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Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours:  
On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Culture and Performance

by

Jacinta Arthur de la Maza

2012

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours:  
On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations

by

Jacinta Arthur de la Maza

Master of Arts in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor David Delgado Shorter, Chair

This ethnography presents a study of Rapanui worldviews and examines land-being relations in Rapa Nui from both ontological and historical perspectives. Informed by Rapanui oral traditions, I provide a preliminary exploration of Rapanui ontological concepts in relation to the land in order to explain how they are fundamental to understand the political history of this South Pacific Island and its problematic relation with the Chilean nation-state. I present this exploration from an intersubjective approach that integrates Rapanui hermeneutics into the scholarly discourse. In doing so, this ethnography problematizes the primitivization of indigenous peoples by a scholarly tradition that has often depersonalized land as well as dichotomized social realities through the imposition of its own modernist ontological assumptions. By asserting the validity and complexity of Rapanui forms of knowledge, this

ethnography aims to contribute to the Rapanui work of decolonization by articulating Rapanui arguments on land-being relations beyond simplistic representations of Rapanui “spirituality” and more as efficacious discourses of resistance.

The thesis of Jacinta Arthur de la Maza is approved.

Peter Nabokov

Mary Nooter Roberts

David Delgado Shorter, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
On the Thesis	1
Preview	1
Notes on Methodology	7
On the Place	13
Rapa Nui	13
Polynesian Discovery and Colonization of <i>Te Pito O Te Kaiḡa</i>	16
Early Encounters and Western Discovery	17
Slave Raids and the Missionaries	19
The Annexation to the Republic of Chile and Chilean Neocolonialism in Rapa Nui	20
CHAPTER 1. On Rapanui Ontology: Land, Language and Being in Rapa Nui	24
He Kaiḡa   The Land	24
He Vanaḡa   The Language	34
He Tupuna   Beyond Human and Other-than-Human Persons	47
CHAPTER 2. Living Among <i>Atua</i> , <i>Tupuna</i> and <i>Varua</i> : From Animism to Relational Epistemology	56
Papa Mo'a Ariki   Ko Pae Rati Ko Taḡaroa	57
Papa Mo'a Taḡata   Ko Uho Te Uka and Ko Moko A Raḡi Roa	66
Papa Mo'a Varua   Ko Kuha Ko Rati, Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu'a	77
CHAPTER 3. A Site of Resistance: The Politics of Rapanui Worldviews	92

The Ancestral Law   Distribution of the Land by Hotu A Matu’a	93
Ancestral Law Disrupted   Colonialism in Rapa Nui	102
The Missionaries and Dutrou-Bornier	102
The Annexation to the Republic of Chile and the Company Period	105
María Añata’s Movement of 1914	108
The Navy Period and Alfonso Rapu’s movement	117
Neo-colonialism in Rapa Nui   Towards Self-determination	124
CONCLUSION	136
AFTERWORD. The MA Thesis as Foundation for the PhD Dissertation	142
Moving Forward: The Path Towards Decolonization and the Repatriation Debate	143
The “Reburial Issue”: An Ongoing Debate	148
Chile’s Position in the Debate	151
Repatriation as a Phenomenon Tied to Colonization	157
APPENDIX I. About the Main Collaborators	164
APPENDIX II. Timeline of Rapanui History	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	175



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*Hai here e hai mo'a kia korua ta'a to'a, mai roto nui o to'oku mahatu te maururu nei.*

## INTRODUCTION

### On the Thesis

#### *Preview*

This ethnography presents a study of Rapanui ontological concepts in relation to the land from an intersubjective perspective that explores Rapanui worldviews as a relational epistemology in which the people and the land become inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos. An intersubjective approach to the study of how Rapanui people think of and relate to the land not only involves a reconsideration of the previous objectivist scholarship but also contributes to the Rapanui work of decolonization. Rapanui worldviews are integral to the present political context of Rapa Nui<sup>1</sup>, to their struggles towards reclaiming their right to the land and self-determination, and to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state. By studying Rapanui land from an intersubjective approach this ethnography revises academic and historical misinterpretations and mistranslations that contribute to the perpetuation of colonialism in Rapa Nui. This ethnography examines the Rapanui concepts of land, language and being, drawing upon examples of oral traditions that illuminate such ideas and provide the means to refigure the concept of animism as a relational epistemology that connects the Rapanui people to the land. This theoretical revision begins to explore how Chilean colonialism in Rapa Nui altered those relations as a means to assert its sovereignty and how the Rapanui people sees in the restoration of those relations an effective site of resistance to fight Chilean neo-colonialism and reclaim control over the land that was taken from them.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the etymologic dictionary and grammar of Rapanui language elaborated by the Commission for the Structure of Rapanui language (2000; 1996), I use *Rapa Nui* as a noun, referring to the island, and *Rapanui* as an adjective (e.g Rapanui people, Rapanui language, Rapanui oral traditions, etc.).

By integrating Rapanui's own concepts and hermeneutics into the academic discourse this ethnography presents a case study that problematizes previous objectivist and animist approaches to the study of indigenous worldviews. "Animism" is a highly charged concept that echoes racist trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth anthropological and archaeological thought. Developed by Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871), animism was defined as a dogmatic belief in souls or spirits proper to "the lower races" (Tylor 1871: 109). Broadly, Tylor presented animism as a fundamental antithetic to science. Animistic beliefs were in his view wrong ideas resulting from mental confusion. Following Nurit Bird-David's (1999) conversations on animism and relational epistemology, this thesis provides a case study proposing that the Rapanui are not animists for they do not dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as rocks or ordinary animals. My thesis posits that the Rapanui understand the world and their *being* in-the-world through a relational epistemology that makes them conscious of the relatedness between them and persons of the other-than-human class that actively participate in a diversified world and whose differences they absorb in the construction of a unified cosmos. By grounding this ethnography in Rapanui concepts and hermeneutics, I significantly move the ethnographic approach away from objectivism and toward what might best be called an intersubjective ethnography.

The theoretical revision this ethnography presents defies the primitivization of indigenous peoples by a scholarly tradition that has often depersonalized land and dichotomized social realities through the imposition of its own modernist ontological assumptions. In doing so this study refigures those ontological assumptions presenting an exploration of Rapanui worldviews as worlds of engaged being and relational ways of knowing as a means to counteract the perpetuation of colonization that the academic primitivization of indigenous peoples entails. In

her analysis of the relationships between knowledge, research and imperialism, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains how those relationships have come to structure indigenous ways of knowing first through the education of “native” intellectuals and later through the development of academic disciplines. The knowledge gained through the colonization of indigenous peoples, Smith (1999: 58-9) argues, has been used in turn to colonize their minds, a colonization that is perpetuated through their primitivization by academic disciplines. By asserting the validity and complexity of Rapanui forms of knowledge, this ethnography contributes to the decolonization of the field of Rapa Nui studies. In reconsidering previous objectivist scholarship this ethnography integrates Rapanui ways of knowledge and instead of translating them into objectivist terms explains them through the Rapanui’s hermeneutics.

By revising previous scholarship and exploring Rapanui worldviews based on Rapanui concepts of land-being relations, my work also contributes to the Rapanui work of decolonization for Rapanui worldviews are organic to the present political context of Rapa Nui and to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state. As this study demonstrates, the relations between Rapa Nui and Chile have been historically based on mistranslations and misinterpretations. In her study of the (re)construction of Rapanui identity, Riet Delsing interprets these mistranslations as a means of the Chilean nation-state to assert its political, cultural and economic hegemony on the island in both discourse and practice (2009: 78). I agree with Delsing in that these mistranslations are an expression of colonial power that explains why the Chilean government has not been able to create an environment of cooperation in Rapa Nui but rather one of resistance. While colonial power and the disenfranchising of indigenous peoples operated by distorting their worldviews and transforming the very way they think about who they are, the work of decolonization finds its most effective form in the

restoration of that disruption and the finding of an empowered voice that comes with the need of remembering who they actually are. Rapanui people are gradually engaging in that process of decolonization, which is visible in the emergence of revitalizing movements that seek to awaken the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse towards self-determination. This national discourse is grounded in Rapanui worldviews and their relations to the land and the universe, presenting an argument that effectively empowers them for it results in being extremely difficult for Chile to understand and deal with. Through the exploration of Rapanui worldviews this ethnography articulates the arguments in which Rapanui discourses of decolonization are founded, presenting them as a critical site of resistance for the Rapanui nation.

This thesis examines Rapanui worldviews to begin to explore how they can explain the present political situation of the Rapanui nation. In Chapter One I introduce the concepts of land, language and being, which I argue are fundamental to understand Rapanui worldviews and the present struggles of the Rapanui people to reclaim control over their cultural heritage. In the first section I examine the Rapanui concept of *kaiŋa* (*RAP.* land) as the result of the actions of the ancestors, who transformed a landscape into a cultural geography. To illustrate this argument I draw upon examples of the Rapanui origin myth, which emphasizes the idea of landscape as both shaping and being shaped by history. In the second section I explore the Rapanui concept of *vananŋa* (*RAP.* language) and the understanding of language as generative, which refers to the idea that the world emerges from language and the interaction of humans, other-than-human beings and the environment. To make this argument I identify and exemplify different categories of Rapanui narrative forms to highlight the agency that Rapanui people attribute to the spoken word. Finally, in the third section I explore Rapanui notions of being by identifying and defining



the different categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) shaped by creating a cultural landscape they named Te Pito O Te Kaiā.

This exploration of Rapanui worldviews is expanded in Chapter Two where I discuss how the three categories I introduced in Chapter One relate to each other. As a means to situate this discussion within the terrain of the present and the concrete, I illustrate the relationships between land, language and being by drawing upon examples of Rapanui petroglyphs and their associated histories, which I transcribe and discuss in detail. The chapter focuses on examples of three types of petroglyphs I have termed *Papa Mo'a Ariki*, *Papa Mo'a Tanata* and *Papa Mo'a Varua* as a means to highlight the person category to which they relate, namely *ariki* (*RAP.* king), *tanata* (*RAP.* human) and *varua* (*RAP.* “omnipersons”), respectively. Through the exploration of these different types of petroglyphs and their associated histories I discuss how petroglyphs enable knowledge, memory and intersubjectivity, and how the present generation of Rapanui think their land and relate to other beings that dwell on it, as well as how they express this thinking and interactions through language. In this discussion I revise theories of animism to propose Rapanui worldviews no longer as animistic but as epistemologically relational where people produce and reproduce sharing relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others. Opposing the objectification and primitivization of the study of ontologies by animist theories, in this chapter I discuss how the Rapanui self is cognitively orientated to a world of subjects other than the self where these relationships are crystallized, making the self to become structured through a diversified world of human and non-human beings.

In Chapter Three I examine how colonialism disrupted Rapanui ancestral law and the order that law established with regard to the land, and how the neo-colonial present of Rapa Nui is witnessing a revitalization of Rapanui identity that seeks to restore that order through a national

discourse that speaks to Rapanui worldviews with an emphasis on the relations with the land. For these purposes, I first explain how the land was originally distributed according to the worldviews examined throughout the previous chapters; and then I discuss how colonialism broke these ontologically established patterns of residency. Then, I briefly refer to three main uprisings that have taken place in the island in claims of the Rapanui's right to their land. The first of these movements was led by María Añata and dates from 1914. Referred to as "The Prophetess," María Añata founded her movement in visions she would have received from God. The doubt remains if hers was a subversive strategy to fight the colonizer in his own language or if it simply accounts for the efficacy of colonial mechanisms to colonize indigenous minds. The second movement was led by Rapanui elementary school teacher Alfonso Rapu in 1963. Trained in Chile, Alfonso Rapu is an example of the figure of the colonized intellectual that seeks to create a moment of disturbance to awake the people by reminding them who they actually are. In examining his movement I discuss the complexities of the colonized intellectual when her/his discourse of remembering is biased by western ideals. Finally, in this chapter I refer to the present revitalizing movement that is taking place in the island today. Led by the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (SPA. Rapa Nui Parliament), this movement seeks to awake the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse that aims to restore the order that colonization disrupted. By revising these movements, I will discuss how Rapanui worldviews are organic to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state, who has historically committed abuses to the Rapanui people in the name of sovereignty.

## *Notes on Methodology*

This study is a result of seven years of research in Rapa Nui, of conducting regular and intensive fieldwork, and of actively collaborating with members of the Rapanui community in a variety of research projects. This ethnography is also a result of long-term personal relations with Rapanui people and, as such, it does not intend to be an objective study of a pristine indigenous thought. Rather, I ground this ethnography in intersubjective relations that have come to make me aware of the difficulties of ethnographic work. I first visited the island at the age of twenty and began my ethnographic work through informal research projects with Rapanui friends. Most of the ontological and relational concepts this thesis deals with I learned them in my everyday life in Rapa Nui. I learned about them chatting with people while working as a waitress in a restaurant in Haja Roa, talking with friends in innumerable fish barbecues, living with my adoptive Rapanui family. I learned about them in picnics and camps in the *campo* (*SPA*, countryside), listening to storytelling, singing, riding, dancing, fishing, partying. And I experienced them in these same ways. When in those barbecues my friends would throw the fish spines to the fire to feed the *varua* (*RAP*. “spirits”), when in those camps the family would ask for permission to the protector *varua* of the place, when my adoptive mother would tell me off for pronouncing the wrong word in the wrong place, when someone would explain why I had that dream when I slept in that place. This ethnography then does not intend to present *a* Rapanui worldview but a collage of Rapanui voices, sometimes harmonic, some others contradictory, never pristine though always speaking to a living community strongly tied to their land.

Shaped and informed by these personal relationships and experiences of a shared time in a shared space, this ethnography resulted from a methodology that acknowledges the bodily nature of fieldwork, the performativity of the ethnographic work as a means to reach

intersubjectivity, and the efficacy of the dialogical ethnographic mode to de-hegemonize ethnographic authority. Based on these concepts my methodologies are informed substantially by the works of James Clifford (1988), Dwight Conquergood (1991) and Johannes Fabian (1996, 2001), which propose communication as a constitutive and fundamental process of doing ethnography. Both Conquergood and Fabian present their arguments from a dialogical rhetoric that advocates for the transition from monologue to dialogue (Conquergood 1991: 182) as a condition for ethnography to become a productive confrontation (Fabian 2001: 25). Adhering to their proposals I developed a methodology that impugns traditional approaches to the other-as-a-theme to propose rather the other-as-an-interlocutor. Not working with passive informants but with collaborators, this ethnography acknowledges their contributions as agents of communication that actively take part of the ethnographic process. Fabian deepens this idea in his study “Beyond the Written and the Oral: Performance and the Production of History” (1996) where he stresses the ideas of production, intersubjectivity, and shared time to argue for an ethnographer that is now a subject herself.

Acknowledging that cultural knowledge gained through ethnographic work is not only informative but also performative, my collaborators and I became all participatory agents of the performance of ethnography itself as being ethnographers and subjects at once. In our collaborative work we paid special attention to the pragmatic aspects of the ethnographic experience, in Fabian’s words, to the “intrusions of materiality as precious glimpses on the working of intersubjectivity in the production of knowledge” (Fabian 1996: 251). Knowledge gained through formal interviews in elders’ homes in Haḡa Roa deeply differed from that knowledge that came to us in eternal discussions at my closest collaborators’ homes, at social gatherings, at horse excursions to the sites. Questions were framed differently and concerns were

voiced differently even if talking about the same story, person or place. In his tackling of the problem of the ethnographer who wishes to represent cultural synthesis in an account whose coherence results neither from imposition, nor from reduction, nor from a “poetic,” metaphorical interpretation, Fabian comes up with performance as a notion that allows the ethnographer to connect the proverbial speech with “the production of a theatrical play” (Fabian 1996: 247), understood both as the basis of an ethnography of power. Through the performance of our joint ethnographic work, my collaborators and I are aiming to join metonymically and contiguously, politics, worldviews and popular culture as practice and the practice of ethnographic presentation.

To explain this last point let me first introduce the main collaborators of this ethnography. When I began doing ethnographic research in Rapa Nui I worked closely with well-known elders, spokespersons, and leaders of cultural groups, all respected people among the community considered authoritative voices with experience working with researchers. During that same time I became aware of the suspicions among the Rapanui community about researchers, who as they would say make money by writing lies about their culture. Along with those suspicions, a more complicated problem I found was that those previous works that for some Rapanui misrepresented them were permeating the discourse of some other Rapanui who were speaking precisely through those misrepresentations. I found these problematic voices more often in those supposedly authoritative and official Rapanui spokespersons and culture brokers. So, slowly, I began to get closer to a more traditional sector of the population, less official though more sincere to the knowledge I was seeking. Being very protective about their heritage and knowledge, my adoptive family, my friends and my experience on the island helped me to reach them, but it did not happen immediately.

In 2009 I met Piru Huki, a respected political and environmental activist in the island with an outspoken anti-Chilean sentiment. As an activist she has worked with the United Nations on issues of indigenous politics and cultural heritage protection. As an ethnographer, she has actively researched Rapanui toponymy, rock art, and museum collections. Incited by Piru I began to work with Moi Moi Tuki, whom I had known from before because of family connections though I did not begin to work with him until 2010. Moi Moi is a respected artist and culture keeper, considered by the community to be as knowledgeable as only a few still living elders are. As an ethnographer, Moi Moi has been consistently researching oral traditions. In 2011 I began working with Te Pou Huke, the most recognized Rapanui artist. Likewise Moi Moi, Te Pou has been devoted to the collection and study of oral traditions, being close and talking to the elders. As part of his ethnographic work he records these oral traditions through his art, a practice that has led him to produce an astonishing visual archive of Rapanui history. Through these collaborations this thesis presents Rapanui voices that are rarely heard through a unique jointly ethnographic work that combines politics, oral tradition and visual culture.

From our different positions we experimented with methodologies that paid special attention to the performativity of the ethnographic work, in Fabian's terms, to the pragmatics of the ethnographic experience. With Piru we would study the politics of the relations between land and worldviews through extreme road trips, as she termed them, "a lo *tupuna*," in the ancestral ways. "You want to know about the *tupuna*," she would say, "then you live as one." So we traveled the island on horses, sleeping in caves, and fishing to eat. In these trips I learned about place-names, history and politics, also about how people like Piru relate to the land and interact with it. In these trips I could experience how she thinks of herself, her ancestors and her land as participatory agents of one unified cosmos. Through these experiences I could truly understand

the political and ontological importance she and other Rapanui attribute to land claim conflicts. With Moi Moi we traveled the island in a very different way. For extra income he offers exclusive tours to which he would take me as a translator. Depending on the stage of my research he would modify these tours to visit the places where the histories that we were studying happened. These trips took the form of a kind of history class *in situ* where the adding of a third party, the tourist, would allow us to also discuss the economic politics of history. A different sort of conversation were those held at his house in the *'uta* (*RAP.* countryside) where he lives now with his wife and their children and lived once with Te Pou and Retu Tepano, also collaborator in this research. There we continued revising oral traditions and Moi Moi's memories of the times he lived with Te Pou and Retu when they left the town and came to the *'uta* to live as their ancestors did, traveling the island, storytelling, dreaming and recording their knowledge in songs, dances and petroglyphs. With Te Pou we revised the history through his art, which has come to be a main source for this research. Through a reciprocal ethnographic work, we developed different methodologies including road trips, archival research, interviews and video work that have substantially influenced both of our works. While his art informed this research, his participation on this thesis motivated his new art project, which reflects on the politics of land, colonial history and repatriation. As a result of this jointly ethnographic work we are now working together in a project of a graphic book of Rapanui colonial history and in the curation of an exhibition in collaboration also with Piru and Moi Moi.

Although the movement from collaborating with those who were at first introduced to me as official, authoritative voices to these more experimental collaborations with Te Pou, Piru and Moi Moi occurred naturally, mainly because of family and friends connections, this time working together has led me to reflect on the politics of these collaborations in light of the often

discussed ethnographic authority and the ethnographic turn (Clifford 1986; 1988; 2000). As mentioned above, this ethnography does not intend to present *a* Rapanui worldview, nor does it aim to provide an objective revision of Rapanui history. Rather, I openly celebrate radical praxis and advocacy as effective methods to lessen the disempowering and harmful effects of anthropological and historical discourses. I follow Lisa Aldred (1993: 235) in that the de-hegemonization of ethnographic work entails the problematization of its voices by the political implications of hegemonic discourses. This problematization provoked in the first place the turn in my own approach to ethnographic research from informative to performative, and then to the will to work with collaborators that although highly respected among the community somehow contest the assumptions on authoritative voice whether because of age, politics or methodologies.

I also investigate and write from a space of self-reflexivity that interrogates my own position as the authoritative researcher. No matter how close I am to the community I work with and how much I feel their historical wounds and present struggles, whether I like it or not I am heir of those who oppressed them and live among those who continue to perpetuate that oppression. And with pain, guilt and shame, I write from that tenuous position. In this same way, no matter my personal relations with the island and the time of shared experiences living within the community, I am an outsider and speak from that outsider's position. Adding to these conflicts are the very issues this thesis deals with, which are highly sensitive for the community. I am sure that more than one on the island is not happy about having a Chilean nosing through these sensitive, sometimes secretive, ideas, places, persons and histories. This awareness was what led me to engage in these very close collaborations, and I do so with honesty, respect and sincerity, writing about what they want me to and avoiding what I was asked to avoid. In doing so, I present an ethnography that opens up spaces for some voices of a living community based



on the recognition of the performance of ethnographic collaboration as capable of configuring identities that are no longer fixed definitions but mixed, inventive and relational constructions. I do not speak for a community, nor do I present a pristine indigenous thought system. Neither do I intend to reveal secrecy nor to translate that thought into absolute categories. Far from that, I present a dialogue of voices and experiences to reframe questions, claims and concerns the Rapanui I work with and I stand for in a honest hope to be a small contribution to the Rapanui's struggles to reposition those questions, claims and concerns back in the center.

## On the Place

### *Rapa Nui*

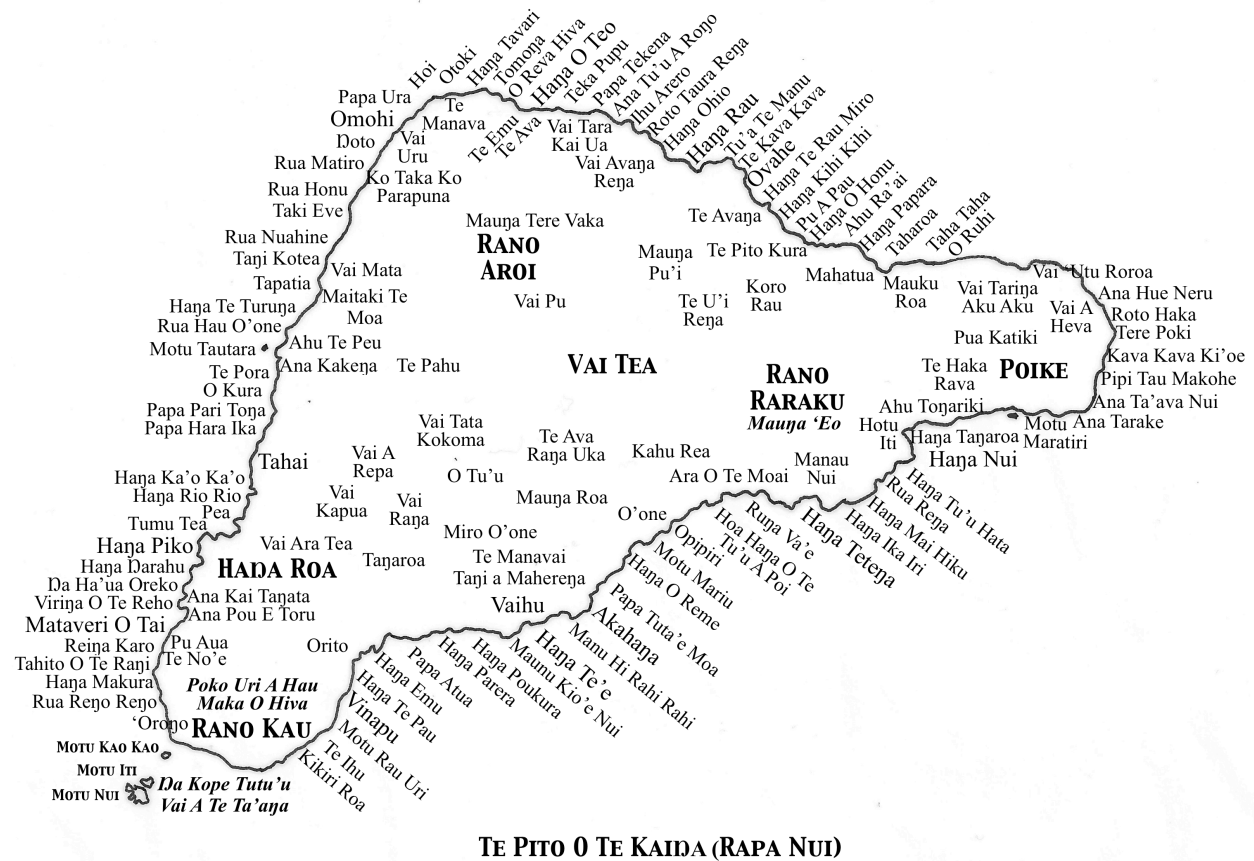
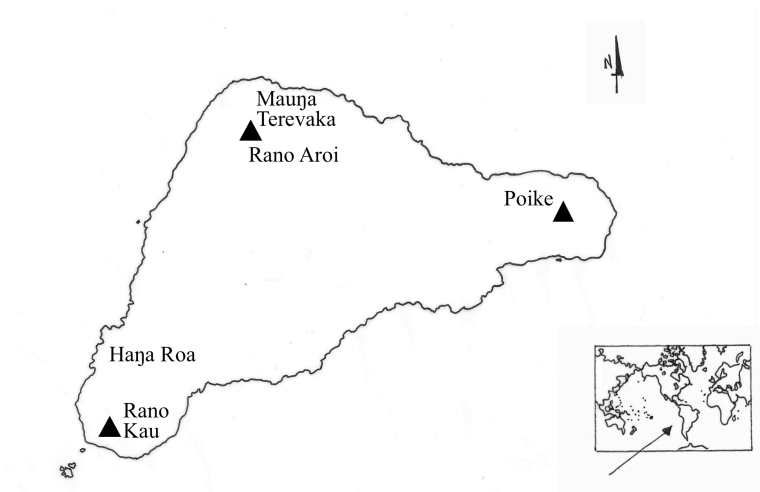


Image 0.1 Map based on a larger and more detailed map on Rapanui toponym by Te Pou Huke

Rapa Nui is a small volcanic island of 166 square km in the South Pacific Ocean 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. Located in the South Pacific Ocean at the southeastern most point of the Polynesian Triangle, Rapa Nui—the native name for “Easter Island”—is one of the most isolated inhabited territories on earth. First visited by Europeans in 1722, and annexed by Chile in 1888, scholars estimate that the island would have been settled around the fourth century AD (Kirch 1984; Lee 1992), although recent studies suggest this date to be around the ninth century AD (Cristino 2011). No evidence has been found of later contact from the time of the Polynesian discovery until the arrival of Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen in 1722 (Lee 1992: 3). Due to this isolation, Rapanui culture “tended toward over-elaboration and efflorescence as if it had nowhere to go but up” (Lee 1992: 2), developing unique features such as *hare vaka* (dwelling houses in the form of boats), *manavai* (walled gardens), and the famed *moai* (megalithic sculptures carved to honor the ancestors). This efflorescence led UNESCO to declare the island as world heritage in 1995 under the tag of being the “world’s biggest out-doors museum.”

Each corner of this triangular island is marked by a volcanic crater. At the eastern end is Poike, Rano (*RAP.* volcano) Kau marks the southwest end with Mauŋa (*RAP.* Mount) Terevaka, whose lava flows filled in between the other two volcanic peaks and formed the mass of the island, and Rano (*RAP.* volcano) Aroi marking 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

strait inland from Haŋa Roa to Anakena beach, and the other bordering the coast. With an airport, three schools, two banks, a pharmacy, two markets and several small businesses, Haŋa Roa is the only town in the island, where most of the population lives today as a result of colonialism and the relocation of the people.



**Image 0.2** Map indicating main volcanoes and location

Both Rapanui oral tradition 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 C<sup>14</sup> 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 traditions, the *ariki* (*RAP.* king) that led the discovery voyage was Hotu A 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 Renja and Marae Tohia in Hiva, islands located to the west of Rapa Nui. An equivalent of Hawaiki, the Maori homeland, scholars identify Hiva as part of Te Henua Kenana and Te Fenua 'Enata, the Marquesas Islands.

### *Polynesian Discovery and Colonization of Te Pito O Te Kaija*

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, and that 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 Kaija 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 firstborn Ira, to Rapareja, and also to the sons of Hua Tava—of names Ku'uku'u A Hua Tava, Rijiiri 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, and Ira and the crew launched the canoe and sailed to Te Pito O Te Kaija. After several moons the seven explorers reached the new land and prepared it for the arrival of the *ariki* and his people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter One for a detailed account of the episodes of Hau Maka and the seven explorers.

Back in Hiva, Matu'a took his royal power, passed it on to his son Hotu A Matu'a (*RAP*. Hotu, son of Matu'a), and told him to sail to Te Pito O Te Kaiā. Hotu gathered the people and they launched the canoes with yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, wooden *moai*, and some animals. Hotu A 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. These are the events the Rapanui refer to as the discovery and colonization of the land Hau Maka named Ko Te Pito O Te Kaiā O Hau Maka O Hiva. Hotu A 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 ten clans from which the Rapanui descend<sup>3</sup>.

#### *Early Encounters and Western Discovery*

On Easter Sunday of 1722, Dutch Admiral Jacob Roggeveen arrived at an island he took to be Davis Land. 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 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 (Haun 2005: 255-56). These same accounts narrate that in the midst of the tumult and confusion, the Dutchmen had caught sight of "strange monuments"

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three for a detailed explanation of the distribution of the land.

which they later discussed at length. They wondered how “naked savages” could have put up these colossi, and finally decided that these “idols” must have been made of clay. The Dutch left that same day.

As a European invention, “Easter Island” was written into European textual existence by eighteenth-century explorers who visited the island and published the narration of their experiences presenting their understanding of the physical island, the people, their agriculture, and their society to a European audience however brief those experiences may have been. 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 set up three great crosses on the Poike hills and took possession of the island in the name of the kingdom of Spain. They named it San Carlos. Four years later, Captain Cook visited Rapa Nui for two days. In the story of his voyage the explorer describes the *moai* standing up-right or fallen flat on top of mausoleums, whose sundered stones revealed the bleached skeletons within. Then, in 1786, a French expedition commanded by the Comte de La Pérouse landed on Rapa Nui, staying only twenty-four hours. This expedition is most known in the island for having introduced nonnative animals.

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 land them on Masafuera Island, where they hoped to employ them as slaves in seal hunting. 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 orgies and other sexual abuses, they threw them to the sea. These crimes deeply marked the relations between Rapa Nui and Western, and their 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 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 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). 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 principle and most learned men. Thanks to the intervention of Bishop Jaussen, 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 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. Eyraud was accompanied by a Rapanui named Pana, who had been carried off by slavers but had managed to escape. The two of them reached their destination on January 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1864. Eyraud would be later joined by Hipolyte Roussel. 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. The memory he has left behind on the island depicts him as a violent, grasping and unscrupulous man that stole lands and abused of the people to found a prosperous agricultural undertaking at Mataveru. Informed about his brutalities, the Bishop of Tahiti ordered the evacuation of Rapa Nui, though Dutrou-Bornier managed for a hundred and eleven Rapanui to be left behind. Most of the nearly three thousand Rapanui living today in the island are the descendants of this handful of islanders who were compelled to remain against their will.

#### *The Annexation to the Republic of Chile and Chilean Neo-colonialism in Rapa Nui*

On September 9<sup>th</sup> 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) has demonstrated, the annexation document has raised doubts as to the legality of Chilean occupation, which is being contested today by Rapanui activists claiming for 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 never ceded 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.<sup>4</sup>

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. As a result, 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 were 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 Hapa 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 took then 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

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Three for more details on the 1888 treaty.

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.<sup>5</sup>

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, and signals the beginning of Rapanui struggles towards self-determination.<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>5</sup> More details on the Company and Navy periods are provided on Chapter Three.

<sup>6</sup> I explain these three periods’ main milestones in Chapter Three.

“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 the 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. This thesis explores the foundations of that rhetoric, which I first present as a relational epistemology in which people and land are understood as inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos to then discuss it 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 of remembering who they actually are, the Rapanui nation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ON RAPANUI ONTOLOGY: LAND, LANGUAGE AND BEING IN RAPA NUI

In this chapter I introduce Rapanui concepts of land, language and being, which are fundamental to understanding Rapanui worldviews and the present struggles of Rapanui people to reclaim control over their cultural heritage. In the first section I examine the Rapanui concept of *kaiŋa* (*RAP.* land) as the result of the actions of the ancestors, who transformed a natural geography into a cultural landscape. To illustrate this connection I draw upon examples of Rapanui origin myth, which speaks to the idea of landscape as both shaping and being shaped by history. In the second section I discuss the Rapanui concept of *vananŋa* (*RAP.* language) and the understanding of language as generative, which refers to the idea that the world emerges from language and the interaction of humans, other-than-human beings, and the environment. I identify and exemplify different categories of Rapanui narrative forms to highlight the agency that Rapanui people attribute to the spoken word. Finally, in the third section I explore the Rapanui notion of being by identifying and defining the different categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) shaped by creating a cultural landscape they named Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa.

#### ***He Kaiŋa* | The Land**

Denis Cosgrove (1989) and Paul Taçon (2000) have written that our oldest ancestors initiated the process of transforming natural wilderness into cultural places many thousands of years ago, by the mythologizing, marking and mapping of landscapes. In Rapa Nui, Hau Maka, who visited the island in his dreams before the Polynesian colonization, initiated this

transformation when traveling the island and naming its places. This transformation is what leads Rapanui people to have a special feeling towards their land; this feeling is what Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) termed *topophilia*. The word *topophilia* is a neologism, “useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment” (Tuan 1990: 93). Tuan explains that these ties differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression, depending principally on cultural determinations.

Whereas Tuan highlights the sensorial aspect of *topophilia*, I propose that *topophilia* is also a highly cognitive response to our relation to the land. People indeed feel their homelands, in the sense that Keith Basso and Steven Feld’s (1996) popularized notion of senses of place explains it, but it must be noted that people also render landscapes intelligible and endow them with social significance. Through their mythologizing, marking and mapping of the land in ancestral times, Rapanui people render the land as a *memoryscape* that reminds them of the actions of their ancestors; a *memoryscape* that organizes history, structures present memory, and speaks to their worldviews and relations to the land. At the same time, Rapanui history, memory and worldviews are articulated and maintained through myths, legends, and stories that both shape and are shaped by the landscape.

Rapanui repertoire of *a’amu* (*RAP.* story; histories) offers a variety of examples that illuminate the idea of landscape as *memoryscape* and its dialectic in that it both shapes these stories while being shaped by them. Every *a’amu* takes place in particular locales that the Rapanui identify today, as each locale elicits the narration of a particular *a’amu*. This interrelation that the Rapanui attribute to land and *a’amu* explains a common Rapanui understanding of landscape as a cartography of history. When I began exploring Rapanui *a’amu* in 2006, my collaborators immediately suggested that to truly understand Rapanui history and to

be able to situate it in time, I should learn the different *a'amu* in the places where they took place. We then developed a methodology based on road trips that I have maintained throughout these years of regular and intensive fieldwork in Rapa Nui. Responding to the relation land-*a'amu*, and as a means to respect traditional Rapanui patterns of residency and the cultural consequences they entail,<sup>7</sup> these trips I always make them accompanied by collaborators whose ancestral lands are the ones to be visited. These road trips have allowed me to understand how my collaborators, friends and family in Rapa Nui think about their land, how they relate with the beings that dwell on it, and how they understand and appropriate their own history.

The first of these trips was to Haŋa Rau, a bay at the northeast now known as Anakena. There, the friends who came with me told me the history of that place, and the arrival of *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a (*RAP.* Hotu, son of Matu'a), who disembarked with his wife Vakai at this bay, beginning with it the colonization of Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. To complete this episode of the history of Rapa Nui, the second road trip we made was to volcano Rano Kau, at the southwest of the island. Rano Kau was the first place that the dreaming *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of Hau Maka visited when he was looking for a land for his *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Hotu A Matu'a and his people. While there, I was told the origin myth of Rapa Nui, part of which I transcribe below, as suggested by my collaborators, according to Pua A Raho'a's (c.1914) version, translated by German ethnologist Thomas Barthel (1978).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Three for an explanation of Rapanui patterns of residency.

<sup>8</sup> Within the body of Rapanui ethno-ethnohistories we find *Manuscript E*, written by Rapanui Pua A Raho'a c.1914 and considered by the Rapanui to be the most important and faithful written document of their history. Commonly referred to by the Rapanui as *Pua A Raho'a, Manuscript E* is the only alphabetical written record of the pre-contact time in Rapanui language. The manuscript documents the Polynesian discovery and settlement of Rapa Nui providing a detailed account of *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a's migration from Marae Reŋa to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. This document provides information about genealogies, place-names, botanic, the origin of the *moai* and mnemonic devices, among others.

Hau Maka had a dream. The dream soul of Hau Maka moved in the direction of the sun (i.e., toward the East). When, through the power of her mana, the dream soul had reached seven lands, she rested there and looked around carefully. The dream soul of Hau Maka said the following: “As yet, the land that stays in the dim twilight during the fast journey has not been reached.” The dream soul of Hau Maka continued her journey and, thanks to her mana, reached another land. She descended on one of the small islets (off the coast). The dream soul of Hau Maka looked around and said, “These are his three young men”. She named the three islets “the handsome youths of Te Ta’anga, who are standing in the water”.

The dream soul of Hau Maka continued her journey and went ashore on the island. The dream soul saw the fish Mahore, who was in a (water) hole, and she named the place “Pu Mahore A Hau Maka O Hiva.” The dream soul climbed up and reached the rim of the crater. As soon as the dream soul looked into the crater, she felt a gentle freeze coming toward her. She named the place “Poko Uri A Hau Maka O Hiva.” The dream soul continued her search for a residence for King Matua.

The (entire) land she named “The Pito O te Kainga A Hau Maka O Hiva” (Barthel 1978: 28-30).

In its capacity of evoking history, landscape serves Rapanui people as a means to organize and maintain memory in that it accentuates the *presentness* of the past. Certain places transform and supplant the present evoking as they do entire worlds of meaning in a type of retrospective world-building. This retrospective world-building is what Basso calls *place-making*, “a way of constructing history itself, of inventing it, of fashioning novel versions of ‘what happened here’” (Basso 1996: 6). Volcano Rano Kau evokes events related to the origins of Rapa Nui, its

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The manuscript was apparently discovered by Chilean elementary teacher Lorenzo Baeza in 1954. In 1958, *Manuscript E* was partially compiled, articulated and translated by German ethnologist Thomas Barthel in his *The Eighth Land: The Polynesian Discovery and Settlement of Easter Island* (1974). Barthel’s work presents these manuscripts thematically organized and accompanied by comments and additional information based on a comparative study with other Pacific cultures. *Manuscript E* was also recently transcribed and translated into Spanish by Chilean Arturo Alarcón and published under the title of *Pua A Raho* (2008).

Although all arguments on this thesis are supported on evidence of oral traditions I gathered myself as part of my ethnographic research in Rapa Nui, in this section I resort to this written source for recommendation of my Rapanui collaborators and consultants themselves, who consider this document to provide the most accurate version of the Hau Maka’s dream, the seven explorer’s journey, and Hotu Matu’a’s arrival and settlement in Te Pito O Te Kaija. Following their suggestion I decided to transcribe Pua A Raho’s version instead of those of my collaborators I gathered. Each excerpt transcribed in this section was consulted and revised with at least three different Rapanui consultants.

discovery and population: the time of Matu'a in Hiva, the journey of Te Ta'anga's sons, the dream of Hau Maka, the adventures of the seven explorers, the arrival of *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a and his sister Ava Rei Pua. These journeys and events are recreated and made present in the form of place-making. When the Rapanui place-make, they build and share place-worlds to revive former times, as well as to revise them as “a means of exploring not merely how things might have been but also how, just possibly, they might have been different from what others have supposed” (Basso 1996: 6).



**Image 1.1** Map showing the places of arrival of Hau Maka and Hotu A Matu'a

This relation between history and landscape, and the efficacy of landscape to serve as a cartography of history is particularly evident in the origin myth, which in the history of the Pacific Islands usually takes the form of journeys made by the “First People” (Taçon 2000: 42). In Rapa Nui, the origin myth is marked by four main journeys, all of them made by the *Hui Tupuna*<sup>9</sup> (*RAP.* First Ancestors): Te Ta'anga's sons, who came to the island before Hau Maka and were converted into three islets by the *mana* of *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Matu'a; Hau Maka, whose

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<sup>9</sup> *He Ūi Tupuna* or *Hui Tupuna* refers to the first ancestors of Rapa Nui and the weavers of the history of the island. This is what distinguishes them from simply *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors). By determining the word *tupuna* with *ūi* or *hui* (*RAP.* to weave), the Rapanui refer to those first ancestors that began to construe the history of Rapa Nui.



*kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) traveled seven lands in search of a place for the *ariki* until he found an eighth land he named *Te Pito O Te Kaiņa A Hau Maka O Hiva* (*RAP.* The Navel of the Land of Hau Maka from Hiva); the seven explorers, who were sent by Matu'a after Hau Maka's dream to explore and prepare the land to the settlement of the future *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a. These journeys are all defined by routes that simultaneously define the landscape through the agency of the "Dreaming Tracks" (Taçon 2000: 42). This relation between myth and landscape makes the transformational potential inherent in the awareness of *time emplaced* to render the ancestral past not as a frozen, timeless, mythical domain, but as both historical and dynamic.

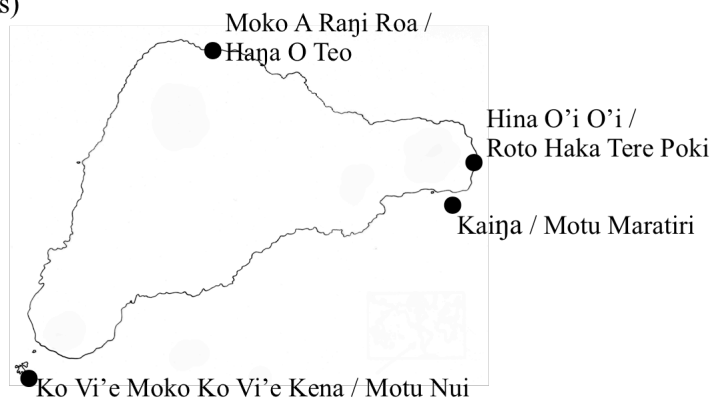
Related to this understanding of the past as capable of informing the present is the Rapanui conception of landscape, which as my Rapanui colleagues would explain and oral traditions show, is reciprocally connected to history. Like Hau Maka's journey, nearly every *a'amu* (*RAP.* story, history) describes the paths traveled by its characters that the Rapanui identify in the landscape of the island. Among these *a'amu*, some of which we shall discuss later, is the one of Moko A Raņi Roa, who traveled the island looking for her wife; after he learned she had been killed, he went after the five *varua rake rake* (*RAP.* *varua*: omnipersons<sup>10</sup>; *rake rake*: bad) who had killed her, killing six of them in Haņa O Teo, in the north coast of the island. Similarly, the *a'amu* of Kaiņa also describes different paths that the Rapanui identify today. After he had sacrificed his son to feed two men who came to his house, Makita and Roke A'ua, he traveled the island to kill them, beginning one of the bloodiest wars in Rapa Nui that ended with Kaiņa's killing of Vaha, who had killed Kaiņa's youngest son, Huri A Vai. In Poike, at the easternmost point of the island, took place the *a'amu* of Hina O'i O'i, a woman whose child converted into a

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<sup>10</sup> By "omniperson" I refer to a being of the person class that characterizes for having unlimited power. I expand on this definition in the last section of this chapter, which explores the different categories of persons according to Rapanui ontology.

*nanue para* fish in Roto Haka Tere Poki (*RAP*. The Pool Where the Child Left), and she decided to follow her fish child’s path from the coast; her journey began at Roto Haka Tere Poki, at the edge of Poike volcano, toward the west, until she reached Motu Nui (*RAP*. Big Islet), an islet at the southwest, where she left her fish child. Also identifiable are those paths detailed in the *a’amu* of *varua* (*RAP*. “omnipersons”). One of them is the *a’amu* of Ko Vi’e Moko 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. Once there, they seduced 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.

Map a’amu/kona  
(histories/places)



**Image 1.2** Map locating the places where the mentioned *a’amu* took place

In some cases, these paths traveled by the *tupuna* (*RAP*. ancestors) left tracks that make the past become vivid in the present and integral to the land. Hau Maka’s journey is one of these cases, whose tracks the explorers that followed him could identify in the land. After Hau Maka’s *kuhane* (*RAP*. soul) traveled the island and named its places, he came back to Hiva, the homeland, and informed *ariki* Matu’a about his finding. Matu’a asked him to choose seven explorers and

instruct them in how to find the new land. Hau Maka also described to them the different places he traveled and named, which the explorers recognized when they reached Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. Pua A Rahoā (c.1914) transcribed this episode, which Thomas Barthel (1978) translated as follows:

The canoe reached the islets (off the coast), and Ira saw that there were three such islets. Ira said, “Hey you, crew of young men, the vision of Hau Maka, our father, which he revealed to me, has come true. There are ‘the handsome sons of Te Taanga, who are standing in the water,’ for this is the name that the dream soul of Hau Maka gave them. Unforgotten (? kai viri kai viri) are they, these three. And therefore this is the (right) land lying here; this is Te Pito O te Kainga, which also received its name from the dream soul” (Barthel 1978: 55).

The first mark of Hau Maka’s journey that the seven explorers identified was then Ōa Kope Tutu’u Vai A Te Ta’anga (*RAP*. The Youths of Te Ta’anga, Who Are Standing in the Water), three islets located in front of Rano Kau, in the southwest of the island. Today these islets are known as Motu Nui (*RAP*. Big Islet), Motu Iti (*RAP*. Small Islet) and Motu Kao Kao (*RAP*. Profile Islet).

The seven explorers landed at Haŋa Te Pau, a little bay at the edge of volcano Rano Kau. They climbed up the volcano and found the first place Hau Maka told them, which he named Poko Uri A Hau Maka (*RAP*. The Dark Hole of Hau Maka). Then the explorers turned around to continue to explore the land and they found a broken *kohe* (endemic plant that grows in the coast); that broken *kohe* was the first track of Hau Maka’s journeying that the explorers saw. Mako’i, the explorer that was assigned to name the different places of the island, did it according to Hau Maka’s dream: “He went along and came to the ‘dark rat.’ He looked around and said: ‘Here we are at the dark rat of Hau Maka.’ He gave it the name ‘Te Kioe Uri A Hau Maka’ [*RAP*. The Dark Rat of Hau Maka]” (Barthel 1978: 56). Mako’i continued through the path of Hau Maka naming its places as he found them. “He went on, all alone he went on, and came to Te Pou. When he arrived there, he looked around and again said, ‘Here it is!’ and gave the name ‘Te Pou A Hau Maka’ [*RAP*. Sirius (guiding star) of Hau Maka]” (Barthel 1978: 56). Night fell and

Mako'i came back to the other explorers, where Ira, Hau Maka's first-born and leader of the expedition, asked him:

“How did you fare when you wandered, when you went searching, when you found yourself on the path of the dream soul of the father?” Makoi replied, “There are indeed all those places. I did not forget them at all (kai viri kai viri) when I saw them. I alone saw no fewer than four of my places, and I returned here only because night was falling.” Then Ira spoke again: “How did you name them, last-born?” Makoi replied, “This is what happened, this is how I gave the names. I wrote (ta) ‘The Manavai A Hau Maka’ on the surface of a banana leaf (kaka), and this is how I left it.” This is how Makoi remembered it. No sooner had he said this, when Ira grew angry and quarrelled with Makoi. He said the following (to him): “You did not pay attention, last-born, and you did not give the (full) name. This is how it should be: the Manavai of Hau Maka of Hiva, in memory (mo aringa ora) of the father, of his dream soul.” Makoi replied, “In Hiva the land belongs to him--this land here is mine, not his!” They stayed (there longer) (Barthel 1978: 56-7).

As the origin myth of Rapa Nui shows, Rapanui people understand the land as a cultural landscape that resulted from the actions of the ancestors. Landscape and history are for the Rapanui interrelated determinants of their culture and worldviews; landscape defines history as much as it is defined by history, and they both account for the ways Rapanui people understand and relate to the world.

Land and history are inseparable from the Rapanui concept of *a'amu* (RAP. history, stories), which far from being conceived as fiction or fantastic tales, almost every Rapanui I know understands *a'amu* as narratives that account for their history and inform their worldviews. Like the history of native studies has demonstrated, indigenous peoples regard their oral traditions as history. Jan Vansina's study *Oral Tradition as History* (1985), which explores the relationship between oral tradition and culture, has become a seminal work in the study of oral tradition, where he argues that narrative histories secure cultural continuity in a present aimed for the future. An extensive list of scholars studying oral tradition (see for example Barthes 1972; Bascom 1984; Eliade 1963, 1984; Frazer 1984; Malinowski 1926, 1984; Pettazzoni 1984; Shorter 2009; Tonkin 1999) reinforces Vansina's conclusions in that oral traditions inform

history as much as history is embedded by them. Whether referred to as “myths,” “legends,” “tales,” “stories,” or “histories,” these works coincide in presenting oral traditions as regarded by oral societies, as historical sources that express, enhance, and codify the essentials of a culture.

A useful referent for the Rapanui understanding of oral tradition as history is Bronislaw Malinowski’s (1926) work on myth, which signals a break with the treatment of myth, common in the occidental scholarly discourse of the nineteenth century, as a fable, invention or fiction to propose instead myth as a narrative form that designates a real story, a story of unappreciable value as it has an ontological, meaningful and exemplary character. The Rapanui concept of *a’amu* shares these ideas, according to which myth cannot be separated from history. Myths inform history as much as history is shaped by myths. Rapanui language is eloquent and hermeneutically pregnant in this matter for it makes no distinction between these two terms. The word *a’amu* translates into both history and story—the latter including myth as much as tales, legends and historical episodes.

In addition to his definition of myth, Malinowski’s examination of the function that myths fulfill for indigenous peoples is also relevant to understand the Rapanui common conceptions of *a’amu* as accounts of their history that inform their worldviews. In his “Role of Myth in Life” (1984), Malinowski noted that non-Western societies attribute an indispensable function to myth in that it “expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man” (199). Malinowski identifies myth as a vital ingredient for human civilization. Responding to the understanding of myth as a fictional tale, he defines it as a hard-worked active force that is less an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery than a pragmatic vehicle of knowledge and moral wisdom. As we shall see in the following sections, Rapanui people also understand

myth—and all other forms of narratives that the term *a'amu* includes—as sources of knowledge and moral wisdom for all *a'amu* are markedly exemplary.

Although problematic in some aspects, especially in his treatment of what he calls “primitive,” “archaic,” or “traditional” civilizations, Mircea Eliade’s (1963) work, particularly the preponderance he gives to the *presentness* of myth, is also useful to understand the Rapanui concept of *a'amu*, the importance of it being recited and the power of the spoken word. The presentness of myth is fundamental in the Rapanui understandings of the term, which conceive *a'amu* as complementary discourses of the past that continue to intervene in the present. Eliade highlights that myths not only tell the origin of the world, but also every primordial event by which man has become what he is today (Eliade 1963: 19). If the world *exists*, if men and women *exist*, that is because the *mana* (*RAP.* power; efficacy) of the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) has unfolded a creative activity from the beginning. “But other events have taken place after the cosmogony and the anthropogony took place, and men, *just as he is today*, is the direct result of those mystic events, *and is constituted by those events*” (Eliade 1963: 19). The wisdom that *a'amu* facilitates is then not an *exterior* and *abstract* knowledge, but one that is *lived* in a certain ritual manner when one narrates a myth. Because myth is *living* and *lived*, it is not enough to know it, “you also have to recite it; its knowledge is proclaimed in a certain manner, this way it *shows* itself” (Eliade, 1963: 24). As we shall see in the following section, this need of *a'amu* to be recited for its knowledge to be proclaimed is expanded in the understanding of language as generative and capable of action.

### ***He Vanaja* | The Language**

In this section I will explore the notion of generative language by drawing upon examples

of Rapanui oral traditions that speak to the vital importance that Rapanui people attribute to the spoken word. As these *a'amu* (*RAP.* histories) will demonstrate, Rapanui speech has the power to *do* things. In his revision of Irvine Hallowell's (1975) study of Objibwa ontology, Tim Ingold (2004) discusses the agency of the spoken word by explaining that speech is not only a mode of transmitting information or mental content but most importantly a way of *being alive*: "Both non-human sounds, like thunder, and human speech have the power to move those who hear them, and both kinds of sound take their meaning from the contexts in which they are heard" (Ingold 2004: 47). By arguing that speech has the power to *move* those who *hear*, Ingold echoes John Langshaw Austin's (1955) speech-act theory, which suggests that speech is 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 in that they elicit a physical response from the interlocutor.

Both Ingold and Austin's arguments are based on the principle of causality, and on the assumption that the power of speech will depend on the context and the interlocutor. The efficacy that the Rapanui attribute to the spoken word goes further than these arguments in that it not only *causes* a response, but in certain cases it also *generates* something, independently of the context or the presence and will of an interlocutor. Rapanui understandings of language coincide more precisely with Kenneth Morrison's<sup>11</sup> hypothesis that for many indigenous peoples language is *generative*. As opposed to the idea of language as representative or referential (Jakobson

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<sup>11</sup> Morrison, Keneth. Conversation on generative language. Los Angeles, 2011. Personal communication, video conference. At the time of this discussion his most recent article, "Animism, Ethnological Misinterpretation, and the Hypothetical Foundations for a Post-Cartesian Anthropology" was in press. In this article he exhaustively discusses his hypothesis of indigenous generative language as part of his critical revision of animism and the modernist anthropological thought.

1960), an understanding of language as generative responds to the idea that the world emerges from language and the interaction of humans, other-than-human beings and the environment.

Rapanui people are self-conscious of the power of the spoken word, which depending on the case they may fear or trust because of their awareness of the efficacy of speech. Through different words, the Rapanui may protect, curse, or enchant someone, and those words will *do* something to that person. A common tradition in Rapa Nui is to give a *po* (RAP. destiny, fate). A *po* is the destiny that an older relative, namely a father or a grandmother, announces to his or her child or grandchild. To do this, the person giving the *po* communicates with his or her ancestors and the ancestors of the person receiving the *po* who, after the words are pronounced, will be protected by them. Also related to the future is the Rapanui concept of *'uruŋa* (RAP. vision, foresee). The episode of Hau Maka is an example of *'uruŋa*, where he foresaw the catastrophe that would destroy Hiva, and visited the new land where his people will settle in. Another well known *'uruŋa* is that of Reŋa Vare Vare, a woman who foresaw the future of the island, the arrival of the white man, the introduction in the island of new animals such as horses, dogs and cows, the new type of houses, Western houses, that would be built on the island, and the church. When she had this *'uruŋa*, she communicated it to her granddaughter, Vehi.<sup>12</sup>

Speech may also have a negative effect on the people, as is the case with curses and enchantments. Enchantments are commonly found in *a'amu* of *varua* (RAP. “omnipersons”), especially female *varua*, who do *haka mana mana* or enchant the young men they want to seduce and take to Hiva O Vake Vake, the land of the *varua*. Female *varua*'s *haka mana mana* or enchantments usually take the form of songs, which once pronounced, make men lose their

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<sup>12</sup> Huke, Te Pou. *A'amu* “Reŋa Vare Vare.” Santiago, 2011. Personal communication.



volition and do whatever the *varua* want.<sup>13</sup> Curses in Rapa Nui take the form of *tahu tahu* and *tohu*, both of them translated generally as curse or spell. *Tahu tahu* are curses that only *nuahine tahu tahu* (*RAP. nuahine*: old woman; *tahu tahu*: curse) can do. A case of *tahu tahu* is that of the *a'amu* of Nuahine Rarape Nui, which tells the story of the *nuahine tahu tahu* that overthrew the *moai* of the Ahu Haŋa Te'e (*RAP. ceremonial platform at Te'e Bay*) with the *mana* of her voice. The *a'amu* says that a *nuahine tahu tahu* asked some men to give her a lobster with a big 'ura rarape (*RAP. lobster's tail*); when the men said that they would not, the *nuahine* did a *pata'uta'u* (*RAP. recitation*), through which she threw 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>14</sup> *Tohu* is another type of curse that can be made only by powerful people, but not necessarily a *nuahine tahu tahu*. The efficacy of *tohu* also relies on the power of the spoken word. The *a'amu* of the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa, who were converted into three islets by *ariki* (*RAP. king*) Matu'a through the *mana* of his voice, is a very explicit example of *tohu* and the efficacy of the spoken word. This *a'amu* will also help us to relate the discussions on how Rapanui understand land and language, and how they relate to the beings dwelling the land.

Like the episode of Hau Maka, the *a'amu* of the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa, usually referred to as *Da Kope Ririva Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'aŋa* (*RAP. The Handsome Youths of Te Ta'aŋa, Who Are Standing in the Water*), was partially recorded by Pua A Rahoā in his already cited *Manuscrito E* (c.1914). The following is a synthesis that takes Pua A Rahoā's version with

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<sup>13</sup> Information on *haka mana mana* is based on different versions of *a'amu* related to female *varua*: Isabel Pakarati 2008, *a'amu* "Ko Kuha Ko Rati" and "Ko Vi'e Moko Ko Vi'e Kena"; Abigail Alarcón Rapu 2008, *kai kai* "Ko Kuha Ko Rati" and "Hau Da Ehe"; Moi Moi Tuki 2010, *a'amu* "Ko Vi'e Moko Ko Vi'e Kena"; Mihaera Pate 2011, *a'amu* "Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu'a" and "Ko Kuha Ko Rati". I transcribe some of these versions in Chapter Two. Additionally information on the concept, its etymology and uses was provided by Te Pou Huke (Santiago, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Huke, Te Pou. *A'amu* "Nuahine Rarape Nui." Santiago, 2011. Personal communication.

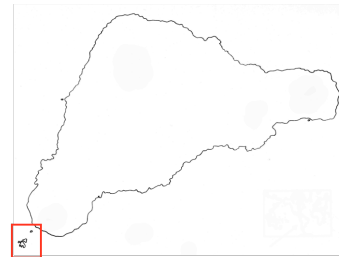
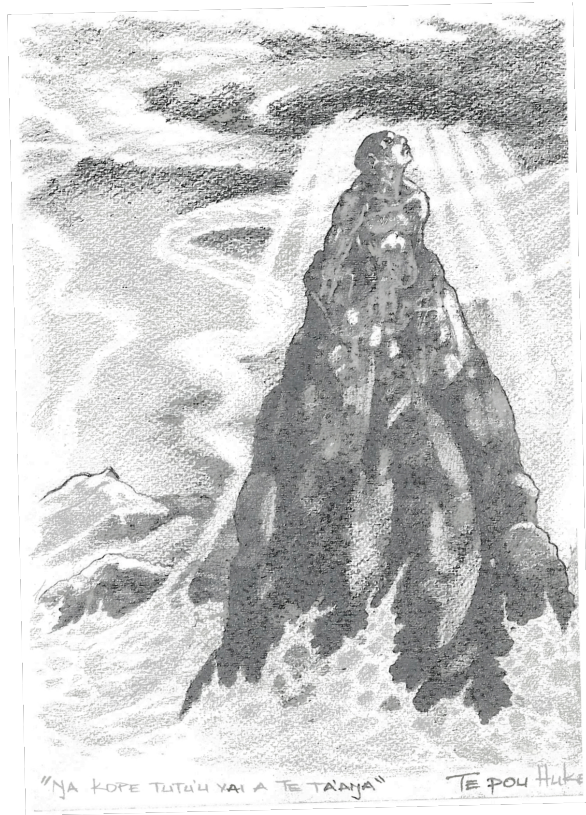
additional details I gathered from the versions that my collaborators Te Pou Huke and Moi Moi Tuki<sup>15</sup> told me. As for the names of the different characters, I gathered them from Pua A Rahoā's recording of the origin myth, and Te Pou Huke's *Vaero Roa* (2008), a comicbook that provides some references to the history prior Hau Maka's dream.

In the time of *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Matu'a, his *ariki ma'ahu* (council of advisors) told him that a natural disaster would destroy Hiva, the island where the *Hui Tupuna* (First Ancestors) lived in the country of Maori. The five *ariki ma'ahu*, Moe Hiva, Po, De Raŋi, Heŋa and Tuku Maura, told *ariki* Matu'a that it had happened in the times of the *Ariki Motoŋi*—rulers before Matu'a, namely Oto Uta, Tanjaroa, Roroi, Tiki Hati, Tu'u Kuma, Ataraŋa, Harai and Ta'ana—and now the big catastrophe would happen that would terminate with Hiva. When *ariki* Matu'a listened to them, he ordered his people to build a canoe, and the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa, Datavake, Te Ohiro and Te Hau, were chosen to sail on it in search of a land for the *ariki* and his people. Before sailing, Te Ta'aŋa told his sons, "When you see the new land, do not look back, stay there." Many moons had passed from the departure of Datavake, Te Ohiro and Te Hau, and they had not come back. The moons told *ariki* Matu'a they were not going to return, and so he recited a *pata'u ta'u* (*RAP.* recitation) that made them *tohu* (*RAP.* curse). Through the *mana* of Matu'a and his *pata'u ta'u*, the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa became three islets and they stayed in the new land, Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa, as their father had ordered. During his journey, Hau Maka named the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa in their islets form *Da Kope Ririva Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'aŋa* (*RAP.* The Handsome Youths of Te Ta'aŋa, Who Are Standing in the Water). Located in front of volcano Rano Kau, in the southwest end of the island, such islets are known today as *Motu Nui* (*RAP.* Big

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<sup>15</sup> Tuki, Moi Moi. "The Dream of Hau Maka." Rapa Nui, 2011; Huke, Te Pou. "Da Kope Ririva Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'aŋa." Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.

Islet), *Motu Iti* (*RAP.* Small Islet) and *Motu Kao Kao* (*RAP.* Profile Islet).



Above: Location of the three islets Da Kope Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'anya on the map

Left: *Da Kope Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'anya*. Te Pou Huku 2011

**Image 1.3** *Da Kope Ririva Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'anya*

The *a'amu* of *Da Kope Ririva Tutu'u Vai A Te Ta'anya* shows the *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy) of language, as well as the close relationship between history, language and landscape in Rapa Nui. We already discussed the concept of *a'amu* as history, myth and story, and the need to be recited for them to come to live. Likewise, landscape needs to be talked about for the beings dwelling on it to participate in the lives of the people. This power that most Rapanui people attribute to speech is grounded, as discussed above, in an idea of language as generative. As Christopher Tilley has pointed out, to truly understand a landscape it must be felt, and to convey some of these feelings to others, it has to be talked about, recounted, or written and depicted (1994: 31) just as myths need to be recited and proclaimed (Eliade 1963: 24). This premise works in two different directions. On one hand, and following the understandings of landscape as the result of

the actions of their ancestors, Rapanui people often articulate landscape through speech as a means to remind themselves of their history. On the other hand, and in their acknowledgement of landscape as the habitation of non-human beings, Rapanui people may also speak landscape as a means to communicate and interact with these beings.

As for the importance that the Rapanui attribute to the act of *speaking* landscape, this act usually takes the form of place-making, which serves as a visual and verbal reminder of the history of the Rapanui people. Place-making is a form of narrative art, a type of storytelling, that tells the story of a place in the form of a retrospective world-building. As Keith Basso (1996) has defined it, place-making is “a way of constructing history itself, of inventing it, of fashioning novel versions of ‘what happened here’” (Basso 1996: 6). Similarly to what Basso explains with regard to cases of place-making within Western Apache people, whenever a world-building is created in Rapa Nui through the action of a place-making evoked by a place, both the listener and the place-maker will then draw attention to the significance of the events that took place there, identifying the landscape with the history of Rapa Nui. In the case of the three islets, Motu Nui, Motu Iti and Motu Kao Kao, whenever I asked a Rapanui about the history of the place at the site, the place-maker highlighted the importance of such place as a landmark that signaled the seven explorers’ finding of Hau Maka’s land. Depending on the time, the person, our relation, and the circumstances, the versions of place-making I gathered in this site differed in their details though they all coincided in emphasizing that the three islets remind the Rapanui of the origin of their culture: the journeys of their *Hui Tupuna* in search of a new land, the *mana* of the father of their first *ariki*, the adventures and misadventures of the seven explorers, the arrival of the first *ariki* Hotu, son of Matu’a, and the Polynesian colonization of the new land.

By acknowledging place-making as a type of retrospective world-building, Rapanui people

place-make not only to remind themselves of the past but also to revise their history. As Basso notes, this retrospective world-building signals “a border crossing where the country starts to change through a transfiguration provoked by thoughts of an earlier day: the country of the past transforms and supplants the country of the present” (Basso 1996: 4-5). For many Rapanui, when they place-make they are building and sharing place-worlds primarily as a means of reviving former times but also of *revising* them. Place-makers explore not only how things happened, but also how they might have happened differently. Two of the versions I gathered of the *a'amu* of the three sons of Te Ta'āna and the dream of Hau Maka were especially explicit in noticing this function of place-making as a revision of history.

When place-making these *a'amu* during a road trip we made together to volcano Rano Kau, Te Pou Huke highlighted the importance of the *'uruŋa* (*RAP.* vision, premonition) of the *ariki ma'ahu*, the court of advisers, in the time of the *Ariki Motoŋi*, rulers before Hotu A Matu'a, first *ariki* of Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. When place-making this *a'amu*, Te Pou referred to those past premonitions and what would have happened if Matu'a would not have listened to Hau Maka's *'uruŋa*. Similarly, Moi Moi Tuki during another road trip we did to this same place highlighted the importance of Hau Maka's *po atua* (*RAP.* dream) and how oral tradition defies science. When he was telling me the story of Hau Maka's *po atua* at the top of volcano Rano Kau he pointed to the west and emphasized that the visionary instructed the seven explorers to sail in the direction of the rising sun (*a roto i te ra'a*; i.e. the east). At this moment he stopped his place-making, looked at me and said, “so they came from the west, not from the east as says this theory of Thor Heyerdhal that the Rapanui came from South America<sup>16</sup>.”

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<sup>16</sup> Tuki, Moi Moi. “The Dream of Hau Maka.” Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication. This theory Moi Moi was referring to is Thor Heyerdhal's hypothesis that before the arrival of the Polynesians, Rapa Nui would have been colonized by native South Americans. Between 1955 and 1956 took place in Rapa Nui the Norwegian

Together with the conception of landscape as the result of the action of the ancestors, Rapanui people understand the land as the inhabitation of the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of those *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) and of other non-human beings, commonly identified as *varua* (*RAP.* “omnipersons”). The *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy) that Rapanui people attribute to language is also related to this understanding of land for they *speak* landscape as a means to communicate and interact with these beings. The tradition of place-making and storytelling in general are particularly relevant in that the act of storytelling serves as a vehicle to establish communication with the *kuhane* of the *tupuna* and other non-human beings. This communication and interaction takes form through the recitation and singing, inserted in the storytelling, of the *tupuna*’s and *varua*’s words as kept in oral tradition.

Storytelling in Rapa Nui involves other narrative forms, which might be improvised oral narratives or highly formalized forms of narrative arts such as *tani* (lyric form resembling an epic or an eulogy, depending on the case) or *pata’uta’u* (recitations of diverse nature), ritualized forms such as *kai kai* (mnemonic devise resembling a cat’s cradle), or performative expressions such as songs and dances. The Rapanui combine these different forms for a number of reasons. When modern forms of performative arts such as dance and songs are interwoven with the storytelling, they are commonly songs and dances inspired on a particular *a’amu* the storyteller resorts to whether as a means to exemplify, illustrate or emphasize an episode of the *a’amu*, as an aide of memory, or to add dynamism to the storytelling and keep the audience’s attention. In

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Archaeological Expedition, organized and led by Norwegian ethnographer and experimental archaeologist Thor Heyerdahl. Among the scientific staff of this expedition were U.S. archaeologist William Mulloy and Chilean archaeologist Gonzalo Figueroa, both main figures in the restoration of some archaeological sites. The results of this expedition were published on *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific* (1965). Also as a result of this expedition Heyerdahl published on his own his international best seller *Aku Aku: The Secret of Easter Island* (1958), where he develops his argument that Rapa Nui would have been first colonized by native peoples from South America. Although widely spread, this theory has been refuted by both Western scientific research and Rapanui oral tradition.

other cases, the storyteller combines his or her free account of the *a'amu* with traditional and ritual forms such as *taji*, *pata'uta'u* or *kai kai*; this happens when a personage of that *a'amu* recited or performed such forms his or herself. I provide some examples below.

*Taji* are soft sorrowful chants that express very deep feelings of yearning, yearning for a person, the family and most frequently the homeland. Most cases of *taji* appear in oral tradition when a person was forced to leave his or her land, as is the case of the *a'amu* of Uho Te Uka (*RAP.* Uho, The Young Woman), which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. Uho was a young woman living in Haŋa Ohio, a small bay close to Haŋa Rau, the bay now known as Anakena. One day the girl was taking her bath when a turtle appear in the water and took her *taura reŋa* (*RAP.* belt to hold the suit) and swam away. Uho followed the turtle swimming untiringly until they reach another land. It was Mahuna Te Ra'a's land. Uho stayed in the new land with Mahuna Te Ra'a, and could only return to her homeland when she agreed to pay the turtle with her *tatake* (*RAP.* sex. i.e. to have sex with him). During the years in the land of Mahuna Te Ra'a, Uho wept her family and her homeland with this *taji*: *He uka au Ko Uho / Tatū au i to'oku kiea / Mata tea tea / I te Papa Haka Vare Ū / O Uho O te Uka / Kaiŋa mata po'uri e / E Mahuna Te Ra'a / Kenu a'aku ē / Ta'e pe 'uta / Pe to matou kaiŋa / Mata ma'eha era / I te uriŋa haŋa ē / Aue a nua ē / Aue a koro ē / Aue a ŋakope ē*<sup>17</sup> (*RAP.* It is the woman, me, Uho / tattooed with my *kiea* [colored earth] / from the white *mata* [clan, territory] / in *Papa Haka Vare Ū* [the rock where she took her bath. *Papa*: rock; *haka*: to do; *vare*: fluid; *ū*: breast] / of Uho, of the woman / Land of the dark clan / of Mahuna Te Ra'a / of my husband / not like [my] land / like our homeland / that illuminated land / in the upper bay / Oh, mother! / Oh, father! /

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<sup>17</sup> Pate, Luis "Papa Kiko." *A'amu* "Uho te Uka." Rapa Nui, 2008. Personal communication. Transcription of Uho's *taji* by Te Pou Huke, 2011.

Oh, brothers!)

*Pata'uta'u* are recitations of different nature and fulfilling diverse purposes. *Pata'uta'u* are, for example, the recitations through which the *nuahine tahu tahu* made their *tahu tahu* (*RAP.* curse), like that of the *a'amu* of Nuahine Rarape Nui mentioned earlier, who through a *pata'uta'u* overthrew the *moai* of the men who didn't give her the lobster. *Pata'uta'u* are also the recitations that powerful people use to make *tohu* (*RAP.* spell), as was the case of *ariki* Matu'a, when recited a *pata'uta'u* in Hiva, the homeland, to convert the three sons of Te Ta'āna into three islets for them to stay in the new land, as their father had ordered. Because of the efficacy of *pata'uta'u*, Rapanui people are reluctant to recite them, especially those that were meant to do *tahu tahu* or *tohu* (*RAP.* curse, spell). To respect my collaborators' concerns on this, I will not transcribe this type of *pata'uta'u*; instead, below I transcribe a *pata'uta'u* that is not related to *tahu tahu* or *tohu* but used to invoke the *varua* (*RAP.* omnipersons). An example of this kind of *pata'uta'u* is that recited by the first *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a (*RAP.* Hotu, Son of Matu'a) at the top of the volcano Rano Kau calling his *varua* from Hiva, Ko Kuihi Ko Kuaha, to take his *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) to Hiva, his homeland. His *pata'uta'u* was as follows: *Ē Kuihi e Kuaha varua ē / ka haka o'oa iti iti mai koe / i te reo o te moa oa ariāna / o koe ē te ariki ē*<sup>18</sup> (*RAP.* Kuihi and Kuaha, you *varua*! / Make the rooster sing a little for me / At the voice of the rooster / I will go in your direction, me, the *ariki*). After he recited these words, the rooster sang and he died.

*Kai kai* is a mnemonic device made from string and resembling a cat's-cradle that is accompanied by a *pata'u ta'u* or recitation. The Rapanui translate it as “recitation in string.” *Kai kai* is an elaborated performative writing, which *pata'u ta'u* narrates history at the same time that

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<sup>18</sup> Huke, Te Pou. Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.



the string choreographs it. Both the string figure and the recitation tell a particular story in a way that the images created by the strings illustrate part of the *a'amu* or story recited in the *pata'u ta'u*. The figure drawn by the strings is often a synecdochal representation of certain persons, objects, or places alluded to in the *pata'u ta'u*. Similarly to *taji* and *pata'uta'u*, *kai kai* is also a vehicle through which the Rapanui communicate specifically with *varua* for the Rapanui understand it as the language of these non-human persons that communicate messages to humans through the string figures.

A well-known *kai kai* among the Rapanui is *Ko Kuha Ko Rati*, which tells the *a'amu* of two female *varua* that traveled from O Vake Vake, the land of the *varua*, to Te Pito O Te Kaija to seduce Ure A Oho Vehi (*RAP*. The Young Son of Oho Vehi) to take him to their homeland. In this *kai kai*, the string figure represents the two female *varua*, Kuha and Rati, by showing their hairs. The Rapanui interpret this representation of a part for the whole as an effort to highlight that the represented bodies are *varua* and not human. By representing Kuha and Rati by their hairs, the strings are emphasizing the ethereal nature of their bodies. Now, the selection is not casual. The Rapanui argue that by representing them by showing only their hairs, the strings are drawing attention to their beauty, and the danger these two women represent to every man going to sleep in their territory. The *pata'uta'u* that accompanies this *kai kai* recalls the words of the two *varua*: *E Kuha, E Rati / Te manu i haka 'eu e / Ku a'eu? / Ku a taria i / To maua kuhane / Ko au, ko mahaki / Ki Hiva, ki O' Vake-Vake* (*RAP*. Kuha and Rati / The birds are strong and beautiful / Are you strong enough / To take / Our enchanted souls / Me and my sister / To Hiva, to O' Vake Vake?)<sup>19</sup>. I will discuss this *kai kai* in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>19</sup> Pakarati, Isabel. *Kai kai* "Ko Kuha Ko Rati." Rapa Nui, 2008. Personal communication. Transcription and translation of *pata'uta'u* by Isabel Pakarati, 2008.



**Image 1.4** Viti Alarcón Rapu performing *kai kai Ko Kuha Ko Rati*.  
Video capture, Jacinta Arthur 2008.

Because of their generative understanding of language, Rapanui storytellers are conscious of the agency of the words she pronounces as well as their specific purposes. As my collaborators note when they perform a *kai kai*, recite a *pata'uta'o* or sing a *tani*, they are not merely representing, not even recreating, the ancestors' voice, but they are owning them, and through this act of owning, they are establishing communication with the ancestors, sympathizing with their feelings, and perpetuating their relations to the land and non-human beings that dwell on it. These *tani*, *pata'uta'u* or *kai kai* were recited or performed by the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) with a particular intention and their words embedded with such *mana* that they became action. As discussed earlier, with only pronouncing some words, a person could even overthrow *moai* or convert men into rocks. Most Rapanui people continue to think of language as a powerful vehicle to connect the human world with that of the *varua* or the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of the ancestors. Because of the *mana* that the Rapanui attribute to speech, the recitation of *tani*, *pata'uta'u* or *kai kai* that were first recited by the *tupuna* might sometimes be *tapu* (*RAP.* taboo)<sup>20</sup>. As we shall see in Chapter Two, even if in the context of storytelling, not everyone can

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<sup>20</sup> In Rapanui historiography, *tapu* has been usually translated as sacred, taboo and prohibited. In Englert's dictionary the entry for *tapu* says "Sacred, inviolable; to prohibit, prohibited, prohibition"

recite them, not in any way and not at any place.

### ***He Tupuna* | Beyond Human and Other-than-Human Persons**

As we have seen in the previous sections, the Rapanui identify different categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (RAP. ancestors) shaped by converting a natural geography into a cultural landscape they named Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. These diverse types of person 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. soul) and an outward form or *hakari* (RAP. body). Whether human or not, all animate beings of the person class hold the attributes of sentience, volition, memory and speech, although 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 attributes. What distinguishes most generally the different categories of beings of the person class is their outward form, which in the case of non-human persons, and due to the higher degree of power they

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(Englert 1948: 500). Similarly, the dictionary elaborated by the *Comisión para la Estructuración de la Lengua Rapanui* (Commission for Structuring the Language, 2000) defines it as “Prohibition, taboo. Something sacred. Prohibited” (173). Sacred, the most used word to define the term is particularly problematic for it entails a modernist, Cartesian and theistic thought that is not shared by Rapanui worldview. More than being related to an idea of god, *tapu* relates more precisely to *mana*, an attribute held by persons and places that are not necessarily associated to an *atua*, the closest category in Rapanui ontology to the theistic concept of god. *Ariki mau*, the persons that possessed the highest *mana* in Rapanui pre-contact society were *tapu*, a condition that obliged those who were below the *ariki mau* to behave in a certain manner. A *tapu* was also established in all places where a person had died. These were *tapu te pera*, and were prohibited in visitation. Today, certain places are also *tapu*; these are named *kona tapu*, and are mainly those places where the *kuhane* (RAP. soul) of the dead or certain *varua* dwell on. *Kona tapu* are, for example, the *ahu moai*, burial sites in the form of platforms where *moai* stand. *Tapu* also designates certain attitudes towards a person that cannot be violated. *Tapu* of this type are for example those that say that a mother cannot cut the hair of her first-born male child or eat from his same plate. *Tapu* is then more precisely a dictated behavior that cannot be violated in order to protect and respect the *mana* that surrounds a particular place or person.

possess, they hold the capacity of metamorphosis or *kuhane hane*. In this section I provide a preview of the different categories of persons, humans and other-than-humans, which I explain by referring to the Rapanui social organization prior to the arrival of the white man and its disruption. This preview will be expanded and discussed in detail in the next chapter through examples or oral traditions.

In his study of Ojibwa ontology, Irvine Hallowell (1975) explains the co-existence in Ojibwa 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 Ojibwa ontology my illustration of Rapanui animate beings of the person class as sharing all the same fundamental structure; however, a binary categorization as the one offered by Hallowell is not effective to fully understand Rapanui ontology. Although I could follow Hallowell's categorization by arguing that the Rapanui language also distinguishes between human and other-than-human persons, namely *taŋata* and *varua* respectively, in Rapa Nui these categories may overlap and allow for others to transit between those two. In his analysis Hallowell explains that Ojibwa categories of persons may overlap as well, though his explanation relies exclusively in other-than-human persons' ability of metamorphosis. As I explain below, I propose that in the Rapanui case, the overlapping of the different categories of persons is given not only by the possibility of metamorphosis but also by the type of communication or lineage connections that different kinds of *taŋata* or humans may have with *varua* and *atua*, two categories of the other-than-human class.

*Taŋata* translates into both human and man; the female form is *vahine* (RAP. woman). Pre-contact Rapa Nui was a tribal society organized, like archaeologist Jo Anne Van Tilburg (1994: 86) explains, as a Polynesian chiefdom. As such, the *taŋata* organized in rank, which was

dictated by the degree of *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy) he or she possessed. *Ariki* and *ivi atua* were those occupying the highest positions in the social pyramid. The *ariki*, usually translated as king or chief, was the person with the most *mana*, which he inherited from the *atua*—commonly translated as god, though we shall see the term does not suffice—or the *ariki motoŋi*. *Ariki motoŋi* were those *ariki* ruling in Hiva, the homeland, and they go from ‘Oto ‘Uta to Hotu, first *ariki* of Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. *Ariki* were surrounded by the *ariki ma’ahu*, a council of advisors that guided the *ariki* based on the ‘*uruŋa* (*RAP.* visions, premonitions) that they experienced in *po atua* (*RAP.* revealing dreams).

After the arrival of Hotu A Matu’a to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa and his distribution of the land amongst his sons, the title of *ariki mau* was established. *Ariki mau*—also found as *ariki henua* (Englert 1948: 44)—was the ranking elder within the Miru *mata* (*RAP.* clan)<sup>21</sup> and acknowledged to be the hereditary leader of the entire island. Inherently within his person, the *ariki mau* possessed the highest and most respected *mana*. *Ariki mau* were surrounded by *taŋata honui* (*RAP.* wise man), lineage heads of 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 the priesthood class. The *ivi atua*, which literally translates into “bones of the *atua*” were responsible for performing burial rituals and certain initiation rituals. Van Tilburg refers to a “priest of lower grades” (1994: 90) she identifies as *taŋata taku*—probably a misspelling of *tohu* or *tahu tahu*

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<sup>21</sup> Hotu A 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’umaheke, who is said by oral tradition to have returned to Hiva, the homeland—and next on the line of succession. A detailed explanation of the distribution of the land is presented on Chapter Three of this thesis.

(*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 *taŋata tahu tahu*, when they are men.

*Ariki motoŋi*, *ariki ma’ahu*, *ariki mau*, *ivi atua* and *taŋata tohu* and *nuahine tahu tahu* are the persons that possessed the highest *mana*, and are all categories of the person class that the Rapanui identify as *taŋata*, or human, yet they all problematize the distinction human / other-than-human proposed by Hallowell and followed by scholars working on or revising theories of animism (Bird-David 1999; Harvey 2010; Ingold 2004; Morrison 1992<sup>22</sup>). According to Rapanui ontologies, *ariki mau* were *taŋata* that descended directly from *atua*, which are by definition non-human. *Atua*, usually translated as *god* (see for example Conte and Hotus 2000: 25; Englert 1948: 425; Lee 1994; Métraux 1941: 126; Van Tilburg 1994: 90) are venerated beings that have *mana* and are capable of metamorphosis, both attributes that Hallowell signaled as defining other-than-human persons (Hallowell 1975: 163). As direct descendants of the *atua*, the *ariki* inherited their *mana*, yet they were still *taŋata* or humans.

The *ariki ma’ahu*, council of advisers that guided the *ariki motoŋi*, the rulers of Hiva, also escape Hallowell’s distinction human / other-than-human persons. Although regarded as *taŋata*, or humans, the *ariki ma’ahu* were capable of metamorphosis or *kuhane hane*, an attribute that is associated to the visions they experienced in their *po atua*, dreams that have been usually translated as astral dream or astral journey. Hau Maka, the *ariki ma’ahu* that in the time of Matu’a had his *po atua* (*RAP.* revealing dream) where he visited Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa, is an example of this category of person. As discussed earlier, the *a’amu* of Hau Maka says that in his

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<sup>22</sup> Also discussed in his forthcoming article “Animism, Ethnological Misinterpretation, and the Hypothetical Foundations for a Post-Cartesian Anthropology.”

*po atua* his *kuhane* (RAP. soul) physically visited and traveled Te Pito O Te Kaiṛa, leaving tracks of his journey that later the seven explorers sent to the new land found. Hau Maka's vision of seven lands, his finding of an eighth, the exploration of the new land and the naming of its places occurred all while Hau Maka slept back in Hiva, the homeland.

*Ivi atua*, *taṛata tohu* and *nuahine tahu tahu* also problematize absolute categorizations. The figure of *ivi atua* presents this ambivalence in its name, where the noun *atua*, as noted above, a category of the person class that coincides with Hallowell's other-than-human persons, is determined by the noun *ivi*, which translates as bone. The etymology of the term alludes to both *ivi atua*'s functions and nature, for *ivi atua* were responsible of performing burial rituals, which entailed a direct communication with the *atua*. As explained earlier through the example of the *a'amu* of Nuahine Rarape Nui, where a *nuahine tahu tahu* overthrew the *moai* of Haṛa Te'e, the power of *nuahine tahu tahu* and *taṛata tohu*, women and men that casted spells, was in their speech through which they casted spells and charms. In certain cases they were capable of metamorphosis and the efficacy of their speech relied on their direct communication with the *varua*.

*Varua* are non-human persons that dwell on the land in diverse forms. As a means to accentuate *varua*'s power, I have defined 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. As we shall see in the examples of *a'amu* of *varua* discussed in the next chapter, the 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 finally *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>23</sup> In her revision of Hallowell's theory, Nurit Bird-David (1999) re-names 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

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<sup>23</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.



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 later, 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 in that it breaks with the tradition of defining the different categories of the person class based on the modernist concept of person (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”), an opposition that due to its absolutism does not work in the Rapanui case, where no absolute boundaries separate humans or *tanata* from other animate beings with whom they share their land and history. Although successful in the traditions it breaks, Bird-David’s unconsciously echoes, at least for me, the postmodern imaginary of superheroes, an association that immediately positions these “superpersons” in a fantastic world that exists only inside people’s minds. This idea would be in direct opposition to my proposal that Rapanui *a’amu* refer to stories as much as history. Consequently, to argue that these persons exist only in the fantasy of people would also contradict my claim that *a’amu* are 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 modernist and Western concepts of person and nature that are alien to Rapanui worldviews, and to highlight the reality 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 might resort to the idea of “omnipersons” in the following chapters as an aide to explain certain aspects of these beings, though I will refer to them as the Rapanui do, by calling them *varua*.

In the next chapter I broaden my exploration of Rapanui worldview by relating the three categories I introduced in this chapter, that is land, language and being, which I argue are fundamental to understand Rapanui worldviews and the present struggles of Rapanui people to reclaim control over their cultural heritage. As a means to situate this discussion within the terrain of the present and the concrete, I illustrate the relationships between land, language and being by drawing upon examples of Rapanui petroglyphs. The decision of resorting to petroglyphs responds to their efficacy in illustrating the relationship between these three main concepts of Rapanui worldviews both visually and materially.

Drawing upon examples of oral traditions associated to petroglyphs and of my own experience collaborating in a project documenting Rapanui petroglyphs, I will discuss how my collaborators and Rapanui people I know understand petroglyphs as capable of enabling knowledge, memory and intersubjectivity. As we shall see, petroglyphs serve as landmarks indicating the ancestral land of a particular *mata* (*RAP.* clan) or *hua'ai* (*RAP.* family), as much as landmarks around which the entire island family organizes its history and structures its memory. These landmarks elicit a performance of memory that usually takes the form of storytelling. As discussed earlier, storytelling in Rapanui combines different narrative forms that speak to an understanding of language as generative. When the storytelling that petroglyphs elicit occurs, the storyteller is not merely recalling his or her past but bringing it to the present; through the

recitation of a *pata'uta'u* or the performance of a *kai kai*, the storyteller is interacting and communicating with the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors). This interaction happens more vividly within sites in which petroglyphs are located because Rapanui people regard these sites as *kona tapu* (*RAP.* *tapu* places) for that the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of the persons depicted or alluded to in the petroglyph are thought to have stayed at that place.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LIVING AMONG *ATUA*, *TUPUNA* AND *VARUA*:

#### FROM ANIMISM TO RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

In this chapter I illustrate the ontological concepts of land, language and being drawing upon examples of three different types of petroglyphs and the *a'amu* or histories associated to them. The examples focus on petroglyphs of the types that following my collaborators and only for the purposes of this thesis I identify as *Papa Mo'a Ariki*, *Papa Mo'a Tanata*, and *Papa Mo'a Varua*. *Papa* means flat rock and is the word the Rapanui use to refer to the rock where a petroglyph was carved or incised. Archaeologists translate *papa* into panel. *Mo'a* refers to the idea of something, someone or somewhere to which the Rapanui owe respect because that thing, person or place is *tapu*. The third word in each name alludes to the class of person that type of petroglyph is related to. Through the illustration of petroglyphs, the discussion of their associated *a'amu* and references to my own experience in the field, this chapter brings a series of different voices to examine how the present generation of Rapanui think about their land and relate to other beings that dwell on it, as well as how they express this thinking and interactions through language.

In the first section I expand on the notion of *ariki* (*RAP.* king) and *atua* (*RAP.* god) through an example of a petroglyph of the *Papa Mo'a Ariki* type that illustrates the agency of petroglyphs in enabling memory, knowledge and intersubjectivity. The second section delves into the notion of intersubjectivity by focusing in two petroglyphs of the *Papa Mo'a Tanata* type, petroglyphs of humans, and their associated *a'amu* or histories that illustrate how the Rapanui engage in relationships with persons of the non-human class. Through these examples, and bridging the

works of Marilyn Strathern (1988) and Nurit Bird-David (1999), I refigure the notion of animism as relational epistemology. In the third section I expand on the notion of relational epistemology by exploring how the Rapanui dividuate non-human persons in the unification of a diversified world. To illustrate the possibilities of this relational epistemology I focus on the Rapanui notions of *vanaja* (*RAP.* language), *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy), *kuhane hane* (*rap.* metamorphosis), and *moe varua* (*RAP.* dreams) drawing upon examples of petroglyphs of the *Papa Mo'a Varua* type and their associated *a'amu* or histories.

### ***Papa Mo'a Ariki* | Ko Pae Rati Ko Tanjaroa**

In Chapter One I identified and discussed the different Rapanui categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) shaped by converting a natural landscape into a cultural geography they named Te Pito O Te Kaija. We saw how these diverse types of persons differ in the degree of power they possess, being the Rapanui categories of both *atua* (*RAP.* god) and *ariki* (*RAP.* king) the ones that have the most *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy). As with the other categories I presented in the previous section, these are inherent to Rapanui understandings of the land, and, as persons, Rapanui people interact with them both in ritual and every day contexts. In this section I will expand on the Rapanui concepts of *atua* and *ariki* to examine the intersubjective relations between land and being. For this purpose, I will draw upon examples of petroglyphs I have termed *Papa Mo'a Ariki*, specifically those of *ariki* Tanjaroa and Pae Rati.

In my definition of the different categories of person identified in Rapanui ontology, I explained how the concepts of *atua* and *ariki* problematize Irvine Hallowell's (1975) distinction human/other-than-human persons. While the concept of *atua* corresponds to the category I have

termed “omniperson” as the most powerful beings, *ariki* belong to the *taŋata* category yet they are genealogically connected to the *atua*. Acknowledging this connection some Rapanui people call certain *atua* indistinctly *atua* or *ariki*. A possible explanation for this identification of two seemingly different categories of beings could be that which Nurit Bird-David (1999) gives to explain the case of the Nayaka. As she argues, the Nayaka construe their idea of personhood by reciprocating relationships with beings, humans and others, with whom they share the local environment. When examining these sharing relationships Bird-David explains that the Nayaka do not dichotomize other beings but regard them as nested within each other (73). In a similar dynamic, the Rapanui recognize that *atua* are beings of a different class than that of *ariki* or *taŋata*, though they also appreciate that they share their land and their history with these other beings, which somehow voids this difference and absorbs their diverse nature into one “we-ness.” The main Rapanui *atua* are Hera, the Great *Atua*, and Make Make, the reinvented *atua* that the Rapanui began to worship after the crisis produced by internal wars. Another *atua*, also called *ariki*, is Taŋaroa.

Taŋaroa is an *atua*, usually referred to in the Pacific Studies field as *god*, who is found in oral traditions throughout Polynesia. Taŋaroa is generally identified as the lord of the seas, and is said to have had come to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa, where he died. The *a’amu* of Taŋaroa says that one day in Hiva, the Polynesian Lord of the Seas, Taŋaroa, had a discussion with his brother Te Teko, the Giant. Taŋaroa wanted to come to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. Te Teko challenged his brother saying that he could reach the East (i.e. Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa) in three steps. Taŋaroa said he would get to the island faster. To do so, he turned into a *pakia* (*RAP.* seal)<sup>24</sup>. He arrived at Hotu

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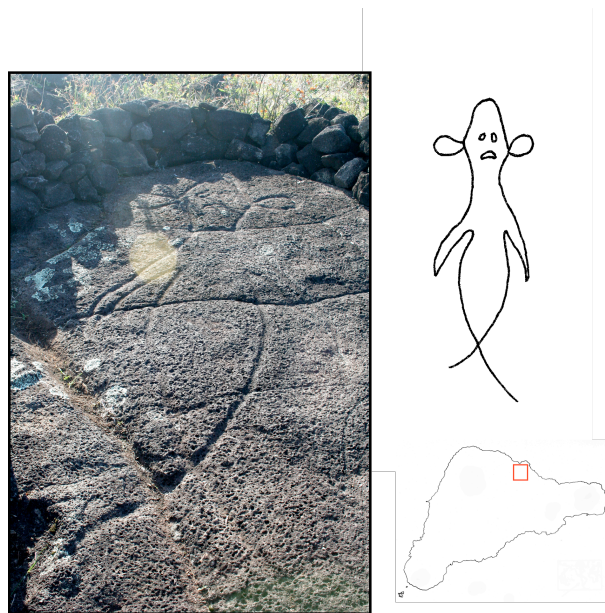
<sup>24</sup> Other versions say he turned into a dolphin or a whale (Tepano, Retu. Rapa Nui 2009. Personal communication).

Iti, in Tonjariki, at the east coast of the island. Some men were there and when they saw the seal they took it to cook it. Seeing their intentions, Tanjaroa shouted: “I am the *Ariki*, I am Tanjaroa, leave me be!” The men did not believe him. How could Tanjaroa, the Lord of the Seas, be a seal, they thought. Tanjaroa warned them again but they would not listen to him. The men then killed the seal and cut it up in pieces to cook it in an earth oven, but it did not cook well. They moved to Haŋa Ho’onu and tried to cook the seal there, but again it did not cook well. They moved from place to place trying to cook it. The seal continued to be raw. They then realized it was Tanjaroa who they had killed.<sup>25</sup>

In front of Mauŋa Mea Mea (*RAP*. Red Hill), in the north side of the island, is located a petroglyph that characterizes the journey of Tanjaroa and evokes his fate in Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. Up on a hill and with a splendid view to the ocean, the site is composed by two *papa*: *Papa Tanjaroa* and *Papa Pae Rati*. *Papa Tanjaroa* has an anthropomorphic petroglyph of a man with the body of a fish, alluding to the metamorphosis of *ariki* Tanjaroa. *Papa Pae Rati* has the petroglyph of a big fish with a little one inside its body, and a smaller fish that accompanies the main one. The small fish is called *Pae Rati*, which gives the name to the *papa*. The big fish is called *Niuhi*. The Rapanui interpret the presence of *Papa Pae Rati* in different ways, being the version that I have found most frequently that of *Niuhi* representing the fish form that *ariki* Tanjaroa took after his metamorphosis. Other versions identify *Niuhi* as a sea beast, though the people that told me this did not know how it relates to the *a’amu* of *ariki* Tanjaroa.

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<sup>25</sup> I based this synthesis of the *a’amu* of Tanjaroa on the versions I gathered from Piru Huki and René Tuki in July and August of 2010, respectively.



**Image 2.1** Petroglyph of Tanjaroa with a detail of the image and its location

The visual representation of Tanjaroa on the *papa* that takes his name highlights Tanjaroa’s capability of metamorphosis, an attribute held by other *atua* and, as we shall see later on this chapter, *varua* (*RAP.* “omnipersons”). Rapanui persons of the other-than-human class are capable of metamorphosis by their very nature, being their outward appearance only an incidental and circumstantial attribute of being. As Hallowell noted in his study of Ojibwa ontology, the “capacity for metamorphosis is one of the features that links human beings with the other-than-human persons in their behavioral environment” (Hallowell 1975: 163). The *a’amu* of Tanjaroa demonstrates that this same characterization is also applicable in Rapa Nui, where the attribute of *kuhane hane*, or metamorphosis, serves *atua* and *varua* to interact with *tanjata*, or humans, and participate in a shared behavioral environment. Like for the Ojibwa, metamorphosis in Rapa Nui is an “earmark of power” (Hallowell 1975: 163) as one of the characteristics that distinguishes *atua* and *varua*, the persons occupying the top rank on the power hierarchy of animate beings, from most *tanjata*. The image on the rock reminds the Rapanui of the history of Tanjaroa and his *mana* while it also serves as a vehicle for interaction. As we shall see later, when



I visited this petroglyph with my collaborators they would not only begin storytelling for me inspired on the image, but they would also engage in more deep interactions with Tanjaroa, greeting him asking for his permission to be there, thank him, talk to him. The *papa* is then not a “symbol” (Lee 1994) of Tanjaroa, nor does it represent the *atua*. Rather, the petroglyph evokes the memory of Tanjaroa and enables intersubjectivity, interaction between the *atua* and the people.

Animist approaches to the study of indigenous worldviews have had at the center the discussion of the agency of otherwise inanimate beings such as stones. Hallowell insightfully explained that one should interrogate not if stones do things of their own volition but if they engage in relationships. In his revision of animism and shamanism, Graham Harvey echoes Hallowell’s argument by proposing that “the key question here is not ‘is it alive?’ but ‘how should we relate?’” (Harvey 2010: 3). To truly understand petroglyphs as perceived in Rapa Nui these are also the questions that one should ask. It would not be appropriate to say that Rapanui petroglyphs are animate beings, although some of them do things of their own volition. When I ask Rapanui people whether petroglyphs were alive or not, they rarely say they are. To claim that Rapanui petroglyphs *contain* the *kuhane* (*RAP.* inner vital part) of an animate being would not be truthful either; their purpose is not to conceal for that would imply that the petroglyph is insulating that inner vital part from the environment. Rather, I suggest that Rapanui petroglyphs *enable*; petroglyphs enable memory, intersubjectivity and knowledge.

As for how petroglyphs enable memory, we saw in the previous section that landscape resounds for the Rapanui with narratives of collective history and personal experience. Borrowing Miriam Kahn’s (1996) words in her study of emotional landscapes in Wamira, Papua New Guinea, landscape “provides tangible forms for the mooring of memory” (Kahn 1996: 167).

The Rapanui concept of *kaiŋa* (*RAP.* land) is based on an understanding of landscape as the result of the actions of the *tupuna*, the ancestors. Landscape, then, *is* memory. And, as memory, landscape is subject to the cumulative nature of memory-work. The idea that the *tupuna* intervened the landscape to transform it into a cultural geography that resonates to the Rapanui as a landscape of memory evidences this cumulative nature of memory-work.

Petroglyphs are one of the means through which the *tupuna* intervened the landscape; today, the Rapanui regard them as a medium to perpetuate their memory and, as we shall see later on this chapter, to relate with their ancestors. Informed by Pierre Nora's (1989) study on memory, Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts (1996) challenge the notion of memory as a passive entity, and the mind as simply a repository from which memories can be retrieved, by arguing that memory is a dynamic social process of recuperation, reconfiguration, and outright invention that is always subject to cultural, physical, and historical settings that cause to take root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects. Based on this principle, the Roberts argue that memory is "often engendered, provoked, and promoted by visual images" (Roberts 1996: 25). Because of their reliance on visual images, petroglyphs are efficacious in this engendering, provoking and promoting memory, in a way that Rapanui people regard them as spaces where memory is living through the remembrance and organization of places, objects, personages, senses, and events.

Since I began doing research on Rapanui petroglyphs my collaborators have always emphasized the agency of petroglyphs in enabling memory and how important to protect them is for they *tell* the history of their people and keep their memories alive. This understanding of petroglyphs parallels Nora's term *lieux de mémoire* (1989: 12): landmarks around which past events structure present memory. *Papa Taŋaroa*, for example, serves as an activator of memory,

this is to say that it enables the memory of the *a'amu* of *ariki* Tājaroa for the memory of the *a'amu* itself is provoked by the visual information provided by the petroglyph. This visual information elicits visual, verbal, and performative arts in a way that Rapanui people speak, sing and dance their petroglyphs. They speak, sing and dance the *a'amu* of Tājaroa and they speak, sing and dance to, for and through Tājaroa; because petroglyphs provoke a performance of memory that at the same time enables them to engage in relationships with the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors).

In his revision of the concept of animism Tim Ingold (2004) criticizes the objectivism of animist theories and advocates for the need to find a mode of human understanding that has our engagement with the world as the starting point rather than our detachment from it. With this argument Ingold refigures the concept of animism as depending on experience, on our engagement and relationship with the world. By emphasizing the need of experience as a condition for animism Ingold problematizes objectivist approaches to the study of human and other-than-human relations by repositioning human beings as continuum of organic life rather than reducing them to objects of nature (27). In doing so, Ingold proposes experience as intrinsic to what he calls “the ongoing process of *being alive in the world*” (40), the being’s involvement in and engagement with an environment that at the same time contributes to the formation and definition of the beings’ own understandings of both the self and their orientations towards the world they live in. By proposing experience and engagement as conditions for animism Ingold refigures animist objectivism as relational intersubjectivity in that animism is no longer an attribute of beings, humans or not, but of their capability of being a continuum within a field of relations with others and the world.

Following Ingold, I suggest that the agency of petroglyphs relies on the possibility of engaging in relationships. Animacy is then a property not of the *papa*, the rock, itself, but “of their positioning within a relational field that includes persons as foci of power” (Ingold 2004: 36). Thus, *Papa Tanaroa* does not contain *ariki* Tanaroa, for the purpose of *Papa Mo’a Ariki* is not to enclose the vital essence of the *ariki* like a container, insulating them from immediate contact with the environment. To the contrary, *papa*, or rocks, enable rather than constrain, and they do so through the performance of memory they provoke, which permits the Rapanui to own the *tupuna*’s words, sympathize with their feelings, and make their *tu’a* (*RAP.* time), at least for the ephemeral time of the performance, cotemporal with their present. Feeling, remembering, and speaking are all aspects of an engagement with the world and the ancestors through which the self continually comes into being.

The agency of petroglyphs in enabling this relationship between *tanata* (*RAP.* humans), *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) and *varua* (*RAP.* “omnipersons”) speaks to an intersubjective relation with the world. This intersubjective involvement with the environment in everyday life is structured culturally and so vividly experienced that the Rapanui act as if they were dealing with persons who can understand what is being said to them and have volitional capacities as well. During 2010 and 2011 I worked on a project together with Rapanui activist and researcher Piru Huki consisting in documenting and recording petroglyphs and their related *a’amu*. In each of our road trips and expeditions, Piru asked for permission and thanked the *tupuna* before and after each documentation and recording. I was asked to do so as well. We were asking for permission to enter their territory and to interact with them, and we thanked them for showing themselves to us. On some occasions the petroglyph would not show itself properly to the camera. I usually attributed the image quality to lighting or angle issues. Piru’s response was quite different: the

*tupuna* did not want to show him or herself. In some cases she would try to convince them by talking or singing to them. In some others we could do nothing; we just needed to leave and come back another day no matter how much I would insist.

Interaction of the Rapanui with the *tupuna* or other beings of the other-than-human class in everyday life responds to their relational worldviews. Rapanui ontology is relational; the ways they *are* in the world are dictated by how they *relate* to the world. Hallowell has pointed out that self-identification and culturally constructed notions of the nature of the self “are essential to the operation of all human societies and that a functional corollary is the cognitive orientation of the self to a world of objects other than the self” (Hallowell 1975: 142). Through this cognitive orientation the behavioral environment of the Rapanui self becomes structured within a diversified world of objects other than the self, namely animals, rocks, natural phenomena and omnipersons. This understanding of *being* in the world can be illustrated in the case of the Rapanui by the manner in which the kinship term *tupuna* is used. The term *tupuna* means ancestor, and according to the Rapanui understanding of ontology, *tupuna* are not only human persons but also persons of the other-than-human category.

In the next section I will expand on the notion of *tupuna* and the relational understanding of being in the world that it entails. For this purpose, I will focus on examples of the type of petroglyphs my collaborators and I have termed for the purposes of this research *Papa Mo’a Tanjata*. *Papa Mo’a Tanjata* are those petroglyphs that relate to *tupuna* that were *tanjata*, or human *tupuna*. The ancestors carved these petroglyphs to honor someone’s memory, to acknowledge their power, dignity or honor. In doing so, the ancestors carved petroglyphs that recorded a particular episode of their histories, episodes in which we often evidence their relations with *tupuna* of the non-human class. To explain how these relations work, as well as

how they are perpetuated on time through the agency of the spoken word, I will draw upon examples of two *a'amu* that illustrate the relations between *taŋata* and animals, in the first case, and between *taŋata* and “omnipersons,” in the second; these are the *a'amu* of *Honu Ure Mea Mea* (*RAP.* Male Red Turtle) and *Moko A Raŋi Roa* (*RAP.* Lizard, Son of Raŋi Roa).

### ***Papa Mo'a Taŋata* | Ko Uho Te Uka and Ko Moko A Raŋi Roa**

In the previous section we began to see how Rapanui people construe their personhood by reciprocating relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others. In this section I will expand on this idea to explain how the Rapanui self is cognitively oriented to a world of subjects other than the self where these relationships are crystallized, making the self to become structured through a diversified world of human and non-human beings. Drawing upon examples of two petroglyphs of the *Papa Mo'a Taŋata* type and their associated *a'amu* (*RAP.* histories), I will discuss how this diversified world is regarded as a unified cosmos that creates a sense of “we-ness.” For these purposes I will briefly revise the concept of animism to refigure it as a relational epistemology.

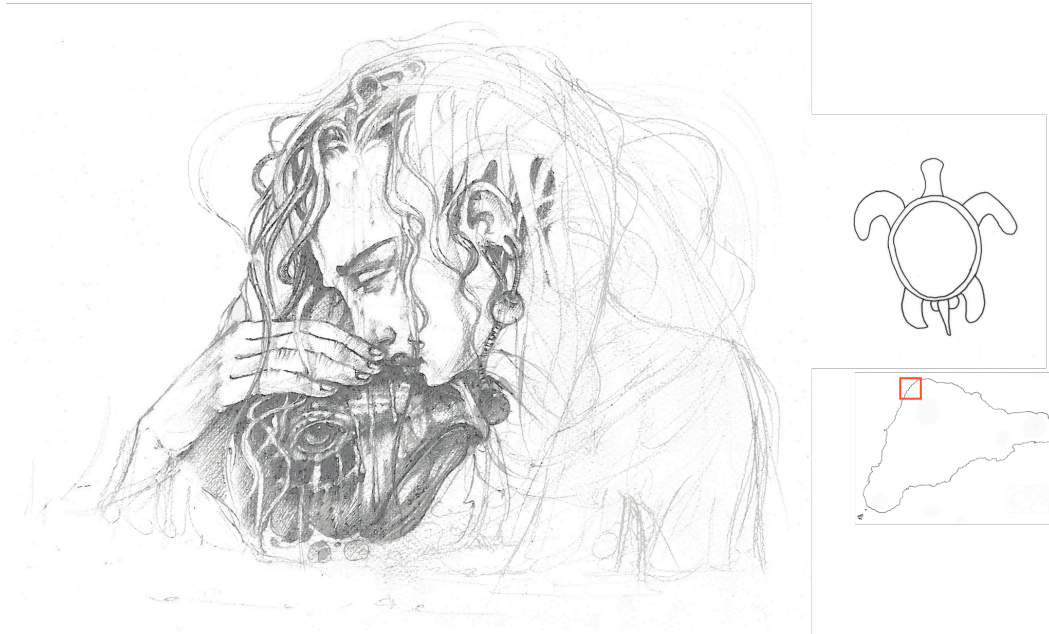
The Rapanui understandings of personhood result from a relational ontology that is based on a conception of person as “dividual.” Marilyn Strathern (1988) first coined this term in her study of the Melanesian society, where she noted that the irreducibility of the individual is a modernist notion for 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,” as a means 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 non-human, exists in Rapanui ontology insofar they engage in relationships.

The Rapanui repertoire of *a'amu* (*RAP.* histories) associated to *Papa Mo'a Tanata* eloquently illustrates this idea of person as dividual. In these *a'amu* we can see how *tanata* or humans engage in relationships with beings of the non-human class, namely animals, plants or stones. These animals, plants and stones are thought of as persons because of their participation within a relational world and, as persons, they have sentience, volition, and self-movement. They are capable of speech and reproduction. Partaking in a unified cosmos, these persons communicate and interact with *tanata*. I will illustrate this idea with petroglyph *Honu Ure Mea Mea* (*RAP.* Red Male Turtle) and its associated *a'amu*, *Ko Uho te Uka* (*RAP.* Uho, the Woman) to then explain Rapanui ontologies as relational epistemologies.

Located at Omohi, in the north coast of the island, *Honu Ure Mea Mea* is the only petroglyph of a male turtle together with one located at Ahu Tonjariki, in the south coast of the island. The Rapanui identify this petroglyph as *Honu Ure Mea Mea*, a turtle that forced young woman Uho to leave her land and to live for years on a foreign island until he acceded to take her back home. *Honu Ure Mea Mea* is an example of a person or dividual of the non-human class, of the animal class. As we shall see in the transcription of the *a'amu* I present below, in action and motivation this *honu* (*RAP.* turtle) is indistinguishable from human persons although he is set off from an ordinary animate being, a turtle. I must note, however, that although *Honu Ure Mea Mea* has human attributes, he does not present a human appearance, neither in the *a'amu* nor in his petroglyph. As Hallowell (1975: 153-4) explains, anthropomorphic traits in outward appearance are not the crucial attributes of the concept of person. Persons of the non-human class, Hallowell continues, may have human attributes that can be explicit—this idea brings to mind in the

Rapanui work how the sexual attributes of Honu Ure Mea Mea are represented in his petroglyph through a penis and testicles. But sometimes these attributes are simply implicit. Building from Hallowell, I do not think that the Rapanui “personify” natural objects or animals (1975: 152). Doing so would imply that, for example, Rapanui people first perceived Honu Ure Mea Mea as an ordinary animal and not a person, and we have no evidence of this.



**Image 2.2** Ko Uho Te Uka

Left: Piece of Te Pou Huke’s series *Uho Te Uka*. Te Pou Huke 2011.

Right: Detail of the image on the petroglyph of *Honu Ure Mea Mea* and its location.

Below I transcribe parts of the *a’amu* Ko Uho Te Uka as narrated to me by Luis Pate Paoa, “Papa Kiko,” in August of 2008. Papa Kiko was a renowned Rapanui musician, considered by the Rapanui to be the master of storytelling. 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. This *a’amu* was recorded at the hospital of Haŋa Roa, the only town of Rapa Nui, only a few weeks before his death. His health was already very weak yet he was willing to transmit his knowledge. He insisted I recorded everything and during our last afternoon together I asked about the petroglyph of Honu Ure Mea Mea. He told me this *a’amu*.



Close to Anakena, there is a place called Hana Ohio. There live the father of Uho, and the mother. Every time there was a nice day and the sea was good and quiet, the girl goes to a papa 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 tau ra reja [belt to hold the suit], and left it there. The turtle took it, and the girl said to her “Ah!” The turtle 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 other island. She got there and stayed there. Her family saw she’s not coming back [...] They made a pera.<sup>26</sup> I te tapu i te pera o Uho [...] 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 appears. 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 tau ra reja 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 the 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 stops his storytelling and 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 / Kaiŋa mata po’uri e / E Mahuna Te Ra’a / Kenu a’aku ē / Ta’e pe ‘uta / Pe to matou kaiŋa / Mata ma’eha era / I te uriŋa hana 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 hears her] Then he said, “Do you want to come back to your homeland?” She said yes, she wants to come back to her mother and father. Ah! 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 [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. Ah! And the turtle replied, “How are you going to pay me?” She points her body. “Ia, hai tatake”

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<sup>26</sup> In Rapanui, *tapu te pera* is a type of *tapu* places (see footnote n° 20), and it signals the place of a dead. *Tapu te pera* are forbidden on visitation, nobody can pass through it for respect to the dead that is living there. The creation of *tapu te pera* evidences the close relationship between the individual and the land that death brings out. As Howard Morphy (1995) points out in his study of Australian ancestral landscape, areas of land associated with a person because he or she visited them frequently when alive, “or because they are associated with his or her ancestral identity, being the conception place or place from which he or she was named, become closed, sometimes for many months. Animals from certain places cannot be eaten, songs cannot be sung, paintings cannot be produced. The land, like the person, becomes dead” (Morphy 1995: 199).

[Here, with my sex]. *The turtle accepted. Then she sat on the turtle, and left.*

*When she arrived at Hana Ohio, her place, where is her mother, the same place where she washed. She was sitting there, and her mother sees her. She said, "Ah!" 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 Hana Teteja 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 Hana Teteja. All the people were there, the girls with their suits and crowns. Uho was also there. Uho won. The most gracious girl, the happiest. They put 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 appears. People shouted, "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 to move away, and she sits like this. She sat on the ground. The bird went up and up, and falls down to Uho's lap. All the feathers fell down, and he turns into a child. People began shouting, "Ah! We thought she was a new girl, young. But she's an old woman, she has a child!" Embarrassed, she took the crown out of her head, went to her mother and father, and ran away.<sup>27</sup>*

The *a'amu* of Uho emphasizes for the Rapanui their worldview as a people strongly tied to their landscape, it reflects how they feel the land, a landscape that they respect, yearn, fear, tell, cry and sing; how they think of language as not merely representative but generative; and how they construe personhood. The relationship with the land is seen in the different episodes of this story. The creation of a *tapu pera* by Uho's parents speaks for the respect that the Rapanui owe to their land and the life that some places acquire when certain actions happen there and the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of a person becomes crystallized in the land. Uho's weeping talks about a land that is yearned for by the Rapanui when they find themselves apart from it. Uho's *taji* [*RAP.* to cry; songs motivated by yearning] accounts for the necessity of proclaiming it so that you will call what you are crying for. While singing her *taji* Uho was not only bringing her memories about her homeland, she was bringing her land to her, knowing that those words would bring her

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<sup>27</sup> Pate, Luis. *A'amu* "Uho Te Uka." Rapa Nui, 2008. Personal communication.

back home. Finally, the crucial participation of Honu Ure Mea Mea in the *a'amu* of Uho accounts for the concept of person as understood by most Rapanui. As discussed earlier, in action and motivation Honu Ure Mea Mea is indistinguishable from a human being. Likewise, Uho regards the *honu* (*RAP.* turtle) as a person in the moment she becomes conscious of her relatedness with the animal as she engages with him, as she “dividuates” him to such an extent that she depends on him.

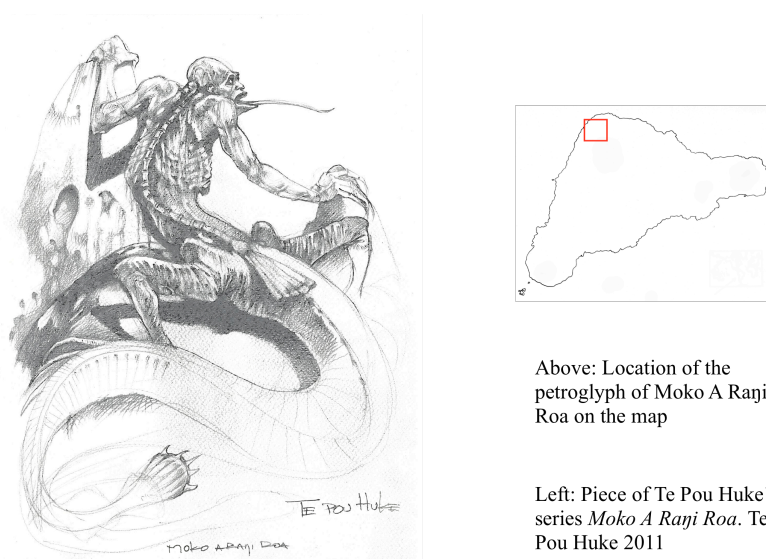
Nurit Bird-David (1999) derives from Strathern’s noun “dividual” the verb “to dividuate.” Expanding Strathern’s arguments on the differences between individuals and dividuals, Bird-David explains that to dividuate differs from to *individuate* in that when one individuates a human being one is conscious of that being in his or herself as a single separate entity; when one dividuates 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 dividuating “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 dividuate” illustrates that in Rapa Nui an animal such as a turtle, which are associated to longevity, can go from being an ordinary turtle to be a person. At first, Uho sees simply a *honu* approaching in the sea, but then he takes Uho’s *tau ra reŋa*, and an interaction begins that transforms him into a person. This transformation happens when Uho dividuates the *honu* and becomes conscious of her relatedness with him as Honu Ure Mea Mea.

Bird-David’s arguments on the concepts of dividual and to dividuate lead her to revise the so-called primitive animism, which she refigures as a relational epistemology. “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 a fundamental antithetic to science. Animistic beliefs were in his view wrong ideas resulting from mental confusion. Although the concept has been lately revised (see for example Hallowell 1975, Morrison 1992, Bird-David 1999, Ingold 2004, Harvey 2010), I think animism is still so strongly charged of those racist ideas that I prefer to avoid by borrowing Bird-David’s notion of 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 dividuating 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.

Following Bird-David's revision of animism we can conclude that the Rapanui are not animists for they do not dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as rocks or ordinary animals. Rather, the Rapanui understand the world and their *being* in-the-world through a relational epistemology that makes them conscious of the relatedness between them and persons of the non-human class that actively participate in a diversified world and whose differences they absorb in the construction of a unified cosmos. Through the examples of *a'amu* associated to *Papa Mo'a Ariki* and *Papa Mo'a Tanata* we saw how this relational epistemology is materialized in the way the Rapanui dividuate animals that are thought of as persons. In the first case, this process of dividualization was possible after the *tanata* realized that the animal they were trying to kill was *ariki* Tanaroa after he underwent metamorphosis, whereas the *a'amu* of Uho offered a more radical example in which the *honu* presented himself to the young woman in his original form, without it preventing Uho from dividuating him. I also discussed briefly how the *papa* or petroglyphs themselves have agency in that they present volition and can withdraw information; how they enable knowledge and memory, and how humans engage in relationships with them by talking and singing to them.



**Image 2.3** Moko A Rangi Roa

As a means of introducing dividual relations between humans and *varua* (RAP. “omnipersons”) that I will discuss next, I close this subsection with an *a’amu* associated to a *Papa Mo’a Tanjata* that shows how this relational epistemology operates not only with animals and rocks but also with *varua*. In Puna, a sector close to Omohi, in the north coast of the island, is located the petroglyph of Moko A Raŋi Roa, a man that fought the seven *varua* of Haŋa Oteo to avenge the death of his wife and daughter. The *a’amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa, which I transcribe below as told to me by Rapanui artist Te Pou Huke, illustrates the relation *tanjata* – *varua*, and how powerful persons bestow power to human beings.

*Moko A Raŋi Roa lived in Haŋa Pā Para. He was one of those matato’a [RAP. warrior] like Kaiŋa or Nune, very powerful and respected. He was from Haŋa Pā Para but his wife was from Haŋa Roa [...] He lived there with his wife and little daughter. The wife went regularly to visit her koro (RAP. parents) in Haŋa Roa [...] For those visits Moko A Raŋi Roa went fishing and prepared an umu [RAP. earth oven] to sent them food and shoots of a certain plant, taro, banana, and he prepared a haka veŋa [food to take away] for them. One day the wife said that time had come to visit her parents. Moko A Raŋi Roa was always watching for the time as well, so he went catch a tuna fish, some chickens, and he prepared a big umu [...] He tied up as much food as he could to the woman’s taropa [RAP. backpack], and the wife left.*

*She went by Ara Roa Ra Kei<sup>28</sup>, passed Haŋa O Teo, walked bordering Omohi, passed Tahai, and then took a road that went to the center of Haŋa Roa. A drizzle was coming. In that sector there was another road that went from Pea to Vaihu. In that time were the haka ŋaru [RAP. surf] competitions so youths from all over the island had gathered at Haŋa Roa to do haka honu [RAP. surf] for the competitions. When the rain came the wife told her daughter, “let’s go hide from the rain in that karava [RAP. small cave].” While hiding there they saw the young men coming back from the beach [...] Then two appeared wearing two white feathers in their pukao [RAP. headdress], meaning they were Ōa Ruti [a clan], bad people. If we were in the jungle, this was like seeing the lions. You have no way out. The woman looked at her daughter and said, “Looks like we’re done here.” And they were. The two men beat them, ate their food, and took them to Vaihu.*

*When in Vaihu they sacrificed the woman and her child. They took off their guts, cut off their hairs and nails, and left them apart. Always at that time of night a nua [RAP. old woman] wandered around looking for food, watching if something was left. And the nua saw this scene. That was the only house that had a fire. All houses were sleeping; they were the only ones [awake]. They were still slaughtering the girl and the woman. Then the nua*

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<sup>28</sup> *Ara Roa Ra Kei* was the principal road of the island. It circumvented the island and was the only safe way through which you could walk through the territory of the different *mata* (RAP.clans).

got closer and the men felt her. They spoiled her, “no, there’s nothing to eat.” The other said, “give her a piece of tuna fish, some sweet potato.” The nua received the pieces and took the nails of the girl and the woman. She wrapped them in a mahute [RAP. barkcloth] and took it with her. She knew that at some point someone could use that information. So the other two had their feast. At that time, if you made a tuna fish umu, next day you made an umu with the same tuna fish, this way you dehydrated it and the food didn’t go bad. That they did with these two bodies.

The moons passed and Moko A Raŋi Roa continued working at his place. He wasn’t worried because he knew his wife and daughter were at her parents’. The wife used to stay there to help her nua [RAP. mother], cleaning the house, listening to stories. So Moko A Raŋi Roa didn’t worried in the first moon. At the second moon he said, “can’t be they’re not back.” He thought his parents in law might be sick, too old, so he prepared another haka veŋa to bring to them [...] Then he came and found it strange that the house was rau tu hiva. Rau tu hiva is when the grass hasn’t been mowed, the banana trees haven’t been pruned, all the banana leaves are dry. When you can’t feel the energy of the koro. It also seemed strange for him that there weren’t children playing around [...] and he began to have a hunch. He entered the house and saw the koro [RAP. father] [...] and the nua [RAP. mother] very weak. So Moko A Raŋi Roa gave them what he had brought to them [...] Moko asked for his wife and child and they said, “From that time you came six moons ago we haven’t seen them.” “How come,” said Moko, “I sent her here two moons ago with food.” And he saw something had happened. So he immediately became a heva [RAP. widow], he entered in trance. The heva begins to look for a mouse, takes a mouse alive and puts it in his mouth, hanging from its tail. Alive. This is the way for the people to identify you. And if you have any information, you get closer, take the mouse out of his mouth, and give him sugar cane to clean it.

Moko A Raŋi Roa went around the island. In the first spin he passed through Haŋa O Teo. In Haŋa O Teo there were seven varua [RAP. omnipersons]. Another varua followed Moko, that was Raraku, the varua of his territory [...]. When they got to Haŋa O Teo, Raraku saw the other seven varua and warned him, “Moko, beware! Here comes Te Arero!” And Moko fought him. Moko was his name because he always carried a moko [a wooden carved lizard] in his hand<sup>29</sup>. So with that moko he eliminated the first varua. The same for the second spin. The same for the third spin. He first encountered Ko Te Arero, then Ko Te Emu, then Ko Te Taoraha, then Ko Te Maŋo, Ko Te Titeve, Ko Te Prau Nuku, Ko Te Ihu. In the fifth and sixth spin Moko had no energy left. The mice rotted and he threw them away and replaced them with a new one to continue his search, his heva. When people saw him pass they bowed but did not looked at his eyes. And they sang Heva-aa heva-aa. Ko te Moko A Raŋi Roa e ‘ati ‘ana i te kopeka mo ta’ana vi’e mo ta’ana poki. Heva-aa heva-aaa [RAP. Is the widow, is the widow. Moko A Raŋi Roa who begins his revenge for his woman, for his child. Is the widow, is the widow].

In his sixth spin, he passed through Vaihu. The nua had seen him passing before but it was always too late when she saw him. So now she went to the place he always passed by [...] and when he came again, the nua raised her hand and told Moko to come. Moko came.

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<sup>29</sup> Another version says that he transformed into a *moko* or lizard to fight the *varua* of Haŋa Oteo.

*The nua didn't say a word. She took off the mouse and washed his mouth with sugar cane, then she gave him food. Then she spoke, "What you're looking for is in that house, where the smoke is." She opens the mahute and shows Moko the nails. But Moko had no energy left. So he came back to his town to recover and to gather his matato'a [RAP. warriors]. Before leaving she asked the nua at what time they went out to do tuku [RAP. dive]. She said, "In the morning, when the sun is beginning to rise, they are all doing tuku." All the men; women stay upwards [...].*

*Moko gathered his matato'a and when all the men got into the sea to do tuku they took their hami [RAP. loincloth] that they left on the rocks because the water damages the mahute [RAP. barkcloth, of which they are made]. Then the men got off the water, didn't find their hami, looked upwards and saw Moko's matato'a. Moko spoke, "I am Moko A Raŋi Roa, and I want those two over there." And a bloody war began in which Moko did not forgive anybody; children, elders, women, all were killed. That's why that bay is called Haŋa Te'e. Haka te'e means to take one's guts off. That was a red sea. All the people were killed, and the two men kept prisoners looking how Moko killed their people. "No, please, stop it, stop it," they begged Moko pai. Moko put aside the women and took the two men to the ahu of Haŋa Pā Para. He showed them his house, "Look, in this umu pa'e I made umu of ko'iro (RAP. conger), kahi (RAP. tuna), honu (RAP. turtle), of all the most delicious species to feed my little girl and my woman. In this same umu pa'e to you two I'll eat." And there he eliminated them both and ate them.*

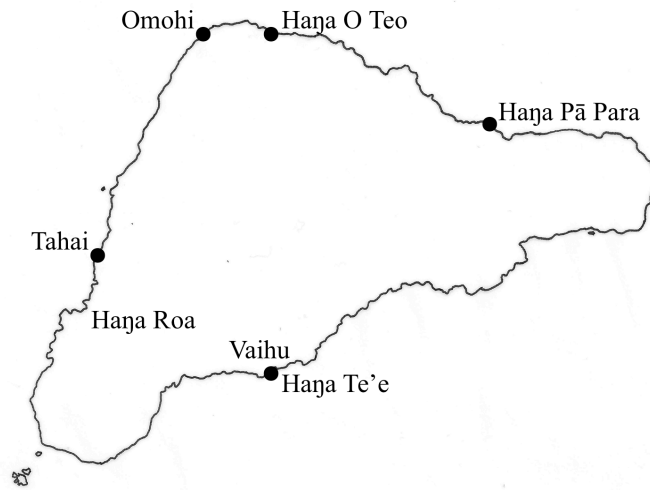
*There was one varua that got out alive. Moko continued his heva once again because Raraku told him there was one varua left. He came back to Haŋa O Teo but didn't find him. Time passed and Moko had a child, Moko Iti One day the boy was catching koreha [RAP. eel] when some older boys came and took the big koreha he had caught. They were from Haŋa O Teo. Moko Iti came back home crying and told his father. Moko A Raŋi Roa went back to Haŋa O Teo [...] He said to the boys, "I'm who killed the varua of Haŋa O Teo. If you don't give the koreha back to my boy something will happen here." People knew who Moko A Raŋi Roa was. They came and give Moko Iti his koreha.<sup>30</sup>*

The *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa gives us another example of dividualization, that conscious relatedness and engagement with beings other than the self. While the *a'amu* of Taŋarua and then the *a'amu* of Uho illustrated cases of dividualization between humans and animals, the *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa shows us how this dividualization can also happen between *taŋata* or human and *varua*, "omnipersons."

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<sup>30</sup> Huke, Te Pou. *A'amu* "Ko Moko A Raŋi Roa." Santiago, 2010. Personal communication.





**Image 2.4** Map of the places mentioned in the *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa

As Hallowell (1975: 163) explains, within the category of persons there is a graduation of power. In Rapanui ontology, *atua* and *varua* or “omnipersons” occupy the top rank in the power hierarchy of animate beings. Human beings do not differ from them in kind, but in power; and power of this degree can only be acquired by *tanjata* or humans through the help of *atua* and *varua*. This acquisition of power can be seen in the *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa when he fought the *varua* of Haŋa O Teo assisted by *varua* Raraku, protector of his territory. Moko could defeat the *varua* of Haŋa O Teo only because he had acquired a high power from *varua* Raraku. In the next section I outline the relation *tanjata* – *varua* by focusing primarily in the Rapanui notions of *vananā* (*RAP.* language), *kuhane hane* (*RAP.* metamorphosis), *mana* (*RAP.* power, efficacy) and *moe varua* (*RAP.* dreams), all means that enable interaction and communication between the *varua*'s and *tanjata*'s world.

### ***Papa Mo'a Varua* | Ko Kuha Ko Rati and Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu'a**

Together with the *kuhane* (*RAP.* soul) of the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) the Rapanui share their land with powerful beings they call *varua*. In this section I will continue to discuss Rapanui

relational epistemology by focusing on how they relate with these powerful beings. To illustrate this relationship I will draw upon examples of *a'amu* associated to *Papa Mo'a Varua*, or petroglyphs of *varua*, which usually signal the territory of these beings. As a means to contextualize *varua* as participatory agents of Rapanui life, I will discuss how they intervene in everyday life as part of a unified cosmos and how the Rapanui respond to this intervention. For this I will refer to the Rapanui concept of *moe varua* (*RAP.* dreams).

*Varua* are other-than-human persons that dwell on the land in diverse forms. In Chapter One I defined these beings as “omnipersons,” as a means to highlight the characteristics of *varuas'* power. By this definition I wanted to emphasize the attributes that the Rapanui give to *varua* as persons capable of perceiving all things and being in all places because of their ability of metamorphosis or *kuhane hane*. 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. The *varua's* universe is then a conceptual ensemble of all possible universes. The Rapanui always highlight the “intelligence” of *varua*, who can cheat on humans. When discussing different *a'amu* of *varua*, Mihaera Pate explained me that *varua* change their names for humans to not identify them. So in one *mata* (*RAP.* clan) they can present themselves with a given name and appearance and then move to the territory of another *mata* with a new name and a new appearance.<sup>31</sup> This change of names makes it difficult for humans to identify and beware of *varua*, being easily outwitted and believing they were humans just like them. Because of this change of names and appearances, some *a'amu* of *varua* overlap and get

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<sup>31</sup> Pate, Mihaera. Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.

confused in a way that a storyteller descending from a certain *mata* (*RAP.* clan) will name *varua* or tell episodes that for someone from another *mata* are the names of other *varua* or episodes of other *a'amu*.

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. Examples of *varua rake rake* are the seven *varua* of Haŋa Oteo referred to in the *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa. 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). As we could see in the *a'amu* of Moko A Raŋi Roa, among the universe of *varua* we also find good *varua* that are protectors of a particular *mata* (*RAP.* clan). Some people call them *Varua Ho Nui O Te Kaiŋa*, good *varua* of the land (*RAP. o te kaiŋa*: of the land), though they usually go by simply *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. An example of these protector, place-specific *varua* is that of Raraku, the *varua* that assisted Moko A Raŋi Roa to fight the seven *varua 'ino* of Haŋa Oteo. Raraku is a *varua ho nui o te kaiŋa*, protector of the area where Moko A Raŋi Roa lived. The Rapanui distinguish a final 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 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 Vaiŋa to seduce a

young man by name Ure A Vai A Nuhe (*RAP*. Young Man Son of Vai A Nuhe). These two *varua* were immortalized in a petroglyph located close to Haŋa Rau, the bay now known as Anakena. The *a'amu* associated to this petroglyph is called *Ko Kuha Ko Rati*, which I transcribe below as told to me by Mihaera Pate.

*Kuha and Rati are two varua, two female varua. These two varua, similarly to Kava Aro and Kava Tu'a—or maybe they were the same because as I said the varua can change from clan to clan, they are very intelligent. They can be called like this here but be called differently in another clan. That thing is delicate. Kuha and Rati are two varua that always listened a boy called Ure who climbed the trees and sang. The varua liked it when he sang. Ure was at that age of puberty, when he was beginning to be a man. And these varua listened to Ure when he went up the trees to sing. They liked it very much how the young man sang that he wanted him for them. The way for them to have him was by killing him; that way his body would become a spirit and only then they could have him for them. So these varua every time Ure went up the trees to sing they listened to him, and listened and listened until they fell in love with him. Every time Ure went up the trees to sing there was another person looking from above. And this person realized, without Ure noticing it, that those two varua wanted him for them [...].*

*This a'amu has two pata'uta'u [RAP. recitations]. The first pata'uta'u is called Ko Kuha Ko Rati, there's a kai kai [RAP. string figure] of it too. It says [Miha sings] Ko Kuha Ko Rati / te manu i haka 'eu e / ku a'eu / ku a taria i / to maua kuhane / ko au ko mahaki / ki Hiva ki O Vake Vake [RAP. Kuha and Rati / the birds are strong and eye-catching / Are they solid / to take / our souls / me and my sister / to Hiva, to O Vake Vake?] This is the pata'uta'u of the varua that wanted to kidnap the boy to take him to Hiva. [...] And then there's the pata'uta'u of the person that looked at what was happening down there. That pata'uta'u says [Miha sings] E Ure A Vai A Nuhe / ku'a aha / kua tikea koe / rakutia / mai kuku mea mea / e Ure te repa e [RAP. Hey Ure A Vai A Nuhe / think: what is that? / see the lacerated bodies / the nails red / hey, Ure]. In this pata'uta'u this person is warning him that Kuha and Rati painted her nails of red, warned him to beware. This pata'uta'u sang that person that saw what was happening and told him [Miha sings] E Ure A Vai A Nuhe / ku'a aha / kua tikea koe / rakutia / mai kuku mea mea / e Ure te repa e. That person was saying be careful because there are two female varua that paint their nails of red and they want you, so you wake up or they are going to take you [to O Vake Vake].<sup>32</sup>*

Isabel Pakarati, considered in the island to be the master of *kai kai*—a ritual and mnemonic performance consisting of string figures resembling a cat's cradle accompanied by a *pata'uta'u* or recitation—told me this same *a'amu* with a slight yet very interesting variant. According to

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<sup>32</sup> Pate, Mihaera. *A'amu* “Ko Kuha Ko Rati.” Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.

her version the second *pata'uta'u* was not a warning from a third party but Ure A Vai A Nuhe's response to the two *varua* Kuha and Rati.

During 2007 and 2008 I directed a research project that consisted in the study of *kai kai* as a mnemonic performance that alternatively records the history of Rapa Nui. For that project I worked very closely with Isabel Pakarati, who became my professor in the art of *kai kai*. Considered to be a connoisseur of this ritual, Isabel inherited her talent and knowledge from her mother, Amelia Tepano. When teaching me the different *kai kai*, she would always note how careful I should be because when performing *kai kai* and reciting *pata'uta'u* I was in direct interaction with *varua*, and that could be dangerous. "It is important that you know this," she would say, "*kai kai* is not made by human beings; *kai kai* is made by *varua*. The *varua* do the *kai kai* and they recite the *pata'uta'u*, and humans listen and see. Humans learned it from them, and when doing a *kai kai*, humans are responding to the *varua*."<sup>33</sup> One of the many times she made this point, she told me the *a'amu* of Kuha and Rati and as a final note, she said,

*For example, Kuha and Rati said Ko Kuha Ko Rati / te manu i haka 'eu e / ku a'eu / ku a taria i / to maua kuhane / ko au ko mahaki / ki Hiva ki O Vake Vake [RAP. Kuha and Rati / the birds are strong and eye-catching / Are they solid / to take / our souls / me and my sister / to Hiva, to O Vake Vake?]. So the prince, who is Ure A Vai A Nuhe, responds with another pata'uta'u saying E Ure A Vai A Nuhe / ku'a aha / kua tikea / te rakutia / mai kuku mea mea / o'ou e Ure te repa e [RAP. I, Ure A Vai A Nuhe / think: what is that? / I've seen lacerated bodies / the nails red / I, Ure]. So, what does it mean what the prince said? That he's seeing two devils, two varua with their nails well painted, very beautiful, you see? flirting with him to make him fall for them, thinking that he doesn't know that they are varua. But he knows it very well that he won't be with them because he knows they are the varua Kuha and Rati.*<sup>34</sup>

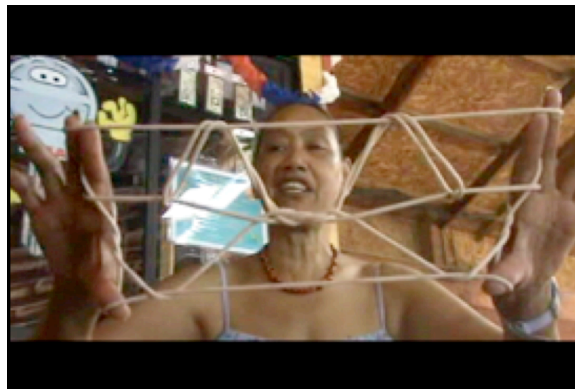
Isabel's version of the *a'amu* and the emphasis it gives to the second *pata'uta'u* as being Ure A Vai A Nuhe's response to Kuha and Rati accounts for her understanding of *kai kai*, shared by

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<sup>33</sup> Pakarati, Isabel. Rapa Nui, 2008. Personal communication.

<sup>34</sup> Pakarati, Isabel. *A'amu* and *kai kai* "Ko Kuha Ko Rati." Rapa Nui, 2008. Personal communication.

many in the island, as a language of the *varua*. Her concerns on how careful I should be when reciting a *pata'uta'u* reflects at the same time the Rapanui understanding of language as generative I discussed in Chapter One. When reciting a *pata'uta'u* one is not merely referencing or representing the world, in this case the *varua*'s world, but rather interacting with the world and the beings that partake in it. Through the very act of recitation, words acquire agency, *varua* can listen to them and you might be calling them. Such is the *mana* or efficacy of the spoken word that most Rapanui would not recite a *pata'uta'u* at any place or any time because of the possibility of those words being recited to *do* something to someone.



**Image 2.5** Isabel Pakarati performing *kai kai Ko Kuha Ko Rati*  
Video capture, Jacinta Arthur 2008

As discussed earlier, *pata'uta'u* were created with a particular intention and were meant to produce some effect. We saw how *ariki* Matu'a recited a *pata'uta'u* to convert the three sons of Te Ta'aŋa into three islets for them to stay in the new land as the father has ordered; how his son, *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a recited a *pata'uta'u* to call his *varua*, Ko Kuihi and Ko Kuaha, to take him back to Hiva, the homeland. We saw how *pata'uta'u* were the medium through which *nuahine tahu tahu* casted spells, as was the case of the *a'amu* of Nuahine Rarape Nui, who with the *mana* of her *pata'uta'u* overthrew the *moai* of Haŋa Te'e. We see now in the *a'amu* of Kuha and Rati how a *pata'uta'u* was recited either by someone to warn Ure A Vai A Nuhe or by Ure himself to

respond to the *varua*, and to note he knew who they were.

The Rapanui are well aware of the *mana* of *pata'uta'u* and the spoken word in general today. When collecting these *a'amu* working with collaborators of different ages, gender and lineage, they were all reluctant to recite *pata'uta'u* at any place and at any time. Some of them would recite certain *pata'uta'u* only at a given place; some others would never recite a particular *pata'uta'u* because it was meant to call *varua* from a territory other than his or hers. Some other *pata'uta'u* are not to be recited by anyone at any place. An example of this kind of feared *pata'uta'u* is that of the *a'amu* of Nuahine Rarape Nui, the one that ended up with the overthrow of the *moai*, which I have never been able to hear because every time I ask, they say its recitation could be too dangerous for the people of that place.

*Pata'uta'u* of *a'amu* of tricksters alike *varua* are not dangerous in the sense they can do bad to someone, as that of Nuahine Rarape Nui, yet people are still reluctant to recite them in places other than those dominated by the *varua* that created them because through their recitation they might call those *varua* and make them come to possess them in dreams. One day in December of 2011, I was discussing different *a'amu* of *varua* with my collaborator Moi Moi Tuki at his place in Vaihu. He was explaining these were *varua* that came to take possession of bodies. Then I asked about Kuha and Rati and he suddenly stopped. After a long silence he spoke, “you know how I am, Jaci, you know how these things are. I can’t tell an *a'amu* from Anakena here. Certainly not *varua a'amu* because then the *varua* from here will get mad of me and will come and get me. As soon as you leave, they will come and get me.”<sup>35</sup> What Moi Moi was saying is that the *varua* will come to his dreams.

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<sup>35</sup> Tuki, Moi Moi. Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.

The Rapanui are a dream-conscious people. Similarly to what Lee Irwin (1994: 12) noted in his study of Native American visionary traditions of the Great Plains, most Rapanui people give dreams a strong ontological priority. When the Rapanui think autobiographically they include remembered events that have occurred in dreams. For them, dreams are primary sources of knowledge and power, which makes dream experiences to be of vital importance, sometimes even more significant than the events of daily waking life because in dreams they come into direct communication with the *tupuna* (RAP. ancestors) and *varua*. “You’ve had experiences of contact with *varua*, right?” Moi Moi asked. He listened carefully and then continued,

*You’re lying down, calmed, and you feel. With your eyes awake but you’re asleep. You’re lying down and suddenly you feel yourself possessed. [...] When I lived in the ‘uta [RAP. country side], not here, upwards, when I was younger, then I really saw rainbows [allusion to the a’amu Ko Vi’e Moko Ko Vi’e Kena, two female varua that were first seen by young man Heru A Patu in a rainbow]. There was no light, none of these comforts. It was all pae pae [RAP. rudimentary houses], all ‘uta, only fire. And I was all the time practicing, remembering, and doing pata’uta’u, so I brought mana. Awake nothing happened. But then I went to sleep, and they were all there. Mi body, my mind, is sleeping. But in the sub-sense there’s a scene--- they are there. I am conscious, awake that I am myself; that I live here, that I am here, that I just went to sleep. And suddenly, there’s a beauty, a wonderful, a gorgeous woman. But then the woman, instead of woman, drives like a tail, as if of metal, through my ass. And that’s not beautiful anymore. [...] You feel hypnotized; she’s possessing you. Scientifically, you say it “she’s possessing you.” Culturally, it’s said “she’s raping you.” [...] You feel it in all your body. She’s digging something, putting something. So it’s only the image of a woman, but is not a woman. They are varua, varua from another universe. It’s true all this that I’m saying.<sup>36</sup>*

As Moi Moi explains, the actual perceptual experience of the *varua* during a waking state becomes even more vividly in dreams, where the same *varua* are seen, heard and felt. The Rapanui word for dream, *moe varua*, accounts for this fact, for it literally translates into “sleeping with *varua*.”

Because of this space of interaction between humans and *varua* that dreams provide, a

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<sup>36</sup> Tuki, Moi Moi. Rapa Nui, 2011. Personal communication.



common understanding of dream experiences among Rapanui people is that of dreams as sources of memory, knowledge and power. In his examination of the connectedness between the behavioral and sensorial environment of the self, Hallowell (1975: 166) related dreams to memory by arguing that experiences undergone when awake or asleep are interpreted as experiences of self. Memory in Rapa Nui has a connotation of possession. Far from being a mere mental operation, memory is something you live with, something that shapes you and that needs to be proclaimed and experienced in both waking life and dreams. Rapanui language is eloquent in this respect in that the word that signifies memory is *ma'u a'au*, which literally translates into *to carry on with you*. And what you carry on with you is what you have lived in both waking and sleeping states. Memory includes what is seen, heard, and felt in dreams. Experiences of the self when awake and when dreaming are equally self-related and function integrally with each other in that they both enter the field of self-awareness. Memory in Rapa Nui is also tightly related to knowledge and wisdom since the memory you carry on with you makes you *know*; memory becomes knowledge. The etymology of the word that signifies *to know*, that is, *ma'a*, speaks for this relation for it is a direct derivation of *ma'u a'au* (*RAP.* memory). As part of the memory-work, dreams are for the Rapanui also a source of knowledge. In the context of dreams the Rapanui engage in a face-to-face personal interaction with the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) and *varua*, receiving from them important revelations that are a source of assistance to them in daily life.

For most Rapanui, during dreams the world is opened up to the dreamer, the world is revealed to them. Due to powerful insight, many Rapanui attach such a tremendous importance to dreaming as a source of knowledge, for as Tim Ingold notes in his revision of Hallowell's work, "the knowledge revealed through dreams is also a source of power." Because of this actual personal interaction, in dreams is where the Rapanui get the closest to *varua* and *tupuna* (*RAP.*

ancestors). In dreams, the worlds of humans and other-than-humans beings become one as in any other situation. The Rapanui interact with *varua* and *tupuna* in waking states as well—as noted earlier, the Rapanui talk to them, the *varua* give or withdraw information, and as we shall see later, the Rapanui feed them—but in dreams humans not merely interact with them but enter their world and acquire their *mana*. Hallowell illustrates this point by noting that in dreams “we find the instability of outward form in both human and other-than-human persons succinctly dramatized” (1975: 167) for persons of both categories undergo metamorphosis. This symbiosis can be seen in the Rapanui concept of *po o te poki*, dreams in which the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) and *varua* reveal to pregnant women characteristics of the child that will be born. The dreamer has recurrent visions of different animals one of them is her child; she has to distinguish which of those animals is her child so that his or her sex, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses will be revealed to the mother.

In their dreams, the Rapanui also meet the *tupuna* and *varua* protagonists of *a’amu*. We discussed how *varua* protagonists of *a’amu* possess humans, as explained by Moi Moi Tuki. But this meeting with characters of *a’amu* in dreams is not always disturbing. Especially with protector *varua* these experiences are rather revealing, and the dreamer “carry on activities with them in a familiar landscape, albeit viewed from an unfamiliar perspective, revealing secrets of the environment that one may not have noticed before but whose presence is invariably confirmed by subsequent inspection” (Ingold 2004: 41). I witnessed these revealing interactions between humans and *varua* in many occasions while working with my colleague Piru Huki in our project of recording and documenting petroglyphs.

During my field seasons in the winters and summers of 2010 and 2011 we used to make expeditions to very remote areas of the island. No roads go to these places; neither do people live

in them. During weeks, we traveled these areas on horse and sleeping in caves. As Piru would always point out, we were in *varua*'s lands, which required that we did a series of rituals for them to protect us. Every time we got to a cave at night, we would light a fire to call the protector *varua* of the place. When eating, we would put some food in the fire to feed the *varua* so that they would stay with us. Sometimes that would be the last food that was left, but Piru would not mind, next day we would go fishing. Before documenting a petroglyph Piru would ask for permission and would introduce me to her or him. If they did not want to show themselves, Piru would sing and talk to them. And at night, they would always show up in the caves. In dreams they revealed information about their history and the place; sometimes they would even guide our expedition, showing the way in dreams for us to find that petroglyph we were looking for.

As mean of recapitulation we can conclude that the Rapanui identify different categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) shaped by converting a natural geography into a cultural landscape they named Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa. Although differing in the degree of *mana* they possess, all animate beings of the person class are unified conceptually in Rapanui thinking in that they share a same fundamental structure—an inner vital part that is enduring and an outward form which can change—, and attributes such as self-awareness and understanding, personal identity and autonomy, mobility, speech and volition. Occupying the top rank in the power hierarchy of animate beings are the Rapanui concepts of *atua* and *varua*, usually translated as “gods” and “spirits.” These beings interact with *taŋata* or humans in awaking and sleeping states. I will close this section with another *a'amu* of *varua*, which for me perfectly illustrates what we have been discussing about the relation *taŋata* – *varua* and its infinite possibilities. This *a'amu* is called Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu'a, also known as Ko Pikea

Uri, which I transcribe as told to me by Mihaera Pate.

*They too were two, Ko Kava Aro and Ko Kava Tu'a. The boy was called Ure A Oho Vehi. He was born blond. The a'amū 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 [...] they wanted him for them. And they kidnapped the boy. They kidnapped him when his father went fishing. They came 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 until the boy fell asleep. They wrap him in his moeņa [RAP. mat] and took him. They hid him in Poike, in holes that there are next to the cliff. And they went to Hiva to bring io io ranjī, poison. [...]*

*But what happened. Right there it was Nuahine Pikea Uri [RAP. Old Woman Black Crab] looking at the scene. Her mana was to convert herself into pikea [RAP. crab], because nobody could go all the way up there. She had that mana of turning into pikea and she went up the entire cliff until she got there. There she saw the boy and saw something strange. She saw the varua leave and she realized it. The nua, intelligent. So she enters, sees the moeņa and the boy wrapped inside. So she says, "Hey, wake up and listen to what I will tell you. You were kidnapped and brought here." And the nua says, "don't eat anything those people bring you." She told him to stand at the mouth of the cave. She prepared an umu [RAP. earth oven], she prepared chicken, everything. And said, "put this food inside your hami [RAP. loincloth] and save it well 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 ashamed 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. Don't worry because I'll be down the cliff. All the food you throw I'll take it and hide it." And like this he lived, and lived, and lived. [...] One day passed, and another day, and another, and the varua saw the boy didn't die. [...]*

*Like this he survived until the day a fisherman came fishing right in front the cave. He was fishing there and then he listened from upwards this pata'uta'u [Miha sings] 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 marengo e kai tangata mo hatu o'ou e ure e ete repa e. All the time he missed his father, he wanted to jump. [Miha sings] 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 marengo e kai tangata mo hatu o'ou e ure e ete repa e. He was doing pata'uta'u to the boat, for the fisherman to listen to his tanjī and tell his father [...]. One day, two days, the boy kept crying. The fisherman came back to the place and one and again he listened the boy's tanjī. [Miha sings] 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 marengo e kai tangata mo hatu o'ou e ure e ete repa e. [...]*

*The father put a kio'e [RAP. mouse] in his mouth. A heva [RAP. mourning; widow]. He took the mouse, bit it from the tail, and went from house to house asking who took my boy. [...] He kept looking and looking, Oho Vehi, until he got to where the fisherman lived. The fisherman saw him and said, "come here." He invited him to his house and said, "throw that mouse and wash your mouth." He gave him sugar cane to clean his mouth. He prepared an umu [RAP. earth oven] and they ate. After they ate and when the father had calmed down, the fisherman told him. "I know where your son is. When I go fishing he does pata'uta'u to my boat. So you eat, rest, and tomorrow we'll go there."*

*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. [Miha sings] 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 marengo e kai tangata mo hatu o’ou e ure e ete repa e. The old man started crying, happy. [...] They came back to their place, their mata.*

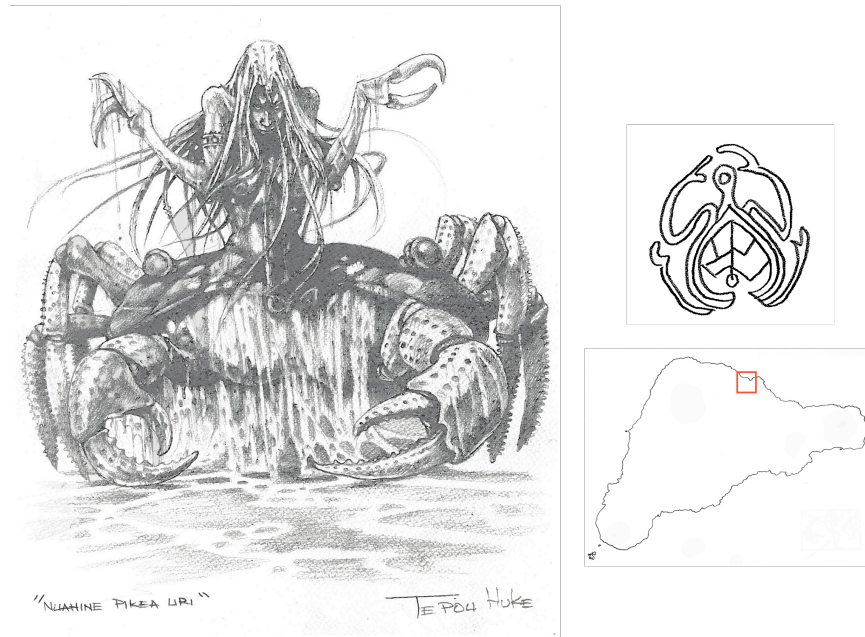
*In that area lived two tahu tahu. They were Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki. Tahu tahu were between varua and humans. Like sorcerers. They knew everything about varua. The fisherman said, “let’s go bring those two to help us bring your son back. Prepare an umu [RAP. earth oven], make it a bit overripe, smelly. Because Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki were of those with flattened nose and couldn’t smell well. [...] So the fisherman said, “To go and ask them for help you have to bring food. Then you tell them your problem. But the food has to have a strong smell.” He went and they helped him.*

*They made a net. Like that in the kai kai. They went up. And here comes the pata’uta’u you were singing [Miha sings] Ka hao e ka hao nga '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 nga ihu more a pua katiki hia hia pua mauku 'uta tangi tangi 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 where 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 varua had gone look for more oi oi ranjī to kill the boy, and when they came back they saw he wasn’t there. They were furious! Meanwhile, the boy told the father, “This nua took care of me, she gave me food.” The father thanked her and took her to their home. They ate and the Nuahine Pikea Uri told the boy, “If you see mice entering the house, step on them and kill them.” Two mice, two flies, two cockroaches. The varua transformed to enter the house. Shortly after entered two bugs, and two bugs and two bugs. Pum! out, pum! out, pum! out. Like three times until the varua had no more mana to transform and they run away to Hiva. And finally the family was safe; the boy, the father and the nua.*

The *a’amu* Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu’a ties together what we have been discussing about *varua* as “omnipersons.” The *a’amu* highlights the *varua*’s ability to *kuhane hane* or metamorphosis, an attribute that is possible only because of the high degree of *mana* these beings possess and that they can use to either damage or protect human beings. The *a’amu* describes two different types of *varua*, being Ko Kava Aro and Ko Kava Tu’a *varua rake rake* or bad *varua*, and Nuahine Pikea Uri a protector *varua*. By presenting these two types of *varua*, the *a’amu* also illustrates different ways in which *tanata* and *varua* divituate each other in the unification of a diversified world. The *a’amu* adds to the possibilities of what we have identified as a relational

epistemology by presenting another class of person, the *tahu tahu*, persons that can move between the world of the *varua* and that of the *tahata*. Finally, the *a'amu* Ko Kava Aro Ko Kava Tu'a highlights the Rapanui understanding of language as generative in that it has agency and words actually *do* things, which is illustrated in the *a'amu* through the notion of *pata'uta'u*. Kava Aro and Kava Tu'a could kidnap Ure A Oho Vehi only after they enchanted them through the *mana* of their *pata'uta'u*. Ure A Oho Vehi could make his father know where he was also by doing *pata'uta'u* to the fisherman's boat. Finally, the *tahu tahu* Da Ihu More A Pua Katiki found the boy helped by their final *pata'uta'u*.



**Image 2.6** Nuahine Pikea Uri

Left: *Nuahine Pikea Uri*. Te Pou Huku 2011

Right: Detail of the image on the petroglyph of *Pikea Uri* and its location

By discussing and illustrating the possibilities of intersubjective interactions between *tahata* and non-human beings, I have shown that the Rapanui are not animist for they do not dogmatically attribute a “soul” to inanimate beings; rather they acknowledge the possibility, under certain circumstances, of engaging in relationship with these beings. To make this

argument I took Nurit Bird-David's (1999) notion of relational epistemology; a way of knowing that grows from and *is* maintaining relatedness with neighboring others. This relatedness is made possible in everyday life because of the metamorphosis of which other-than-human beings are capable for their outward form (e.g. rock, animal, natural phenomenon) enables communication and interaction. In dreams, this interaction takes the form of disturbing possession or revealing protection experiences through which non-human persons bestow their *mana* to humans.

Building upon examples of Rapanui oral traditions and petroglyphs along with references to Rapanui's personal narratives and my own experience on the island, in these chapters I have examined some aspects of Rapanui worldviews from an ontological perspective. In this examination I focused primarily in the Rapanui concepts of land, language and being to explain the cultural and ontological significance that Rapanui people attribute to their land. Combining versions of different types of narratives, I examined how Rapanui people see their history and their very identity through their land; how the land becomes a memoryscape that reminds them who they are and where they come from, and how the land provides ontological understandings of how they came to be the people they are. While in these previous chapters I examined Rapanui land-being relations from an ontological perspective, in the next chapter I will shift to a more historical tone as a means to revise how Rapanui worldviews as a unified cosmos of human, other-than-human and land relations were disrupted by Chilean colonialism and how the Rapanui people has historically reacted to this disruption.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**A SITE OF RESISTANCE:**  
**THE POLITICS OF RAPANUI WORLDVIEWS**

In the previous chapters I explored Rapanui ontological concepts and their relation to the land building on examples of oral tradition as a means to present an overview of Rapanui worldviews, which I presented as a relational epistemology. In this chapter I will bring this exploration to the present political context of Rapa Nui to explain how the different ways the Rapanui think of and relate to the land can help understand the current political situation in Rapa Nui and the struggles of a people towards self-determination. For these purposes I will first refer to the distribution of the land according to the ancestral law, how it established patterns of residency that spoke to Rapanui worldviews, and how colonialism disrupted this order altering the linkages between lineages and their ancestral lands. Then, I will refer to three main social movements that have taken place in the island in claims of the Rapanui's right to their land, as well as which their political implications have been. I will close this discussion by examining the neo-colonial present of Rapa Nui, which is witnessing a revitalization of Rapanui identity by gradually re-validating Rapanui ontology and epistemologies through a revitalization movement that has the land and self-determination in its center.

The first movement I will discuss is María Añata's uprising of 1914. Referred to as "The Prophetess," María Añata founded her movement in visions she would have received from God. The doubt remains if hers was a subversive strategy to fight the colonizer in his own language or if it rather accounts for the efficacy of colonial mechanisms to colonize indigenous' minds. The second movement I will examine is that led by Rapanui elementary school teacher Alfonso Rapu



in 1963. Trained in Chile, Alfonso Rapu is an example of the figure of the colonized intellectual and the progress in what Franz Fanon has called the “journey back over the line” (2004: 178-9), that moment of disturbance when the colonized remembers who she actually is. Finally, I will refer to the present revitalizing movement that is taking place in the island today. Led by the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (*SPA*. Rapa Nui Parliament), this movement seeks to awaken the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse. By revising these movements, I will discuss how Rapanui worldviews are organic to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state, which has historically committed abuses to the Rapanui people in the name of progress.

### **The Ancestral Law | Distribution of the Land by Hotu A Matu’a**

*Ariki* (*RAP*. king) Hotu A Matu’a had many sons from which the different clans descend, and whose names they bear. According to the versions of Hotu A Matu’a’s distribution of the land I have gathered, which largely coincide with Pua A Raho’a’s (c.1914) account of the episode and partially with Katherine Rotledge’s (1919) and Sebastian Englert’s (1936) versions, Hotu A Matu’a had had a quarrel with his first born, Tu’u Maheke, and his wife Vakai. One day in Hotu A Matu’a’s residence in Oromaña fifteen-year-old Tu’u Maheke was hungry. His mother and servant were not at the house; the servant had gone fishing for the boy and the mother was digging up sweet potatoes. Tu’u Maheke grew hungry. He entered the house and started crying. Hotu A Matu’a heard the boy’s weeping. He stayed there, seeing Tu’u Maheke continue crying. Hotu A Matu’a told him off calling him *morore rava tanji* (*RAP*. bastard crybaby). The boy kept weeping until Vakai arrived. When she learned what had happened, Vakai confronted Hotu A Matu’a telling him that he was the bastard of Tai A Mahia; that Ko Kiri T’u Hojo Hojo was his

foster father. Hotu A Matu'a stood up and left. He settled at Hare Pu Raŋi. Vakai came to Hare Pu Raŋi and stayed there. Then Hotu A Matu'a left and settled at Hare Moa Viviri. Again, Vakai arrived and stayed with the ariki. Like this, Hotu A Matu'a moved from one place to another and Vakai followed him. In each place they had a child. When all sons of Hotu A Matu's were born he moved with them and his wife to Te Dao O Te Honu and they settled there. Time passed and Vakai died. Her sons moved her corpse to Akahaŋa, where they buried her. *Ariki* Hotu A Matu'a settled in Akahaŋa until his time to die came. Then he told his sons and his people he was going to Rano Kau and he settled there.



**Image 3.1** Map indicating First and last residencies of *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a and his burial site

Before his death, *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a gave the *po* (*RAP*. destiny) to his sons. His elder sons gathered at the *ariki*'s house but Hotu A Matu'a kept asking for Hotu Iti, the youngest son. The elder brothers wanted to begin without Hotu Iti. One by one they presented before the *ariki* claiming to be Hotu Iti. Hotu A Matu'a was blind but he could tell Hotu Iti was not there. First came Marama. Hotu A Matu'a felt the calf of his leg and said, "You are not Hotu Iti; where is he?" And Koro Oroŋo spoke, "I am here." But the ariki felt the calf of his leg and again said, "You are not Hotu Iti; where is he?" And the same thing happened to the rest. Finally Hotu Iti came and Hotu A Matu'a knew it was he. Then the *ariki* began. He called his first born, Tu'u

Maheke, and instead of giving him his *po* (*RAP.* destiny, luck), he made him *tohu* (*RAP.* curse). Hotu A Matu'a told him he would have descendants but insects will come, too many of them that he would have to leave and would perish. Then the *ariki* called Miru and gave him his *po*. He told him his descendants would multiply like the shells of the sea, and the reeds of the crater, and the pebbles of the beach, but that they would die and would not remain. Hotu A Matu'a told him he and his descendants would have the life of *ariki*, and he named him the heir *ariki*. "You are Miru," Hotu A Matu'a said, "of the Mata Nui (*RAP.* Big Clan)." Finally, Hotu A Matu'a called his last born, Hotu Iti. He kissed him and spoke, "You are Hotu Iti, of the Mata Iti (*RAP.* Small Clan)." The *ariki* told Hotu Iti he would have a small issue but his descendants would remain and would build big houses, they would prosper and survive all others. After Hotu A Matu'a spoke to his sons he left the house and went along to the cliff. He came to the edge of Rano Kau and looked over Motu Nui (*RAP.* Big Islet) towards Marae Reņa, his homeland in Hiva. Then he called his *varua* from Hiva with this *pata'uta'u* (*RAP.* recitation): *Ē Kuihi e Kuaha varua ē / ka haka o'oa iti iti mai koe / i te reo o te moa oa ariāņa / o koe ē te ariki ē* (*RAP.* Kuihi and Kuaha, you *varua!* / Make the rooster sing a little for me / At the voice of the rooster / I will go in your direction, me, the *ariki*). After he recited these words, the rooster sang and he died.<sup>37</sup>

The *mana* of the *po* (*RAP.* destiny) Hotu A Matu'a gave to his sons in his deathbed marked forever the destiny of his people. After his death, the sons of Hotu A Matu'a brought the body of his father to Akahaņa to bury him in Hare O Ava. They dug a grave and lined it with stones. When it was done, they lowered the body into the grave. The first born, Tu'u Maheke, instructed his younger brothers to not cover the head with coarse soil. They finished the burial

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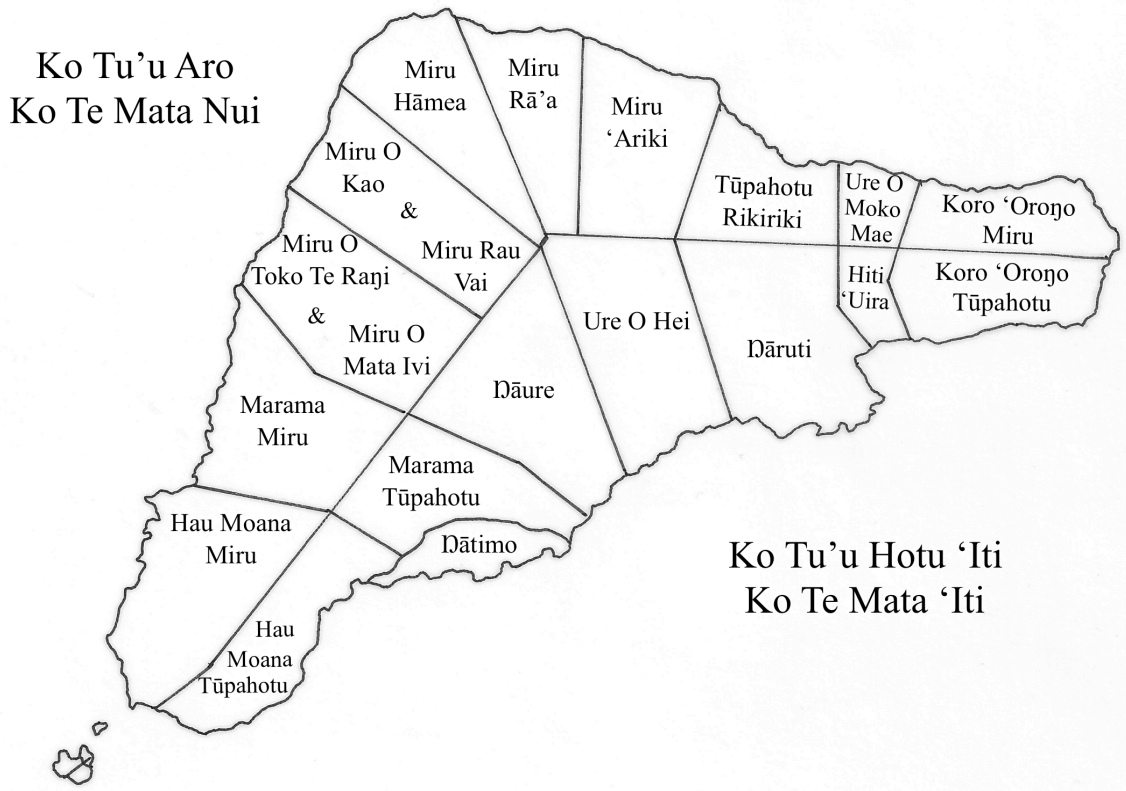
<sup>37</sup> Version of the history of the distribution of the land by Hotu A Matu'a as narrated to me by Te Pou Huke in January of 2012.

and waited. Night fell, midnight came, and Tu'u Maheke told his younger brothers to go to sleep. When they had all left, Tu'u Maheke came and cut off the head of his father. He hid it and took it to Ava Ava Maea, inland, and he buried it. By stealing the head of Hotu A Matu'a for himself, Tu'u Maheke wanted to steal his father's *mana*, because the *mana* of a person rests in his or her skull. One day passed and a dense swarm of flies pour forth and spread out like a dust storm in the place where Tu'u Maheke had hidden his father's head. Tu'u Maheke understood and he left to Hiva. With Tu'u Maheke no longer in the island, the land was divided into two main clans, as Hotu A Matu'a had said: *Ko Tu'u Aro Ko Te Mata Nui* and *Ko Tu'u Hotu Iti Ko Te Mata Iti*. Miru was the *ariki* of Mata Nui and, as Hotu A Matu'a said, the *ariki mau* of the entire island, being Hotu Iti the *ariki* of Mata Iti. Many generations passed, the two *mata* (*RAP.* clans) engaged in interstitial wars and due to the *mana* of Hotu A Matu'a's words, the *po* (*RAP.* destiny) he gave to his two sons resulted in Miru's people succumbing to Hotu Iti's people. Miru's people perished and, just as Hotu Matu'a had said, Hotu Iti's descendants survived all others.

A line traces the territorial division that goes from volcano Poike, at the east, to the *motu* (*RAP.* islet), at the southwest. The dividing line starts at Ko Te Pipi Tau Makohe, at the east of the Poike peninsula and goes up straight to the top of Pua Katiki, were are two *pipi horeko* (stone piles landmarks). It continues to towards the north and goes down to a ravine called Ko Te Umu Roa A Tavake. Then it goes to Mauņa (*RAP.* mountain) Aio passing through Maho, Ko Te Kahi A Hereama to Mauņa O Pipi. The line continues northeast of Mauņa Pu'i to the northeast of Mauņa Hoņa'a, until it reaches Pipi Horeko Matu'a (main landmark) located at Koro Ma'ea. At this point the line turns towards the southwest passing through the southwest of mauņa Kauhaņa O Varu, mauņa Omoaņa and mauņa Ra'e Paoa, and through the west of mauņa O Tu'u. Then the line passes east mauņa Tanjaroa to mauņa Tanji and then through the east of mauņa Vai O Ha'o to

the moai of Ahu Huri A Ureŋa. The next point was a small hill close to Orito called Hatu Ru Pei, but the hill was excavated while the construction of Mata Veri airport. Today Hatu Ru Pei is transformed in a depression where is located the municipal dump. Here the line slightly deviates towards the west until it reaches Rano Kau where the last mark is a rock called Ko Te Ri'a Ri'a. Then the line continues imaginary above the volcano crater to Puku Maharo. Finally the line deviates to the southwest and divides the islets Motu Iti and Motu Nui. Ko Tu'u Aro Ko Mata Nui occupies the half to the north of the dividing line, whereas to Ko Tu'u Iti Ko Te Mata Iti corresponds the half to the south.

As established by *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a when he gave the *po* to his sons, Ko Tu'u Aro Ko Mata Nui, Miru's *mata* (*RAP.* territorial clan) was the *mata* of the *ariki* or kings, being Ko Tu'u Iti Ko Te Mata Iti, Hotu Iti's *mata*, the *mata* of the *uru manu* or plebeians. Within each *mata* were distributed the different *ure* (*RAP.* tribes). In Ko Tu'u Aro Ko Mata Nui were the *ure* Koro 'Oroŋo Miru, Ure O Moko Mae, Tupahotu Riki Riki, Miru Arika (linear descendants of *ariki* Hotu A Matu'a), Miru Ra'a and Miru Hamea. Sharing a same territory were Miru O Kao and Miru Rau Vai, and Miru O Toko Te Raŋi with Miru O Mata Ivi. Finally, towards the south of Mata Nui were Marama Miru and Hau Moana Miru. In Ko Tu'u Iti Ko Te Mata Iti were the *ure* Koro 'Oroŋo Tupahotu, Hiti 'Uira, Daruti, Ure O Hei, Ŋaure, Marama Tupahotu, Ŋanatimo and Hau Moana Tupahotu. With Tu'u Maheke, the oldest son, having returned to Hiva, the next on the line of succession was Miru, who Hotu A Matu'a entitled as *ariki mau*, the hereditary leader of the entire island. According to Hotu A Matu'a's mandate, *ariki mau* was a title to be held only by the ranking elder within the Miru Mata. Inherently within his person, the *ariki mau* possessed the highest and most respected *mana*. Lineage heads of other *mata* held the title of *taŋata honui* (*RAP.* wise man), high ranked men by which the *ariki mau* was surrounded.



**Image 3.2** Map indicating tribal distribution. Based on Alberto Hotus (1988)

Hotu A Matu'a distributed the land in a way that he organized the society by rank and trade. As we saw, the main two *mata* represent also a hierarchical division, where *Ko Tu'u Aro Ko Mata Nui* is the *mata* of the *ariki*, the ruler *mata*, whereas *Ko Tu'u Iti Ko Te Mata Iti* is the *mata* of the *uru manu*, the plebeians. Additionally, the different *ure* (*RAP.* tribes) within each main *mata* are differentiated among each other by their specialty. The people of Hau Moana, for example, are expert fishermen; Marama people's expertise is astronomy; the people of Hiti Uira are known for their mastery in the carving of the *moai*. Although as we shall see later in this subsection Rapanui residency patterns were abruptly broken with the invasion of the white man, Rapanui people continue to respect land divisions and to acknowledge the social organization it entails, although they are no longer allowed to live in their ancestral lands. Among other archaeological features, the Rapanui see in petroglyphs a testimony of the distribution of the land

as established by Hotu A Matu'a and of what characterizes each *ure* or tribe by means of the motifs they present. Depending on their location, petroglyphs may present the image of an important person that belonged to that territory, of a *varua* that protects its people, or of material culture (e.g. fish hooks, canoes, *moai*) that account for the activities that characterized the people living in that territory.

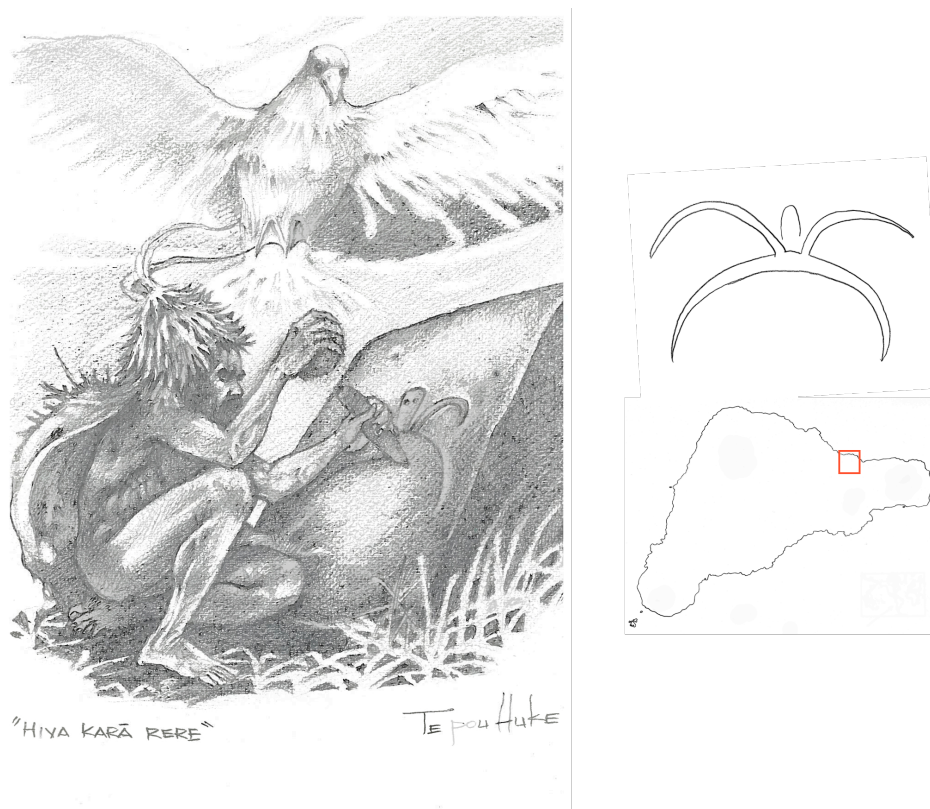
As my collaborators always highlight when we are discussing the land divisions and the role of each *mata* and *ure*, Hotu A Matu'a brought this organization, in my colleagues' words, "programmed from Hiva."<sup>38</sup> Hotu A Matu'a and his people came to Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa in two canoes; in one came Hotu A Matu'a and his wife Vakai, in the other came Ava Rei Pua, sister of Hotu A Matu'a, and his husband Tu'u Ko Ihu. In one of our road trips to Rano Kau, my collaborator Moi Moi Tuki and I were at the top of the volcano talking about the arrival of Hotu A Matu'a when Moi Moi, looking over the three *motu* (*RAP.* islets), towards Hiva, said, "They were only a hundred and twenty people who came, but Hotu had it all programmed. In each canoe came an astronomer, a fisherman, a carver, a sexologist, an expert in *roŋo roŋo* (*RAP.* writing system), a constructor, a doctor, an artist, and so on. They were only a bunch of them, but it was a whole civilization they brought here." They had come to convert Hau Maka's discovery, the eighth land, into their land, their culture.

Other-than-human persons also partake in this social organization in that most of them are place-specific and belong to a particular territory. Protector *varua* (*RAP.* "omnipersons") are an example of place-specific other-than-human persons, which although may wander around the island because of their capacity of mobility and *mana* for metamorphosis, they belong to a

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<sup>38</sup> Tuki, Moi Moi. Rapa Nui, 2011; Huke, Te Pou. Rapa Nui, 2012. Personal communication. (*SPA. Programado desde Hiva*).

particular territory which people they protect. In Rapa Nui, the belonging of a *varua* to a particular place is usually marked by petroglyphs that both enable as we saw in the previous chapter interaction between humans and *varua*, while serving as landmarks indicating an area as the land of a particular *varua*. An example of the *varua* partaking in the social and spatial organization of the island is that of Hiva Kara Rere, protector *varua* of the Tupahotu Riki Riki tribe. Located at Ahu Ra'ai, the petroglyph of Hiva Kara Rere presents this protector *varua* in the form of an aerial creature as a means to highlight Hiva Kara Rere's ability to fly, which makes him a very powerful *varua* that protects the Tupahotu Riki Riki people from the air.



**Image 3.3** Right: *Hiva Karā Rere*. Te Pou Huku 2011  
Left: Detail of image on the petroglyph and its location

During a field season I worked in Rapa Nui from July to September of 2010 as part of a collaborative project with Piru Huki consisting in recording and documenting Rapanui petroglyphs and their related *a'amu*, we came to Ahu Ra'ai to document the petroglyph of Hiva



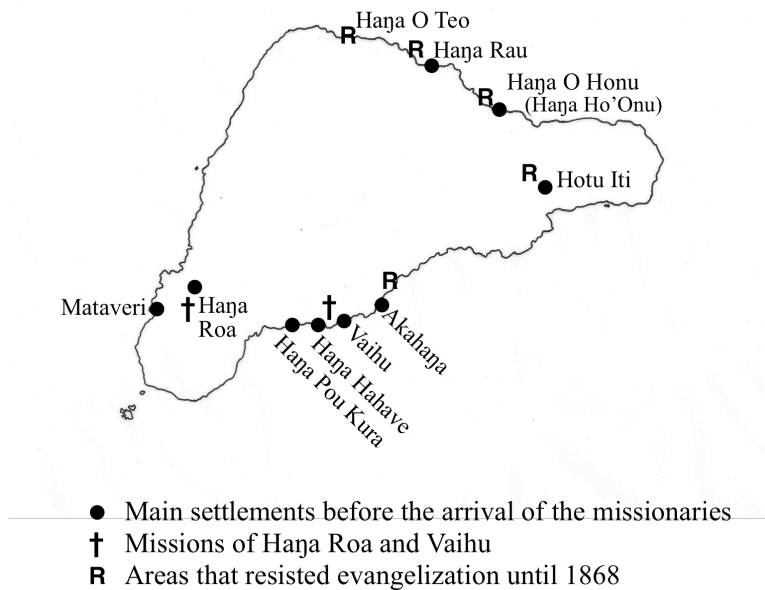
Kara Rere. As usual we always do when working in a territory dominated by a *varua* we lighted a fire to feed and thank Hiva Kara Rere for showing himself to us and to ask for his permission to work within his territory. During that road trip my 7-year-old goddaughter, Pua A Tiveka, accompanied us. After I had recorded the panel, we sat down around the fire and Piru started storytelling. Since Piru belongs to the Tupahotu Riki Riki tribe she spoke freely and told us different stories related to Hiva Kara Rere, her protector *varua*. All stories highlighted his *mana* to fly and to have a powerful vision on what was happening in the surface. “From the sky,” she explained to Pua, “he seeks who are the bad guys that do bad things.” And after each story she emphasized that this was his territory, and hers, the land of the Tupahotu Riki Riki.

The division of the land as established by Hotu A Matu’a, the subsequent creation of the different *mata* (*RAP.* clans) and *ure* (*RAP.* tribes), together with the social organization underlying this division and the partaking of *varua* in the organization of the society, established patterns of residency that although abruptly broken with the invasion of the white man the Rapanui continue to respect today. Rapanui people are well aware of their lineage, their *mata* and the territory to which they belong. As Chilean anthropologist and archaeologist Claudio Cristino (2011: 26) notes, the deepest changes in the residency patterns that broke the links between lineages and their ancestral lands resulted from the arrival of the first missionaries and the establishment of their missions in Haŋa Roa and Vaihu. The missionaries’ period was preceded by slave raids that abducted more than half of the population as labor to work in the Islas Guaneras of Peru, which as we shall see also contributed to the alteration of residency patterns. To the missionaries’ period followed the annexation of the island to the Republic of Chile and the decision of the Chilean government to rent Rapa Nui to the Williamson & Balfour Company, which terminated to break the links between lineages and their ancestral lands.

## **Ancestral Law Disrupted | Colonialism in Rapa Nui**

### *The Missionaries and Dutrou-Bornier*

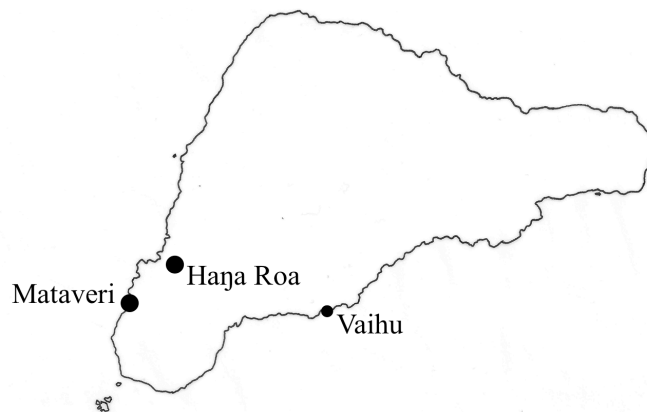
The arrival of the missionaries was then the beginning of a series of colonial efforts to disempower and disarticulate Rapanui society by forcibly taking from the Rapanui what most powerfully linked them to their memory and identity: their land. In 1864 arrived on the island brother Eugenio Eyraud, from the Sacred Hearts Congregation, being the first Westerner to settle in Rapa Nui. Soon would follow him four other missionaries from the same congregation. Upon their arrival they began two missions: the first mission was 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.



**Image 3.4** Map indicating main settlements during the early mission period

Illnesses contracted by the Rapanui as a result of the return of a small group repatriated from Peru after the slave raids of 1862 also substantially contributed to the alteration of residency patterns in Rapa Nui. These illnesses, for which the Rapanui did not have any kind of immunity, had devastating effects in the population of the island of the time. In his discussion of the impact of the slave raids in the population of the island, Critino (2011: 27) tracks Father Hippolyte Roussel's reports on the decrease of the population. In March of 1866 Roussel reported that the population of the island was of 1200 inhabitants; in November of that same year the population had reduced to 900 people, and in May of 1869 less than 600 had survived. Roussel noted that the population was decreasing one third each year, with an average of twenty deaths per month only in Haŋa Roa. As a consequence, some lineages vanished as well as the knowledge on the property of some lands. 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, beginning a regime of fear that also impacted Rapanui residency patterns and the links between lineages and their ancestral lands. 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 of cloth or pieces of cotton, a practice supported by the Mission with whom soon 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. Since his settlement in the island Dutrou-Bornier was responsible of a series of abuses and crimes committed against the Rapanui people that resulted on a tense relationship with the missionaries. The island divided into two sides: Dutrou-Bornier and his armed followers, and the missionaries and their people. In 1871 the bishop of Tahiti intervened in the conflict and decided to bring the missionaries and their people to Tahiti. Most of the population of the island left for fear of staying under the command of Dutrou-Bornier, with no house, no land and no food. Only 175 stayed on the island, most of them against their will. At this point all the population concentrated in Mataverí, Hapa Roa and a few isolated houses in Vaihu; the rest of the island was uninhabited (Cristino 2011: 30). With a total control over Rapa Nui, between 1872 and 1877 Dutrou-Bornier converts the island into a ranch that had as tenant farmers the majority of its inhabitants.



**Image 3.5** Map indicating distribution of the population in 1871

In 1877 and as a result of the crimes and abuses he committed against their people, a group of Rapanui killed Dutrou-Bornier. That same year, his partner Brander dies in Tahiti. The death of both Dutrou-Bornier and Brander originated a series of lawsuits between both successions, whereas the Bishop of Tahiti lodged an appeal for legal protection in favor of the Rapanui, who were claiming their right to their ancestral land. In the meanwhile, the parties convened in sending a new administrator to Rapa Nui, Alexander Ari'i Paea Salmon, who was related to both the royal family of Tahiti and the Brander family. With the arrival of Salmon the order was partially reestablished and in 1882 the Rapanui elected a new king, with which emerges in Rapa Nui a monarchy that similes the Tahitian style. The new king was a direct descendent of the last *ariki*. He was re-baptized as Atamu (Adam), and the queen as Eva (Eve).

#### *The Annexation to the Republic of Chile and the Company Period*

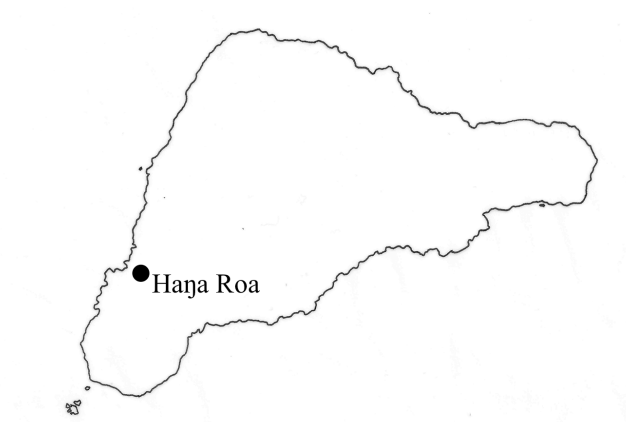
While Rapa Nui was witnessing this period of restoration, in the rest of the South Pacific foreign powers were increasingly annexing islands to their territories. Back in Chile, renowned conservative intellectual Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna called the attention of Chilean authorities and public through a series of articles with a vast diffusion in the national press wondering why Chile had not done the same, especially with Rapa Nui, the closest island to the Chilean coasts. Influenced by this public awareness, in 1887 the President José Manuel Balmaceda resolved 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 takes formal possession of the island through a treaty signed by Policarpo Toro and king Atamu

Tekena which legality, as we shall see later in this chapter, the Rapanui continue to question until the present day.

The main problem that the taking of possession generated concerned land rights and conflicts between Rapanui and Europeans, which since 1866 had configured “rights” 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 this: 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 part 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, among others. With this transaction, in 1895 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 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, who were relegated to the role of mere tenant farmers. During the period of the company all the 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, symbol 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 Haja Roa, the only town of the island, 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 move in their island.



**Image 3.6** Map of the distribution of the population after the establishment of the Company (1895)

Resulting from these abuses, in 1898 King Ko Riro A Nure, 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. Sánchez informed Merlet and King Riro was poisoned at his arrival to the mainland without meeting with the government. After the death of king Riro the company's domain is absolute, being all the authority concentrated in the person of the *Subdelegado Marítimo*, as mentioned above, also Merlet's administrator. In 1900 Sánchez is replaced by Horacio Cooper, who 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).

### *María Añata's Movement of 1914*

With the assassination of King Riro the environment continued to grow tense between the Company and the Rapanui. The Rapanui began to upraise against their oppressors, while the 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 Pakarati 2011: 81) and by José Pirivato and Lázaro Ricardo Hitorañi in 1902 (Moreno Pakarati 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. Because of her discourse based on dreams in which she would have had direct communication with God, Añata's rebellion has been usually interpreted as a religious movement that has been even described as millennialism (Castro 2011), overlooking its relevance as a liberation movement that had a series of political implications. In my analysis of Añata's uprising I suggest that its impact among the Rapanui community did not result from a desperate attempt "to look for refuge in the rudiments of their catholic religion" (Cristino 2011: 42) but from the charisma of a woman leader that spoke to both the colonizer's discourse and the Rapanui's worldviews.

María Añata Veri Tah had born in Rapa Nui c.1856 and carried with her the memories of the most traumatic episode of the history of her people. She was only six to seven years old when



she witnessed the bloody arrival of the slave raiders and the capture of her *ariki* Kai Mako'i along with his son Maurata and more than half of the population to go work in the Islas Guaneras of Peru. María Añata was probably one of the orphans that the missionaries took and raised in the mission established upon the arrival of brother Eugéne Eyraud for we know that around 1871 the missionaries sent her to Mañareva, in French Polynesia, where she received instruction in the catechist school of the Catholic Church (Štambuk 2010: 31-33). After widowing of a violent marriage she married Pakomio Maori with whom she returned to Rapa Nui in 1888, in the same travel that Policarpo Toro took possession of the island in the name of the Republic of Chile.

Once in Rapa Nui, María Añata actively engaged with the community and the political context of Rapa Nui. She visited Rapanui homes continuing with the mission's evangelization and also rising awareness about the injustices of the present situation. At the time of Añata's arrival the firm Williamson, Balfour & Co. had acquired the 75% of Merlet & Co.'s shares, though Enrique Merlet continued to be the president of the *Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua* (SPA. Exploiting Company of Easter Island). Following this transaction, in 1906 arrived to the island Henry Percy Edmunds, who had come to replace Horacio Cooper in his duties as the company's administrator. Edmunds maintained the institution of forced labor established by Merlet, who had burned down all Rapanui plantations as a means to generate a need for work. Dispossessed of their lands, animals, goods and plantations, elders, children, men and women were all forced to work for the company. If they refused, they were tortured with lashes of barb, tied to a tree for days with no food whatsoever. In her visits to the Rapanui's homes María Añata would profess the Gospel while accentuating and rising awareness of the company's abuses by contrasting the God's word with the victimization of her people. She would do so by

communicating the people messages of justice and a better future that would have been revealed to her through dreams and clairvoyance.

In his study of María Añata's movement, Chilean historian Nelson Castro (2011) parallels Añata's revelations to those of prophets and biblical apostles, a parallel that I regard as both forced and inaccurate considering that revelations have been always strongly rooted in Rapanui worldviews through the concepts of *moe varua* (RAP. dreams), *po o te atua* (RAP. revealing, premonitory dreams) and *'uruŋa* (RAP. premonitions) discussed in the previous chapters. In his interpretation of Añata's movement as "messianic," Castro vaguely connects its markedly Catholic compound with Rapanui worldview by pointing out that dreams and clairvoyance "had also formed part of the *ivi atua*'s practices" (109), a relation that I consider equally inaccurate for "dreams and clairvoyance" were far from being attributes held exclusively by the *ivi atua*. By implying these attributes as exclusive of *ivi atua*, high ranked men usually translated as "priests," Castro is forcing a theistic reading that is in direct opposition to the Rapanui understanding of revelations, which in Rapa Nui results not from a theistic understanding of the world but from a relational interaction with it. Revelations are then not messages of God but valuable information that human beings acquire through communication with other-than-human persons. As discussed in the previous chapters, revelations are one of the means through which other-than-human persons bestow their *mana* (RAP. power, efficacy) to human beings. *Mana* is not associated to the image of a deity but to powerful persons that can be humans or not and its transmission is thus not exclusive, nor does it relies on a deity. Rather, revelations as a form of *mana* transmission are available to powerful *tajata* or humans in the form of *po o te atua* (revealing dreams) or *'uruŋa* (RAP. premonitions), but also to ordinary *tajata* in the form of *moe varua* (RAP. dreams).

With this discussion I want to emphasize Aŋata's movement as one of resistance and to validate it as such. I do not intend to disregard Aŋata's use of the Catholic discourse though I strongly disagree with the argument that her movement would have impacted the Rapanui community only because of its Catholic foundations. The power of her discourse was rather in her ability to strategically use the colonizer's language as a means to covertly restore the worldview that the colonizer was trying to destroy. Aŋata's movement was not merely a religious driven one, of course not a messianic (Castro 2011), but a political one. I find it hard to believe that Aŋata's intention was exclusively to connect her people with the Catholic doctrine but rather to use that doctrine and its sense of justice as a means to assert her people's rights by connecting them back to their land and their rights to it. I will get back to this discussion but first I will refer to the climax of Aŋata's movement. As we shall see, the facts speak to my argument that Aŋata's, far from being only a messianic movement, was most importantly one of liberation. The following is a synthesis of the 1914 uprising informed mainly by an interview I did in 2008 to Julio Hotus, direct descendant of María Aŋata Veri Tahi. Additional details are taken from the account of the facts as structured by Patricia Štambuk's *Rongo. La Historia Oculta de Isla de Pascua* (2010), a compilation of Rapanui elders' memories of colonial times, and from Katherine Routledge's (1919) reference to the 1914 movement, which took place during her archaeological expedition to Rapa Nui.

At the time of Aŋata's liberation movement the Rapanui lived as prisoners in their own island. Representatives of the company had removed from their ancestral lands, forced them to live in a restricted area, and prohibited them to walk through the stone wall they themselves were obliged to build, they were forced to work for the oppressor and tortured if they refused to. Within the environment of fear and subjugation imposed by the company, and with a Rapanui

community dispossessed of their lands, animals and goods, María Añata Veri Tahi began calling the attention of her people speaking out what their rights were. Her revolution reached its climax when one day of June of 1914 she gathered her followers at the church. She was a catechist and usually used the church as a space for gathering so the company's people could not suspect of her plans. But this time Añata was not indoctrinating her people but rather preparing an assault on the company to restore the Rapanui's right to their land and property. Once she had the people gathered Añata spoke and said they needed to have a *tutia* (RAP. sacrifice). She sent some people to collect firewood and others to ask for animals to *mister* Edmunds, the administrator. Edmunds refused and the people brought the word to Añata. She sent them again and again he refused.

After Edmunds' consecutive negatives to the people's claims Añata sent Daniel Te Ave Manuheuroroa, her son in law and closest follower, with a message for the administrator. The message was spelled out in a letter that Katherine Routledge, British archaeologist at that time in the island, translated as follows:

Senior Ema, Mataveri,

Now I declare to you, by-and-by we declare to you, which is the word we speak to-day, but we decide to take all the animals in the camp and all our possessions in your hands, now, for you know that all the animals and farm in the camp belong to us, our Bishop Tepano gave to us originally. He gave it to us in truth and justice. There is another thing, the few animals which are in front of you, are for you to eat. There is also another thing, to-morrow we are going out into the camp to fletch some animals for a banquet. God for us, His truth and justice. There is also another business, but we did not receive who gave the animals to Merlet also who gave the earth to Merlet because it is a big robbery. They took this possession of ours, and they gave nothing for the earth, money or goods or anything else. They were never given to them. Now you know all that is necessary.

Your friend,

Daniel Antonio,

Hangaroa (Routledge 2007: 142).

And so they did, but not without the *mana* of María Añata, who called the rain to protect her people. As discussed in the previous chapters, the spoken word has for the Rapanui such efficacy that María Añata made it rain. As Analola Tuki puts it,

They came from the outside and began to conquer everything. *Mister* Cooper came here in underpants and said that the animals were his! He punished the people, stole the women, and forbade killing animals. People were hungry, that is why my great-grandmother María Añata kneeled in the church and told his tribe of the Rapanui people: “I will pray, and while I’m praying a rain will fall strong from Haña Roa to Vinapu that will prevent the vision. The chief [Edmunds] is there in Mataveri, with his tribe, but everything will get dark. You go and take the cattle, and when you come to tell me that you finished, then I will stop the rain.” It rained a lot (Štambuk 2010: 40).

A group of men commanded by Daniel irrupted in the company’s domain like *varua* in a dark rain, without the guards noticing them. “The guards were there, but they didn’t see a thing!” (Štambuk 2010: 36), explains Luis Pate, Papa Kiko. They took the animals and came back to the church where Añata and the rest were waiting with a fire. They cooked the animals and fed the people. “The smoke went straight to the sky” (Štambuk 2010: 36), points out Papa Kiko probably noting that they were not only feeding the humans.

*Mister* Edmunds learned about the assault but could not prevent it from happening again. They were a bunch of men against a people, a hungry people. So the administrator could do nothing but to wait for the army’s ship *Baquedano* to arrive and vanquish the rebellion. Once the *Baquedano* arrived to Rapa Nui, Edmunds informed the commander about the uprising, and he began an indictment. The first to be captured was Daniel Te Ave, Añata’s son in law and leader of the most radical wing of the movement. He was temporarily incarcerated in the ship and then sent to a prison in the mainland, where he died. Then the commander went after Añata,

—“Are you María Añata?”

—“Yes.”

—“Are you who sent people to take the company’s animals?”

—“Yes, I am.” (Štambuk 2010: 39).

The commander beat her in the church and then took her to the main square, to the stone called *Puku U’i Ropa* and punished her:

—“Knee down on that stone. You are going to be here all day, for sending people to steal animals.” María Añata was not afraid. “You stole, you are a theft,” said the commander.

—“No, I didn’t steal, I asked for permission to take what is ours” (Štambuk 2010: 39).

Along with the indictment and the trapping of Añata’s followers, the commander proclaimed an edict, which terminated each of the elements that had contributed to the success of the movement. Opposing the movement’s negation of Chilean authorities, the edict established that “Easter Island forms part of the Chilean territory; the only sovereignty and flag is the national one and no other can be hoisted under any pretext whatsoever” (Castro 2011: 118). Although the movement was completely disarticulated, Añata’s liberation rebellion provoked a series of political consequences.

The 1914 uprising and Añata’s leadership contributed not only to the rising of awareness among Rapanui people in what concerned their rights as the legitimate owners of the land but also called the attention of Chilean government about the abuses that the company was committing against the Rapanui people. As a result of the movement led by María Añata, Ignacio Vives Solar was appointed *Subdelegado Marítimo* (Navy Sub-delegate) and representative of the Chilean government, a title that before Añata’s movement was embodied in 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).

In addition to the impact that Añata's liberation rebellion had in Chilean authorities, it also impacted Chilean civilians in the mainland, whose actions resulted in the creation of the *Comisión Isla de Pascua* (Easter Island Commission). In 1915 monsignor Rafael Edwards visited the island, and at his return he published a report that deeply impacted the public opinion. Part of Edwards's report denounced that,

Everything that they had has been stolen from them. The soil where they were born, their houses, their canoes, their animals, their very clothes (and this without referring to the honor and peace of their outraged homes). Everything, everything has been object of the brutal greed of the men without God and law, without guts and without decency. Cornered like animals in the last corner of their own island, they lived of the mercy of those who have divested them (Cristino 2011: 43-4).

After Edwards's report was published diverse catholic organizations initiated a campaign that culminated in 1916 with the promulgation of the 1291 Decreed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which created the *Comisión Isla de Pascua*. Presided by monsignor Rafael Edwards, its mission was to study the island's legal and administrative problems, and to propose the government measures to safeguard fiscal interests and to improve Rapanui living conditions. The Chilean government automatically terminated the lease to the Company and filed suit against Merlet, who had attempted to inscribe the entire island under his name. The government then ensures its control over the hectares that belonged to the *fisco*, delimited Merlet's property, and took under its custody all uninhabited lands. Certainly, these measures and legal dispositions did not consider the Rapanui law system according to which the Rapanui were the legitimate owners of uninhabited lands. However, everything was made, according to Edwards, to protect the rights and interests of the Rapanui people.

As the facts demonstrate, Añata's revolt had a series of political implications that resulted in concrete actions taken by the Chilean government. These political implications, however, have been usually overlooked and the religious aspects of this movement have been given more

relevance than its efforts to assert Rapanui's rights. Nelson Castro, in his already cited study, vaguely concludes that Aŋata's movement sought to restore "a traditional moral order that had been injured by the Company and that was inspired in the communal model designed by the missionaries" (Castro 2011: 115). Rather, I propose that Aŋata's liberation movement sought to restore the Rapanui political order that asserted their right to property, which had indeed been injured by the Company but that far from being inspired on a model of community life imposed by the missionaries, sought to restore the model that the ancestors had established once and that the missionaries had disrupted.

Before the arrival of the missionaries the patterns of residency had been defined by the *tupuna* (RAP. ancestors) through a system that was strictly respected and safeguarded by other-than-human persons that enforced its fulfillment. The ancestors marked the limits of each *mata*, *ure* and *paenja* with landmarks such as *pipi horeko* and *puke 'o'one*. As Alberto Hotus, President of the Elders' Council, explains, no one could violate these limits, for those who did so could be sanctioned even with death. "The ultimate limits," Hotus explains, "were the *aku aku*. They are guardian spirits, vindictive and territorial, that secured both the wellbeing of their people as the disgrace of the invaders. Since they are territorial beings, the chance of a person to take possession of another territory was impossible" (Hotus 2007: 8). Not even in war times the Rapanui violated this order. When conflicts happened, the defeated became *kio* (RAP. refugees, pursued) and they were obliged to serve their conquerors or to pay a tax for their productions or coastal extractions. "But never did they lose the right to their ancestral land" (Hotus 2007: 8). The restoration of this system, the rights it asserted and the moral order it enforced, are what I suggest Aŋata's movement sought. To say that the 1914 liberation revolt was inspired in the missionaries' model and, even more, that it intended to restore the order that they had imposed



by violating the ancestral law is in my opinion an act of negation of the sole possibility of the existence of an order before the invasion of the white man and contributes only to validate the violation of the Rapanui's rights, history and worldviews by the colonizer.

### *The Navy Period and Alfonso Rapu's Movement*

Despite the efforts and achievements of the *Comisión de Isla de Pascua*, the Chilean government's outspoken commitment to the Rapanui's wellbeing was only superficial and short lasting, and resulted in a history as violent as that of the company's time, the Navy period. The resolution issued in favor of the Chilean government led the Company to negotiate a new lease, to which Chile agreed giving the island in lease for the next twenty years. During this period and due to the total lack on interest showed by Chilean authorities, the Company established again the institution of forced labor with the creation of the "*lunes fiscales*" (*SPA*. "fiscal Mondays"), where the Company's administrators and representatives forced all Rapanui to work during those days with no remuneration, a practice that continued until the 1960s, when another revolution that I shall discuss next took place in Rapa Nui. In 1936 Chile leases the island to the company for another twenty years though due to international pressure in 1953 the company transfers all its lands and properties to the Chilean Navy, which took control of the administration of the island. The termination of the lease resulted then in the assertion not exactly of the Rapanui's rights but of Chilean sovereignty in 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 through discipline. Within this disciplinary system the Rapanui were treated as enlisted in the Navy, forced to undertake humiliating medical examinations and to do community work. If they

refused, they were punished and taken to the dungeon, where officers shaved their heads. The Navy developed these different formulas of domination to maintain discipline over the body of the Rapanui, which paired with the system to discipline their knowledge, began by the missionaries and then continued by the Chilean nation-state. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 68) explains, the colonizing of the other through discipline has a number of different meanings. The way knowledge was used to discipline the colonized worked in a variety of ways, being the most typical forms of discipline through exclusion, marginalization, and denial. During the Navy period, the most obvious manifestation of these forms of discipline was restriction of freedom. The Rapanui were still enclosed in a small area of the island, forbidden as they continue to be today to live in their ancestral lands, and forced to work now for the Navy. The discipline system that the missionaries and the Company had initiated continued in the Navy period through the denial of the Rapanui's rights.

Another form of discipline that began to take form during the Navy period was education. In her analysis of the relationship between knowledge, research and imperialism Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) challenges the idea of imperialism as a system that drew everything back into the center to propose it as a system that also distributed ideas outwards as a means to assert what Edward Said (1978: 7) called "positional superiority." Based on this argument Smith identifies colonial education as the major agency for imposing this positional superiority over knowledge, language and culture of indigenous peoples (1999: 64). Colonial education in Rapa Nui took two basic forms: the religious schooling established by the missionaries and later the public and secular schooling facilitated by the nation-state. These two forms of colonial education co-existed during the Navy period where the school of the island was run by nuns and followed the missionaries' model whereas the nation-state began to offer secular education in the mainland for

outstanding Rapanui students. These forms of colonial education contributed in Rapa Nui to what Smith calls “colonizing knowledges” (58-9) for they came to structure the Rapanui ways of knowing through the denial of Rapanui worldviews and the imposition of Western epistemologies, language and culture. Public and secular education in particular contributed also to assert the maintenance of the positional superiority over time through the training of indigenous intellectuals.

With public and secular education and the training of indigenous elites in the West emerged what Franz Fanon (2004: 178-79) has termed the “colonized intellectual.” In his revision of the colonized intellectual Fanon distinguishes three levels through which native intellectuals can progress in their journey back over the line that goes from the recognition of their assimilation into the occupying power to a cultural revitalization. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith succinctly explains,

First there is a phase of proving that intellectuals have been assimilated into the culture of the occupying power. Second comes a period of disturbance and the need for the intellectuals to remember who they actually are, a time for remembering the past. In the third phase the intellectuals seek to awaken the people, to realign themselves with the people and to produce a revolutionary and national literature (Smith 1999: 70).

In Rapa Nui the training of indigenous intellectuals began during the Navy Period and was accompanied by a system of adoption in which Chilean families adopted Rapanui students who traveled to the mainland for the time their studies lasted. This system began in 1956 when after the tragic death of Chilean teacher Lorenzo Baeza Vega in Rapa Nui, her widow and the *Sociedad de Amigos de Isla de Pascua* negotiated with the Ministry of Education to arrange for ten scholarships for the best Rapanui students to study in the mainland.

Among these ten students was Alfonso Rapu, leader of the 1964 revolution that culminated with the promulgation of the *Ley 16.441* in 1966, a law that included Rapa Nui to the

Chilean jurisprudence, recognized the Rapanui as Chilean citizens, and granted their rights as such. Rapu problematizes Fanon's phases of the colonized intellectual's journey for, as we shall see, his revolution both asserted Rapanui's rights while secured Chilean sovereignty in the island. As a colonized intellectual trained in the mainland, Rapu's discourse was one of integration, as opposed to liberation, though his movement was motivated by a desire of freeing his people from the Navy oppression and to raise awareness of their rights. I met Alfonso Rapu in 2008 in a room of the hospital of Haja Roa. I was there assisting my friend Hapa to take care of Papa Kiko, who was unconscious due to the brain hemorrhage that took his life. That day I was with Julio Hotus, talking about María Añata, his great great grandmother. Alfonso walked through the door and Julio said something like "here you have another great revolutionary," and Alfonso began recalling his memories of a revolution he had led aided among others by Papa Kiko. What follows is a brief account of Rapu's revolution as I recall it from this conversation in a hospital room and aided by the versions of its protagonists as collected by Patricia Štambuk in her *Rongo. La Historia Oculta de Isla de Pascua* (2010).

In 1966, during the Navy period, Alfonso Rapu initiated a movement motivated by some Rapanui elders that wanted to denounce the abuses that the Navy was committing against the Rapa Nui 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 suit 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. Until today, when asked about the Navy period Rapanui elders have divergent appreciations of those times. The majority of those who I have talked with about it identify the Navy period with the violation of their human rights yet I have also found a few that regard it as times of progress, development and order.

In December 8<sup>th</sup> of 1964, and after a modest and unofficial ceremony, the Rapanui elected Afonso Rapu mayor of Rapa Nui, beginning a campaign to raise awareness about the Navy violations of the Rapanui's rights. His immediate concern was the so-called "*lunes fiscales*" (*RAP*. "fiscal Mondays"), an institution that forced the Rapanui to do community work. At the beginning the "*lunes fiscales*" were restricted to Mondays only but the Navy was extending this across the week, forcing the Rapanui to work on a weekly basis building stonewalls, fixing the roads, gathering firewood or cooking for the school. If the Rapanui refused, they were taken prisoners. Once Rapu learned about the situation he talked to the community about the "*lunes fiscales*" and explained how it violated their rights.

The governor of the island, Portilla Orrego, informed his superiors that Rapu was organizing a rebel movement to gain independence from Chile and annexation to French Polynesia. Portilla Orrego arranged for Rapu to be deported to the mainland in the ship of the METEI Expedition, a Canadian scientific expedition that was established in the island at the time. The governor's first attempt to detain Rapu failed due to people telling Rapu beforehand. A second attempt took place one night when Rapu was coordinating, along with Papa Kiko, a show of Rapanui dance in the Haña Piko cove. Rapu was lighting torches around the performers when suddenly the lights went down and someone took him from his arm. Again, and aided by some friends, Alfonso Rapu managed to escape and began his life as fugitive hiding in the caves. Around twenty people accompanied him, always from a secure distance, while two or three

people stayed with him discussing and creating strategies to communicate with the people of the island.

Although fugitive, Rapu managed to lead the movement from his hideouts, aided and informed by his followers and family. Before the order for his apprehension Rapu had been working on a letter he intended to send to Chilean President, Eduardo Frei Montalva. Reina Haoa, Rapu's mother, managed to covertly give the letter to a nun that was traveling in the *Cape Scott*, the Canadian ship. Upon her arrival, the nun delivered the letter to Rapu's younger brother, Sergio, who was studying in the mainland. The document summed complaints, denounces and proposals. The letter described the abuses and abandonment, denounced forced labor and torture, and complained about the prohibition of free transit, the lack of basic services, access to education and documents of citizenship. Far from demanding independence, Rapu's letter proposed a full integration of the island to the Chilean jurisdiction and the recognition of the Rapanui as citizens of the Chilean nation. Sergio Rapu and his adoptive parents in the mainland held interviews with the Minister of Education and the Secretary of Defense, this latter giving the order to stop the persecution against Alfonso Rapu. Rapu's adoptive father brought the discussion to the Congress, initiating a debate on the situation of the island that would culminate with the creation of the Law 16.441 two years later.

Simultaneously, a Navy ship with eighty marines landed in the island and the climate continued to grow tense. Navy delegates John Martin and Guillermo Rojas intended to force Papa Kiko and other people who had endorsed Rapu's letter to sign another document denouncing that the previous letter was false. They refused and were sent to the "*casa de piedra*" (*SPA*. stone house), the dungeon which ruins are still standing in Haña Roa, a block from the bank and the governor's office, as a testimony of the atrocities committed in the time of the Navy.

Having learned about the Secretary of Defense's order, Alfonso Rapu was no longer hiding in the caves but in his parents' house in town guarded by his followers. John Martin came to the house to "invite him to the governor's office to sign a paper," as his friend Sorobabel Fati recalls Martin's words, "Nothing will happen to you, we are not going to take you, everything is clear now" (Štambuk 2010: 298). Rapu would soon learn that was a trap. They took him, interrogated him, and declared him prisoner. They intended to deport him to the mainland but when taking him to the ship a multitude was waiting outside the office and a woman grabbed his arm. Within seconds, a group of women including Rapu's mother, gathered around him creating a sort of human shield. Slowly, they began to move towards the METEI camp to ask for asylum. The marines followed them but could not break the shield. I remember Rapu describing the scene at that room in the hospital, how the marines tried to break in and how he saw some of them "flying over his head": all these were protecting him, spitting at the marines faces and beating them. Finally, Rapu made it safe to the METEI camp. Once there, the Canadians let Navy delegate Guillermo Rojas in. He talked with Rapu and freed him of charges with the condition that he guaranteed his marines safety. Rojas wanted to avoid an escalation of the conflict, probably afraid of the orders he had received from the Secretary of Defense about protecting Rapu.

Back in the mainland, Rapu's letter had gotten to President Eduardo Frei's hands, who realized Rapu was not demanding independence but asking that the Rapanui were recognized Chilean citizens and that the legislation and constitution granted them the same rights they established for Chilean people. In that letter Rapu was asking for more sources of employment, to value and protect their culture, and to take them out of poverty. With this other version of Rapu's intentions, the same marines sent to the island to put an end to the rebellion received, in a reversal, a presidential order to safeguard the integrity of Alfonso Rapu. His demands began to

be discussed in the Congress and in the meanwhile he was elected mayor of the island, a title only symbolic at the time for the Rapanui were not yet considered Chilean citizens. The discussion in the Congress continued and in March of 1966 the *Ley 16.441* was passed which included the island as part of Chilean jurisdiction creating the *Departamento de Isla de Pascua*, part of the Province of Valparaíso. After the passing of this law the Navy retired from the island, entering the civil administration with all its public services. In 1967 Alfonso Rapu was officially elected mayor of Easter Island.

### **Neo-colonialism in Rapa Nui | Towards Self-determination**

Alfonso Rapu's revolution resulted in a series of legal measures, *Ley 16.441* being the most important of them, which recognized the Rapanui as Chilean citizens, liberating them from the colonial yoke of the Navy administration. As elder Augusto Teao puts it,

With Alfonso as the mayor we knew what was it like to have rights, because until that time things happened like in the old movies of slaves, people with a chain from one leg to the other and to the neck, working like Kunta Kinte. Doctors that forced you to be examined with all your family naked, nurses that raped the girls, and lunes fiscales of forced labor, which was also eliminated.

In 1967 we knew what was to be a citizen, when they gave us for the first time an identification document. This change was made possible by a twenty-two year old teacher. Thanks to him they couldn't tell us anymore, "you come here to do this, you go there to do that." I am the owner of my person, I am free to decide whether I go or no, and where I go. That freedom was what we the Rapanui yearned for, and it was because of Alfonso that we were free to do whatever we wanted with our lives, with the door open to leave and enter the country and the world, that was the revolution of Easter Island (Štambuk 2010: 308).

Although the *Ley Pascua* was meant to be an instrument to guarantee Rapanui's rights and enhance equality between the Rapanui and mainland Chileans, as Riet Delsing (2009) notes, the specifications of the law are a testimony to unequal relations between mainland Chileans and Rapanui Chileans.



In her insightful analysis of the *Ley Pascua* Riet Delsing identifies two distinct levels at which the emphasis on inequality is evidenced. First, in its article 2 the law grants special privileges to mainland Chilean professionals who occupy posts in Chilean governmental institutions and would “serve” on the Island (Delsing 2009: 57). Among these privileges is the special salary of 200% above regular salaries on the mainland for governmental employees, which contrasts with the Rapanui’s labor situation for they hardly have the opportunity to become professionals, because of an inadequate educational system on the island. Second, in its article 41 the *Ley Pascua* also privileges Chileans that take up residence on the island, in the form of relieving property and income taxes, privileges that Chilean people enjoy nowhere else in Chilean territory. Proposed by the left wing of the Congress when discussing the law, this tax relief was intended to benefit only Rapanui people though it was finally applied to all residents of Rapa Nui independently of their ethnicity. These privileges that Delsing has identified as legal enhancements of inequality between Rapanui people and mainland Chileans are also responsible for two of the main problems that Rapanui people are now struggling against, namely uncontrolled immigration and land distribution.

Because of the privileges that the *Ley Pascua* grants to all residents of Rapa Nui, specially the tax redemption benefit, immigration has become an issue that concerns most of the Rapanui community today. According to the census of 2002 3,800 people reside in the island, of which a 65% are of Rapanui descent. The Rapanui estimate that the census of 2012 will show that the population has grown to over 5,000 and that the percentage of residents of Rapanui descent will be way below the 50%. Although the concern is generalized within the Rapanui community, the debate on immigration is somehow controversial for they acknowledge the problem yet, as I have been told repeatedly when discussing the immigration situation with

Rapanui people, they continue to facilitate the means for immigration to happen. As they have told me, Rapanui people are who allow the massive immigration in the first place, for they hire mainland Chilean labor because is cheaper. Then, the Rapanui are also who facilitate the settlement of Chileans in the island, for they rent rooms and lease land to them as an easy income. Although they often acknowledge their participation in the problem, Rapanui people are concerned about the increasing Chilean immigration for it has resulted in an increase of crimes that were very unusual prior the explosion of immigration to the island.

The most active Rapanui organization to fight against the uncontrolled immigration in Rapa Nui has been *Makenu Re'o Rapa Nui*, formed by a group of Rapanui women activists. *Makenu Re'o Rapa Nui* brought the immigration issue to the public opinion in 2009 when they took over the *Mataveru* airport in protest for the increasing and uncontrolled immigration that was threatening their heritage, environment and lifestyle. With this occupation they were demanding that the authorities took immediate action in this matter. This protest was the first of a series of occupations that resulted in the delay of flights, the annoyance of tourists, and the beginning of a dialogue with Chilean authorities. Along with these radical manifestations, *Makenu Re'o Rapa Nui* have been also active in generating awareness among the Rapanui community on issues of immigration and the need of the community to get involved, for which they had a radial program. After the first take over of the airport the debate was brought to the political agenda and after a series of negotiations and consults to the community the Congress began to discuss a reform to the Constitution that would regulate the immigration to Rapa Nui. The proposed reform consists in the incorporation of a new article to restrict the right to reside, stay and move freely in any place of the country for the cases of Rapa Nui and Juan Fernández attending to their statute as special territories. The reform establishes that in these islands those

rights will be subject to specific regulations and aims to safeguard the environment and sustainability of these special territories and their fragile and vulnerable ecosystems. For these purposes the reform would create four migratory categories—permanent resident, temporary resident, passer-by, and tourist—and a special fee for tourists. The reform was passed by the Senate in January 10<sup>th</sup> of 2012 and by the House of Representatives in January 18<sup>th</sup>. According to the 169 ILO Convention, this reform needs to be consulted with the Rapanui community before its implementation<sup>39</sup>.

In addition to the present problem of immigration, in its supposedly aim to enhance equality by granting the same privileges to Rapanui and mainland Chileans the *Ley Pascua* also created a major conflict in what concerns land rights in Rapa Nui. In its article 38 the law authorizes the President of the Republic to grant *títulos de dominio* (SPA. land titles) to Chilean nationals in *territorios fiscales urbanos*, urban territories belonging to the state. This article stipulates that lands can be given in concession for exploitation to the *Corporación de Fomento de la Producción* (CORFO) or to any of its companies or subsidiary associations, to governmental, semi-governmental and autonomous institutions and companies in which the government has intervention.<sup>40</sup> As Delsing notes, by using the term “Chilean nationals,” the *Ley*

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<sup>39</sup> ILO C169 is a Convention of the International Labour Organisation on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples that deals especially with indigenous’ rights. ILO C169 was adopted in 1989 and ratified by Chile in 2008. Since its ratification ILO C169 has become a fundamental tool for indigenous peoples in Chile to regulate legislations concerning their rights.

<sup>40</sup> The law allowing CORFO and its subsidiary companies to own Rapanui lands was the origin of the Hotel Haja Roa case, the most emblematic case of land claims in Rapa Nui, which is now being fought in court by the Hitoranji family, who claims ownership to that land. After the first land distributions made by Chile in the early twentieth century, the land where now the most luxurious hotel of the island is located was property of the family until in 1973 CORFO proposes widow Verónica Atamu to exchange her high valued land for a “solid house,” and analphabet Atamu was required to sign a contract of cession. After the cession CORFO builds a hotel in that land. According to the *Ley Pascua*, CORFO would only have concession of exploitation; however, in 1980 CORFO sold the hotel, which was incorporated to the *Sociedad Hotelera Panamericana*. The Hitoranji family initiated legal actions with no success and in 2005 the hotel is again sold now to a private firm, contravening what is stipulated in both the *Ley Pascua* and the *Ley Indígena* with regard to land ownership in Rapa Nui. The case was brought to the public

*Pascua* granted land rights in Rapa Nui to non-Rapanui Chileans, “the first such action since Chilean annexation” (Delsing 2009: 159). The Chilean nation-state would reverse this decision only thirty years later with the promulgation of the *Ley Indígena*.

Through erratic measures that had failed to acknowledge and represent Rapanui interests in regards to their right to the land, the Chilean government created a major point of conflict within the nation-state and the Rapanui community that even today is far from being resolved. As mentioned earlier, the land conflict originated with the arrival of the missionaries and the disruption of Rapanui patterns of residency and the links between lineages and their ancestral lands. The conflict intensified during the Company period with the enclosing of the Rapanui in Haŋa Roa and was somehow legitimized during the Navy period. Delsing (2009: 219-21) analyzes the conflict by following up the introduction of individual land ownership in the island. As she explains, in 1917, and acting as the legal owners of the land, the Navy started to distribute plots of land for agricultural use. These provisional titles only allowed the Rapanui to use the land, being the Chilean state its legal proprietary (219). Later, the *Ley Pascua* of 1966 officially introduced individual private land ownership though this right was also extended to non-Rapanui Chilean citizens and it only referred to the urban area of Haŋa Roa (220).

The decision of extending land rights to non-Rapanui was only revoked in 1993 when President Patricio Aylwin issued the *Ley Indígena*, a law that established norms of protection, promotion and development of indigenous peoples in Chile and created CONADI, *Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena* (SPA. National Corporation for Indigenous Development)

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attention in August of 2010 when the Hitorañi family took over the hotel installations before its inauguration. After almost three months of interrupted occupation and unfruitful negotiations the Chilean government sent to the island police special forces to put an end to the occupation. In December 3 the police erupted in horrific violence shooting the occupants, which resulted in the intervention of international organizations that strongly condemned Chilean government for the disproportionate use violence against the Rapanui people.

(MIDEPLAN 1993: 1). As for what directly concerns Rapa Nui, the *Ley Indígena* explicitly mandates that only people of Rapanui descent can own land in Rapa Nui, which cannot be transferred to non-Rapanui. This law also created CODEIPA, *Comisión de Desarrollo de Isla de Pascua* (SPA. Easter Island Development Commission), the only Chilean governmental entity with Rapanui representation elected by the Rapanui people. In its article 67, the law establishes that CODEIPA cooperates with Chilean institutions in the assessment of the Rapanui's needs of land, the promotion of Rapanui cultural and archaeological heritage, and the formulation and execution of development programs, projects and plans (22). Through this cooperation and according to the law, CODEIPA is also responsible of giving recommendations about the use of land as an advisory body and to and to confer land titles to Rapanui based on their needs (23).

Since its creation, CODEIPA has been actively cooperating with Chilean government mediating between governmental and Rapanui interests. Among its functions has been to regulate the processes of land restitution. The first process took place between 1998 and 2000 when lands were distributed to a significant number of Rapanui people. In 2011 began the second process of land restitution that favored four Rapanui families, and CODEIPA is working now in the second phase of this process that consists in the repartition of *Fundo Vaitea*, a four thousand hectares territory that equals the 27% of the surface of the island. The land distribution process has been criticized from the beginning by an important portion of the Rapanui community because of the selection and distribution criteria, which they argue are finally decided by Chilean government. Although a significant progress on issues of land rights and an important gesture towards the reparation of historical injustices, the land distribution program fails in restoring the traditional residency patterns disrupted with the colonization of Rapa Nui for the distribution criteria does not reflect the links between lineages and their ancestral lands.

The main reason of this failure is that in 1935 the 43.5% of the total surface of the island acquired the category of *Parque Nacional* (SPA. National Park) through DS N° 103 of the *Ministerio de Tierras y Colonización* (SPA. Lands and Colonization Ministry), a category that transforms almost half of the island into property of the Chilean government and prevents its historical owners to live in their ancestral lands.

As a result of the *Ley Indígena*, issues concerning indigenous rights have been increasingly occupying Chile's political agenda in the past years, being as we have seen immigration, land restitution, development and the creation of a special statute the main concerns in what relates to Rapa Nui. Although some progress has been seen, the Chilean legislation still fails in truly representing Rapanui interests, which led them to develop a parallel agenda to find a solution to their demands. With this purpose, in August 13<sup>th</sup> of 2001 a group of Rapanui formed the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (SPA. Rapa Nui Parliament), which announced the Rapanui Nation autonomy in its *Constitución Parlamentaria* (SPA. Parliament Constitution) in the following terms:

Our land claims have been permanent, and intensively unheard, from the first day the [Chilean] occupation took place. Our duty today is to recover the individual and social identity that one day they took from us. We claim our identity and therefore we announce our autonomy through the creation of our own structures of governability (Tuki Hey et al. 2003: 470).

Arguing for their ties to the land as part of their cultural identity and whith which they are “fused” (Ibid.), in this same document the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (2003: 469) demands that the administration and distribution of the land be made according to their ancestral procedures,

which would validate their demand to recover all lands that CORFO possesses, those that CONAF<sup>41</sup> administrates, and all those owned by non-Rapanui.

Since its constitution the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* has been struggling for the recognition of the Rapa Nui Nation sovereignty and autonomy denouncing the illegality of the treaty that annexed the island to the Republic of Chile. On September 9, 1888 Chile annexed Rapa Nui through a treaty of wills between the Rapanui king, *ariki* Atamu Tekena, and Chilean representative, Policarpo Toro. The *Parlamento Rapa Nui* has denounced publicly the illegality of the treaty arguing that, in the first place, the Rapanui Nation did never cede the sovereignty to Chile, and that Chile, on the other hand, did never ratify the treaty as was stipulated in the proclamation document, which says that Toro annexed the island on condition that the Chilean government ratifies the act, though no official document was issued towards that end.

Delsing explains these claims of illegality of the Chilean occupation through an analysis of the mistranslations of the cession document. In its Spanish version, this documents states that the chiefs agreed to “cede, forever and without reserve, to the government of the Republic of Chile the full and complete sovereignty of the above mentioned island” (Vergara 1939: appendices XII and XIII). However, an accurate translation from the Rapanui text says that the Rapanui “have agreed to transfer that what is above (*iruŋa: RAP.* the surface). We do not cede what is underneath, the territory (*kainga: RAP.* the land)” (Delsing 2009: 87). Delsing’s analysis is corroborated by Rapanui oral tradition, according to which king Atamu Tekena gave a bunch of grass to Policarpo Toro and kept a handful of soil for himself, a gesture through which the Rapanui argue he was allowing Chile to make use of the land but that the territory stayed in

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<sup>41</sup> *Corporación Nacional Forestal de Chile* (SPA. National Forestry Corporation), CONAF, is a governmental body that administrates Chile’s National Parks.

Rapanui hands. Delsing interprets these mistranslations as a means of the Chilean nation-state to assert its political, cultural and economic hegemony on the island in both discourse and practice (2009: 78), and as an expression of colonial power that explains why Chilean government has not been able to create an environment of cooperation in Rapa Nui but rather one of resistance.

In the past decade the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* has been the visible face of this environment of resistance. Acknowledging the inefficacy of Chilean legislation as a means to validate their claims, they have recourse to the international community and configured a discourse that combines international legislations with their ancestral law. Chile perceives this discourse as a risk to its sovereignty. As a means to question its validity the Chilean government, aided by the media, constantly manipulates Rapanui claims for autonomy as to make them appear to the public opinion as a radical pro-independence discourse that has no future other than to fail. The argument is that Rapa Nui *needs* Chile. Chilean rhetoric echoes colonial strategies to exert sovereignty, which in Franz Fanon terms operate by “distorting, disfiguring, and destroying the past of an oppressed people” (Fanon 1965: 211). As Fanon explains, colonial system wants to be perceived by the native as a mother figure that does not allow a fundamentally perverse child to kill her/himself. Chilean rhetoric continues to be, accordingly, the discourse of helping the poor. While this strategy has been effective in influencing the public opinion in Chile and in some Rapanui by replicating the colonial discourse meant to disenfranchise the oppressed and transform the very way they think about who they are, this same rhetoric has also encountered a strong resistance among those who, on the contrary, feel the need to remember who they actually are. The *Parlamento Rapa Nui* embodies this resistance.

From a historical perspective, in this chapter I referred to three main Rapanui movements that have fought against Chilean colonialism and the violation of their rights as a means to begin



to explore how Rapanui worldviews as a people strongly tied to their land are organic to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state, who has historically committed abuses to the Rapanui people in the name of sovereignty. In the previous chapters I analyzed how the Rapanui relate to their land through a relational epistemology in which the people and the land become inseparable agents of a unified cosmos. In that analysis I explained the cultural and ontological significance that Rapanui people attribute to their land. Combining versions of oral traditions and Rapanui's personal narratives with references to my own experience in Rapa Nui, I examined how Rapanui people see their history and their very identity through their land; how the land becomes a memoryscape that reminds them who they are, where they come from, and how they came to be the people they are. In that analysis I also examined how the Rapanui people relate to their land; how they live their history and their memory *through* their land, how they make the very land and the beings dwelling on it to partake in their daily lives, and how they define and identify themselves in the reciprocity of these land-being relations.

While in the previous chapters I examined these relations from an ontological perspective, in this last chapter I shifted to a more historical tone as a means to revise how that unified cosmos of human, other-than-human and land relations was disrupted by Chilean colonialism and how the Rapanui people has historically reacted to this disruption. I deliberately juxtaposed ontological and historical approaches with the intention of providing land-being relations with urgency and contingency. While the ontological study offered evidence of the importance Rapanui people attribute to their relations to the land through examples of oral traditions and personal accounts, this historical revision proved that evidence not only from histories of a remote past and intimate narratives, but from accounts of very recent times and public

discourses. My purpose with this ontological and historical dialogue was to demonstrate how Rapanui worldviews are organic to the political history of Rapa Nui. Through this dialectic I could explore Rapanui worldviews to then explain how Chilean colonialism used and distorted them as a means to disenfranchise a people and to assert its sovereignty, and how the Rapanui people sees today in the assertion of their worldviews and relations to the land a site of resistance to fight back Chilean neo-colonialism in Rapa Nui. To explain how the Rapanui are politically articulating this resistance I revised the emergence of a Rapanui national discourse that aims to recover what was taken from them by restoring the land-being ontological relations that colonialism disrupted.

I explained the origins of this national discourse through the discussion of María Añata's movement of 1914. By appropriating both the Catholic discourse and Rapanui worldviews, Añata was able to raise awareness among her people while calling the attention of the Catholic Church in Chile, which played an important role in the movement's political achievements. In discussing the Navy period I examined how by terminating the lease to the company in the name of protecting the Rapanui's rights the Chilean government was in fact promoting a political agenda that was intended to assert Chile's sovereignty in the island. Although effective in defending human rights in Rapa Nui, Alfonso Rapu's movement of 1963 demonstrated the problematic of the colonized intellectual when his or her discourse is aligned to that of the colonizer only. By advocating for integration, Rapu's movement was successful in granting Rapanui's rights as Chilean citizens though in the long term this claim for equality derived in a legislation that failed to acknowledge the Rapanui's specificity as a people and consequently in the loss of the Rapanui's right to the land and self-determination as a nation with its own laws. I explained these implications through the examination of Chilean legislation concerning

indigenous' rights and Rapanui's in particular. By referring to these laws I gave a brief overview of the current political situation on Rapa Nui, for which I focused on the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* and its revitalizing movement that seeks to awaken the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse towards self-determination. This national discourse is grounded in the Rapanui spiritual relations to the land and the universe, presenting an argument that while empowers them, results extremely difficult for Chile to deal with, which converts it in a critical site of resistance for the Rapanui people.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis I examined Rapanui worldviews to begin to explore how they are relevant to understand the present political situation of the Rapanui nation. In Chapter One I introduced the concepts of land, language and being, which I presented as fundamental to understanding Rapanui worldviews and the present struggles of the Rapanui people to reclaim control over their cultural heritage. I first examined the Rapanui concept of *kaiŋa* (*RAP.* land) based on my collaborators' understanding of it as the result of the actions of the ancestors, who transformed a landscape into a cultural geography. To illustrate this argument I drew upon examples of the Rapanui origin myth, which emphasizes the idea of landscape as both shaping and being shaped by history. I then explored the Rapanui concept of *vanaŋa* (*RAP.* language) and the notion of generative language, which refers to the idea that the world emerges from language and the interaction of humans, other-than-human beings and the environment. To make this argument I identified and exemplified different categories of Rapanui narrative forms to highlight the agency that Rapanui people attribute to the spoken word. Finally, I explored the Rapanui notion of being by identifying and defining the different categories of persons dwelling on the land that the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors) shaped by creating a cultural landscape they named Te Pito O Te Kaiŋa.

I expanded this exploration of Rapanui worldviews in Chapter Two where I discussed how the three categories I introduced in Chapter One relate to each other. As a means to situate this discussion within the terrain of the present and the concrete, I illustrated the relationships between land, language and being by drawing upon examples of Rapanui petroglyphs and their associated histories. The chapter focused on examples of three types of petroglyphs I have

termed *Papa Mo'a Ariki*, *Papa Mo'a Taŋata* and *Papa Mo'a Varua* as a means to highlight the person category to which they relate, namely *ariki* (*RAP.* king), *taŋata* (*RAP.* human) and *varua* (*RAP.* “omnipersons”), respectively. Through the exploration of these different types of petroglyphs and their associated histories I discussed how petroglyphs enable knowledge, memory and intersubjectivity, and how the present generation of Rapanui think their land and relate to other beings that dwell on it, as well as how they express this thinking and interactions through language. In this discussion I revised theories of animism to propose Rapanui worldviews no longer as animism but as a relational epistemology in which people produce and reproduce sharing relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others. Opposing the objectification and primitivization of the study of ontologies by animist theories, in this chapter I discussed how the Rapanui self is cognitively orientated to a world of subjects other than the self where these relationships are crystallized making the self to become structured through a diversified world of human and other-than-human beings.

In Chapter Three I examined how colonialism disrupted Rapanui ancestral laws and the order they established in what regards the land, and how the neo-colonial present of Rapa Nui is witnessing a revitalization of Rapanui identity that seeks to restore that order through a national discourse that speaks to Rapanui worldviews with an emphasis in the relations to the land. For these purposes, I first explained how the land was originally distributed according to the worldviews examined throughout the previous chapters and then discussed how colonialism broke these ontologically established patterns of residency. Then, I briefly referred to three main uprisings that have taken place in the island in claims of the Rapanui's right to their land. The first of these movements was led by María Aŋata and dates from 1914. Referred to as “The Prophetess,” María Aŋata founded her movement in visions she would have received from God.

The doubt remains if hers was a subversive strategy to fight the colonizer in his own language or if it only accounts for the efficacy of colonial mechanisms to colonize indigenous' minds. The second movement was led by Rapanui elementary school teacher Alfonso Rapu in 1963. Trained in Chile, Alfonso Rapu is an example of the figure of the colonized intellectual that seeks to create a moment of disturbance to awake the people by reminding them who they actually are. In examining his movement I discussed the problematics of the colonized intellectual when her/his discourse of remembering is biased by western ideals. Finally, in this chapter I examined the present revitalizing movement that is taking place in the island today. Led by the *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (SPA. Rapa Nui Parliament), this movement seeks to awake the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse that aims to restore the order that colonization disrupted. By revising these movements, I discussed how Rapanui worldviews are organic to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state, who has historically committed abuses to the Rapanui people in the name of sovereignty.

By integrating Rapanui's own concepts and hermeneutics into the academic discourse this ethnography presented a case study that problematizes previous objectivist and animist approaches to the study of indigenous' worldviews. As I explained, "animism" is a highly charged concept that resonates with the racist attitudes and perceptions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth anthropological and archaeological thought. Developed by Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), animism was defined as a dogmatic belief in souls or spirits proper to "the lower races" (Tylor 1871: 109). Broadly, Tylor presented animism as a fundamental antithetic to science. Animistic beliefs were in his view wrong ideas resulting from mental confusion. Following Nurit Bird-David's (1999) revision of animism, this thesis provided a case study proposing that the

Rapanui are not animists for they do not dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as rocks or ordinary animals. In contrast, my thesis posited that the Rapanui understand the world and their *being* in-the-world through a relational epistemology that makes them conscious of the relatedness between them and persons of the other-than-human class that actively participate in a diversified world and whose differences they absorb in the construction of a unified cosmos. The theoretical revision this ethnography presented was based on the exploration of Rapanui's concepts and hermeneutics and their integration into the theoretical discussion, which entails a significant movement from objectivism to an intersubjective approach to the study of Rapanui worldviews.

The revision of previously objectivist scholarship this ethnography presented defies the primitivization of indigenous peoples by a scholar tradition that has depersonalized land and dichotomized social realities through the imposition of its own modernist ontological assumptions. In doing so this study refigured those ontological assumptions presenting an exploration of Rapanui worldviews as worlds of engaged being and relational ways of knowing as a means to counteract the perpetuation of colonization that the academic primitivization of indigenous peoples entails. In her analysis of the relationships between knowledge, research and imperialism, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains how those relationships have come to structure indigenous ways of knowing first through the education of "native" intellectuals and later through the development of academic disciplines. The knowledge gained through the colonization of indigenous peoples, Smith (1999: 58-9) argues, has been used in turn to colonize their minds, a colonization that is perpetuated through their primitivization by academic disciplines. By asserting the validity and complexity of Rapanui forms of knowledge, this ethnography contributes to the decolonization of the field of Rapa Nui studies. In reconsidering

previous objectivist scholarship this ethnography integrated Rapanui ways of knowledge and instead of translating them into objectivist terms explained them through Rapanui own hermeneutics.

By revising previous scholarship and exploring Rapanui worldviews based on Rapanui concepts of land-being relations, this ethnography also contributes to the Rapanui work of decolonization for Rapanui worldviews are organic to the present political context of Rapa Nui and to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state. As this study demonstrated, the relations between Rapa Nui and Chile have been historically based on mistranslations and misinterpretations. In her study of the (re)construction of Rapanui identity, Riet Delsing interprets these mistranslations as a means of the Chilean nation-state to assert its political, cultural and economic hegemony on the island in both discourse and practice (2009: 78), and as an expression of colonial power that explains why Chilean government has not been able to create an environment of cooperation in Rapa Nui but rather one of resistance. While colonial power and the disenfranchising of indigenous peoples operated by distorting their worldviews and transforming the very way they think about who they are, the work of decolonization finds its most effective form in the restoration of that disruption and the finding of an empowered voice that comes with the need of remembering who they actually are. Rapa Nui is gradually engaging in that process of decolonization, which is visible in the emergence of revitalizing movements that seek to awaken the people, to fight the occupying power internationally and to produce a revolutionary and national discourse towards self-determination. This national discourse is grounded in Rapanui worldviews and their relations to the land and the universe, presenting an argument that effectively empowers them for it results extremely difficult for Chile to understand and deal with. Through the exploration of Rapanui worldviews this



ethnography articulated the arguments in which Rapanui discourses of decolonization are founded, presenting them as a critical site of resistance for the Rapanui nation.

Through the study of Rapanui ontological concepts in relation to the land from an intersubjective perspective, this ethnography explored Rapanui worldviews as a relational epistemology in which the people and the land become inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos. This intersubjective approach to the study of how Rapanui people think of and relate to the land not only involved a reconsideration of the previous objectivist scholarship but also contributes to the Rapanui work of decolonization. As discussed in this ethnography, Rapanui worldviews are organic to the present political context of Rapa Nui, to their struggles towards reclaiming their right to the land and self-determination, and to the problematic relationship between Rapa Nui and the Chilean nation-state. By studying Rapanui land from an intersubjective approach this ethnography provided a new input to revise academic and historical misinterpretations and mistranslations that have contributed to the perpetuation of colonialism in Rapa Nui. In doing so, this thesis examined the Rapanui concepts of land, language and being drawing upon examples of oral traditions that illuminate such ideas and provide the means to refigure the concept of animism as a relational epistemology that connects the Rapanui people to the land. This theoretical revision set the basis to explore how Chilean colonialism in Rapa Nui altered those relations as a means to assert its sovereignty and how the Rapanui people see in the restoration of those relations an effective site of resistance to fight Chilean neo-colonialism and reclaim control over the land that was taken from them.

## **AFTERWORD**

### **THE MA THESIS AS FOUNDATION FOR THE PHD DISSERTATION**

As a preliminary exploration of Rapanui worldviews and land-being relations from both ontological and historical perspectives, this thesis is the starting point of my dissertation project, in which I will investigate the repatriation debate in light of these ontological and historical relations to discuss how repatriation could contribute to the Rapanui work of de-colonization. In this thesis I began to explore how colonization disrupted Rapanui ancestral law and the order it established with regards to land-being relations, and how the neo-colonial present of Rapa Nui is witnessing a revitalization of Rapanui identity that seeks to restore that order through a national discourse that speaks to Rapanui worldviews. In my dissertation I will expand on this exploration by examining colonial and archaeological collection as an agent of disruption, and repatriation as a medium towards restoration and reparation. For these purposes, my dissertation will examine the Chilean position within the repatriation and reburial debate to explore potential cases of repatriation in Rapa Nui. To understand Chile's position within the debate as both a colonized and colonizer country, I will investigate the relationships between colonialism, collection and repatriation.

This thesis set the ground work for the discussion of repatriation and (de)colonization where I proposed that while colonial power and the disenfranchising of indigenous peoples operated by distorting their worldviews and transforming the very way they think about who they are, the work of decolonization finds its most effective form in the restoration of that disruption and the finding of an empowered voice that comes with the need of remembering who they actually are. This discussion will be deepened in the dissertation where I will examine how

collection in Rapa Nui has contributed and perpetuated the colonial disenfranchising of Rapanui people and how repatriation could serve the people to find an empowered voice that leads to decolonization. By way of an afterword, in the next pages I present a preliminary overview of the main lines of the repatriation and reburial debate. As a preamble I will first outline my previous research leading to this thesis and how the methodologies I used determined the direction that my research is taking. Then, I will explain the different positions within the repatriation debate, the foundations of indigenous peoples' claims for repatriation, and the opposition that these claims have found within the museum and academic communities. To understand Chile's position within the debate I will briefly refer to Chilean legislation concerning protection of cultural heritage and explain how this legislation difficulties indigenous peoples in Chile to take substantial action towards repatriation. To situate this local discussion within the global repatriation debate I will refer to repatriation as a phenomenon tied to (de)colonization by proposing that while collection was one of Western practices to disenfranchise indigenous peoples and to colonize them, repatriation is a form of empowerment and resistance. In this discussion I will provide some cases of collection in Rapa Nui, focusing particularly in the detachment of some *moai*. Through these concrete examples I will briefly explain how this thesis serves as a necessary preliminary exploration to my dissertation project and the investigation of repatriation as a means towards decolonization.

### **Moving Forward | The Path Towards Decolonization and the Repatriation Debate**

In the introduction of this thesis I reflected on my methodologies and collaborations to explain how this ethnography was both shaped and informed by personal relationships and experiences of a shared time in a shared space. By way of a conclusion, I would like now to

expand on how these personal relationships and experiences have deeply influenced my research interests and my ethnographic work, and how they determined the way I frame my research in the future. As mentioned in the first pages of this thesis, this ethnography resulted from a methodology that acknowledges the bodily nature of fieldwork, the performativity of the ethnographic work as a means to reach intersubjectivity, and the efficacy of the dialogical ethnographic mode to de-hegemonize ethnographic authority. These methodologies impugne traditional approaches to the other-as-a-theme to propose rather the other-as-an-interlocutor. Not working with passive informants but with collaborators, this ethnography acknowledges their contributions as agents of communication that actively take part of the ethnographic process.

In this taking part of the ethnographic process, my collaborators and I became all participatory agents of the performance of ethnography itself as being ethnographers and subjects at once in a joint ethnographic work. Through these very close collaborations and the experimentation with methodologies that had radical praxis and advocacy at the center, we allowed for this ethnography to open up spaces for some voices of a living community based on the recognition of the performance of ethnographic collaboration as capable of configuring identities that are no longer fixed definitions but mixed, inventive and relational constructions. As discussed in the introduction, I also investigate and write from a space of self-reflexivity that submits my own position as a researcher to problematization. Conscious of the difficulties of the ethnographic work and problematics of my own position as an ethnographer, I do not intend to speak for a community, nor do I claim to present a pristine indigenous thought. Neither do I aim to reveal secrecy nor to translate that thought into absolute categories. Far from that, through this ethnography I presented a dialogue of voices and experiences to reframe questions, claims and concerns the Rapanui I work with and I stand for in a honest hope to be a small contribution to

the Rapanui's struggles to reposition those questions, claims and concerns back in the center.

Sharing the ethnographic work and the ethnographer's position with my collaborators not only shaped this thesis but also deeply influenced my ethnographic work in a wider sense for the experience of collaboration determined the very basis of my research interests by integrating my collaborators' own concerns and interests. Six years ago I came to the island with a research project that investigated the strategies through which a new generation of Rapanui artists was re-writing history and re-inventing tradition. Strongly focused on oral traditions, this study looked at its modes of representation and its vivid transition from ancestral rituals to postmodern theatrical performances, imaginatively and critically integrating Rapanui local culture within global formats. The results of this research were presented in the first interdisciplinary colloquium in Rapanui culture and art, *Hakari O Te Rapa Nui* (Body of Rapa Nui, 2008), which took place in different universities and cultural centers in Santiago de Chile and congregated both Chilean professors and researchers, and Rapanui artists, researchers, students and political figures. In a three-days encounter we discussed from a cultural studies perspective how individuals coming from peripheral cultures are capable of owning, critically and inventively, the flows of metropolitan cultures producing eloquent political discourses of resistance based on the reinvention of tradition. Although significant in the academic and intellectual dialogue it provoked, this research spoke more to Chilean academia and to the very reduced elite of Rapanui students rather than to the Rapanui community at large. Aiming for my work to be a contribution to the community, I began engaging in closer collaborations, participating in research projects led by Rapanui people, and attending to my collaborators' own concerns and research interests.

Working within Chilean academia as a professor in a Chilean university my intention was to de-hegemonize the scholarly discourse by integrating Rapanui epistemologies and cultural

manifestations within the Chilean academic debate. Working at the same time as a researcher in Rapa Nui I became aware that for de-hegemonization to be achieved it needed to be based on the empowering of Rapanui voices. The conversations my collaborators wanted to engage in were not those of whether or not the subaltern can speak; they have a clear answer for that. Rather, they wanted to explore on how s/he speaks. Motivated by them I partook in this exploration and my research took a complete different direction. Together we began to explore Rapanui worldviews and epistemologies, the relations between land and being, how colonization disrupted these relations to disempower a people, and how the people could regain that power by restoring those relations. This thesis resulted from those conversations. Also from these explorations we learned that empowering would not come only by disseminating knowledge outwards but most importantly, by bringing it back in. And with this intention we began to relate our research to the repatriation debate. This thesis is then a preliminary exploration towards the opening up of a space to begin a conversation on issues of repatriation in Rapa Nui, a conversation that will occupy my dissertation.

The past four decades have witnessed an arising movement of self-reflexivity and political action on problematics concerning power relations and the rights of the oppressed. This movement has been increasingly led by indigenous peoples around the globe arising awareness of their ancestral rights. Land claims, education and cultural heritage protection have occupied the heart of this movement where the so-called “reburial” issue has taken a particularly significant position. During the past forty years Australian Aborigines, Maori people, Native Americans and, increasingly, indigenous peoples from other parts of the world, have campaigned for the right to determine the destiny of their cultural heritage. This campaign has materialized in the indigenous claims for the return of the human remains of their ancestors, funerary goods and

other culturally significant items, contesting the ownership of museums' and other institutions' collections. Indigenous groups culturally affiliated to these collections have been increasingly demanding that such material be returned to them, as well as taking action to ensure that human remains and funerary objects found today stay in their land.

Our interest in the repatriation debate was motivated by Piru's previous research on museum collections. Two decades ago Piru did an extensive investigation on Rapanui collections held in museums worldwide. One by one, she wrote them requesting a copy of the inventory of Rapanui items they had, creating an archive that lists the collections of museums in France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. I learned about this archive during a field season I worked in Rapa Nui in 2011 when I was living in Piru's house in Vai To Iri. While revising her archive she would stop at some "items." Her main concern was, as she called them, the *puoko o te tupuna* (RAP. head of the ancestors), the skulls. Simply as it sounds, by collecting skulls explorers and archaeologists had taken the *mana* away from the island. And the Rapanui just had to learn to live with that. Piru told me about entire families that were cursed because of showing burial sites to archaeologists or revealing the location of caves where other Rapanui were desperately hiding "treasures." Piru took me to those people, to some of these sites, to a few of those caves. Nothing is left in there. And now researchers complain about Rapanui suspicions and supposedly outrageous accusations of us making money of this. Well, those who preceded us made fortunes. And they did so disturbing burial sites, violating *tapu* places, assaulting hiding caves, fooling informants, and robbing a people. All in the name of what was good for Rapa Nui, because their heritage would be surely better taken care of in a museum. Like *Hoa Haka Nana 'Ia*, for some the most important of the over nine hundred *moai* in the island, which is now standing in the ground floor of the British

Museum in London, very well preserved. “This island is never going to be the same until Hoa Haka Nana ‘Ia is back,” Piru said when we were reviewing her inventory of the British Museum’s collection. She did it without melodrama, making some annotations in the margin of the page, but she meant it. Her words touched me so deeply that I committed my research to the cause. Piru is now back researching in museums’ collections; I am investigating the policies, principles, and politics of repatriation; and Te Pou is working on an art project that aims to raise awareness on the issue among the community.

### *The “Reburial Issue”: An Ongoing Debate*

Many are the reasons for which indigenous groups have been requesting the repatriation of their ancestors’ human remains and culturally significant items, yet these reasons have encountered a passionate opposition by many who study and curate such materials. 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 20002: 100). Instead of their claims for academic freedom, museum, anthropology and archaeological communities should be more concerned about their research’s bounds to human subjects. In the academic community, students and faculty have to submit their



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. Academics conducting research on human remains or cultural properties in museum collections often do not seem to be aware of the consequences of their investigations for human subjects for the “objects” and “remains” they are curating and studying constitute in many cases living persons according to the worldviews of the peoples from which they were taken. Rather, they continue to defend their right to research on the name of academic freedom.

Arguments on the protection of “human” patrimony are also very common (see Simpson 2002) within the repatriation and reburial debate, where researchers and curators claim for the importance of the retention of especially human remains to ensure future research and the development of science. These arguments rely on the efficacy of human remains to provide archaeologists and biological anthropologists with data concerning past diseases, diet, social practices, population movement and human evolution. As Jane Hubert and Cressida Fforde (2002) have pointed out, “with the development of such techniques as DNA analysis scientists are now able to elicit even more information from human remains, even perhaps from the most ancient ones” (Hubert and Fforde 2002: 4). This argument is particularly harmful for indigenous peoples’ rights to their cultural heritage for a number of reasons. It first disregards the patrimony of a particular people and their rights to it to propose it instead as a universal good. Underlying the “human” patrimony argument is also that of preservation, which is equally violent for indigenous peoples for it suggests that their cultural heritage is better taken care of in a museum rather than in the place they belong to and by the people that own it. Moreover, the argument of “human” patrimony echoes colonial claims of Western positional superiority by privileging science over indigenous worldviews, for according to this argument indigenous cultural

“objects” and human “remains” are of better use to universal knowledge than they are to a particular people’s exercise of their traditions.

These two main arguments have tainted the efforts that repatriation laws and international conventions have made towards the recognition of indigenous rights by neglecting both indigenous epistemologies and their rights over the specificity of their ancestral past. On the one hand, the debate surrounding repatriation entails an epistemological problem that is founded on the assumption that pre-contact aboriginal knowledge would have vanished without a trace were it not for archaeology. This assumption discounts the validity and accuracy of indigenous versions of their own past as well as their ways of knowing and understanding that past by asserting the primacy of scientific approaches. On the other hand, the claim that the retention of human remains would benefit the development of science and therefore secure the exercise of the universal right of knowledge is supported on an understanding of archaeological past as public heritage disregarding the voice of its actual heirs.

As mentioned above, underlying these approaches and assumptions is what Edward Said called the “positional superiority” of Western (Said 1978: 7), an attitude that perpetuates colonial discourses. This position finds its counterpart in the argument that defends repatriation as a means by which the colonial wounds of the oppressed can and should be healed (see Thornton 2002). Following this debate I argue that repatriation far from restricting academic freedom makes us researchers to critically position ourselves within a space of collaboration and responsibilities that can effectively de-hegemonize scholarly discourse. Similarly, far from jeopardizing the so-called public heritage I argue that repatriation ensures the care for which it was meant to, contributing with it to the validation of indigenous ways of knowing.

### *Chile's Position in the Debate*

Chilean legislation concerning cultural heritage does not include issues of repatriation. The legislation we find establishes more specifically regulations for the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and archaeological, anthropological and paleontological excavations. Due to this lack, the very few cases of repatriation that have taken place in Chile during the past few years have relied exclusively in foreign institutions' and private collectors' goodwill. This section briefly reviews Chilean laws and ratified conventions concerning cultural heritage and indigenous rights that could serve as a basis to a law dealing directly with repatriation and reburial in Chile.

Within Chilean legislation, the most important law that could serve as a basis for the creation of a law or regulations concerning repatriation is the *Ley de Monumentos Nacionales* (SPA. National Monuments Law, 1970). This law 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).

This law states that the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (SPA. National Monuments Council) regulates the tenure and protection of every national monument identified as such according to this definition. Additionally, this law 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 objects 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 were found.

The regulations that the law establishes for the distribution of material obtained through excavations benefits exclusively museums under the argument that they would guarantee the conservation, exhibition, and study of such material. As a means to reinforce this guarantee the National Monuments Law allows the loan, exchange and transfer of such material. In the case of material obtained by foreign scientific missions, for example, the Council may assign up to a 25% of it to such missions (Consejo de Monumentos 2000: 23). Similarly, the law even allows nation-state museums to exchange or loan items to both private institutions and foreign museums (25), a permission that results at least outrageous in light of foreign law and international conventions (see for example IFO C169, 1989; NAGPRA, 1990; UNESCO, 1954). The *Decreto Supremo N°484* on Archaeological, Anthropological and Paleontological Excavations and/or Prospecting (1991) also facilitates these exchanges and loans under the claim that the material found on excavations are property of the Chilean nation-state and that the Council will assign its tenure to those institutions that guarantee its conservation, exhibition, and availability for scientific research (Consejo de Monumentos 2000: 40).

The distribution regulations that the law establishes do not consider the cultural significance that this material might represent for the community historically residing in the area where it was found, the community's worldviews that may be affected by the detachment of such material, and the effects that its display may have for them. This problematic goes further in what the law and the decree establish with regard to the dissemination of research results and

findings resulted from excavations. As they mandate, researchers conducting authorized excavations or prospecting are required to submit a report on the results and findings of their research to the Council yet they will not be accessible for the public or specific communities. As stated in the Article 17 of the Decree, these reports will be confidential for a period of eight years and might be available for the public only after that period (Consejo de Monumentos 2000: 39).

The prevalence that Chilean legislation concerning the protection of cultural heritage gives to museums and educational institutions, as well as the primacy that it gives to the development of science are grounded in Chilean constitutional rights and duties. As the *Constitución Política de la República de Chile* (SPA. Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile) states in article 19 of its Supreme Decree N°100, it is a duty of the nation-state to promote the development of education in all levels, to encourage scientific and technological investigation, artistic creation, and the protection and increase of the national cultural heritage (*Constitución* 2011: 17). Although faithful to the Constitution, the National Monuments Law fails in acknowledging the regulations established by the Indigenous Law (1993) and the ILO Convention 169 (1989) in what respects indigenous participation. As both the law and the convention mandate, whenever the nation-state institutions and organizations deal with issues that impact or are related to indigenous peoples, they must consult indigenous communities and consider their opinions (Consejo de Monumentos 2000: 50). The National Monuments Law not only does not consult on issues such as excavation, collection and exportation of their cultural heritage but it also fails in providing the communities with information about scientific research and excavation works being carried on in their territory.

These shortcuts of Chilean legislation concerning cultural heritage have been partially corrected by the ratification of international conventions, being the most significant the 1989

ILO Convene 169 ratified by Chile in 2008. The *ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* establishes important regulations to guarantee the acknowledgement of indigenous rights specifically over cultural heritage, land, education, and communication. As a means to ensure the exercise of these rights, the Convene mandates that indigenous communities be consulted every time that the Chilean nation-state intends to legislate on issues that concern indigenous rights and impact their cultural agendas. Although this Convene represents a very significant effort towards a mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between indigenous people and governmental institutions, not much has changed since its ratification and many attitudes, stereotypes and fears remain deeply entrenched. The indigenous right to live in their ancestral lands continue to be unconstitutional, indigenous tangible cultural heritage continues to be property of Chilean nation-state, education continues to be based on Western positional superiority.

Other international conventions concerning more specifically repatriation are the 1970 *UNESCO Convention of the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* and the 1954 *UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*, also known as the 1954 Hague Convention. The 1970 UNESCO Convention, which ratification the Congress is still studying, is limited in its effectiveness because of differences in national laws in the states that have signed the Convention. Furthermore, it applies only to illicit activities that occur after a state has acceded to the Convention (Simpson 2002: 202). The 1954 Hague Convention was ratified by Chile in 2008, which includes its second protocol (1999) that requires occupying powers to prohibit and prevent the illicit export, removal or change of ownership of cultural property and defines new crimes in relation to the protection of cultural property (Simpson 2002: 202).

Whereas at a national or international level, repatriation in Chile is necessarily associated

to colonialism, which makes all the mentioned laws and conventions very limited in their effectiveness. At a national level, the main problem that Chilean legislation encounters when approaching repatriation debates is that it fails in recognizing indigeneity as a legal status. This legal status is what has been called in Latin America *constitucionalidad indígena*, which consists in the legal recognition of the different indigenous peoples occupying the national territory. Many Latin American countries have been legislating on this issue as a means to recognize the specificity of each indigenous group and their rights, and to define those nations as multicultural. An exemplary case in this regard is that of Bolivia, where in 2009 President Evo Morales promulgated a new Constitution that defines the country as a unitary *plurinational* state. In Chile, a project for the law on *constitucionalidad indígena* has been resting in the Congress for over fifteen years. This project has been given special attention after the ratification of the ILO Convention 169, and the government has been increasingly consulting indigenous communities on this matter.

The international conventions mentioned above do not consider the acquisition of items taken in past centuries as the result of colonial expansion. As Moira Simpson (2002) has pointed out in her analysis of the diverse international conventions concerning repatriation, the 1954 Hague Convention—the only international convention ratified by Chile that deals specifically with repatriation—does not regard conflicts between colonizers and the colonized as war. Instead, “the arrival of European military personnel and settlers was regarded as discovery, though to the indigenous population it was, more often than not, invasion” (Simpson 2002: 202). According to this understanding of colonization, those items that Spaniards took from Chile during the colonial period are not subject to the regulations that the 1954 Hague Convention establishes, nor are the items that Chile itself took from indigenous lands during the colonization

of those indigenous peoples.

Due to these limitations, the very few cases of repatriation that we find in Chile have relied exclusively in the goodwill of foreign institutions and private collectors. As Roger Anyon and Russell Thornton (2000) have pointed out on their analysis of what can be learned from repatriation legislation in the USA, to guarantee that repatriation will occur in a systematic and structured manner, repatriation legislation is to be enacted; because, as the Chilean case shows, “relying on the goodwill of institutions or individuals to implement repatriation often promotes ineffective, inadequate, and arbitrary efforts” (Hubert and Fforde 2002: 5). As a result of their own initiatives, in the past five years foreign institutions and collectors have repatriated human remains and mummies to Chile.

In 2007, the National Museum of the American Indian repatriated four human remains, two skeletons and two skulls, 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. The remains received funerary rituals according to Atacameña traditions and were buried at Cerro Sagrado, in the Azapa Valley. In 2010, the Anthropology Department of the University of Zürich repatriated five Kawésqar skeletons to the Kawésqar community, an indigenous group that has historically resided in Tierra del Fuego, in the extreme south of Chile. The remains were part of a group of eleven Kawésqar that German businessman Carl Hagenbeck had captured in 1881 with the consent of the Chilean government to be exhibited as curiosities at the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris, the Zoological Park in Berlin, and other curiosities fairs in Leipzig, Munich, Stuttgart, Nuremberg and Zürich. The Kawésqar community reburied the remains in Karukinká Island, in Tierra del Fuego. In 2011, the Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève repatriated four mummies to the Museum San



Miguel de Azapa in Arica. Among them were two Chinchorro mummies. Arguing for the patrimonial and scientific value of these mummies that, as Chinchorro, are considered to be the most ancient mummies in the world, the National Monuments Council decided to keep them in the museum.

### *Repatriation as a Phenomenon Tied to Colonization*

The history of collection and repatriation of human remains and cultural objects is embedded within and contributes to the relations of power between the indigenous peoples and the West. The detachment of such a relevant part of a people's culture could be possible only because of these power relations for collection was a form of colonization that served the West to the disempowering of indigenous peoples. Repatriation, on the other hand, has resulted from indigenous movements of revitalization and resistance to reclaim control over their cultural heritage, and from Western governments' efforts to recognize indigenous rights and to repair the history of abuses committed against them. While collection was one of Western practices to disenfranchise indigenous peoples and to colonize them, repatriation is a form of empowerment and resistance.

As part of the colonial mechanism, collection was one of the means by which the colonizer attempted to destroy the colonized culture, to alter their worldviews, to make them forget. This aspect of colonization is what Kenyan post-colonial theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls the "colonization of the mind" (Thiong'o 1986). As I discussed in the last chapter of this thesis, the colonization of the mind in Rapa Nui operated mainly through discipline and enclosure of the people, and the alteration of residency patterns that disrupted land-being relations. Another agent for the colonization of the mind in Rapa Nui was the detachment of their cultural heritage. The

most dramatic example is that of the detachment of *moai*, Rapanui megalithic sculptures that were carved by the ancestors to honor their dead. The original name of the *moai* is *Ariŋa Ora*, which translates into “Living Face”; they were carved to perpetuate the life of the dead and, as persons, they were all named. These imposing monuments have always attracted the attention of visitors from the first explorer Jacob Roggeveen, who arrived to Rapa Nui in Easter Sunday of 1722, to contemporary archaeologists and tourists that come to the island. The size of these giants did not stop explorers, colonizers and archaeologists, and many of them even broke them apart to be able to take at least their heads to Europe. Today, almost a hundred *moai* are held at museum collections worldwide.

The *moai* are one of the most powerful materializations of Rapanui worldviews, as discussed throughout this thesis, as a relational epistemology in which the people and the land become inseparable participatory agents of a unified cosmos. As the living memory of the *tupuna* (*RAP.* ancestors), they enable memory, knowledge and intersubjectivity. First brought by the seven explorers from Hiva in the form of small wooden carvings, the *moai* remind the Rapanui people where they come from and make their history to live in the land. For the Rapanui people, the *moai* are also repositories of knowledge. Their carving and transportation speak to sophisticated techniques which understanding has occupied archaeological research for several decades, as their emplacement across the landscape reveals an advanced astronomical knowledge. Their distribution in the island speaks to both Rapanui residency patterns and worldviews. They signal the relations between lineages and lands, as well as the relations between land and beings. As the living face of the ancestors, all *moai* in Rapa Nui are *tapu* for the *mana* of the ancestors stayed embedded in them.

As the most *tapu* manifestations of their worldviews, the Rapanui see in the detachment of

the *moai* a violation that resulted in the diminution of the *mana* in the island. The most famous of stolen *moai* is *Hoa Haka Nana 'Ia*, which the *Topaze* expedition took from the island in 1869. Since then, *Hoa Haka Nana 'Ia* has been held at the British Museum. Rapanui people consider this *moai* to be their most precious masterpiece, though they can no longer see him. In his back the ancestors carved aspects of their worldviews and history, and they erected him at top of the volcano *Rano Kau*, the most important site in the island; the place that the first *ariki* (*RAP.* king) Hotu A Matu'a chose for his death, and where the ancestors built the ceremonial village of Oroño, where the ritual of the *Tanata Manu* (*RAP.* Birdman) used to take place. Another well-known case is the head of a *moai* that Pierre Loti broke and took to Europe during his *La Flore* expedition in 1872. This head was held at the *Musée de L'Homme* in Paris until the creation of the *Musée du Quai Branly*, in 2006, where the head is now. During their archaeological expedition in 1934-35, Henri Lavachery and Alfred Métraux also took two heads and one complete *moai*. The heads were also given to the *Musée de L'Homme*, and were then transferred to the *Musée du Louvre*. The *moai* was given to the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels, where it has been held since then. The Smithsonian Institution acquired one *moai*, one head and one *pukao* (*moai*'s headdresses) in 1886, which are currently held at the Department of Anthropology of the National Museum of Natural History. While the collection of these *moai* substantially altered Rapanui worldviews for the *moai* took with them their *mana*, their return for the Rapanui is about reclaiming their collective *mana* as a people.

Colonial collection served yet another function, that of expansion and search or new knowledges derived from the Enlightenment and Imperialism. As Maori scholar and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 59) explains, the dismantling of colonized lands was one more facet of the modernist project that completed the exploration and “discovery” of other worlds and the

establishment of colonies while ensuring the development of scientific thought and the expansion of trade. This legitimated robbery was hidden behind the collectors' argument that they were actually rescuing "artefacts" from decay and destruction, and from indigenous peoples themselves. They needed to gather these materials before the indigenous peoples vanished completely. David H. Thomas has connected this trend towards collection by eighteenth and nineteenth intellectuals with the arousal of American anthropology (Thomas 2000: xxx), which adds to the linkage between collection and power relations. Collection was then not only a means to disempowering the colonized but also a way to empower the West, for Western knowledge and science were, and continue to be, beneficiaries of the colonization of indigenous peoples.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues in her exploration of the relationships between knowledge, research, and imperialism, the form of imperialism that indigenous peoples are confronting today emerged from that period of European history known as the Enlightenment. "The Enlightenment provided the spirit, the impetus, the confidence, and the political and economic structures that facilitated the search of new knowledges" (Smith 1999: 58). This search of new knowledges was initiated through the collection of "artifacts" and human remains in indigenous lands, and of indigenous peoples themselves, who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were taken to Europe and the U.S. to be exhibited as "curiosities" and studied as specimens of a "vanishing race." The collection of "artifacts," human remains, and human "curiosities" signaled the beginning of the search of new knowledges as a form of the imperial enterprise for, as Smith notes, "while Imperialism is often thought of as a system which drew everything back into the centre, it was also a system which distributed materials and ideas outwards. [...] Knowledge and culture were then as much part of imperialism as raw materials and military strength" (Smith 1999: 58). The repatriation of what the colonizers took from them

has become for indigenous peoples a site of resistance. By claiming the return of their patrimony, indigenous peoples are fighting the new face of that modernist project that the institution of museums is perpetuating.

The repatriation debate entails then a conversation on post-colonialism as a metadiscourse that reflects on the consequences that colonialism had and continues to have for indigenous peoples. The decision of Western institutions of whether returning or retaining indigenous patrimony might result in either the perpetuation of colonialism or in a substantial movement towards indigenous work of decolonization. As Russell Thornton (2002) explains in his exploration of the relations between trauma, repatriation and healing, the symbolic power of the return of their patrimony to a formerly oppressed people is that it can begin to heal the wounds of the people as a group, and lead them to reconciliation with the past. Ayau and Tengan (2002) broaden this argument by suggesting that repatriation also contributes to the strengthening and assertion of indigenous worldviews, and to the raising of awareness of the damage that colonization inflicted to indigenous peoples. The retention of indigenous patrimony, on the other hand, is criticized as a perpetuation of colonial attitudes, perceptions and abuses that oppressed indigenous peoples (Hubert and Fforde 2002: 6). I must note, however, that the retention of human remains and cultural patrimony is not always the desire of those who study and curate them only, but sometimes also the desire of indigenous peoples themselves, who argue that such materials should be “protected” for future generations.

When the discussion on repatriation and reburial finds opposition within indigenous communities the debate becomes even more problematic for it speaks to the complexity of indigenous peoples struggles towards decolonization. It speaks, primarily, to the way colonization structured indigenous’ ways of knowing and transformed ways they think about

who they are. While the opposition expressed by curators and scientists toward repatriation is seen as a perpetuation of colonial attitudes and perceptions, when this opposition comes from indigenous peoples it can then be understood as evidence of the effectiveness of those attitudes and perceptions in what we identified earlier as the colonization of indigenous minds. As Ayau and Tengan explain in their discussion of the debate on repatriation that has emerged inside indigenous communities, they argue that those who see these objects as “precious artifacts” that need to be preserved for future generations are also seeking to reclaim their own identities. However, “the notion that culture and identity is only to be learned in the museum and in school is one that perpetuates our colonization by reifying the idea that our culture is a thing of the past” (Ayau and Tengan 2002: 185). To make this claim, Ayau and Tengan refer to colonial education as an agency for imposing Western positional superiority over knowledge, language, and culture of indigenous peoples. Echoing Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s analysis of knowledge and imperialism, Ayau and Tengan argue that Western institutions such as the school and the museum are primary sites for the colonization of indigenous people. While schools have worked as a colonial agent to impose Western ways of knowing and devalue indigenous worldviews, museums perpetuate this devaluation by exhibiting and studying indigenous cultures as if they were only relics of a remote past.

While colonial collection contributed to the disempowering of indigenous peoples and to empower the colonizer, indigenous peoples see in repatriation a means to destabilize those power relations. When engaging in the repatriation debate, indigenous peoples are asserting their pre-eminent right to make their own decisions regarding the future of their cultural heritage and ancestors’ remains. Engaging in a discussion about repatriation as an indigenous issue has been about finding a voice, a way of voicing concerns, fears, desires, aspirations, needs and questions

as they relate to identity. When indigenous peoples become those in control of their heritage and not mere curiosities to be displayed in a museum, the very basics of those power relations that have determined them over centuries is transformed: questions are framed differently; priorities are ranked differently; problems are defined differently; people participate on different terms.

**APPENDIX I**  
**ABOUT THE MAIN COLLABORATORS**

**Te Pou Huke**

The main collaborator in this thesis, Te Pou Huke is the most renowned Rapanui artist that has devoted his art to the preservation of Rapanui traditions. Born and raised in Rapa Nui, Te Pou was very close to his grandfather and grew up surrounded by elders, listening and learning from them. As a teenager he traveled to the mainland to study in Santiago and later he attended the *Escuela de Bellas Artes* in Valparaíso. Immersed in the Chilean artistic scene, he shared artist studios with famed artists and presented his work in prestigious venues, such as the *Museo de Bellas Artes* in Santiago. A talented painter, sculptor and illustrator, at his 37 years old he has exhibited his art in Chile, Europe and the Pacific, has been invited to illustrate several books on Rapa Nui studies, and published his own comicbook inspired on Rapanui origin myth.

Te Pou's art is the result of his will to preserve Rapanui oral traditions and pass on the knowledge of his ancestors to the new generations. Informed by a long-term and rigorous ethnographic work, his art can be seen as a visual archive of Rapanui history. Among his mentors and influences Te Pou highlights Benedicto Tuki, an elder with whom he traveled the island learning about oral traditions and placenames together with his friends Moi Moi Tuki and Retu Tepano. Interested in the study of his culture and history within the broader Pacific context, Te Pou is constantly researching on the history and oral traditions of other Pacific islands, an interest that led him to do a two-year residency at Paratawhiti Maori School in Aotearoa (New Zealand), where he studied Maori language, history, arts, and traditions. He is currently preparing to present his work in the next Festival of Pacific Arts (Solomon Islands, 2012), to



which he was invited to represent Rapa Nui. Among his future projects is the creation of a school of arts for Rapanui youths and an art book on Rapanui colonial history. He lives in Hapa Roa, Rapa Nui.

### **Piru Huki**

An activist and environmentalist, Piru Huki is one of the main political figures in Rapa Nui that has actively participated in political and cultural organizations. Her activism has focused primarily on issues of self-determination, land claims, uncontrolled immigration, and environmental policies. She has participated in several documentaries and served as a consultant in a number of investigations, particularly in the areas of indigenous politics, women activism, and environmental sustainability. Today in her fifties, she was born and raised in Rapa Nui and comes from a family that is well known for their political and cultural activism.

Piru has devoted her life to the revitalization of her culture and the protection of her people's rights. Actively participating in culture and politics, she has become a referent in the island, and an ambassador of Rapa Nui in Europe and the Pacific. In her youth she integrated *Tu'u Hotu Iti*, an artistic group for the revitalization of Rapanui culture. Created by her brother Karlo Huke in 1974, *Tu'u Hotu Iti* was pioneer in the staging of Rapanui oral traditions in the form of theatrical performances. In 1990 Piru traveled to France, where she settled for three years. During her stay in France, and with the support of UNESCO, she began an exhaustive research on museum collections. As a result of this research she put together a complete inventory of holdings of Rapanui cultural objects and human remains in museums in France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States, among others. Upon her return to the island she formed the environmentalist organization

*Kakaka Here Henua*, with which she has been working on the maintenance of coastal areas and archaeological sites. She lives now in Vai To Iri, Rapa Nui.

### **Moi Moi Tuki**

At his 38 years old, Moi Moi Tuki is considered to be a connoisseur of Rapanui history with a knowledge on Rapanui traditions, as his peers say, only comparable to that of the most respected elders. Born and raised in the island, Moi Moi grew up close to the land, the sea, and the culture. His father, Claudio Tuki is a farmer and a fisherman; his mother, Carmela Pakomio, is a prolific crafter, particularly in the confection of traditional attires and ornaments. Moi Moi is a talented storyteller, a farmer, a fisherman, and an artist. He is also a connoisseur of Rapanui traditional medicine and oral traditions such as *kai kai*, *pata'uta'u* and *taji*. All this he does with a tremendous respect to his land and ancestors. When he was younger he went to live to the countryside, where he lives until today, with his friends Te Pou Huke and Retu Tepano. They worked the land, honored their ancestors and protector *varua* carving petroglyphs, traveled the island to learn from the land, and preserved their knowledge storytelling, sharing dreaming experiences and composing songs, many of which are interpreted today by Rapanui musicians and cultural groups. He lives today in the countryside with his wife and their two children.

### **Isabel Pakarati**

A respected Rapanui elder, Isabel is one of the masters of *kai kai*, a Rapanui mnemonic device consisting in the making of string figures accompanied by a *pata'uta'u* (recitation). Now in her sixties, Isabel comes from a family that is well known for its work on the preservation of culture. Born and raised in Rapa Nui, she is the daughter of Amelia Tepano, a referent in the art

of *kai kai*, and the sister of Nicolás Pakarati, who in the 1960s formed the first group of Rapanui music to tour in Europe, *Los Hermanos Pakarati*. Together with Sofía Abarca, Chilean musician resident in Rapa Nui, in 2008 she published *Kai Kai Rapa Nui. Ideograma de Hilos; Juego Ancestral*, a compendium of *kai kai* that includes images of the string figures, a transcription and translation of their *pata'uta'u*, and a CD with their recitations and contemporary adaptations. In a joint work with the *Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastian Englert*, Isabel teaches workshops of *kai kai* to Rapanui children and youths.

### **Luis Pate (Papa Kiko)**

Elder Papa Kiko was a referent of Rapanui music and oral traditions, who devoted his life to the preservation and teaching of Rapanui culture. He participated in different cultural groups teaching Rapanui music, dance, oral traditions and *kai kai* to Rapanui youths. In addition to his work within the community, he was a consultant for many scholars doing research in Rapa Nui, especially in the areas of ethnography, oral history, and ethnomusicology. He passed away in 2008 and stayed in the memory of the Rapanui as the master of Rapanui music and storytelling.

### **Mihaera Pate**

Mihaera Pate is a young elementary school teacher. Born and raised in Rapa Nui, he traveled to the mainland to attend to college in the *Universidad de Playa Ancha*, where he graduated from Pedagogy. Since his return to the island, he has been actively working with Rapanui children and youths in different institutions, combining his classes with the teaching of Rapanui language, oral traditions, and performative arts. In addition to his work on schools, he is a member of *Maori Tupuna*, a renowned cultural group in the island that serves as a school of

Rapanui music, dance, and traditions, and a venue for touristic shows. As part of *Maori Tupuna* he sings and dances, and teaches Rapanui music and dance to Rapanui youths.

**APPENDIX II**  
**TIMELINE OF RAPANUI HISTORY**

**CE**

- c.400 Polynesian discovery and settlement.
- 1100-1680 *Ahu Moai*: construction, transportation, and erection of *moai*.
- 1680-1864 *Huri Moai*: internal tribal wars; destruction of *moai*; beginning of *Taʻāta Manu* (Birdman) ritual.
- 1722 Easter Sunday, Western discovery. *Den Arend*, *Thienhoven*, and *Africaansche Galeij* (Dutch), under command of Jacob Roggeveen, first westerner to discover the island.
- 1770 *San Lorenzo* and *Santa Rosalía* (Spanish), under command of Captain don Felipe González de Haedo. The island is renamed *Isla San Carlos* and declared property of the Spanish crown.
- 1774 *Resolution* and *Adventure* (English), under command of Captain James Cook.
- 1786 *Astrolabe* and *Boussole* (French), under command of Jean-Francoise Galaup, Comte de La Pérouse.
- 1805 *Nancy* (American), schooner. Kidnap of 12 men and 10 women. In an attempt to escape, the men jumped overboard; the Americans left them to their fate. Only one is said to have made it swimming back to the island. This episode notoriously changed Rapanui perceptions of and attitudes toward outsiders.
- 1806 *Kakoumanou*, a Hawaiian brig, is prevented from landing due to hostility of islanders.

- 1811 *Pindos*, American whaler ship; sailors capture women, rape them and then throw them overboard.
- 1815 *Rurick* (Russian), under command of Otto von Kotzebue; islanders attack them.
- 1825 *HMS Blossom* (British), under command of Captain Beechey. Population estimate: 1,260.<sup>42</sup>
- 1837 *Colo Colo*, first ship from Chile to land.
- 1838 *La Vénus* (French), commanded by Abel Dupetit-Thouars. He did not disembark and wrote about having seen standing *moai* from the distance; last written record of standing *moai*. Population estimate: 1,500.
- 1862 Slave raids. 2,000 people, more than half of the population, kidnapped and sold as slaves to work in the *Islas Guaneras* of Peru.
- 1863-5 Smallpox epidemic rages on Rapa Nui.
- 1864 Brother Eugène Eyraud, missionary. First westerner to settle in the island.
- 1866 French adventurer Jean-Baptiste Dutrou Bornier visits the island. First mission, Haʻa Roa.
- 1868 Dutrou Bornier settles in the island; partner with Brander (Tahiti); robbery and abuses against Rapanui people. Second mission, Vaihu. *HMS Topaze* (British), under command of Captain Barclay; Linton J. Palmer takes *moai* Hoa Haka Nana 'Ia, now in British Museum.
- 1870 *O'Higgins* (Chilean), under command of José Anacleto Goñi. Population estimate: 600; mostly living at Haʻa Roa. Two *ronjo ronjo* tablets sent to Santiago.

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<sup>42</sup> Population estimates based on Lee 2006: 210-12.

- 1872 *La Flore* (French). Pierre Loti on board. Crew saws off the head of a *moai*; Pierre Loti and Alphonse Pinart take the head to France. Now in the Musée Quai Branly.
- 1877 Islanders kill Dutrou Bornier.
- 1883 Wilhelm Geiseler excavates archaeological sites and takes skulls and wooden statues to Berlin.
- 1886 *Mohican* (American) with William Thomson on board, who takes painted slabs from Oroño ceremonial village and one *moai*. *Angamos* (Chilean), under command of Policarpo Toro. Population estimate: 157.
- 1888 Chile annexes the island through a treaty signed by king Atamu Tekena and Policarpo Toro.
- 1892 Atamu Tekena dies. Ko Riro A Ñure, sucesor; elected by the people.
- 1895 *Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua*.
- 1896 Alberto Sánchez Manterola, Company administrator and Chilean government representative. Rapanui forced to live enclosed in Haña Roa.
- 1898 King Riro killed in Chile.
- 1900 Horacio Cooper, new administrator. Forced labor, torture, deportation policy.
- 1901 King Moisés Tu'u Hereveri's revolt; deported.
- 1902 José Pirivato and Lázaro Ricardo Hitorañi's revolt; deported.
- 1906 Henry Percy Edmunds, new administrator.
- 1914 María Añata's liberation movement.
- 1915 Monsignor Rafael Edwards's report denouncing the Company's abuses against Rapanui people. Population estimate: 273.

- 1916 *Comisión Isla de Pascua*, presided by monsignor Rafael Edwards. Chile terminates lease to the Company.
- 1917 Chile “temporarily” leases the island to the Company; lease is definitely terminated only in 1953.
- 1934 Alfred Métraux and Henri Lavachery’s expedition; they saw off the heads of two *moai*, and take the two heads and a *moai* to the *Musée d’El Homme* in Paris and the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels.
- 1935 Creation of the Rapa Nui National Park.
- 1936 Father Sebastian Englert settles in the island; ethnological and linguistic studies.
- 1937 Chile tries to sell the island to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan. Population estimate: 494 people; 7,000 sheep.
- 1943 96% of the population unemployed.
- 1951 *Manutara*, first flight to Rapa Nui.
- 1953 Chilean Navy takes control of the administration of the island.
- 1955 Norwegian expedition led by Thor Heyerdhal.
- 1956 *Sociedad de Amigos de Isla de Pascua*; scholarships for Rapanui students to study in the mainland.
- 1960 Restoration of *Ahu Akivi*, William Mulloy.
- 1964 Alfonso Rapu’s revolution. METEI expedition (Canadian).
- 1966 *Ley 16.441 (Ley Pascua)*: Rapanui recognized as Chilean citizens; island as part of Chilean jurisdiction; Navy retires from the island and enters the civil administration. Population: 1,544.



- 1967 Alfonso Rapu officially elected mayor of Easter Island. *Mataverí* airport opens. Tourism begins: 444 tourists monthly, approx.
- 1968 Restoration of *Ahu Tahai* (William Mulloy).
- 1969 First *Tapati Rapa Nui*, main Rapanui festivity.
- 1971 First hotel.
- 1973 *Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert* (Anthropological Museum Father Sebastian Englert) opens. CONAF establishes in the island: administration of National Park.
- 1974 Restoration of 'Oroño (William Mulloy).
- 1975 New hospital.
- 1976 Television.
- 1978 Rapanui archaeologists Sergio Rapu and Sonia Haoa restore *Ahu Nau Nau*.
- 1984 First appointed Rapanui governor, Sergio Rapu.
- 1993 *Ley Indígena* (Indigenous Law): CONADI and CODEIPA created. Major Hollywood film, *Rapa Nui*, is made on the island.
- 1994 Movements claiming right to ancestral land.
- 1996 UNESCO declares Rapa Nui a World Heritage Site. Population: 2,700.
- 2000 *Programa de Inmersión Intercultural Bilingüe*, Rapanui initiative and implementation in the school of an educational program in Rapanui language.
- 2001 *Parlamento Rapa Nui* (Rapa Nui Parliament).
- 2002 Census: 3,800 people reside on the island, 65% are of Rapanui descent.
- 2005 'Ūmaña Hatu Re'ō, Rapanui Language Academy.
- 2009 Beginning of series of protests against the uncontrolled immigration in the island.

- 2011 Series of protests for the restitution of lands; Hotel Haʻa Roa case.
- 2012 Census: Results not available at the time of this thesis; projections speak of a population of over 5,000 people, less than 50% of Rapanui descent.

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