand indigenous knowledges than to these knowledges themselves. Responding to this critique, the personal experiences that facilitated my understanding of Rapanui philosophies and values are secondary in these video essays. In this sense, the self-reflexive component in these videos does

not take the usual form of a voice over or a “framer framed” (Min-ha 1992). Rather, the self-reflexive element is given here by the position of the camera.

On each video, where the camera is situated is a statement of my engagement with those before the lens and their world. The position of the camera narrates the journey of my ethnographic work, which began as participant observation (Clifford 1992) to develop then into radical praxis (Aldred 1993). While now I serve as the repatriation manager to the RNRP, my first encounter with Rapa Nui was as a tourist. These video essays are reflexive of that journey, presenting a camera that shifts from a tourist’s position to that of a collaborator holding hands with those observed, singing to the ancestors, and committing to bringing them back home.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### HE MANA O TE TUPUNA

When I started working with Rapanui traditionalists in the creation of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP), a first question I would ask to each of them was what motivated them; why should the *tupuna*, the ancestors, come back. They all answered in very different forms, but all answers coincided in one same, central point: when the *tupuna* come back, then the *mana* will be back. Sorobabel Fati, the eldest founding member of RNRP responded to my question with a story, his story. His account illuminates the idea of the *mana* and *tapu* of the *tupuna*, a central aspect of this dissertation. A Rapanui traditionalist expert in *haka ara* (RAP. genealogy), *te re'o* (RAP. language), *a'amu* (RAP. history), and *injoa i te kona* (RAP. toponym), his main expertise, *koro* Sorobabel fell very ill soon after RNRP was created. He passed away while I wrote this dissertation. Because I owe much of this research to his wisdom and generosity, I open this dissertation with his response to the importance of repatriation, his story.

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I, Jacinta, I will tell you my story. When I was eight I went out the church with my dad and my *tía* [CHI. stepmother] that lived with my dad. We left from town, took Tahai and up there the horse scared away. The horse went crazy fast and there I fell down. When I was eight, and I broke my spine. I was three months, every day urinating blood in the mornings. In that time there are no doctor, no medicine. In my dad's land there is a *puku* [RAP. rock] and there were two heads inside, one of a woman and one of a man, from his *haka ara* [RAP. genealogy], our *haka ara*, Marama. So my dad went yell at them. "Why didn't you look after my son who fell down the horse." I heard my dad telling this story, because we all gathered, my aunts, my mom, all

gathered to listen to my dad. So my dad goes once a day to yell at them. One night he slept and woke up in the middle of night. He spoke to my *tía*, “I dreamed that my haka ara [i.e. the skulls] were yelling at me. That I light the fire with my neighbor and don’t look at them.” The neighbor was the man living next to our house. The *varua* [*RAP.* beings] of the place was the *varua* that did the evil to me. So said my *tía*’s haka ara. To my *tía* they said, “tell that man that he and Paoa 8 [the neighbor] make an *umu* [*RAP.* earth oven offering] for us. [Sorobabel narrates the dream.] That day I woke up, went out to pee, and all go away. After that, my *tía* dreamed again and this couple told her, “tell that man that he has to remember about us. He is not to eat only he and his neighbor, leaving us just looking.” And since then, here I am, nothing happened to me. Thanks to the *varua*. We talk so much about *varua*. Well, the *varua* saved me. So my dad went to make an *umu* for them. It was a big *puku*, with a hole at the bottom. There they were. But if you go now, all *ivi* [*RAP.* bones] disappeared. So there went my dad to give thanks. That is why I tell you, if the *ivi tupuna* that are all over the world come back, the *mana* comes back again.

†**Sorobabel Fati Teao**

Rapa Nui, March 2013

## CHAPTER ONE

### *MANA TAPU 'AO*

Scholars, museum officials, and government representatives very often claim that repatriation is an indigenous opportunistic and purely political act. I do not think so. In fact, I think that who have politicized repatriation are the very scholars, museum officials and government representatives, not indigenous peoples. When the repatriation of ancestral remains is presented as a political act only, the ancestors are, once more, politicized and objectified. Repatriation is, indeed, a political endeavor, a means of readdressing colonial wrongs and achieving self-determination. But the political gesture is a consequence of a bigger struggle: to reclaim notions of kinship, memory, and *mana*. An ethnographic approach to the cultural relevance of repatriation helps us understanding the ontological, holistic underpinnings of indigenous claims for the repatriation of their ancestors. For the Rapanui people repatriation is a question of *mana*. Far from thinking that their political activism will bring their ancestors home, most of them think that repatriation was meant to be. The *mana* of their ancestors is bringing them home.

Committed to expose and counteract the many assumptions that have long demonized the repatriation movement, this dissertation deals greatly with this ontological relevance of repatriation. This chapter presents a brief examination of Rapanui funerary and burial rituals. Like the larger document, this chapter is based on research conducted in collaboration with the members of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP). Rapanui elders, traditionalists and culture bearers, they consider that central to the decolonizing agenda of repatriation is to assume responsibility for the proper care of ancestral remains and understand traditional knowledge

regarding the adequate treatment of the ancestors. This chapter responds to that recognition. I open this study on the repatriation movement with this succinct and superficial commentary on a much complex system to counteract from the very beginning a simplistic yet foundational argument opposing the repatriation of the body of the ancestors: that the Rapanui never did really care about their dead, until now.

### **Caring for the Dead: *Mana* and *tapu* after death<sup>2</sup>**

Death and the dead have occupied Rapanui historiography almost obsessively. From the accounts of very first visitors to the reports of contemporary researchers, a few notes on burials seem to be a must. Stroke by the sight of the moai, eighteenth century explorers noted these “savages’ irrational cult to the dead.” Missionaries, from the nineteenth-century French Catholic mission to its re-establishment in 1936 by Father Sebastian Englert, wrote extensively on Rapanui burials and funerary rituals. In his museum-mandated collecting expedition, William Thomson noted in 1886 that the “entire island seems to be one vast necropolis” (484). In 1924, John MacMillan Brown even called Rapa Nui the “Island of the Dead.” From then on, writings on Rapanui burials abound. “For our ancestors, the dead are more alive than the living,” said Javier Tuki when I too was researching Rapanui funerary rituals. “Even dead, they continued bringing them offerings, feeding them, and invoking the gods to protect them so they could travel in peace to the universe,” he continued.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the settlement of the first *ariki* Hotu Matu’a, the Rapanui developed cared burial techniques, carried out strict funeral ceremonies, and constructed truly masterpieces for their dead.

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<sup>2</sup> Concepts like *mana* and *tapu* will be extensively discussed in Chapter Two. For the purposes of this preliminary revision only, let us define *mana* as a synergic ontological power and *tapu* as a set of restrictive cultural protocols meant to protect and enhance the *mana* of a person, place, knowledge or activity.

<sup>3</sup> Javier Tuki Pakomio. Rapa Nui, December 2013. Personal communication.

*Timo Rara Ivi*<sup>4</sup> were the people designated to care for and treat the *papāku* (RAP. corpse). When a person died, they would wash her body thoroughly and display the deceased in the family home for relatives and friends to present her with food offerings and gifts. The *Timo Rara Ivi* then took the *papāku* and wrapped her up in shroud of bark cloth or woven bulrush reeds elaborated by the family. Some versions indicate that they placed the wrapped body on a *raŋa or raŋa ria*, a wooden trestle. Most of my collaborators, however, coincide in that they did it on a sort of *umu pae* (RAP. earth oven) or a pile of stones located next to the *ahu*, the family's burial site especially for this purpose. Placing the *papāku* with the head pointing towards the sea, the *Timo Rara Ivi* would let the sun, breeze and seawater to stuff the body. Depending on the rank of the deceased and the family's wealth to gather the provisions for the final ceremony, this process could take anywhere from several months to years. Meanwhile, the *Timo Rara Ivi* would guard the *papāku*, accompanying her in her journey and reciting *pata 'u ta 'u* for the *atua* (RAP. protector, most powerful being) to protect her. Relatives would be also present at all times, bringing her food and offerings. This ritual of mourning was called *he tapu te pera*: an extended period of time involving offerings and a complex treatment of the remains, where relatives and experts collaborated to ensure the safety journey of the *kuhane* or inner part of the deceased into *Te Po*, the world of the afterlife. Access to the *kona tapu i te pera*, the area of the *tapu pera*, was strictly restricted, and *huhū*, wooden sticks with a line of feathers hanging from the top, were raised to indicate the *tapu*.

When the mourning period ended, the second phase of the funerary ritual took place, where the *ivi tupuna*, the bones of the deceased, were taken to their final resting place. Adding to the existing literature, my collaborators point out that here the *Timo Rara Ivi* handed the *ivi*

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<sup>4</sup> Also found as *Timo Rara Papāku* (Paoa 1983: 445).



tupuna over to the *Mata Hiapo*, the eldest patrilineal male of the clan. The Tumu Ivi Atua was the responsible for the burial ritual, and after receiving the ivi tupuna from the Mata Hiapo, he would place them in the *avana* (*RAP.* burial vault)<sup>5</sup>. Depending on the rank and wealth of the deceased and her family, the *avana* varied widely. At their simplest, they are vault structures with a stone sealing the opening. We found them on more complex forms in the *ahu*, burial structures.

Ahu are family burial constructions. Beneath them, the tupuna would rest in the *avana* with their heads pointing towards the ocean. Generally, the Rapanui distinguish three types of ahu: *ahu avana*, *ahu poe poe*, and *ahu moai*. *Ahu avana* are rectangular in shape and with a chamber measuring up to several meters long by anywhere between 60 to 80 cm wide. *Ahu poepoe* are stone mass constructions with an elevated front that resembles the prow of a ship. *Ahu moai* are burial constructions in the form of ceremonial platforms. They consist of an elevated rectangular platform over which stood one or more moai. Some of them have an adjoining inclined ramp, the *taupe'a* or terrace of the ahu, consisting of a pavement of *poro*, rounded water-worn stones, surrounded by a filling of *kikiri* or small pebble. A fourth type of ahu appears in archaeological reports as “semi-pyramidal ahu,” a term that the Rapanui have adopted too. After a long period of internal wars that resulted in the toppling of the moai, the owners of some ahu covered them with a thick layer of stones, forming these asymmetrical constructions. While the toppling of the moai was a sign of great offence, the offended would cover their destroyed ahu as a means to conceal their families’ burials to avoid further profanation, forming these semi-pyramidal constructions. Some of my collaborators disagree with this hypothesis and affirm that these stone-mass semi-pyramidal constructions were the ahu of the late period lower ranked people.

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<sup>5</sup> *Avanga* means burial vault in Rapanui and it is used to designate any structure used as a tomb, including those that in more recent times were built over *ahu moai* (Edwards 2013: 303).

For the Rapanui, the ahu are *kona tapu*, tapu places. Even if some profit from them as touristic attractions or others let their free horses to trample them, they do respect the tapu. Some more strictly than others, every Rapanui enforce the tapu and educate tourists, even if yelling at them, when they attempt to step on the ahu for a great shot or touch a moai to feel the mysteries of Easter Island. Those who go further in the respect of the tapu would never approach an ahu without introducing themselves to the tupuna, asking for their permission to enter their territory, and lighting a fire to feed them. As far as for the people I relate to in Rapa Nui, they all show a ceremonial respect for this tapu even in the most quotidian situations. They introduce themselves to the ancestors reciting their *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy), talk to them and feed them. So this custom or respect cannot be said to have been forgotten somewhere in the past.

To enforce the tapu, when the ivi tupuna were taken to the *avaŋa*, *pipi horeko* were raised to indicate where the tupuna was buried so that everyone would know not to disturb her *varua*. Serving a similar function to that of the *huhū*, *pipi horeko* were the *tapu* markers to remain over time in the form of piles of stones of pyramidal shape. During the *tapu pera*, the *Timo Rara Ivi* aided by close male relatives of the deceased would guard over the ivi tupuna to enforce the tapu. Considered very dangerous to disturb the rest of the tupuna, anyone caught breaching the tapu would be either killed in the act or heavily punished by the protector *varua* of the tupuna.

While living, high-ranked and wealth people commissioned to expert sculptors the carving of their family's moai to be placed on their ahu after their death. Through the moai, they would continue to live and their *mana* would be preserved. Carved at *Rano Raraku*, the moai was transported to its ahu only after its owner's death. Ethnographic evidence connects the length of the moai's transport to the treatment of the remains<sup>6</sup>, suggesting that the moai were removed from *Rano Raraku* when the *Timo Rara Ivi* initiated the treatment of the *papāku*, arriving at the

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<sup>6</sup> Paoa 1984: 447; Huke 2013, personal communication.

ahu when the Ivi Tupuna were ready for burial. The moai then was placed on the ahu completely finished, with only its eyes missing. Once the ivi tupuna were placed in the avaŋa, the eyes were placed on the moai. Then, it went from being a moai, a sculpture, to be the *Ariŋa Ora O Te Tupuna*, the living face of the ancestor, through which the deceased and her mana would continue to live.

Offerings to the deceased would continue to this stage of the ritual and beyond. After a death, relatives and friends would lament the passing through ceremonies charged with chants honoring the life of the deceased and meals prepared in earth ovens, the *umu*. *Umu papāku* was the meal that relatives and close friends prepared for the guests. Direct family of the deceased could not eat from this umu, a tapu meant to prevent another passing in the family. The parents, children and siblings of the deceased could only eat from that one prepared especially for them, the *umu takāpu*. Another tapu associated with funerary rituals, its violation was an offense and a negative omen. Adding to these ritual offerings, when the deceased was to be buried in an ahu, the taupe'a of the ahu served as a ceremonial courtyard where the *mata* (*RAP.* clans) congregated for rituals to honor the deceased before the family tupuna. Each poro of the taupe'a had an owner. And during the tapu pera, members of the different clans would sit on their poro, named *taki eve*, and place their offerings before them. Like during the process that last the treatment of the ivi tupuna, this ritual was meant to ensure that the deceased had all necessary provisions for a safety journey to the Po.

After the burial, ceremonies would continue over the years to remember and honor the memory of the tupuna. Here, the activities moved to the front of the ahu, where the *Koro Paina* took place. *Koro Paina* were in-memoriam ceremonies to honor someone years after her passing. They took place during the summer and lasted four days. The host family prepared for years,

raising chickens and increasing their plantations. Guests would also contribute bringing their harvest and catch. Guests and offerings were such that the *umu nui*, the great earth oven, might extend all along the length of the ahu.

The *Heva* (*RAP.* mourner) commissioned the crafting of the *paina*, a *tapa* figure that represented the honoree. Three to four meters high, its body was hollow so the Heva could enter it. Its mouth was left open and its body made of vertical and horizontal bars giving it a conical shape. Its skeleton was covered with tapa cloth and painted with *kiea* and *pua* (turmeric roots). Tattoos depended on the sex of the honoree. Perpendicular lines on its neck indicated he was a man, while dots on the forehead and a black triangle on the cheeks indicated she was a woman (Paoa 1984: 451). The *paina* was placed in front of the ahu, inside a circle marked by stones, some of which still remain at certain ahu. These *paina* were never destroyed but carefully preserved for future ceremonies. The head would receive particular care. Small *tapa* figures, like the ones currently at the Belfast and Peabody museums, might have been models of the larger *paina*.

The Heva indicated the inauguration of the ceremony. He entered the *paina* through its back and, standing on a trestle, he appeared through the *paina*'s mouth. From there, he commenced his speech, paying tribute to the honoree and enhancing her virtues. Listening to the speaker, the audience would begin their weeping and funerary chants, the *tani*. Accompanying music was organized and directed by a *Tumu Ivi Atua*, entrusted by Heva for such function. Coming from all over the island, the guests came on their best attires, painting themselves with colorful dyes and wearing their best and most elegant accessories. Each year corresponded to a different mata the organization of this ceremony.

The complex Rapanui funerary system speaks to an understanding of the death as a stage of life, and a very important one. As we shall discuss in the first chapter, the Rapanui distinguish different categories of persons based on the degree of mana they possess. After death, mana increases; this complex funerary system was meant for that purpose. Through offerings, the living would enhance the mana of the deceased so that her kuhane or inner vital part would enter the world of the *varua* or *atua hiva*, omnipersons with the most degree of mana. A custom that, even if greatly impacted by Catholicism, continues to the present day. Through the treatment of the papāku, the Timo Rara Ivi assisted the deceased in this journey, enhancing the tapu that would be then enforced with tapu markers and burial constructions. Through post-mortem feasts, the living would feed the dead that continue to live there, in certain cases as tangible as in an *Ariŋa Ora O Te Tupuna*, the Living Face of the Ancestor statue.

The dead maintained her mana both in her kuhane, as *varua* or *atua hiva*, and in her remains, her *ivi tupuna*. Tapu by definition, *ivi tupuna* are so because of their mana. Such is their degree of mana that people would bring them home so that they could bestow their mana to the living, a tradition that, as all aspects of the Rapanui funerary system, the missionaries forbid and ended. Among the *ivi tupuna*, the skull was the one with the most mana. When a high-ranked person died, the Timo Rara Ivi might give her skull to her relatives, who took it home for some time to benefit from her mana before placing it in her final resting place. This tradition was followed when the papāku was cremated too. Then the ashes of the deceased were handed over to her relatives in an *ipu kaha* (*RAP.* recipient made of dried pumpkin shell).

According to my collaborators, cremation took place either when the deceased was a lower-ranked person or in a posterior phase, or both. According to Zoilo Huke, for example, only high-ranked people rested in the *avaŋa*. “According to what the grandparents told me,” he told

me, “the stuffing process was made on structures next to the ahu ... Also, there they cremated them. Not all the corpses were placed in the avaŋa. Many were cremated. They had crematoriums. The evidence is there, to the sight ... There are many, at almost every ahu.”<sup>7</sup>

Connecting cremation with the mana of the ivi tupuna, Niso Tuki adds that “when the corpse was cremated, the ashes were placed in a pumpkin and given to the owner [the mourner]. Then the owner would decide where he would leave it, maybe where his father worked or planted or fished, or maybe inside the house. That was Heva’s decision.”<sup>8</sup> Whether cremated or not, the mana of the ivi tupuna brought fertility, abundance and prosperity to the living relatives.

So precious were these bearers and givers of mana that they were even subject to theft. In a conversation with another collaborator, Carlos Edmunds Paoa, he explained that, “usually when a king died, they cut his head off. They take it. Either they steal it or the family cuts it off and keeps it as something important, with mana, for their harvest, their crops.” A custom proper of the old times, Carlos noted, it survived to modern days. As he recalled, “when Atamu Tekena died—this happened recently, he is the great great-grandfather of Pou and Moi<sup>9</sup>—his relatives came at night to the cemetery after his funeral, they stole his head, and took it to Anakena.” They did so to restore and relocate his mana. In Carlos’s words, “His mana was here when it should be there. They wanted it there. They were not stealing, they were taking it to bring his spirit to his place.” He stressed this last point later, “Here, when someone would die, he goes to the place where he belongs to, his tribe’s, and there he dies. You can’t go die in Anakena, for example, if you’re from Te Peu ... He buries at his place, where he was raised, where he grew up and lived.

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<sup>7</sup> Zoilo Huke. Rapa Nui, November 2013. Personal communication. According to Huke’s information, cremation was also a custom in a later phase of Rapanui funerary system: while at first cremation responded to rank distinctions, during the epidemics period, cremation responded to the lessen of population.

<sup>8</sup> Niso Tuki. Rapa Nui, October 2013. Personal communication.

<sup>9</sup> Te Pou Huke and Javier Moi Tuki, younger collaborators.

Because of the spirit. He remains in the place, where he continues to live through the bones, which are alive.”<sup>10</sup> Shared by every one of my collaborators, these words illustrate simply and clearly why *ivi tupuna* cannot be removed from their resting places. Bearers and givers of *mana*, *ivi tupuna* are first and foremost *tapu*. A *tapu* strictly enforced and respected, its violation, as we shall see later, had dramatic consequences.

While the Catholic mission succeeded on abolishing the practice of this funerary rituals, the attitudes toward the dead and the *tupuna* remain, at least for all the Rapanui I have worked with, intact. The exercise of some of these customs continues to be banned today. Because Chilean legislation protects Rapanui burial sites as historic monuments, the Rapanui cannot bury their dead in their ancestral lands. But customs that do not involve intervention of so-called national monuments still persist. Family and relatives still prepare funerary meals like the *umu papāku* and *umu takāpu*, which are made for the same purposes and governed by the same *tapu* described earlier. While the evangelization of Rapa Nui, collecting missions and Chilean colonialism did have a dramatic impact on Rapanui cultural protocols and rituals relating to the dead, repatriation stands as an effective medium toward the restoration of these relations. Proving repatriation as not a political maneuver but a revitalization movement that can re-connect a people with their ancestors and self-knowledges, at the heart of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program is the re-institution of the practices, protocols and relations that colonialism disrupted.

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<sup>10</sup> Carlos Edmunds Paoa. Rapa Nui, December 2013. Personal communication.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### KO KAVA ‘ARO KO KAVA TU’A

Throughout this dissertation I will argue that the Rapanui people have their own ontology, according to which they perceive being and beings in the world very differently than those of us influenced by Western worldviews. They understand the ancestors and other beings they co-exist with as persons, capable of sharing their unique knowledges, skills and *mana* with other beings, humans included. Because this conception of the world is critical to understanding the ontological relevance of repatriation, in the next chapter I present a revision of some fundamental Rapanui ontological concepts: *tupuna*, *mana*, and *tapu*. Central to these notions is a categorization of beings and being that is distinctive of Rapanui. As a preamble to that discussion, I provide here a Rapanui *a’amu* (*RAP.* story) that illuminates Rapanui categories of persons, both human and not, and their interactions in the world. The narration below pertains to Mihaera Pate, a Rapanui traditionalist, culture bearer, and educator committed to the revitalization and teaching of his ancestors’ legacy.

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Ko Kava ‘Aro, Ko Kava Tu’a; they, too, were two [*varua*; *RAP.* powerful beings]. The boy was called Ure A Oho Vehi. Ure [was his name]. Oho Vehi was his father. He was born blond. The *a’amu* says “*rau oho pahe ra’a*” because the hair was like the sun. He was blond. So these *varua*, when the boy was grown up ... let’s say fifteen years, they wanted him for them ... So they kidnapped the boy. They kidnapped him when his father went fishing. They arrived and did like if they were looking for lice [on the boy’s head]. And while they did as if they were looking for lice, they did *pata’uta’u* [*RAP.* recitation, enchantment] so the boy fell asleep. They



wrap him in his *moeŋa* [*RAP.* mat] and took him. They hid him in Poike, in the holes that are next to the cliff. And they went to Hiva to bring *io io ranji*, a poison. It is a plant that they put in the food, so when he eats, he dies, and they can possess the boy.

But right there, there was Nuahine Pikea Uri [*RAP.* Black Crab Old Woman] looking at the scene. Her mana was to convert herself into a *pikea* [*RAP.* crab], because nobody could go all the way up there. She had that mana of turning into pikea, so she went up the entire cliff until she got there and helped the boy. There she saw the boy and saw something strange. She saw the varua leaving. So she realized it right away. The *nua* [*RAP.* old woman], intelligent. She looked around, saw the moeŋa, and saw the boy wrapped inside. So she says, “Hey, wake up and pay attention to what I will tell you. You were kidnapped and brought here.” She told him everything. And the nua says, “don’t eat the food those people will bring you.” And when you stand up, you look them in the eye. Because when you look them in the eye, the varua get embarrassed. They will look down. When you look them in the eye, they will look down. When they look down, you take the food they gave you”— First she told him, “you stand here, at the cave’s mouth.” She prepared an *umu* [*RAP.* earth oven], she made chicken, everything. And said, “put this food inside your *hami* [*RAP.* loincloth] and save it well in there. When the varua give you food, you don’t eat it. You look them in the eye and when you look varua in the eye they get embarrassed and look down. When they look down you throw the food outside, take the food you have in your hami, and do as if you eat the food they gave you. I’ll be down the cliff. All the food you throw I’ll take it and hide it because the varua are too intelligent.” And like this he lived, and lived, and lived. Every time he ate, the varua look to each other smiling like saying, “here we got him.” Like muttering, “we got him.” One day passed, and another day, and another, and the varua saw the boy didn’t die. Meanwhile, the nua had made food for him; chicken,

everything. So every time he looked the varua in the eye and they looked down, embarrassed, he threw the food away and ate the *moa* [*RAP.* chicken] that Pikea Uri had made for him.

Like this he survived until the day a fisherman—I forgot the name now, but I have it at home. So this man was fishing right in front the cave. He was fishing there and then he listened something from up the volcano. That is another *pata’uta’u*—when the boy cried. It says [Mihaera recites],

*Ka hao e ka hao hanuanua mea*  
*a vai tau’a kura,*  
*ka rere a Ure a Ohovehi*  
*ki haho e—*

The boy missed his father so badly that we wanted to jump down the cliff. Who knows what the kid was thinking at that time [Mihaera recites],

*Ka hao e ka hao hanuanua mea*  
*a vai tau’a kura,*  
*ka rere a Ure a Ohovehi*  
*ki haho e*  
*na Ohovehi nui*  
*ina oti to’oku matu’a*  
*e rua mareŋo*  
*e kai taŋata*  
*mo hatu o’ou e ure e te repa e.*

He was doing *pata'uta'u* to the man that was in the boat, for him to go tell the father. With his weeping, his *tanji*, he was telling him, “My dad is this... he looks like this... If you see him, tell him what I’m saying.” Something like that.

One day, two days, the boy kept crying. The fisherman came back to the place to fish and one and again he listened the boy’s *tanji*. In the meantime, the father—that’s a whole different story. I’m telling you only the boy’s part because the father has another whole story of what he did since he got home and saw his son was not there. That’s another story—The father put a *kio'e* [*RAP.* mouse] in his mouth to show that he was a *heva* [mourning; widow]. *Heva* is when you wander around looking for—well, it depends, though, depends on your problems at that moment. He took the mouse, bit it from the tail, and went from house to house asking who took my boy. The *heva* is big deal. The elders, the second they saw a *heva*, they knew he was a *heva*. And they said, “kids, if the *heva* comes, tell him that nothing has happened here. So he doesn’t come to the house.” Because if he did, that house would be in trouble. Problems, wars... everything could happen. “If the *heva* comes,” the *matu'a* [*RAP.* parents] said, “you tell him that nothing has happened here. And let him go on.”

And so he did. He went on and kept looking and looking, the father, Oho Vehi. He got to where the fisherman lived looking for his son. The fisherman saw him and said, “come here.” He invited him to his house and said, “throw that mouse away and wash your mouth.” He gave him sugar cane to clean his mouth. He prepared an *umu* and they ate. While eating, the fisherman told him. But not right away. First he made him calm down, and then the fisherman spoke. “I know where your son is. When I go fishing he does *pata'uta'u* to my boat. So you eat, get some rest, and tomorrow we’ll go to that place.” They went in the boat and the fisherman said, “cover your head,” because he was bald the old man, “because if your son sees you, he will jump down here.

So you cover your head, we'll get there and you'll listen." They got there, he threw the anchor, did as if he was fishing, and the boy started to do his pata'uta'u from the cave. The old man started crying. And the man said again, "don't take that thing out of your head, if the boy sees it is you down here, he will jump down the opata [RAP. cliff]."

After seeing him, they came back to their place, their *mata*. In that area lived two *tahu tahu*. They were *Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki*. *Tahu tahu* were between *varua* and the living. They were like— how could I say it... Like sorcerers. To say something, but they were not sorcerers. They knew everything about *varua*. The fisherman said, "let's go ask for help to those two, so they can help you bring your son back. Prepare an *umu* [earth oven], and make it a bit overripe, smelly." Because *Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki* were like—like those people with flattened nose that can't smell. So they didn't sense smells as we do. They needed to smell strong scents to sense the smell. So the fisherman said, "To go speak with them and ask them for help you have to bring food. Then you tell them your problem. But the food you bring them is not like the one we eat. It has to be a bit overripe, *hau'a*. Go there and ask them for help."

He went and they helped him. They made a net in case they try to escape, the *varua*. They were directly to [the volcano] to get the boy. And here comes the other pata'uta'u. [Mihaera recites],

*Ka hao e ka hao ŋa 'ehe*

*ka hao te nuku nuku*

*ka kava 'aro ka kava tu'a*

*ka ko ka ko Ure A Ohovehi*

*ka hiku ka haki hia*

*Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki*

*hia hia pua mauku 'uta*

*taji taji pua mauku tai,*

*rupe koe rupe koe*

*ka tahi ia poko poko*

—the first poko [*RAP.* hole] where they looked and he wasn't there—

*rupe koe rupe koe ka rua ka rua ia poko poko*

—the second hole they looked and he wasn't there—

*rupe koe rupe koe ka toru ka toru ia poko poko*

—he wasn't there—

*rupe koe rupe koe ka ha ka ha ia poko poko*

—he wasn't there—

*rupe koe rupe koe ka rima ka rima ia poko poko*

—there he was.

The father, desperate to rescue his boy, wanted to go down with those nets, *timo*. But Ōa Ihu More A Pua Katiki said, “No, that boy has been so long with the varua that he now smells like one. And if you go he won't recognize you.” Being there, everyday, the varua catch you. Even if you don't die, they brainwash you. So, “hold on,” they said and the two tahu tahu went down, and there was the boy. They took him with all his stuff, his moeja, and came out with him. The varua had gone look for more oi oi ranji to kill the boy, and when they came back they saw he wasn't there. They were furious!

Meanwhile, the boy told the father about the nua hine. “She took care of me, she fed me, she saved me from the varua that wanted to kill me.” So Oho Vehi thanked the nua and took her to their home. The boy's mother had died. So he took her to take care of the boy. It was like a

form of gratitude. She took care of him all that time, so he took her home to be with them. They arrived home—everything was fine now. They made earth oven meal for the family—“*Maururu*, thank you...” Good. And the nuahine told the boy, “If you see two mice, two flies, or two cockroaches entering the house, step on them and kill them.” They [the varua] were transforming themselves to get in the house. So the nua said, “when you see these bugs entering, get up from your bed—well, not bed—from the place where you are resting, step on them, take them, and throw them away.” Shortly after two bugs entered again. The boy knew now. Pum! out. Like three times. Pum! out. Until the varua had no more *puai* [*RAP.* strength], no more mana to transform and they run away to Hiva [the land of the varua]. And finally the family was safe; the boy, the father and the nua who took care of him.

But this story is very long. This is a part of it only.

**Mihaera Pate Haoa**

Rapa Nui, August 2011

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVISITING THE “SPIRITUAL”: RETHINKING “SPIRITS,” “MAGIC,” AND  
“TABOO”**

Historically, laws have forbidden excavations and exhumation in white cemeteries. Historically, too, laws have allowed for the excavation and exhumation of the ancestors in indigenous cemeteries. While disturbing the rest of the white dead has been so considered a human rights violation, the brutal and indiscriminate looting of indigenous graves has been so celebrated as a contribution to the development of science and universal knowledge. Before this historic injustice, the repatriation of *ivi tupuna* (*RAP.* the bones of the ancestors) is not a mere indigenous right but a human one. Rapanui people are demanding the return of their ancestors for many reasons; yet those who study their ancestral remains have passionately opposed their demands in the name of science, development, and academic freedom. By examining some fundamental Rapanui ontological concepts, this chapter provides the basis for understanding the ontological underpinnings of repatriation as a human rights movement.

This chapter presents an exploration of Rapanui ontological concepts in relation to the ancestors from an intersubjective perspective that examines Rapanui worldviews as a relational epistemology in which the people and the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) become inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos. The “inter-” stressing here a zone of contact, “intersubjectivity” acknowledges that both human identity and knowledge are socially constructed. An intersubjective approach to the study of how Rapanui people think of and relate to their ancestors not only involves a reconsideration of previous objectivist scholarship but also contributes to destabilizing the academic debate surrounding the repatriation of indigenous

heritage, which main opposing arguments rely upon the misinterpretations of indigenous worldviews that colonialism and the imposition of Western authority and assumptions provoked. The repatriation debate is greatly affected by a scholarly tradition that often spiritualizes, depersonalizes and dichotomizes social realities and indigenous epistemologies through the imposition of its own modernist ontological assumptions. In reconsidering previous objectivist scholarship this chapter integrates Rapanui ways of knowledge through the Rapanui's hermeneutics as a means to revise the repatriation debate from a perspective that asserts the validity and complexity of Rapanui forms of knowing and relating. Through the exploration of some fundamental Rapanui ontological concepts this chapter provides the basis to articulate the arguments on which Rapanui people base their claims for demanding the return of their ancestors. This chapter, like the larger document, presents them as a critical and effective counterpart to colonialist arguments affecting the repatriation debate.

Many mentions of Rapanui "spirituality" in Western writings come from observations in the journals and letters of explorers and missionaries to Rapa Nui in the wake of its discovery by the West. All too often, these writings come accompanied by an overlay of European, Christian and modernist bias. This bias translated into a "sacred" terminology meant to be an analogy to the Christian hierarchies and dichotomies. The idea of the "sacred," associated with the worship of "primitive" deities and rituals, speaks to Western understandings of "spirits," "magic" and "taboo" as forms of the exotic superstition of an "uncivilized" people. By deeming them as inferior, the West found the perfect justification for committing all sorts of atrocities against the Rapanui people. They looted their treasures, made them slaves, appropriated their lands, forced them into a new worldview, and disturbed their ancestors, all within an evolutionary stage in the development of science. Western science was then the direct beneficiary of the disenfranchising



of a people. Because the consequences of this scientific opportunism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continues to this day, and dramatically permeated the repatriation debate, an examination of some fundamental Rapanui ontological concepts is pertinent to this discussion. As we shall see, conversations on repatriation vividly demonstrate the conflict between scientific and cultural values, as reflected in the widely divergent and colonial understandings of Rapanui *tupuna*, *mana* and *tapu*, and the Western “spirits,” “magic” and “taboo.”

From the writings of Captain James Cook to contemporary late-capitalist forms of cultural appropriation, Rapanui “spirituality” has been inscribed in the West in ways that not only categorically diverge from Rapanui ontologies but that also perpetuate colonial violence inflicted upon Rapanui people. Through his journals, sort of bestseller in Victorian England, Cook was the first to massively disseminate stereotypical ideas of Rapa Nui. More “reliable” sources were then the missionaries’ portrayals of the Rapanui people. The first Westerners to settle on the island, the missionaries provided detailed descriptions of what they labeled as Rapanui “traditional lifestyles,” “religion,” “dialect,” “pagan customs,” and “idols.” Explorers and missionaries began then a long tradition of authoritative ethnographic representations that has not only permeated academic discourses of the study of Rapa Nui but also the very ways Rapanui people represent themselves.

A “spiritualized” idea of the indigenous people of Rapa Nui has been at the forefront of this tradition. In his revision of the Post-Cartesian reappraisal of animism, Kenneth M. Morrison (2013) questions an objectivist scholarly tradition that has “spiritualized” both nature and indigenous peoples. Through romantic and theological idealizations and Cartesian rationalism, he argues, this scholarly tradition has both depersonalized and objectified indigenous realities by imposing its own modernist ontological assumptions. The binary approach to the study of

cultures he critiques has resulted in what he calls a “categorical slippage,” anthropological theories and terminology that not only fail to identify indigenous intersubjective realities but also continue to misrepresent indigenous knowledges. David Shorter (2014) furthers Morrison’s critique by revising the concept of “spirituality.” Examining its use in Native American studies, he unveils the linguistic, historical, political, and ethnographic underpinnings of the concept and calls to cease its use for being not only an unclear terminology but also one that perpetuates colonial attitudes toward indigenous peoples. As Shorter rightfully notes, “spirituality” has not only been a dominant concept through which others represent indigenous people but often also how indigenous people represent themselves. Coincidentally, the “spiritualization” of Rapanui people has affected both scholarly discourses and Rapanui self-knowledges.

Most Rapanui show this disruption of their self-knowledges in the very way they talk about themselves, their relations, and their land. Before starting to research the repatriation movement in Rapa Nui, I directed different research projects on the island that were all affected by this “spiritualized” Rapanui self-discourse. When researching Rapanui oral traditions and cultural appropriation, I studied the mnemonic string-figure ritual of *kai kai*. Many of them telling stories of *varua* (*RAP*. “omnipersons”), I started to ask around about these powerful persons. The response was almost always the same, “they are spirits.” When researching on Rapanui land-being relations I collaborated on a project for the recording and documentation of Rapanui petroglyphs. Before each recording, my collaborators would ask for permission to the ancestors. They introduced themselves to them by reciting their genealogy. Most of the times they would also feed them lighting a fire. Soon I would learn I was on “sacred” lands where the “spirit” of the ancestors lived. After that collaboration, I was invited to commit my dissertation research to the repatriation cause. The reason for such invitation was powerful: those objects and

human remains are “sacred,” and only when they come back, the “spirits” of the ancestors will rest in peace and their *mana* will come back.

My purpose in revising some Rapanui ontological concepts is simple: to reframe Rapanui claims for the repatriation of their ancestors in Rapanui terms. I have no intention whatsoever to prove Rapanui people wrong or to teach them how to talk about themselves. I would not dare. All my collaborators communicate in Rapanui language, and if they use that “spiritualized” discourse is simply due to my limited knowledge of their language. For outsiders like myself, that other language is more understandable. However, we agree in that its use is not necessary and it certainly does not make justice to Rapanui repatriation claims. As I have discussed in long and repeated conversations with my collaborators, reframing academic and political discourses in their own terms is about reclaiming control over their knowledge. The Western appropriation and misrepresentation of Rapanui knowledge was possible because of colonial powers and also because of the imposition of Western ontological assumptions that are completely alien to Rapanui ways of knowing and relating. To cease the use of Western imposed terminology is then a way of resisting. Using colonial terminology in Rapanui discourses that demand the return of the ancestors lessens the validity of such arguments simply because that language disregards the ontological underpinnings of Rapanui claims. When claims for the repatriation of the ancestors are rather voiced in Rapanui terms, the foundations of repatriation as a means to recover the collective *mana* of a people are clearly and strongly exposed. And only then, we can begin to talk about repatriation as a revitalization, social justice, and human rights movement.

This chapter does not intend to be an exhaustive and definite exploration of Rapanui worldviews but an examination of some fundamental Rapanui ontological concepts that are organic to their repatriation claims. The Rapanui people are demanding the return of their *tupuna*

as a means to recover their collective *mana* as a people by re-establishing the *tapu* that colonialism disrupted. Revising the concepts *tupuna*, *mana* and *tapu* is then critical to understanding their repatriation claims. In the first section of this chapter I examine the Rapanui notion of being, or ontology, by identifying and defining the different categories of persons dwelling on the land to explain how the Rapanui cognitively orient their personhood to a world of subjects other than the self. In this intersubjective world, people crystallize relationships and structure personhood through a diversified world of humans and omnipersons. In the second section I explore the Rapanui concept of *mana* in order to refigure a supposedly Rapanui “primitive” animism as a relational epistemology through which the agency or *mana* attributed to the ancestors and omnipersons with whom they relate is engendered by human socially biased cognitive skills. In the third section I revisit the concept of taboo, a misspelling and misinterpretation of the Polynesian *tapu*, a dictated behavior of extreme respect that cannot be violated in order to protect and honor the *mana* that surrounds a particular place or person.

### ***He Tupuna. Beyond human and other-than-human persons***

As I have learned it from my fieldwork, the Rapanui self is cognitively oriented to a world of subjects other than the self that constitutes an implicit and undivided wholeness of interactive relationships between different beings, both human and more-than-human. Drawing upon examples of oral traditions, this section examines different categories of persons with whom the Rapanui identify and relate. In this examination I partake of critical conversations on previously dehumanizing approaches to the study of indigenous “animism” as a means to explain how the Rapanui engage in relationships with their ancestors and other more-than-human beings from a relational epistemology, a concept that I examine in the second section. By explaining the

ontological underpinnings of how the Rapanui relate to their ancestors in everyday life, this section problematizes some of the main arguments opposing the repatriation of indigenous human remains, arguments that assume a primacy of science over indigenous epistemologies.

The Rapanui identify different categories of persons dwelling on the land with whom they relate, both in dreaming and waking states, in rituals and in every day life. These diverse types of persons differ in the degree of power they possess and are conceptually unified in that they all share the same fundamental structure: an inner vital part or *kuhane* (*RAP.* inner vital essence) and an outward form or *hakari* (*RAP.* material form body). Whether human or not, all animate beings of the person class hold the attributes of sentience, volition, memory and speech, yet they might show these attributes in very different manners. A non-human person might not communicate in the same way a human does, as the way they interact with others might differ too. But although differing in form, the inner vital part, the *kuhane* of all beings, will always hold these same attributes. What distinguishes most generally the different categories of beings of the person class is their outward form. Due to possessing a higher degree of power, omnipersons hold the capacity of metamorphosis or *kuhane hane*, which make them capable of presenting themselves in the form of an animal, a plant, a natural phenomenon, or a landscape feature. The *tupuna*, Rapanui ancestors, continue to live in the land and to relate with the living in the form of these powerful, more-than-human beings.

In his study of Anishinaabe ontology, A. Irvine Hallowell (1975) explains the co-existence in Anishinaabe thinking of different types of animate beings of the person class by identifying two main categories: human and other-than-human persons. I take from his analysis of Anishinaabe ontology my examination of Rapanui animate beings of the person class as sharing all the same fundamental structure; however, a binary categorization as the one I argue Hallowell

offers is not always effective to fully understand Rapanui ontology. Although I follow Hallowell's categorization by arguing that the Rapanui language also distinguishes between human and other-than-human persons, in Rapa Nui some of these categories may overlap and allow for others to transit between those two. In his analysis Hallowell explains that Anishinaabe categories of persons may overlap as well, though his explanation relies exclusively in the ability of metamorphosis, which he proposes as an earmark of power of both human and other-than-human persons, and the transmission of power from other-than-human persons to humans. As I explain in my exploration of the Rapanui concept *varua*, in the Rapanui case the overlapping of the different categories of persons is sometimes given not only by the possibility of metamorphosis or power transmission but also by the type of communication or lineage connections that *taŋata* or humans may have with the *atua* and *varua*. Understanding not only the co-existence in Rapanui ontologies of different categories of persons but also the kinship relationships that connect them is critical to truly understand Rapanui claims for the return of the remains of their ancestors.

In Rapanui worldviews, the person category that holds the highest degree of *mana* is the *atua*. Commonly translated as *god* (see for example Conte and Hotus 2000: 25; Englert 1948: 425; Lee 1994; Métraux 1941: 126; Van Tilburg 1994: 90), the *atua* are venerated super powerful beings usually from Hiva, the homeland. Acknowledging their extreme *mana*, the Rapanui regard them as creator and protector forces. The main Rapanui *atua* is Hera, the Great Creator *Atua* from Hiva. Following Hera are Make Make and Taŋaroa. Although most Rapanui people refer to Make Make as an *atua*, some of my collaborators consider him to be rather a very important *varua*, a person category I shall discuss later in this section. In both cases, though, they all coincide in that Make Make is an *atua* or special *varua* that the Rapanui began to worship

only after the crisis produced by internal wars. Tanaroa is an atua usually referred to in the Pacific Studies field as the god of the seas, who is found in oral traditions throughout Polynesia.

Coincidental with Hallowell's concept of other-than-human persons, atua are also super powerful beings that differ from humans in the degree of *mana* they possess. Pertaining to the "person" category, they interact with other other-than-human persons and with humans both in waking and dreaming states. In every day life, humans interact with the atua through offerings. When the Rapanui light a fire, for example, they would call the atua with a *pata'uta'u* (*RAP.* recitation) and invite them to take part of the meal. Since the very first time I visited Rapa Nui, I would always see people throwing food to the fire. They were feeding the atua and varua. "The smoke calls them, so that we can feed them and ask for their protection," they replied when I asked. Through their *mana*, they might manifest themselves in different forms. They are everywhere, as a constant living force to protect the *tanata henua*, the Rapanui people.

*Tanata* translates into both human and man; the female form is *vahine* (*RAP.* woman). Pre-contact Rapa Nui was a tribal society organized as a Polynesian patriarchal chiefdom. As such, the *tanata henua* (*RAP.* people of the land, i.e. Rapanui people) organized in rank, which was dictated by the degree of *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy) he or she possessed. The *ariki* were those occupying the highest positions in the social pyramid. The *ariki*, usually translated as king or chief, was the *tanata* with the most *mana*, which he inherited from the atua or the *ariki motoji*. *Ariki motoji* were those *ariki* ruling in Hiva, the homeland. They were surrounded by the *ariki ma'ahu*, a council of advisors that guided the *ariki* based on *'uruja* (*RAP.* visions, premonitions) that they experienced in *po atua* (*RAP.* revealing dreams).

One of the most important ariki ma'ahu in the history of Rapa Nui was Hau Maka, the visionary who visited Rapa Nui in his dreams before the migration of the first king and his people from Hiva to Te Pito O Te Kaiņa. In the time of Matu'a<sup>1</sup>, the last *ariki motoņi*, Hau Maka learned from *po atua* (*RAP.* revealing dreams) that a disastrous catastrophe would destroy Hiva. In his dreaming, visionary experience, his *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) visited seven lands in search of a new place for the settlement of the ariki and his people. When his kuhane arrived at the eighth land, he found it to be the appropriate place for the settlement of the king and his people. He named it Te Pito O Te Kaiņa A Hau Maka O Hiva (*RAP.* The Navel of the World of Hau Maka, From Hiva). Once he informed Hotu Matu'a of his vision, the king sent seven explorers to prepare the new land for his arrival.

After the arrival of the first ariki, Hotu Matu'a to Te Pito O Te Kaiņa and his distribution of the land amongst his sons, the title of *ariki mau* was established. *Ariki mau* followed the ariki motoņi and ariki ma'ahu in the degree of mana they possessed. Also found as *ariki henua* (Englert 1948: 44), the *ariki mau* was the ranking elder within the *Miru mata* (*RAP.* clan)<sup>2</sup> and acknowledged to be the hereditary leader of the entire island. The ariki mau inherently embodied from birth the highest and most respected mana. Ariki mau were surrounded by *tanjata honui* (*RAP.* wise men), lineage heads of the other mata who were thus not entitled as ariki. Following the ariki mau in the degree of mana they possessed were the *ivi atua*, the highest ranked men of

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<sup>1</sup> According to *Manuscript E*, by Rapanui Pua A Rahoā c.1914. Other versions gathered orally suggest some differences in the genealogy that Pua A Rahoā presents and claim that the migration to Rapa Nui occurred during the time of Matu'a.

<sup>2</sup> Hotu Matu'a had many sons from whom the different clans are descended. Oral tradition says that before his death Hotu called his youngest son Hotu Iti, designated him as the father of the Mata Iti (*RAP.* small clan), and gave him this *po* (*RAP.* destiny): that his descendants will prosper and survive all others. Then Hotu spoke to Miru, also his son and designated him as the father of Mata Nui (*RAP.* big clan), the clan that would rule for many years and whose descendants would multiply but would not remain. Within these two main *mata*, the other clans were created by Hotu's descendants, being Miru the ruling *mata*. Miru clan takes his name from his founder, Miru, second oldest son of Hotu—after Tu'u Maheke, who is said by oral tradition to have returned to Hiva, the homeland—and next on the line of succession.



the priesthood class. The *ivi atua*, which literally translates into “bones of the atua” were responsible for performing burial rituals, which entailed a direct communication with the atua. In her explanation of Rapanui pre-contact social organization, Jo Ann Van Tilburg (1994) refers to a “priest of lower grades” (90) she identifies as *tanata taku*—“*taku*” probably being a misspelling of *tohu* or *tahu tahu* (*RAP.* spell, curse)—who were “essentially healers and casters of spells and charms, sorcerers who were greatly feared” (90-1). I refer to these healers or sorcerers, following my collaborators, as *nuahine tahu tahu*, when they are women, or *tanata tohu*, when they are men.

*Nuahine tahu tahu* (*RAP.* *nuahine*: old woman; *tahu tahu*: curse) and *tanata tohu* (*rap.* *tanata*: man; *tohu*: curse) are powerful human persons that have the mana to do *tahu tahu* or *tohu*, usually translated as curses or spells. A well-known *nuahine tahu tahu* was Nuahine Rarape Nui, the old woman who toppled the moai of the Ahu Haŋa Te’e (*RAP.* burial site at Te’e Bay) with the mana of her voice. The *a’amu* (*RAP.* history; story) tells that a *nuahine tahu tahu* asked some men to give her a lobster with a big tail. When the men said that they would not, the *nuahine* did a *pata’uta’u* (*RAP.* recitation), through which she casted them a *tahu tahu* (*RAP.* curse). Right after she pronounced her words, the moai of Ahu Haŋa Te’e, territory of those men, fell down.<sup>3</sup> Her very words toppled the giant statues. The power of these people of mana resided in their speech, through which they casted spells and charms.

Revising the Rapanui categories of person helps us understand the struggles of Rapanui people for repatriating the remains of their ancestors. This rigid social organization based on the mana that people possessed no longer exist. The main agent for disarticulating Rapanui social organization was the Catholic mission that settled on the island in 1864. But the Rapanui blame it on others, too: ethnologists, adventurers, anthropologists, collectors, and archeologists

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<sup>3</sup> Te Pou Huke. *A’amu* “Nuahine Rarape Nui.” Santiago, 2011. Personal communication.

obsessed with disturbing the rest of their ancestors. Before the missionaries and continuing until the present day, explorers, collectors and scientists have insisted to enrich their collections and prove their theories by disturbing Rapanui graves. Up until very recently, excavations resulted in the removal of the remains of the ancestors, stored today in boxes in the Rapanui museum, private collections, and over a hundred of museums worldwide. Every time scientists take their “specimens” for study, they are disenfranchising a people in the most dramatic way imaginable. The Rapanui say it clearly. As people of mana, when the ancestors left the island, their mana left with them. The Rapanui struggle for the return of the remains of their ancestors is their means to recover their collective mana as a people.

Rapanui traditionalists argue that this loss of mana altered Rapanui relations forever. The Rapanui no longer relate with any of the persons I presented above simply because they no longer exist. What made humans being such powerful persons like a nuahine tahu tahu or an ariki ma’ahu was the high degree of mana they possessed. With their mana plundered, they can now only be *tanjata honui*, wise people, but rarely casters or visionaries. While no longer partaking of social relations as humans, these powerful persons remain in the island as *varua*, super powerful more-than-human persons that dwell on the land in diverse forms. Although the Rapanui continue to relate with *varua* today, they are very self-conscious in that the loss of the mana also affected their relations with them. While in the past the *varua* interacted with humans in everyday life, today they manifest themselves more often in dreams and visions or presences in particular places and circumstances only.<sup>4</sup>

For the purposes of this study and as a means to accentuate *varua*’s power, I have defined

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<sup>4</sup> According to some of my collaborators, *varua* is very likely to be a word imported from Tahiti. For them, the original term to refer to these omni-persons is *Atua Hiva*, *atua* from Hiva, the homeland. Others disagree, claiming that *varua* is found in traditional songs, thus the original term. I opt to use *varua* here not to favor one of these versions but rather because this is the term that almost every Rapanui uses to refer to these persons in every-day life language, whether it is the original or not.

these beings as *omnipersons*. From the Latin *omnis* (*LAT.* all, every), *omniperson* refers to a person of unlimited power, an omnipotent person. By defining them as omnipersons, I want to emphasize the attributes that the Rapanui give to the *varua* as omniscient and omnipresent persons. Rapanui think of *varua* as having a complete and unlimited knowledge, awareness, sensitivity or understanding that makes them capable of perceiving all things. Adding to this omniscience, *varua* have the power to be everywhere. This attribute lies on *varua*'s mobility, which has unlimited possibilities due to their ability of metamorphosis or *kuhane hane*.

Expanding on this last attribute, *varua* are also capable of moving from one world to another; they come from O Vake Vake, the land of the *varua*, yet also dwell on Rapa Nui, co-existing and interacting with humans. They live in the past, the present and the future; and they might inhabit these worlds as a human, an animal, a rock, a landscape feature, or a natural phenomenon. This ability of *varua* to inhabit different worlds in different forms makes the *varua*'s universe an *omniverse*, a conceptual ensemble of all possible universes, with all possible laws of physics. As inhabitants of an *omniverse*, *varua* are *omnidirectional*, which refers to the notion of existing in every direction, and *omnifunctional*, a term that I borrow from the field of Information Studies, where *omni-functional* software platforms are environments that offer any functionality that the users require, with the advantage that such functionalities are available no longer in large sets of applications but in a single interface. These powerful other-than-human persons, *varua*, are usually translated as “spirits,” a concept that I avoid for it echoes objectivist approaches to the study of indigenous worldviews and the imposition of modernist dichotomies that are alien to Rapanui ideas of persons.<sup>5</sup>

A widely accepted alternative for “spirits” within the new animism theories (Harvey 2013)

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<sup>5</sup> For some of the work that translates *varua* or *aku aku* (a type of *varua*) as “spirits,” see Conte, Hotus et al. 2000; Delsing 2009; Englert 1948; Heyerdhal 1958; Lee 1992; Métraux 1957; Ramírez 2008; Routledge 1919; Štambuk 2010.

is “other-than-human persons,” first coined by A. Irvine Hallowell (1975) in his study of Anishinaabe worldviews discussed above. In his exploration of the visionary *epistemé* among the Plains Indians, Lee Irwin (1994) revises Hallowell’s theory of “other-than-human” persons to reframe the term from a perspective that favors superiority over mere difference. While Irwin agrees in Hallowell’s distinction based on degrees of power, he clarifies that, among the Plains Indians, these other-than-human persons are “categorically ‘more-than-humans’” (1994: 72). I take from Irwin’s revision of Hallowell’s concept the suggestion of an ontological category that accentuates power as what differentiates more-than-humans from humans. However, in providing terminology that works only in comparison with the ontological category of human persons, both Hallowell’s and Irwin’s vocabulary rely on a binary understanding of the different types of persons by dividing the possibilities into two: humans and non-humans.

Like the previous categories of persons I discussed, *varua* also could easily fit within Hallowell’s and Irwin’s theories. In the strict sense of the term, they are other/more-than-human persons. I must, however, highlight two characteristics of *varua* that made me want to find a new terminology to define them. First, that *varua* are also the ancestors. As people who used to be living in human form, they are then other/more-than-human persons only presently. Second, due to their physical interaction with human persons, they have human descendants. Human persons born from *varua* categorically avoid binary labels like other-than-human persons. They are humans, though by being born from *varua*, they inherited their more-than-human *mana*.

In his study, Hallowell distinguishes a category of human persons with other-than-human power as well. He attributes this power to the help of other-than-human persons, who bestow their power to humans through dreams and visions (Hallowell 1970: 163). The difference between the human persons with other-than-human power he describes and the ones I do is

ontological. Hallowell is referring to sorcerers or shamans, humans that gained their power through dreams and visions. This category coincides with the Rapanui concepts of *ariki ma'ahu*, visionaries, and *nuahine tahu tahu* and *tajata tohu*, sorcerers and healers. While in these powerful human persons their mana was acquired, humans born from *varua* inherited it.

The Rapanui repertoire of a'amu offers a variety of examples of humans born from *varua*. Some examples are found in the a'amu of Ko Vi'e Moko Ko Vi'e Kena, Hina O'i O'i, and Ure Haka Kū Hane Hane. Heru A Patu were the sons of Ko Vi'e Moko and Ko Vi'e Kena, two female *varua* who traveled from Hiva O Vake Vake, the land of the *varua*, to Motu Nui, at the southwest of the island to seduce two humans, Heru and Patu, with whom they had two children. This a'amu describes the journey of the sons of the *varua* from Motu Nui to Hotu Iti, at the east, where Heru and Patu had formed their families after they left the *varua* Vi'e Moko and Vi'e Kena. Jealous at their half-brothers, the sons of the *varua* used their mana and through *pata'uta'u* (*RAP.* recitations) they tricked the boys to death. Hina O'i O'i was also a daughter of a *varua*. A woman with an enchanting voice, she captivated another *varua*, with whom she had a child. She gave birth at Roto Haka Tere Poki (*RAP.* The Pool Where the Child Left), at the edge of Poike volcano. When the child was born, he converted into a *nanue para* fish. Not being able to take her son out of the water, Hina O'i O'i followed him by foot from Poike to Motu Nui (*RAP.* Big Islet). Here he went offshore and the woman lost sight of her child. Ure Haka Kū Hane Hane was also the son of a *varua*. Having inherited the mana of his *varua* parent, Ure had a *po atua* where he was revealed a new fishing technique. While all other fishermen were using *ma'ea mañai* (*RAP.* stone-made fishhook), he used the *ivi mañai* (*RAP.* bone-made fishhook) that his dream showed him. More resistant, his *ivi mañai* made him the most successful fisherman. Persecuted

for not revealing his secret, he fooled his pursuers converting himself into different species.<sup>6</sup> All these persons are then, inherently, both humans and other-than-humans.

Further complicating definitions relying on the binary human/non-human, some *varua* have always been so; some others are people that are no longer alive. Among the first, the Rapanui distinguish between different types of *varua*. *Varua Rake Rake* are dangerous *varua* that are feared all over the island, independently of the *mata* or clan from which one descends.<sup>7</sup> The Rapanui perceive these *varua* as perfidious; there is no circumstance or territory where they are motivated by noble causes. Today the Rapanui generally refer to them as *tatane*, a derivation for the Spanish word *Satán* (*SPA*. Devil). Among the universe of *varua* we also find good *varua* that are protectors of a particular *mata* (*RAP*. clan). Some people call them *Varua Hōnui O Te Kaiŋa*, good *varua* of the land (*RAP*. *o te kaiŋa*: of the land), though they usually go simply by *varua*. Since they are place-specific, these *varua* can be good to people from a certain territory but be *varua rake rake* or *varua ‘ino*, bad *varua*, to people from a different area. The Rapanui distinguish another type of *varua* that is in between the other two; they are not good *varua* but are not *‘ino* (*RAP*. perfidious) either. These are tricksters alike, and are those *varua* that can present themselves with different names and bodies for the humans to not identify them. These *varua* usually take the form of beautiful women that come to Rapa Nui to seduce young men and take them to O Vake Vake, the land of the *varua*. An example of this last type of *varua*, the tricksters alike, is that of Kuha and Rati, two female *varua* who traveled from their land O Vake Vake to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa to seduce a young man by name Ure A Vai A Nuhe (*RAP*. Young

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<sup>6</sup> Isabel Pakarati 2008, *a’amu* “Ko Vi’e Moko Ko Vi’e Kena”; Moi Moi Tuki 2010, *a’amu* “Ko Vi’e Moko Ko Vi’e Kena”; Te Pou Huke 2010, *a’amu* “Hina O’i O’i”; Te Pou Huke 2013, *a’amu* “Ure Haka Kū Hane Hane”; Niso Tuki 2013, *a’amu* “Hina O’i O’i” and “Ure Haka Kū Hane Hane” Personal communication.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of *varua rake rake* are the seven *varua* of Haŋa Oteo referred to in the *a’amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa (Arthur 2012: 73-77).

Man Son of Vai A Nuhe).

In addition to these varua from O Vake Vake, the Rapanui posit their ancestors also in the category of varua. They do so in two different ways. First, because they might descend from historical varua like the mentioned above; and second because they think of the dead as varua. As discussed earlier, because of the constant interaction between *tajata henua* and varua, Rapanui history accounts for many cases where varua had children with *tajata henua*. Today, some Rapanui families lineally descend from those people that were born from varua/human relations. When reciting their *haka ara* [*RAP.* genealogy], these families identify these half-humans as their first ancestors, which makes their varua parents their direct ancestors too. Finally, more recent ancestors are varua as well. When a Rapanui dies, she remains in the land in the form of varua. Varua are then also *tupuna*: the ancestors from whom Rapanui people lineally descend.

Adding to the genealogical linkages between *tajata henua* and varua, a terminology that does not rely uniquely in the distinction human/non-human is necessary to truly reflect how the Rapanui define this person category. In over seven years of doing research on Rapa Nui, I do not remember a single Rapanui defining varua as non-humans or even using the human category to comparatively describe them. Rather than their human, non-human or other-than-human attributes, they would always define them as persons of mana. As people of mana, they have the power to know everything and to be everywhere; they are capable of metamorphosis to manifest themselves physically and either protect or do harm to people; they inhabit all sorts of worlds and interact with the living people both in dreams and in waking states; and if people respect them, they might bestow them with mana. All related to the extraordinary mana they possess, these attributes are which I prefer to highlight with the term “omniperson.”

In her revision of Hallowell's theory, Nurit Bird-David (1999) also favors power as a distinctive attribute of person categories by re-naming other-than-human persons as "superpersons." Echoing Bird-David's concerns, I find that neither "spirits" nor "supernatural beings" are adequate English equivalents to *varua*. As she notes, the term "spirits" derives from the spirit/body dualism of the modernist concept of person, while "supernatural beings" mirrors the Western idea of nature. Hallowell's alternative "other-than-human persons" escapes these biased notions, but I agree with Bird-David in that it "still conserves the primary objectivist concern with classes (human and other-than-human)" (Bird-David 1999: S72). This objectivist-oriented categorization is grounded in a dichotomist understanding of animate beings that, as we shall see in the next section, is not reflected in the ways the Rapanui relate to the *varua*.

Bird-David partially overcomes the shortcuts of previous modernist-based or objectivist-oriented definitions of non-human persons by refiguring these beings as "superpersons," a term that could work in the Rapanui case since it breaks with the tradition of defining the different categories of person relying on the modernist notion of personhood (i.e. "spirits") or on the Western idea of nature (i.e. "supernatural beings). Bird-David's "superpersons" also succeeds in avoiding definitions of person based on the binary opposition human/non-human (i.e. "other-than-human persons"; "more-than-human persons"), an opposition that does not work in the Rapanui case, where no absolute boundaries separate humans or *taŋata* from other animate beings with whom they share their land and history. Although successful in the traditions it breaks, Bird-David's term unconsciously echoes, at least for me, the postmodern imaginary of superheroes<sup>8</sup>, an association that immediately positions these "superpersons" in a fantastic world

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<sup>8</sup> Late-capitalist appropriation of indigenous "spirituality" has a long and prolific history. Indigenous relations to the land and the ancestors have been a problematic and violent source of inspiration for the entertainment industry resulting in the massive consumption of stereotypical representations of indigenous peoples. An example of this late-capitalist stereotypical representation that directly relates to



that exists only inside people's minds. This idea would be in direct opposition to the Rapanui understanding of the mythic world as history in which my work is founded. Consequently, to argue that these persons exist only in the fantasy of people would also contradict the Rapanui understanding of *a'amu* (*RAP.* history, oral traditions), the main sources of this work, as not merely fictional tales or myths but real stories that account for the worldview and the history of a people.

Acknowledging the difficulties of previously coined terms to truly define *varua* as understood in Rapanui ontology, I opt for “omnipersons” as a means to both disassociate my definition from binary, modernist and Western concepts of person and nature that are alien to Rapanui worldviews, and to highlight the agency and *mana* that the Rapanui attribute to these persons, with whom they communicate and interact in everyday life. I must note though that I am using this term here only to define and explain the Rapanui concept *varua*, to help the reader understand their unlimited power, their differences with humans and yet their co-existence in the human world. I resort to the idea of “omnipersons” in the following chapters as an aide to explain certain aspects of these beings, though I will mostly refer to them as the Rapanui do, by calling them *varua*.

The reasons for Rapanui people to demand the return of their *tupuna* are simple yet crucial. The disturbance and removal of Rapanui ancestral remains dramatically altered the Rapanui's relations to the land, the ancestors and themselves. They want them back for the ancestors to rest in peace and for them to recover their collective *mana* as a people. Their claims, however, have

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the idea of “superpersons” and the Pacific Islands is *Bionicle*. *Bionicle* was a line of toys created by the LEGO Group that translated later into the book series *Bionicle Chronicles*, *Bionicle Adventures*, *Bionicle Legends*, and *Bionicle Super Chapter Books*, some comic books published by DC Comics, and four films. The history of this part-organic, part-machine beings with “souls” is set in a science fantasy world, and takes place in an island called Mata Nui, coincidentally, the name of the main Rapanui clans confederation.

encountered a passionate opposition by many who study and curate their ancestral remains. This opposition is greatly grounded in the claim, often heard within museum, anthropology, and archaeology communities, that repatriation is a violation of academic freedom and, as Rosemary Joyce notes, “when the spectre of infringement of academic freedom is raised in the academy, it is a very powerful weapon” (Joyce 2002: 99). In her problematization of this claim, Joyce insightfully argues that those who invoke academic freedom in the context of the implementation of repatriation laws are ignoring the actual nature of that right, for academic freedom is meant to be a guarantee that researchers will not be persecuted for the content of their research results, and should not be understood by any means as “an absolute right to study anything one wishes in any way one wishes” (Joyce 2002: 100). The Rapanui respond firmly to such arguments: the study of Rapanui ancestral remains by outsiders that ignore Rapanui cultural protocols is for them a direct violation to the ancestral law.

Museum, anthropology and archaeological communities should be more concerned about their research’s bounds to human subjects, instead of defending academic freedom. In the academic community, students and faculty have to submit their research projects to routine reviews for their potential impact on human subjects. As most of my colleagues, before conducting this research I was required to submit my project to the Institutional Review Board, an ethical review board that evaluated the consequences of my research to prevent that harm might be done to human subjects. While evaluators were concerned about my conducting of interviews and use of informed consent, I kept wondering how researchers studying Rapanui ancestral remains got cleared by such board. Undertaken with no Rapanui participation or consultation whatsoever, these studies are unethical on all counts. Yet academics conducting research on human remains often do not seem to be aware of the consequences of their

investigations for human subjects. While they continue to defend their right to research on the name of academic freedom, the Rapanui response is an ontological claim: they are dealing with their ancestors, and their disturbance posits real dangers to the people. As we shall discuss next, the Ivi Tupuna have mana and are tapu, and history has shown that they cannot be disturbed under any circumstance whatsoever.

### ***He Mana. From mysterious magic to relational epistemology***

Almost every scholar writing on mana has agreed that no word within the English language fully reflects the essence and meaning of this ontological Oceanic concept. Nonetheless, many have insisted and speculated freely. A favorite term of anthropologists, Clifford Geertz (1983: 157) noted, mana seemed to provide a conceptual key to unlocking the mysteries of other cultures. Among the extensive literature on mana, anthropologists have all too often defined it through a “magic” terminology. Slippery and having to do very little with indigenous ideas of mana, spread “magic” definitions echo the animist discourses to the study of the “primitive” mind. Being mana at the very heart of Rapanui demands for the return of their ancestors, revising some of this literature is necessary to understand such claims. The purpose of this revision is not to provide an exhaustive, new definition of mana. Rather, I interrogate previous definitions of mana to reposition it as integral to Rapanui relational epistemologies. As I have come to understand it, mana is an indigenous ontology based upon notions of reciprocity, kinship and respect between the living, the ancestors and the land. An ontological and relational practice, mana is the source of vitality, well-being, knowledge, harmony and abundance. Understood as such, the Rapanui argument that the return of their ancestors will bring them their mana back cannot be overstated.

The earliest well-known English definition of mana came from Robert Codrington. In his study on Melanesian folklore from 1891 he wrote that

the Melanesian mind is entirely possessed by the belief in a supernatural power or influence, called almost universally mana. This is what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature; it is present in the atmosphere of life, attaches itself to persons and to things, and is manifested by results which can only be ascribed to its operation. When one has got it he can use it and direct it, but its force may break forth at some new point; the presence of it is ascertained by proof (1957: 118-19).

Codrington's understanding of mana stressed that this "supernatural power" was "connected with some person who directs it" (119). These persons were usually spirits or ghosts, who bestowed their mana to the living. As he explained, "a dead man's bone has with it mana, because the ghost is with the bone; a man may have so close a connection with a spirit or ghost that he has mana in himself also, and can so direct it as to effect what he desires" (119-20). Although based on a spiritualized understanding of indigenous epistemologies, Codrington noted the relational essence of mana, an idea that coincides with the Rapanui conception of the term. Theorists that followed Codrington, however, took his findings to a different direction and saw in mana a golden opportunity for evolutionary classification. They preferred to attribute mana to animist, wrong ideas of the "primitive mind."

Like "primitive," "animism" is a very charged concept that resonates with the racist trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth anthropological and archaeological thought. Developed

by Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871), he defined animism as a dogmatic belief in souls or spirits that was “plainly to be traced onward from the intellectual of the lower races” (Tylor 1871: 109). Tylor used it as synonym of “religion” and applied it to “primitive” peoples, who attributed life and personality to animal, vegetable, and mineral alike. Broadly, Tylor presented animism as fundamentally antithetical to science. Animistic beliefs were in his view wrong ideas resulting from mental confusion. An important generation of anthropologists based their speculations on mana on this primitivist tradition. In his study comparing Fijian mana and truth, for example, Arthur M. Hocart (1914) defined mana as “one of the more archaic forms of a belief that has spread to the uttermost bounds of the earth” (1922: 141). James G. Frazer, Émile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski, Robert R. Marett, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss continued misinterpretations like Hocart’s providing opportunistic definitions of mana to explain evolutionary classification. Primitivist ideas of “animism” and “magic” were key to their accounts.

Bronislaw Malinowski (1925) explored mana from the anthropology of magic. In his study he explains that this force that Codrington described, “is almost the exact opposite of the magical virtue as found embodied in the mythology of savages, in their behavior, and in the structure of their magical formulas” (77). And after affirming that such a thing like mana simply does not exist, he argues that the “real virtue of magic” resides “only in the spell and in its rite” (77). A slippery terminology, “magic” specifies very little and confuses a lot. So as to lead him to conclude the analysis of a spell asserting that this force, which he describes as a spirit power, can only be called “mana” (127). Trapped in his magic terminology, Malinowski failed to accurately explain the efficacy and relational essence of mana. His argument on the virtue of

mana as residing in the spell and its rite can be better explained through the intimate connections between mana and indigenous understanding of language as generative.

As opposed to the idea of language as representative or referential (Jakobson 1960), an understanding of language as generative responds to the idea that the world emerges from language and the interaction of humans, omnipersons and the environment. In this view, speech has the power to do things. From the field of discourse analysis, John Langshaw Austin's (1955) speech-act theory serves to understand how the spoken word is not only a mode of transmitting information or mental content but also a performance act. Austin distinguishes between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts to highlight the efficacy of speech as action. An illocutionary act is an act performed in saying something because of the use of a locution with a certain force; whereas a perlocutionary act is an act performed by saying something as it elicits a physical response from the interlocutor. Grounded in the principle of causality, Austin's argument assumes that the power of speech will depend on the context and the interlocutor. The efficacy of generative language goes further in that it not only causes a response, but it also generates something or some relation, at times independently of the context or the presence and will of an interlocutor. Words may protect, curse, or enchant someone. And rather than causing a response, they will have an immediate effect. Inversely to what Malinowski speculated, the *mana* of the speaker is the source of the efficacy of the spoken word.

Like Malinowski, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert (1950) also touched erratically on the relational essence of mana and its connections with indigenous ideas of a generative language. And so were they trapped in the "magic" terminology, failing to directly address such connections. They rightfully noted that mana "is not simply a force, a being, it is also an action, a quality, a state" (108). But immediately after they defined it as meaning variously "a sorcerer's

power, the magical powers, to be under a spell, to act magically” (108). Echoing animist theories, they explained that mana is sometimes a force that brings inanimate things to life, “more especially the force of spirit beings, that is to say, the souls of ancestors and nature spirits” (109). This “force of spirit beings” relates in their view to efficacy, economy and social organization, as they argue that mana is “power par excellence, the genuine effectiveness of things” (111), “the talisman and source of wealth that is authority itself” (1990: 8), and a sign of “social superiority” (1990: 75). All these attributes they labeled under the tag of mana being a “magical force” (1990: 38). Vague and permissive, their “magic” terminology allowed them to freely speculate on definitions of mana that go from a supposedly spiritual power to material wealth.

Mana became at some point an obliged topic to every scholar writing on indigenous peoples. Greatly affected by these primitivist ideas, mana became more a theoretical concept for theorist seeking to understand the mysteries of the “primitive mind” and its religion. The first to note this opportunistic misuse of the term, Raymond Firth (1940) challenged previous claims on the meaning of mana arguing that the term had become merely theoretical and a fanciful device at the service of Western scholars. Pioneer in mediating indigenous understandings of the term, Firth repositioned mana as a core ontological principle. Based on his study among the Tikopian, Firth stressed the relational essence of mana as a principle that acknowledged the deep imbrications and interdependence between the different categories of persons and worlds.

After a tradition of speculative, opportunistic and depersonalized study of mana, scholars in Pacific Studies started to spread a more accurate understanding of the term as an ontological principle based on relational reciprocity. Roger Keesing (1984), for example, explored mana as a quality of “a relationship, always contextual and two-sided” (1984: 150). In his study of pre-

contact Hawai'i, Valerio Valeri (1985) accentuated that crucial to the meaning of mana was the relational reciprocity between humans and "the divine" (4). A product of these relations, he explained, "man and god having mana depends on their relationship" (104). Furthering this relational understanding of mana, Bradd Shore (1989) noted that mana was essential to a Polynesian worldview based on the possibilities of exchange and linked to generative potency (140, 142). A revision of this debate on the refiguring of mana from an animist idea attributed to the "primitive mind" to a relational ontological concept essential to Oceanic worldviews helps us understand Rapanui demands for the return of the ancestors. Following this debate, I borrow Nurit Bird-David's (1999) terminology to reposition mana as the driving force of a relational epistemology, an idea that is critical to the Rapanui repatriation movement.

As we saw in the previous section, the Rapanui self is cognitively oriented to a world of subjects other than the self that constitutes an implicit and undivided wholeness of interactive relationships between different beings, both human and more-than-human. The Rapanui construction of personhood results then from a relational ontology that figures persons as "dividuals." Marilyn Strathern (1988) first coined this term in her study of the Melanesian society, where she noted that the irreducibility of the individual is a modernist notion for not everywhere is the individual regarded as a single entity. As she explains, the Melanesian "person" is a composite of relationships, and microcosm homologous to society at large (1988: 13, 131). She calls this person "dividual," as opposed to the Western concept of "*individual*," to highlight that this person objectifies relationships and makes them known. I take from Strathern her notion of "dividual" in that persons in Rapa Nui are constitutive of their relationships; a person, either human or not, exists in Rapanui ontology insofar she is related and relating.

Nurit Bird-David (1999) derives from Strathern's noun "dividual" the verb "to dividuate."



Expanding Stranthern's arguments on the differences between individuals and dividuals, Bird-David explains that to dividualize differs from to individuate in that when one individuates a human being one is conscious of that being in his or herself as a single separate entity; when one dividualizes a person one is conscious of how that person relates with one's self. Bird-David clarifies that this is not to say that when dividualizing "I am conscious of the relationship with her 'in itself,' as a thing. Rather, I am conscious of the *relatedness with* my interlocutor as *I engage with her*, attentive to what she does in relation to what I do, to how she talks and listens to me as I talk and listen to her, to what happens simultaneously and mutually to me, to her, to *us*" (Bird-David 1999: 72). Bird-David's term "to dividualize" is essential to understanding Rapanui ideas on *mana*, a relational ontological force that is transmitted, bestowed and obtained through "dividual" relations between people, the ancestors and the environment. Most usually, this *mana* transfer occurs in dreams and visions.

Bird-David's arguments on the concepts of dividual and to dividualize lead her to revise the so-called primitive animism, which she refigures as a relational epistemology, a revision that I follow to revisit *mana* as central to Rapanui relational epistemology. To define the notion of relational epistemology Bird-David contrasts modernist and animistic epistemologies. She explains that the object of the modernist epistemology "is a totalizing scheme of separated viewpoint, the object of this animistic knowledge is understanding relatedness from a related point of view within the shifting horizons of the related viewer" (1999: 78). Whereas knowledge in the modernist epistemology emerges from the *introjection* of representations of things in the world, knowledge in a relational epistemology consists in developing the skills of being in the world with others. Knowing in this case "grows from and *is* maintaining relatedness with neighboring others. It involves dividualizing the environment rather than dichotomizing it and

turning attention to ‘we-ness,’ which absorbs differences, rather than to ‘otherness,’ which highlights differences and eclipses commonalities” (1999: 78). By exploring different types of epistemologies, Bird-David refigures “primitive” animism as a relational epistemology through which the agency attributed to seemingly inanimate objects or ordinary animals is engendered by human socially biased cognitive skills.

I borrow Bird-David’s discussion to reposition mana as central to Rapanui ontology. The Rapanui understand the world and their *being* in-the-world through a relational epistemology that makes them conscious of the relatedness between them, the ancestors and the environment. All agents in this relational epistemology, they actively participate in a diversified world whose differences they absorb in the construction of a unified cosmos. Central to this ontological construction is the idea of mana. As we saw in the previous sections, not only is mana transmitted and maintained through these dividual relations between the people, the ancestors and the world, but also are these very relations possible only because of mana.

Afraid of being over theorizing about mana, while writing this section I discussed these ideas with Rapanui artist Te Pou Huke. After explaining the concept of “to dividualate,” I asked if I was right in saying that mana was transmitted through these dividual relations. He replied with an example. “Remember when we went to ‘Ana O Mū?” I did. He had been talking with koro Niso about that cave. He had been there many years ago and wanted to come back. Caves are everywhere in Rapa Nui. Some caves have big entrances that make them easy to find. Some others have only a tiny opening covered up with stones and rocks. Finding those is like trying to find a needle in a straw loft. ‘Ana O Mū is one of them. After a while walking the area among the weeds and stumbling over the rocks one and again, I gave up and limited to take some shots from the place and the many *umu pae* (*RAP.* structures for earth ovens), vestiges of *hare paēna*

(*RAP.* ancient houses) and *hare moa* (*RAP.* chicken houses) that were around. “There was a whole city here,” I said amused. But he was not there. Then I heard him calling me from the distance. I looked around and did not see a thing. But then I saw him appearing from the underground like a hallucination. Yelling that I had the camera off, I walked among the weeds hurting my sun burnt legs and got to, now for me famous, ‘Ana O Mū. We sat there and Te Pou told me the story of that cave. “That day I saw all these tupuna walking around and lots of *moa* (*RAP.* chickens).” While searching the cave, he told me only after all these months, he walked talking with them. “They brought me to the cave,” he concluded.

Having worked with Te Pou for years, I know that he relates with his tupuna in an every day basis. In his place, the fire is always lighted. The first thing he does in the day, he lights the fire to do *karaŋa*, to call the ancestors, invite them home, and *aro varua* to ask for their mana. He cooks in this same fire. He does so to feed his ancestors. In all of the many road trips we have done together to different places of the island, the first thing he does is to introduce himself to the tupuna of the place. He does so reciting his *haka ara*, his genealogy, and then asks them for permission to be there. A member of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP), he hosted in his place our *umu hatu*, a traditional earth oven meal to present our work to the ancestors and to ask them for wisdom, trust, good will and protection in our work.

Only after this conversation, however, I learned about another aspect of how he relates with the tupuna in terms of his practice as an artist. Similarly to what Lee Irwin (1994) called the “visionary epistemé,” one of Te Pou’s primary sources of knowledge are visions and dreams. This knowledge he translates into an art practice with an important ethnographic component. A truly participant observer, he has devoted his art to illustrating the history of his people. The historical information comes from the many stories he have heard from the elders since he was a

child. The visual aspects of his art, how the ancestors and the land looked in pre-contact times, he learned from visions and dreams. Through them, his ancestors bestow him with the knowledge he needs for his art practice and the preservation of his people's history and culture. After consulting with Te Pou, I share this anecdote and very intimate aspect of his art practice to explain the Rapanui ideas of mana. This knowledge that he acquires from his ancestors results from, maintains, and is mana.

My purpose in revising previous literature on mana is not to redefine the term but rather to reposition it as central to Rapanui relational epistemology and, thus, to the Rapanui demands for the return of their ancestors. I follow Elizabeth Marshall's (2011) critique of mana literature as an "epistemology of imperial expansion," in which a privileged analyst makes "the rest of the world an object of observation" (4). Studies on the "mysteries" of Rapa Nui are not the exemption. Early and contemporary accounts of mana in the context of Rapa Nui studies are also grounded in "magic" terminology and animist assumptions that contribute to the depersonalization of this critical ontological concept (see for example Routledge 1919; Métraux 1941; Englert 1948; Heyerdahl 1958; Lee 1992; Van Tilburg 1994; Štambuk 2010; Castro 2011; Edwards and Edwards 2013). Through this imperializing lens, mana has been presented as a primitive relic. Owning it as the object of Western inquiry, this tradition has deemed the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of mana to the status of a magic, mysterious artifact of the past.

But mana is far from being a frozen residue of the ancient times. Many times I have heard from my Rapanui colleagues that "mana is not like it was before," but they all convene in that mana still exists. Some of them compare it to power, some others to synergy. But independently of their word choice, they agree that mana lives among them as part of a system of relationships

in which the living, the dead, and the land are mutually dependent, as an expression of everyday life reciprocity. Just to mention a few examples, in every single meal I have shared with a Rapanui, my companion has invited the Tupuna. In her *aro varua* she would thank them for the meal, ask them to continue to protect her and her loved ones, and bring them mana. In every project I have started on the island, my collaborators have invited me to do an *umu hatu*, a traditional earth oven meal to introduce the project and myself to the tupuna. Before opening the *umu*, my collaborators make food offerings to them and ask them to bring us success, good will, and protection in our project. In both cases, what they are asking for to the Tupuna is mana. As I have come to understand it, mana is then the condition for these reciprocal relations. It results from and is maintain through them. The living ask for mana to the ancestors, while nurturing them with it. The living feed and house the ancestors; they give them offerings and invite them to meals. Through such actions, the living maintain the ancestors' mana. And as a reciprocal cycle, the ancestors bestow their mana to their descendants. As part of this system of relationships, mana is about empowerment and as such provides the foundation for political power.

Contesting previous literature deeming mana as a relic of the past, indigenous scholars have centered the attention on the meaning and currency of mana in late-twentieth century Polynesian societies. A perspective that did not circulate in the political economy of academic production, these scholars write from an epistemology of decolonization that reinterpret the meaning of mana and reposition it as central to the neocolonial context. Hawaiian scholar Haunani Trask (1993: 117), for example, accentuates the relevance of mana to the work and aims of a people engaged in decolonizing. Highlighting the political and cultural significance of mana as a challenge to neocolonialism, Trask argues that reclaiming mana as ontology is crucial for decolonization and is pivotal for the survival of indigenous Hawaiians.

Bringing this perspective to the specific context of repatriation, Hawaiian scholars Edward Halealoha Ayau and Ty Kāwika Tengan (2002) explain how the repatriation of the remains of their ancestors is intimately tied to the Hawaiian struggles to reclaim their collective mana as a people. The relevance of repatriation, they argue, resides on understanding the connections between the disturbance of their burials and colonialism. As they explain, colonialism alienated the *Kanaka Ōiwi* from their *‘āina* (lands), *mo’olelo* (histories), *‘ōlelo* (language) and *akua* (gods), which included the desecration of gravesites. They posit the collecting of *iwi kūpuna* and *moepū* (ancestral remains) as integral to these larger processes of disenfranchising their people and transforming the very way they think about who they are.

Ayau and Tengan’s arguments coincide deeply with Rapanui ideas on repatriation, also conceived as inseparable from colonization and mana. Indeed, I first learned about repatriation from them and in these same terms. In 2009, while conducting research on land-being relations in Rapa Nui and collaborating with Rapanui Piru Huki in a project for the documentation and recording of petroglyphs, she introduced me to the repatriation movement. More than a decade ago she had conducted an extensive research on Rapanui materials in museums’ holdings in Europe, the United States, South America and Oceania. Living with her in Vai To Iri, one night she showed me the results of that research: five huge folders with the letters she sent to the different museums, the inventories of their Rapanui collections, and photographs of every single Rapanui piece in their holdings. Her purpose was, initially, to edit a book with this material, but she never got the funding for such publication. If I was interested, she said, that archive could serve as the basis for our work on repatriation. Maybe I can help, was my immediate reaction. Even though I was thinking of it as a future project, the very next day she started telling people about “our work” on repatriation. “You know,” she would say, “*la Jaci* is dong this thing to

bring our tupuna back.” The “thing” I was doing was quite different, though. I had been admitted to grad school with a different project and was then in the Island to work on that. But she insisted. “The island is falling into pieces.” She said once. “We need our mana back.” A few weeks later I came back to Los Angeles and proposed to my advisor a new doctoral research project. “This island is never going to be the same until they are back.” The moment I listened to her I decided to commit my dissertation research to the repatriation cause.

By repositioning mana not as a mysterious magic but rather as the driving force of Rapanui relational epistemology, this section set the basis for the larger document’s aim to explain the ontological and cultural importance of the repatriation of Rapanui ancestors back to the Island. For the Rapanui integrating the RNRP *Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna*, repatriation is a means to reclaim their collective mana as Ma’ohi people. As for all Rapanui people we consulted, for them the return of the tupuna will bring back the mana that colonizers and scientists took away from the island. The disturbance of burials and collecting human remains as mechanisms of the colonial and missionary endeavor altered forever the relations with the *kaiŋa* (RAP. land), *a’amu* (RAP. history), *re’o* (RAP. language) and *Tupuna* (RAP. ancestors) for they violated the most fundamental *tapu*, the ancestors.

### ***He Tapu. Between the “death taboo” and the tapu of the dead***

While the repatriation of ancestral remains is for the Rapanui a means to recover their collective mana as a people, the collecting, study and retention of such remains in museum collections constitute for them a violation of the *tapu* in all imaginable ways. In this section I revisit the concept of “taboo,” a misspelling and misinterpretation of the Polynesian ontological concept *tapu* to reposition it as a dictated behavior of extreme respect that cannot be violated in

order to protect and respect the mana that surrounds a particular place or person. Like mana, tapu governed all aspects of Rapanui society and is still very deeply rooted in Rapanui ways of understanding and relating with the world, the land and the ancestors. Not being a word within the English language that fully reflects the essence and meanings of this Pacific ontological concept, this section does not intend to provide an exhaustive definition of the term. Rather, by revising previous literature and how Rapanui ideas of tapu differ from the constructed English “taboo,” the aim is to further an understanding of the importance of tapu in relation to the repatriation of Rapanui ancestral remains.

Tapu was first introduced to the West by British explorers in the eighteenth century. Understanding very little of its cultural meaning and significance, they misspelled it as “taboo.” At the time of their “discovery” voyages, tapu ruled every aspect of Polynesian societies. Unable to fully comprehend the complex essence of the concept, these early explorers attributed it to a supposedly “superstitious,” “primitive” mind. Due to its applicability to so many and various circumstances, taboo was then presented as an arbitrary and incongruous concept that spoke to an equally ambiguous and incongruous people. Like mana, “taboo” came too to satisfy the Victorian society’s desire of the exotic as “taboo” gave them a delightful input to the unreachable “savage mind.”

Following this age of colonial expansion, “taboo” permeated then anthropological discourses, where it soon became a sort of scientific jargon to define culturally proscribed things, circumstances, and attitudes. Margaret Mead (1937), for example, explained the idea of “*tabu*” as fundamentally related to “a prohibition whose infringement results in an automatic penalty” (502). In his monograph published posthumously in 1956, Franz Steiner related the term to the idea of danger, explaining that “taboo” was concerned with every social mechanism of obedience



that had ritual importance, and with specific and restrictive behaviors in dangerous situations (1967: 20-21). Noting the different and various circumstances in which tapu applied, Anne Salmond (1978) stressed that tapu could be “applied equally to high descent, ritual and sacred lore, and to death, darkness, menstrual blood and filth” (7). Representative of a much broader literature on tapu, these scholars come together in the misinterpretation of the Polynesian term as 1) a proscription that was 2) applied equivocally to differing situations. In anthropological language, taboo came then to refer to things that are “culturally proscribed for symbolic rather than pragmatic reasons” (Winthrop 1991: 295) that can even equated with irrational beliefs (Gilmore 2013: 332). Contributing only to the construction of the “primitive” stereotype and its assumption of indigenous “wrong” ideas on “religiosity,” these definitions are dangerously distant from the Polynesian meaning of the term. As I shall explain later, tapu is neither a prohibition nor is it confused or ambivalent. As I have come to understand it in Rapa Nui, tapu is rather an extreme attitude of respect that derives from and maintains the mana of a particular person, place or situation that the Rapanui know very well when, how and where to apply.

Adding to this “primitivist” approach to the study of tapu, scholars have also often grounded their definitions in Western theistic assumptions that have resulted in a widely “spiritualized” literature. Joan Metge (2010), for example, defines tapu as “a condition or state of being affecting people, places, things and actions that results from association with the spiritual realm” (65). This “spiritual” association, he argues, “involves being set apart from ordinary life under ritual restriction” and results in inherent danger, “unless treated respectfully according to prescribe rules” (65). Stressing the consequences of the breaching of tapu, Metge affirms that they might result in sickness, trouble or death, “through the action of an offended God or spirit or as an automatic reflex” (59). Following Metge, Jonathan Barrett (2013) specifies that “breach of

*tapu* may lead to human as well as divine sanctions” (8). “Spiritualized” definitions of *tapu* usually rely on Western theistic notions like “the divine” and even more so “sacred,” which has become the translation of ontological concepts like *mana* and *tapu* par excellence. In their review of ancestral Polynesia, Patrick Kirch and Roger Green (2001) say it very clearly: “Nothing could be more fundamental to an understanding of Polynesian conceptualizations of the sacred than *mana* and *tapu*” (239), which they define as “sacred power” and “sacred prohibition,” respectively. Scholars adhering to these spiritualized, theistic understandings of *tapu* argue that the breaching of *tapu* causes the anger of malevolent spirits or gods that punish the perpetrator, an idea that radically differs from Rapanui and other Polynesians understandings of the term.

Even though this Western spiritual-based terminology has somehow permeated Polynesian discourses, whether scholarly or not, most Rapanui are self-conscious of its inefficacy. While at first many would define *tapu* as either “sacred” or “prohibition,” after a short conversation they would question such terms as either alien or limiting. A woman in her period, an *atariki* (*RAP.* first born), and natural resources, for example, are *tapu*. Yet they are neither sacred nor prohibited. *Tapu* would be then better defined as “having *mana*” and therefore demanding respect. The breaching of a *tapu* has indeed a consequence. Though that consequence does not come from malevolent spirits or gods. It comes from the *tupuna*. The ancestors bestow their descendants and the land with *mana*, and disrespecting these extensions of their *mana* is then a direct offence to them.

In his study of Maori pre-1840 manuscripts on *tapu*, Michael P. Shirres (1982) rightfully noted this relational essence of the term. A Catholic priest, however, his arguments were framed in a theistic, confusing vocabulary. As he explained, no being stands alone. In his words, “each section of creation has its own spiritual power which is its ancestor, *tupuna*, and its source of

*tapu* and *mana*. So an attack on the *tapu* and *mana* of any particular creature is also an attack on the *tapu* and *mana* of its particular spiritual power” (48). Strongly tied to relations and genealogy, *tapu* is then not used equivocally, meaning incongruous various things, nor used univocally, meaning just one thing. Adding to Shirres’s argument on the analogical essence of *tapu*, the Rapanui understand it also as an extension: an extension of the *mana* of the *tupuna* that materialized on a person, an animal or a landscape feature to which they therefore owe a profound respect.

Also closer to the Rapanui understandings of *tapu* are John Patterson’s ideas on the respect for *tapu* he explores in his various writings on Māori ontologies and in particular in his exploration of Māori environmental virtues. Here he explains that the concept and practice of *tapu* “involve the idea that *the world is not ours*” (1994: 402). Noting that this idea is part of what some people mean when they say, wrongly, that the world is sacred, he explains that the Maori concept is not that of being “set apart.” Rather, he clarifies, “we are *one with* the world in which we live, ultimately, on a Maori view” (402). Confronting totalizing definitions of *tapu* as prohibition, he explains that respect for *tapu* should not be seen as a matter of “following rules” but rather as “being a certain sort of person” (402), with which he highlights the intrinsic ties between *tapu* and kinship.

The Rapanui best explained to me the relations between *tapu* and kinship through visits to *kona tapu*, *tapu* places. Even if usually translated as “sacred places,” the term fails to convey the essence of *tapu* places as providing genealogical links for Rapanui and merging contemporary history into the stories of creation. Some places are special in a cultural, historical and spiritual sense and require a change in behavior from the observer, inhabitant or visitor. Such places are *tapu*. And they are so because of what happened there and the presence of the *tupuna* that

remained in the place since the time of such event. My collaborators from the Huki *hua'ai* of the Tupahotu Riki Riki clan, for example, would not go to Mataveri. Huki, tupuna of that family, killed French tyrant Jean Baptiste Dutrou Bornier there, so they say the tupuna of the place would not let them be there in peace. Members of this family have even died in the surroundings of Mataveri for inexplicable reasons they attribute to the breaching of the tapu. These linkages between *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy) and history determines the tapu of a place. Sometimes the tapu of the place might be stated in the very name. Every place in Rapa Nui has a name and, in many cases, these names speak to these historical-genealogical relations.

*Ahu* and *avaŋa*, Rapanui burial sites, are especially tapu. Here, to the *tapu* of *haka ara* and history the Rapanui add the tapu of the dead; of all tapu, the most respected and feared. While all burial sites are tapu because of the association with death and *ivi tupuna* (*RAP.* bones of the ancestors), they may differ in the level of tapu attributed to them. An important variable is often the antiquity of the grave and whose remains are buried there. Caves are tapu in this same sense for they were also burial sites. During the age of the *ahu moai* (burials with moai) florescence, families that could not afford the construction of an *ahu* deposited their relatives in caves. In more recent times, when the Catholic mission settled on the island, the Rapanui buried their relatives in the Catholic cemetery, as imposed by the missionaries. However, a common custom was that they came back at night, exhumed the bodies and took them to their family caves. Family caves, also known as *'ana tao'a* (*RAP.* caves of treasures) where caves where Rapanui people hid their most precious belongings. Those included some remains of the family's ancestors, especially skulls, and what outsiders later labeled as "ethnographic artifacts," among them mnemonic devices like the *kohau roŋo roŋo*, wooden carved tablets with the genealogy or histories of the family; instruments like *maŋai* (*RAP.* fishhook) or *toki* (*RAP.* chisel); or different

types of *moai*, like *moai maea*, *moai taŋata*, *moai pa'a* or *moai kava kava*, all carved by members of the family or inherited from their ancestors to protect them. *Tao'a* were wrapped with weed mats like *peu'e* or *moēŋa*, or with human hair to protect them. These caves were carefully closed with rocks and *paēŋa*, rock blocks, to keep their secrecy.

The tapu of the 'ana tao'a leads us to another aspect of tapu, that of knowledge. As explained in the discussion on mana, knowledge is mana. And, therefore, knowledge is tapu. In her study of Māori schools and pre-contact education, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1986) notes that knowledge was tapu and therefore sanctions were put in place that ensured its protection, appropriate use and accurate transmission. Following Smith, Leonie Pihama, Kaapua Smith, Mereana Taki and Jenny Lee (2004) attribute the tapu of knowledge to a wider Māori understanding of knowledge as serving the interests of the collective. Knowledge, they explain, was then “guarded by *tikanga* [MAO. protocols] and restricted by *tapu*” (14). In an equally rigorous pre-colonial education system, the Rapanui too guarded their different forms of knowledge for it to be transmitted accurately and used appropriately. Material forms of Rapanui knowledge were also secretly guarded and, as tapu, kept in these secret caves or in crevasses along the cliff faces. This tapu was only breached with the arriving of collectors that saw in this material knowledge curiosities and ethnographic specimens.

Governing all aspects of Polynesian ways of knowing and relating, tapu has eluded exhaustive definitions. As part of a community workshop in Aoteaora, Māori Pa Tate (1993:177) developed a conflict resolution model sourced directly from *matauranga* Māori. Within this framework he provided three distinctions of tapu: tapu relating to being, tapu relating to value, and tapu relating to restrictions. The first type, in his words, *te tapu o te taŋata ora*, or the tapu of the living people, refers to personal dignity and self worth; the second corresponds to the tapu

resulting from the linkages between the ancestors, the people and the land; the most studied and wrongly proposed as an exhaustive definition of tapu, the third class responds to the prohibitions or rules that some tapu entail. As discussed with my collaborators, Rapanui ideas on tapu coincide with Tate's distinctions, which can be tied in a single statement: tapu is "being with mana," and as such it links the people directly with the ancestors.

As shown through this revision of part of the extended literature on tapu, most studies on this Polynesian ontological concept have failed to fully acknowledge the essence and meanings of the term. Overly descriptive, licentiously interpretive and always ethnocentric, early and some contemporary ethnographers and scholars have built their descriptions on generalizations from the observation of isolated incidents, and their definitions on Western concepts that are alien to the Polynesian practices they intend to explain. By contrasting these definitions and descriptions with references to some Rapanui ideas of tapu, I sought to reposition tapu as an extension of mana, a dictated behavior of extreme respect that cannot be violated in order to protect and respect the mana that surrounds a particular place or person. A highly more complex concept than scholars and ethnographers commonly present, tapu is intrinsic to a worldview in that posits people, places and objects under the protection of the ancestors.

Of particular relevance to death, I follow Māori scholar Peter Mataira (2000: 233) in that revisiting the meaning of tapu and "taboo" is critical for understanding both contemporary cultural attitudes and archaeological and curatorial approaches to indigenous ancestral remains. For the Rapanui the tapu links them directly with their ancestors. From this view, to respect the tapu is to respect the ancestors. Conversely, to violate the tapu is a direct offence to the ancestors, as shown in the history of Rapa Nui. In times of peace, the ahu and avaŋa, Rapanui burial sites, were tapu. In times of war, invaders would violate the tapu and dig the ivi tupuna of

the defeated. Disturbing a people's tupuna was the greatest offense. By disturbing the tupuna, the invader was literally disenfranchising her descendants. The offenders were taking the mana of the defeated. How the tapu of ivi tupuna worked differently during peace and invasion illustrates that the disturbance of Rapanui burials by explorers and scientists was one more of colonial mechanisms to disenfranchise indigenous peoples by disrupting their relations and altering their self-knowledges.

Burial sites continue to be tapu today. But outsiders insistently violate them. Tourists do so out of ignorance and curiosity, the Chilean government in the name of progress and land requirements, and scientists under the argument of the development of universal knowledge. Speaking of the latter, the graves of indigenous peoples have historically constituted an important and always available source for physical anthropologists, archaeologists and museum curators who claim that disturbing the rest of indigenous ancestors provides unique information for the study of the past, an argument deeply rooted in racist evolutionary theories. In the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, museums were actively seeking to form comparative collections of human remains. The purpose of such collections was to study and document human variation and to prove evolutionary theories like craniology and phrenology (Burke 2008: 169-70; Fine-Dare 2002: 33-40; Thomas 2000: 38-43, 106-10; Trigger 2006: 159-60). While these theories have been widely and comprehensively rejected, their legacy is unavoidable as the very museums that insist to retain indigenous human remains in their holdings openly acknowledge that such materials were unethically obtained.

These museum-mandated collecting missions landed on Rapa Nui too. In addition to the free collection of eighteenth century explorers and posterior private collectors, in the nineteenth century the Rapanui witnessed the institutionalized collecting of their ancestors' remains, which

continue to be held in museums worldwide. This practice continued in the twentieth century, either as explicit collecting missions or as a result of archaeological restoration projects. While museums argue for the retention of Rapanui ancestral remains for the sake of science and universal knowledge, the Rapanui see it quite differently. For them, the collecting of their tupuna was a form of disenfranchising and their retention in museum collections one more facet of the denial of their rights. Javier Tuki, a long-term collaborator and a member of RNRP said it plainly: “They needed us unprotected in order to colonize us.” And which was the most effective way, he asked, “taking our ancestors. They took their mana, and left us unprotected.”<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter I revisited the concepts of mana and tapu in relation to the ancestors in order to begin to understand the depth of claims such as Javier’s. The colonial and neo-colonial disregard for the tapu of the ancestors and their mana not only devaluated the foundation of Rapanui social and kinship structures but also dismissed as a primitive absurd and incongruence all the associated ontological relations between the people, the ancestors and the land. As the basis for the larger document, this theoretical exploration serves as the grounds for understanding the Rapanui claims for the return of their tupuna that occupy this work. A clearer view on the Rapanui ideas of mana and tapu in relation to the ancestors helps us realize that while the collection of ancestral remains dramatically altered Rapanui ways of knowing and relating, the repatriation of their tupuna is a means to restore what the colonizer disrupted, an idea I will further explore in the next chapter.

Lastly, the revision of mana and tapu in relation to the ancestors that occupied this chapter will serve another purpose to be examined later in this document. A more accurate understanding of such ontological concepts provides an effective way of evaluating contemporary approaches to the study and curation of human remains. Many of who study and

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<sup>9</sup> Javier Tuki Pakomio. Rapa Nui, December 2013. Personal communication.



curate indigenous ancestral remains fear that repatriation will end with the archaeological profession. And consequently, they have neglected attention to the relevance of the ontological underpinnings of the materials they study. They have judged indigenous concerns for their ancestors as anti-modern and obstructive (Cuno 2005; Gilmore 2013; Sayer 2012; Turnbull 2002). Conversely, I think, returning the qualities of *tapu* and *mana* to the study and curation of ancestral remains could only benefit archaeological and museum professions since these terms are more than words; these words delineate two of the most important aspects of Rapa Nui culture and are thus critical for understanding the past and contextualizing the present. Acknowledging, understanding and respecting the ontological relevance of museum collections should be seen as an effective way of developing research methodologies based on collaboration and mutual respect that can begin to heal the postcolonial trauma and set the basis of a new path for greater understanding.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### HE PUOKO O TE ARIKI KO HOTU MATU’A

Following my Rapanui colleagues, throughout this dissertation I contend that *ivi tupuna* or ancestral remains have *mana*. Among all *ivi tupuna*, those who have the most *mana* are the skulls. The *mana* of a person, Rapanui assert, concentrates in her skull. Among all human persons, I explained in the previous chapter, those who possess the greatest *mana* are the *ariki*, the kings. When an *ariki* died, a common custom was for his family to take his skull and burry it in a plantation within his *mata* or territory, so the *mana* of the *ariki* would bring abundance and well-being to his people. Because of their great *mana*, sometimes *ariki*’s skulls were also stolen. The *a’amu* (*RAP.* story) of the death of Hotu Matu’a, the first *ariki*, speaks to the *mana* of *pakahera tupuna*, ancestral skulls. Below I present this *a’amu* as narrated by founding members of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program, Joaquín Niso Tuki and Te Pou Huke at the very place where Hotu Matu’a is buried.

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**Niso Tuki:** That’s the Puoko (*RAP.* head, skull) that Tu’u Ko Ihu said: “Ka tea mai to’u niho ena kai honu era kai kepu kepu o te kaiŋa.” “Here it is your white teeth that ate turtles, carapace-food of the land.”

**Te Pou Huke:** Here we are at Ura Uraŋa Te Mahina, the place were our *ariki* Hotu Matu’a is buried. Or here is where they placed his body, his bones, at Hare O Ava. History tells that he died in Reīŋa Take, at Vai A Tare. They moved his body from there and buried it right here.

**Niso Tuki:** When Hotu Matu'a arrived here, they settled in Anakena. Then, when the clans divided up, he had argument with his wife Vakai and left. He came to another settlement, stayed with another woman, and another boy was born. Like this he moved one and again. So many sons of Hotu Matu'a were born in the different clans, various settlements, until he arrived at Reīna Take, up here, in Vai A Tare. There is a stone there that measures like two, three meters high. Maea Hono A Hotu Matu'a, the stone is called. Well, in that place that I'm telling you, Reīna Take, there he died.

**Te Pou Huke:** Before passing, Hotu Matu'a called his sons and to each he gave a *po* (RAP. fortune). To Tu'u Maheke he told he would be rich in insects. Because Tu'u Maheke wasn't a good son. Hotu Matu'a believed more in the other two, that were Miru and Hotu Iti. To one he gave the wealth of the place, the white sand and the people. To the other too, the people. And the mission of Hotu Iti was to carve the moai.

**Niso Tuki:** Before he died, he told the universe "E Kuihi e Kuaha varua e! Haka haoa mai koe i te re'o o te moa Ariana." So when the rooster sang, he heard and then he died. He died. They took him and buried him here in Hare O Ava, at Akahaŋa. Between Poike and Vai A Tare, Akahaŋa is the middle point. Hare O Ava is the center of the island. That is why they buried him here. Because he was the first king to arrive here. The most important king for all clans on the island. So they buried him here, in Hare O Ava, at Ura Uraŋa Te Mahina.

**Te Pou Huke:** Once Hotu Matu'a dies, they take him to the ahu. But when they place Hotu Matu'a inside the avaŋa, comes Tu'u Maheke and steals the skull, the skull of Hotu Matu'a. The

skull of an *ariki*, and very especially Hotu Matu'a's, gave prosperity, improved the crops. To that end Tu'u Maheke took it, because he wanted to recover his honor as the first-born of Hotu Matu'a, to govern again and have the best place. But it rather happened as the *tohu* [RAP. curse] Hotu Mtu'a had made him. To him he told, "you will have many insects." When Tu'u Maheke leaves with his skull and stores it in his place, rather than filling up with banana trees and wealth, it filled up with insects. Tu'u Maheke had two children, Hojo and Tekena. Tu'u Maheke was sick of insects and his bad fortune. So he decides to leave the island. No one ever heard again from this son of Hotu Matu'a called Tu'u Maheke, the first person to be born on this land.

**Niso Tuki:** The body stayed here in Hare O Ava, but the head they took it because they knew the head of the king was very important for having more powers than the others. For this reason they took it. That is why flies came out of the tomb, like swarms of bees. They followed the route they had taken the head through until arriving to Vaihu. There they had left it in a crack. So this man saw it and took it to Mai Taki Te Moa. He hid it underneath this slab I was telling you about. And there in Mai Taki Te Moa, when this person made his house, *hare ho'ou*, every time he was working he saw a mouse going underneath the slab. Every time, it did it every time. And so one day we went and bended down to see under the slab. And there it was his head. When he finished the house, he took the head and hung it inside the house.

**Te Pou Huke:** That head Tu'u Maheke took it. He took it to his place and buried it there. Then this farmer working there, doing his daily work, run across the skull. As I've been told, the skull of Hotu Matu'a had a tuna [carved] on it. Skulls with inscriptions are those of *ariki*, of a very important person. He was noticing already that his crops were abundant. And when he found the

head, he knew it was the head [increasing the crops]. So the head was later transferred and loaned for these purposes. That is what Hotu means, that something is beautiful, abundant.

**Niso Tuki:** [The farmer] invited Tu'u Ko Ihu to come to the inaugural feast of his new house. When Tu'u Ko Ihu entered, he laid down. He looked up and saw the head. Then he said: "Ka tea mai to'u niho kai honu kai kepu kepu o Hiva, o te Kaiŋa. Here it is your white teeth that ate turtles, carapace-food of the land." That is what Tu'u Ko Ihu said, because he knew it. When he left home, he hid the head in his cape and took it, without the farmer noticing it. He took it to his place in Te Peu. There he made a hole and placed the head down there. He covered the hole with a *keho* [RAP. slab] and put a *poro* [RAP. rounded stone] on top of it. And there the head remained. One day the man entered his house to sleep and saw the head was missing. He made *umana* [RAP. ~gather] the men to start digging up the surroundings of Tu'u Ko Ihu's place. When Tu'u Ko Ihu saw them, he went out and sat down on the *poro* where the head was. He knew they were looking for the head. The men dug up to the edge of Tu'u Ko Ihu's hose. Seeing that the head was not there, he approached Tu'u Ko Ihu and told him, "Ho'oku, haka tapo koe" [RAP. "You, my friend, stand up."]. And Tu'u Ko Ihu did. The man moved the *poro*, removed the *keho*, and there it was the *puoko*. He took the *puoko* and came back to Mai Taki Te Moa. He left it back there, and there it remained.

**Niso Tuki and Te Pou Huke**

Rapa Nui, October 2013

## CHAPTER THREE

### BETWEEN MANA AND POWER: A HISTORY OF COLLECTING IN RAPA NUI

#### PART I. THE RACE PARADIGM

Having explored central Rapanui ontological concepts and examined Rapanui worldviews as a relational epistemology in which the people and the *Tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) become inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos, this chapter provides a revisionist reading of the beginning of ethnographic and scientific collecting in Rapa Nui. While the previous ontological exploration provided the grounds to articulate the arguments on which Rapanui people base their claims for demanding the return of their ancestors, this critical revision of collecting on Rapa Nui will provide the basis for destabilizing the arguments that defend the retention of the ancestors in museum collections. Informed by the intersubjective relations previously examined, in this chapter I will begin to explore first collecting efforts on Rapa Nui in order to explain how the collecting of Rapanui *tao 'a* (*RAP.* treasures) and *ivi tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestral remains) was one more agent of the colonizing mission for disrupting a people's worldviews. Collecting on indigenous lands served yet one more purpose, that of imposing Western systems of knowledge and facilitating colonial expansion. I will focus on first hand accounts demonstrating that the Rapanui have historically opposed the collecting of *tao'a* and the disturbance of the *tupuna*, invoking the very same ontological principles on which they support their repatriation claims today.

Voyagers' diaries, missionaries' letters, and officials' reports are a rich source of information about individual responses, motivations and perceptions about the collecting of Rapanui *tao'a* and *ivi tupuna*. They provide an accurate insight into how indigenous people

reacted to the looting of their family treasures and the removal of their ancestors' remains, and how collectors viewed their own actions. Especially towards the later years of the eighteenth century, this literature shows a broad awareness by collectors of Rapanui objection to their collecting activities, to the extent that many conducted their activities in secret and watchful of retaliation. Contrary to what scholars have widely argued, these accounts also show awareness by collectors of unfair trade and the race paradigm motivating their missions, a paradigm that has had a long-standing history in arguments opposing repatriation.

In the following pages I will first present a revision of early voyages to Rapa Nui focusing on the voyagers' notes on the Rapanui attitudes toward their burials and their romantic descriptions that fuelling an exotic imaginary and desire would come to motivate further expeditions to the discovered land. I will present early voyagers' unsystematic collecting as an objectification of the achievement of imperial expansion. Then, I will examine the missionary period and how collecting was an effective means toward the Holy Spirit propagation of faith. I will present missionaries' collecting as a dual enterprise, on the one hand aiming to disrupt ontological relations and, on the other, showcasing the triumph of Catholicism over idolatry. Finally, I will explore nineteenth-century museum-mandated expeditions coming to Rapa Nui on explicit collecting missions. I will present colonial officials' collecting as an objectification of the race-paradigm motivating these expeditions that would come to scientifically prove the need of the colonial enterprise.

### **“The Thief Native,” another convenient stereotype**

A common argument usually embraced by those opposing the repatriation of indigenous heritage back to their descendants is that the origins of Western collecting in the Third World

occurred as part of an economic system accorded by both parties. We find this argument very often in literature on collecting in the Pacific. In his well known study of the history of colonial exchange in the Pacific Islands, Nicholas Thomas (1991) grounds his analysis in the hypothesis of an assumed “symmetry between indigenous appropriations of European artifacts and the colonial collecting of indigenous goods,” as a “way of breaking up us/them oppositions” (5). Greatly informed by Thomas’s work, Steven Hooper (2006) echoes his ideas in his catalogue of the *Pacific Encounters* exhibition, which comprised a representative collection of Pacific “art” in relation to divinity. There he legitimizes these collections arguing that, “the great majority appears to have been acquired in circumstances agreeable to both parties, and at exchange rates, in terms of European and indigenous systems of value, which were satisfactory at the time” (24). This claim leaves unquestioned eighteenth-century explorers’ accounts describing exchange relations with a people they depicted as, first and foremost, professional thieves. While concealing unethical collecting under racist descriptions can be understood within the historical context of that first looting, what remains condemnable is to replicate such a strategy almost three hundred years later.

The first ethnographic descriptions of the Rapanui people we find them in the accounts of Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen and his crew, who landed on Rapa Nui in 1722, inscribing it within Western historiography as “Easter Island;” a tradition continued by his fellow explorers, the naturalists they brought in their voyages, and then by settlers, missionaries, collectors, scientists, and government representatives. Coming to Rapa Nui in very different missions, their accounts also vary widely. But what remains common to almost every of these narratives is the depiction of the Rapanui as a skilled thief.



Upon his arrival in 1722, the very first thing that Rogeeven noted about the Rapanui was their longing for everything they saw. As he wrote, “they were so courageous that took the caps and hats of sailors from their heads and jumped with their loot outboard” (2012: 67). An anonymous Dutch sailor continued this narration writing that as soon as the Rapanui went on board, “we found out they were naturally thieves and agile like the inhabitants of those islands that voyagers called Islands of Thieves, due to the great tendency of the people to assault and rob” (2012: 67). Coming on board of the Spanish expedition to Rapa Nui, Francisco Antonio Aguera wrote in 1770 that, “both old men and women are in extreme keen on asking, and with satisfaction take whatever they find” (2012: 123). Four years later, Captain Cook noted that even before landing the crew found out “they were expert thieves” (2012: 155). This recurrent description of Rapanui people as thieves was not one exclusive of the first voyagers.

Missioners, collectors and scientists that found their way to Rapa Nui in the following centuries did as well. The first missionary to settle in Rapa Nui, Eugène Eyraud noted in 1864 how friendly Rapanui men armed with spears guarded his property, though “they had also taken the trouble to appropriate anything they could lay their hands on” (2004: 13). His most pressing need, he wrote after detailing these thefts, was to build a cabin, “because the protectors of my property seem keen on protecting it from its rightful owner also” (13). In 1869, his fellow missionary Hippolyte Roussel went further, writing on his description of Rapanui social organization that, “it would be a contradiction in terms to call the perpetual thievery a form of government” (2013: 47). The leaders of two of the main museum-mandated collection missions in Rapa Nui had something to say about the thieves they were robbing. Arrived at Rapa Nui on orders from the Ethnology Department of the Berlin Imperial Museum, Wilhelm Geiseler wrote in 1882 that “taking something from Europeans was not considered to be reprehensible; in fact,

they tended to consider this as an indication of great cleverness” (1882: 62). Similarly, William Thomson, arrived in 1886 on orders from the National Museum of Natural History, noted that, “the natives did not attach any moral delinquency to the practice of thieving. They had a god of thieving” (1889: 465). And as recently as in 1975 one of the most avid collectors in the history of Rapa Nui, Thor Heyerdahl wrote to have decided to set the expedition camp base as far as possible from Haŋa Roa, the village, “where the temptation to steal might become too big for the population” (1975: 83). Placed in the midst of descriptions of massive looting, these comments sound, at the very least, uneasy.

The construction of the thief stereotype seems to be used as an aide to the fair trade argument. The collectors’ enthusiast remarks commenting on the thief character of the Rapanui contrast with their plain, unquestioned notes on their massive looting. The Rapanui stealing a hat appears to be far more worth of attention and morally condemnable than the missionaries burning the only evidences of a writing system on the Pacific, the collectors robbing a megalithic ancestor, or the officials profaning graves. The looting of tao’a and ivi tupuna is presented then as either incidental or a contribution to humanity: they were saving this world’s heritage from a thief race, hat thieves. All the same, what they call now a circumstance of exchange agreeable to both parties was trading a piece of cloth for the various tao’a which retention curators fiercely defend today, fair trade.

### **Early voyagers: The eighteenth-century voyages of discovery**

In the sixteenth century, intense Polynesian expansion movements were taking place in the Pacific, where Polynesians were migrating westwards into islands within Melanesia and Micronesia. Into this situation arrived European voyagers. Growing European interest in

possibilities for expansion and trade led to further voyaging in the eighteenth century, endeavoring to discover the much-desired Terra Australis Incognita. Within this scenario occurred the first encounter between Rapa Nui and the West, with the arrival in 1722 of Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen. This encounter brought with it the first documented killing, which marked future Rapanui people's attitudes towards newcomers. In this regard, Captain Cornelius Bouman wrote that,

The inhabitants did not have any weapons whatsoever. They approached us in crowds with their empty hands to welcome us gamboling and jumping of joy. Despite this, 9 or 10 of them were killed by shot, and many of them hurt. The responsible of this was my second in command, Cornelis Mens, who shot without instruction. Others concluded that such order had been given and they shot. This caused great offense (2012: 89).

This unjustifiable use of violence is recognized and regretted in the diaries of one of Roggeveen's sailors of last name Behrens, but overlooked in Roggeveen's, who attributed it to a crew's misunderstanding.

Arriving at Rapa Nui on the Easter Sunday of 1722, the writings of Roggeveen and his crew inscribed Rapa Nui within Western historiography as Easter Island. These first writings were also responsible for initiating a tradition of misrepresentation on Rapa Nui. Driven by his own fantasies of the new world, an anonymous Dutch sailor described the Rapanui people like this,

All these savages are of the most gigantic size, men being twice the length and width of the biggest of us; they measured, ones with others, twelve feet high. We could have easily—who would not be amazed by this—passed between the legs of these sons of GOLIAT without bending (2012: 69).

Also within these writings we find the first descriptions of the *moai*, Rapanui megalithic sculptures. Even though later collectors would justify their looting arguing that the Rapanui showed a complete lack of interest on their moai, these very first voyagers noticed otherwise. Referring to the killing mentioned above, Carl Friedrich Behrens explained that, “the inhabitants of this island do not carry weapons ... However, I noticed that, in the event of an attack, these poor people entrust themselves entirely to the help of their idols, erected in great number across the coasts” (2012: 74). Similarly, Jacob Roggeveen noted that the Rapanui “light bonfires before some particularly tall stone images, and then sitting on their heels with their heads bended, they bring the palms of their hands together, moving them up and down” (2012: 81). In these accounts we find the earliest documentation that speaks directly to the *tapu* of the moai, noting that the Rapanui interacted with them through rituals and offerings to show them respect and receive their protection. The Dutch left that same day.

After the Dutch expedition, Rapa Nui was “discovered” for the second time in 1770 by a Spanish expedition under the command of captain Felipe González de Haedo, who anchored there for three days. Before the Spaniards left they took possession of the island in the name of the kingdom of Spain. They named it Isla San Carlos after the king. The accounts of González de Haedo and his crew relate the ceremony in detail. After a procession to Poike, they set up three great crosses, previously kissed by the present, both Spaniards and Rapanui. Once the crosses

were raised, an armed troop formed before the flag and listened to Josef Bustillo's "elegant speech" that "took possession of the Island in the name of the King, as its legitimate owner and lord, preventing any other sovereign to aspire to its possession" (González de Haedo 2012: 111). A salute repeated seven times followed along with a gunfire salvo and twenty-one cannon shots by each of the two ships. After the bombastic military ceremony, a possession agreement was signed between the "relevant individuals and three Indians" (111) after having read them the document, in Spanish. Leaving on the third day, the crew's last sight was that of the natives up the hill taking down the crosses in the distance, a sailor wrote.

Like the Dutch, the Spaniards also provided descriptions of the moai on their diaries. At first taking them for big trees resembling pyramids, they soon found out they were "images of the idols these naturals worship" (Aguera 2012: 119). Adding to what the Dutch had already noted, the Spaniards erratically affirmed that the *moai* were used as burial poles. Noting on the island's religion, they observed "that every time they said Moá, they all bended their heads and responded Beritegue, with demonstrations of a profound respect" (de Moraleda 2012: 139). Going further, de Moraleda wrote that "they could not bear us to smoke cigars; they begged our sailors to extinguish them, and they did so. I asked one of them the reason, and he made signs that the smoke went upwards; but I do not know what this meant" (139). This note is the first reference we have of Rapanui people demanding foreigners to respect the *tapu* of the moai, an attitude we shall find consistently in later accounts, yet usually conveniently concealed.

Also revelatory are the notes of González de Haedo in regards to the exchanges the Spanish did with the Rapanui. Although much has been written on voyagers establishing exchange relations in terms that were agreeable to both parties, in the Spanish diaries we can see how conscious they were on the unfairness of this trade:

They are notoriously importune in asking, though their simplicity is so extreme that they content with any trifle that can cover part of their nudity, not distinguishing what may be more appreciable, as it happened with many of them that, in exchange for a useless hat ... gave their much more valuable cloaks (537).

Similarly to Rapanui objections to the breaching of the *tapu*, unfair trade is also something we shall find consistently in later accounts. The Spaniards left on the third day.

The 1760s marked the beginning of a period of unprecedented European voyaging to the Pacific. Along with other emblematic voyagers like John Byron (1764-6) and Samuel Wallis (1766-8) was James Cook, whose three voyages, undertaken in 1768-71, 1772-75 and 1776-79, were to change European perspectives of the landscape and seascape of the Pacific. During Cook's voyages extended contact between Europeans and Pacific islanders was made, beginning a long-life comparative discourse of evolutionary assessments involving native physique, religion, behavior and material culture. Resulting from this extended contact, Cook's voyages marked the beginning of a Western tradition of collecting in the Pacific (Hooper 2006; Thomas 1991). Trading between Europeans and Polynesians began before Cook, though before him trades had mostly a survival motivation. As we can see from the diaries of the Dutch and Spaniards, they traded for fresh food and water. On Cook's voyages not only physical survival motivated exchange relations. Developing scientific interests were taken as an opportunity to acquire natural and artificial specimens.

Cook visited Rapa Nui during his second voyage, undertaken with the mission of unveiling the southern continent question. William Hodges was recruited as an artist and Johann

Reinhold Forster as an ethnologist and natural scientist; the latter accompanied by his son George and sent out on orders of the British government to collect natural curiosities. Taking detailed notes on their observations and providing assessing descriptions of the Pacific islanders, the Forsters also proved to be assiduous collectors, documenting with thoroughness their acquisitions, held now mainly at Oxford and Göttingen. Anders Sparrman, assistant to Forster, also made a collection, as did Cook and other officers (Hooper 2006: 53-4). Aboard the *Resolution* the earliest documented Rapanui artefacts were taken to Europe, among them the wooden hand currently at the British Museum.

George Forster narrated some of the acquisitions in his diaries, describing the pieces and the context in which they acquired them. Aided by Mahine, a Tahitian young man recruited as an interpreter, the crew could trade Tahitian barkcloth, which the local people were keen to acquire. Mahine himself collected a number of small wooden *moai*. Forster wrote:

The desire of possessing this cloth prompted them to expose to sale several articles which perhaps they would not have parted with so easily under other circumstances. Among these were their different caps or head-dresses, their necklaces, ornaments for the ear and several human figures, made of narrow pieces of wood about eighteen inches ...

[Mahine] purchased several of them ... As he took great pains to collect these curiosities, he once met with a figure of a woman's hand, carved of a yellowish wood, nearly of the natural size. Upon examination, its fingers were all bent upwards, as they are in the action of dancing at Taheitee, and its nails were represented very long, extending at least three fourths of an inch beyond the fingers' end. The wood of which it was made was the rare perfume-wood of Taheitee, with the chips of which they communicate fragrance to the

oils. We had neither seen this wood growing, nor observed the custom of wearing long nails at this island, and therefore were at a loss to conceive how this piece of well-executed carving could be met with there; we hoped, however, to unravel this circumstance also at the return of our party. Mahine afterwards presented this piece to my father, who has in his turn made a present of it to the British Museum (1777: 314).

Collected in 1774 and consequently gifted to the British Museum, this finely carved wooden hand is now on display at the Enlightenment room, in one of the “Discovery-Trade” thematic display cases.

The men of science on all three of Cook’s voyages were interested in assembling collections for classification purposes. Influenced by the Enlightenment philosophies and methods of the time, they documented their observations of the “natural world” and its inhabitants. Like his predecessors, Cook also wrote about the moai and other aspects of Rapanui material culture, as did the Forsters and other crewmembers. Suppressing previous accounts, they provided more detailed descriptions on Rapanui burials and more accurate annotations on the meaning of the moai. In his description of the statues, John Marra noted that “close to them are located their burial places” (2012: 149). A note that Cook deepened stressing that

the gigantic statues, so often mentioned, are not, in my opinion, looked upon as idols by the present inhabitants, whatever they might have been in the days of the Dutch; at least I saw nothing that could induce me to think so. On the contrary, I rather suppose that they are burying-places for certain tribes or families (2012: 167).



George Forster completed this information narrating that they asked “to the most intelligent persons among them about the nature of these rocks, and from what we could understand, we concluded that they were monuments erected to the memory of some of their areekees, or kings” (2012: 180). Richard Pickersgill and Johann Reinhold Forster coincided with this information, the latter adding that “every of these poles has a name” (2012: 224). With more or less detail, the British provided the first accounts relating the statues previously deemed as idols with the memory of the ancestors.

The British were also the first to document the Rapanui reaction at the disturbance of their ancestors. George Forster wrote in this respect,

On our way we walked on the area where the above-mentioned solitary pillar was located. Some natives that were still with us gave us signs that we had to go down and walk on the grass at the bottom of the pedestal; but seeing that we were not interested in understanding their signs, they did not make more efforts to oppose our progress” (2012: 180).

Further, he noted that certain places were *tapu* and entrance was not permitted. After noticing that some of piles of stones were communicated with natural caves, he wrote that they attempted to investigate them, “though the natives always negated us admission to these places” (179). They did not care much, as did not the many naturalists, artists and collectors to come. He was talking about hiding places historically used in Rapa Nui to store family trophies and treasures, among them the remains of some illustrious ancestors; the same hiding places that were to be assaulted less than a century later and on. The *Resolution* left on the fifth day.

In 1786 arrived to Rapa Nui a French expedition under the command of Comte La Pérouse, Jean François de Galaup. Sent on orders of the French crown to discover new lands and explore those recently discovered, La Pérouse described a very different island to that of Captain Cook. Rapa Nui seemed to him much less wretched. Unlike his predecessors, he and his crew had come in good shape and with provisions with the sole intention of doing the Rapanui well (2012: 237). La Pérouse and his people introduced to the island a series of new animal and botanical species, like goats, sheep, hogs, and seeds of orange and lemon tree, cotton plant and maize. Their voyage being apparently different in purpose, the discourse we find in the French's diaries is also quite distinct. La Pérouse did not hesitate to question and criticize his predecessor's appreciations of the island, his inhabitants and their material culture. He coincided in relating *moai* to burial places and the memories of the ancestors, and stressed once more the respect that the Rapanui afforded to them. He however described an island much less miserable and celebrated its people as the descendants of the makers of such masterpieces. The French left after twenty-four hours.

### **Collecting and the empire-building mission**

Whether scientifically driven or not, these discovery voyages were part of an empire-building mission that impacted intellectual life back in Europe fuelled by reports on the lives of the savages and drawings of their curiosities that came to enhance the Enlightenment philosophies. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has pointed out, “the Enlightenment provided the spirit, the impetus, the confidence, and the political and economic structures that facilitated the search of new knowledges” (58). As she explains, the development of scientific thought resulting from the exploration and “discovery” by Europeans of other worlds and the expansion of trade

were all facets of the modernist project. The collecting of indigenous heritage was an integral part of this project, as it provided the means to document discoveries, argument comparative assessments of evolution, and demonstrate the positional superiority of the West.

Back in Europe, then, voyagers displayed their collections as precious trophies. A controversial idea, Steven Hooper (2006) argues that explorers did not collect curiosities as trophies, “since their acquisition did not involve conquest or subordination in any intentional sense” (27). Apparently in this view the arrival of European military personnel was not invasion but simple discovery. I rather agree with Nicholas Thomas (1991) in that collections brought to Europe spoke to the accomplishment of the voyage, reflecting the broader experience and mastery of a passage around the world, he explains, and the positional superiority on part of the traveler, I add. Because, as he points out, the movement of these pieces from indigenous to European exchange circuits was, indeed, a movement of commoditization, but also a materialization of discourses about the people who produced them (143). They were first and foremost markers of prestige, social status, and racial superiority.

The interest in collecting that these first explorers initiated stood then as an objectification of intellectual and experiential desire. The objects of this collecting practice were what they termed “curiosities.” Like “curios,” this concept was used to refer to indigenous material culture, human remains and natural specimens like botanical, marine and mineral samples (Thomas 1991: 127). Based on the accounts of these first voyagers, they collected curiosities to say something about the lands they visited and their inhabitants, though they did not give much relevance to the singular histories behind them. Thomas illustrates this lack of specified interest through the actual practices of collecting, “in that the explorers did not make systematic effort to acquire either representative samples of a totality or artifacts of particular

kinds” (138). As he points out, although they made efforts to acquire ornaments that were evidently valuable, the islanders were usually who determined what they received. As we shall see next, this dynamic would dramatically change with the arrival of the missionaries.

The language that early voyagers used evidences this lack of a systematic collecting method. They expressed their interest in indigenous material culture through neutral terms like “striking,” “interesting,” “singular,” or “peculiar,” or “curios.” Though when judging workmanship and their fineness or grotesqueness, they avoided all neutrality. As Thomas notes, later voyagers in particular sustained their narratives of indigenous material culture with sharp judgments and “the imputation of hierarchical differences” (139). José de Moraleda, for example, described the *moai* as “rational figures, though very imperfect” (2012: 38), while George Forster judged them as being “of rude sculpture” (2012: 186). Pejorative descriptions abounding in voyagers’ diaries, they speak to an imperialist project put in place to affirm power relationships between Europeans and indigenous peoples as a means to facilitate the classification and differentiation of those susceptible to become objects of colonization.

A consequence of this voluntarily unsystematic collecting is the lost of documentation associated to early collections and their detachment from their meanings. The first being one of the main obstacles indigenous people find when demanding their repatriation, and the latter their main motivation for claiming their restitution. Eighteenth voyagers presented their collections to museums in Europe; some of them were subsequently donated, sold or exchanged in curios markets. Some got lost; some others remain at museums or private collections but became separated from their documentation. Uncertainty on the provenance of their collections is one of the main arguments for museums to refuse their repatriation, while their detachment from their

cultural contexts and meanings remains to be the reason why their descendants demand their restitution.

### **The missionaries: collecting and the propagation of faith in the nineteenth century**

After explorers' romantic and celebratory accounts of the noble savage came a darker view fed by stories of sacrifice, cannibalism, idolatry, infanticide and paganism. While the first found on new lands a state of infantile innocence and noble dignity, devout Christians saw one of benighted savagery. And so they embarked in the mission of bringing Pacific islanders to salvation. In this project they constructed a new imaginary of indigenous peoples, one that suggested an assumed instability and ambivalence. As to spread propaganda on the need of the propagation of faith, accounts of dark barbaric pagans came along with depictions of the indigenous character as not totally repugnant but with an underlying humanity that made them capable of redemption. In these terms began in the late eighteenth century the history of evangelization of the Pacific, a history marked by an aggressive imposition of Christian ideas that dramatically impacted the lives of Pacific islanders. This history did not begin in Rapa Nui until the late nineteenth century.

In 1862 Spaniard slave raids disembarked on Rapa Nui taking over half of the population to work as slaves in the Islas Guaneras of Peru. At that time, exploitation of the guano deposits on the Peruvian coast was a prosperous undertaking that needed more labor and companies began then recruiting their workmen with the aid of adventurers. These new-style slave-traders made an expedition to Rapa Nui, of all Polynesian islands the closest to Peru. A flotilla arrived on December 12<sup>th</sup> of 1862. The few islanders that came aboard were seized, chained and thrown into the hold. The slavers then went ashore and drove to the beach all the natives they could find

with gunshots or attracting them to the shore by a display of presents to then capture them (Routledge 1919: 205-06; Métraux 1957: 46-7). Two thousand people were removed from the island. Among the prisoners were *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Kai Mako'i, his son Maurata, and some of the most learned men. Upon the intervention of Bishop Jaussen of Tahiti, the French Government negotiated the liberation of a number of Rapanui that were returned home. However, they had contracted smallpox and out of one hundred who were to be repatriated, only fifteen survived. On their return to the island in 1963 the survivors brought the disease, which spread rapidly among the population.

The following year, in 1864, the first missionary settled on the island, his mission benefiting from the disaster. Eugène Eyraud, along with a group of Fathers of the Holy Spirit, left Chile in 1862 to undertake the spiritual conquest of "Easter Island." The group landed first on Tahiti, where they learned of the raid that had just been inflicted in Rapa Nui. The missionaries hesitated to embark on an undertaking that seemed to have become pointless. But Eyraud refused to be discouraged and set off for Rapa Nui. A Rapanui named Pana, who had been carried off by slavers but managed to escape, accompanied him. The two of them reached Rapa Nui on January 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1864. Hippolyte Roussel, Gaspard Zumbohm and Théodule Escolan would subsequently join Eyraud in the mission.

The newcomers set up two missions: the first one established in 1866 and settled in Haŋa Roa; in 1868 a second mission was settled in Vaihu. At the time of the missionaries' arrival the population of the island was distributed throughout the coast with important settlements in Haŋa Roa, Mataveri, Haŋa Hahave, Haŋa Poukura, Vaihu, Akahaŋa, Hotu Iti, Haŋa Ho'onu and Haŋa Rau (Cristino 2011: 26). These settlements were gradually disarticulated by the missions in Vaihu and Haŋa Roa, which attracted a significant number of the population to those areas.

Some groups from the areas of Akahaŋa, Hotu Iti, Haŋa O Teo, Haŋa Ho'onu and Haŋa Rau resisted evangelization and stayed in their lands until 1868. That year, missionaries abetted by armed catechumens from all clans reduced them by force and brought them to the missions of Haŋa Roa and Vaihu. Those who were still resisting ended up converting for fear of new attacks by the converts (Edwards 2011: 184). In October of 1868 all Rapanui had been baptized, removed from their ancestral lands, and relocated in the missions of Haŋa Roa and Vaihu. While illnesses contracted by the Rapanui and brought by the group repatriated from Peru resulted on the vanishing of some lineages and knowledge on the property of some lands, the missionaries terminated to alter residency patterns in Rapa Nui. Europeans made well use of the crisis, acquiring those lands that had no clear owner.

In 1868 French adventurer Jean Baptiste Dutrou Bornier settled in the island with the authorization of the missionaries, beginning a regime of fear that also impacted Rapanui residency patterns and the links between lineages and their ancestral lands. Settling in Mataveru, Dutrou Bornier formed a commercial firm with a partner from Tahiti, John Brader, with the intention of acquiring lands in the island for ranching. Most of the land they acquired in exchange for cloth or pieces of cotton, a practice supported by the Mission with whom they would create the *Consejo de Estado de Rapa Nui*. This association between the missionaries and tyrant Dutrou Bornier controlled and arranged land purchase contracts. Missionaries becoming intensely involved in local politics, interests began to conflict and relations between Dutrou Bornier and the missionaries broke. The island divided into two sides: Dutrou Bornier and his armed followers, and the missionaries and their people. A war began in 1870 between Mataveru and the mission, which ended up with the expulsion of the missionaries from Rapa Nui.

The accounts of the missionaries were widely impacted by this political tension, their reports becoming stories of political success to demonstrate the triumph of the evangelization mission. Reports of baptisms were one measure of successful performance, another one being the demonstrable overthrow of pagan idolatry. In one of the letters he sent to the director of the *Anales des Sacrés-Cœurs* in 1879, Father Gaspardd Zumbohm described what he took to be the practice that resembled the most to the religious feeling, the *tapu*. As to demonstrate the mission success over politics, land tenure and paganism, he wrote:

The missionaries needed only to destroy the superstition of the “tapu” that the chiefs pronounced over some portions of land of which they wanted to reserve use. In order to show that these places were nothing sacred, we went on trampling them, the most audacious of those who had committed to us doing the same, after us (Zumbohm 2013: 151).

Comparable measures of success demonstrating the overthrow of paganism were accounts celebrating the Rapanui disregarding the *tapu* attached to the moai. As Zumbohm related:

In addition to these gigantic idols, our insulars had others of smaller sizes: they were wooden “moais,” that they could carry on the hand. Two objects of this type were carefully hidden for quite a long time after our arrival. Those possessing them surrounded them still with some superstitious respect, which we successfully combated, since we realized it (151).



These reports of success contained also narrations of the Rapanui handing these “idols” and other material culture over to the missionaries. Destruction and collecting of *moai* and artifacts was the objectification of the triumph of Catholicism over idolatry.

As discussed earlier with respect to voyagers, description, collecting and display of curiosities stood as an objectification of intellectual and experiential desire that spoke to the accomplishment of the voyage and the superiority of the voyager. They did not however intend to intervene in or restructure Pacific societies. But missionaries did. The mission was not merely to substitute Catholicism for paganism. As Thomas (1991: 153) explains, changing religion was to be accomplished in a broader social and moral terms: abolishing barbaric customs and attitudes inconsistent with Christian life. Professing adherence was then not enough to prove the adoption of the new doctrine; converts needed also to openly repudiate those customs.

Missionaries in Rapa Nui narrated these methods very explicitly. In a letter sent to MRP Rouchouze in 1868, Zumbohm related this episode:

A few days ago, our Mangarevan, police prefect, found Kutano with a pagan insign. He reprehended him, saying that his Christian feelings were quite doubtful. Take it, said Torometi, taking his feathers off, I had worn them for the last time only to have fun and then give them to you; take them and do whatever you want with them. The Mangarevan took the feathers and told him: I am still not sure about your sincerity –What do you need? –You have an “ua” [pole]. While you keep it, I will doubt of your feelings. Kutano enters his house, takes the pole, and hands it to the Mangarevo saying: do not think that this is difficult for me, because my fondness for paganism had completely disappeared (2013: 80).

Of particular convenience for the missionary discourse was their characterization of Rapanui religion as “idolatry.” “Idols” entered this discourse as the objectification of a wrong, false religion that needed then to be abolished. In his narration of the war between Mataveru and the mission, Father Hippolyte Roussel celebrates the triumph of his doctrine with the following episode from 1870: “Some young men from Vaihu looking for R.P. Gaspard find the wooden god and the two poles of the pagan authority. Mataveru is furious that the pagan god was stolen. Mr. Bornier demands it. The Indians of Vaihu refuse to give it back because it was placed there to reestablish the paganism. The god remains in their possession” (2013: 124). Embodying erratic ideas, idols needed to be detached from their “worshipping” contexts and either destroyed or displayed. While iconoclasm served as proof of Catholic superiority proving that idols could be destroyed without bad consequences, their preservation and display served as indicators of success.

In this sense, Hooper (2006: 65) defines this role of collected “idols” as “performance indicators.” Following Thomas (1991: 156) in that idols provided a powerful means through which conversion could be materially expressed and displayed, Hopper explains that captured idols were sent back to Europe and presented at mission museums and fundraising exhibitions as the most concrete evidence of the triumphs of the mission work. The message they spread through displayed idols was one of the natives abandoning paganism. In this discourse the removal of these artifacts was possible due to natives repudiation of their underlying beliefs.

But not only idols and ceremonial artifacts interested the missionaries. Enthusiast ethnographers, they also sought to contribute to scientific development. In this regard, missionaries on Rapanui were particularly eager to collect *kohau roŋo roŋo*. These inscribed

wooden tablets captivated the attention of their superiors in particular. The first to learn about these tablets, Eugène Eyraud informed his superiors in 1864 that the Rapanui kept in their homes various wooden figures and tablets of wood covered with hieroglyphic signs (2004: 21). Zumbohm narrated his efforts to acquire as many tablets as he could upon the request of Monsignor d'Axiéri, who was most interested in these pieces as they were “the first trace of writing we found in all the islands of Oceania” (2013: 153). He, along with Roussel also presented Bishop Jaussen of Tahiti with some of these tablets. In a letter addressed to the Bishop, Roussel wrote in 1870: “I send Your Greatness all the ‘ta rapanui’ I was able to find” (2013:131). With the collection he could form, Jaussen attempted the first classification of “Easter Island wood-carving art.” In a report describing this collection and its acquisition, Jaussen wrote in 1893 with respect to the tablets that after Zumbohm presented him with one of them, he “begged father Roussel to gather together for me what he could find of these tablets, which from now on are useless to the natives” (in Heyerdahl 1975: 47). In these terms the missionaries began a tradition of systematic collecting in Rapa Nui for research purposes, research often talked about in terms of its absolute worthlessness to Rapa Nui and its absolute usefulness to the West.

### **First scientific expeditions at the birth of national museums**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a series of museum-mandated expeditions were sent off to Rapa Nui under explicit collecting orders. A tradition set up by early explorers, collecting curios began as an objectification of the achievement of discovery voyages and a display of the lands discovered and the inferiority of their inhabitants. Nineteenth-century collecting on indigenous lands would come to assert discourses of racial superiority and enhance

the history of progress and expansion of colonial powers. While collecting idols helped the mission, collecting ethnographic and natural specimens helped shape the colonial enterprise. As agents of colonization, national museums to which collected materials were relocated became sites of power display that contributed to the creation of discourses of nationality. Ethnographic objects collected on indigenous lands were displayed back in the West as signifiers of progress and imperial power. Collection of human remains added to these discourses by providing the scientific means to prove the racial superiority of colonial powers and the need of colonizing indigenous lands. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, museums were actively forming comparative bioanthropological collections they analyzed as a means to describe and categorize racial diversity. Scientifically proving that races were of unequal cultural, physical and intellectual status, therefore subject to be placed within a natural hierarchy. Serving imperial expansion, such collections confirmed that colonization was a natural and biologically needed process.

*The Topaze and Lipton Palmer - United Kingdom, 1868*

In 1868 arrived on Rapa Nui the British battleship HMS Topaze under the command of Richard Ashmore Powell to carry out surveying work. The ship's surgeon, J. L. Palmer investigated the island archaeology and the native customs. In his reports from 1870 he wrote that he was shown a large variety of wooden effigies of great antiquity, carefully preserved by the natives. The Rapanui, he noted, wrapped them in *tapa* and either kept them away in niches or hung them from the ridgepoles of their huts. Although he was not successful in acquiring these pieces, he was able to secure two moai, now in the collections of the British Museum.

Palmer noted that the Rapanui not only preserved their treasures very carefully but that they were also very secretive about them. The few pieces that they showed him, their owners

retained them and once more made them disappear. As early as in the eighteenth century, voyagers had noticed the existence of mysterious caves that the Rapanui refused to let them in. Immediately after his arrival, Eugène Eyraud learned these caves served as a secure deposit for precious belongings. He wrote in his 1864 report,

Hiding places abound. There are deep caves, some natural and some artificial, all over the island, and they have very narrow entrances. Only a few stones are needed to cover and hide each entrance. At any given moment, the entire population of the island could disappear, hiding in these caves. Torometi proposed to put my belongings in one such cave to keep them safe (2004: 29).

These hideouts are called *'ana tao 'a*, treasure caves. With the help of missionaries and settlers, nineteenth-century officials sent out by national museums were the first to disclose and rob these and other hiding places, homes to the most precious family heritage and protector beings.

An emblematic case of these assaults was the robbery of moai Hoa Haka Nana 'Ia, one of the “musts” of the British Museum, displayed in the “Living and Dying” thematic room and reproduced in the various museum’s merchandising. Half buried and hidden inside a stone house at the ritual village of Oroŋo, Palmer could access this *moai* only with the help of missionaries. Gaspard Zumbohm narrated the transport of this *moai* from the house to the ship in a letter he wrote to the director of the *Anales des Sacrés-Cœurs* (notable in his narration is his use of the first person),

A British ship called Topaze had come to spend some days at our bay of Hanga Roa. The commodore of this embarkation wanted to take one of our “moai” to give it to the museum of London, but it was impossible to transport one of these enormous masses on board. Now, a league from our residency there was the bust of an idol half buried. The British admiral visited this monument and found it of his taste. Despite the reduced dimensions of this piece, the work of 500 crewmen aided by two or three hundred Indians was required to move it. The operation was benefitted from the new route that we recently finished, which did not prevent the idol from marking with the nose a long line on the land, despite of all of our precautions to avoid this accident. Our archaeologists feared that much of the captive god’s face were noticeable disfigured, but the enterprise resulted beyond their hopes; also to declare their joy they offered us a splendid meal (2013: 150-51).

Although Zumbohm narrated with joy that Hoa Haka Nana ’Ia did not get disfigured in his way to the ship, he did get damaged during his journey to London, his red and white painting being washed off in the sea. After his capture in 1868, the Lords of the Admiralty presented him to Queen Victoria, who gifted him to the British Museum in 1869.

Hoa Haka Nana ’Ia is now a British Museum’s must see, celebrated in the diverse museum’s guides as the vestige of a “colossal figure from a lost civilization” (British Museum map booklet, 2014). His description reads with regards to his name, “The crew recorded the islanders’ name for the statue, which is thought to mean ‘stolen or hidden friend’,” a translation that the museum and scholars writing on its collections have insisted to widespread (see for example Hooper 2006; Van Tilburg 2004, 2006). Reproduced consistently in subsequent

literature, even the Rapanui have adopted this name. My collaborators, however, agree that this translation is incorrect.

For them, a more accurate translation would be “The Friend that Brings Joy.” *Hoā* meaning “friend,” *haka nana*, “to gesticulate, to make faces” and *'ia*, “the one that,” the British must have misunderstood the his name as *Hoā Haka Na'a 'Ia*, which would mean The Friend that Hides. During the celebration of *Koro O Haka Nana 'Ia*, the moai would be transported from one clan to another for each clan to benefit from the joy he brings, his mana. *Hoā Haka Nana 'Ia* has his back carved with all main aspects of Rapanui worldviews. When he arrived to the ritual village of Oroño he served yet another role, that of instructing *Poki Tane* and *Poki Manu*, youths participating in the *Tanata Manu* ritual, on the principles of Rapanui worldviews. He resided inside one of the instructional houses at Oroño when the British captivated him. The friend that brings joy, *Hoā Haka Nana 'Ia* has been with almost no exception in every conversation on repatriation I have had on the island. Even if usually talking of the repatriation of human remains only, the question is always the same, what can we do to bring *Hoā Haka Nana 'Ia* back.

*The Corbeta O'Higgins and Ignacio Gana - Chile, 1870*

Two years after the visit of the *Topaze* the Chilean corvette *O'Higgins* arrived at Rapa Nui under the command of captain Ignacio Gana. The writings of Gana and particularly those of captain Luis A. Lynch Zaldívar illustrate the logic of colonial expansion. As we began to see in the British case, collaboration was crucial for the success of collecting missions, visitors needing the help of missionaries and settlers to acquire what they came looking for. When colonial expansion accompanied collecting missions, these collaborations took more active forms, the potential colonizer needing to develop relations of cooperation and compromise that would set the basis for future negotiations.

Part of these relations, Chilean Minister of War and Navy, Francisco Echaurren, wrote the Navy General Major with some instructions for the trip to Rapa Nui. Among his instructions were to bring the missionaries medicines and provisions and to take “one or two” of the “rude stone statues” for the museum (Echaurren 1870: 416). The missionaries responded to the government’s generosity. Lynch detailed in his 1870 report some of the gifts of Zumbohm and Roussel:

Particularly interesting are two tablets of “Toromiro” or acacia wood, carved with inscriptions or hieroglyphs, the only writings that have been found in Oceania ... A net made of fibers of a plant called “bourahó,” a cloak of “mahute,” weave made of this plant’s bark, a sort of indigenous papyrus. Some rolls of human hair braids, a crown of great feathers, similar to those of the Missouri Indians, three or four carved oars ... Several small figures of idols, chiefs’ scepters and insignias ... and other objects of less importance (2013: 425).

Dutrou Bornier would do his own assisting the Chileans to find the appropriate *moai* for the museum. Lynch narrated that, “the commander, captain Lynch and captain Gana have visited the missionaries and immediately, guided by French captain ... Msr. Dutrou Bornier have inspected two idols nearby the shore” (419). He reported they resigned to take the first due to being enormous. The second being smaller and in perfect shape, Lynch narrated with joy that Dutrou Bornier had gifted it to them. This moai ended up breaking in a fight between Rapanui people disputing ownership over Dutrou Bornier’s gift.



The Chileans noticed the rivalry between the missionaries and Dutrou Bornier, which Lynch described very explicitly in his report. After inviting both parties to dine on board, Lynch noted:

It is easy to notice the rivalry of interests between these two civilized entities ... Bornier aspires to be owner of the island for a wool business ... The missionaries have the same interest ... There was great interest for the Society [of Jesus] that the island could be made a farm ... that produced them the necessary provisions and shipments abundantly, at a low cost and yet with profit (426).

Revealing the economic interest behind the mission, Lynch described the war that resulted from this conflict and the subsequent division of the island into two bands, those supporting the mission and those aligned with Dutrou Bornier. “The former,” he noted, “distinguish for a feebleness that touches the extreme. There are seen daily in the chapel, praying out loud in the morning mass. The name of the missionaries inspires them a sort of terror” (426). Although openly denouncing the missionaries’ regime of fear, he admitted not to trust Dutrou Bornier’s enterprise, which he would advise to leave and not fight against the SSCC. A convenient opinion, the missionaries would become key collaborators on the Chilean occupation of Rapa Nui.

The political motivation in Lynch’s notes is made very clear. Adding to his critiques to the missionaries and Dutrou Bornier, the main threats to a potential Chilean occupation, in his sharp report Lynch also hurried to denounce the actions of the British. Describing the exchanges taking place on board, he wrote:

Almost everyone brings objects for swapping, small stone and wooden idols, hens, rabbits, shells, chiefs' scepters, etc., and what they ask the most for exchange are clothes, pants ... They show themselves distrustful, not giving away a thing until they receive the exchange. This happens because the crews of warships have frequently deceived them. Evidently, the *Topaze*, British ship that preceded us, has made them lost (420).

Not only do Lynch's notes complicate the widespread idea of collections having resulted from fair trade in the Pacific; they also posit to public scrutiny the actions of those who preceded the Chileans in occupying or visiting Rapa Nui.

Strong statements by Lynch and Gana on a supposedly foreseeable vanishing of Rapanui people imply Chile's interest in colonial expansion. Lynch wrote in this regard that, "one can predict the vanishing of this race if not coming to their assistance with great means" (424). Gana corroborated Lynch's idea, stressing in his statement the preoccupying state of degradation he saw. He wrote in 1870,

Those people that made the idols, the walls, that wrote their tablets with beautiful characters and carved in wood countless figures, were moving towards progress and civilization, and should be today enjoying the well-being that the industry and the arts offer. But on the contrary, there has been a degrading setback that has driven them to the most absolute nudity, negligence, misery and ignorance, and converted them to the most horrible state of barbarism: cannibalism (2013: 447).

Similar to the strategies employed by the missionaries throughout the Pacific, we see in the Chilean officials' statements a dual discourse implying both an encouraging potential and an imperative need, the vanishing race stereotype being coined as a noble motivation justifying occupation and colonization. The moai collected will be for this dual discourse an objectification of what would soon become Chilean colonial expansion.

*La Flore and Pierre Loti - France, 1872*

In 1872 arrived on Rapa Nui the French warship *La Flore*, under the command of Admiral de Lapelin. Vividly kept in the memory of Rapa Nui, this visit is remembered for its vandalism, the French robbing a *moai*, sawing his head in order to be able to transport it and destroying one other statue in the attempt. Not yet the famed poet under the pseudonym Pierre Loti, Julien Viaud was a midshipman on board. He illustrated his visit in numerous drawings showing the island landscape and burials along with some ideas on Rapanui rituals and lifestyles. As derived from his own accounts, Loti proved to be an assiduous collector and smart trader.

*La Flore* arrived soon after the war between the mission and Dutrou Bornier had reached its climax, resulting in the expulsion of the missionaries from the island. Only 175 Rapanui stayed under the rule of Dutrou Bornier, the rest of the population leaving with the missionaries to Mangareva. With a total control over Rapa Nui, between 1872 and 1877 Dutrou Bornier converted the island into a ranch that had as tenant farmers the majority of its indigenous inhabitants. Although not more favorable for the Rapanui than the situation they were living with the mission ruling, what we learn from Loti's notes and illustrations is that upon the expulsion of the missionaries, the Rapanui rapidly restituted the customs that the mission had forbidden, embracing them once again openly and freely.

His trading aptitudes allowed Loti to get a closer insight to Rapanui private lives. As to ensure favorable exchanges, Loti made a few acquaintances that let him in the houses of some illustrious Rapanui, experiences that he recorded in detail in his diaries. Despite the romantic fantasies in his descriptions, his notes and illustrations do, nonetheless, provide relevant information with respect to Rapanui attitudes toward their *tao 'a* (*RAP.* treasures) that Loti and the French were so keen to obtain. Not content with the many *moai* he acquired, Loti wanted a striking headdress too. As he wrote in his diaries in 1872,

I want to obtain one of the meter-wide headdresses made of black feathers that I have seen worn by some of the elders. But these men are difficult to approach and I explain what I want to Houga. [...] He brings me to several huts, in which ancients with blue faces and white teeth are kneeling, as motionless as mummies. Initially, they don't even seem to notice my presence and one of them is busy pulling teeth out of a human skull to give new shiny eyes to his idol. In this particular hut there are, indeed, some very large feather headdresses, attached below the roof, but the old man wants an insanely high price for them: my white trousers and my cadet's jacket with its gold trim, that is to say, my new jacket since I sold my other one yesterday (2004: 83).

Like the illustrations of the houses he visited, his notes on this episode evidence restored attitudes toward ideas, traditions and customs the missionaries attempted to abolish. The scene of the old man working on new eyes for his moai speaks to the maintenance of ontological and intersubjective values attached to the moai. That he is using human bone for his moai's eyes stands for the survival of the old tradition of keeping the skull of illustrious ancestors to benefit

from their mana. That he values his headdresses and decides to keep them shows that his customs are no longer ridiculed and a reason of shame, but rather valuable and honorable. The free profession of these restored attitudes is also evidenced in one of Loti's drawings of a Rapanui house showing two small stone moai. In the absence of any missionaries, moai were openly placed back on each side of the entrance as guardians of the house. The collections formed by Loti and his fellows subsequently reached private collections.

The true reason of the visit, Loti noted, was "to take one of the gigantic stone idols to the Musée du Louvre." Loti's talent allowed him to participate of this great event, as he could come only "on condition that I bring a detailed sketch of the marae, made before it is disturbed by our activities" (85). A hundred men marched up to the ahu. The islanders have assembled to watch them. After an hour of work, Loti wrote,

everything on the platform has been knocked about by the tools and the levers that we brought with us. The statues are even more damaged than they were yesterday, and it is difficult to know which one to choose. One statue, which appears to be lighter and less badly damaged than the others, is lying with its head down and its nose in the dirt. In order to see its face, we should have to turn it over. The levers, maneuvered with loud shouts, succeed in pivoting the statue around its axis and the statue rotates onto its back with a loud thud. The sight of the statue rolling over and falling down again causes the natives to dance even faster and more furiously, with an even louder clamor of voices. Twenty savages jump onto the statue's belly and dance like madmen... The bodies of their distant ancestors, sleeping under the piled-up stones, have never heard such a commotion (86).

He subsequently narrated the sawing of the chosen moai. After toppling a few of them, “it is decided that we shall take the statue that has been turned over. However, we shall not take its entire body, only its head. The head, by itself, is huge, weighing four or five tons. The job of sawing off the head begins” (86-7). Softening an account that seems too conscious on the French vandalism and disrespect, Loti quickly offered an explanation: “The men of Rapa Nui, who treat their little fetishes and little gods with such veneration, seem to have no respect at all for these tombs; they have no memories of those who are buried beneath them” (82), he ventured to affirm on his second day on the island. The French desecrating the burials of this disrespectful people was something absolutely acceptable.

Like his predecessors, Loti too resorted to the vanishing race hypothesis. The Rapanui did not have memory of their buried ancestors not because they were a forgetful people but simply because they were a different race that nothing had to do with the master carvers, the latter being “an earlier race of people that is now extinct” (102). One of his first descriptions of the island was that of one “planted with monstrous tall statues, carved by an unknown race of people that has either disappeared or dispersed, and its history remains an enigma” (63). Carved “with a childlike lack of skill” (77), the monstrous tall statues his compatriots worked so hard to bring back to France were, in his view, clearly not the work of the Rapanui people but of a “race that disappeared without leaving any other mementos in human history” (96). Not only did Loti affirm the death of the culture that had carved, raised and transported the *moai*; he also predicted the vanishing of the culture he saw. These “savage singers,” prisoners on their treeless waterless island, he wrote, “are a condemned race, even there in Polynesia among their maternal islands. They are part of a dwindling humanity and their unique destiny is to disappear” (79). The

vanishing race stereotype used, once more, as a noble motivation for looting cultural property. Thanks to the French, the world would see in civilized Paris the vestiges of a dead culture and of another one soon to vanish. The *moai* they sewed is now at the *Musée du Quai Branly*, Paris.

*The Seignelay and Alphonse Pinart - France, 1877*

Preoccupied about Rapa Nui's situation under the rule of Dutrou Bornier, France sent another expedition. In 1877 the *Seignelay* arrived on Rapa Nui under the command of commander Lafontaine and captain Aube. On board was French adventurer, philologist and ethnologist Alphonse Pinart. In his six-day visit, he attempted study of the island and his inhabitants and, like Loti, collected a large number of objects that he subsequently gifted to the Trocadéro Museum. Unlike his predecessors, he proved to be most interested in human remains, his diaries occupied mostly with notes on Rapanui burials. With the assistance of surgeon Dr. Thoulon, he formed an important collection of *ivi tupuna*, also donated to the Trocadéro Museum.

Pinart's being the first more systematic collection missions of many to come, immediately after landing he began identifying burials for excavation. On shore, he noticed a "little tumulus," based on his descriptions and sketches, a *tupa* in Haŋa Ho'onu, and in the vicinity, "a large quantity of stones that had been piled up in an orderly manner and marked the site of ancient graves" (2004: 108), the *pipi horeko* of that same area. "The smell of dead bodies that wafted around us," he wrote, "suggested that a burial had occurred recently. Soon we were certain that such was the case and we learned later that the natives took advantage of ancient graves to bury their dead" (108). His notes proving, once more, that upon the expulsion of the missionaries the Rapanui had rapidly restituted part of their funerary practices.

Soon after these preliminary observations, the collecting endeavor began. Continuing the exploration of the area, they arrived at the village of Ovahe, where they “noticed a long wall of stones that had been piled with great regularity upon one another” (111). And upon detailed measurements, he wrote that, “there were bones mixed with the construction materials and Monsieur Thoulon, the ship’s doctor on the *Seignelay*, was able to dig out twenty skulls and two complete skeletons (111). In the next days they explored other areas, among them *Vaihu*, which they visited a second time planning to excavate an *ahu*. Pinart wrote in his diary,

This pakaopa [sic] was very similar in all respects to the ones that we have already described. Under the statues, which were lying down, their faces resting on the upper side of the terrace, there were two bodies that were still wrapped in straw matting, which had been secured at both ends. The bodies had been placed in the open space below the statues (127).

Along with the wrapped bodies, they found a large number of skulls and bones. All of which they took, marked and gifted to the museum.

Like his predecessors’, Pinart’s notes speak very clearly to his attitudes toward *ivi tupuna*. Resorting once more to the assumption of a vanished race, their collecting was urgent. As he hypothesized,

The present inhabitants of the Easter Island, as we had seen, had retained no memory at all of those who had come before them. This total absence of traditions suggests, perhaps,



that the sculptors of long ago might not even have been the ancestors of the present-day Kanacs and that these generations had disappeared entirely (122-3).

The vanishing stereotype being embraced again as the reason and justification for collecting, Pinart's notes also provide an insight into how Rapanui people reacted to the removal of their ancestors' remains and how Pinart was well aware of their objection. This broad awareness led him to conduct his collecting activities in secret by fear of retaliation. He wrote in this regard,

In order to transport our finds more easily, the sailors who had come with us got the idea of stringing together the skulls and bones and then, after distributing them among themselves, they hung around their necks like necklaces. You have never seen anything as unusual and picturesque than the sight of our fine sailors gravely wearing this new type of decoration, walking ahead of us in their funereal attire towards the village. However, since we were afraid of scaring the Kanacs, we decided to make a detour around Mataveru and to head towards the port of Hanga Piko, where we would hide our booty until the following day under the rocks and ruins (127).

But smart enough as to avoid any judgments, he hurried to clarify that, "in spite of our precautions, the natives had caught sight of us and we were absolutely astonished when, a little while later, they came up to us carrying all kinds of bones, which they gave us willingly in exchange for a little tobacco" (127). Presenting the actions of a few as the generalized feeling of an entire people, Pinart, just as those who came before him and the ones to follow, made convenient use of these isolated episodes. This supposedly lack of interest, combined with

repetitive notes on the vanishing of a race, made the collecting of indigenous remains a practice that contrasted an absolute worthlessness to the indigenous world with an absolute need to science. While condemned to destruction in the hands of their descendants, in those of science these collections would preserve vanishing knowledges for humanity.

Mostly concerned about his scientific findings, Pinart's diaries also provide some insight into the ethnologist's political ideas, the latter never completely isolated from collecting missions. The *Seignelay* sent by France to explore the island's situation under the rule of Dutrou Bornier, the French would soon learn about the death of their compatriot. Asking around soon after landing, the Rapanui informed them that the Frenchman had died falling drunk from his horse. Aware of the tyrant's practices, they questioned this version and assumed he had been murdered. Though Pinart chose to celebrate his deceased fellow:

A devout and courageous sea captain who had not been afraid to come and live on an inhospitable island with the aim of making it a better place. Having made his home for several years on the island, he had lived to see his efforts rewarded and had shown the Kanacs a future full of promise, which had, perhaps, with the death of this patient settler, evaporated forever (110).

On the fourth day of their visit, Koreto, Dutrou Bornier's widow welcomed the French visitors in Mataveri. Dutrou Bornier having proclaimed himself king of Rapa Nui, the "reigning queen" offered her dead husband's compatriots accommodation at her residency in Mataveri. In his narration of the European dinner that Koreto gave for them, Pinart took the opportunity to suggest the great potentials of Rapa Nui for French colonial expansion:

Koreto told us how much she and her people wished to come under French protection, and she did not disguise her aversion for the Chilean, the Americans and the Germans—an aversion shared, we must immediately add, by the island notables who were present during this conversation. He begged us to write several letters to Tahiti and also to write to the captain of the *Seignelay* asking him to come the next day (126).

This commentary on politics within his scientific report is not to be read as a random observation. The race paradigm of the time present in Pinart's notes, his collecting would provide the colonial power with the specimens to scientifically prove racial superiority, thus urging colonial expansion.

The hundreds of ivi tupuna Pinart acquired are currently held at the *Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle* in Paris. Pinart's collection was initially relocated to the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*, the first anthropological museum in Paris. The museum closed in 1935, when the Trocadéro Palace was demolished. At the same site opened in 1937 the *Musée de l'Homme*, to which the ivi tupuna, along with the Trocadéro collection, were transferred. Currently undergoing major renovations, the museum's ethnographic collections are housed at the *Musée du Quai Branly*, while its natural and anthropological collections were transferred to the *Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle*.

#### *The Hyäne and Commander Geiseler - Germany, 1882*

After the murder of Dutrou Bornier in 1877 the Rapanui regained control of their own land, but only for a short period until Alexander P. Salmon arrived from Tahiti to succeed Dutrou Bornier and manage the Brander ranch holdings on the island. Half Tahitian, Salmon could

communicate with the Rapanui in their own language, which he had learned from the Rapanui in Tahiti. He observed very rigorously the local customs and worldviews, and became the chief interpreter, informant and guide for the visitors to come next, especially those coming in scientific collecting missions.

The first of these visitors was Commander Geiseler, who arrived in 1882 on board of the German sloop *Hyäne*. The first German contact with Rapa Nui, and at the special request of the Kaiserliches Museum, the Germans visited the island with the objective of conducting the first ethnological studies among the Rapanui. Systematic collecting was also a primary aim of the visit. In his four-day stay, Geiseler undertook organized investigations, and Salmon helped him secure a large collection that was subsequently distributed to various imperial museums throughout Germany.

With no special training in anthropology, Geiseler aimed at compiling a document relating to all aspects of Rapa Nui life and providing the first detailed ethnographic description by anyone. In contrast to his predecessors and in accordance with his instructions, Geiseler treated the pieces not as curios or art objects but as ethnological specimens. To this end, he compiled a report identifying the significance and use of each item in his collection of over 250 craft and technological items plus about fifty human crania and two hair samples (Ayres 1995: 11). Geiseler's was the first mission to the island with specific instructions for ethnological collecting.

Geiseler's report reveals once more the Rapanui living in accordance to their worldviews and customs. Seeing many of the pieces he collected still in use, in this connection he affirmed that the influence of the expelled missionaries had passed away, leaving almost no traces. He

noted in this regard that chiefs used their staffs and clubs; that burials were highly respected *tapu* sites and the moai vividly honored, considered to be alive and to have mana:

The honoring of these idols must have been widespread because even today every older Rapanui man knows well the names of each of many of the statues ... and displays great respect toward them. Even though present inhabitants claim to be Christians, the idols are still considered to have some special attributes and to possess great powers. Furthermore, they view the tipped over statues as being still alive; only the broken idols are thought of as dead and without any powers whatsoever (35).

He explained how he came to this conclusion by narrating the different obstacles had in their collecting efforts. When they tried to take a chip from the ear of a *moai*, a Rapanui accompanying him would not let them. Calling each *moai* by his name, “he said that the stone idol was tabu,” Geiseler wrote, “and another man from the escort, a Tahitian, explained that the Kanakas—meaning the people of Rapanui—would cry, if something happened to injure one of these idols” (22). In spite being very aware of the Rapanui objection to even the touch of their *moai*, they attempted to take one back to Germany. “During the whole tour we directed ourselves to the problem of finding a stone idol that was suitable for taking along with us” (30), he wrote, and continued explaining that the only reason they did not was because of their dimensions, which made their transportation impossible.

Similarly, Geiseler’s report evidences the *tapu* of ahu too. Noting that the Rapanui still used them for burials, Geiseler stressed that ahu were “strictly tabu since they are designated by tabu signs and consequently they are not permitted to be used for further excavations” (22).

Connecting the *tapu* with notions of land property, he added later that, “every piece of land here and every old burial has its particular owner without whose permission the land cannot be disturbed” (29). Once more disregarding the *tapu* and the Rapanui’s objection to the disturbance of the ancestors, he insisted and “since it appeared to be important that we should excavate precisely here in the old burials, the permission of an attending native was purchased for a few dollars; soon thereafter several skulls were uncovered by the pickaxes and shovels of the cutter crew” (29). He marked these and other *ivi tupuna*, adding them as specimens to his collection of ethnographic objects under the entry “86 A box of human skulls.”

As for his “ethnographic objects,” Geiseler took close note of the uses of the different artefacts he collected along with their ontological relevance for the Rapanui. With regard to wooden moai, he explained that during major celebrations the entire population would wear their moai and paint their bodies to participate in the parade to the designated place. “Each person,” he added pointing out the ontological relevance of the images, “drags along as many wooden idols as he could make by this time. The more idols a man wears, it is that much better for him and that much more will his prayers be of use with the chief god” (67). Accordingly, acquiring old wooden moai was not easy. They were family possessions that the Rapanui guarded zealously to benefit from their mana. Nonetheless, and always with the help of Salmon, he managed to acquire many of wooden and stone moai of great antiquity.

Although Geiseler’s report does provide relevant information regarding Rapanui attitudes toward their material culture and the ontological importance they attach to the pieces the ancestors and themselves had created, Geiseler articulated these data as being first and foremost pivotal for the scientific endeavor though apparently useless to those who produced the materials described. Concluding his report, and despite everything he had noted above, he celebrated that,

In general accordance with our wishes, the collection includes examples of everything that is still available on Easter Island and has examples of artifacts, as far as it was possible, in duplicates. The collection includes many valuable ethnographic items which are no longer made and are the last ones that can still be had on the island (81-82).

In what relates to Ivi Tupuna, he highlighted the scientific importance of their collection:

Also it seemed important for anthropological purposes and for comparisons to obtain the greatest number of skulls possible; Mr. Salmon took on the task of having the natives collect a trunk full of skulls, about 50 of them, for which the relatively low price of 10 pounds sterling had to be paid (82).

A discourse we still hear all too often, the ancestors of a people would be of better use serving scientific purposes within a museum's setting than resting in the places to which they historically and ontologically belong.

*The Mohican and William Thomson - United States, 1886*

Four years later, in 1886, arrived on Rapa Nui the U.S. Mohican. On board was Paymaster William J. Thomson, who had received instructions to undertake investigations desired by the Smithsonian Institution, and to bring away a moai for the museum. Like Geiseler, he conducted his investigation with the aide of Salmon, and also consulted with old Rapanui that had survived the slave raids and the mission. From the former, he was able to acquire a large collection for the Smithsonian Institution. From the latter, he obtained the ethnographic data he

included in his report, concerning most especially information about burials and place-names. Guided by his consultants and assisted by Salmon, Thomson accomplished the first archaeological inventory of coastal ceremonial, burial sites.

Interested in the economic value of Rapanui material culture, Salmon introduced in the island the notion of commercial art. With the purpose of establishing a Rapanui art business in Tahiti, he motivated skilled carvers to create duplicates of “old relics” for sale. In his enterprise, he also amassed an important collection of pieces of great antiquity. Thomson narrated in his report that nearly all of his first night on shore was devoted to the purchase and cataloguing of pieces from Salmon’s collection. He acquired duplicates of all the articles in Geiseler’s collection and of those collected by the British (1889: 477). With the help of Salmon, he was also able to obtain old *kohau roŋo roŋo*, the wooden inscribed tablets, and some other antique pieces that, as he reported, emerged from hiding only after great persuasion.

Like his predecessors’, Thomson notes also speak to the resistance of the Rapanui people to abandon their worldviews and customs. He noted that although at the time of his visit all Rapanui had professed Christianity and part of their customs had been replaced by the ceremonies of the church, he stressed that, “since the departure of the missionaries there has been a tendency to return to the old ideas, and many superstitions and practices are mingled with their religion” (465). In particular with regards to burials, he noted that “Christianized natives of today still regard this [the ahu] as a favorite burial-place,” and that “they place their dead in receptacles filled with the remains of their ancestors” (508). Although Thomson attributed the continuing use of the ahu as burial places to the Rapanui having “neither the ambition nor the industry to construct tombs for themselves” (508), from later accounts (Heyerdahl 1975: 66) we learn otherwise. Forced to bury their dead according to the Catholic rites and in the Catholic



cemetery, the Rapanui would come at night to secretly excavate the bodies and carried away for deposit in an ahu or secret cave on the land to which the deceased belonged.

Thomson's ethnographic research led him one and again to connect material culture to Rapanui worldviews. Yet he opted for explaining the ontological relevance of burials and artifacts as mere superstition. He found the Rapanui to be "superstitious to an extent that was extraordinary, and they were constantly under the influence of dread from demons or supernatural beings (470). This extraordinary superstition he connected it to nearly every description he provided of burial places and ethnographic objects. He noted, for example, that fishhooks made of bones of deceased fishermen "were thought to exert a mysterious influence over the denizens of the deep" (470) and stone moai to be "deified spirits" (469). Through this extraordinary superstition too he explained the Rapanui objection to the disturbance of burials and hiding places.

In his notes he made constant references to the sealing of both burials and caves, yet he reported to have excavated several ahu and accessed a few *'ana tao'a*, treasure caves. He narrated in his report the excavation of a large number of sites and includes visual descriptions of the many human remains found beneath them. Three of which he catalogued towards the end of his notes as "three specimens obtained from the King's platform [that] have hieroglyphs engraved upon them, which signify the clan to which they belonged" (538). As for caves, he noted to have reached many after difficult and dangerous climbing, and some others, with their entrances intentionally concealed, they had found them by accident. One such cave was hiding a small moai of three feet high, "a splendid specimen of work [that] could be easily removed to the boat-landing at Tongariki" (491). Along with him, he removed a second moai. To undo earlier expeditions, he also collected a *pukao*, red-scoria made moai topknots or headdresses. The three

of them are now held in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, along with the rest of his impressive collection.

Guided by the British's findings, Thomson was also interested in the stone houses of the ceremonial village of Orongo. He destroyed many to get some samples for the museum. Aiming to remove doorposts "covered with hieroglyphs and rudely carved figures" (480), he reported that much excavation was necessary even before examination could be made. He took two. Soon after celebrating that "the majority of the houses at Orongo are in fair state of preservation and bear evidence of having been occupied at no very remote period" (480) he wrote that three other houses "were demolished at the expense of great labor and the frescoed slabs obtained (480). Brought to the Smithsonian, in 1950 the institution returned a set of these painted stone slabs. This repatriation was one of the first in the Smithsonian's history and the first one in Rapanui's.

Underlying Thomson's collecting mission we find, once more, the stereotype of the vanishing race coined. In addition to the "spiritualized" tone of his notes deeming the highly complex ontological relevance of Rapanui material culture as superstition, towards the end of his report, he stated the scientific significance of his mission very clearly:

Tribes flourished, were conquered and passed out of existence, without leaving a trace behind them except perhaps, a shadowy tradition. The natives in this genial climate have always dwelt in rude structures of thatch and cane, which after a few years of abandonment would decay and leave no sign behind, unless it be a few broken implements lying about (539).

In this view, the past of indigenous peoples would have vanished without a trace had it not been for these collecting missions and the scientific endeavor. An argument that we will find repeatedly in following accounts and that we continue to hear all too often when it comes to the repatriation debate.

### **Collecting, museums, and colonization**

The first documented collected *tao'a* on Rapa Nui we find it back in the eighteenth century as part of a series of discovery and exploratory voyages that came to inscribe Rapa Nui into Western historiography and imaginary. Between these early visits dating back to 1722, the Peruvian slave raids of 1862-1864, and subsequent introduction of Catholicism in 1864, at least fifty-five ships called on Rapa Nui. These visits were largely random events, the duration of each being from less than twenty-four hours to about seventy hours. Since the arrival of the missionaries this situation changed, 1868 marking the beginning of a series of organized collecting or scientific-oriented expeditions sent off by colonial powers to Rapa Nui. Each expedition published scientific reports, which documented a systematic collecting of Rapanui *tao'a* and *ivi tupuna*. Some of these collections reached private hands; some others were relocated to national and imperial museums as an objectification of colonial expansion.

As agents of colonization, national museums became sites of power display that contributed to the creation of discourses of nationality. In his examination of the formation of the exhibitionary complex, Tony Bennett (1996) analyses the museum as an institution that articulates power and knowledge relations. Defining the exhibitionary complex as “a set of cultural technologies concerned to organize a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry” (84), Bennett explains that the exhibitionary complex provided a context for the display of power and

knowledge. Bennett argues that exhibitions of materials collected on indigenous lands contributed to the creation and assertion of discourses of nationality through display strategies that presented such materials as signifiers of progress, and by showcasing progress itself “as a collective national achievement” (89). The display of indigenous human remains, “artefacts,” and even indigenous people themselves accounted for the imperial power of the nation-state. The rhetoric of power was clear and materialized in its ability to organize an order of things and to delimit a place for the people in relation to that order: nationalized citizenry was placed on this side of power, on the side of progress and empire; those on display, on the other.

While the first collecting expeditions sent off to Rapa Nui focused on the collection of moai, a second period of such expeditions included systematic collecting of human remains. Collection of human remains added to museums articulation of knowledge and power relations and nationalist discourses by providing the scientific means to prove the racial superiority of colonial powers and the need of colonizing indigenous lands. Helping shape the colonial enterprise, collecting of indigenous human remains during colonial era for scientific research was conducted within the race paradigm, as it provided the means to distinguish and identify race through quantitative measurement of skeletal material. By revising the beginnings of collection of human remains on Rapa Nui, this chapter began to illustrate how concepts of race and identity have been used as elements of empowerment and disempowerment, and demonstrate how this history has not only been embedded within power relations between the West and Rapa Nui’s indigenous population but has also reaffirmed and enforced such relations.

As Cressida Fforde (2002; 2004) explains in her analysis of the collecting of Aboriginal human remains, during the nineteenth century until the first half of the twentieth century museums amassed collections to represent skeletally the different races of the world. Races were

then measured, compared and analyzed to understand human origins and variations. Comparative analysis of these collections took place “at a time when perceptions of human diversity were deeply rooted in notions of biological determinism and racial worth” (2004: 1). These notions being themselves entangled within the contemporary colonial ideology and practice, colonialism facilitated the acquisition of indigenous human remains, at the same time that their collecting supported and helped shape the colonial enterprise (2002: 29). Providing data for the description and categorization of racial diversity, scientific analysis of indigenous human remains came to demonstrate that human groups had different cultural, physical and intellectual status, therefore subject to be placed within a natural hierarchy. This type of analysis, Fforde insightfully notes, “helped corroborate the notion that colonization was a ‘natural’ and indeed biologically necessary, process” (2002: 29). As discussed throughout this chapter, perceptions and constructions of identity embedded within the race paradigm abound in the history of collecting in Rapa Nui. Proving Fforde’s analysis, museum-mandated expeditions to Rapa Nui reached their climax during a time of occupation uncertainty, between missionary settling and Chilean definite occupation and colonization in 1888. After Chilean occupation, collecting missions would land on Rapa Nui under different terms and displaying renewed discourses.

In this chapter I discussed collecting activities resulting from discovery and exploratory voyages, the Catholic mission, and scientific and collecting expeditions. All facets of the modernist project of imperial expansion, I presented the collection of Rapanui *ivi tupuna* and *tao’a* as an objectification of such project and a justification for the colonial enterprise. In the next chapter I will continue to revisit the history of collecting on Rapa Nui, focusing on the period between the Chilean annexation and the creation of the local museum. Interweaving collecting activities with political events, the following chapter will examine how scientific and

collecting expeditions in Rapa Nui impacted Chilean political agenda. While the period analyzed in the last section of this chapter culminated with the annexation of Rapa Nui to Chilean territory, subsequent expeditions would motivate the development of Chilean public policies concerning the protection of cultural heritage. While the annexation was a political response to the colonization of the Pacific, Chile determined not to be left without a share, the passing of cultural heritage legislation was a neo-colonial nationalist maneuver to claim and safeguard indigenous cultural heritage as national property.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### 'ANA TAO'A

Because *ivi tupuna* and *tao 'a*, ancestral remains and treasures, have *mana*, people usually hid them. Common hiding places are *'ana tao 'a*, family caves where people kept their family's *tao 'a*. Inherited and passed on from generation to generation, family *tao 'a* are highly precious. They tell the history of a family and preserve the *mana* of illustrious ancestors. As to keep them safe, people found the most remote caves and made an impressive work of engineering to conceal their entrances so they would go unnoticed. Some *'ana tao 'a* can be accessed only through the cliffs, some others from the sea. Secret caves' owners entrusted them to the family's protector *varua*. They look after such caves and prevent intruders from finding them. With such precautions, many *'ana tao 'a* remained unreachable to collectors; some others were disclosed; and some are still there, secret and untouched. Some people are still trying to find them, but generally the Rapanui are very secretive about them. Below I present an account by Sorobabel Fati of one such *'ana tao 'a*. Needless to say, these caves are *tapu*. To respect that, place names are deleted in this transcription.

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Some caves are full of things. But each is a system in its own. Because of the family. For example, my family has two caves, but I cannot go in. My father told me that only the owner of the cave can enter. And we respect that ... There are many caves here. There is a cave at an *ahu* [*RAP.* burial platform] in [REDACTED] ... My father showed me that cave and told me half of it belongs to the family of his father and his mother. He showed me the place and told me not to go in. "Leave it there. It is old thing. Leave it there or problem will happen." I never went. Because

it is serious what he said. Varua are dangerous. People that don't own that cave, for example, disappear. That happened here. Things happened to many people ... There are many people who go in the varua system and die. You don't even notice but then night comes and all gets started. Some people might not believe. But then they do something, and then it comes.

There is a cave close to the beach of [REDACTED]. This man is still alive. He works in Sasipa now. This man found this cave near the beach of [REDACTED]. He told me that when we went down [the beach] to throw his fishing net in the morning, he saw a cat. And the cat, when it saw him, it run and vanished. But he saw the point where it vanished. He went there and started to open the hole the cat had entered through. He took out the rocks and went down. It had paenja steps. He went down, he told me—all kinds of toromiro [wooden sculptures] inside. But, imagine! He told me that at the very same moment he saw all those toromiro, he told me, he saw [the cave] has two *moeña* inside. [They were] in the upper part, on a place that is like to put things. Two *moeña* means that there are two dead people that they wrapped up with *moeña* ...

We were working there at that time, working for CORFO [National Production Development Corporation]. So he came to tell me because we were both living there, in this old house that is gone now. So we went down right away. We went and when we got there, then he said, "Wow, where is it?" he started looking but didn't find the cave. And so I told him, "Maybe you're just *reo reo* [lying]." Then he sat on the rock and showed me the place—that he was coming from the beach when the cat run and vanished, he told me. And right there where he was sitting, he said, was the entry. "Well, so where is it now?" I said. And then I realized. So I told him, "Look, so it is the very varua, the cave's owner, who sealed the cave back, so that you don't see that cave ever again" ... That's the key of the cave system. One can't go and enter because the owner can make things happen to the people who enter ... You can't go enter places you



don't belong to. Just like my father told me ... The varua system is dangerous here. Today too, all the same. Some Rapanui might not believe but it is here.

**†Sorobabel Fati Teao**

Rapa Nui, March 2013

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BETWEEN MANA AND POWER: A HISTORY OF COLLECTING IN RAPA NUI

#### PART II. A WORLD'S HERITAGE

In the previous chapter I began to revise the history of collecting on Rapa Nui focusing on early voyages, the Catholic mission, and scientific and collecting expeditions. All facets of the modernist project of imperial expansion, I presented those first collecting efforts as an objectification of such project and a justification for the colonial enterprise. Expanding on this analysis, I will here continue to revisit this history focusing on archaeological and ethnographic expeditions and restoration projects. While the first missions justified imperial expansion and facilitated colonialism, twentieth-century collecting and archaeological activity on Rapa Nui came as an instrument for Chile to assert its sovereignty on the island and safeguard the economic interests of the nation-state. Collecting of indigenous heritage has never been dissociated from contemporary global and local politics. As we shall see next, museum-mandated expeditions sent off to Rapa Nui culminated with Chile's colonial expansion and the occupation of Rapa Nui, while post-annexation expeditions terminated to secure Chile's colonial presence on the island. By engaging scientific and political discourses motivating post-annexation collecting and restoration projects along with Chile's responses to these activities, this chapter furthers the examination of the founding principles of both the scientific and political opposition to the repatriation of Rapanui ancestors.

Critical to this continued revision, special attention will be given to individual, national and global responses to the collecting of Rapanui *tao'a* and *ivi tupuna*, Rapanui treasures and ancestral remains. The first section of this chapter will be devoted to the three post-annexation

archaeo-ethnographic expeditions with explicit collecting purposes: the British *Mana* Expedition, the Franco-Belgian Expedition and the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition. Included in this section will be a revision of the collecting, ethnographic and archaeological mission of German Capuchin Sebastian Englert, responsible for the re-establishment of the Catholic mission on Rapa Nui. Focusing on first hand accounts, this discussion will emphasize attention to ethnographic collaborations and the contrasting responses to collection. Most of these reports considered today the baseline of Rapa Nui studies, in sharp contrast with their insights into Rapanui worldviews are shared ideas on a vanishing memory. Integral to this revision, in this section I will discuss the impact that these missions had in Chile's political agenda and the subsequent measures to protect national heritage.

Expanding on the analysis of these protective measures, in the second section I will examine how a people's heritage turns to be the heritage of humanity. To this end, I will briefly revise some main archaeological restoration projects leading to UNESCO's designation of Rapa Nui as a World Heritage Site. I will analyze how the very same museological values and methods underlying collecting missions came to be extended to living persons, their knowledges, artifacts, social worlds, and living spaces. Concluding the revisionist reading of the history of collecting on Rapa Nui, this chapter will demonstrate how the collection and conservation as its renewed form have historically been a means to preserve for humanity the history of a great civilization whose memory seems to live solely in its archaeological past.

### **Ethnographic archaeology on Rapa Nui: Collecting in the twentieth century**

Official scientific expeditions being sent off to Rapa Nui by colonial powers had a political impact in Chile. Worried about Chile being left outside the Pacific share-out, renowned

conservative intellectual Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna called the attention of Chilean authorities and the general public through a series of articles with a vast diffusion in the national press. In 1885 he published “El Reparto del Pacífico, la Posesión de Isla de Pascua,” where drawing attention to the colonization of the Pacific he wrote:

The memorable age of the discovery of the New World, which suppressed the heroism of the Crusades in both fame and great deed, tends to relive in the present century in the practical and avaricious positivism of the nation-glutton nations.

The two continents of America discovered and conquered still in their last extremes, a third world appears from the immensities of the Pacific and attracts in covetous hordes the peoples and governments of the Old Continent. The Pacific is now their favorite prey (Vicuña Mackena 1885: 615).

This expansion, he noted, was “no longer a soldiers’ or missionaries’ enterprise, but a merchants’ one” (615). In his brief yet sharp analysis, he revises the occupation of the Pacific by the British, an “island-eating nation that does not satiate but by truces” (616) and the French, “either a scarcer, shyer, or clumsier colonizer” (616). Chile, “a comparatively smaller republic but that with great sacrifice maintains a fairly powerful navy,” he wondered, “will it be left without a piece of rock in the unceasing and unequal share-out of the Pacific?” (617). Not even would Chile possess a wretched Easter Island by everyone dismissed? Then he makes his call clear:

It reveals that our ambition is not great. Easter Island is barely a withered drag, remains of an ancient and apparently extended sunken continent; yet located right in front of our

current most septentrional possessions, and might therefore serve us as a rocky target on equatorial waters to go to and train our Navy's crews ... [Easter Island] is worthy of fixing within its volcanic cervices a flagpole exhibiting at the top the white star of our conquerors (617).

His writings received immediate attention and provoked a political response. And Chile occupied Rapa Nui within three years.

In 1887 President José Manuel Balmaceda decided to annex Rapa Nui to the Republic of Chile. Balmaceda commissioned Captain Policarpo Toro Hurtado to strike up negotiations with John Norman Brander, who had taken over the properties of the Brander-Bornier succession through public auction. In September 9<sup>th</sup> of 1888 Chile took formal possession of the island through a treaty signed by Policarpo Toro and King Atamu Tekena which legality, the Rapanui continue to question until the present day.

The main problem that the taking of possession generated concerned land rights for since 1866 Europeans had claimed rights to the land through purchase or use. After a series of negotiations by Policarpo Toro and the government, in August of 1888 the rights in Rapa Nui were defined as follows: the government of Chile as the owner of the mission's lands and buildings and of the Salmon brothers' lands, and Policarpo Toro as tenant of Brander's lands, buildings and animals as well as of the Rapanui's lands (Cristino 2011: 33). Brander intended to sell his share to Chile, though the government was not interested and Brander had to find another buyer. That man was Enrique Merlet, French businessman living in Chile, who acquired all rights to both real and personal properties, including land, buildings and animals. With this transaction Merlet became the owner of the entire island, except for the properties that belonged

at that time to the government of Chile, a few small terrains belonging to the Rapanui, and some uninhabitable lands of no agricultural value. Later that year Merlet leased all lands, buildings, animals and other possessions that the Chilean *fisco* declared to have in the island (Cristino 2011: 37-8). Through this succession of purchases, leases, promises, associations and cessions, the Rapanui were left completely dispossessed of their land.

With Merlet's lease of all fiscal properties, the period between 1895 and 1953 characterized by the installation of the firm Merlet & Co., which transformed the entire island into a big sheep ranch. All lands, animals and belongings were taken from the Rapanui, now tenant farmers on their land. During the period of the Company power was concentrated in the Company's administrator, who until 1915 was also the *Subdelegado Marítimo* (Navy sub-delegate), the representative of Chilean government in the island. Merlet's first administrator was Alberto Sánchez Manterola, who stayed in the memory of the Rapanui as a brutal figure, a personification of the abuses of the Company period. Sánchez Manterola confined all the Rapanui to live enclosed in an area of 1000 hectares, part of today's Hana Roa, the only town, and took their animals arguing that the Rapanui did not have animals of their property. Enclosed by force in this place, the Rapanui were no longer free to transit their island.

Resulting from these abuses, in 1898 King Ko Riro A Dure, the successor of King Atamu Tekena, who had died in 1892, asked for permission to travel to the mainland with the purpose of meeting with the President and asking for protection to the Chilean government for the loss of their lands, animals and belongings. King Riro was poisoned at his arrival to the mainland. After the death of king Riro the Company's domain was absolute, all the authority concentrating in the Navy Sub-delegate, as mentioned above, also Merlet's administrator. In 1900 Horacio Cooper arrived to take Sánchez's position. Cooper showed the Rapanui no mercy, assassinating some of

them, mutilating others, and kidnapping their wives and children. Cooper's abuses resulted in a series of riots that initiated the Company's deportation policy (Foerster 2010) in which all ringleaders were embarked by force and taken to Valparaíso where they let themselves die of hunger (Cristino 2011: 40; Moreno 2011: 77).

With the assassination of King Riro the environment continued to grow tense between the Company and the Rapanui. The Rapanui began to upraise against the oppressor, while Chilean government showed a complete indifference towards the abuses that the Company was committing against the Rapanui people. Among the uprisings were those led by King Moisés Tu'u Hereveri in 1901 (Moreno 2011: 81) and by José Pirivato and Lázaro Ricardo Hitorañi in 1902 (Moreno 2011: 82), both of them resulting in the deportation of their leaders. The abandonment, isolation, poverty, and the deterioration of the traditional authority and all its institutions set the basis for the development of the 1914 uprising led by María Añata Veri Tahī, a catechist trained in Tahiti by the missionaries.<sup>10</sup> Based on a discourse that merged Rapanui worldviews with political demands, Añata's was a liberation movement (Arthur 2012: 81-89) and the first land claims revolution in the history of Rapa Nui.<sup>11</sup> In the midst of this tense political environment arrived on Rapa Nui the first post-annexation scientific expedition, the *Mana*.

#### *Katherine Routledge and the Mana Expedition, 1914-15*

Katherine Pease Routledge co-led with her husband the *Mana* Expedition, which arrived on Rapa Nui in March 1914. A member of the Oxford Anthropological society and with some ethnographic fieldwork experience in East Africa, Routledge conducted the first long-term

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed account of Añata's 1914 uprising see Moreno 2011; Castro 2006, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Añata's 1914 uprising has been often presented as a Catholic, millenarist movement. An interpretation I disagree with, I revise Añata's rebellion as a liberation movement that articulated a strong political discourse based on Rapanui worldviews, yet framed in the colonizers' language.

ethnographic research on Rapa Nui. The first woman archaeologist to work in Polynesia, she came to Rapa Nui attracted by the international mystery of Rapa Nui's giant stone statues. At first an archaeological expedition, her work would soon turn to ethnography. During her seventeen months in Rapa Nui, Routledge mapped and measured hundreds of archaeological sites, excavated over thirty moai and gathered thorough information on Rapanui oral traditions and history. In 1919, she published much of her expedition's research in a book wrote for the general public, *The Mystery of Easter Island: The Story of an Expedition*. Generally well received, a second edition was published within a year. Although widely read as an Englishwoman's travel experiences book, many consider it to be the first thorough ethnography in Rapa Nui studies. During her expedition she also amassed a large collection of Rapanui tao'a and ivi tupuna, subsequently distributed between the British Museum and the Royal Geographical Society, partners of the expedition.

At the time of the *Mana* arrival, the 250 Rapanui the British found were living in a repressed and impoverished island. Leased to the Williamson-Balfour Company, Rapa Nui was converted into a sheep ranch. The Rapanui were confined to the island's village, Haŋa Roa, enclosed and forbid to freely transit their land. The rest of the island, over 90% of its surface, was territory of the Company for its sheep ranching enterprise. The Company's headquarters were located at Mataveri. A mile from Haŋa Roa, Mataveri was a comfortable European commune contrasting with a poor and abused Haŋa Roa with no school, no medical care, and no sanitary facilities. Forced to live under the Company's rule and economy, labor was paid on limited wages credited against purchases in the Company's store. With the Rapanui not allowed to having cattle, fishing or working the land outside the Company's walls, this economic system resulted in most families being enslaved by debt. Henry Percy Edmunds, a Scotch-English



collector, entrepreneur and the Company's resident manager, was also the official representative of the Chilean government in Rapa Nui. He welcomed the British of the *Mana* expedition at his Mataverí home.

From Edmunds Routledge acquainted her main consultant and research collaborator, Juan Tepano Huki. A charismatic yet complicated figure among the community, Tepano had served in the Chilean military. Upon his return to Rapa Nui in 1901, the Company named him "headman" of the community and in 1902 appointed him "mayor." He represented the Company in Haja Roa, had police power in the village and freedom to travel the island (Van Tilburg 2009). He was the son of Rano and Viriamo. A culture keeper and knowledgeable woman of the Huki family, Viriamo would not convey her knowledge to Routledge. But her son did. Routledge and Tepano's work together resulted in a mass of fieldnotes, photographs, maps, sketches, genealogies, place-names and some records of oral traditions.<sup>12</sup>

Routledge focused on the study of what she termed "living memory." Understanding both archaeology and ethnography as vehicles to the study of memory, she combined a functionalist yet humanistic approach to archaeology with ethnographic methodologies. Tepano as her main collaborator, he arranged some contacts for Routledge. Men like Jotefa Maherenga, Kapiera (Gabriel Revahiva), Porotu (Hongi Atua a Ure Auviri), and Te Haha (Ramón Te Haha) were some of her consultants. She did not succeed in establishing close collaborative relationships with women or young Rapanui. Van Tilburg (2009) attributes this failure and Routledge's poor social relationships to her closeness with Tepano. In her opinion, young Rapanui men would have kept their distance because Tepano had assumed the attitude of watchdog over Routledge, which added to a generalized assumption within the community that sex was part of the

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<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of Routledge-Tepano collaboration see Van Tilburg 2003; 2009.

collaboration between Routledge and Tepano. With her few consultants, however, she conducted regular intensive group interviews or informal conversation sessions translated by Tepano.

Authoritative and powerful, Tepano often discredited others' contributions, positing in Routledge the doubt of their versions. Unlike Tepano, she did not directly call them liars, yet considered the "native love of accuracy" to leave "a good deal to be desired," their lies being "astonishingly fluent" (Routledge 1919: 140). An appreciation she constantly highlighted in her writing, she noted later that, "deliberate invention was rare, but, when memory was a little vague, there was a constant tendency to glide from what was remembered to what was imagined" (212). Whether influenced by Tepano or not, Routledge connected this "tendency to glide" with her hypothesis of a confused, if not vanishing memory. The "living memory" she celebrated was rather a by-product of a florescent past:

In many places it is possible in light of great monuments to reconstruct the past. In Easter Island the past is the present, it is impossible to escape from it; the inhabitants of to-day are less real than the men who have gone; the shadows of the departed builders still possess the land ... and every day, as the power to see increased, brought with it a greater sense of wonder and marvel (165).

But in the present, "natives take little interest in the remains" (165). In lieu of this vanishing memory and lack of interest, collecting was once more pivotal in Routledge's expedition. tao'a and ivi Tupuna, as nothing but the remains of a florescent past needed to be rescued for the sake of science.

With Tepano handling the logistics, an important component of the Mana expedition was the excavation of moai and human remains, and cave hunting. They excavated about thirty moai, collected fifty-eight skulls, and explored as many caves as they could find. Two of these findings are of particular interest for this study as they speak to the influence of the race paradigm in Routledge's collecting efforts and to the complete disregard of the ontologies and living memory she so enthusiastically studied. Her collaborators identified them as Ko Tori and Hotu.

Routledge found Ko Tori, whom she named "the last cannibal," in a cave at Rano Kau. When part of the expedition had ridden to the top of volcano Rano Kau and while exploring the southern side of the crater, her Rapanui companions were pointing out the site where Hotu Matu'a had died. Suddenly, one of them vanished into a gap in the rocks, reappearing with a thighbone. She scrambled into the cave and saw the skeleton. The skull was missing. In describing her finding, she noted,

Bones were in the department of the absent member of the Expedition, but it was of course essential to collect them, from the view of determining race, and the natives never resented our doing so. I therefore passed these out, packed them in grass in the luncheon-basket, and, sitting down on a rock, asked to be told the story of the cave. "That," my attendants replied, "is Ko Tori" (225-26).

She ended her narration celebrating the contribution of Ko Tori to science: "As I write, Ko Tori resides at the Royal College of Surgeons, and has his bit towards elucidating the mystery of Easter Island" (226). Ko Tori's bit towards such elucidating was an unpublished paper on the "negroid" component of the Rapanui "race."

Routledge devoted a few pages to the collecting of another individual, Hotu. Based on the carvings on his skull, he was an illustrious ancestor of the Miru clan. Routledge's account of her finding demonstrates her awareness on the ontological relevance of *puoko tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestral skulls). As she wrote:

Members of this group [the Miru clan] had, in the opinion of the islanders, the supernatural and valuable gift of being able to increase all food supplies, especially that of chicken, and this power was particularly in evidence after death. It has been known that certain skulls from Easter are marked with designs, such as the outline of a fish; these are crania of the Miru, and called "puoko moa," or fowl-heads, because they had, in particular, the quality of making hens lay eggs. Hotu, the Miru, ... made his own skull an heirloom, as "it was so extremely good for chickens," that he did not wish it to go out of the family (240).

As my collaborators have explained, carved skulls are usually those of *ariki* (*RAP.* chief, king). Coinciding with Routledge's accounts, only men of the Miru clan could have that rank. As discussed in Chapter Two, *ariki* were among the humans possessing the highest degree of mana, which adding to the inherent agency of *puoko tupuna* to bestow mana makes this skull one of particular ontological significance. Routledge however opted to call it a supernatural power and a byproduct of the Rapanui superstitious mindset. She continued,

His son gave it to a relative, who was the father of an old man from whom we managed to obtain it. When the time came to hand it over to us, the late owner began to cling to it

affectionately, and say that “he wept much at the thought of its going to England”; as, however, the bargain had already been completed, we remained obdurate, and at the time of writing Hotu resides with Ko Tori at the Royal College of Surgeons (241).

The passage revealing the Rapanui’s objection to the collecting of their ancestors, Routledge presents her ethnographic research as completely disconnected from her collecting efforts.

Writing very clearly on the ontological relevance of *ivi tupuna* and the Rapanui objection to their collection, she nonetheless reported to have collected fifty-five of them. Prioritizing the contribution of human remains to science over their cultural significance to their descendants, Routledge celebrated the relevance of this collection as her expedition’s contribution to the anthropological world (295). Studied back in England, these *Tupuna* did their “bit towards elucidating the mystery of Easter Island.” Found to prove the prevalence of a Melanesian “type” (295) and the Rapanui having “the largest-brained people yet discovered in the islands or shores of the Pacific” (296), they did their bit to reinforcing the race paradigm as well.

Tangential to her ethnographic writing, Routledge left some space for political ideas as well. She wrote with detail about *Añata*’s uprising and the island’s situation under the rule of the Company. Here she took the chance to liberate her fellow compatriots of any charges and blamed on Chile the misery of *Rapa Nui*. While the Company was being depicted as a brutal, inhumane abuser, she denounced Chile’s hypocrisy having abandoned the island to its fate. Meanwhile, in the mainland some concern was arising with regard to the abuses that the Company was committing against the Rapanui people. As a result of *Añata*’s movement plus some public pressure, the government appointed Ignacio Vives Solar as Navy Sub-delegate and representative of the Chilean government. Before *Añata*’s movement this position was embodied in the same

the person of the Company's administrator. The separation of administrative and political powers in Rapa Nui responded to the government's outspoken desire to stop the abuses and exploitation that were taking place in the island. Certainly, a more real desire was to assert Chilean sovereignty in its insular territory. Vives Solar implemented then a series of measures to put an end to the conflict between the Company and the Rapanui. Some of these measures consisted in abolishing forced labor, obliging the company to sell meat to the population, authorizing the Rapanui to move along the coast to fish, the distribution of fiscal bovines to provide milk, the opening of a complaints book, obligatory instruction for children, and isolation of lepers ensuring they were provided with food (Cristino 2011: 43). Into this situation arrived on Rapa Nui the Franco-Belgian expedition.

*The Franco-Belgian expedition: Henri Lavachery and Alfred Métraux, 1934-35*

In 1934 arrived on the island the Franco-Belgian expedition on board of the French *Rigault-de-Genouilly*. The expedition was initially planned by the *Institut d'Ethnologie de l'Université de Paris* and the *Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle* in Paris. The Belgian government and scientific institutions gave their support to the enterprise, the expedition becoming a joint undertaking by the two countries. Archaeologist Charles Louis Watelin, museum curator Henri Lavachery, ethnologist Alfred Métraux, and physician Israel Drapkin originally formed the expedition, but Watelin died on the way. Rock art enthusiast and curator of the Royal Museum of Art and History at Brussels, Henri Lavachery surveyed Rapanui petroglyphs and conducted the first research on the rock art of Rapa Nui. Ethnologist Alfred Métraux undertook an extensive ethnographic study, for which the Bishop Museum awarded him a fellowship to write his *Ethnology of Easter Island* (1940) at the museum. Together they amassed an important collection of *ivi tupuna* and *tao'a*, including two moai.

Métraux and Lavachery were on Rapa Nui from July 1934 to January 1935, Juan Tepano being also a key research collaborator to them. Métraux's writings, however, along with some gossiping by later researchers, speak to a confrontational relationship between the French ethnographer and Tepano. In his very introduction of his consultant, Métraux exposed Tepano's authoritative character and lies:

'Your party will get to know all about the island and its past. Those who came before could not retain the words, but they will all be conveyed to you, I know.' He continued: 'The words of the ancients have been twisted, but you, you will receive them straight.' Looking at him as he talked to us, we were struck by his relatively young and active appearance. We asked his age ... Tepano launched out into a confused explanation from which it emerged that he must be somewhere around eighty. 'I'm the oldest man on the island,' he kept repeating. Later, we learned that our first impression had not deceived us and that Tepano must have been just approaching sixty; but that day he had every interest in making himself out to be old, as old as the sculptors of the statues (1940: 24).

Indeed, and despite acknowledging Tepano as a consultant, Métraux gave more credit to Isabel Chavez and to his chief consultant, Victoria Rapahango. These two women instructed Métraux and Lavachery in feminine customs and rituals that Routledge could never approach with Viriamo. As Van Tilburg (2009) has insightfully noted, involved in these continuing research visits, the Rapanui constantly tried either to save themselves from outsiders (e.g. Viriamo) or to benefit from contact with them (e.g. Tepano), and the community guarded its resources carefully. Because Tepano received so much support from outsiders, including Chile, the Company and

researchers, he, in turn, lost some familial support. Adding to the local problematic, the reason for Métraux and Tepano's confrontational relationship was probably that by the time of the Franco-Belgian expedition, Tepano had realized that the researchers he worked with were building worldwide reputations and making money from his hard-won knowledge.

Based on the information provided by his consultants, Métraux was able to research deeply on Rapanui oral traditions, customs and worldviews. His ethnography is now considered by many to be a base line in Rapa Nui studies. Integral to his fieldwork were his collecting intentions, about which he wrote:

A rather handsome lad, Pedro Atam, who had learnt that we intended to stay on the island, asked us the reason for our visit. We explained to him that we were archaeologists in search of ancient objects. He had no difficulty in understanding what we meant, and declared in a detached tone: 'There aren't many ancient objects about nowadays and it will take time to find them. But don't worry, we'll make you as many as you want. We'll give you whatever you ask for. When you get home, nobody will know the difference.' Pedro, with his mustache and his fine presence, appeared to us into temptation. We declined his offer, at the same time ardently hoping that the specimens his compatriots would offer us might prove to be *genuinely* old (17).

He succeeded in acquiring an important collection of "genuinely old specimens" and also contemporary art. This collection was subsequently distributed to the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*<sup>13</sup> in Paris and the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* in Brussels.

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<sup>13</sup> The first anthropological museum in Paris, *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro* closed in 1935, when the Trocadéro Palace was demolished. At the same site opened in 1937 the *Musée de l'Homme*, to which



Part of this collection was also displayed on an exhibition at the Trocadéro museum, which opened in June 1935 to celebrate the Franco-Belgian mission to Oceania. Aiming to display the stylistic evolution of Rapanui art, the exhibition included both pieces of great antiquity and contemporary artworks by Juan Tepano and Juan Araki. Métraux wrote for the exhibition catalogue:

The art of woodcarving is not dead in Easter Island; I would even say that it is still florescent, very florescent, alas. It is the only indigenous industry in the Island. The islanders make every year large amounts of statuettes they exchange for uniforms with Chilean sailors of the training ships. These modern productions of miserable ugliness testify to the decadence of taste and technology since the end of paganism (in Lauriere 2014: 17).

Adding to Métraux sharp judgments, Paul Morand wrote in the preface of the booklet accompanying the exhibition: “Is Easter Island the last cry on surface of a sunken civilization, of an Oceanic Atlantis? What race were the men who built the terraces without cement and sculpted these gods with a single tool? Is it the cemetery of archipelagos shipwrecked?” (in Lauriere 2014: 18). Echoing the questions haunting Western imagination, their writings show that little had changed since Pierre Loti’s romantic depiction of the Rapa Nui he visited and the one 1920’s surrealists imagined. Rapa Nui continued to fulfill the fantasizing Western eager for exotic and fabulous tales.

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Métraux’s collection, along with the Trocadéro larger holdings, were transferred. Currently undergoing major renovations, the museum’s ethnographic collections are housed at the *Musée du Quai Branly*, while its natural and anthropological collections were transferred to the *Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle*.

Ideas of an exotic land and a vanishing race were not an isolated note for the exhibition; they also abound in Métraux ethnography. In sharp contrast with all the information he obtained from his consultants, he insisted that these people, “living image of the childhood of the human race” (1957: 30) were the product of a lost civilization and a dying memory. In line with the race paradigm evidenced in his writing, the collecting of human remains was an inescapable endeavor to keep record of this vanishing people for the sake of science.

In his analysis of what he called Rapanui religion, Métraux paid special attention to the concepts of *mana* and *tapu*. He defined *mana* as magical power and *tapu* as religious interdict. He noticed them to be so deeply ingrained in Rapa Nui that not even ninety years of Christianity had wiped them out (139). “Today stomach disorders still threaten every plebeian who marries a Miru woman,” he wrote, “ulcers eat into the legs of those who walk on land formerly placed under an interdict, and mothers take great care not to eat above the head of their children” (139). Describing funerary rituals, he noted them to be governed by “very detailed rules” (119). Explaining the extent to which these *tapu* were enforced, he wrote that, “no insult was so deeply felt as a breach, even if involuntary, of these tabus. Death was the only possible punishment for such an affront” (118). Not only did he understand the concept of *tapu*, but also the *mana* that the ancestors possess. In this regard he wrote that, “the mausoleums were also the sanctuaries on which offerings were made to the gods and to which the ancestors were reputed to return in order to protect their descendants and preserve them from danger” (119). Even though acknowledging the *mana* and *tapu* of the ancestors, he deliberately and systematically excavated burial sites.

Unlike his predecessors, he did not provide much detail of his excavations. Only in one passage, when analyzing the Rapanui association of the bay of Haña Rau with memories of the *ariki*, he wrote: “every time our excavations brought to light a skull, the workmen remarked,

‘There’s the head of another ariki’” (92). An explanation for this omission might be that, differently from what we noted about Routledge, Métraux did not conceive his collecting as disconnected from the knowledges he researched. Métraux was not only the first to have a critical opinion with regards to collecting missions, like his own expedition’s, but also the first to explicitly comment on the consequences that breaching the *tapu* could have for collectors. A more pressuring reason must have been Métraux’s fear of the possible political repercussions of his collecting activities.

After the Franco-Belgian expedition a public campaign began in Chile, where the press denounced the looting activities of the mission. Both Lavachery and Métraux partook of the controversy. While the former affirmed that the collection had been “donated” by the Chilean nation-state, Métraux called it a theft. Illuminating in this regard is the last chapter of Métraux’s *Isla de Pascua*, devoted to the expedition’s great deeds to take to Europe a *moai* head and one full statue. Métraux calling this “acquisition” straightly a “robbery” (1950: 246), he would then remove this chapter from subsequent translations and editions.

In this chapter, Métraux narrated the arrival of the *Mercator*, the Belgian ship that would take the expedition back home. Its commander, Remi Van de Sande was determined to take a *moai* to Belgium, “so that the name of his vessel would be associated to this great endeavor” (244). Worried about the consequences that the commander’s wish might have in Chile, Métraux wrote: “Our instructions on this regard were formal. We were committed to take one statue to France, but I do not like the project much. I know very well the South Americans’ possessive character as to not fear that this loot will not have angry repercussions” (244). But he yielded. Excavating at Haña Rao few months ago, Lavachery had found “a marvelous head perfectly conserved” (245). They decided to take it. Against all odds, the transport of the loot was quite

easy, which encouraged the commander. He wanted another moai, now not just a head but an entire statue. He decided to take Pou Haka Nonoña from his ahu at Haña Vare Vare, Ahu O Roño. And so they did. Métraux knew very well about the mana of this moai, who protected fishermen and increased the tuna catch. Pou Haka Nonoña has been at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels since his capture in 1935. As discussed earlier, Métraux showed broad awareness on the breaching of the tapu of his collecting activities but nowhere he wrote as explicitly on such awareness as on this removed chapter. In the second-to-last paragraph, Métraux wrote: “One afternoon, while I searched skulls in a mausoleum, Tepano warned me: ‘When you die your soul will come back, loaded with all these skulls. Before you go where God sends you, you will have to return them all to the tomb from which you took them’” (1950: 250). But he never did.

In December 13, 1934 Chilean newspaper *La Opinión* published a note with the title: “Easter Island LOOTED by a FOREIGN scientific expedition.”<sup>14</sup> The piece denounced that “archaeological collections of great value will be taken to European museums” and that “the government must intervene immediately to avoid that they are taken out the country for free.” This press campaign, along with the intervention of the University of Chile and the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (National Monuments Council), resulted in the constitution in 1935 of the island as “historical monument.” An effort not to protect Rapanui heritage but the nation-state’s property, this title was the first step towards designating indigenous heritage as national monuments and property of the Chilean nation-state. As the state had been doing it with the land, this new title was but an objectification of a forced and substantially separation of the community from, first, the land and now the monuments. People would react to this double pillaging very strongly, but not until the 1960s.

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<sup>14</sup> *La Opinión* 929: 1.

*Father Sebastian Englert and the re-establishment of the mission, 1935-68*

A few months after the departure of the Franco-Belgian expedition, arrived on Rapa Nui Sebastian Englert. An ethnology and linguistics enthusiast, German Capuchin priest Sebastian Englert settled in Chile in 1922 upon his volunteering to serve as a missionary in the Araucanía, where he supplemented his mission work with ethnological and linguistic research he subsequently published in several reports. He became interested in Rapa Nui while studying Mapudungun, the Mapuche language, and wrote two essays on comparative etymology between Mapudungun and Rapanui languages. Due to this work, he was invited to partake of a University of Chile research commission that would travel to Rapa Nui in early 1935. The expedition did not happen but two people were designated to visit Rapa Nui in November. They were Sebastian Englert, who would study the language, and Humberto Fuenzalida, who would research the island's geology. Upon the request of Monsignor Rafael Edwards, at the time *Vicario Castrense* (military vicar) for Rapa Nui, Englert volunteered to also serve in the missionary parish. Although his duties there would initially be for a few months, Englert stayed on Rapa Nui as the parish priest until his death. The memories that Rapanui elders maintain of Englert are contrasting, shifting between accounts of a devoted, kind-hearted priest to testimonies of violence and abuse. As for his ethnographic work, he published several reports on Rapanui Christianization, linguistics and oral traditions. His most comprehensive work, *La Tierra de Hotu Matu'a* (1948) offers a detailed account of the linguistics, ethnology, and archaeology of Rapa Nui.

Contrasting with Métraux's opinion that everything was lost, Englert worked closely with Rapanui consultants inventorying moai and archaeological sites, recording oral traditions, and studying and learning the language. He was a key liaison for new researchers to come and upon

the arrival of the Norwegian archaeological expedition he became their archaeological guide and chief consultant. He was also an avid collector and a generous gift-giver. Englert's arrival marked the first permanent establishment of a Catholic mission on Rapa Nui since the interrupted attempts of the French missionaries. He encountered a generation of Rapanui torn between their own worldviews and imposed beliefs, a situation that fruitfully served his dual mission.

He was eager in eliminating the Rapanui's respect for and fear to *aku aku* (i.e. *varua*, omnipersons). Like his early fellows, he explained this respect as wrong ideas derived from paganism and idolatry. In imposing the Catholic doctrine, he taught the Rapanui that "supernatural beings" such as *aku aku* had always existed everywhere, and that they were as real as Catholic angels and devils. The difference between the former and the latter was for him a matter of linguistics only, an idea that became widely spread among the Rapanui (Heyerdahl 1975: 76). Continuing his predecessors' doctrine of fear, he made his catechumens believe that his ancestors had communicated with devils only. He introduced the Rapanui term "tatane," a derivation of the Spanish word *Satán* (*SPA*. Satan, Devil). He so effectively imposed his ideas that most of the present generation uses *tatane* and *aku aku* interchangeable, *aku aku* shifting its meaning from a protective omniperson to an evil one.

In his study of the original meaning of *aku aku* and their linkages to the land, Englert noted that all Rapanui recalled the area from which their own specific *mata* or clan derived, and the clan's "tutelary spirit," its *aku aku*, which the Rapanui said to still reside there. He wrote in this regard that,

Until the present day some natives recall the personal name of the specific akuaku which was a sort of protecting genius to their own clan, and they do not only remember the name, but even maintain the belief in these tutelary spirits. One can say that there existed a kind of totemism (Englert 1948: 52).

Taught that some of the carved figures were meant for the *mana* of the *aku aku* to be bestowed to the family, he noted that, “these figures were kept at the entrances to houses and caves to obtain the protection of these spirits” (169). Much like for his early fellows, the collecting of such figures was for him a joint enterprise between his ethnographic and evangelization missions.

An eager collector, Englert too learned about *'ana tao'a*, the secret caves. Writing about hiding places he noted that secret caves were the property of particular families, and only elders in a family knew the entrance to their respective *'ana tao'a*. “These served for hiding objects of value, like inscribed tablets, ‘kohau rongorongo,’ or statuettes,” he wrote. And “the secret of the precise whereabouts of the entrance is buried in the grave with the last survivors of the antique era” (Englert 1948: 224). Like Métraux, he was warned that such places were tapu. He narrated this episode:

Some decades ago an old man, Paoa Hitaki, one day brought the native Juan Araki to Rano Kao. He did not permit him to descend to the bottom of the crater, and he ordered him to prepare a sacrificial earth oven with chicken and sweet potatoes; he made a circular demarcation line, and strictly forbade him to go outside this area. He descended alone into the crater, disappeared behind rocks and trees, and after a long while he returned, carrying in his hands a well preserved tablet. ‘Seven kohau rongorongo were

pulverized in the cave,' he said, 'this is the only good one.' Down in Hangaroa he gave the tablet to the administrator of the Company who lived in Mataverí at that time. Soon after he became sick, had mental disturbances, and died. The cause of his illness and death was attributed to his having fetched and disposed of the tablet (Englert 1948: 318).

His account illuminates once more the Rapanui extreme respect for the tapu even after decades of the imposition of the new Catholic doctrine. That Paoa ordered Juan to prepare an earth oven meal speaks to the very rooted tradition of feeding guardian aku aku to have their protection. That Paoa became ill after breaching the tapu speaks to the agency of such aku aku and the consequences of violating a tapu. Englert disregarded these apprehensions as simple superstition.

Considering Rapa Nui to be of international interest as world heritage, Englert also actively participated in the restoration projects that would begin in the 1960s. Due to his ethnographic work and his participation in these projects, he was appointed Honorary Chairman of the Easter Island Committee of the International Fund for Monuments Inc. of New York. Participating of this committee, he made two trips to the United States and Canada and gave public lectures on Rapanui heritage. He died in New Orleans during his return from the second of these trips, in January 1969. His collecting work was undoubtedly benefited by his missionary work, his ethnographic research and his participation in restoration projects. In his over thirty years living in Rapa Nui he amassed an important collection, including ethnographic and archaeological pieces. He donated his collection to the Chilean nation-state with the hope that it would be exhibited to the few tourists that were gradually beginning to visit the island at the time of his death. His personal collection, along with the many findings of the intense scientific and



restoration activities that were taking place on Rapa Nui, would be the founding materials for the creation in 1973 of the *Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert*, the Rapanui museum.

Soon after the Englert's arrival, in 1936 Chile leases the island to the company for another twenty years though due to international pressure in 1953 the company transfers all of its lands and properties to the Chilean Navy, which took control of the administration of the island. The termination of the lease resulted in the enforcement of Chilean sovereignty on the island. The Navy taking control of Rapa Nui entailed not only the control of the administration of the island but also of its people by continuing the colonization of the Rapanui now through military discipline. Within this disciplinary system the Rapanui were treated as enlisted in the Navy, forced to undertake medical examinations and to do community work. If they refused, they were punished and taken to the dungeon, where officers shaved their heads. The Rapanui continued to be confined to the small village of Hapa Roa. Under the Navy rule and upon authorization of the Chilean government landed on Rapa Nui the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition.

*Thor Heyerdahl and the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition, 1955-56*

In October 1955 reached the island the Norwegian archaeological expedition, led by experimental archaeologist Thor Heyerdahl. They anchored at Hapa Rau and set up the base camp on the plain above the beach, which became the headquarters for the twenty-three expedition participants. Teaming with Heyerdahl were Edwin Ferdon, archaeologist at the Museum of New Mexico; William Mulloy, head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Wyoming; Arne Skjølsvold, director of archaeology at the Stavanger Museum; and Carlyle Smith, professor and curator of anthropology at the University of Kansas. The Chilean government requested the participation of an official Chilean representative, for which Gonzalo Figueroa was appointed. Another Chilean in the expedition was Eduardo Sánchez, both from the

*Centro de Estudios Antropológicos* at Universidad de Chile. The expedition included experiments in the carving, transport and erection of the *moai*, as well as several excavations including sites like Oroŋo, Haŋa Rau, Poike, Rano Raraku, Vinapu and Te Peu.

Heyerdahl wrote extensively on this archaeological mission. He co-edited two volumes of scientific reports, *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific* (1961) and published a comprehensive volume devoted Rapanui tao'a and his disclosure of secret caves, *The Art of Easter Island* (1975). He also published his experience in Rapa Nui in his best seller *Aku-Aku* (1958) and his controversial diffusionist hypothesis of a South American migration in *Easter Island: the Mystery Solved* (1989). For the purposes of this study, this section will focus on a brief analysis of Heyerdahl's disclosure of 'ana tao'a and his outspoken awareness of the tapu of such places.

While their predecessors had come, excavated and collected to rescue a culture from vanishing, Heyerdahl and his team came to tell the Rapanui their history. The first stratigraphic excavations ever attempted on Rapa Nui began as a joint enterprise by all the expedition archaeologists. The work started at Haŋa Rau and the excavation results allowed the visitors "to give information to the islanders rather than vice versa" (Heyerdahl 1975: 83). After this initial joint excavation, each archaeologist selected his own site for continued work. The location of the expedition's base camp was the same that first ariki Hotu Matu'a had chosen as his first residence. The decision responded partly to their interest in initiating excavations "among the local ruins that legend accredited to him" (83), and partly because both Chilean governor in Rapa Nui and Father Sebastian Englert preferred them to stay as far as possible from Haŋa Roa, "where the temptation to steal might become too big for the population" (83). Accordingly, the Company's administrator appointed two Rapanui elders as the expedition camp police.

One of the two armed guards, Kasimiro, was the first to speak to Heyerdahl about the secret caves. He told him and his colleagues about his father taking him to one such cave at Motu Nui, but not showing him the entrance. Kasimiro volunteered to show them the general locality. When they took him up on his offer, “he always found ingenious excuses for not showing up whenever the boat was launched to take us over to Motu-nui” (90). They later persuaded the other policeman, Nicolás Pakomio who was with Kasimiro the day his father took him to the cave. But his indication of the area “was so vague that our search was hopeless” (90). The first of many other failed attempts to come, Kasimiro’s refusal to show Heyerdahl the whereabouts of his family’s *’ana tao ’a* was the first indication of the extreme *tapu* of these caves Heyerdahl was so eager to explore and vacate.

A few weeks after Kasimiro’s original offer, Arne Skjölsvold left the base camp to start his months of excavations in Rano Raraku, the moai quarry. In addition to a staff of native labor, he appointed Pakomio as foreman and assistant. One day he and José Pate visited Skjölsvold in his tent to talk about secret caves. Both assured him that a whole series of such caves existed on the island, hiding the inherited patrimony of the different families. Both assured too that although the general localities were known, the entrances were not. Skjölsvold did not believe them. When he tentatively asked if they could search the areas and attempt discovering some of such caves, “they suddenly became serious and shook their heads warningly: the caves were *tapu* and to enter them invoked bad luck” (91). Days later Pakomio approached Skjölsvold again and told him confidentially he would show him one of the caves. Time passed and he never did.

In the middle of excavation work, the disclosure of *’ana tao ’a* became a sort of obsession for the expedition participants. They were determined to unveil the mystery and insisted once and again. Meanwhile, people in Haŋa Roa began gossiping about the crew wanting to uncover

the caves. The gossips reached the base camp, and the topic started to be spoken of openly. The breaching of another tapu being seemingly unavoidable, Pakomio soon became hesitant as to whether he knew of any of the procured caves. When the news arrived to the camp that a cave had been shown to the expedition, Pakomio changed completely and affirmed that cave entrances were no longer known by anyone. “My impression,” Skjölsvold wrote, “was that he had become frightened by all the open stir about the caves” (91). Pakomio was the son of María Añata, the visionary who led the 1919 Rapanui uprising against the Company, which according to Skjölsvold, “will help explain why he was so filled with respect for the faith and beliefs of his forefathers” (91). Truth is that such “faith and beliefs” were not his forefathers’ or Pakomio’s himself only. Both Heyerdahl and Skjölsvold knew very well that the secrecy surrounding *’ana tao’a* was a response to a tapu that most of the Rapanui were eager to enforce.

Despite this awareness, they insisted and managed to disclose and empty several of these caves. Heyerdahl wrote in detail about a ten of them, describing how he got to them and what he found. Pedro Atan, mayor at the time, was a key collaborator in Heyerdahl’s *tao’a*-hunting efforts. A man with political power, he would persuade his friends and relatives to show Heyerdahl their caves. Knowing about the strong and massive opposition to his activities, Heyerdahl reported to have visited these caves always accompanied by their owners. Hiding from the rest of the population, they would come to the caves secretly, sometimes late at night (133). As the news spread that the expedition was systematically disclosing and looting caves with the permission of a few Rapanui, the community reacted. “One by one,” Heyerdahl wrote, “our native friends reported that they could not move by night without somebody trying to spy on them” (131). Another facilitator to this *tao’a*-hunting mission, Lázaro Hotus, saying that he knew of a cache in the cliffs of Vinapu, reported that, “he dared not go there as he was either

followed or else he detected people hiding near the spot” (131). Even a member of the expedition, William Mulloy, informed to have detected spies “as he tried to steal off on his nightly mission to Hanga-tepeu” (131). The community would give the expedition further signs of a generalized objection to their collecting activities.

Heyerdahl could also notice his collaborators’ fear for retaliation in their hiding of gifts that the expedition gave them in exchange for the looted *tao’a*. He wrote in this regard that while trade items they gave to the Rapanui “in return for normal services” were generally displayed openly at the first opportunity, “similar gifts obtained in return for cave transactions disappeared from the surface of the island” (133). As Heyerdahl himself noted, it became evident that “next to the range of an insulted *aku-aku*, there was nothing which the cave owners feared more than the reaction of the other village people if they learned that someone had broken an old family *tapu* of this kind” (133). He however deemed the ontological thought behind such fear as rather “gossip of an invidious, mercantile, or superstitious nature” (131). In spite of the community’s efforts to enforce the *tapu*, some dared to breach it. Over a ten of Rapanui disclosed their family caves for the expedition. Stories of subsequent illness and dramatic deaths that the violators encountered abound in Rapa Nui.

After the expedition, Heyerdahl brought part of the impressive collection they managed to obtain to the Kon-Tiki Museum in Oslo. Within this collection were the 800 cave sculptures, which he described as “a world sensation.” Among the largest collections of Rapanui *tao’a* in the world, these pieces have been held by the Kon-Tiki since 1956 and were displayed for the first time in 2014, as the museum expanded its Rapa Nui exhibition. In 1986-1988, Heyerdahl and the Kon-Tiki Museum led a new archaeological expedition to Rapa Nui.

The Norwegian Archaeological Expedition was the last one to speak very openly of its uncontrolled collecting activities on Rapa Nui. Taking place after the nationalist awareness raised by the press campaign denouncing the looting of the Franco-Belgian expedition, Chile requested the participation of an official representative in Heyerdahl's. However, legislation protecting the exportation of cultural property was not yet passed and Heyerdahl and his colleagues were still able to take their large collection out of the country. The situation will change for their successors as in 1966 the Easter Island Act, *Ley Pascua* was passed, which restricted the removal of archaeological remains from Rapa Nui. The passing of the law coincided with a moment of intense scientific research and a tense political environment on the island.

In 1964, during the Navy period, Rapanui Alfonso Rapu initiated a movement<sup>15</sup> motivated by some elders that wanted to denounce the abuses that the Navy was committing against the Rapanui people. Alfonso Rapu was a twenty two year old elementary school teacher who had recently come back to the island. Upon his arrival, a group of elders began a movement to appoint him mayor of Rapa Nui. He had a diploma, was fluent in Spanish and would be better suited to communicate with the authorities and denounce the precarious situation of the Rapanui under the administration of the Chilean Navy. Some of the elders that had appointed him were aiming for independence whereas Rapu was an advocate of a full integration to Chile. Some other elders were against this movement for they considered the Navy administration was bringing order and development to the island. Resulting from this movement and Chilean foreign policy, the Easter Island Act, *Ley Pascua* was passed, a legislation that secured Chilean

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<sup>15</sup> For a revision of Rapu's movement see Arthur 2012: 88-101; Ståmbuk 2010: 265-311. For a detailed analysis on the political situation in the mainland and on the act as a response to first international decolonizing efforts, Foerster 2015 [unpublished].

sovereignty on the island. In what concerns Rapanui heritage, in its article 43 the act restricted the removal of archaeological remains out of the island. The article reads,

Only the President of the Republic, by founded decree, can authorize the removal, out of national territory, of part of buildings, historic or artistic ruins, aboriginal burials or cemeteries, of objects or athro-archaeological or natural items that exist underneath or on the surface, and which conservation interests science, history or the arts, as well as of private or public goods, monuments, objects, items, paintings, books or documents that due to their historical or artistic nature, are to be conserved in museums or archives, or maintained at a public site for commemorative or display purposes (Ley 16.441, article 43).

These regulations would be subsequently added to the 1970 *Ley de Monumentos Nacionales* (National Monuments Act).

### **Protecting the world's heritage: archaeological research and restoration in Rapa Nui**

The 1960s marked the beginning of intense archaeological research and restoration projects on Rapa Nui. The first need identified was a precise archaeological inventory of the island. In 1968 American archaeologist William Mulloy, originally a member of Heyerdahl's first expedition, designed an archaeological inventory project, which included a complete description of all sites. Acknowledging the potentials of Rapa Nui as a world's heritage, Mulloy's main concern was to protect archaeological sites from damage. In his reports (1968) he describes the island as one continuous archaeological site, which economically and scientifically

valuable archaeological materials would be damaged by almost any modern land use. In this scientifically and economically driven mission, Mulloy and his colleagues, including Patrick McCoy, Mario Arévalo, William Ayres and Gonzalo Figueroa, surveyed, excavated and restored several of the main sites on Rapa Nui. Mulloy led the restoration of Ahu Akivi (1960); Ahu Tahai, Ko Te Riku and Vai Uri (1970); two *ahu* at Haŋa Kio'e (1972), and the ritual village of Oroŋo (1974). He collaborated with several Rapanui consultants and mentored who would become the first Rapanui archaeologist, Sergio Rapu Haoa.

These restoration projects would come to enhance the potentials of the Rapa Nui National Park to become, as it did, one of Chile's main touristic attractions. As part of a series of nationalist protecting measures discussed earlier, a 1935 Ministry of Land and Colonization decree declared over 40% of the island a national park. That same year, the entire island was declared historical monument. In 1970 a series of strict regulations would be added and stipulated in the 1970 National Monuments Act. While the 1935 Decree had already designated the entire island as historical monument, under the 1970 Act Rapanui burials, *ivi tupuna* and *tao'a* were subject to a new national protection. The 1970 Act defines national monuments as

places, ruins, constructions and historical or artistic objects; aboriginal burials, cemeteries or other aboriginal remains; anthropo-archaeological, paleontological or natural items and objects that exist beneath or above the surface of the national territory or in the submarine platform of its jurisdictional waters and which's conservation interests history, arts or science; natural sanctuaries, monuments, statues, columns, pyramids, fountains, plaques, crowns, inscriptions and, in general, objects that are meant to stay at a public place for commemorative reasons (Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales 2000: 15).



Additionally, the law states that the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (CMN, National Monuments Council) regulates the tenure and protection of every national monument identified as such according to this definition. Likewise, the 1970 Act regulates scientific excavations by establishing that no Chilean or foreign person or institution can do scientific excavations in national territory without the authorization of the National Monuments Council, which establishes the regulations that such excavations must follow and the future of the materials to be found. The law mandates that the totality of the findings be given to the National Monuments Council, who will determine their distribution. In this same line, the law establishes that the Council provides the National Museum of Natural History with a collection that is representative to the material obtained by those excavations. No rights are granted whatsoever in this law to the indigenous peoples' in whose lands those items are found.

Subsequently, a 1973 Decree formalized the creation of the Easter Island Museum under the tutelage of the *Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos* (DIBAM, Libraries, Archives and Museums Division). Named under the collector priest, the *Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert* would be the new home to Englert's personal collection and most of archaeological and bioanthropological materials found as a result of the intense archaeological activity that was taking place on Rapa Nui at the time. Mulloy's protégée Sergio Rapu was appointed director of the museum, position that he occupied until 1990. After completing an undergraduate degree and going on to graduate studies in the United States, Rapu returned to Rapa Nui becoming a key figure in Rapanui archaeology. Upon his return, he conducted intense archaeological research and restoration projects, among them the restoration of Ahu Nau Nau

(1978), in Haŋa Rau. Much of the findings in Rapu's excavation work were moved to the museum.

Also key figures in archaeological surveying and restoration on Rapa Nui, Claudio Cristino and Patricia Vargas, both of the University of Chile, initiated in 1976 their work on the Easter Island Archaeological Survey Project. In 1981 the University of Chile published the *Atlas Arqueológico de Isla de Pascua*, which compiled the topographical maps of Mulloy and McCoy's surveys and those of Cristino and Vargas. Having participated in the restoration of Oroŋo, Cristino led the restoration of Ahu Tonariki (1992) along with a multidisciplinary team co-directed by Vargas. The largest restored *ahu*, with a 220 meter-long platform and fifteen uplifted *moai*, its five year-long restoration resulted from an agreement between the Chilean government, a private Japanese firm and the University of Chile, and was funded by the Japanese government. Prior to this restoration project, Cristino had served as the director of the Rapanui museum from 1990 to 1993.

Along with archaeology, the tourist industry and the island economy benefited greatly from this intense archaeological activity, all the restored sites becoming the main Rapanui touristic attractions. Restorations, like the various projects on archaeological documentation and conservation that have followed, aimed at the protection and preservation of Rapanui archaeology as a world's heritage. Like Englert and Mulloy had foreseen, in 1996 UNESCO designated Rapa Nui a World Heritage Site under cultural criteria. The World Heritage property occupies an area of approximately seven thousand hectares, including four nearby islets. World Heritage Site, Historical Monument, National Park and National Monument, Rapa Nui has been labeled the "world's largest outdoor museum." Ontological ideas attached to this piece of land were however left behind. As the museum the island became, the Rapanui cannot live in their

ancestral lands, cannot bury their dead in the places they belong to, cannot restore and *ahu*, cannot carve a petroglyph, cannot touch their island.

In a time where collecting on indigenous lands is no longer accepted unquestioned, protection and preservation in the name of a world's heritage comes as an extension of museological values and methods to living persons, their knowledges, artifacts, social worlds, and living spaces. Collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation, and interpretation takes now the form of a list under which places, people and practices are to be protected and conserved. In her examination of the politics and economics of UNESCO's World Heritage list, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2006) explains in this regard that as a totality, as the heritage of humanity, world heritage "is subject to interventions that are alien to what defines the constituent masterpieces in the first place" (170) because every effort to protect, preserve, and foster cultural practices and masterpieces alters and endangers the relationship of practitioners to their practices, of makers to their creations, of people to their land. While during the time of massive and uncontrolled collecting the Rapanui saw their culture looted, their ancestors disturbed and their mana robbed, the tag of world heritage prevents them to revitalize their culture, afford their ancestors appropriate funerary rituals, and reclaim their collective mana as a people.

Opinions in Rapa Nui are divergent in this regard. The touristic industry and island's economy benefitting greatly from the world's heritage designation, many applaud with pride being a World Heritage Site. The island gets to show itself to the world and tourists come from all over the globe to witness the masterpieces their ancestors created, they celebrate. Some others are well aware of the limits this designation posits them. While scientists get cleared by the National Monuments Council to excavate an *ahu*, a group of Rapanui culture preservationists get

sued when using such structures, like their ancestors did, as ceremonial sites. While archaeologists are granted permission to experiment new chemicals to stop the erosion of *moai* and rock art, a Rapanui teacher and culture bearer carving a petroglyph to show his students the legacy of their ancestors goes to jail. While anthropologists are authorized to study Rapanui human remains, their descendants find but obstacles when attempting to bring the ancestors back home. As world's heritage, Rapanui burials, *moai*, rock art and ancestors belong more to humanity than to the Rapanui themselves. The question that remains is how does heritage come to belong to all humanity.

Both the collecting missions reviewed in this chapter and the various protective measures proposed here as paradoxical, asymmetrical solutions are grounded in a shared conviction, the need of preserving the heritage of humanity. This world's heritage assumption speaks to the troubled history of museums as agents of deculturation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 183), as the final resting place for evidence of the success of evangelizing and colonizing efforts to preserve in the museum what was wiped out in the community. While collectors embraced the world heritage assumption to retain in a museum setting the vestiges of a vanishing people, UNESCO's list as an extension of museological values and methods defends the power of preservation to effect cultural maintenance. Both discourses share one same basic assumption, that materials, specimens and sites are to be preserved as heritage of the humanity all.

Adding to the previous chapter, with this discussion I close the review of the long-standing history of collecting on Rapa Nui. Focusing on first hand accounts, from the diaries of first voyagers to the reports of twentieth-century archaeologists, this review contrasted Rapanui reactions to the removal of their *tupuna* and the collecting of their *tao'a* with collectors' perceptions of their own actions. In most cases these writings showing awareness of the Rapanui

objection to collecting activities, they illuminated the extent to which the looting of indigenous lands has been historically embedded within the race paradigm of the study of cultures. As discussed in the previous chapter, for early voyagers collecting was an integral part of the empire-building project, as it provided the means to document discoveries, argument comparative assessments of evolution, and demonstrate the positional superiority of the West. For missionaries, collecting was an objectification of the triumph of Catholicism over paganism and an indicator of performance proving indigenous worldviews as barbaric idolatry. For collectors sent in museum-mandated missions, collecting was a facet of the modernist project of scientifically demonstrating the inferiority of indigenous peoples as to facilitate colonial expansion. In this chapter we concluded this analysis discussing how for ethnographers and archaeologists, collecting has historically been a means to preserve the vestiges of a vanishing race for the sake of science. Collections resulting whether from explicit collecting missions or from restoration projects and archaeological research, they all have shared one same purpose, to preserve for humanity the history of a great civilization whose memory seems to live solely in its archaeological past.

Some might argue that the various writings discussed throughout these chapters should be read attending to their historical context, as time-specific philosophies might explain their racist, violent assumptions. And I agree. Accordingly, I presented this revision from a historical perspective that merged collecting missions into contemporary global and local politics. In this regard, special attention was given in this chapter to the impact that collecting missions had on the development of Chilean public policy, and how at the same time such policies regulated ideas of national heritage. Rather than justifying brutal looting, however, attention to historical contexts shows that very little has changed. Arguments defending the retention of indigenous

heritage in museums are but grounded in the very same convictions that motivated its collection in the first place, a discussion that shall occupy the following chapter. Likewise, Chilean legislation responding to collecting missions as a nationalist effort to enforce Chile's sovereignty on Rapa Nui and to protect nation-state property has been one of the main obstacles for Rapanui efforts to repatriate their ancestors, obstacles that I shall analyze and complicate later in this document.

The accounts discussed in this revision have yet something else in common, they all refer to collected materials and restored monuments in terms of its absolute worthlessness to the Rapanui and its absolute usefulness to the outside world. Not too differently, they all deemed the ontological values that the Rapanui attached to the materials collected as mere superstition, and enhanced the value of their collections as either trophies of superiority and success, specimens worth of scientific attention or world's heritage monuments. In the following chapter we shall see that arguments defending the retention of indigenous heritage in museums are still deeply rooted in this very same discourse. Scientific worth continues to override ontological values; stereotypes of a vanishing race still persist; and a people's heritage continues to be fiercely defended as a heritage of humanity.

Very often, repatriation opponents try hard to delegitimize indigenous repatriation requests arguing that the very ancestors of the claimants gave the disputed materials away. Some readers may think that way too. A note in this regard is important before I detail the main repatriation-opposing arguments in the next chapter. Some Rapanui did exchange *ivi tupuna* and *tao'a*. I exposed some of those cases in this revision. The motivations of the individuals who allowed *ivi tupuna* and *tao'a* to be commoditized can never be known for certain. But the historical circumstances have a lot to say here. At the time that collectors were in search of the

“authentic” artifacts and “ancient” remains, the Rapanui people were experiencing extreme pressures to assimilate into, first, the Catholic doctrine, then an exploitation system, and later the Chilean society. I detailed some of the brutal assimilation policies in these last two chapters. Relations to *ivi tupuna* and *tao’a* being the very manifestation of their ways of life, some might have given them away influenced enough for these policies. Some others might have done so out of fear, others out of extreme necessity.

In her examination of collecting in Native American lands, Amy Lonetree (2012: 11) contends that disease, too, played a central role in wholesale collecting. The same can be said about Rapa Nui. First, the devastating impact of the epidemics brought to the Island by the slaves led to the notion of the Rapanui people as a vanishing race, urging collectors to acquire everything they might be leaving behind. Also, disease disrupted traditional ownership patterns. While the Rapanui had strictly defined patterns of familiar ownership, the loss of population altered them dramatically. Zoilo Huke and Carlos Edmunds explain in this regard that after the epidemics hit Rapa Nui, *’ana tao’a* were left without an owner. Some of them remain enclosed somewhere in the Island, unknown. Some others were found, and the unclaimed *tao’a* hidden there were often sold or exchanged.<sup>16</sup>

Even when some *ivi tupuna* and *tao’a* were sold or exchanged voluntarily, we must never forget the broader historical context. Exploitation, colonial oppression, and extreme poverty impacted Rapanui life at the time, as it continues to do for many indigenous peoples. Those who hold that indigenous peoples do not have the right to claim what their ancestors gave away are ignoring these brutal realities. These brutalities should never go unacknowledged when debating repatriation.

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<sup>16</sup> Zoilo Huke. Rapa Nui, November 2013. Personal communication.  
Carlos Edmunds. Rapa Nui, December 2013. Personal communication.

**HEREĪDA RODO**  
**TOKEĪDA HE PUOKO ARIKI**

As a preamble to the history of collecting on Rapa Nui discussed in Chapters Three and Four I presented the *a'amu* (*RAP.* story) of the death of *ariki* Hotu Matu'a and the stealing of his skull. I finish that story here. After a series of disputes over the *ariki*'s head, the skull remained hidden for centuries until in 1964 French ethnographer, Francis Mazière persuaded three Rapanui to let him borrow the mana-charged head. Taking advantage of the relations he could establish with the Rapanui thanks to his Tahitian wife, he deceived them and obtained the *ariki*'s head. He said he would take the skull to France for studies, after which he would return it. He never did. While living in Paris, founding member of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program, Ida Piru Huke engaged in an almost detective research to track her *ariki*'s head down. She came very close, but after a private collector acquired the skull, all traces disappeared. Anthropologist Grant McCall tried as well, an attempt he narrates in an article that reveals this story of lies and greed.<sup>17</sup> Below I present this story as narrated by Sorobabel Fati, Joaquín Niso Tuki, and Te Pou Huke.

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**Te Pou Huke:** Time passed and the skull went from family to family until they sold it. And these people that sold this head suffered the curse, the *tohu* [*RAP.* curse] for doing bad things, for breaching the *tapu*.

**Niso Tuki:** After time, the Ika brothers knew about the legend of the *puoko* [*RAP.* head] from their mother. They found the *puoko* and took it to Pepe Reja, in Haŋa O Teo. And there they left

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<sup>17</sup> McCall 2010.



it. As they had taken the puoko over there with their mother, they knew where it was and so they brought it here when Tira arrived with Mazière. And then he traded it for I don't know what, clothes, cigarettes, things like that. And so that is how Mazière could take the puoko with him, when he left with Tira. And these two brothers died like this. Wandering on the outside. Because of the puoko they died like this. The mother of these twins knew about the head. And took it to Pepe Reņa. And the twins knew. So when Mazière came they went for it and made the barter with Tira, Mazière's wife. And then Mazière took it there. That is the part of the history of the head of Hotu Matu'a that I know. I don't know it is in France now, no idea. And then all the *mana* left, with the king's head.

**Sorobabel Fati:** There are two persons, who are brothers, twins. In 1964 a French couple arrived on the island. They started to give things to the Rapanui. When they had old things, they gave them things, like a trade. And this Frenchman knows the things from here. Because of his wife, that is Tahitian ... These two people that are twins went to the place where Hotu Matu'a was, took the skull and traded it with the Frenchman. Do you know how the eldest died? He lives on the cove. Daniel Ika was his name. And then everything started to change for him. He doesn't speak well; his hear starts to lose. He lived two years; then he died. To the other one happened the same. He was two years like that. He goes out alone, he goes naked and wandering the countryside. And his children go after him, searching for him. These two, these two were the ones that found that cave north to Akahaņa I told you about. And this man lived in that cave. And when he was coming from there, he died. He died in that place upwards Te Pahu cave, towards Mauņa Terevaka. People went to look for him and they found him there. There are many people here that mess with the *varua* world and die. One doesn't realize but then night comes

and it all starts. People may not believe on this now. But if one makes these bad things, then it appears.

**Niso Tuki:** When the puoko of Hotu Matu'a went away, the *mana* went away, the *varua*, everything. Because he was the first king, and he brought the *mana* to the island. So if he goes away, it goes back with him. It won't stay on its own. Well and the spirits that are left now are the spirits of the clans, of the clans of each place. They are guardians only. Not those spirits that have all kinds of extensions, like the king. The spirit of the king is the one that has the most powers. Like that of knowledge and many others. What remains here are the spirits of each clan, which are in the family caves ... in the sites of the clans. Those spirits are there. Because they are from the settlements of the clans of that place. They reside there as guardians. And there are in the inland too. Sometimes people plant taro, kumara in the inland, the people of today, and they grow beautiful, big. That is because, in the old times, people had planted taro in that place, so the *mana* is integrated in the land. So today it reproduces again. That is why the *mana* is diminishing. Because people don't gather, don't project, relive the *mana*. And what does it mean to relive the *mana*? That one has to talk about history, go to the places, light the fire, cook. Everything. In order to activate what is diminishing. So people have to reactivate it again. Planting *maika* [*RAP.* banana], *kuma* [*RAP.* sweet potato], raising chicken. Building a *pae pae* [*RAP.* hut] and staying there in the places now and then so that the spirits can activate again and live with the people. For the people have to learn the history, speak the language properly. In order to live with the spirits one has to speak too. Talk with the spirits. You talk to them too. Normally, if you talk to the spirits, they protect the places.

**Sorobabel Fati, Joaquín Niso Tuki, and Te Pou Huke**

Rapa Nui, March and October 2013

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE REPATRIATION DEBATE AND THE LAW OF THE FUNNEL

(With †Sorobabel Fati Teao, Pelayo Tuki Make, Joaquín Niso Tuki Tepano, Petero Huke Atan, Carlos Edmunds Paoa, Zoilo Huke, Piru Huke Atan, Pablo Hereveri Teao, Javier Moi Tuki Pakomio, Te Pou Huke, and Tarita Alarcón Rapu)

Indigenous people demand the return of ancestral remains and culturally significant items for multiple reasons. First and foremost, they demand the restitution of the ancestors to afford them culturally consistent treatment and appropriate funerary rituals, to let them rest in peace, and to reconnect them with their land and descendants. As for culturally significant items, their legitimate owners demand their restitution every time those items are needed for the maintained practice of rituals and ceremonies. Similarly, such materials can be repositories of knowledge, activators of memory, and holders of *mana*. In many cases, they can even be living persons or powerful, protector beings that must go back home. Arguments supporting repatriation claims are of ontological relevance. They concern cultural revitalization, re-connection with self-knowledges and history, and re-empowerment of a people that upon the looting of their heritage, knowledge, and history was left disempowered, disconnected and defenseless. Indigenous repatriation claims are, in sum, about human rights, yet their reasons have encountered a passionate opposition by many who study and curate such materials. Claims of world's heritage, universal knowledge, and academic freedom are the most heard. At the center of these claims is the insistence in protecting an assumed to be humanity's heritage. A heritage presented to be of greater value to the rest of the world than to its very heirs, its retention seems to serve an also

greater purpose: to preserve for humanity the history of great civilizations whose memories seem to live solely in a mummified archaeological past.

† **Sorobabel Fati:** When the ivi tupuna come back, then the sun will rise. The mana will return. Do you know why I say this? Because I always recall my father saying that all ancient things must be respected. For example, he told me, “If you see a *toki*, *maŋai*, any ancient thing, you look and then you leave, you don’t touch. Because you are not the owner and you don’t know which *haka ara* is owner. If you touch, put in your pocket and leave, the varua follow you.” And that is clear. Because many people here on the island, the varua followed them to their homes and to some they did things for them not to do it again.

In this chapter I present the repatriation debate from a multi-vocal perspective that opens up a space for my collaborators to refute the arguments opposing repatriation in their own voice, with their own words, and in their own terms. Framed as a part analytical, part conversational discussion, in this presentation we demonstrate that arguments opposing repatriation replicate colonial ideas that motivated collecting on indigenous lands in the first place. Claims defending the retention of the ancestors within museum collections perpetuate racist notions of Western superiority. Even if widely and comprehensively rejected, these notions govern the repatriation debate as the interests of the West continue to override the interests of indigenous peoples: the heritage of a people continues to be the heritage of the world, scientific worth continues to override ontological relevance, Western rights continue to be protected at the expense of violating indigenous rights, and national legislation continues to overrule ancestral laws. Acknowledging the intersubjective, ontological relevance that museum collections hold for their

legitimate owners provides the basis for refiguring the debate from a perspective that prioritizes understanding and respect while readdressing the wrongs of the past. Refiguring the debate in such terms contributes to establishing a new path of greater understanding and ethical collaboration leading to the negotiation of ownership and custodianship in terms that honor the history of the subjects in dispute.

In the following pages I detail the main arguments opposing repatriation, which I categorized in four main themes: the conservation of world's heritage, the defense of scientific development, the protection of academic freedom, and the enforcement of national heritage protective legislation. Interweaving my presentation, my colleagues of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP) intervene in the debate, exposing the arguments underlying their repatriation claims and impugning the arguments defending the retention of indigenous heritage. To the world's heritage argument they respond loud and clear: Rapanui heritage is their heritage, not Chileans' and certainly not the world's; to the scientific argument they respond with an ontological statement: the specimens scientists insist to retain are not just objects, but ancestors, ancestors who are *tapu* and have *mana*; to the academic freedom argument they respond with a denouncement: research carried out on their ancestors violates cultural protocols, research ethics, and their rights as an indigenous people; to the legal argument they respond with a complaint: rather than protecting, Chilean legislation destroys Rapanui heritage and violates international and ancestral law. Underlying each of their responses is the ontological need that motivated their engagement in the repatriation cause in the first place: the return of *mana*. Recovering their collective *mana* is for them a means to empowering the Rapanui people through cultural revitalization and re-connection with their ancestors, their knowledge, and their history.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, collecting on indigenous lands has always been strongly tied to colonization. For early voyagers collecting was an integral part of the empire-building project, providing the means to document discoveries and comparatively assess evolution as to demonstrate the positional superiority of the West. For missionaries, collecting was an objectification of the triumph of Catholicism over paganism and an indicator of performance proving indigenous worldviews as barbaric idolatry. For collectors sent in museum-mandated missions, collecting was a facet of the modernist project of scientifically demonstrating the inferiority of indigenous peoples as to facilitate colonial expansion. For ethnographers and archaeologists, collecting has been a means to preserve the vestiges of a vanishing race for the sake of science and humanity.<sup>18</sup> Collecting, then, has historically been a colonial mechanism for disempowering indigenous peoples.

**Javier Moi Tuki:** [They took the ivi tupuna] to lessen the mana of the originals so that they could be dominated. That is how I see it. It was their means to weaken the mana ... They lessen the mana that concentrates in the island so that through politics and religion they can colonize. If mana comes back there will be more energy in the Rapanui people so that we can outcompete the politics and religion that we live today with ... With the mana coming back we unite as a people and get organized deciding to do something for the island, everyone with one same idea. Today, since the mana left, we are defenseless. It is a smart way of the West to colonize an original people, to weaken it, and allowing it to be looted so that the energy doesn't stay there. Because that way we have no authority to say no, this is to remain ancestral.

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<sup>18</sup> Each of these claims is analyzed in detail in Chapters Three and Four. For further reading, see Thomas 1991 and Hooper 2006 for discussions on ethnographic collecting in the Pacific; Fforde 2002, 2004 for a complete analysis of human remains collecting; Trigger 2006 for a history of the development of anthropology and archaeology with deep reflections on how collecting on indigenous lands was critical for the birth of both academic disciplines.

While collecting has been about disempowering, repatriation is about empowering. The Rapanui put it very clearly: repatriation is a means to recover the mana of a people. As I discussed extensively in Chapter Two, mana is the driving force of Rapanui relational epistemologies. A Pacific ontological concept based upon notions of reciprocity, kinship and respect between the living, the ancestors and the land, *mana* is the source of vitality, well-being, knowledge, harmony and abundance. Mana is about efficacy, power, and synergy. Recovering the mana is then about restoring relations, re-connecting with self-knowledges, and reclaiming control. Recovering the mana is, in sum, about re-establishing what colonialism disrupted. As I have stated repeatedly in this dissertation, the *ivi tupuna*, the bones of the ancestors, have mana. The return of the ancestors will then bring back the mana that left with them. But mana being a relational force, its recovering does not end with the return of the ancestors. As my collaborators explain, recovering the mana comes with re-establishing the *tapu* by affording repatriated *tupuna* with culturally consistent care and appropriate funerary rituals; re-connecting the people with their *maramarama tupuna* or ancestral knowledge by conducting and sharing culturally safe repatriation-related research; and re-uniting the Rapanui nation in one shared purpose, a community-based effort to bring their *tupuna* back home. Repatriation as the return of mana is about empowering through revitalization.

**Joaquín Niso Tuki:** It is dangerous for us that they are away because they are our ancestors. They are the people that have more knowledge than us, and we have to recover that because we have a tradition. The traditions are inside the Rapanui people. We must maintain that tradition and for that to happen the bodies of our ancestors cannot be scattered throughout the world. If they come back we will have our mana back because our ancestors returned.



**Carlos Edmunds:** For us, the ivi tupuna, the tupuna—is very important that they return because of their mana, because they took their mana from us. The bones that they took are the spirits that looked after us. If they come back the mana comes back again.

**Javier Moi Tuki:** They are crying there, the mana all disconnected from its world. And so are we because they left us alone. We are disorganized because the mana is disorganized and can't unite to re-unite the people and oneself ... It is important to bring back what is important the most: to bring back the mana to this people, for them to rest in peace where they were left to rest, and for us to make them today the same offerings and enforce the tapu.

**Te Pou Huke:** When the ivi tupuna come back the mana will come back, unity will come back, respect will come back. More and more people will join this movement and then the mana will grow. The mana will come back when they come back. They have mana in themselves. And that will provoke that we also enter a synergy and be one people again ... Because if those bones come back we will feel that something of our own is back here. This program, this movement is much needed here in the Island.

Arguments shielded on the protection of the so-called world's heritage are the ones invoked more often and fiercely within the repatriation debate. When it comes to defend the retention of the bodies of the ancestors, repatriation opponents invoke the world's heritage argument for the sake of universal knowledge: these valuable specimens of study need to be protected and preserved for the future generations (of researchers). As for ethnographic objects,

opponents to their restitution assure that artifacts of great artistic and cultural worth are of international interest as that they are part of the world's heritage, and belong to all of humankind. Either retaining the ancestors or their creations, those invoking the world's heritage argument assure that taking seriously the legitimate demand of indigenous nations for the restitution of their heritage would lead to a fatidic dismantling of museums as monuments of the history of humankind.<sup>19</sup> The world's heritage appeal entails a debate on property rights. Debatable in itself, the alleged purpose of tagging a particular people's heritage as a world's patrimony is to protect and promote such heritage. This problematic tag, however, has come to an absolute disregard of the rights of a people to its own heritage. The object may be protected while the entire cultural and social bond that enlivens the object is damaged in that same act of false protection. And the dynamic is founded in a patriarchy that insists the colonizers know more, have more, and can do more.

**Petero Huke:** They don't even know how my tupuna did these works and they come and talk to me about world's heritage. They don't know what they did; they didn't come at that time to see how they did it ... How can this be of the humanity? The humanity is not here when my tupuna did all this for me. So this world's heritage thing, no ... First are the natives to whom this culture belongs.

**Piru Huke:** It cannot be. It is impossible that a culture, one culture named Te Pito O Te Henua, be an international culture. No, sir. Rapanui culture is Rapanui. The moai are our first law that arrived at our land named Rapa Nui. They come from our kings. And from them we come too,

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<sup>19</sup> For a complete analysis of the world's heritage argument opposing repatriation in the British context, see Simpson 2002. For a discussion on such argument from the opposition viewpoint, see Cuno 2005.

from the hundred and eleven that remained after so much destruction and murder we come. And they really think this is a world's heritage. No!

Those artifacts of international interest and great artistic and cultural worth may be needed for the maintenance of ceremonies or for the revitalization of collective memory. They may also be secretive family belongings that ensure the wellbeing of the living or the safe journey of the deceased. They may even be the embodiment of powerful protector beings. All the same, those valuable specimens of study that need to be protected and preserved for the future of research are the ancestors of a people, and need to be protected and preserved in the graves where they belong for the future of a culture. As I have claimed repeatedly and consistently, these so-called artifacts and specimens have *mana* and their descendents need them.

**Pablo Hereveri:** It is time that they be conscientious and return the bones of our ancestors because those energies are away, flying. It is like bringing their [scientists'] bones here too. They would be crying here. [The ancestors] are there, the spirits wandering, looking where is my other hand, my other foot. And the very island, looking where its energy is. Here you give your navel [i.e. umbilical cord] to the land where you are born. When the baby is born, you cut the navel and bury it. Where your navel [i.e. umbilical cord] was buried, there your bone should be. It must be that way. The energy concentrates there. It can't one go that place and the other this other place because the mana scatters. This is not mana for them to take.

**Zoilo Huke:** It is important [that the ancestors come back] for them to return to their original place. For us, the original place is to return to the *kaiña*; *kaiña* is the place where you were born.

It is to return to the mother's womb ... Those ivi tupuna scattered on the world are yearning for coming back to their kaiā.

**Pablo Hereveri:** It is important that they come back for the mana to unify. It is important that they come back because they are ours. If their navels [i.e. umbilical cords] are here, they have to be here too. They have been there fifty, sixty years. [Scientists have been] scraping them, searching DNA. Enough! What else will they keep searching for in the bone? It is important for us that they come back so that energy will come and we will be at peace. And for the very bone to rest in peace.

In Chapter Four I contended that appeals to the world's heritage argument are highly problematic, ethically, politically, and economically, as they echo the imperialist and colonial enterprises that motivated the looting on indigenous lands in the first place. In that discussion, I examined Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2006) arguments on the effects that the world heritage label has on the actual communities, arguments that also illuminate the problems of applying such label to museum collections. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett complicates the world heritage tag explaining that as a totality, as the heritage of humanity, world heritage "is subject to interventions that are alien to what defines the constituent masterpieces in the first place" (170). Because every effort to protect, preserve, and foster cultural practices and masterpieces alters and endangers the relationship of practitioners to their practices and of makers to their creations. Keeping this heritage from its actual descendants and owners endangers these relations even more so.

**Zoilo Huke:** Being [world's] heritage protects but it leads to destruction. It is Rapanui heritage. That should be respected first.

**Tarita Alarcón:** They were left by their ancestors, which are ours as well, in a place with an intention. And that intention was abruptly modified. Processes are different and act differently on people. This knowledge has always been here, this tapu in relation to the Ivi Tupuna. There are many rituals and tapu in relation to the ivi tupuna. The Rapanui respect their ivi tupuna so very, very much. Here it is well known that if you see an ivi tupuna, you thank him and ask him for permission. And even when you don't see them, you ask for permission to our statues, in the understanding that with them are the Tupuna that lived there, now in their eternal dream. In their eternal dream that will make them dust. That dust will become island again and will increase the harmony and balance that the island needs.

**Te Pou Huke:** The tupuna are enslaved there. And we, this generation, we cannot stay with our arms crossed before this. We must begin a new energy that makes us all strong and gather the people to go together in this repatriation cause for bringing all those objects that here will shine. Here they will have meaning; here the varua of the [moai] *kava kava* will be happy, in his place. The mana would return. People would have the synergy needed for this culture to grow again, for a cultural renaissance to happen. We need those pieces here, all of us.

Grounded in the faith of the power of preservation to effect cultural revitalization, the assumption of indigenous heritage as a world's heritage speaks to the troubled history of museums as agents of de-culturation, as the final resting place for evidence of the success, as

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, of missionizing and colonizing efforts to preserve in the museum what was wiped out in the community. The debate on indigenous heritage versus human heritage necessarily leads to museums' contested claim of collective ownership. In this discussion, Mieke Bal (1996) rightfully notes that the ethnographic museum is the most obviously politically charged institution, "and it does pose the immediate problem of 'cultural property' and collective ownership" (202). The immediate questions that arise are how the heritage of a people comes to be the heritage of humanity, and how their property could come to be collectively owned. Bal makes these questions even more uncomfortable when he interrogates if former colonialists are entitled to hold onto objects that their ancestors took from former colonies (202), a reflection that motivated the repatriation movement in the first place.

**Te Pou Huke:** They took advantage of their arms and ships, and persuaded the tupuna with their junks. Here is the history. If there had been any gifts, something would have been left in the *kai kai* [*RAP*. string figures and recitations], something would have been left in the *riu tanji* [*RAP*. songs]. That is why I believe that nothing was gifted; everything was stolen. Here they landed and exhumed our ancestors from all the ahu on the coast. And so they violated. They violated the space, they violated the tapu, they violated everything. And now they tell us they have them in the museums; that they have them well preserved. But, what for? The question we ask. What for do they have them there? With what purpose? For other people to see them?

**Javier Moi Tuki:** So they say, "No, we cannot give these back because you don't have a museum for them." What?! They took them from inside an ahu, from an *avaŋa*. They were resting there, at peace. [If they come back] We could bring them the *moa* [*RAP*. chicken], the taro

to do *hatu* [*RAP.* make offerings] to do *maururu* [*RAP.* give thanks] for them.

In his study of cultural property and museums, James Cuno (2005) vehemently defends the argument of museum collections as human heritage. In Cuno's view, museums are entrusted with the responsibility of preserving "things" for all of time, and the responsibility of museums to the preservation of "endangered species," he argues, is a moral one (143). All too often, indigenous people have to deal with such outrageous claims that replicating nineteenth-century anthropological racial discourses that relegate them to the category of "species," and their material, intellectual, and spiritual heritage to that of "things." All supported on the equally outdated stereotype of the "vanishing race," and the painful assumption of ignorance, because museums will take better care of their heritage than themselves.

**Tarita Alarcón:** Who has that responsibility is that one who is directly connected to the materials, to the artifacts, and in this case to the *ivi*. All of us who are here have similar blood types; we keep a genetic connection to those *ivi*. I can follow my genealogy backwards and get to them. And maybe one of these people I will find will be in my lineage. So in that sense we are the first responsible ones to fulfill their wishes. This is not something I am making up or that the Rapanui are making up because it just occurred to us. These matters were done with a purpose. The rituals had their purpose of placing [in the burial] and then stay there. And they trusted we would maintain that for them to rest in peace. In peace, in harmony, in coexistence with us. This is how I refute that argument that they belong to everyone. Will I go tell a person from Jakarta or Timbuktu how to bury her great-grandfather? How to bury her mother? How to build her temple? I can contribute to conservation and preservation from my viewpoint, but the first

responsible is the original descendant. And in Rapa Nui, favorably, that connection was never lost because the land was always inhabited by Rapanui people.

**Te Pou Huke:** I find it insane that they think like that. Because it is very simple, you have said it yourself: they must return to their place. Simple. Why? Because they would not like that I go to their cemeteries, take the bones of their grandparents, and bring them here. That is the reason. As simple as that: because they do not belong to them. Even if they have the care and temperature. No. Because it was not thought like that: their future was to pulverize inside the ahu. It is simple: because they are ours, because they are our grandparents, because they are our ancestors ... They do not respect what the ancestors determined.

Retaining indigenous heritage within museum collections is also very often defended in the name of the development of science. When it comes to secure the future of science, ancestral remains are the main targets. Those who oppose the repatriation of the ancestors base their position in the efficacy of human remains for unveiling the mysteries of the past. Their study, they assure, reveals unique information concerning illnesses, social practices, diets, population movements, and human evolution.<sup>20</sup> This largely invoked argument is problematic in many different ways. First, it reifies the race paradigm that motivated the collecting of ancestral remains in the first place; second, it disregards the ontological significance that the disputed ancestors hold for their descendants; third, it underestimate indigenous knowledges.

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<sup>20</sup> For a complete, historical analysis of the scientific motivation of collecting of human remains in relation to repatriation, see Fforde 2004. For a detailed analysis on the scientific argument, see Jenkins 2011; Landau and Steele 2000. For a discussion of the same argument in the context of the reburial debate, see Goldstein and Kintigh 2000; Klesert and Powell 2000; Sayer 2010; Turner 2005. For a broader analysis of the repatriation debate, with emphasis on the scientific argument, see Thomas 2000.



**Pelayo Tuki:** Because of the oral sequence [i.e. tradition] we know, we do not need the science. We already know all what happened and we are applying that knowledge today. In that sense, and respecting very much science, I do not need it. Culturally, here we know everything. We feel it, we see it daily, and we apply it in all imaginable senses.

**Te Pou Huke:** Whose past? Their past? They have their own heritage. France must have its own heritage inherited from Bonaparte's empire, and so must the British. That is their heritage, not ours. Our heritage is the world's but theirs is theirs. So what is yours is mine and what is mine is mine. That is how they speak. But no, things are not like that. Why is it a world's heritage? Who decided that? Scientists? They cannot come here and decide that. "For the study of the past." Whose past?! The world's past? No, this is our past. Those are our ancestors.

**Piru Huke:** What scientists say is what scientists say. It is enough all these many years they have been studying them. They were lucky. But there is nothing, not the smallest evidence left here in Rapa Nui. Build your laboratory here in Rapa Nui. Our children here need it too. Why do they always take, take, take? Why don't they give back too?

The graves of indigenous peoples have historically constituted an important and always available source for physical anthropologists, archaeologists and museum curators who claim that disturbing the rest of indigenous ancestors provides unique information for the study of the past, an argument deeply rooted in racist evolutionary theories. As discussed in my revision of collecting in Rapa Nui, in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, museums were actively seeking to form comparative collections of human remains. The purpose of such collections was

to study and document human variation and to prove evolutionary theories (Burke 2008: 169-70; Fine-Dare 2002: 33-40; Thomas 2000: 38-43, 106-10; Trigger 2006: 159-60). Grounded primarily in the racist schools of craniology and phrenology, these theories came to scientifically prove the inferiority of indigenous people. While these theories have been widely and comprehensively rejected, their legacy is unavoidable as the very museums that insist to retain indigenous human remains in their holdings openly acknowledge that such materials were unethically obtained.

**Piru Huke:** We are slaves still. We are in an island that is ours but enslaved. And scientists say they [the ancestors] are theirs; that they have to keep studying our tupuna? Come on! Bring them and bring them fast. They are our ancestors. We have never broken into their cemeteries to take their tupuna. Why are our ancestors with them and not with us?! There must be consent and respect. Never have we gone as the Rapanui people to take their ancestors from their cemeteries or their heritage. But they, they have stolen everything from us.

**Te Pou Huke:** They are graduates from Harvard or whatever, but get here and don't respect the meaning of the ahu. They might be very archaeologists but here they don't know a thing about respect. This is all full of funerary works. And that is tapu. Tapu like their ancestors that are in their cemeteries. So they go to Harvard to learn what? How to disrespect other cultures? How to impose laws that favor them but that work against us? If they want to study this place, first return everything and then come study it for real. We will teach them the history ... We will demonstrate them we are a living culture and so we insist: they must stop manipulating with that term "world's heritage" something that does not belong to them.

**Tarita Alarcón:** That is what anthropology is all about. First you have colonization, where the Rapanui or the tribe to conquer was the savage without a soul, the child that no one really knows what status he belongs to. Then he becomes the Company's labor. He works and acquires that category. It has been the very historicity that has given their distinctive roles to the different human groups on which it works, intervening them in all counts. That is the thinking of earlier periods, where the Rapanui doesn't know anything and that only ethnology and anthropology have rediscovered everything and made the Rapanui understand.

Arguments defending the retention of the ancestors in the name of science are based on a wrong understanding of repatriation as an obstruction to scientific development. Further, these arguments entail an epistemological problem founded on the assumption that indigenous pre-contact knowledge would have vanished without a trace, were it not for archaeology. This assumption disregards the validity of indigenous versions of their own history and their ways of knowing while validating Western science as the only possible approach to the truth.<sup>21</sup>

Indigenous intellectuals respond to this argument very strongly. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), for example, in her critique on how research is all too often talked about both in terms of its absolute worthlessness to indigenous peoples and its absolute usefulness to those who wielded it as an instrument, responds sharply: "It told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs" (Smith 1999: 3). Those studying ancestral remains, however, disagree widely and rarely mention the indigenous contribution to the foundations of Western research, nor do they consider indigenous ways of knowing in its continuing development. Echoing the convictions of collectors, who could not even imagine that

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<sup>21</sup> For a complete multi-vocal debate on the dispute between science and oral tradition within the repatriation context, see Burke, Heather et al. 2000.

other people could ever have done things before or better than themselves, for them the objects of research do not have a voice and have not kept the knowledge worth to contribute to research or science.

**Niso Tuki:** No, history is not based on anthropology or archaeology. History is based on the people and their customs. It is based on its people and its lineage. Archaeology is for me but an hypothesis. Archaeologists have never built an ahu. That who built the ahu is my ancestor, not the archaeologists. Archaeologists do their studies according to their hypotheses. But no one can say it is correct. For an archaeologist to say, “we are correct, perfect on this,” I will expect them to have built an ahu somewhere. But here in this island, the ahu my ancestors built them, not the archaeologists. Archaeologists say things that are not in accordance with our ahu, our customs or our lineage.

**Tarita Alarcón:** I respond to them with their very science: [that indigenous knowledge would have vanished were it not for archaeology] is but a hypothesis ... The Rapanui people settled in a place with very limited survival conditions, yet they prospered. They prospered in a very impressive way ... Were there breakdowns? Yes, there were breakdowns. Could the Rapanui survive those internal breakdowns with no foreign intervention? Yes, they could. Yes, they could. Their construction techniques were modified; they stopped carving the Ariña Ora [*RAP. Living Face*] and megalithic constructions, and a new cult began, the Tājata Manu [*RAP. birdman*]. But these processes were interrupted by colonization. The same external element without which they say continuation would have not been possible was rather what intervened in the normal development process. Theirs is a tautological argument.

**Carlos Edmunds:** The Rapanui have always cared. Many of us did not have the ancient education. We did not learn the *rono rono* [*RAP.* writing system], for example, because they took [the wise people] to Peru as slaves. But even so, those who remained cared about giving back what they knew, which was passed on from generation to generation. I wish they wouldn't have taken them. Maybe knowledge would be wider than it is now. Because with them they took the knowledge ... This knowledge left with the looting too.

**Petero Huke:** To those people, scientists, anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists I say ... I don't have studies, but there is one thing I can assert even with no studies ... I [meaning, my ancestors] brought the moai from Rano Raraku to Tahai. Simple. I have no studies. But I brought the moai from volcano Rano Raraku to Tahai, from volcano Rano Raraku to Vinapu. [This knowledge, this technology] happened before them, before them. They were not born; none of those scientists were born. All that technology I made it, before them, because it comes from my ancestors, who passed it on from generation to generation, sixty-nine generations from my birth to my tupuna.

When researchers encounter indigenous objection to the study of the ancestors, they often respond very seductively: their research is for the good of the community. For most Rapanui, however, that promise is a big lie. They accuse researchers of failing to request authorization from the community, of voluntarily excluding Rapanui participation in their studies and of withholding information from the community. Question remains how a study can be of use to a particular community if its results are kept from them. As of today, the “doing good to the community” argument in Rapa Nui is a vague and unilateral one. Some promises often arising in

the conversation are that studying ancestral remains would help them understand their past, genetically prove a Polynesian identity, and get an accurate insight to past pathologies. When I asked about such promises, my interlocutors were simple and clear: the oral traditions and knowledge their grandparents passed on to them have taught them more about their past than any known study; a genetic profile that quantifies identity will not tell them more than their genealogy, language and self-knowledge about who they are; and they have no knowledge whatsoever of any research on their ancestors finding a cure to any of the diseases or diet disorders that affect the community today.

**Joaquín Niso Tuki:** What happens is that they came to do studies on the bones but without asking for permission to anyone. “That we will do studies; that we will take this.” They came, did their excavations, studies, and took the remains of the ancestors. And they did not ask for permission to anyone. For me, that is to profane, to violate others’ rights. Because we are the owners. They should ask us if they want to do studies or want to take the bones of our ancestors. Here they do studies, they do excavations, they take the bones of our ancestors, and no one says a word. And no one authorized.

**Tarita Alarcón:** The Ivi Tupuna have been analyzed with no or very, very few—counted with the fingers of my hand—knowing which treatments have been carried out on their Ivi. As living people, we all demand respect, and we demand respect to our spirits too. No one has asked the Rapanui people, “Hey, can I grind the right upper molar to do a chemical analysis that tells me which phytolith was found and therefore which plants were the Rapanui eating at the time?” And here is what I said about orality and writing. Today everything must be written for it to be true,

for me to believe you. If not, it is not true. But no, the Rapanui still maintain their knowledge. If I heard it, if someone had told me that before, if I agree and that knowledge is visibilized through orality, that knowledge is true for me. I don't need you to tell me, as science does, "yes, when I did the C14 it showed they indeed ate palms." We have that knowledge too.

The study of the body of the ancestors could certainly be of use to the communities. But for that to happen, certain basic requirements are to be met. Sharing the results with the community and ensuring community participation should be a must, as should be attention to the community's needs. The Rapanui that I have talked with about bioanthropological research might be interested, for example, in the asset that such research might be for their land claims or repatriation and reburial efforts, as DNA studies might corroborate lineages-land connections. Up until today, no researcher has offered to do them this good.

**Piru Huke:** They don't leave a single file [i.e. research report, results], Jacinta. Not a single Rapanui kid gets to participate in and learn from their studies.

**Carlos Edmunds:** What they research is for them. The people, we who are the people and the owners are not interested in what they are studying. Those are studies for them not for this community. Never will they inform what they are doing. What they are studying with our bones is of no interest for us, the people.

**Piru Huke:** Like the *Puoko* [*RAP.* head] of Hotu Matu'a. They did wrong, they loaned the head. But the family received their punishment, very strongly and for generations ... Francis Mazière

promised the two brothers that he would take the head to study and that in five years he would return the head. But when the head of Hotu Matu'a left, he never came back. And when he left our mind and our people started to change. The country got dry and the energy of the people went down. This is not as it was before, not as I knew it.

**Carlos Edmunds:** Or now recently, that body from Anakena that they took and who knows where it is now. A full body, no head. They took it to study, I don't know where. The museum people must know. But they never told us. Those are the bodies of important people because when a king died, they cut his head off.

**Javier Moi Tuki:** Expeditions have taken tons of archaeological information but they never bring the written evidences or anything.

Even under these unethical research conditions a third argument defending the retention of indigenous heritage within museums is that repatriation violates academic freedom. And as Rosemary Joyce notes, “when the spectre of infringement of academic freedom is raised in the academy, it is a very powerful weapon” (Joyce 2002: 99). In her problematization of this claim, Joyce insightfully argues that those who invoke academic freedom in the context of the implementation of repatriation laws and policies are ignoring the actual nature of that right, for academic freedom is meant to be a guarantee that researchers will not be persecuted for the content of their research results, and should not be understood by any means as “an absolute right to study anything one wishes in any way one wishes” (Joyce 20002: 100).<sup>22</sup> Instead of so

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<sup>22</sup> For an analysis of academic freedom argument as a violation of religious freedom, see Burk et al 2008; Echo Hawk and Echo Hawk 1994.



fiercely defending academic freedom, curators, anthropologists and archaeologists should be more concerned about their research's bounds to human subjects.

**Piru Huke:** Do research. Let's hope when their father or grandfather dies they go study them. Violation?! And never did they think about violation when they robbed from our culture? Where are we looking at? What gives them that right? ... Never have the Rapanui said, "Hey, bring me your ancestors." Never have we robbed. Never have the Rapanui said, "I give you my ancestors." Never. All what they say is study, study, study. Yet we have not a single scholar here, not a single library with those studies.

**Pelayo Tuki:** We would need to ask them what is their research for. If they have them for fifty, a hundred years, well, what else? What else do they want to know? There is nothing else to be known. If they have done their research and studies, then they should have all their information. I think it is enough ... No one is violating their right to science because they have already done [what they wanted to do]. They are violating here, not us. If they have had them for so long, what do they still want them for? If they are not doing their studies, they better return them.

**Te Pou Huke:** To refuse repatriation is to violate a right, my right to have my ancestors here, where they were born, where they grew up and died. Where they left their heirs, who are we, the living. And we need them. Because when I go to an ahu, I was taught to do *aro* [*RAP.* speak to the ancestors introducing yourself by reciting your genealogy], to talk with the tupuna. The tupuna are there, they are. But we need their bones; we need to know they are there. Because what we know is that the western man, who is superior, came here to steal all this from us. He came to

leave us mute, blind, disabled. Enough. We need them back. It is crucial for the culture to grow. They violated the human rights of the people that lived here and continue to do so when they say that [refusing repatriation appealing academic freedom].

**Carlos Edmunds:** They are violating our right to repatriate our bones. The people do not care about what they say that we are violating their academic rights because we have no idea what they are doing with them.

In the academic community, students and faculty are increasingly required to submit our research projects to routine reviews for their potential impact on human subjects. These reviews evaluate the consequences of research to prevent that harm might be done to human subjects. As most of my colleagues, before beginning my research on repatriation in Rapa Nui, I had to submit my project's proposal to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), an ethics committee that assessed the potential consequences of my research in order to prevent that any eventual harm might be done to research participants. While the evaluators insisted to ask about interviews and protocols for informed consent, I wondered how researchers studying Rapanui ancestral remains got cleared by the board. Most of the times conducted abroad and with no Rapanui participation or consultation whatsoever, these researches are unethical in all imaginable ways. Researchers studying the remains of indigenous ancestors, and the reviewers themselves, seem to be absolutely unaware of the impact that such studies have on their descendants. While they insist to defend their right to research in the name of academic freedom, the Rapanui that I have consulted respond with an ontological statement: these researchers are dealing with their ancestors and disturbing them constitutes an inherent danger to their descendants. As my

collaborators and I have stated repeatedly in this document, the ancestors have mana, and history has demonstrated that disturbing them and breaching the tapu may bring dramatic consequences.

**Tarita Alarcón:** Freedom and licentiousness are similar words [*SPA. libertad* and *libertinaje*] but they are not the same. I think they are alleging academic licentiousness: *I* should do what *I* need to do at every place, on any material, and at any time. The focus of this is exceeded as of where they can work. What I appeal to in this sense is that they must speak to the community. The community must be informed about what they want, and the community shall assess, think, and give their answer. That is freedom. The other thing is licentiousness [*NOTE. In Spanish: libertad* and *libertinaje*]: that the academic community has all rights to do whatever they want.

**Te Pou Huke:** The archaeologists come here, enter a tapu land that is the ahu, excavate, do all these research, and loot everything. That is theft. Because we don't go to where these Norwegian, British, Spanish archaeologists live to profane their graves. If I did, they would give me life imprisonment. Why do they have these licenses, then?

**Pablo Hereveri:** The Rapanui respect. We respect our origins, our bones. If a Rapanui sees a bone in this cave, the Rapanui will never touch it. That head will be there; that energy will be there forever. But other people come and take. Our culture is about not touching anything. What we think is that these issues are tapu, as are the bone of our ancestors. There is the strength; there is the power, the knowledge that they gave to us, our life and all of this. The moai arouse from the contact with those bones. So those bones are tapu.

**Javier Moi Tuki:** We feel helpless because we can't do anything. It is already done. What's left is that we protect so they can't keep excavating. Because for the Rapanui the tapu means respect. We respect that ... But they don't care. They see them for their studies, for them. But they are taking away the mana and the puai [*RAP.* strength].

Before this problematic and the complicated relations between the academic freedom appeal, cultural protocols and research ethics, reaching a greater understanding of the ontological underpinnings of the debate is critical to assess contemporary research methodologies for the study and curation of ancestral remains. Many of who study and curate ancestral remains have publicly declared their fear to repatriation, arguing that it will end the archaeological profession. Consequently, they have refused to attend to the ontological component of the materials they study and have not hesitated to criticize indigenous repatriation claims as anti-modern and obstructive (Cuno 2005; Gilmore 2013; Sayer 2010). On the contrary, attending to such claims, acknowledging their ontological relevance, and complying with cultural protocols can only bring benefits to the archaeological, anthropological and museological professions, since they are critical for understanding the past and contextualizing the present. The acknowledging of the ontological and cultural significance of bioanthropological collections should be rather seen as an effective means toward the development of research methodologies that, grounded in collaboration and respect, can begin to heal postcolonial trauma and set the basis for a new path of greater understanding.

**Joaquín Niso Tuki:** We were born on this island. Our culture, our language and our knowledge were not brought here from somewhere else but born here from the oral transmissions of our

ancestors. They projected here on this island and all that knowledge we know it. But it has been altered with the arrival of outsiders to the island, in the past and today. So there is every time more deterioration of the language, the customs, the culture. But that does not mean that we do not want to have what is ours. We must, now more than ever, reclaim all what is ours and that is scattered throughout the world. Because the world is not the owner. We are the legitimate owners of that heritage, the same that outsiders consider to be theirs. But the true owners of that heritage are us, no one else than us, the Rapanui people.

**Te Pou Huke:** I know that some traditions have been lost but we, the new generations can build, with the help of research and what we have inherited from our ancestors. We have a base that is not as far as others think. It is here, it is close, and it is palpable. We have to pass this knowledge on to the new generations ... My thinking is that if you are gifted something, you have to give back. That we should do. The tupuna gave us this gift, they gifted us this, this immense culture, famed world-wide as the largest outdoors museum, they say. Because each step here is history, each stone has a name. Everything is here. Only those pieces are left to be back so we can carry out this renaissance.

**Pleayo Tuki:** And that it is very important because there are many people here that are disconnected [from the maramarama tupuna, Rapanui knowledge]. So revitalizing it will impact them and make them raise awareness. They will be aware of how important and valuable is [to know] how we were. But we have to be very cautious. It is not easy, it is very complicated. We have to study. But we can. We have to study and gather all the information to revitalize the situation.

Underlying the perceptions and assumptions opposing repatriation is what Edward Said called “Western positional superiority” (1978: 7), an attitude that contributes only to the perpetuation of colonial discourses. This position encounters its counterpart in the argument that defends repatriation as a medium through which colonial wounds of the oppressed can and must be healed (Thornton 2002; 2009). I am firmly convinced that the repatriation of indigenous heritage back to the communities, rather than restricting academic freedom, invites researchers to critically and reflexively position ourselves within a space of collaboration and responsibility to effectively de-hegemonize the academic discourse and endeavor. Likewise, I am convinced that repatriation and the collaborations it entails, far from jeopardizing the so-called “world’s heritage,” ensures the care of and respect for indigenous heritage in the terms and to the ends that it was created and kept, contributing to validating indigenous ways of knowing.

**Te Pou Huke:** I think it is like the law of the funnel: the wider part for them, the smaller one for us, the rest of the world. And it can’t be like that. If they have known how to impose throughout the years is because they have been very clever. It is good to tell them no. No to their ways of studying, of analyzing our past. They cannot be more capable than us and our ancestors. They have to get rid of that idea that they have the license to do that, that they are superior. They have not been superior. They have been looters and have demonstrated to be disrespectful and rude. They do not have that right. It doesn’t fit today that way of thinking that they have this right to research. Maybe in the time of Thor Heyerdahl everyone thought that and it was an adventure. Let’s know the world, and let’s go looting and “interpreting.” That is the harm that they have done. So they have that right to research but their studies are but distortions of the real history.

And so they still have this right to keep distorting? No, this is the time for us to empower and lead a renaissance. And that will be done through this [repatriation] program.

**Piru Huke:** Beware! Even what you say can destroy a culture.

Adding to the main arguments opposing repatriation detailed above, indigenous peoples face yet another obstacle in their repatriation efforts, the legal argument. While claims appealing to the world's heritage, the development of science, and academic freedom do not distinguish boundaries, legal ones rely on national public policies.<sup>23</sup> Even in countries with specific repatriation legislation or government-mandated repatriation policies, indigenous people find their repatriation efforts often boycotted under the legal appeal, in some cases making their way to a court. In these cases, appeals to federal land, cultural affiliation and non-recognized tribes are the most heard. This situation gets even more complicated in countries with no repatriation policies. Chile falls under this category.

Chile does not have a repatriation law, nor does its legislation concerning heritage establish repatriation regulations. Not only does Chilean legal apparatus fail to establish repatriation protocols, it posits but obstacles to any indigenous repatriation effort. The law concerning cultural heritage in Chile is the National Monuments Act. Passed in 1970, the law defines and categorizes national heritage, dividing it into national, historical, public, and archaeological monuments. Rapanui ivi tupuna and tao'a fall under these categories. Preceding this law, in 1935 the 4.536 Decree was issued, which designated the entire island as historical monument. That same year, over 40% of its surface acquires the category of National Park

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<sup>23</sup> For an international revision of laws concerning excavation and treatment of human remains, see Márquez-Grant and Fibiger 2011. For a revision of international documents and writings on the repatriation debate, see Prott 2009.

through the 103 Decree. In 1973 through the 1203 Supreme Decree, the Ministry of Lands conceded free use of the park to the National Forest Corporation (CONAF), since then responsible from the administration and protection of the Rapa Nui National Park. Rapa Nui being under this multiple legislative protection, Rapanui ancestors, monuments, burials, ceremonial sites and lands are property of the nation-state.

**Te Pou Huke:** This term, “archaeology,” is as if this was someone else’s, as if it didn’t belong to us. That label, “archaeology,” we must eradicate it completely ... Our “archaeology” is part of our being. We grew up in this landscape and since we were children, they told us the stories, stories that were told to them. That is how our history was transmitted to us. But now they come and put a rock that reads “National Park” in the place where my grandparents lived. That is theft. This term, “National Park,” is a theft. Just like archaeology is.

**Javier Moi Tuki:** So it is very important that the ancestors come back for then they [Chilean government] will recognize us, recognize that this [land, culture] has an owner, and make institutions recognize that. Institutions that profit from this field and that only care about getting projects [funding] but they don’t protect anything of what we are talking about now. Like the institutions that are doing their projects now, they say they are protecting archaeological sites, “archaeological sites,” but they don’t protect the ivi tupuna that have been looted. And not only by foreigners, it was the very Chilean politics that authorized them to come do their studies. They said, “No, it will do good to the country because they are coming to do studies.” But the studies take the bones and they never come back. Where is the power? That power they are taking it elsewhere, not bringing it here.



**Te Pou Huke:** It is sad what happens when you go to Rano Raraku, for example. That is a tapu place, but tourists go there and enter. It is full of paths and they have tried everything to contain erosion. Do you know what is the best technique to contain erosion? That no one else enters! That place is tapu. You can't go there and touch a moai. They did it already, Thor Heyerdahl and them; they took their pictures there, sitting on the head of the moai. They mocked already. But it is enough, we don't want any more.

**Piru Huke:** They don't have this culture and they don't understand it, because they have never wanted to. You see all these institutions are taking our lands. They think they can do this because we, the Rapanui, don't know how to read, don't know where the boundaries are of each family. But we do know. They tell me I'm *toma* [illegal occupation within the Park] when I am owner! Where is that respect? ... Why don't they want to recognize that the moai are of the Rapanui, of the Rapanui the sea, of the Rapanui the land?

**Javier Moi Tuki:** The idea is that this be *tierra fiscal* [EQ. federal land] and national park, not that it be *kaiŋa tapu* [RAP. tapu land] where my ancestors, and theirs, and his and hers, were buried. That way they colonize. Because if the *ivi tupuna* are here, we will go to the place and say, "here died Tuki Horo Pari; here lived Hoŋo I Tekena; here lived Kaiŋa," just to name a few. It is better to allow for them to be looted so that we are not to say that this is the place of our grandparents. With the return of the ancestors, and leaving them in their places, we will have the authority to say, "No, this is the place of our ancestors."

**Te Pou Huke:** It upsets me that these are all “archaeological sites.” This is our home, these are our ahu, there our Tupuna rest. We should plant in the place, embellish it again, and make paths. For us. For us to tell the stories as they are; for us to gather at the different matariki, the places ... This is not a touristic park, this is history and it is alive.

In addition to regulating intervention on and tenure of national heritage, and preventing uncontrolled acquisition and exportation, the National Monuments Act controls excavations, surveys and any study carried out on protected monuments. Further, the law establishes regulations for the distribution of findings and dissemination of research reports. Such regulations benefit exclusively museums under the argument that they will guarantee the conservation, exhibition, and study of such material. As such, the law allows for the loan, exchange and transfer of such material to both private national institutions and foreign museums. Grating no indigenous participation whatsoever, in light of international law and conventions (see for example UNESCO 1954, 1970; ILO C169, 1989; UNDROIT 1995; UN 2007) these regulations and allowances are both licentious and illegal. Rather, the law designates the National Monuments Council as the office to enforce its regulations, a council that does not have a single seat reserved for indigenous representatives. This office, as I will discuss in Chapters Seven and Eight, has been a firewall to the RNRP, intending to control repatriation procedures that they completely ignore, and claiming ownership over ancestors they did not even know were illegally obtained, exported and auctioned in Europe.

**Piru Huke:** On what grounds? Where is the ILO Convene 169? Where is the right of a people to reclaim what is original to them? Is there that respect at all?

**Javier Moi Tuki:** I have seen groups of archaeologists and told them to leave. But they tell me they are authorized. They gave them permission from Valparaíso and then here, from CONAF and the Gobernación. They talk politics with the main institutions and then come here and excavate. I have told them I will call the police. But they will detain me, not them. Because I'm asking them why did they sieve. "No, this is for study, this is for study." Trunks and trunks and trunks ... They say "study" and then let's go sieving toki, mañai, ivi. I have seen them sieving. Let's keep sieving; and then they leave and never come back. Neither the studies on paper, nor the pieces. This based only on what I have seen so I can imagine all the other expeditions that have come and the amount of pieces they took. And that means they are taking away the mana and the puai forever.

**Piru Huke:** Thousands and thousands come and destroy. This volcano here, Maūña Eo, we have no toki left there. That much they have looted. Do you think that CONAF protects? Politics, huh? Do you think that CONAF protects the ahu? No, CONAF damages, takes possession, and steals, steals Rapanui culture and Rapanui land. Do you think that is right? What about the 1888 Treaty with Policarpo Toro and Atamu Tekena? Never have they complied.

Governed by this legislation, Chile's position within the repatriation debate is strong, unveiling an outdated, harmful nationalist discourse and a complete disregard of indigenous rights. When drafting the policy of RNRP, I met with several government representatives and the directors of the main national museums. From the former, I usually heard that "repatriation" was not the correct term for the work I was doing. A peculiar statement, the return of these "archaeological monuments" is for them "national heritage restitution." When I inquired further,

they corrected me: repatriation refers to the return of dead people from overseas. I take from this correction that Rapanui ancestors are not people for the National Monuments Council. As for museum directors, their position within the debate is defensive. Some would openly refuse to meet me due to my work on repatriation fearing that what they said “might be used against them” in our repatriation efforts. Some others insisted in my wrong word-choice: my use of this term, “repatriation,” was but a symbolism. Rapa Nui is Chilean, former director of the National Historic Museum pointed out. Repatriating the ancestors back to their descendants is then not actual repatriation. In these meetings I was told repeatedly that repatriation was a separatist, purist and self-victimizing movement.

**Piru Huke:** All of Rapa Nui has places where the dead are buried and resting. Each tribe. But there they come the intruders, brash rascals like foreign scientists, to take them and then say they are the owners. They disrespected [us] when they took them. Who did they ask for permission to? Did they ask a Rapanui his opinion? They are the dead of the Rapanui. The Rapanui demand the return of their ancestors. The Rapanui say, “Enough, you bastards! Give us our culture back.” A way to say, “stop.” Stop shitting around, stop lying, stop deceiving us. Because we are Indians they think we don’t have rights? We have more right because we were here before the nation-state; we were here before the Chilean government ... Scientists have always robbed. Scientists have always destroyed. They must give back; they must repatriate a culture that is not theirs. They must bring back the reality of a family, a people, a nation, so we will live.

Notions of separatism, purism and self-victimization, often heard in Chile as a response to any indigenous demand, coincides with the nationalist discourse of the anthropological

museum. Historically, these museums have constructed discourses of nationality pretending that indigenous nations accept a particular passive-voice presentation of the colonizing forces in their histories. In so doing, these museums fail to hold colonizing nations and governments accountable for the genocidal acts committed against indigenous peoples. This rhetoric of the anthropological museum contributes to empowering colonizing forces while disregards that museums can be very painful sites for indigenous peoples as reminders of the colonizing process. In her critical revision of the decolonizing aim of the National Museum of the American Indian, Amy Lonetree (2006: 59) stresses that the hope for many indigenous community activists and scholars is that museums will finally begin to tell the painful truths of indigenous histories to the nations that have willfully ignored those truths. Indigenous peoples have historically been portrayed from the outside, their stories told by others to explain or justify their own agendas or to present their subjects as people without a history. Museums have then been but an apparatus for displaying only the aspects of those histories that the visitors want to see. Presented as frozen relics of a remote past, Lonetree notes, these people on display are left with a paradox: “for all our visibility, we have been rendered invisible and silent” (2006: 60). For a truly decolonized museum, those silences ought to be heard.

When repatriation enters this conversation, it is usually celebrated as a progressive means towards destabilizing hegemonic museological discourses. However, repatriation has also been criticized as a reactive measure. Paul Tapsell (2002) advances this critique in his case study of *iwi*-museum partnership between Ngati Whatua O Orakei and the Auckland Museum. There he argues that most Māori repatriation demands are a “red herring that distracts from the need to address other partnership initiatives” (284). In his view, the “concept” of repatriation rarely finds currency as it invokes reactive rather than proactive interactions. Instead of reactive measures

like repatriation, Tapsell celebrates the advantages of forming long-term relationships between indigenous communities and the museums that stand on their ancestral lands.

Rather than pursuing simplistic purposes like purism or self-victimization, the RNRP seeks to partake of this far more complex conversation. Repatriation is indeed a reactive measure and due to the history of relations between indigenous people and museums, it needs to be so. Reactive measures are needed to redress the wrongs of the past. Rather than an alternative to repatriation, proactive measures as museum-community collaboration, partnerships, and negotiated custodianship should be sought by every museum in which collections rest indigenous people's ancestors and heritage. The stand of the RNRP in this debate is that indigenous people should have the legal right to demand that the bodies of their ancestors and culturally relevant materials be given back to them. As such, implementation of both reactive and proactive measures should be pursued in order to make processes of repatriation more expedite and less emotionally painful, as well as to assert indigenous people's right to maintain ownership and reclaim control over those that remain at the museums. Only through the establishing and co-existence of both reactive and proactive measures museums can envision a truly and honest decolonized future.

As we presented in this chapter, common to all arguments defending the retention of indigenous heritage is an understanding of repatriation as obstructive: repatriation endangers the world's heritage, jeopardizes the development of science, violates academic freedom, and threatens national heritage. Presenting the work of the RNRP, in the next chapters I will demonstrate how demonizing repatriation efforts not only reifies hegemonic impositions but also ignores the potentials of repatriation as a site of revitalization and empowerment. A community-based program for the repatriation, care, and reburial of *ivi tupuna*, *Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana*

*Tupuna* (Give Us Back the Mana of Our Ancestors) is an example of the promise of repatriation as a means to facilitate collaborative research, greater understanding and respect. Based on an innovative and culturally safe action-research model that has the *Tikanga Rapa Nui* cultural protocols at its core, the work of the RNRP reframes repatriation as an opening rather than an obstacle; an opening to reposition research as shared responsibility, as an ethical, empowering space for critical, participatory and dialogical work where distinct knowledges and protocols can and must coexist. Because the RNRP is greatly informed by the work of indigenous peoples from elsewhere, I will first provide a brief introduction to indigenous repatriation activism and its legal outcomes. This discussion will occupy the next chapter.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### MANA 'API

Every February, Rapa Nui gathers to celebrate the Tapati Rapa Nui, the main festivity of the Island. A festival lasting two weeks, all generations come together to celebrate their culture in a series of contests and demonstrations of Rapanui traditions, arts, crafts, sports, music, dance, gastronomy, fishing, and agriculture. Preparations last months, where children and youth work together with elder traditionalists and prepare for their contests. Among the many competitions is the “*Conjuntos*,” a thematic dance contest that brings to stage over a hundred performers, including Rapanui of all ages and tourists. In the 2013 Tapati Rapa Nui, one of the *Conjuntos* presented a performance that revised the history of Rapa Nui from the arrival of the first *ariki* from Hiva to the present day. Towards the end of the over an hour-long performance, dancers staged the looting of their heritage as an integral part of Rapanui history. While the performers danced, the group’s director, Kihi Tuki, entered the stage dressing as an archaeologist, digging burials, and hiding *ivi tupuna* in his bag. Below I present a transcription of the performance, which includes songs and narrations. Narrations were performed by Moiko Teao, Rapanui young traditionalist and culture bearer, and her eight-year-old daughter, Reņa Pate. Narrations and songs were originally performed in Rapanui language.

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[Narration]

Good day, grandmother

Good day, Reņa. How are you?

Good. What are you doing?



I am contemplating the joy of our land  
And the fortune that Hotu Matu'a had come  
Where did our king come from?  
From Hiva. Life was not too good there  
The tide moved back, swelled up, then it came back and took the people  
This is how history was lived  
Hau Maka slept and dreamed  
And saw the land  
His soul came and went all over the island  
And went naming the places  
His soul came back to Hiva. He woke up and told his brother  
He [Hotu Matua] came in the king's great canoe  
Through the great ocean of Kiva to our land  
The great chief arrived at the bay of Ko Te Haŋa Rau Ariki  
landing on the sand

[Song]

Oh king! How pure and white is the sand on the bay  
May the king land  
On Haŋa Rau  
He is Hotu Matu'a

The king disembarked on the land of Haŋa Rau and contemplated

He went upward, arrived at Ahu Nau Nau and lighted the torch

We dance, the people acclaim. It is truth, he is our king

He is Hotu Matu'a, she is Ava Rei Pua

They are the king and queen of our land

This bay is a good place for our king to land

[Narration]

So this is how it happened, grandmother?

Yes, my dear daughter

And the king stayed on this land with all his people

And thousands and thousands of people were born

And the time came when they carved the moai

Where did they carve the moai?

At Rano Raraku

[Song]

At Rano Raraku the moai were carved

And they made them walk through the coast

Until arriving at their ahu [ceremonial platform, burial site]

Moai! Living face of our ancestors!

[Narration]

Look at the turtle!

Yes, he is on the top of the wave

He reminded me of the turtle varua that fell in love with Uho

Who is Uho?

Uho is a beautiful virgin that went to Puhijā Tamariki to take a bath

She took out her belt and the turtle stayed contemplating the beauty of the virgin

[Song]

I yearn for my mother, I yearn for my father, I yearn for my siblings

Slide, turtle, on the top of the wave

Slide, turtle, on the swinging of the wave

Show your shell on the bay of Pua Te Ohe Ohe

To see your whiteness through the wave's wall

To see your gill

Honu Ure Mea Mea, "What do you have for me?"

What do you have for me?

My sex you have at your disposal

Three, four

What do you have for me?

This, my vagina.

The day came when Uho went to take a bath to Puhijā Tamari'i

She took out her belt and the turtle varua stayed admiring the virgin's beauty

This is how Uho sang

I am Uho the damsel

I paint my body with White kiesa [colored earth]

at Papa Haka Vare Ū O Uho 'Ō te Uka [The Rock Where Uho Squeezes Her Milk]

Dark is your land, Mahuna te Ra'a, husband of mine

Not like my land, luminous in the darkness

[Narration]

How nice is Uho

Yes, that is true; Uho was very beautiful

There are also more stories about other beautiful damsels. They were the virgins

Where did that story happen? At Oroŋo, of the Bird Man

Mata Ōarahu lived there

His job was to gather the virgins for the Bird Man

[Song]

Who is the doctor that looks at the clitoris?

He is the old Mata Ōarahu

He is the old Mata Ōarahu

Who gathered the virgins for the Bird Man that competed

Swim hopu manu [competitors] up to the islet

to find the Manutara bird's egg

Listen, in the heights and in the coast, I have the egg for the Bird Man

Where are the virgin damsels?!

I will go get the virgins, wait!

Virgin damsels, come closer

I will take you to the mana of the land

Come closer. These damsels are virgin damsels

from the land of Poike, from the area of 'Ana O Keke

the place where you meet the sun

in the darkness and the shadows

[Narration]

Why didn't they keep on competing for the Bird Man?

Yes, sweetie, that is another story

The time came when people came to teach the gospel

And they stayed on the land

They saw the competition that happened at Oroŋo

And found it pagan. That is how they cut with the history

From that time people from outside started to come and they enter our land

They dug inside the caves,

Up on the tupa [burial sites]

And under the ahu

And so they took all our ancestors away

[Song]

Inwards the cave I looked at my ancestors  
Inwards the cave I looked at my ancestors  
that carved the rei miro, the make make, the tahoꝻa  
that carved the rei miro, the make make, the tahoꝻa  
we are who are seeing how thet took out our ancestors  
we are who are seeing how thet took out our ancestors  
Under the cave, inside the tupa, under the ahu  
they extract everything from us

Inwards the cave I looked at my ancestors  
Inwards the cave I looked at my ancestors  
that carved the rei miro, the make make, the tahoꝻa  
that carved the rei miro, the make make, the tahoꝻa  
we are who are seeing how thet took out our ancestors  
we are who are seeing how thet took out our ancestors  
Under the cave, inside the tupa, under the ahu  
they extract everything from us

[Narration]

What a pity that our ancestors went through all that  
Yes, sweetie, it is really sad

**Conjunto Mana 'Api**

Rapa Nui, February 2013

## CHAPTER SIX

### REPATRIATION IN POLICY: ON INDIGENOUS VALUES AND SOVEREIGNTY

#### A COMPARATIVE REVISION OF U.S. AND AOTEAROA

#### REPATRIATION POLICIES

In 2011 I was invited to participate in a collaborative project of creating a repatriation program in Rapa Nui. The initial invitation came from Rapanui activist and traditionalist Piru Huke, with whom I had been working for the past years. Piru's desire of bringing her *Tupuna* and *tao'a* back home grew stronger in the early 1990s, when she conducted an extensive research on Rapanui collections in museums worldwide. Her research resulted in the most thorough catalogue and visual documentation of Rapanui collections to date. Lacking financial support, this archive ended up sitting on bookshelves in her house, with a digital copy in the Rapanui museum's database. Yet the idea of bringing her ancestors back home never abandoned her. She was committed to gathering a group of Rapanui traditionalists and creating a repatriation program in Rapa Nui. A preliminary stage of this collaborative project consisted in an exhaustive research of repatriation-related legislation and policies worldwide.

In this chapter I present part of this background research focusing on U.S. repatriation legislation and Aotearoa/New Zealand repatriation program. First, I provide a brief introduction to the repatriation movement and the role of indigenous peoples in the birth of this movement. Then I present the repatriation provisions of U.S. federal repatriation laws.<sup>24</sup> Following this

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<sup>24</sup> For the purposes of this revision, I focus only on NMAIA and NAGPRA, federal repatriation laws in the U.S. But the readers must be minded that in addition to these federal legislations, all states in the U.S. address the issue of the disposition of ancestral remains and grave goods through particular state laws. State legislations, however, present several problems. Among them is the fact that they usually protect marked graves only; Native American graves were often unmarked and prior to NAGPRA did not receive the protection provided by these state statutes. Another major problem is that state laws addressing the

presentation I discuss the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme emphasizing its differences with the U.S. statutes. I end this analysis with a final discussion reflecting on the divergent principles in which the different policies are grounded as to illuminate the need that repatriation policies are reflexive of indigenous values, philosophies and sovereignty.

The background research conducing to the creation of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP) was informed by a wide array of international, national, museum, and community-based repatriation policies and regulations around the globe. Documents and cases consulted included international conventions, federal and state legislation in the U.S.; international and national regulations in Aotearoa, Australia and Canada; museum policies in Aotearoa, Argentina, Canada, France and England; and indigenous-run, community-based repatriation programs.

Representative of the broader research, my choosing of U.S. and Aotearoa policies only for this brief comparative review is not coincidental.

First, Native Americans and Māori people have been among, if not the most active indigenous peoples in the world in their efforts for bringing the ancestors back home, presenting together an unprecedented, long-standing history of successful repatriations. Second, Native Americans and Māori played a crucial role in what was a key moment for the debate and articulation of the repatriation movement, the first World Archaeological Inter-Congress, “Archaeological Ethics and the Treatment of the Dead” held in Vermillion in 1989. Their

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disposition and protection of ancestral remains and funerary materials often operate in tandem with general laws. In his work, *Disputing the Dead. U.S. Laws on Aboriginal Remains and Grave Goods*, H. Marcus Price III (1991) explains these problems through a comparative analysis of federal, state and general laws on ancestral remains and funerary materials. In his study he contends that comparing the applicable legal regime of every state, not merely those states possessing legislation specific to the issue, is necessary to understand how individual states deal in legal terms with the disposition of ancestral remains and grave goods. Some states have specific legislation. Those that do not have them apply their general public health and sepulchral laws. Alabama, Kentucky and Texas are some of these states. And even in states that enjoy specific legislation, the laws often operate in tandem with general laws. Alaska and Virginia show this problem. For a complete analysis of state laws, see Price 1991: 43-115.



collaboration was critical for the declaration of a code of ethics that set the basis for the developing of repatriation policies worldwide.<sup>25</sup> Third, U.S. and Aotearoa statutes are grounded on some central divergent principles that illuminate the importance that repatriation policies and procedures reflect indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, grant indigenous participation and respect of cultural protocols, and regard repatriation as a nation-to-nation agreement.

Both U.S. repatriation legislation and the Aotearoa government-mandated repatriation program are the result of decades of indigenous activism. Native American tribes and Māori *iwi* have actively and critically engaged in repatriation in both countries and internationally. Native Americans, in particular, have been particularly active in producing critical scholarship on U.S. repatriation legislation. My research respectfully acknowledges this activism and follows this scholarship. This discussion does not intend to be an exhaustive analysis of U.S. and Aotearoa repatriation policies. Rather, it focuses very specifically on how each of these policies rely on either scientific or indigenous philosophies and values, a distinction that was critical in the process of drafting the RNRP policy. The purpose of including this discussion in a dissertation on repatriation in Rapa Nui is to provide the framework that informed that process. Being this program the first repatriation program in Chile, this preliminary research was critical for the development of a repatriation policy that reflected Rapanui values while complying with international and professional regulations requirements. Additionally, this foundational research is crucial for how to critically engage Chilean legislation and the obstacles it posits to repatriation efforts. The creation of this repatriation program was not only informed but also inspired by the hard work of Native American and Māori activists for repatriating their ancestors. We must acknowledge Native American and Māori repatriation activists' major influence on

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion on the Inter-Congress and the full text of the Code of Ethics, see Zimmerman (2002); for a discussion on Māori participation, see Matunga (1991) and Zimmerman (2000: 299-301).

RNRP before I present it in the next chapter. In the following pages I offer part of this background research presenting a comparative analysis of the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAIA), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (KARP).

### **Indigenous activism and the birth of the repatriation movement**

Internationally, repatriation first began to gain attention in the 1960s when indigenous peoples and other colonized nations started to voice their concerns about the appropriation of their heritage. The main issues brought to the debate were the constant destruction of archaeological sites with the inevitable loss of data; the public denunciation of illicit acquisition of art and artifacts; and increasing nationalistic sensitivities about the loss and appropriation of cultural heritage (Lokensgard 2010: 130). Raising awareness on the significance of cultural property, this organized international pressure led UNESCO to establish in 1970 international guidelines for the repatriation of cultural property. Such guidelines were stipulated in the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. This first attempt to regulate and recommend international repatriation has however a limited effectiveness in what concerns the repatriation of indigenous heritage. While collecting and looting on indigenous lands began as early as with the voyages of European imperial expansion, these regulations and recommendations apply only to illicit activities that occur after a state has acceded to the Convention. Nevertheless, its adoption has been spoken about as a milestone contributing to the growth of the repatriation movement. Truth is that indigenous activism came first and has been by all means for effective than the 1970 UNESCO Convention.

Indigenous activism has been critical to changing the relationship between tribal nations and museums. In her analysis of museums as decolonizing sites, Ho-Chunk historian and museographer Amy Lonetree (2012) calls to this acknowledgement contending that, “native involvement in the museum world did not happen because of academic epiphanies by non-Native academics or curators, but as result of prolonged and committed activism” (18). The repatriation movement has been at the heart of this activism. In his sharp analysis of the implementation of repatriation legislation in the United States, Pawnee repatriation activist James Riding In (2005) advances the argument that repatriation has explicit decolonizing purposes. The repatriation, reburial and graves protection movement that began during the 1960s, he argues, “had as its core principle the decolonization of laws and policies that sanctioned grave looting. This goal continues to guide our efforts” (55). In the United States and Canada, this decolonizing activism has been identified with the “Native American Museum movement.” Arising in the 1970s, repatriation activism went straight to the heart of this movement.

Native Americans initiated this activism protesting museum research on Native American bodies, as well as their exhibition, storage, and curation. Within this protest, they started demanding more inclusive exhibition production processes, and pressuring for the repatriation of human remains, grave material, and objects of cultural patrimony. Additionally, they started reforming the museum from inside by both entering into the museum profession and creating counter-hegemonic community museums and cultural centers. Central to this movement was the aim of raising awareness about the history of the relations between indigenous people and museums. Native Americans activists effectively contested stereotypical displays of their histories and cultures; challenged curatorial authority and the imposition of Western perspectives; and impugned the legality of museum collections. Simultaneously, in 1978 the

American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in the United States, which came as a first legal mechanism to urge the repatriation of the ancestors and culturally significant materials.<sup>26</sup>

A result of this activism, the first federal repatriation law was passed in the United States: the National Museum of the American Indian Act, NMAIA. The NMAIA grew out of the discovery in 1986 by Cheyenne religious leader William Tallbull that the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History had in its collections the remains of about 18,500 Native Americans (Daehnke and Lonetree 2011: 91). The NMAIA became public law in 1989. This first repatriation law applied only to the Smithsonian Institution. A year after, a new legislation was passed that would apply to all institutions that have received federal funds: the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, NAGPRA. Together, these laws became the first formal effort of a nation-state to respond to indigenous peoples' growing demands for the restitution of their ancestors and funerary, ceremonial, and living materials.

NMAIA and NAGPRA are unique human rights legislations. A critical figure in the passing of NAGPRA was Pawnee attorney Walter Echo Hawk, who has been outspoken in addressing and calling attention to the historical inequities between how the graves of white Americans and the graves of Native American are treated. When fighting for the passing of this legislation he spoke at the Congress: "If you desecrate a white grave, you wind up sitting in

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<sup>26</sup> Although a procedural statute, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978 is important to understand the history of U.S. legislation concerning repatriation. Stressing the rights of Indians to freedom of religion protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, AIRFA was the first federal law to specifically consider Indian cultural values (Prince 1991: 29). Prior to this legislation, and also directly related to the disposition of ancestral remains and grave goods, we find the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gave exclusive jurisdiction and control to the federal government of all ancestral remains and funerary materials located on property owned or controlled by the federal government (Prince 1991: 25; Lonetree 2012: 14). After the passing of AIRFA, the Antiquities Act was effectively replaced by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979, operative legislation that emphasizes preservation of "archaeological resources" (Prince 1991: 30-31). ARPA stipulated that materials recovered from federal land are the property of the federal government, while "archaeological resources" recovered from Indian land are the property of the tribe.

prison. But desecrate an Indian grave, and you get a Ph.D. The time has come for people to decide: are we Indians part of this country's living culture, or are we just here to supply museums with dead bodies?" (quoted in Thomas 2000: 210). Repatriation legislation in the U.S. was designed to address these historical inequities that, created by a legacy of past collecting practices and the continual disregard for Native worldviews and burial traditions, continue to reify the contradictions between how white and native graves are treated.

When in the United States and Canada indigenous peoples were leading the Native American Museum Movement, in Aotearoa *Tangata Whenua* (MAO. Māori people) were working on establishing protocols for the appropriate care of their ancestors resting in museums, and pressing for their repatriation to their final resting places. From the early 1970s, former National Museum Chair Maui Pomare dedicated much of his work to international repatriation and the establishment of an appropriate *wāhi tapu* (MAO. place of *mana*) for the ancestral remains held by the National Museum. Committed to reuniting the ancestors with the land, he brought home the remains of thirty-seven *tūpuna* (MAO. ancestors). His dedicated work motivated the creation of Aotearoa repatriation program.

A direct precedent of this repatriation program was the *wānanga* (MAO. seminar) held at the national museum in 1998. In partnership with *iwi* (MAO. community) representatives, the *wānanga* focused on the care and management of *kōiwi tangata* (MAO. human remains). The following year, the Ministry of Māori Development hosted a second *wānanga*, which stressed the imperative of Māori participation in repatriation, the need of an organization to facilitate and lead repatriation processes, the requirement for Māori to develop their own management policy for the care of *kōiwi tangata* (MAO. human remains) and to decide their final resting places, the establishment of an interim repository for the remains, and the need for the government to

facilitate and fund the repatriation of *kōiwi tangata* (Herewini 2010: 5). As a result, in 2003 Cabinet agreed that the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa should act on behalf of the government for the return of Māori and Moriori ancestors. This agreement resulted in the establishment of the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (KARP).

### **Sovereignty in policy: Scientific and Indigenous worldviews in repatriation statutes**

The first laws regarding repatriation of indigenous heritage, the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAIA) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) are first and foremost human rights legislation. Indigenous people and adherent scholars around the globe have received NAGPRA as an unprecedented gesture of a nation to begin to redress the history of genocide and violations committed against Native Americans, and an opportunity to the scientific community to put things right. However, the law did not come without a heated debate, as it has failed to grant the decolonizing effects that Native Americans were expecting. Failure to acknowledge Native Americans' values and views on their past has been at the heart of the debate. Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme, a New Zealand government-mandated program for the repatriation of Māori and Moriori ancestral remains stands as a counter example of a repatriation program that has compliance with Māori cultural protocols and values at its core. In this section I offer a comparative analysis of these three policies. I first briefly present the repatriation provisions of NMAIA and NAGPRA. Then I discuss the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme highlighting its differences with NAGPRA and NMAIA. I end this analysis with a final discussion reflecting on the divergent principles in which the different policies are grounded. Focusing on their contrasting procedures and language, this discussion will illuminate the need that repatriation policies are reflexive of

indigenous values, philosophies and sovereignty.

Passed in 1989, NMAIA created the National Museum of the American Indian, a national museum devoted exclusively to the history, heritage and art of cultures indigenous to the Americas.<sup>27</sup> It also established provisions for the repatriation of Native American human remains that are in possession or control of the Smithsonian museums. In its provisions, NMAIA mandates that the Smithsonian Institution inventories and identifies the origin of human remains and associated funerary objects in its possession or control, and expeditiously return them upon the request of lineal descendants or culturally affiliated Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations.<sup>28</sup> In 1996 an amendment of the NMAI Act was passed which extended its provisions for repatriation to include unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The 1996 Amendment added a new provision mandating that the Smithsonian Institution, in addition to the inventory and prior identification, provided a written summary of unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony in its holdings.<sup>29</sup>

The NMAIA was the direct precedent of what became the most relevant repatriation legislation worldwide, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). While the NMAIA applies exclusively to Smithsonian Institution's museums, NAGPRA applies to all American institutions that have received federal funds. NAGPRA became public law in 1990. In his revision of the first ten years of the implementation of NAGPRA, legal anthropologist Timothy McKeown (2002: 109) highlights the significance of NAGPRA as an Indian, property, and administrative law. As Indian law, it explicitly recognizes tribal sovereignty. As property law, it clarifies the unique status of the dead as well as begins to redress

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<sup>27</sup> Section 1, National Museum of the American Indian Act.

<sup>28</sup> Sections 11 and 13, National Museum of the American Indian Act.

<sup>29</sup> Section 4, National Museum of the American Indian Act Amendments of 1996.

the failure of American law to adequately recognize traditional concepts of communal property. As administrative law, NAGPRA promulgates regulations to ensure due process, establishes civil penalties for non-compliance, and awards grants to Indian tribes and museums and federal agencies to facilitate the repatriation process. In their revision of the background and legislative history of the law, attorneys Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk (2000) add to this list that NAGPRA is, “first and foremost, human rights legislation” (139). I follow Trope and Echo-Hawk in that NAGPRA is a first effort to begin to address and redress the blatant violation of the rights of U.S.’s first citizens.<sup>30</sup>

Subject to this statute are Native American human remains, funerary and sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. A central element of the law mandates federal agencies and museums to compile inventories and summaries of the covered items held in their collections so that repatriation can occur upon request. Inventories are item-by-item descriptions of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects, including whenever possible the geographical and cultural affiliation of each item. Inventories must be completed in consultation with officials of tribal governments and Native Hawaiian organizations, and traditional religious leaders. If cultural affiliation is determined, the museum or federal agency must notify the concerned Indian tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations. Summaries must be completed of

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<sup>30</sup> NAGPRA’s final statute is organized as follows. Succeeding the introduction and a section on definitions, section 3 establishes the procedures for the discovery and exceptional excavation or removal of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal or tribal lands after 16 November 1990, and defines the criteria for ownership and control of materials found. Section 4 makes the trafficking of Native American human remains and cultural items illegal under certain conditions. Sections 5 and 6 mandate and establish the guidelines for museums and federal agencies to inventory or summarize their collections containing Native American human remains and cultural items, to establish cultural affiliation, and to notify the tribes concerned. Sections 7 through 10 describe procedures for lineal descendants, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to repatriate Native American human remains and cultural items from museum and federal agency collections, and establish penalty for non-compliance.



unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and cultural patrimony. Summaries must include the context of collection, kinds of objects, geographical location, and cultural affiliation when already determined, and must be followed by consultation with officials of tribal governments and Native Hawaiian organizations, and traditional religious leaders.

These mechanisms are intended to facilitate the request of lineal descents, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. When the request meets all the criteria stipulated in the statute, i.e. the claimant has standing, the item being claimed is covered by the statute, and lineal descent or cultural affiliation can be established, the museum or federal agency must return the requested items expeditiously. One of the most contested aspects of NAGPRA, the statute defines cultural affiliation as meaning that “there is a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group.”<sup>31</sup> When cultural affiliation is not established in the inventory or summary, claimants can still demonstrate that they are culturally affiliated to the requested materials through evidence based upon geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, folkloric, oral traditional, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion. Finally, the statute establishes that the return of cultural items must be in consultation with the requesting lineal descendant or tribe or organization to determine the place and manner of delivery of such materials.

Undoubtedly, NAGPRA and the NMAIA are unprecedented gestures of a nation to begin, as Russell Thornton (2002) puts it, to heal the wounds of the trauma of history. The laws establish a legal avenue for Native Americans to regain legal control over, and ultimately repatriate, stolen ancestors and their belongings. Additionally, the laws protect burial sites from intrusion and criminalize the selling of ancestral remains. Lonetree celebrates this legislation

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<sup>31</sup> Section 2, subsection 2, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

highlighting that the repatriations they have facilitated “have brought comfort and healing to Native people, while also giving the scientific community an opportunity to put things right in the present” (2012: 158). Yet she also calls for further action stressing that a great deal of work remains to be done to address the shortcomings and limitations of NAGPRA.

Repatriation legislation in the U.S. presents some fundamental lacks that prevent it from faithfully acknowledging and representing Native Americans’ rights and interests. The passing of this legislation marked a milestone in the relationships between Native Americans and museums, universities, and federal agencies in the United States, which the law brought together to work on the solution of the complex issues surrounding custody of indigenous heritage. The grounds for such renewed relationship, however, often ignore indigenous understandings, perceptions, and relations to the materials subject to the statutes. This ignorance has resulted in ample non-compliance.<sup>32</sup> In what follows I will discuss the political implications and ontological consequences of ignoring cultural values in repatriation policies. For a more comprehensive analysis of these implications and consequences, I will first present a brief comparative revision of a model that succeeds in meeting statutory requirements with cultural values, the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme.

Developed in 2003 by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (hereafter Te Papa) on behalf of the government of New Zealand, the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (hereafter KARP) is a formal national program for the repatriation of *kōiwi/koimi tangata* (MAO. human remains) from international institutions to *iwi* (MAO. Maori tribes). The objectives of KARP include carrying out quality research with appropriate *Māori tikanga* or cultural protocols, bringing *kōiwi/koimi tangata* back home from overseas institutions and

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Riding In 2005 and Daehnke and Lonetree 2011 discussion on the unresolved issue of “culturally unidentified remains,” which I shall also address later in this chapter.

museums; facilitating their final resting place through engagement with *iwi*; maintaining close communication with *iwi*; and working under the expert guidance and advice of a Repatriation Advisory Panel.<sup>33</sup> As a government-mandated authority, KARP negotiates the repatriation of Māori *tūpuna* on behalf of the Māori nation. Te Papa does not place conditions for the repatriation of human remains to their final resting place but voluntarily facilitates the repatriation of all *kōiwi/koimi tangata* after the original place of the remains is determined.

The main difference between KARP and U.S. repatriation legislation is, first and foremost, that while NAGPRA and NMAIA are public laws, KARP is a museum and governmental policy with no law enforcement. Additionally, while NAGPRA mandates all federal agencies and museums receiving federal funds to comply with its provisions, KARP only applies to Te Papa and museums that, upon invitation, agree to repatriate Māori ancestors from their collections. KARP involves both inwards international repatriation (from overseas institutions to Te Papa) and domestic repatriation (from Te Papa to *iwi*), marking another difference with NAGPRA and NMAIA, which establish provisions for U.S. institutions only. As for the materials covered by the program, while NAGPRA and NMAIA apply to human remains, funerary and sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, KARP covers only *kōiwi tangata*, which includes *toi moko* (MAO. mummified tattooed heads).

KARP is grounded in the principle of “engagement with *Tangata Whenua*” (Herewini 2010: 5), which ensures Māori participation in all repatriation procedures and at all times. While NAGPRA and the NMAIA grant Native American participation through consultation and partial representation in the review committee, under KARP Māori conduct all repatriation procedures with only isolated cases of Pākehā (non-Maori New Zealanders) participation. Both KARP’s Repatriation Team and Repatriation Advisory Panel are entirely comprised of Māori people.

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<sup>33</sup> Resource 1, Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme.

Additionally, Te Papa grants community participation through *wānaga* (MAO. seminars) periodically held with community representatives.

While under NAGPRA and NMAIA cultural affiliation needs to be established for repatriation to occur, under KARP provenance of the remains needs to be determined for Te Papa to repatriate them to the appropriate *iwi*. The mechanisms to determine cultural affiliation and provenance vary widely. To establish provenance, KARP staff carry out research based on archival sources, including accession information, collector diaries and documents, auction house records, traditional oral histories, *waiata* and *pātere* (MAO. songs), *mōteatea* (MAO. chants), and *whakapapa* (MAO. genealogies).<sup>34</sup> The acknowledgement of oral traditions as a reliable research source and affiliation evidence signals a significant difference between KARP and NAGPRA and NMAIA, which allow for requests to use oral traditions as a source, though scientific sources are always given preponderance.

When repatriation occurs, *toi moko* and *kōiwi tangata* return from overseas institutions to Te Papa on an interim basis only.<sup>35</sup> Te Papa does not request repatriated ancestors to be accessioned as part of the museum's collections. Rather, *kōiwi* remain in Te Papa's custody pending return to their attributed place of origin. The ultimate goal of repatriation is then not to hold the remains at Te Papa, but to return them to the appropriate *iwi*. To this end, KARP establishes five main *tikanga* or procedures: repatriation selection, identification, contact, repatriation, and documentation.<sup>36</sup> First, the program directs KARP and Te Papa staff to conduct research on the *kōiwi tangata* that are cared for at Te Papa and their provenance. Once provenance is established, the KARP team contacts the affiliated *iwi*, and works with *iwi*

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<sup>34</sup> Resource 11, Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme.

<sup>35</sup> Resource 4, Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of the procedures for domestic repatriation see Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Program, Resources Three, Six, and Seven.

representatives to discuss the possibility of domestic repatriation. They discuss the planning and organization of the repatriation, including final resting place, persons to conduct the return, timing, transportation, and *tikanga* Māori (*MAO*. cultural protocols) requirements.

When the *iwi* agrees to the return, the KARP team manages and facilitates the repatriation process, which is led entirely by *iwi*. *Iwi* determine the place, time, and details for the repatriation and burial or ceremonies involved. At this stage of the repatriation process, Te Papa's role is to support *iwi* wishes. Finally, the KARP team elaborates a report of the repatriation process and gives it to the appropriate *iwi*. This research report includes all documentation relevant to the *kōiwi tangata* and provenance research, with an emphasis on the *kōiwi tangata*'s museological and collection history, archaeological records and maps, and related *mātauranga* Māori (*MAO*. Māori knowledge). The purpose of this document is to help inform *iwi* and their membership of their relationship to the returning *kōiwi tangata*.<sup>37</sup> A Repatriation Advisory Panel supervises all repatriation procedures. Comprised of high profile *kaumātua* (*MAO*. Māori elders) and advisory experts, the panel's role is to provide advice on *kōiwi tangata* matters, to facilitate communication with *iwi*, and to outline research priorities.

KARP stands as an example of a progressive, culturally safe repatriation program that has compliance with Māori values at its core. Under KARP *kōiwi tangata* are regarded as *tūpuna* or Māori ancestors at all stages of the repatriation process. Accordingly, KARP ensures that they are afforded culturally consistent treatment at all times. Acknowledging *tūpuna* as holders of *mātauranga* Māori (*MAO*. Māori knowledge), KARP is particularly careful of complying with

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<sup>37</sup> Under KARP, Te Papa has carried domestic repatriations throughout the country in both the North and South Islands. In the North Island, Te Papa has repatriated *kōiwi tangata* to Ngāti Kurī, Ngāi Tai, Te Tairāwhiti, Muaūpoko, Ngāti Apa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Whanganui, Tauranga Moana *iwi*, and Ngāti Whakāue. In the South Island *kōiwi tangata* have come back to Ngāi Tahu and Rangitāne O Wairau. To date, Te Papa has repatriated nearly a hundred *kōiwi tangata* to their final resting places.

*tikanga* Māori (*MAO*. cultural protocols) requirements as to respect the *tapu* and enhance the ancestor's *mātauranga* Māori. Māori values are reflected in the policy's language and procedures, providing a unique model of a culturally safe repatriation program that acknowledges the importance that repatriation procedures be articulated according to indigenous hermeneutics and understandings as to truthfully represent their interests and worldviews.

The language of NAGPRA and NMAIA, in contrast, has been object of major debate. Jack Trope and Walter Echo-Hawk (2000) celebrate NAGPRA as a unique legislation for it signals the first time in which the federal government and non-Indian institutions consider “what is *sacred* from an Indian perspective” (151). A highly debatable statement, Trope and Echo-Hawk are enthusiastic in calling for future legislation to be “imbued with this same heightened consciousness of the nature of Indian culture and spirituality” (151). Conversely, in their revision of the implementation of repatriation in the United States, Roger Anyon and Russell Thornton (2002) suggest that definitions of materials subject to repatriation should be flexible enough to allow “latitude in their interpretations,” for which they should “explicitly provide for the application of different cultural values” (197). In her revision of compliance and “good-faith” issues surrounding NAGPRA, Kathleen Fine-Dare (2002) joins Anyon and Thornton in critiquing the statute's definitions. Fine-Dare offers a one-by-one revision of definitions, which she concludes are, simply “difficult to understand” (145). Intended to impact entire communities outside professional and academic circles, and dealing with highly sensitive matters, repatriation legislation requires accessible and culturally appropriate language.

Responding to Trope and Echo-Hawk (2000), I argue that rather than heightening “consciousness of the nature of Indian culture and spirituality,” the use of “sacred” in the definitions reifies racist anthropological discourses, thus endangering repatriation efforts. In

Chapter Two I discussed extensively the problems of imposing a spiritualized and objectifying language when it comes to the study of indigenous cultures and religions. I remind the readers of such arguments here as they illuminate the need of culturally appropriate language for repatriation legislation to faithfully represent indigenous peoples' rights and interests. In his analysis of the hypothetical foundations of what he called "post-Cartesian anthropology," Kenneth Morrison (2012) insightfully discussed the effects of the inclusion of Cartesian terms in anthropological discourse. Presenting Franz Boas as the father of this discourse, Morrison accuses him of not appreciating indigenous understandings of the world as emerging from interrelations with interacting beings, imposing "his own, unconscious, monotheistic ontological assumptions" (82). By using these same unconscious, monotheistic ontological language, NAGPRA and NMAIA fail to acknowledge the ontological relations of Native Americans to the "objects" seeking repatriation, objectifying and depersonalizing those relations.

In practice, spiritualizing repatriation language reifies racist anthropological constructions of indigenous worldviews as wrong, irrational understandings of the world, conveniently serving repatriation-opposing scientists. Clayton Dumont (2003) aptly identifies this religious language with the political goal of repatriation opponents to make indigenous ways of knowing "religious" as opposed to "rational." This political strategy is effective because it draws on the imagery and context that allows for deeming repatriation activists as irrational creationists. Such labels, Dumont argues, such labels are semiotically imbedded within the unappealing imagery of Christian zealotry, which he interrogates:

But why should native understandings that predate the arrival of Europeans by thousands of years be awarded significance only on the basis of the colonizers' own history? Given

what Indian understandings had significance for Indians long before Europeans began fighting for their Enlightenment, why should the logic, imagery, and slogans of the Enlightenment be uncritically invoked as the basis for awarding these old Indian understandings significance now? Can we really assume that precontact Indians' comprehension of the dead was "religious" in the postcontact sense of that term? Is it not intellectually much more honest (and more analytically rigorous) to assume that labeling very un-European native ways of knowing as "religious" and "creationist" has given these understandings a modern-day flavor that tribes who did not yet know Christians could not have recognized? (Dumont 2003: 122).

When repatriation legislation is articulated around religious language, it serves the political strategy of repatriation-opposing scientists. Indigenous peoples must be associated with irrational religion in order to clear the way for science to assume the culturally familiar and seductive voice of reason.

I follow Dumont in that religious language should not be accepted un-problematically so that definitions and regulations can, like Anyon and Thornton call for, explicitly provide for the application of different cultural values. Te Papa's Kōiwi Tangata Policy, which provides the definitions for the implementation of Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Program, is a successful model of applying Māori values. Referring to the "remains" as rather *kōiwi tangata* or *tūpuna* highlights their ontological relevance and personhood, as opposed to objectifying terms stressing scientific worth, i.e. bioanthropological remains. Identifying the ancestors as *tapu* stresses a strict acknowledgement of and respect for Māori values, relations and epistemologies, as opposed to spiritualized terms imposing and reifying alien axioms, i.e. sacred. Naming the otherwise



“storage deposit” *wāhi tapu* complies with cultural protocols and refigures the role of the museum as a *kaitiaki* or guardian that rather than claiming ownership or securing research, offers temporary culturally consistent resting place, treatment, and care. By incorporating indigenous hermeneutics and values, repatriation policies will not only comply with indigenous protocols, but will also make repatriation procedures easier, fairer and less painful.

Also critical for repatriation policies to faithfully represent indigenous rights and values are the mechanisms that they provide for determining affiliation to the ancestors. Under NAGPRA and NMAIA, such mechanisms rely on scientific evidence. Even though the statutes establish oral traditions and ethnographic evidence as sources for determining cultural affiliation, the implementation of the laws has shown that primacy is almost always given to scientific evidence over oral traditions and other forms of knowledge (Thomas 2000: 240). Science, borrowing Anthony Klesert and Shirley Powell’s (2000) words, should be regarded as “just one perspective among many” (202), for different views of how the past was structured directly impacts the determination of cultural affiliation. Rather than cultural affiliation, the key component of the repatriation process under KARP is “provenance,” and provenance research regards oral traditions as a reliable source. Once the original place of the *kōwi tangata* is identified, affiliation is determined by default to the *iwi* (Māori tribe) historically residing in that place.

Native American repatriation activists have sharply critiqued NAGPRA mechanisms for demonstrating cultural affiliation. Central to this debate are the so-called “culturally unidentifiable” human remains, which Riding In (2005) has renamed the unfinished business of NAGPRA. Tens of thousands of ancestors are still retained in museum storage deposits out of reach for repatriation because institutions have not assigned them a culturally affiliated status.

This labeling declares, Riding In explains, “that human remains from old, isolated, or disappeared peoples have no cultural ties with present-day Indians, and so are not bound by the same ethical and legal standards that govern the treatment of human remains from federally acknowledged tribes” (54). Rather, they are conveniently decided to remain in museums and federal repositories for study. “Sponsored by the scientific establishment,” Riding In continues, this rationale “encroaches dangerously on Native concepts of kinship and ancestry” (54). In practice, mechanisms for demonstrating cultural affiliation have rather become mechanisms for noncompliance.

The problems of scientifically driven repatriation language and mechanisms illuminate the dramatic consequences of scholarly misinterpretation of indigenous cultures. In his study of the commoditization of Blackfoot religion, Kenneth Lokensgard insightfully notes that since policy makers often turn toward scholarly writings for background information, such misinterpretations may easily result in bad governmental policy. Because “interpretations,” he explains, “are based solely upon the scholars’ own, epistemologically and ontologically biased views, and not those of the people who originally cared for those items” (2010: 144). When such misinterpretations permeate repatriation, they result in policies that ignore indigenous peoples’ connections to the ancestors and relations to the living materials whose repatriation they claim. Scientists appear then to have the final say in determining not only what is “sacred,” and thus subject to repatriation, but also who has a legal stand to claim that right. Policies informed by scholars’ biased interpretations rather than by indigenous hermeneutics and values make then repatriation procedures difficult and unfair.

Language is intimately connected to sovereignty. As Clayton Dumont puts it, “any adequate definition of the sovereignty of minority cultures must include the right to assert

uniqueness and difference through narrations of reality that differ from those of dominant societies” (2003: 109). When repatriation policies are articulated indigenous hermeneutics and understandings, thus, they acknowledge and respect indigenous sovereignty. In this same line, I close this comparative revision of U.S. and Māori repatriation policies emphasizing the imperative that repatriation laws and policies be regarded as nation-to-nation agreements. Although NAGPRA and NMAI acknowledge the sovereignty of Indian tribes (though only of those federally recognized, which has posited significant shortcomings to both laws<sup>38</sup>), they fail to regard repatriation of Native American heritage as a nation-to-nation agreement. At the end, the parties in the repatriation processes are the Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, and museums and federal agencies, not the federal government. Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Program shows a case in which repatriation is regarded as a nation-to-nation agreement. Its policy explicitly states that Te Papa is acting on behalf of New Zealand government for the return of *kōiwi tangata* to the *iwi* (Māori tribes), which under the bicultural policy of New Zealand government emanated from the Waitangi Treaty of 1840 are granted sovereignty.

As the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Program and The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Kōiwi Tangata Policy demonstrate, when nations regard repatriation as a nation-to-nation agreement, issues of positional superiority surrounding the repatriation debate are overcome. When policies adopt such approach, parties’ interests are represented in equal, fair terms. Criteria for evaluation are negotiated, and backgrounds for interpretation mediated. Only when governments start adopting a nation-to-nation approach to repatriation of indigenous

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<sup>38</sup> For a discussion on this problematic in the context of NAGPRA see Jon Daehnke and Amy Lonetree (2011: 87-97).

heritage can we begin to talk about human rights legislation. Only then, former oppressors will be redressing wrongs of the past.

This comparative analysis of repatriation policies in the U.S. and Aotearoa serves as a preamble to my presentation of the RNRP, *Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna* (*RAP. Give Us Back the Mana of Our Ancestors*), which will occupy the next chapter. As I mentioned at the opening of this discussion, the creation of the RNRP did not come without a comprehensive research on repatriation policies worldwide. The purpose of this research was to provide a framework for drafting a repatriation policy that met international and professional statutory requirements. Also, the aim was to learn from the long-standing experience of indigenous repatriation activists. Central to this background research was the critical scholarship produced by native repatriation activists in response to the failures and shortcomings of repatriation policies around the globe. Native Americans being particularly active in critically engaging repatriation procedures in the U.S., their writings were key for this research.

That the RNRP is reflective on and faithful to Rapanui worldviews is the main objective of the founding members of this program. As the Native American experience shows, Western-biased repatriation language and procedures are not to be accepted un-problematically but rather acknowledged as a political and effective strategy serving the purposes of repatriation-opposing scientists. The Māori experience, on the other hand, shows the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and their effectiveness in counteracting hegemonic discourses. The RNRP is committed to critically engage this conversation. Acknowledging the imperative that its repatriation policy reflects Rapanui values and philosophies, this program is articulated around *Haka Tere Tupuna*, a Rapanui worldview that incorporates thinking and understanding in the practice and philosophy of living a Rapanui culturally informed life. In doing so, this program is

not only committed to faithfully represent Rapanui interests but to also provide an intellectual basis for critically theorizing and engaging repatriation opposition from distinctive Rapanui understandings.

## HEREĒDA RODO

### KO UHO TE UKA

Rapanui visitors to museums are often saddened by the treatment of the *tao 'a* they find there. For those who have had the chance to visit *ivi tupuna* held in museum collections, such sadness, they say, is tremendous. Valeska Chávez, who works at the Rapanui museum as an assistant librarian, explains that it “hurts” to see *ivi tupuna* in museums. The very memory of such experience makes her cry. This pain, the Rapanui assert, is extensive to the *ivi tupuna* themselves. They, too, suffer. Founding member of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program, Zoilo Huke compares the situation of museum *ivi tupuna* to that of sick Rapanui having to travel to the mainland to get treatment. They yearn for the Island. Zoilo explains that *ivi tupuna* in museums must share the same sort of aching loneliness most of these sick people feel. This yearning for the *kaiŋa*, the land, is very vividly illustrated in one of the first *a 'amu* [RAP. story] I heard, *Ko Uho Te Uka*. Below I present Uho's story as narrated by late Papa Kiko, Rapanui traditionalist, musician, and storyteller.

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Close to Anakena, there is a place called Haŋa Ohio. There lives the father of Uho, and the mother. Every time there was a nice day and the sea was nice and quiet, the girl goes to a *papa* [i.e. flat lava rock] that is there, she sits down and washes ... Everyday the girl does this. And one day, when she was there, a turtle came. She left her *taurareŋa* [RAP. belt to hold the suit], and left it there. The turtle took it and started walking into the sea. The girl calls her saying [Papa Kiko sings] The girl walks into the sea too. She walks and walks until she arrives to another island. She got there and stayed there. Her family saw she's not coming back ... They

made a pera: i te tapu i te pera o Uho<sup>39</sup> ... But the girl hadn't died, the honu [RAP. turtle] had taken her to another island.

When she arrives there [to the other island], a young man shows up. And when he does, the turtle disappears. He asks the girl, "where do you come from?" "I come from Rapa Nui, Te Pito O Te Henua." "And how did you get here?" She told him everything. "The turtle came, took my taurareña and brought it here. Then I got [into the sea] following the turtle until I got here." The young man is named Mahuna te Ra'a. He said, "let's go to my house." He took her there and she stayed with him. She lived with him. She forgot the island and stayed in the land of Mahuna.

One day, the girl remembered her mother and father, I think one or two years later. She remembered her family here. She said [Mahuna's] grandmother, "I'm going outside", she said she wanted to take the sun. When she went outside, the old woman listened she was crying [Papa Kiko sings],

*He uka au Ko Uho tatū au i to'oku kiesa  
Mata tea tea i te Papa Haka Vare Ū  
O Uho O te Uka Kaiña mata po'uri e  
E Mahuna Te Ra'a kenu a'aku ē  
Ta'e pe 'uta pe to matou kaiña  
Mata ma'eha era i te iruña haña ē  
Aue a nua ē Aue a koro ē Aue a ŋakope ē*

"Ah", says the old woman, "she remembered her family." The day went, then another day, and she continues the same. Three, four times [until Mahuna listens to her]. Then he said, "Do you

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<sup>39</sup> *Tapu pera*: a tapu that marks the death of a person; *i te tapu i te pera o Uho*: Uho's tapu pera.

want to come back to your homeland?” She said yes, she wants to come back to her mother and father. And a child was already born. She had a boy, his name is Uko. He was already walking. Then Mahuna says, “get ready with the child, and go.” She said goodbye to the people in the house and left with the young man to the beach.

She found a turtle. She looked at it, it was very similar to the other turtle, and she called it [Papa Kiko sings]. The turtle says “ok”. So she took feathers out of her head, of her *vaero* [i.e. feather headdress], and sticks it in the boy’s shoulder. The boy screams. She takes another and sticks it on the other side. And then another one, and sticks it on the back, in the bottom. She throws the child in the sand, and she runs. Once, twice, thrice, until he flies. Then the turtle replied, “How are you going to pay me?” She points to her body. “Ia, hai tatake” [*RAP*. Here, with my sex]. The turtle accepted. Then she sat on the turtle, and left. When she arrived at Haņa Ohio, her place, where is her mother, the same place where she washed. She was sitting there, and her mother sees her. She said, “Aue” and calls her husband, “look, there’s a girl over there, she didn’t respect and is in there.” They called her. [Papa Kiko sings] The girl pointed with her hand: “I am.” They called again. They called a third time and the husband says, “why is she saying ‘I am’? Go see.” She goes and sees she’s her own daughter. In three more days, there’s a fest in Haņa Teteņa to choose the most gracious girl of the island. The mother, the father and the girl knew about this. The day came and they came to Haņa Teteņa. People were all there, the girls with their suits and crowns. Uho was also there. Uho won; the most gracious girl, the happiest. They sat her on the throne as the queen, but when the people were preparing everything for the party, cooking and dancing in the sand, a white bird shows. People voiced, “Look! There’s a bird!” When the bird went down, people threw him stones. Uho makes a *pata’u ta’u* [recitation]. [Papa Kiko recites]. “Stones going up come down. Do not touch my child”. Then the



bird looks for her mother to be able to go down. Uho runs and sits on the ground. The bird went up and up, and falls down to Uho's lap. All the feathers fell, and he turns into a child.

†**Luis Pate Avaka, “Papa Kiko”**

Rapa Nui, August 2008

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**KA HAKA HOKI MAI TE MANA TUPUNA**  
**THE RAPA NUI REPATRIATION PROGRAM IN THEORY,**  
**POLICY AND PRACTICE**

In the 1990s, while repatriation legislation was being implemented in the U.S., a Rapanui traditionalist and activist woman, Ida Piru Huke Atan was traveling through European capitals researching museum and private collections. Repatriation was not even a conversation yet in Chile. Piru's motivation was a personal one. What moved her was her desire to "raise awareness and educate Rapanui youth in the value of their cultural heritage" (Huke 1995: 9). The results of this research would be an exhaustive catalogue of Rapanui collections that she would distribute among Rapanui families as to "inform the new generation of maori Rapanui with regards to the value and importance of preserving the language, the traditions, and the culture they have inherited not only through oral tradition but also in the physical presence of ancestral materials today absent in Rapa Nui" (10). For this revitalization project she found support in UNESCO and scholars who opened her way into museum and private collections worldwide. She, however, did not find the same support in Chile and her research, which resulted in the most complete catalogue of Rapanui collections to date, was never published. The long-term goal of her research was to raise awareness on the imperative that some of this heritage be repatriated back to Rapa Nui. She told me about this research in 2011, when she invited me to collaborate in the creation of a repatriation program in Rapa Nui. In this chapter I present Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna (*RAP. Give Us Back the Mana of Our Ancestors*), a repatriation program for the repatriation, care and reburial of Rapanui ancestral remains, which resulted from this

collaborative project.

I met Piru Huke in 2009. During my various fieldwork stays in Rapa Nui I always heard about her, her work, and her temper. Friends and collaborators insisted I should meet her, yet none of them would introduce us. They probably feared she would chase me away. A respected activist and attracting character, she had a long history of cultural revitalization work and political activism, also a long history of publicly confronting researchers and Chilean government officials. At the time I met her, one of the most popular tunes in Rapa Nui was a masterization of one of her famed speeches:

Did you ask for authorization to us, the Rapanui? Here we are the Rapanui. Here we are the ministers of our land; we are the ministers of our land, of our heritage. We have *inheriting heritage*. Ancestral [heritage], sir. If you Chileans do not have culture, please take your flag, take your people, get in the plane, and get out of here.

In these terms she responded to a government official after he said all Rapanui lands belonged to Chile. Thanks to the popular tune, I already knew her speech by heart. And with these very words in my mind, I visited her for the first time in her house in Rano Raraku. The friend who took me there made the first introduction, and then I presented her my Master's research project, an ontological study of Rapanui intersubjective land-being relations. I spoke about how I had come to work on Rapa Nui, my research plans and methodologies, the elders that had mentored me, and whom I was working with. She listened silent. Moving only to take a smoke from her cigarette, she listened. "Bravo," she said when I finished, and only then I breathed.

Piru and I started working together that same summer of 2009. She invited me to

participate in a project to record and document Rapanui petroglyphs and was also a key collaborator for my Master's research. Together we traveled the island recording petroglyphs, gathering their stories, and collecting oral traditions associated to them. Our work together was all about "living the land" and "knowing the Tupuna," as she would say. Intense and challenging, through our many road trips I began to understand Rapanui ontological relations. Most of the places we explored being remote sites, we could only access them by foot or horse. Sleeping in caves I learned about dreaming in Rapa Nui; walking down the cliffs to get the pigment for the recording technique I understood *varua* protection; cooking on the rocks I learned that the ancestors ought to eat too; hiking the many hills to reach the petroglyphs on the top I understood that history and memory are alive in every single rock; listening to Piru talk and sing to every *moai* and petroglyph I learned that they do not represent her ancestors, they are the ancestors themselves. Our work together introduced me to the ontological importance of repatriation. And she probably knew before I did.

One night during one of the field seasons I lived in her place, she told me about her research on museum collections. She showed me her many folders with all the documents and images she gathered, and the catalogue with the results of her research. She stopped at some of the images to tell me about them. How she got there, how she felt, what she told them, and what they told her. Piru is a tough woman, fierce when she needs to. Together we lived many things, though she would yell at me before showing any feelings. But that night she cried. At the light of the fire, that windy winter night she invited me to collaborate in a new project, to bring the ancestors back home. "Only when they are back," she said, "the *mana* will come back to the island." So I committed my doctoral research to the repatriation cause.

## **Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna and Haka Tere Tupuna**

After over two years of research, in 2013 a group of Rapanui traditionalists gathered to create Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna, a community-based international program for the repatriation, care, and reburial of *Ivi Tupuna* (Rapanui ancestral remains). As an invited researcher and later repatriation manager to this program, I have had a close insight to its policy, organization and methodologies, which I present below. Coming back to the discussion that opened this dissertation, this examination will prove that rather than a simple political maneuver, the work of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP) is based on an innovative and culturally safe action-research model that is related to being Rapanui, that is connected to Rapanui philosophy, that takes for granted the legitimacy of Rapanui knowledges and the importance of Rapanui language and culture, and that is concerned with the struggle for self-determination, all the above while satisfying the rigors of research.

Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna was born as a collaboration in response to the expressed desire of Rapanui traditionalists to bring back the ancestors currently retained in museum collections worldwide, and to reunite them with their descendants and the land.<sup>40</sup> Led and run by Rapanui, Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna is a community-based, independent and autonomous repatriation program based at the Rapanui museum, Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert (MAPSE). This collaboration between the museum and the community signals the beginning of a renewed role of MAPSE as Hoa Kona, or guardian, that regards *Ivi Tupuna* as *Tupuna*, ancestors that must be afforded culturally consistent care until their final

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<sup>40</sup> Based on preliminary research, the largest collections of Rapanui ancestral remains are found in museums in England, France, the U.S., and Chile. The exact number of *ivi tupuna* that are currently held in museums worldwide is still to be determined. Since the creation of this program we have been requesting inventories to national and international museums. To date, we have catalogued near a thousand ancestral remains. I mind the readers that this information is based on preliminary research only. When research is completed, we expect this count to be significantly larger.

resting places are determined. MAPSE does not posit conditions for the repatriation of *Ivi Tupuna* but offers a space for their temporary rest while provenance research is conducted.

At the core of Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna is Haka Tere Tupuna, Rapanui philosophy and worldviews, which define the program's organization, policy and research. Five main principles underlie Haka Tere Tupuna: *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy), *te re'o* (*RAP.* language), *tikāŋa* (*RAP.* cultural protocols), *hua'ai* (*RAP.* family), and *mau hatu* (*RAP.* sovereignty). These principles providing the basis for the RNRP, here I present the program's organization, policy, and repatriation procedures in light of these founding values. In the previous chapter I emphasized the imperative that repatriation policies reflect indigenous ontological relations to and understandings of the living materials they seek to repatriate. This discussion based on the governing principles of Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna will illuminate how the RNRP is committed to faithfully representing and complying with such relations and understandings.

The RNRP is pioneer in articulating Haka Tere Tupuna principles and applying them to research. With no literature or initiatives reflecting on these matters, we turned toward the Māori experience for background information and a model on how to articulate Haka Tere Tupuna principles.<sup>41</sup> Haka Tere Tupuna shares great similarities with Kaupapa Māori, its Māori equivalent. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) defines Kaupapa Māori as a term used by Māori to describe the practice and philosophy of living a “Māori” culturally informed life. Kaupapa Māori is a Māori worldview that incorporates thinking and understanding. Māori traditionalists and scholars have a long-standing history of applying Kaupapa Māori values to education, research, curation, and repatriation. Examples of this work are Te Kohanga Reo, the Māori

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<sup>41</sup> Among the Māori scholarship consulted, key sources were the literature reviews on Kaupapa Māori put together by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000) and Leonie Pihama (2004). Informed by these reviews, also critical were seminal writings on Kaupapa Māori by Tuakana Nepe (1991), Rangimarie Rose Pere (1991), Graham Smith (1997), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2009), and Leonie Pihama (2001). My presentation of Haka Tere Tupuna principles follows this scholarship.

immersion pre-schooling system; Kura Kaupapa Māori, the primary schooling alternative based on Māori philosophies and taught in Māori language; and Kaupapa Māori research, a localized critical indigenous research model informed by Kaupapa Māori values. Inspired by the Māori experience, the RNRP is the first attempt to articulate and apply Haka Tere Tupuna principles to activism and research.

When forming the RNRP, all its members agreed that the program's policy and research needed to be based and reflexive on Rapanui worldviews and philosophies. When thinking of a way to articulate them, we turned to the Māori experience and Māori scholars' writings on Kaupapa Māori. Having studied Kaupapa Māori research as a model for my own research methodologies, I presented the group with a summary of literature review on the topic and an outline of Kaupapa Māori principles. One of the founding members of the program, Te Pou Huke, lived in Aotearoa for over a year, where he attended Kura Parā Tawhiti, a Kura Kaupapa Māori dependent of the Wananga O Raikawa, in Otaki. There he worked closely with *kaumātua* (MAO. elders) to learn *te reo* (MAO. language) and *tikanga* (MAO. protocols) Māori. Fluent in both *te reo* Māori and *te re'o* Rapanui, Te Pou is knowledgeable in Haka Tere Tupuna and has studied Kaupapa Māori in depth. He and I worked together in outlining a draft of Haka Tere Tupuna principles based on his knowledge and practice and my research.

Articulating Haka Tere Tupuna principles was not about applying blindly Kaupapa Māori to Rapa Nui. Despite their cultural affiliation, Rapa Nui is not Aotearoa and their present cultural and political contexts differ widely. Our work was based on extensive comparative research and mentored by Rapanui elders. We first identified Kaupapa Māori principles based on Te Pou's studies in Aotearoa and literature review. Within the literature consulted, we focused particularly on the analyses of Kaupapa Māori by Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997), Linda Tuhiwai Smith

(2009), and Leonie Pihama (2001). While previous foundational sources on Kaupapa Māori were also consulted for background information and further definitions, these three studies have the particularity of outlining a comprehensive and definite list of Kaupapa Māori principles. Among these lists, we used Linda Tuhiwai Smith's as a model. While Graham Hingangaroa Smith and Leonie Pihama focus on Kaupapa Māori pedagogy, Linda Tuhiwai Smith focuses on Kaupapa Māori as a research model discussing Kaupapa Māori principles as research principles. Graham Hingangaroa Smith and Leonie Pihama focusing on education, their lists include socio-economical aspects that apply to the Māori context only. Linda Tuhiwai Smith providing a broader focus on research, her list served as a more suitable model for our purposes of both articulating Haka Tere Tupuna principles and connecting them with repatriation research and procedures. Based on Smith's (2009) model, we translated each of Kaupapa Māori principles and defined them broadly, focusing on relevant connections with Rapanui worldviews, values and philosophies. We discussed each of these principles with the elders of the program as to ensure they reflected Haka Tere Tupuna appropriately.

The RNRP is based entirely on Haka Tere Tupuna. With the ultimate goal of reuniting a people with their ancestors, its mission is intimately tied to Rapanui worldviews, values and philosophies. Repatriation is not simply about bringing the ancestors back but also about re-connecting a people with their *mana* and *maramarama* (*RAP.* knowledge). To this end, a repatriation initiative could not just reflect on worldviews, values and philosophies, it also needed to be structured around the system that conceptualizes such ontological, axiological and epistemological relations. *Haka Tere Tupuna* is that system. Here I follow Māori definitions of Kaupapa Māori, which highlight the distinction between *matauranga* Māori (Māori knowledge and epistemology) and Kaupapa Māori. Tuakana Nepe (1991: 22) argues that Kaupapa Māori is



a “conceptualisation of Maori knowledge.” Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000) advances the same argument explaining that Kaupapa Māori does not mean *matauranga* Māori. Rather, “it is a way of abstracting that knowledge, reflecting on it, engaging with it, taking it for granted sometimes, making assumptions based upon it, and at times critically engaging in the way that it has been and is being constructed (230-31). In this same sense, Haka Tere Tupuna does not mean *maramarama tupuna*, Rapanui knowledge and epistemology. The concept of *haka tere* implying a way of conducting and driving, *haka tere tupuna* implies a way of framing, structuring and transmitting how Rapanui think about and practice knowledge. As a system conceptualizing knowledge, values and relations, Haka Tere Tupuna governs the policy of the RNRP. Its principles define its organization and regulate repatriation research and procedures as a means to ensure that they are conducted in a culturally safe manner.

### **Five principles governing the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program**

As I mentioned, the RNRP is the first one of what can be called a Haka Tere Tupuna initiative. This document is also the first attempt to articulating and writing on Haka Tere Tupuna. I do not intend the following discussion and definitions to be exhaustive of Rapanui philosophy. Rather, I offer a preliminary outline of Haka Tere Tupuna principles and how they are reflected on and applied in the work of the RNRP. For each principle I first offer a translation and brief definition based on my conversations with Rapanui traditionalists and elders. Then I provide the principle’s equivalent in Kaupapa Māori along with Māori scholars’ definitions and analyses. I contextualize these analyses discussing how each principle is applied in the organization, policy and research of the RNRP.

## The principle of *Haka Ara*

Literally genealogy, *haka ara* is also the most fundamental way in which the Rapanui think about and come to know the world. *Haka ara* refers to the way of knowing, learning, storing, and debating knowledge. Echoing Rapanui relational epistemologies, this understanding of the world through genealogical connections allows for positioning and contextualizing relations between people, participants, ancestors, land, and the universe as a whole. As a research principle, *haka ara* organizes research relationships. As for repatriation research, in particular, *haka ara* is at the center of provenance research.

Māori scholars' definitions of *whakapapa*, the Māori equivalent for *haka ara*, further illuminate this founding principle of Rapanui ontologies and philosophy. In his articulation of Māori "sacred" knowledge, Peter Mataira (2000) attends to the etymology of the term to explain that *whakapapa* means "to lay one thing upon another" (102). In this same way, *haka ara* refers to the actions of creating a foundation, and layering and adding to that foundation, which is done by reciting genealogies and stories. In this layering and adding, *haka ara* allows people to locate themselves in the world, relationally. Rangimarie Pere (1982) furthers this definition connecting *whakapapa* with *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge). As she explains, every Māori person is a part of a system of social and genealogical relationships. Acting as a map, *whakapapa* assists people to locate themselves within their lineages and relationships to others. Locating *whakapapa* as a pedagogical tool, Leonie Pihama (2004) furthers this ontological-epistemological connection explaining that *whakapapa* is a complex and sophisticated learning system through which *mātauranga Māori* is transmitted and received.

This same ontological-epistemological connection applies to *haka ara* and *maramarama tupuna* (*RAP*. Rapanui knowledge) in that *haka ara* is both vehicle and expression of

maramarama. In Chapter Two I discussed ontological and epistemological connections in Rapa Nui explaining that Rapanui ontologies are grounded in a relational epistemology. Integral to such connections, haka ara is an example of the complex ways in which Rapanui knowledge is transmitted inter-generationally through recitation of a person's genealogical position and through the transmission of maramarama tupuna within the stories of *hua'ai* (*RAP.* family), *paena* (*RAP.* lineage), and *mata* (*RAP.* clan). Haka ara asserts, then, that knowledge is made sense of through a common ground of understanding which arises from a common experience and relationship with the ancestors, who have transmitted key principles and ways of being to their descendants.

Like whakapapa, haka ara has multiple layers and multiple meanings. In addition to expressing and transmitting knowledge, haka ara also defines status and designates roles. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1996) discussion of whakapapa helps illuminating the concept of haka ara as also a way of organizing relationships. As she explains, whakapapa provides a means of storing, learning, transmitting and inscribing knowledge, while serving also as a frame of reference for how Māori organize, manage, position and contest relationships. I noted earlier that, like whakapapa, haka ara assists people to locate themselves within their descent lines. Likewise, it assists people to locate themselves within their relationships to others. In doing so, haka ara defines status and responsibility and designates key roles and activities within *hua'ai* (*RAP.* family), *paena* (*RAP.* lineage) and *mata* (*RAP.* clan). As a relational epistemology and mapping, haka ara is a key principle for both RNRP's research and organization.

Applying the principle of haka ara to its organization, the program is structured in two main bodies, the *Motuha Hokiāna* or Repatriation Team, and the *Koro Oroho* or Expert Committee. Both work together and under the supervision of the Hatu, elder traditionalist and

MAPSE's Chief Museographer. The Repatriation Team undertakes research on collections, initiates negotiations with museums, facilitates procedures for physical repatriations, and conducts provenance research. The Expert Committee is comprised by Rapanui elders and traditionalists versed in Rapanui *tikāŋa* (*RAP.* cultural protocols), *maramarama tupuna* (*RAP.* knowledge), and haka ara. The Committee provides research advice to the Repatriation Team, assists it in cultural protocols matters, and facilitates communication with the community to coordinate repatriation and reburial ceremonies.

Haka ara research is key for determining provenance of repatriated ancestors. Provenance research begins with the Motuha Hokiŋa investigation of the journey of the Tupuna. To this end, after requesting the inventories to the museums, the team requests documentation associated to the ancestors in their holdings. This documentation includes acquisition records, donor/vendor information, and locale or excavation context. When necessary, this research is complemented with consultation of relevant institutions' archives. The purpose of this preliminary research is to determine the original place of the Tupuna. When provenance can be identified, the Motuha Hokiŋa handles research results to the Koro Oroŋo. Based on the Tupuna's original place, the Expert Committee researches the ancestor's haka ara as to identify his or her *mata* (*RAP.* clan) and lineal descendants, whenever possible. At this stage the Koro Oroŋo contacts and informs appropriate mata representatives to discuss and coordinate re-burial procedures.

The genealogy principle should be central to every research agenda committed to responsibly serve indigenous communities, not only to repatriation research or research conducted in Rapa Nui. For many indigenous peoples, genealogies are a fundamental way in which they think about and come to know the world. Genealogies connect them with the land, the ancestors, and other beings of their world. Acknowledging these connections in how research

is organized allows for positioning and contextualizing relations between people, participants, and the research agenda. A critical element for decolonizing methodologies, when these connections are taken seriously, research methodologies can more genuinely grant community participation, not imposing a master plan developed outside themselves but rather with them.

### The Principle of *Te Re'o*

Literally tongue, as a research principle *Te Re'o* asserts the efficacy of Rapanui language as a site of struggle and empowerment. In Chapter Two, I explained that language is also a way of interacting in the world. Rapanui worldviews are embedded in the language, as Rapanui relations are facilitated through it. Some social practices, both between humans and the world can only be conducted in Rapanui. Likewise, complex forms of expression and communication only make sense in Rapanui, as they connect with histories, values and the ancestors. *Te re'o Rapanui* is, then, a way of knowing in itself. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith puts it, “the language is a window onto ways of knowing the world,” and also “a way of interacting in the world” (Smith 2009: 237). This knowledge and relations being encapsulated in *Haka Tere Tupuna*, language is also a source of empowerment, as *te re'o Rapanui* is the only language that can access, conceptualize and internalize in ontological terms this body of knowledge. *Te re'o Rapanui* and *Haka Tere Tupuna* knowledge are, then, inextricably bound, one being the means to the other.

Language is intimately tied to cultural revitalization. Māori scholars and educators have advanced this argument connecting *te reo Māori* with *matauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge). Te Kapunga Dewes (1977), for example, stresses that the Māori oral tradition means that the transmission of Māori knowledge “rests on the foundation of *te reo Maori*” (46). In this same line, Rangimarie Rose Pere (1991) highlights the depth that *te reo Māori* offers the Māori in regards to understanding traditional knowledge forms, as it enables them to get a deeper insight

into understanding themselves as Māori. In her words, te reo Māori “provides the tentacles that can enable a child to link up with everything in his or her world. It is one of the most important forms of empowerment that a child can have. Language is not only a form of communication but it helps transmit the values and beliefs of a people” (9). Connecting te reo Māori as a form of knowledge with Kaupapa Māori, Tuakana Nepe (1991:15) explains that, as a “conceptualisation of Māori knowledge,” Kaupapa Māori developed and continues to do so through oral tradition. She contends that Kaupapa Māori is the process by which the Māori mind “receives, internalises, differentiates, and formulates ideas and knowledge exclusively through Te Reo Māori.” Situating Māori knowledge specifically within te reo Māori, Nepe argues that revitalization of te reo Māori is critical in the understanding of mātāuranga Māori. An argument advanced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, she stresses that the survival of te reo Māori is absolutely crucial to the survival of Māori people (Smith 2009: 236). Like Kaupapa Māori, Haka Tere Tupuna knowledge, too, can only be accessed through te re’o Rapanui, which connects te re’o with *maramarama tupuna* (Rapanui knowledge) and, thus, cultural revitalization.

Smith’s argument relating linguistic with cultural survival is a conviction to which the RNRP members hold strongly. At the beginning of this dissertation I quoted Joaquín Niso Tuki, Koro Oroño to the program. Narrating the theft of Ariki Hotu Matu’a’s skull, Niso Tuki explains that the mana left with it. Yet he stresses that mana can be “reactivated.” This reactivation occurs when the people live with the ancestors and, as he explains, one lives with the ancestors through language. His call is for the people to learn the history, which can only happen when they “speak the language properly.” Only then, he highlights, the ancestors will live among the living, and protect them. His words connect with the argument presented in the previous chapter of repatriation being about revitalization. Critical to this intimate relation is te re’o Rapanui. Niso

Tuki, like his Koro Oroŋo peers, speaks of the repatriation of the ancestors as the repatriation of maramarama tupuna.

Te re’o Rapanui is, then, at the core of the RNRP. As part of this program, I was entrusted with drafting the repatriation policy. The drafting process comprised three stages. The first stage consisted in extended, individual conversations with the Koro Oroŋo. These conversations focused on *tikāŋa* Rapanui, cultural protocols that needed to be reflected in the repatriation procedures and etymo-historical revisions of terminology to be employed. The second stage consisted in preparing a preliminary draft informed by the background research I presented in the previous section, and reflecting the information gathered in the consultation stage. The third stage consisted in a revision of the draft by the Koro Oroŋo. This revision took us several meetings, where Koro Oroŋo members discussed the policy, literally, word by word. Proving Māori scholars’ arguments of language being knowledge, these meetings brought together linguistic, epistemological and oral tradition knowledge. Like te reo Māori, te re’o Rapanui being grounded in oral tradition, the elders would defend a concept over another by resorting to *haka ara* (genealogies), *a’amu* (stories), *pata’uta’u* (recitations), and *riu tanji* (songs). The centrality of te re’o Rapanui was critical in the drafting of the program’s policy, as only Rapanui language can fully conceptualize and access the maramarama tupuna that the program is committed to revitalize, repatriate, and protect.

The Koro Oroŋo’s stand with regards to revitalization of te re’o Rapanui is that it facilitates the revitalization and assertion of maramarama tupuna. Sharing Smith’s acknowledgement of language as “a window onto ways of knowing the world” and “a way of interacting in the world” (2009: 237), searching appropriate repatriation terminology within oral tradition was a search for framing repatriation language within Haka Tere Tupuna. I noted above

that Haka Tere Tupuna is the conceptualization of Rapanui knowledge transmitted through te re'o Rapanui. The centrality of te re'o Rapanui is, then, critical in understanding traditional Rapanui relations and in comprehending the ontological relevance of the return of the ancestors. The centrality of te re'o Rapanui is also critical in re-connecting the people with tikāŋa Rapanui; a people that, in the sharp opinion of the Koro Oroŋo, is dormant.

As a vehicle for revitalization, te re'o Rapanui is also a site of resistance. Tuakana Nepe (1991:15) clarifies that Kaupapa Māori knowledge is not to be confused with Pākehā knowledge or general knowledge that has been translated into Māori. The same applies to Haka Tere Tupuna knowledge. Borrowing Nepe's explanation of Māori knowledge, Rapanui knowledge has its origins in a metaphysical base that is distinctly Rapanui, which influences the way Rapanui people think, understand, interact and interpret the world. This philosophical base validates Rapanui epistemologies and is owned and controlled by Rapanui through te re'o Rapanui. The centrality of Rapanui language in drafting the repatriation policy was not about simply translating repatriation-related terms into te re'o Rapanui. Rather, the special attention given to the policy's language responded to the need of conceptualizing the importance of repatriation and framing repatriation procedures in accordance to Haka Tere Tupuna. In doing so, the RNRP responds critically to the problems outlined in the previous section about imposing Western ontological terminology to repatriation policies. By maintaining key repatriation concepts in Rapanui language, the Rapanui repatriation policy asserts the validity and legitimacy of te re'o and tikāŋa Rapanui. In doing so, this program challenges Western dominance within the repatriation debate, re-positioning Rapanui no longer as the other, but rather the norm within their own constructions. Who is subject to repatriation, who has a stand to make a request, and how repatriations are to be conducted are then no longer decided by scholars, museums or



governments. Who has the final say are the Rapanui people.

In a broader sense, the linguistic principle is critical to decolonizing methodologies. A central aspect of authoritative, colonialist research is the representation of indigenous people from concepts that are completely alien to their knowledges and cultures. In doing so, research risks to be constructed to promote the reification of Western thought by marginalizing indigenous epistemologies. Adhering to the indigenous paradigm of emancipatory research involves, among other things, to rigorously interrogate existing scholarship and, very specifically, to call out anti-indigenous concepts and languages embedded in that scholarship. Because indigenous languages are deeply reflexive of their very worldviews, critical revisions of existing literature must incorporate indigenous languages. Doing so means to privilege indigenous sources and perspectives over non-Indigenous ones, a central principle for decolonizing research. It means, too, to assert indigenous languages as a site of struggle and empowerment that can effectively counteract hegemonic discourses.

#### The Principle of *Tikāŋa*

Literally “to point at the past,” *tikāŋa* are the principles that govern social and customary practices in Rapa Nui, and through which actions are judged as *titika*, or correct. As a code of ethics, *tikāŋa* are the protocols and processes that define, mediate and guide relationships. Intersecting all principles, but this one in particular, are the concepts of *mo’a* (respect) and *tapu*. The breaching of *tapu* having real consequences, *tikāŋa* is intimately related to the idea of safety. As a core research principle for the RNRP, compliance with *tikāŋa* Rapanui means that all repatriation research and procedures are undertaken following appropriate Rapanui cultural protocols as to ensure that research and repatriations are all and at all times culturally consistent and safe.

Māori definitions and extensions of *tikanga* Māori illuminate its connection to healthy relationships and safe research. Leonie Pihama (2004: 40) defines *tikanga* as the protocols and tribal customs that define, regulate and guide healthy relationships. Building upon Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2009) analysis of *tikanga* within Kaupapa Māori practice, Pihama connects *tikanga* with Māori ethics. Smith identifies these ethics as including the notions of:

*aroa ki te tangata* (a respect for people)

*he kanohi kitea* (a face seen is appreciated)

*titiro, whakarongo, korero* (look, listen and speak)

*manaaki tangata* (share and host people, be generous)

*kia tupato* (be cautious)

*kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (don't trample on the *mana* of the people) (2009: 221).

Based on these ethical principles, Smith bridges *tikanga*'s sense of correctness with *tapu* and its impact on research.

As Smith explains, *tikanga* conveys the sense that something feels and looks right. This sense of correctness has direct implications for research. "Having things set right," she explains, is important, because the alternative—"getting it wrong"—comes with consequences.

How researchers enter the research community, how they negotiate their project aims and methods, how they conduct themselves as members of a research project and as individuals, and how they engage with the people require a wide range of cultural skills

and sensitivities ... And getting it wrong in a traditional sense is viewed as having real (sometimes dire) consequences. For example, someone may fall ill. Obviously, “rational” science would not consider this a rational belief, but it is not important what the researchers think; important are what the research subjects think and their perceptions of the researchers (2009: 238).

This intimate relation between *tikānga* and *tapu*, and how they can impact research, is one of the primary reasons why the Koro Oroño or Advisory Panel occupies a key role in the RNRP. Smith highlights that even Māori researchers need a mentor or *kaumātua* (elder) when they are entering the more formal domain of Maori communities. The same applies to *tikānga* Rapanui. Not mere consultants but active researchers, supervisors and facilitators, one of the roles of the Koro Oroño is to look after and attend to the formal, ritual, and ontological dimensions of *tikānga*. As researchers, they lead Haka Tere Tupuna research; as supervisors, they ensure that negotiations with museums and provenance research are conducted in compliance with *tikānga* Rapanui, for which they mentor and guide the Repatriation Team; as facilitators, they mediate proper communication with *mata* (clans) representatives.

The principle of *tikānga* Rapanui governs both repatriation research and procedures of the RNRP. Repatriation procedures comprise two main stages, international and domestic repatriations. For international repatriations, the Motuha Hokiīnga or Repatriation Team researches the presence of Ivi Tupuna in museum collections. The team contacts the institutions, requests relevant inventories and associated information, and files repatriation requests. Negotiations are conducted on behalf of the Koro Oroño, whom the team informs on the progress of conversations on a regular basis. The team then conducts provenance research, the Koro

Oroŋo also participating actively. The team presents the Koro Oroŋo with the results of preliminary provenance research based on documentation provided by the museum, which the Koro Oroŋo completes through haka ara research. As for repatriation procedures, the Koro Oroŋo looks after the formal and ritual aspects of tikāŋa. Once repatriations are approved, the Motuha Hokiŋa coordinates the physical repatriation in collaboration with pertinent institutions, while the Koro Oroŋo conducts hand over and welcoming ceremonies. Part of the Koro Oroŋo travels to lead the hand over ceremony at the repatriating museum and accompany the Tupuna in her journey back home. There, the rest of the Koro Oroŋo joins them in the welcoming ceremony. Both ceremonies are conducted in strict compliance with tikāŋa Rapanui.

Repatriated Ivi Tupuna are taken to the Hare Tapu Tu'u Ivi (*RAP*. Tapu House for the Ivi's Care). Located within MAPSE's facilities, this deposit serves as a temporary resting place for repatriated ancestors, until their final resting places are determined. The Hare Tapu demands the same respect than any other *ahu* or *avaŋa*, Rapanui burial sites. Both access and entrance to the Hare Tapu are regulated by strict tikāŋa or protocols. Access is restricted to authorized staff approved by the Hatu. At discretion of the Hatu, access may be granted to unauthorized staff, community members, or scholars. When access is granted, some of the *tikāŋa* include *aro varua* (*haka ara* introduction), *pata'uta'u* (prayers), and *mauiui vahine* (menstruation restrictions). A Koro Oroŋo representative or staff mentored in tikāŋa must be present during the visit. No food, drinks, shoes or media are allowed at any time.

As a research principle, complying with cultural protocols is a central aspect of decolonizing research. Very often, researchers reject this principle arguing that communities' protocols are restrictive and research-obstructive. I suggest that we rethink these "restrictions" as rather responsibilities. Community's protocols require mediation and posit obligations. In doing

so, they offer researchers a space to hold ourselves accountable for the work we are doing. This space should be seen as an opportunity rather than as an obstruction. If we are genuinely committed to produce scholarship that can serve indigenous people, then we must hold ourselves accountable to the communities we purport to represent. This principle serves such purpose.

The principle of *Hua'ai*

Literally “extended family,” the principle of *hua'ai* refers to a support structure that has in-built responsibilities and obligations. Like all three previous principles, *hua'ai* sits at the heart of Haka Tere Tupuna. Referring back to pre-colonial social structure, *hua'ai* is the basis for Rapanui society. As a social core unit, it functions as a support base of shared responsibilities. As a research principle it extends to the research team and beyond. *Hua'ai* is a way of organizing and supervising research; of distributing tasks and reciprocating responsibilities; of sharing knowledge and ensuring that Rapanui values are kept at the core of the research project.

*Hua'ai* finds its Kaupapa Māori equivalent in the principle of *whanau*, the extended family structure principle. Broadly, *whanau* is the basis for Māori society upon which other forms of organization like *hapu* and *iwi* are dependent. Leonie Pihama (2004) locates *whanau* as an integral part of Māori identity and culture. Stressing its role in cultural revitalization, Pihama explains that, “the cultural values, customs and practices which organise around the *whanau* and ‘collective responsibility’ are a necessary part of *Maori* survival” (48). Further, Pihama connects the principle of *whanau* with notions of empowerment and decolonization. First, *whanau* provides a “support base” that allows Māori to locate themselves in the wider dimensions of *whakapapa* and Māori society, and to find strength in their kinship relations. Second, *whanau* has been a key target for colonialism, colonizing forces having “actively sought to undermine the fundamental values and relationships that are the basis for *whanau* wellbeing” (49). As both a

source of empowerment and target of colonialism, whanau has been spoken of as a site a crisis and a site of intervention.

Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1993) has advanced the crisis-intervention argument in his analysis of new formations of whanau, which he identifies as an innovative intervention into Māori cultural and educational crisis. He attributes the success of Kaupapa Māori initiatives to whanau, as it reinforces the strengths and commitment of the Māori people with the intervention and transformation such initiatives seek. In his thorough discussion of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis, Smith (1997) explains the centrality of whanau as playing a key role in providing support. Critical in this support base role is the structure of whanau, which comprises reciprocal roles and obligations. Analyzing whanau as a structural principle of shared responsibilities, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2009) locates this extended family principle as a way of organizing research in Kaupapa Māori initiatives.

Smith (2009) contends that whanau has become part of a methodology, a way of organizing a research group. She traces this organizing role back to precolonial times, where whanau, rather than the individual, was the core social unit. A social unit that survived colonialism, Smith argues, whanau remains a crucial means of living in and organizing the social world—also a crucial means of organizing research. As an organizational principle, Smith situates *whanau* as an effective way of working collaboratively and structuring supervision. When research is organized around the principle of whanau, Smith highlights, it ensures that a wide range of Maori principles is discussed rigorously, that specific communities are engaged appropriately, and that long-term relationships with them are maintained (241). At a pragmatic level, Smith explains that the whanau can replace advisory committees, project teams, and supervisory roles, encompassing both technical and mentoring and support roles.

Like whanau for Māori, hua'ai is the basis for Rapanui society upon which other forms of organization like *paēna* and *mata* are dependent. Following the experience of Kaupapa Māori initiatives, the RNRP situates hua'ai as a structuring principle. Above I presented the program's organization in light of the *tikāŋa* principle. There I explained that the program organizes around two main teams, the Motuha Hokiŋa and the Koro Oroŋo. While the *tikāŋa* principle is critical to understand this organization in terms of compliance with cultural protocols, the hua'ai principle further illuminates the importance of organizing and defining roles around a mutually supportive structure. In this sense, hua'ai is a way of distributing tasks, of engaging people with particular and diverse expertise, and of ensuring that Rapanui values are kept central to the project.

Age issues are a core component of hua'ai. Smith (2009) explains that in attempts to operate within Māori contexts, the research role of *kaumātua* (elders) has taken on a new significance: "some see their role as a mentoring and supporting one. Others have 'adopted' kaumātua as part of their research team, as official members who bring expertise. Part of this exercise has been about gaining entry into a community" (240). In Rapa Nui, the research role of *koro* and *nua* (elders) is generally limited to that of a consultant or informant. The role they play in the RNRP is rather that of active researchers. They bring support, mentorship and expertise, while also partake of and oversee all research stages and decision-making processes. Like Māori kaumātua, Rapanui koro and nua are also held to be those people who are knowledgeable about Rapanui things. "This is based," Smith continues, "not simply in the fact that they are old and therefore wise but also on the premise that they have systematically gathered wisdom as they have aged" (241). Yet she clarifies that not all older Māori are kaumātua in this sense of the term. The koro and nua of the RNRP are. They have systematically gathered and enhanced

maramarama tupuna, Rapanui knowledge. They are experts in *te re'o* (*RAP.* language), *haka ara* (*RAP.* genealogy), *tikāŋa* (*RAP.* protocols), *te iŋoa o te kona* (*RAP.* toponymy) and *a'amu* (*RAP.* history), and for their wisdom and knowledge they have earned respect. They have the status of *koro/nua hōnui* (*RAP.* wise elders) because of their knowledge but also because of their efforts to use it for the collective good.

When forming the RNRP, its founding members were particularly concerned with inter-generational collaboration. As key research participants, the role of koro and nua of this program is, like that of kaumātua, “to make the pathways to knowledge clearer” (Smith 2009: 241). To this end, they supervise tikāŋa or protocols, mentor researchers and technical staff, lead handover and welcoming rituals, and intellectually engage in analyzing data. In all and each of these roles, they work closely with younger staff. Not only do they supervise their work but they have also taken the greater task of personally instructing them in the fundamentals of Haka Tere Tupuna knowledge like haka ara and te re'o.

In 2014, the RNRP was invited to speak at the Latin American Biological Anthropology Association Conference. Both elders and younger staff traveled to this event, presenting their joint work toward the repatriation of their ancestors and discussing (un)ethical procedures of bioanthropological research. In the occasion, Vai A Tare Paoa, the youngest member of the program, addressed the importance of inter-generational collaboration and its role in cultural revitalization. “I am Rapanui, but I grew up away from the Island,” were the words that opened her presentation. “I did not choose to be separated from my land, to not speak my language,” she continued, “but now that I am back, I do choose to learn from the koro and nua, and re-connect myself with my land and my Tupuna.” Volunteering in the RNRP was her way to do so. Since then, she has been working closely with the elders of the program, coordinating Koro Oroŋo



meetings and keeping records of haka ara and tikāŋa research. Meetings and research being conducted in te re’o Rapanui, Vai A Tare’s first goal was to learn the language. The Koro Oroŋo has been key in her learning and re-connection process.

As a Haka Tere Tupuna principle, hua’ai is also about ensuring community participation. As a research methodological principle, Smith defines whanau as “a way of incorporating ethical procedures that report back to the community, a way of ‘giving voice’ to the different sections of Maori communities, and a way of debating ideas and issues that have an impact on the research project” (2009: 239). A mechanism to ensure that such ethical procedures are incorporated into the work of the RNRP is the *vānaŋa*. Literally “to talk,” *vānaŋa* are community forums to report research progress and results back to the community and discuss repatriation-related matters. One of the main objectives of the program is to ensure that the Rapanui people have a space where repatriation-related matters can be discussed and opinions shared. To this end, the program facilitates regular *vānaŋa* held twice a year or as frequency of repatriations requires. This space for permanent and regular dialogue allows the members of the program to share with the community the progress of their research and negotiations, community members to provide feedback so that the program can facilitate their requests, and both to share knowledge and collaboratively partake in decision-making processes.

*Vānaŋa* are at the core of Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna as they seek to place Rapanui people in a better position to make informed decisions about repatriation and associated issues related to their heritage. In accordance with the hua’ai principle, *vānaŋa* are also about “sharing knowledge.” A concept I borrow from Smith’s writings on decolonized research and Kaupapa Māori in particular, “sharing knowledge” (1999: 16; 2009: 243) stresses the commitment to report back to the people concerned in and with the research project. A means of

the RNRP to engage in “sharing knowledge,” *vānaŋa* are both a commitment to reciprocity and a process of accountability. Through them, the members of the program report their work back to the community at the same time that submit it to community scrutiny as to ensure that the work not only reflects Rapanui values but also responds to community needs and desires.

The rethinking of research organization is a critical element of emancipatory research. Decolonizing methodologies requires that the community engage in the research project no longer as mere consultants but in key research roles. It also requires that the research process is exposed and research results shared. The “family” research principle serves these purposes. Extending to the research team and beyond, it functions as a support base of shared responsibilities that ensures that the community’s values are kept at the center of the project.

The principle of *Te Mau Hatu*

Literally “kept chiefs,” *te mau hatu* is the self-determination principle. A core principle of Haka Tere Tupuna, *mau hatu* stresses Rapanui control over decision-making processes. A notion referring to the precolonial government structure, this self-determination principle reinforces Rapanui governance over all things Rapanui, by Rapanui and for Rapanui. Generally, *te mau hatu* is the basis for critically engaging power relations and counteracting hegemonic impositions from Rapanui understandings. As a research principle, in particular, *mau hatu* determines how research is governed. It asserts Rapanui control over all aspects of research as to ensure a decolonizing, emancipatory research agenda.

*Te mau hatu* finds its equivalent in the Kaupapa Māori principle of *tinu rangatiratanga*, usually discussed in terms of sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination and independence.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2009) locates *rangatiratanga* as the guiding principle of Kaupapa Māori initiatives, reinforcing “the goal of seeking more meaningful control over one’s own life and

cultural well being ... in order for *Maori* to take control of our destiny” (239). Leonie Pihama and Graham Hingangaroa Smith have written extensively and comprehensively on the counter-hegemonic role of Kaupapa Māori. Fostering this role, and inherent within the notion of tino rangatiratanga are elements of resistance and struggle that respond to the historical imposition of Pākehā structures, language and knowledge onto Māori people. Attending to its counter-hegemonic role, Pihama (1993, 2004) and Smith (1997) place Kaupapa Māori as a form of critical analysis of power structures and relations that is driven by Māori understandings. Stressing the need that Kaupapa Māori be the basis for engaging power relations, Pihama (1993) explains that, “*Kaupapa Maori* theory is a politicising agent that acts as a counter-hegemonic force to promote the conscientisation of *Maori* people, through a process of critiquing *Pakeha* definitions and constructions of *Maori* people, and asserting explicitly the validation and legitimisation of *te reo Maori* and *tikanga*” (57). Like tino rangatiratanga for Kaupapa Māori, te mau hatu contributes to the counter-hegemonic role of Haka Tere Tupuna as it embodies Rapanui control over things Rapanui, expressed by Rapanui and for Rapanui.

Interpretations of tino rangatiratanga also include the notion of decolonization. The decolonizing aspect of rangatiratanga is usually framed within the discourses related to the Treaty of Waitangi. Hariata Huata-Tapiata (1992), Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) and Leonie Pihama (2001) extend these interpretations to the realm of education contending that the dominant Pākehā education system has been the mechanism to deny tino rangatiratanga amongst Māori. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2009) contributes to this conversation expanding the decolonizing aspect of rangatiratanga to research discussing how the self-determination principle has a major influence on the ways that research is governed. As a research principle, she explains, “*rangatiratanga* owes as much to the discourses around the Treaty of Waitangi as it does to the

shifts in social science research toward more sympathetic and emancipatory research aims and practices” (Smith 2009: 239). Identifying community control, ethical practices, and research reflexivity as markers of emancipatory research, Smith locates rangatiratanga as a principle that regulates control over the research agenda and the resources and how they are distributed, which involves control over decision-making processes.

Emancipatory research is not to be confused with culturally sensitive research. While the latter rests on community consultation or, at its best, participation, the former asserts community control over all aspects of the research agenda, resources, methodologies, and distribution. The principles of rangatiratanga and te mau hatu mark such distinction at a pragmatic level. In this regard, Smith contends that rangatiratanga governs the ways in which fundamental and critical research questions are answered:

- 1) What research do we want to carry out?
- 2) Whom is that research for?
- 3) What difference will it make?
- 4) Who will carry out this research?
- 5) How do we want the research to be done?
- 6) How will we know it is a worthwhile piece of research?
- 7) Who will own the research?
- 8) Who will benefit? (Smith 2009: 240).

Like the principle of rangatiratanga to Māori people, that of te mau hatu asserts consistently the importance of addressing these questions to Rapanui people and not, as normally occurs, to

foreign experts, with Rapanui being consulted on the side. Unlike the Māori experience, research in Rapa Nui continues to be widely controlled by outsiders and notions of emancipatory research often received as overly radical and exclusionary. The Māori experience, however, has shown otherwise. As Smith (2009) emphasizes, “where discussions by Maori on these issues have occurred, it has not meant that Pakeha researchers have been excluded or restricted. Many Pakeha researchers have found the process far more collaborative and exciting than if they had attempted to carry out their research apart from Maori groups” (240). As a non-Rapanui myself, I stand by Smith’s words. An argument that I will detail in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, emancipatory research, rather than restricting, facilitates a space for true and ethical collaboration.

As a Haka Tere Tupuna initiative, the RNRP locates *te mau hatu* as its guiding principle. Self-determination defines the program’s mission, policy and research. Promoting decolonization and sovereignty, *mau hatu* governs the program’s mission of reuniting a people with their ancestors. A decolonizing effort in itself, repatriation does not come without struggle and critical engagement in hegemonic discourses, all elements that go straight to the heart of the *mau hatu* principle. For the RNRP, the struggle does not end when a museum agrees to a repatriation request. The hardest battle comes afterwards, when the Chilean nation-state intends to claim ownership over the repatriated ancestor.

In Chapter Four I discussed the history of the *Ley de Monumentos Nacionales* (National Monuments Law, 1970) and how its statute obstructs repatriation efforts. The passage of the law and its preceding decree had ramifications between anthropology and indigenous peoples in Chile, both living and dead. Supposed to protect the cultural heritage of Chile, the law created a permitting process for archaeological excavation and forbid unauthorized looting and

exportation. In practice, however, the law further reified the authority that anthropologists and archaeologists held over indigenous peoples' material culture and ancestors. Ignoring the interests that indigenous peoples might have in their own heritage, the law legislated the appropriation of such heritage by anthropologists, archaeologists and curators. The law turned indigenous peoples' ancestors and material culture into scientific resources and made them the property of the nation-state. Interpretations of its statute deem Rapanui repatriation efforts as national heritage restitution.

As the Repatriation Manager to the RNRP, I have had to go through long and hard negotiations with the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (National Monuments Council) on behalf of the Koro Oroño. A mechanism created by the 1970 National Monuments Law to protect national heritage, the Council authorizes, regulates and supervises excavation, exportation and research on national heritage. Even though the law does not establish any regulations for repatriation whatsoever, the Council claims to have major influence on repatriation efforts. In a nutshell, their argument is that with their sole importation to the country, anything and anyone defined under the law as national monument automatically becomes national heritage and, therefore, subject to the law. In doing so, they explicitly claim ownership over repatriated ancestors as the law makes national monuments the property of the nation-state. Put it simple and straight, the Council appropriates Rapanui people's and my own hard and self-supported work for bringing the ancestors back. They demand participation but, in practice, they only obstruct negotiations and posit obstacles to repatriations, and when the work is done, they claim ownership and intend to regulate repatriation and reburial procedures.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In Chapter Eight I present a brief discussion of the first repatriation case negotiated by the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program. This discussion further illuminates the obstructions that the law and the Council posit to repatriation efforts.

The National Monuments Law and its enforcement body, the National Monuments Council, are some of Chilean mechanisms to deny Rapanui people's rights over their own heritage. The response of the Koro Oroño to the law and Council's obstructions to their repatriation efforts is based on the principle of *mau hatu*. Critically engaging power relations and counteracting Chilean hegemonic imposition over their ancestors, they openly criticize the law and Council's ignorance of Rapanui interests on and rights over their heritage. In doing so, the Koro Oroño demands, first, that Ivi Tupuna are regarded as ancestors, not as scientific resources, nor Chilean heritage. Ivi Tupuna are their Tupuna, with whom they have *haka ara* connections. Second, that negotiations and decisions be controlled by them on behalf of the Rapanui people, not by a Council that has no Rapanui representation whatsoever, nor does understand the cultural relevance of the matters they intend to control. Third, that repatriation procedures are governed by the policy of the RNRP, not by a Chilean law that nothing has to do with repatriation, nor with Rapanui *Ono Tupuna*, Rapanui heritage. These Koro Oroño demands bring us back to the second point I made on this discussion, that of *te mau hatu* defining the program's policy.

The policy of the RNRP is governed entirely by Haka Tere Tupuna principles, *te mau hatu* going straight to the core of the statute. First and foremost, the policy establishes that Ivi Tupuna are the ancestors of the Rapanui people, and must be afforded culturally appropriate and consistent treatment at all times. Second, the program is governed entirely by Rapanui people. They control decision-making processes in what regards negotiations, research, repatriation, care, and reburial, all determined by Haka Tere Tupuna principles. Third, the policy regulates the terms of the partnership between the program and the Rapanui museum, establishing that repatriated ancestors do not enter the museum's collection through acquisition but remain collective heritage of the Rapanui people. As *Hoa Kona* or guardian, the museum is not to posit

conditions to repatriations but to facilitate a space for the temporary rest of repatriated ancestors. Finally, whenever provenance can be determined, the program contacts the appropriate representative of the *mata* or clan to which the Tupuna belongs, this person being a *Mata Hiapo*, the eldest male of the relevant clan. The Mata Hiapo and his mata determine reburial procedures, the program acting only as a facilitator. Finalizing the repatriation process, the program provides the relevant *mata* with a copy of the repatriation report, including documentation and research results. The original report remains at the Hare Tapu Tu'u Ivi available to the community and, upon Mata Hiapo's authorization, to outsider researchers. Reports regulations lead us to the third point I made in this discussion, that of *te mau hatu* defining repatriation research agenda, permissions, methodologies and distribution.

As a research principle, *mau hatu* governs all aspects of research carried out by the RNRP. Intersecting with the principle of *tikāŋa* and how it defines research roles, *mau hatu* ensures that Rapanui control all decision-making processes. Three mechanisms reinforce this principle: the Koro Oroŋo's role as research supervisors; the program's collaboration with Mata Hiapo; and the *vānaŋa* or repatriation forums open to the community. At a more pragmatic level, *mau hatu* is also reinforced in the program's permitting process for research on repatriated *ivi tupuna*.

The program's stand regarding research access is that the ancestors are not to be disturbed, thus no invasive research on their remains should be allowed unless it is conducive to determining provenance. However, the program also acknowledges that the community should partake of this sort of decision-making processes. To this end, the program created a strict permitting process based on the principles of *haka ara*, *tikāŋa* and *mau hatu*. As for unprovenanced (where the place of origin is unknown) *ivi tupuna*, research is allowed only for



provenance-determining purposes. In such cases, research is to be led by the program's physical anthropologist and supervised by the Hatu or a Koro Oroño member. As for provenanced (where the place of origin is known) *ivi tupuna*, permissions might be granted only upon both the Hatu and the relevant Mata Hiapo authorization.

Requests to access or research provenanced *ivi tupuna* must be made in writing to the Hatu, providing the following information: First, the purpose for requesting access to the *ivi tupuna* and/or associated information. Direct benefit for enhancement of *maramarama tupuna* and/or Rapa Nui development should be highlighted. Second, requests must provide evidence of support from the relevant *mata hiapo*. The Hatu, or delegate, will contact the relevant *mata hiapo* for further advice and endorsement of the request. Third, petitions must include the list of person(s) who wish to access the *ivi tupuna* and/or associated information, and designations or responsibilities if appropriate. Fourth, requests must outline any anticipated products or outcomes as a result of the research, and a request for permission to reproduce information if appropriate. Any anticipated commercial gain should be included. Fifth, whenever the interested party is not Rapanui, requests must provide evidence of Rapanui collaboration in key research roles. Evidence should include list of collaborators, with their designations and responsibilities.

The RNRP permitting process signals a significant and unique move toward asserting Rapanui self-determination on research carried out on Rapanui heritage. It also signals a progressive move toward regulating research in accordance to Haka Tere Tupuna principles and protocols. This permitting process is particularly relevant considering that, currently, permissions are granted mostly by Chilean institutions and governed by Chilean legislation. Lacking a unified and culturally consistent protocol, permitting processes in Rapa Nui fail to assert Rapanui self-

determination in controlling and supervising research in accordance to their interests, worldviews and cultural protocols.

Five different entities participate in the current permitting processes: the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (CMN; SPA. National Monuments Council); the *Comisión Asesora de Monumentos Nacionales* (CAMN; SPA. National Monuments Advisory Commission); the *Corporación Nacional Forestal* (CONAF; SPA. National Forestry Corporation); the *Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena* (CONADI; SPA. National Corporation for Indigenous Development); and the *Comisión de Desarrollo para Isla de Pascua* (CODEIPA; SPA. Easter Island Development Commission). Some more than others, all five entities are dependent of the Chilean government and governed by Chilean legislation. None of them has a defined protocol for their regulations, yet they all have a say when it comes to authorize and supervise heritage research in Rapa Nui. This lack of a unified protocol has resulted in researchers having to ping pong between the different offices, submitting multiple proposals, and yet sometimes finding themselves without a final determination. This lack of a unified protocol has resulted in a serious failure to inform the community on research carried out on their heritage, and authorizations based on arbitrary criteria that often ignore Rapanui interests, worldviews, and cultural protocols.

The RNRP permitting process is a critical response to this problematic situation that contributes only to continuing to deny the principle of *te mau hatu* and Rapanui rights over their own heritage. The purpose in creating a unique and distinctive permitting process was not that of adding one more set of regulations to this already disconnected and dysfunctional system, but rather that of serving as a model for the implementation of a unified, culturally safe permitting protocol. To this end, the RNRP is currently working on the elaboration of a code of ethics and broader research protocol to be presented to the relevant institutions involved in current

permitting processes in Rapa Nui. Like the program's permitting process, this broader proposal is based on Haka Tere Tupuna and has te mau hatu and tikāŋa as guiding principles. Adding to its own work in reinforcing culturally safe protocols for repatriation-related research, with this proposal the RNRP intends to make a broader contribution, that of ensuring Rapanui control over all research carried out on Rapa Nui. Reinforcing Rapanui control facilitates the means toward a decolonizing, emancipatory research agenda that critically engages power relations and counteracts hegemonic impositions from Rapanui understandings with the ultimate goal of restoring te mau hatu Rapanui.

Asserting indigenous peoples' sovereignty and contributing to their struggles toward self-determination are the main aspects defining emancipatory research. Accordingly, the "self-determination" principle should sit at the core of every research project with a decolonizing agenda. Such principle reinforces community's control over all aspects of the research. Regulating governance over the research agenda and the resources and how they are distributed, the "self-determination" principle is the basis for engaging power relations and counteracting hegemonic impositions. In doing so, it effectively criticizes and demystifies the ways in which Western science and the modern academy have been part of the colonial apparatus, a central aspect of decolonizing research.

### **Repatriation, Haka Tere Tupuna and decolonization**

Haka Tere Tupuna is of pivotal significance to Rapanui repatriation efforts. Articulating the repatriation movement from understandings that are distinctive of Rapanui not only reinforces the connection between the ancestors, knowledge, and culture; it also asserts the legitimacy and transformative power of such connections. In framing its work within the

principles of Haka Tere Tupuna, the RNRP is concerned with facilitating the revitalization of Rapanui forms of knowledge and the debates that accompany those epistemologies. The significance of Haka Tere Tupuna to Rapanui repatriation efforts is also tied to the connection between repatriation and decolonization. In his analysis of the politics of scientific objections to repatriation, Clayton Dumont (2003) emphasizes that, “any adequate definition of the sovereignty of minority cultures must include the right to assert uniqueness and difference through narrations of reality that differ from those of dominant societies” (109). And a basic aspect of decolonization is for indigenous peoples to accept responsibility for the fate of their ancestors. But for repatriation to truly commit to this decolonizing philosophy and re-claim sovereignty, repatriation activism must be framed within understandings and practices that arise from indigenous own knowledges. The significance of Haka Tere Tupuna to Rapanui repatriation efforts responds to this commitment.

Haka Tere Tupuna derives from epistemological and metaphysical foundations that are distinctive of Rapanui. These foundations give Haka Tere Tupuna its distinctiveness from other schools of thought. In the context of Kaupapa Māori, Linda Tuhiwai Smiths advances this argument contending that, “there is more to Kaupapa Maori than our history under colonialism or our desires to restore rangatiratanga. We have a different epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the ways we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask, and the solutions we seek. It is larger than the individuals in it and the specific ‘moment’ in which we are living” (2009: 230). By framing repatriation activism within Rapanui distinctive epistemological traditions, the RNRP critically engages dominant ideologies that serve to justify repatriation opposition.

Engaging with and criticizing hegemonic impositions from Rapanui understandings is

critical for Rapanui repatriation activism, in particular, and for decolonizing agendas, in general. Decolonization being a process of unveiling the ways in which colonization has influenced worldviews and social practices, it impacts on and contributes to the collective construction of what it means to be Rapanui today, destabilizing power dynamics that have historically privileged the colonizing forces. This awareness-raising mission and destabilizing struggle is integral to Rapanui repatriation activism. Taking for granted the legitimacy of Rapanui worldviews and epistemologies, the RNRP engages critically hegemonic discourses that protect museums as “ivory towers of exclusivity” (Anderson 2004: 1). In doing so, it challenges the privileged status that archaeologists, physical anthropologists and museum curators have long enjoyed through racist and discriminatory laws.

This critical engagement based on Rapanui theorizing also challenges the hegemonies that maintain the status quo of Chilean dominance and Rapanui subordination. I mentioned early that for the RNRP, the repatriation struggle does not end when a museum agrees to a repatriation. The greatest obstacles are faced back in Chile, when the government intends to impose its own regulations for the repatriation to take place. In the next chapter I further this argument presenting a brief discussion of the RNRP first repatriation case. A case still in progress, this discussion will go back to the argument that opened this dissertation, that of repatriation being delegitimized as an opportunistic indigenous political maneuver. Addressing the obstacles that the Chilean government has posited to this repatriation, this discussion will demonstrate how the allegedly retention of the body of the ancestors perpetuates colonial attitudes toward indigenous peoples and how the Chilean government, rather than the Rapanui, is politicizing repatriation, seeing in the head of an ancestor an opportunistic instrument to assert Chilean sovereignty in Rapa Nui.

**HEREĒDA RODO**  
**KA HAKA RODO MAI**

In my introduction to the first of these dialogues I mentioned that when I started collaborating in the creation of the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP), I asked my colleagues why the ancestors should come back. I presented one of such responses there. Later, we started working on a documentary about the work of RNRP. One of the questions I asked with the camera was what would they say to museum officials holding on to *ivi tupuna*, Rapanui ancestral remains. All messages coincided in one central point: they need their *mana* back. Also common to all responses was the stressing of museums as painful sites and repatriation as an opportunity for a cultural renaissance and joy. I close these dialogues with excerpts of some of their messages.

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**Javier Tuki:** The dead is as if he's more alive when dead than when living. That's why they made the *moai*, to remember them at all times and keep them alive. That's why [the moai] are called *Ariŋa Ora O Te Tupuna* [*RAP.* Living Face of the Ancestors]. They are the living face of our ancestors ... But then the European came. Contact with new religions and politics diminishes or interrupts all original energies of the original people, the *mo'a* and *tapu* [*RAP.* respect] of *ivi tupuna* that are buried in the *ahu*.

**Te Pou Huke:** We need those materials here, all of us. There are many of us who have had the chance to travel and see them. All what they convey about these experiences is a deep sadness,

also anger. That's the feeling I have too. Sadness, anger ... We want to have our heritage here because we are sorrowful; we are in a cultural shadow because of that too. We are working for the tourist; we are turning culture into a show, a show for the tourist.

**Pelayo Tuki:** The return of our ancestors is something that cannot be expressed enough. I would ask scientists to bring a hand to heart, close the eyes, and think. If [ivi tupuna] have contributed so much to science already, it is time to stop manipulating our ancestors, it is time to stop torturing them. We are waiting for them to return and welcome them with joy and afford them with dignifying funerary rituals and let them rest in peace.

**Tarita Alarcón:** It is time already that they return our ancestors to us, our ivi tupuna. It is time already that the cycles are concluded. Even if that means they disappear. We shouldn't be afraid of not knowing everything, of not having all answers. [More than answers] we need that symbiosis, that interaction; that confidence that what he thought and did will maintain him united to the people. There is this concept, "singularity." What makes an ivi tupuna different from other elements? That I and all people of my community, we singularize that ivi. We attribute them qualities that in turn make that some of their capabilities and attributes come back to us. We have a belief, which scientifically has been called "traditional." That belief says that ivi tupuna need to come back to Rapa Nui; they need to be in their land ... It is time already to come back to our own processes, to feel again. It is time for the mana to come back. It is striking when you are close to an ivi tupuna. It is a feeling you can't describe; an energy that comes from your feet up to your heart. And then you say, "*koro, maururu* [*RAP.* old man, thank you]. Here we remain; thanks for everything you've done."

**Te Pou Huke:** I'm very proud of my grandfather; what he gave me, my genealogy. He told me where I come from. And by telling me that, as a child, he showed that there is something else, something that belongs to you. For us, that is ahu Heki'i [i.e. his mata, ancestral land], from where they herded us here. So I tell museum officials that we do not need to advertise our culture. On the very contrary, we want to keep it and give those materials the real meaning they have and rebury our ivi tupuna. It is painful for us to know they are there. It is a sad feeling; it is the sadness of a people. So my message for them is that they give us back that what we need: our ivi tupuna. Otherwise it makes no sense that my grandfather taught me my genealogy; it makes no sense to have the ahu if we don't have the ivi inside them; it makes no sense the history we have ... They have enslaved our ancestors until the present day. It is so easy to say, "yes, that people need their mana, their *maramarama* [rap. knowledge]."

**Pau Hereveri:** [I tell them] that we are here, every Rapanui, waiting for that one day that will rain with no storm, no wind; that one day that will rain a beautiful rain of mana because the ancestors came back to Rapa Nui to be reburied in their home, their ahu, the origins from where they come and from where they were taken.

**Pelayo Tuki, Pablo Pau Hereveri, Javier Tuki,**

**Te Pou Huke, and Tarita Alarcón**

Rapa Nui, November 2013



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE LONG JOURNEY HOME: AN IN-PROGRESS CASE STUDY

To date, the Rapa Nui Repatriation Program (RNRP) has three repatriations in progress. One of these repatriations involves one ancestor, other involves three, and the last one almost three hundreds. The first one is at the most advanced staged among the three. Chile does not have a repatriation law; nor does it have any official policy regulating repatriations in any way. Nonetheless, because of Chilean legislation and the different protective statuses that apply to Rapa Nui, various offices need still to be engaged in the repatriation processes. Among them, the National Monuments Council is, according to Chilean law, the one that has a more decisive say on repatriation procedures. Accordingly, RNRP has maintained regular communication with this office during the entire process. Negotiations so far have been long and hard, the repatriating museum being very supportive yet the Council positing several obstacles. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that this repatriation will come to a good end. I close my dissertation on repatriation in Rapa Nui with a discussion on this first repatriation case. A case that is still in progress, some good-will confidentiality agreements are still in place. As not to jeopardize the negotiations, which have already been hard enough, I will refrain from exposing the names of individuals and institutions involved.

Conversations for this repatriation started in February 2014, in Los Angeles, CA during a talk organized by the Fowler Museum of UCLA that brought together several indigenous museum professionals. One of them was a curator from an overseas museum that, according to our research, had a Rapanui ancestor in its holdings. Thanks to mediation by a Fowler Museum's official, I was able to contact her beforehand and schedule a meeting during her brief stay. To

my surprise, she was not only the chief curator of indigenous collections in her museum but had also been the co-leader of her museum's repatriation program the past year. Eager to hear about Rapanui repatriation efforts, she was very attune to our request and provided sound advice. Upon her return, she passed our request on to her museum's repatriation advisory panel and the repatriation manager contacted me promptly. As an interlocutor between RNRP's advisory panel and the museum, I submitted an information request on their behalf. In response, the museum provided a report with all information they had on the Rapanui Tupuna, to which followed a formal repatriation request.

The next step was to research the journey of the ancestor. While the museum provided detailed information, they could only trace his journey back to the days the Tupuna was acquired by a British collector in an auction house in London, from whom the government of the museum's country acquired him a decade later. I continued this research as to find information regarding the first part of his journey, from Rapa Nui to the auction house. Researching the auction catalogue, I traced the Chilean collector to whom the original auctioned collection belonged. I contacted his closest lineal descendant and met with him at his home in Santiago de Chile. The grandson of the original collector, he had little information other than some auction catalogues. He however doubted that his grandfather, a prominent Chilean collector, had traveled to Rapa Nui himself. Rather, he said to think that he had obtained the Tupuna from Chilean sailors in the Chilean port of Valparaíso. Seeking confirmation, I consulted the National Archive of Chile finding no documentation connected to the collector. Contacting then the chief archivist, he confirmed this information. As to rule out that the collector had been to Rapa Nui himself, I consulted an expert on Chilean Navy's archives in Valparaíso. He found no record of this collector traveling to the Island.

At this stage I traveled to Rapa Nui to inform the Advisory Panel on the progress. Together we held a Vānaʻa to be in dialogue with the community about our conversations with museums. During this stay, the Advisory Panel decided that we contact the National Monuments Council to inform them about this repatriation in progress. Back in the mainland, I met with a Council official in a joint meeting with other government offices. From the latter we were requesting financial support to cover repatriation costs. For them to assess the request, they said, the repatriation needed to be approved by the Council. The Council official, on the other hand, said she would bring the request to the relevant commission as to determine whether the ancestor was subject to the law or not. Not receiving any notification, I requested an extraordinary session with the Rapa Nui Monuments Advisory Commission. Representatives of the Koro Oroŋo presented the case and requested the mediation of the Commission, who voted that the Council was to comply with RNRP's policy and declare its position and participation in this repatriation. Mediating on our behalf, the Technical Secretary of Rapa Nui Monuments presented the Council with the session minutes and a report detailing provenance research they requested from me.

The Council contacted me two months later with no definite answer. Rather, they requested further information. For them to determine the Council's stand and participation, they said, they needed a technical report of the individual, images, and the museum's repatriation policy stating whether they would repatriate the ancestor to the community, the museum, or the nation-state. I contacted the museum. They confirmed that all information on the Tupuna had been provided in their initial report and that no further research was to be carried out on him. After informing the Koro Oroŋo, I reported back to the Council. To date, three months after, we have yet not received any official notification.

The Council's assessment of the case is intended to determine whether the Tupuna is

subject to the National Monuments Act and relevant decrees. The law establishes that all national monuments are property of the nation-state and thus subject to the protection of the statute. The Council, however, still must determine whether the ancestor falls into the categories of national, archaeological or historical monument, if any. Three different scenarios might dictate such status: 1) for materials removed prior to 1925, the year when the 651 Decree of National Monuments was passed, the Council should not have any jurisdiction; 2) for materials removed between 1925 and 1935, the Council is still to determine its oversight since that period falls under a legal gap as a generic declaration of archaeological monuments was not yet pronounced; 3) for materials removed after 1935 the Council would have competency under the 4536 Decree of 1935, which declared the entire Island a historical monument. Although we have not yet been notified of the Council's decision, since the most likely scenario is that the ancestor left the country in 1939, the year of the auction in London, we expect that they will determine to have competency. Question remains what such competency will translate into in practice.

Based on previous conversations, we have reason to believe that the Council will intend to claim ownership over the Tupuna. Even though we were able to demonstrate that the ancestor left the country as part of a private collection with no control or knowledge by the Council whatsoever, some sections of the Council consider that upon return to the country, the ancestor will immediately acquire the category of archaeological monument. Such determination would result in the Council imposing its own regulations to the repatriation process, among them, that the ancestor enters the collections of the Rapanui museum as to protect his status quo as property of the nation-state. This decision would violate the policy of the Rapa Nui Repatriation policy, to which the Rapanui museum agreed. In lieu of the uncertainty of negotiations with the Council, I contacted the repatriating museum. Very attune to our concerns, they will bring the case to their

next Repatriation Advisory Panel meeting. Since this museum has a long history of successful repatriations, we are hopeful they will not only provide sound advice but also maintain a firm stand in ensuring that the Tupuna is repatriated back to his descendants. But even if they do so, obstacles might not end there.

In previous meetings, Council officials were very straightforward in warning us that reburials were to be assessed under Council's regulations. In 2007 the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) repatriated four ancestral remains to two communities proved to be culturally affiliated to the remains: the Atacameña Community of San Francisco de Chiu Chiu, in the Region of Antofagasta, and Aymara communities in the Region of Arica and Parinacota. Negotiations then were also long and hard, lasting five years and involving consultation with indigenous representatives, the National Monuments Council and the National Corporation for Indigenous Development. As to ensure that the ancestors were repatriated to their community, the NMAI requested that a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the museum and the Council, including an Addendum consisting in a convene between the Atacameña community of San Francisco de Chiu Chiu and the Council, where the Council agreed that the ancestors were repatriated directly to the community. The repatriation process culminated with the reburial of the ancestors. Based on this experience, the Council soon drafted a document intended to regulate future reburials.

A preliminary manual with conditions and instructions for the reburial of ancestral remains was drafted in 2007 and revised in 2009. The manual offers some guidelines as of when and how to rebury; all guidelines intended to protect, first, the nation-state property and, second, scientific interests. The document first states the role of the Council in the custodianship and protection, on behalf of the nation-state, of "goods" that have the status of national monument.

As national monuments, it then highlights burials and “anthro-archaeological pieces that exist on or underneath national territory” are the property of the nation-state. The document acknowledges the “special nature of human remains and the existence in people of specific sensibilities, perceptions and beliefs that make necessary, in specific cases, a reflection and openness to actions other than exhibition and access, including reburial.” Requests will be approved only when reburials are “fully compatible with scientific interests and the society’s will to access cultural goods” (CMN 2009: 1). Even though the document states explicitly that criteria and regulations apply only to new findings resulting from archaeological contexts and not to collections currently in museum holdings (2), Council officials informed us that reburials of repatriated Tupuna were to be assessed by the Council in a case-to-case basis and in accordance to these regulatory guidelines.

According to these regulations, the Council accepts cases for assessment only when requested by an indigenous legally recognized community and when affiliation to the remains is culturally and geographically demonstrated. Requests must prove the “legal and scientific need of reburial” (CMN 2009: 4). Prior reburial, claimants must provide an exhaustive physical anthropological report on the remains, including sampling for future analyses. Locations for reburial are to be proposed by the community but approved by the Council and ensuring that archaeological sites will not be altered or affected. When reburials are approved, “they must allow for the possibility of temporary exhumation of the remains for research and/or heritage purposes” (4). To this end, the document continues, reburials “must consider the covering of bioanthropological and cultural remains with materials that ensure their conservation” (5). Claimants are responsible for reburial costs, including those resulting from studies and documentation requested by the Council.

Concerned primarily about asserting nation-state rights over indigenous ancestors and protecting scientific interests, the Council's reburial regulations directly oppose the RNRP principles and policy. Demanding further studies and availability for future research on the remains, the guidelines not only ignore indigenous rights and interests on the fate of their ancestors but also show an absolute disregard and disrespect for indigenous values and relations. In theory, this working document arose as an allegedly intention to respect indigenous "specific sensibilities, perceptions and beliefs" and respond to communities' explicit desires. In practice, however, these regulations prevent descendants to afford their ancestors with appropriate funerary rituals, dictating the ways in which their bodies are to be reunited with the land. Further, these regulations violate descendants' will that their ancestors be let rest in peace, demanding that further research is conducted on them and that they remain available for future studies. In effect, this working document further reifies the authority that anthropologists and archaeologists hold over indigenous peoples' ancestors and their belongings. In doing so, it fosters the hegemonies that maintain the status quo of Chilean dominance and indigenous subordination by continuing to deny indigenous sovereignty on deciding the fate of their very own ancestors.

The Council's stand and its allegedly good-will to consider indigenous "sensitivities" should not be accepted uncritically. Here I borrow James Riding In's (2005) distinction of three basic schools of thought that come to bear on discussions over the disposition of ancestral remains. His analysis reflects on the implementation of NAGPRA in the U.S. and, in particular, on discussions over culturally unidentified human remains (CUHR). Bringing his analysis in broader terms to the Chilean context, it illuminates the politics under the Council's stand on this discussion.

The first camp that Riding In identifies is that one taking the position that all ancestral remains and funerary materials must be returned to the next of kin, or to a coalition of Native Americans, for proper reburial. Positioning himself as part of this camp, he claims that, “we emphasize that NAGPRA is Indian law, and that scientific grave looting is immoral, unethical, and illegal, as well as a desecration and a sacrilege” (59). The second school Riding In identifies, he calls it “the scientific establishment.” Subscribers to this camp oppose the repatriation and reburial of ancestral remains contending that in burying ancestral remains data necessary for unveiling the so-called mysteries of the past would be destroyed. These archaeologists, physical anthropologists, museum curators, and professional organizations often ridicule repatriation activists as “irrational religious fundamentalists who hold antiscience perspectives” (59). In light of this school, the looting of ancestral remains occurred legally and their scientific interest on them overrides any ethical or legal claims raised by indigenous peoples. The third school, Riding In explains, “advocates a compromise between Indians and science” (60). Subscribers to this camp contend that human remains should be subjected to scientific study before they are reburied. “Like their counterparts in group two,” Riding In continues, “they often accept the Western worldview of the origins of life ... [and] want Indigenous Peoples to accept their views as well” (60). Only when they do, subscribers to this school will release the ancestors.

In its declared intention to comply with indigenous peoples’ wishes insofar they are “fully compatible with scientific interests,” the Council’s position corresponds to this third school. They stand for holding the ancestors hostage until their descendants comply with scientists’ desires. The RNRP responds to the Council’s stand firmly. First, it demands that all repatriated Tupuna be returned directly to the community, with no conditions or imposed regulations. Second, the program asserts that Ivi Tupuna are not property of the nation-state but



the ancestors of the Rapanui nation, and that institutions and collectors acquired them by acts of theft. Third, this program stresses that scientific grave looting is immoral, unethical, and illegal, as are the Council's demands that further scientific studies are conducted on the ancestors. Finally, this program asserts that since the Council permitted the theft of the ancestors in the first place, it has no moral stand whatsoever to impose regulations for their return and/or reburial. Attempts to do so will be fought by this program as a direct violation to Rapanui sovereignty and human rights.

At the time I write this report, we cannot know the final outcome of these negotiations. We are rather hopeful that they will come to a good end and the Tupuna will return to his descendants under the terms of the RNRP, who acts on behalf of the Rapanui community. Hopeful, we cannot ignore the hostile position that the Council has held so far, resting on racist legislation and dominant ideologies that serve to continue to marginalize indigenous peoples and deny them sovereignty and fundamental human rights. Well aware and critical of the politics behind the Council's position, the program's Koro Oroño has maintained a patient and passive stand, entrusting me to represent them in conversations with the Council. A sign of goodwill and convinced of the potentials of repatriation to create ongoing relations of ethical understanding and respect, this panel is willing to maintain this position. They are also decided to intervene firmly if the Council does not show a sign of equal respect and goodwill. The Koro Oroño has sought legal advice and built international collaboration with repatriation activists and experts worldwide. And more fundamentally, they continue to demand that Rapanui values and philosophies are kept at the center of negotiations, challenging dominant hegemonies and structural inequalities that perpetuate the subordinate positioning of Rapanui.

The Chilean government has signaled its intention to politicize repatriation, seeing in

the head of an ancestor an opportunistic instrument to assert Chilean sovereignty in Rapa Nui. A statement that they would never declare openly, government officials conceal this intention under the shield of science: the ancestors of a people are to be protected and preserved for scientific interest. While the scientific appeal assumes here the culturally familiar and seductive voice of reason and development, the ethical and rightful demands of descendants are deemed as antiscience, thus irrational, fundamentalists and development-obstructive. The scientific appeal, then, is not to be accepted un-problematically. Its dangers are directly associated with the way in which science is constructed to promote the reification of Western thought, which in turn perpetuates the status quo of Chilean dominance and Rapanui subordination.

The scientific appeal being at the heart of the repatriation debate, I conclude this study on the repatriation movement in Rapa Nui with a discussion on the interventionary and transformative potential of academic research. Contrary to the imagery that repatriation-opponents have constructed, repatriation activism is not an antiscience irrational fundamentalism. Rather, it relies entirely on rigorous research, one that has critically engaged, reconstructed and reclaimed science to work for the interests of indigenous people. I advance this argument in the following concluding chapter, where I contend that theory and academic research are important sites of struggle for indigenous people. That repatriation-opponents ridicule repatriation emancipatory, culturally safe research as antiscience or irrational preserves the privileges they have long enjoyed through racist theories and laws. When governed by decolonizing philosophies and developed from theoretical understandings and practices that arise out of indigenous own knowledges, research becomes a powerful means to destabilize power relations and assert indigenous self-determination.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **DECOLONIZING RESEARCH**

The central problem addressed in this dissertation arises from the recognition that Rapanui understandings of Ivi Tupuna or ancestral remains conflict dramatically with the widespread understanding held by non-indigenous, both scientists and beyond. For Rapanui Ivi Tupuna have an ontological status. They are the ancestors, to whom they relate by genealogies in a relation that connects the living and the dead with their history, land and knowledges. In contrast, non-indigenous usually consider Ivi Tupuna as mere objects, which only importance is symbolic. For many, they are valuable specimens for understanding the mysteries of the past; for others they are archaeological residues, “monuments” that feed the nationalistic greed. In these views, Ivi Tupuna have no inherent value: they have no real connection with living Rapanui nor ontological significance in their present lives. Repatriation opponents hold this understanding.

This conflict in how Rapanui and repatriation opponents understand the ontological status of Ivi Tupuna is a major problem embedded with immoral historical values and impacting the cultural and legal present of the Rapa Nui nation. Repatriation opponents representing the interests of Western science and colonial powers, they continue and assert their extensive history of appropriating ancestors, living materials, and knowledges from the indigenous peoples over whom they have exerted violence and dominance for centuries. In this dissertation I have discussed this problem from the particular lens of repatriation because this movement effectively reveals the conflict between ontological and objectifying views of indigenous ancestors and the knowledges associated with them. First, repatriation activists have been particularly eloquent in asserting the destructive consequences of Western misinterpretation and appropriation of

indigenous ancestors, living materials and knowledges. Second, the repatriation of ancestors and ceremonial materials have helped indigenous communities around the globe maintain and revitalize their traditional systems of knowing and relating, re-connecting peoples with their histories and self-knowledges. Third, the repatriation movement has urged a new paradigm for the careful dealing of indigenous ancestors and living materials, rethinking the scientific endeavor and opening a space for a new generation of collaboration based on greater understanding and respect. This conflict between ontological and objectifying views expands to the broader field of indigenous studies, the repatriation lens working here as a microcosm revealing its grave consequences to indigenous peoples and their cultures.

Repatriation revisits the history and impact of both material and immaterial collecting. It calls for the readdressing and reassessment of the exchange, appropriation and simple theft of indigenous ancestors, living materials and knowledges. Stressing that these practices were immoral and illegal, it also demands their restitution. In his study of the commoditization of Blackfoot religions, Kenneth Lokensgard (2010) discusses the collection of medicine bundles with special attention to immaterial exchanges between scholars and Blackfeet. From the analysis of these immaterial market Lokensgard explains the deep consequences that the collecting and commoditization of medicine bundles had for the Blackfoot nations. His study based on the ontological difference between gift- and commodity-based exchange of the bundles, Lokensgard explains that, “even when indigenous ceremonial materials are only ‘exchanged’ into scholarly literature, a completely immaterial exchange, they lose their personhood” (2010: 156). Lokensgard connects this loss with scholars’ repeatedly characterization of living materials as symbolic objects and their rejection to consider their personhood from the views of the people they purport to understand and represent. When scholars objectify these materials, they

objectivize indigenous peoples and their cultures. In Lokensgard's view, they also commoditize them. He contends that the economic activity of the scholarship market has historically been unidirectional, yet this trend is shifting.

Scholars are recognizing that they must act more generously and ethically toward those who grant them access to their cultures and knowledges. And even if scholars do not recognize this need, their indigenous collaborators and colleagues will surely remind them of it. Increasingly, indigenous peoples and scholars are critically aware of and honest about interpretive impositions. This shift in scholarly attitudes is usually attributed to two intellectual trends. One is the postmodern school. Early articulated in James Clifford and George Marcus's edited *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986), this trend promotes a philosophical awareness of how epistemologies and identities differ between individuals and groups. The second one is the postcolonial school. This trend urges a critical, reflexive meta-discourse on the representation of indigenous and colonized peoples and thought in the academia. An early example displaying postcolonial sensibilities and philosophies is Vine Deloria's "Commentary: Research, Redskins, and Reality" (1991). I attribute this shift to one more intellectual trend, the decolonizing school. Advanced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith and articulated in her *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), this trend asserts the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and promotes research as a site of struggle contributing to indigenous peoples' decolonizing agendas. This trend based on the interventionary potential of indigenous knowledges, I contend that this shift in the social sciences did not happen because of academic epiphanies but because of indigenous people's prolonged and committed activism and critical engagement of power relations.

Common to the postmodern, postcolonial and decolonizing schools is a critique of the academic notion of history as universal, patriarchal and assumed innocent. In Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999: 29-31) critique, the discipline of history is a totalizing discourse in the form of a coherent narrative that tells the story of the development of humanity chronologically. As a totalizing discourse, the academic idea of history assumes the possibility of including all known knowledge into a logical, articulated whole. In this view, history is universal, which accepts the existence of fundamental characteristics that all cultures share and which development is of historical interest. The premise that history is about development entails the assumption that societies progress in stages of development "as a child grows into a fully developed adult human being" (30), where the history of indigenous peoples occupies the first stages of development, regarded as primitive, simple, and emotional. Integral to this notion of history is its construction around binary categories. The historian needs to find a certain point of beginning, which all too often is attached to the idea of Western discovery. Everything before that moment is pre-historical. The pre-contact history of indigenous peoples is thus not history but fantastic, primitive myths and tales.

The postmodern, postcolonial and decolonizing schools have responded critically to this primitivist view of indigenous histories embracing an ontological turn in the social sciences. The postmodern school has promoted the de-hegemonization of ethnographic representations from an intersubjective approach that problematizes the researcher's authoritative position. Yet very effective in urging the ontological turn of social sciences as to more truthfully represent indigenous histories and knowledges, the post-modern intersubjective approach is often too centered in the researcher, sometimes resulting in obsessive accounts of self-knowledge deliriums. The post-colonial school has promoted a critical, reflexive revisiting of the

representation of indigenous and colonized peoples and thought in the academia. The intersubjective approach here is centered on the analysis of power relations. Yet very effective in denouncing the destructive impact of colonization on indigenous cultures, by staying theoretical and reactive, post-colonial theories have often failed to make a positive change in the lives of indigenous peoples. Provoking such change is the principle governing the decolonizing school. The intersubjective approach here is centered on indigenous knowledges, the framework of decolonizing theories. With an emancipatory and empowering agenda that privileges positive action over reactive theory, decolonizing theories acknowledge the transformative and interventionary power of indigenous knowledges and complement them with critical theory for explicit social justice purposes.

Although now claimed by post-modern and post-colonial theories, the critique of history has always been integral to indigenous ways of knowing. An argument advanced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), she contends that the notion of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past is “very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing” (33). These contested accounts are stored through indigenous systems of knowledge, within genealogies, the landscape, weavings and carvings, even personal names. “Many of these systems,” Smith stresses, “have since been reclassified as oral *traditions* rather than histories” (33). In her sharp revision Smith asserts that history, in the terms that academic disciplines have promoted it, is of no use to indigenous peoples. The story of the powerful, how they became powerful and how they use that power to dominate others, history is the reification of the power relations that have excluded, marginalized and “othered” indigenous peoples. To serve decolonizing agendas, history is to be revisited from the intersection of indigenous approaches to the past, the modernist history project itself and the resistance strategies. Critiquing the

marginalization of indigenous histories and knowledges, Smith situates research as a site of resistance.

Reclaiming research from indigenous understandings and for indigenous interests can effectively challenge the status quo of Western domination and indigenous subordination. In this dissertation I have argued that science is not to be accepted un-problematically. Advancing a positivistic framing of the world that conflicts with indigenous ways of thinking, science has been constructed in a way that promotes the reification of Western thought. Indigenous communities have thus often held an anti-academic stance. In his articulation of the challenges to protect indigenous knowledges, Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2009) highlights that indigenous peoples' distrust of academics, research and institutions "is well founded and relates to a history of hurt, humiliation, and exploitation that has been perpetrated by some institutions and academics, with disastrous outcomes for some people" (213). An example of this history is the race paradigm informing the development of anthropology as an academic discipline, which turned the genocide of indigenous peoples into a scientific need. An example of how academics and institutions have perpetrated this history is their rejection to return the ancestors that were desecrated to feed racist theories and imperial expansion. Very well founded, this distrust has also been directed at indigenous academics and often resulted in even more hermetic research, disengaged researchers and misinformed communities. One of his highlighted challenges, Smith calls for rather than dismissing all intellectual contributions as being unworthy and problematic, seeking out "those whose work is supportive and useful and ensuring that they are able to contribute to the struggle with appropriate support and guidance from the community" (214). In so doing, indigenous peoples are moving forward toward reclaiming research and protecting indigenous knowledges.



Reclaiming research to serve indigenous interests means acknowledging the transformative power of indigenous knowledges and the interventionary potential of theory. The anti-intellectual stance of some communities is connected to a dismissing of theory. The anti-theory position is often justified on the ground that theory is a Western colonizing apparatus that serves to keep indigenous peoples oppressed. Here I take on another of Smith's challenges to demystify the assumed revolutionary action behind the anti-intellectual stance: theory and academic research are rather important sites of struggle for indigenous peoples. Such call, Smith clarifies, does not mean that indigenous peoples should "take for granted that existing Western-oriented theories are at the centre ... [but] to develop theoretical understandings and practices that arise out of our own indigenous knowledge" (2009: 214). Also, Smith calls for not turning away from theories developed elsewhere: "We ought to be open to using any theory and practice with emancipatory relevance to our Indigenous struggle" (214). Theory, following Smith, is critical in organizing struggle and transformative action by developing sound critiques and effective interventions to crisis situations.

Reclaiming research from indigenous theoretical frameworks opens up a space for critically engaging Western theory and thus challenging the hegemonies it promotes. This engagement comes with a transformation of research methodologies. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) contends that, "to hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges" (34). Access to alternative knowledges can provide the basis for alternative ways of doing things. This premise explains the concept of decolonizing and culturally safe research I have used throughout this dissertation. A research model with an emancipatory agenda, decolonizing research is a culturally safe research that is related to being indigenous, that is connected to indigenous philosophies, that takes for granted the legitimacy of indigenous knowledges and the importance

of indigenous language and culture, and that is concerned with the struggle for self-determination.

Decolonizing research is committed to decolonize Western methodologies by criticizing and demystifying the ways in which Western science and the modern academy have been part of the colonial apparatus. To ensure that indigenous values and philosophies are kept at the center of the research project, its methodologies are structured around cultural protocols and relations. A research model that asserts the transformative power of indigenous knowledges, stresses the interventionary potential of theory, and complies with indigenous values, decolonizing research is committed to affirming indigenous sovereignty over research carried out on indigenous peoples, their lands, histories and knowledges. In decolonizing research, the academy has been thus critically engaged, not simply dismissed. Theory and methodologies have been reflexively reconstructed and reclaimed from indigenous frameworks and protocols as to work for the interests of indigenous peoples rather than against them.

Non-indigenous scholars often criticize decolonizing research as exclusionary. I think those holding this position are simply too afraid of loosing the privileges they have long enjoyed through racist theories and laws. Decolonizing research does not exclude non-indigenous academics. Rather, it demands us further commitment and responsibility. The challenge for advocates of decolonizing theories and methodologies is to find pathways that offer honest opportunities for the transformation of what Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2009: 213) has called indigenous “crisis circumstances.” This challenge requires researchers a greater level of accountability in the development of transformative outcomes for the communities we claim to be serving. If we are genuinely producing scholarship that aims to serve a community, then the

community will be part of the entire process, not simply an ornament of a master plan developed outside, imposing alien terms and understandings.

I close this study on the repatriation movement with this revision of research as a site of resistance because repatriation effectively reveals the tension between authoritative and emancipatory research philosophies. The dispute over the dead is very much a dispute over research: who is entitled to research, what is to be researched, and how research is to be conducted. These “skull wars” are a knowledge war (Thomas 2001). Repatriation opponents advocate for the maintenance of the status quo of Western science supremacy over indigenous knowledges. They promote that history remains intact in the continued marginalization of indigenous peoples so they can keep their privileges unquestioned. Repatriation activists are acting upon that history. I hope this dissertation can contribute to the struggle of these activists whose prolonged and committed work I acknowledge and respect. I hope this dissertation can also contribute to the dialogue between all scholars interested in the engaged and responsible study of indigenous peoples, their cultures, relations, and knowledges. Ultimately, I hope my work can assist the ancestors of the Rapa Nui nation to come back home.

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