

A LOOK BACK

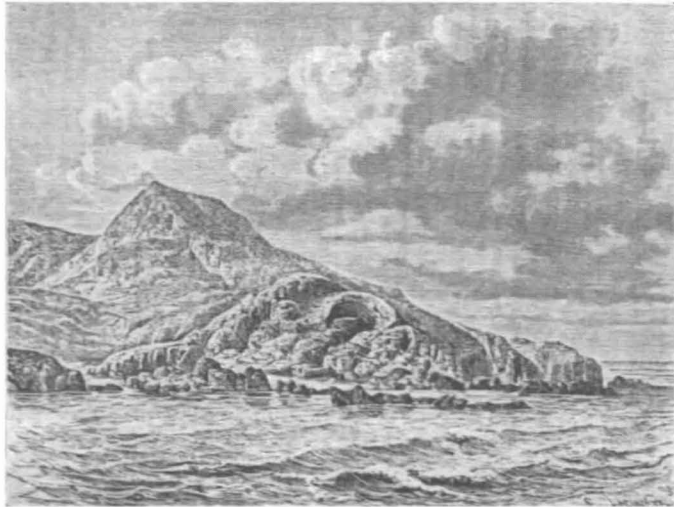
VOYAGE TO EASTER ISLAND - 1877

by Alphonse Pinart

Translated from the French

by Ann M. Altman, Ph.D.

In 1877, at 8:30 on Easter morning, we were on board the *Seignelay* when the island first came into view and we were able to make out, from the bridge of the ship, a distant coastline against which waves were crashing with tremendous force.



L'île de Pâques, vue de la mer, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This view appears to be from La Pérouse bay, perhaps looking toward the cliffs above Ovahe).

Located at 27° 9' South and 111° 45' East, the Easter Island, because of its triangular shape and the presence of a volcano at each corner of the triangle, appeared from the ship to be a group of three small islands. It was only at ten o'clock that we were able to distinguish Cape Roggeween and a long stretch of the coast on the east-southeast. The terrain is low in that part of the island but the land rises to the northeast between Cape Roggeween and O'Higgins Point, where there is a steep cliff made of reddish lava with signs of numerous landslides.

We sailed along the south coast of the island, intending to disembark towards the west in Hanga Roa Bay. Very near land, at the entrance to La Pérouse Bay, we noticed a little sandy inlet where the sea was calm. Nonetheless, we continued on our way and, after passing the western point of La Pérouse Bay, we came upon another little circular inlet, known to the natives as Anakena Bay. From the ship, we were easily able to make out fields of banana trees and sugar cane.

Examining the coast with more care, we noted the point on the northwest of the island that was the highest of all and we found ourselves, at one o'clock, within sight of Mataveri

on whose higher ground we could see houses, with the mission church down in the valley. The sea was very rough and huge waves hammered the coastline. We were unable to find a safe place to drop anchor with ease and we had not yet found the little port of Hanga Piko.

The shore was deserted and there was not a native to be seen. We signaled our arrival by firing a canon and, sailing up the coast, we headed for La Pérouse Bay, where we dropped anchor at two in the afternoon. A few moments later, the skiff brought us

to shore and we landed in the little inlet mentioned above, which we named Seignelay Inlet. It opens at the foot of a cliff of porous red lava, within which there are many hidden caves. The first thing that we did was to visit some of these



Alphonse Pinart, December 20, 1879. (Photo reproduced with permission of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).



Tumulus de la baie de la Pérouse; drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This appears to be a *tupa* although the extra pile of rocks on the top is atypical).

caves and we could tell that the natives often took shelter here when they were in these parts. One of the caves contained a skeleton that was still enveloped in matting, as well as many skulls.

On the left of the beach there was a little tumulus and, on a nearby point, there was a large quantity of stones that had been piled up in an orderly manner and marked the site of ancient graves. The smell of dead bodies that wafted around us suggested that a burial had occurred recently. Soon we

were certain that such was the case and we learned later that the natives took advantage of ancient graves to bury their dead, being content simply to remove a few stones and dig a shallow pit in which they laid the body which they would then cover, but only barely, with the stones that they had removed originally.

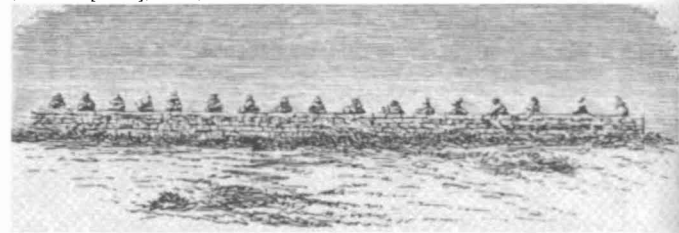
We wanted to make our way on foot to Hanga Roa and we were getting ready to walk around the small hill that formed the east side of La Pérouse Bay when we saw a group of Kanacs on horseback coming towards us. As soon as they caught sight of us, they stopped, at a distance of about fifty feet. But as soon as we called out to them, they came towards us fearlessly, shouting their greeting, *ia-ora-na*. They were dressed in European clothes and our first question to them was whether Dutrou-Bornier was still on the island. They answered that he was dead!

We gathered that this event had happened only a few days previously. The way the Kanacs drew our attention to their clothes seemed to suggest something abnormal and we were not far from thinking that they might have murdered Dutrou-Bornier, in spite of their telling us that he had died from falling off his horse while drunk. We learned later on that our suspicions had been unfounded. Our first question to the natives had been about Dutrou-Bornier because his name, evoking for us our distant motherland, was that of a devout and courageous sea captain who had not been afraid to come and live on an inhospitable island with the aim of making it a better place. Having made his home for several years on the island, he had lived to see his efforts rewarded and had shown the Kanacs a future full of promise, which had, perhaps, with the death of this patient settler, evaporated forever.

Our encounter with the natives had delayed us. The late hour prevented us from continuing further; our suspicions about the death of the captain suggested that it might be prudent to return to the ship and so we went back to the beach, preceded by our Kanacs on their horses. They had been joined by two Kanacs on foot, each dressed in a kind of jacket with a piece of fabric secured between his thighs. We arrived at La Pérouse Bay as night was falling, passing the ancient village of Ovahe.

On April 2, in spite of the rain, we returned to land with nine of the crew as porters to carry our gear and camping equipment. We made contact again with the Kanacs that we had met on the previous day. After spending the night in the caves on the cliff, they were waiting to escort us to the Ronororaka volcano. The first thing we wanted to do, however, was to go back to the cave in which we had seen the skeleton, which we wanted to add to take with us. An old Kanac in the group protested when we tried to remove the skeleton. He told us that it was the bones of one of his wives and that we were doing something shameful. A few leaves of tobacco were enough to assuage his anger, but it was unclear whether this anger was real or an act. Moreover, for some additional leaves of the coveted plant, he even promised to help us find more bones.

Behind the village of Ovahe, we noticed a long wall of stones that had been piled with great regularity upon one another. The wall was about 50 meters long, four meters wide, and one and a half meters high. There were bones mixed in



Muraille avec tumulus. — Ancien village d'Ovahé, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (Again, piles of rocks on what appears to be an ahu, as shown here, are not typical).

with the construction materials and Monsieur Thoulon, the ship's doctor on the *Seignelay*, was able to dig out twenty skulls and two complete skeletons. Numerous little tumuli composed of carefully piled stones were distributed at regular intervals on the wall and what was remarkable about them was that, from a certain distance, they resembled crouching men. These tumuli, which were sometimes circular and sometimes pyramidal, had served as sepulchers. Ruins of circular and rectangular huts were distributed among these remains; they were made of fragments of lava and their roofs, most probably made of plant material, had disappeared entirely.

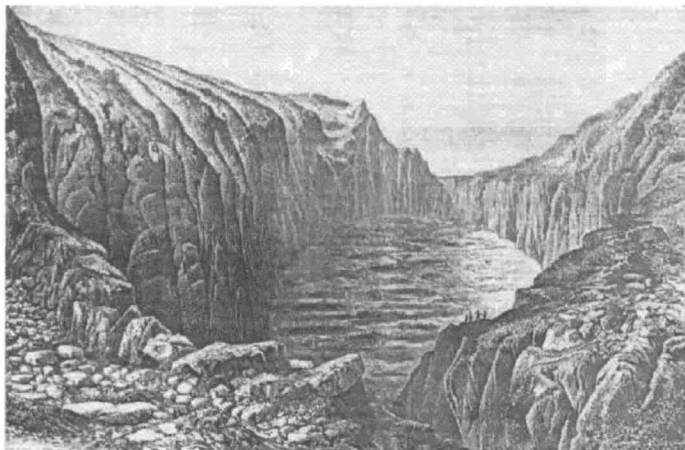
Spaced at relatively large intervals over the entire area, there were oval or circular pits of one or two meters in depth, with a diameter of three to twelve meters. There was a wall around the mouth of each pit and, at the bottom, banana trees, sugar cane and *Dracena terminalis* (known to the natives as *tii*). The structure of these pits, which one might call deep gardens, can easily be explained by an examination of the soil, which is basically composed of volcanic ash and decomposed lava and is, thus, very porous and unable to retain the moisture required for growing plants. To overcome this problem, it was necessary for the natives to dig down to a certain level to reach the moisture that is indispensable for plant growth. Perhaps, also, the people who built the pits were trying to protect their plants from the incessant high winds that blow in from the sea and have such a destructive influence on the vegetation.

On one side of the circular wall around each pit there was generally an opening that faced towards the south and permits entry into a chamber built of stones that probably served as a dwelling.

Between the Ronororaka volcano and La Pérouse Bay, the ground is not altogether flat but there is no significant high ground. The rain had not stopped all morning and we made our way with some difficulty through tall verbena-type plants, a few mimosa bushes and some kind of gramineous grass that formed the meager undergrowth beneath the larger plants. From a short distance away, we heard some characteristic grunts and soon we found ourselves in the presence of a herd of pigs that seemed completely indifferent to the rain. These animals, whose antecedents had probably been brought to the island by the missionaries and Dutrou-Bornier, had become very numerous and entirely wild. Commandant Lafontaine and Monsieur Berryer were unable to resist their desire to test their skills at the expense of these inoffensive beasts and they killed one of them. The natives are very afraid of the wild pigs and never go hunting for them. Moreover, they make no effort at all to domesticate them.

There are quite a number of cows, sheep and horses. One should add also the common rat, which has proliferated all over the countryside, and a few small rabbits that are mainly corralled near the villages. That is all there is in terms of fauna on the island.

As we continued on our way we saw, rising on our right, the tops of Pui and Toatoa, one with its horizontal summit that resembled a table and the other which was pyramidal in shape. To the left, Poike stretched out into the distance and in



Cratère de Ronororaka, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This drawing is of Rano Kau, not Rano Raraku).

front of us was the Ronororaka volcano at whose base we arrived and which we then started to climb. The slopes were quite steep and difficult to negotiate; they were also very slippery as a result of the rain, which never let up. Nonetheless, within an hour we had reached the crater and its statues.

Extending for six hundred meters in greatest diameter, the oval crater of Ronororaka has a shallow slope that extends for eighty to a hundred meters. It is covered with waist-high verbena-like grass and the center is carpeted with reeds and phragmites that flourish among puddles of sulfurous water.

As we moved towards a sort of shelter beneath a rock that we had made out from a distance and where we hoped to set up camp, we came upon the first statues. There were about forty of them, spread out over the interior face of the crater in three separate groups, all facing north. They were all very similar; many were lying down; and one had been completely carved but had not yet been detached from the rock. From where we were, the volcano rose up as a steep cliff of about two hundred meters in height – the maximum height of the volcano. Monsieur Escande busied himself taking measurements with his theodolite. The mountain itself is made of trachytic (volcanic) rock, mixed with a large quantity of gray and porous rock, a sort of amalgam of ash and igneous rock. Many statues are composed of this mixed rock but some of them are composed entirely of trachytic rock.

After we had made our way up the slippery and lichen-covered path to the summit, using both hands and feet to hoist ourselves over the rocks, we were able to see that the slope that was to the southeast of the summit was covered with statues at various stages of completion.

Looking at the vast open-air studio for the production of giant statues – some quite finished, some in the process of

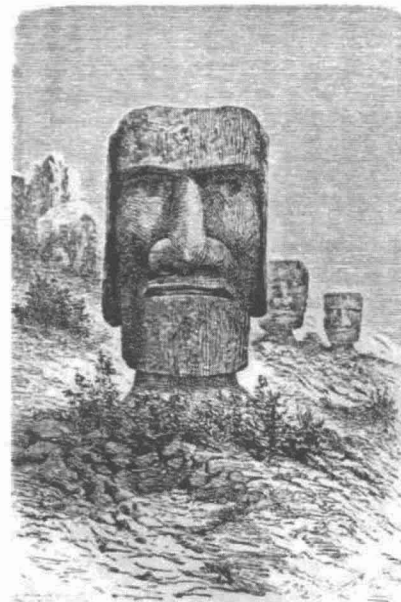
being carved, and some close to completion – we were able to figure out how the work had been done and how the statues had been erected and set in place after they had been made. At first glance, this problem appears to be extremely difficult to solve and the erection of these statues has astonished visitors to the island and become the source of many hypotheses. The method was, however, extremely simple.

The sculptors always chose, as the site at which they would carve out a statue, a rock that was located on a fairly steep slope. They carved the statue out of the slope itself and they cut it loose only when it was finished. To detach the statue, they had to make a myriad of small parallel channels of about eight centimeters in diameter beneath the statue, as we were able to see. Once the statue had been detached from the mother rock, it was easy to slide statue down the natural slope to the site where it was to be erected. The ground there would already have been prepared by digging a hole that would enclose the statue as far as the torso, leaving the remainder above the ground. Then, very gradually, without the use of excessive force, the statue would be raised with the help of fragments of rock that were pushed under it, forming an inclined plane or, more accurately, an enormous angle of which the widest part corresponded to the head, which was raised and stabilized in this way. Then the pit was filled up, the inclined plane of rocks was taken down, and the statue was left standing free and clear.

The largest of the statues that we saw, situated on the southeast slope, was seven meters high from the chest up. On the side of the volcano, near the statues, just as at other sites on the island where there are statues, we found a large number of obsidian blades, carved into the shape of scrapers, knives and spearheads etc. Could these be the tools with which the statues had been carved? Even if this suggestion might seem surprising at first, it does seem plausible especially if one recalls the limited hardness of the rock and the ease with which it can be worked.

The incessant rain forced us to shelter in the cavern that we had found originally. It was clear that this cavern had been carved out in the process of removing a giant statue from the rock itself; on each side, as well as behind the head, the sculptors had dug out a kind of circular corridor that would have allowed them to work more easily on the statue.

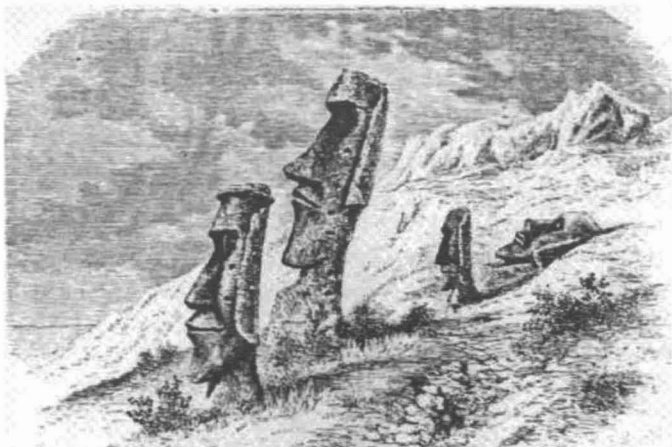
Monsieur Lafontaine had set off with the Kanaks from the other side of the volcano, towards Hutuaiti, and had found



Statue à Ronororoka, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (The eyes of the glum looking statue are the result of the artist's imagination).

a more commodious shelter and, at the end of the day, we went to set up our camp there. Just like the first one, this grotto had been carved out in the process of separating a statue from the rock. Very close by, to our right, another statue had barely emerged; others, spread out further away, standing or lying down, surrounded our shelter.

After collecting some water from a crevice in the rock, set up our table in front of the statue and chosen where to lay our heads, we lit a fire of branches at the entrance to the grotto. Below us, the steep cliff was lost in the shadows of the night; to our left, a rough sea roared and the fevered noise of the waves was mixed with the howling of the wind and rain. Opposite, far away, the interior of the island appeared vaster and darker, with its clusters of mimosa and mulberry trees bent by the storm. Behind us, the back of the cave was illuminated by the campfire whose glow flickered over the statues and created the impression of a troupe of monstrous phan-

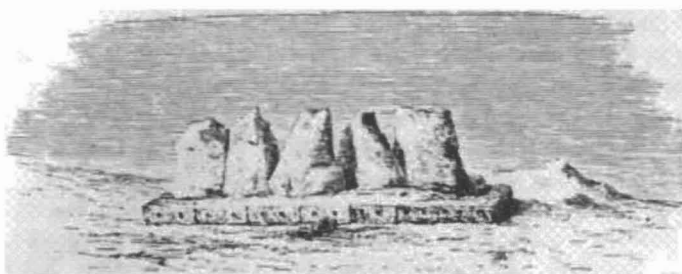


Ronororaka. — Intérieur du volcan. — Versant sud-est du volcan, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart.

toms, awakened by the sound of our footsteps or, more likely, a gathering of the spirits from Vahou, who had been conjured up by us to explain the mysteries of a race of giants that had disappeared.

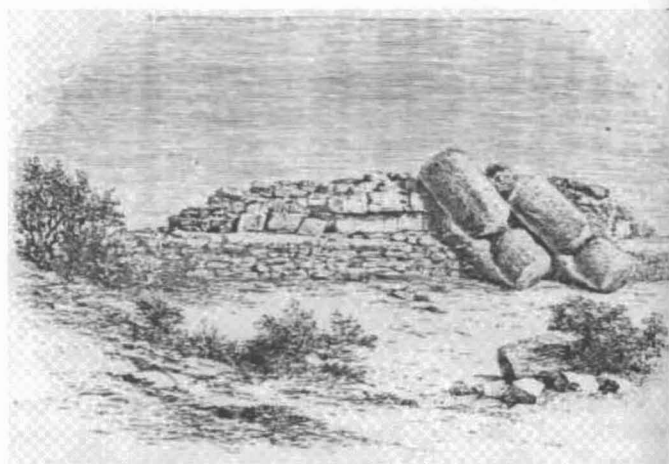
Even though we were tired, for a long time we were unable to stop gazing at the fantastic apparitions that evaporated as the last sparks in our hearth died down.

At daybreak, we decided to return to the place that we had studied the day before and we took the path to the left, from which we could look out over the Hutuiti plain, with its ruined village, deep gardens, huts and tumuli. On the right of



Ruine d'une allée pavée. — Environs de Hotuiti, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (Where this might have been in unclear).

the slope that we were climbing, we came to an immense bust that must have been part of a statue that broke while it was being moved. We could see there most clearly how the statues were carved because the rock had been hollowed out for a length of about four meters and a width of 2.25 meters. Very nearby, two statues were lying parallel to each other: one had been carved out of the rock but not detached; the other had already been completed and had the following dimensions: height of the forehead, 2.0 meters; length of the nose, 3.40 meters; distance from the nose to the lips, 0.75 meters; height of the chin, 2 meters; and length of the body, 12 meters.



Ruines du pakaopa d'Opulu, drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. ("Opulu" may be the ahu at Akahanga).

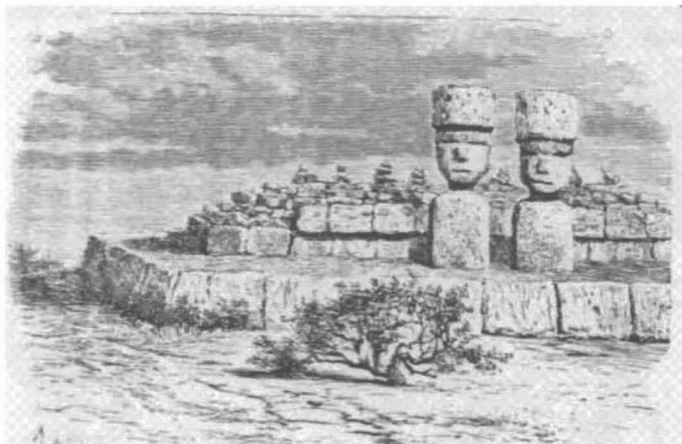
In the same direction and at the summit of a veritable amphitheater, surrounded by a dry-stone wall, was a third statue lying on its back, still intimately attached to the rock and extending beyond it for about four meters.

The left side of this amphitheater had a cross-shaped engraving of two signs, one representing a kind of bird and the other representing a person, while on the right side was a bust with the following measurements: height of the forehead, 1.25 meters; length of the nose, 2.80 meters; length of the mouth and the chin, 1.75 meters; length of the rest of the body 8.50 meters. This bust, which had been raised on a type of altar, was notable for several unique features, namely, a line of tattooing composed of little raised circles on the nose and the entire length of the body. The body itself was covered in sculpted bands and behind the head we collected a few calcified bones, which suggested that the statue might have been the focus of some ancient cult. The head of the large statue at our campsite also had traces of tattoos that seemed to have been painted in red on its nose and chin.

A short distance from where we were standing was another natural amphitheater, identical to the first and close to other groups of statues that numbered eighty in all. These statues are upright and differ from those in the interior of the crater only insofar as they have longer noses or thicker lips. In various places we found a type of paved path, bordered by carved stones of 1.20 meters in length, 15 centimeters high and 10 centimeters thick, with small round openings incised along a median line. Perhaps they were also involved in cere-

monies associated with the cult of the primitive islanders.

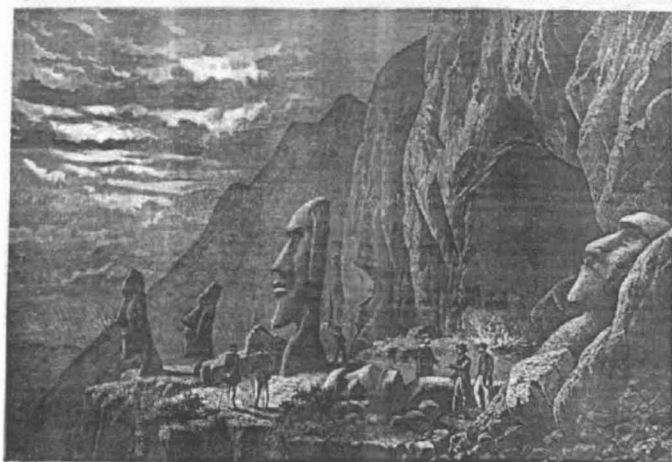
On the morning of April 4, we left Ronororaka and, guided by two Kanacs who had rejoined our men on the previous day, we crossed the Hutuiti plain and headed for Toatoa along a path that was covered with rocky debris and along which ran ditches in which banana trees and *tii* grew. The coastline that the maps indicate as being relatively smooth is, however, interrupted by numerous little inlets into which the sea crashes with tremendous force. One of them, half way



Restauration du pakaopa d'Opulu, Drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This conjectural reconstruction bears little relation to the actual site of Akahanga).

between Cape Atama and Cape Kai-Kai, is called Opulu by the islanders.

On the left side of this inlet and before one arrives at the *pakaopa* [ahu] or terrace that we will discuss shortly, we first saw a pillar of red lava that was still upright and around which blocks of rocks had been piled up, with evidence on the south side of a crude engraving of a head. In addition, we found the crowns or headdresses of the statues from the *pakaopa*, which had rolled this far when the statues had been pushed over. They consisted of cylinders of red lava and were partly buried in the ground. It seems plausible that they had been balanced on the heads of the statues, which are generally



Campement sur le Ronororaka, Drawn by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This was the place where Pinart and his companions set up camp on the quarry slopes).

flat. These cylinders were seventy to eighty centimeters high, with a diameter of fifty to sixty centimeters.

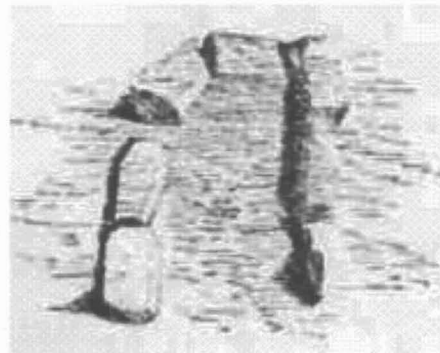
The *pakaopa* was built on a small, slightly elevated promontory, against which the waves were breaking. In ruins today, this terrace must have been a platform of 50 meters high, 200 meters long and 10 meters wide. Its sides were inclined and were made of slabs that had been cut without great skill. The interior, as far as we could tell, was filled with fragments of rocks. Above it was built a second terrace that was 5 meters wide, 1.70 meters high and 1.50 meters long, built out of big slabs laid down side by side. On the lower part of these slabs, there was a trough into which fitted a sculpted ledge, also made of red lava and 1.40 meters long by 70 centimeters high, the perfectly flat face of which was decorated in bas relief with figures that had been rather finely carved.

The deteriorated state of these ruins allowed us to make drawings only with the greatest difficulty. However, on one of the ruins it was clearly possible to make out the shapes of skulls. The side of the ledge that faced the sea carried no traces of any decoration. The statues were standing in the space between the two platforms. The interior of the terrace contained burial chambers of quite considerable size, made of slabs placed one on top of the other, such that the ones on the top sealed each sarcophagus hermetically. The chambers were, on average, two meters long and eighty centimeters wide. A rather large number of cadavers seemed to have been placed there in no particular order.

These tombs are ancient. Today the islanders take advantage, as we noted above, of any place that they can find to bury their dead,

sometimes putting the bodies under fallen statues, sometimes in the *pakaopas*, and they content themselves with just removing a few stones to make space for the body. Placed on the wider lower terrace, the statues faced away from the upper terrace. However, this position was not typical of all the terraces since we saw some on which the statues faced in the opposite direction, that is to say, towards the interior of the island.

The workmanship of these statues was much cruder than that of the statues at Ronororaka. They had just been carved to indicate the curve of the forehead and the flat surfaces of the nose. The eyes were marked by two slits below the forehead and concentric and parallel lines simulated a type of tattooing. Basically, the statues were flat. Moreover, they were made from a rock that was quite different from that of the volcanoes. This rock consisted of compacted volcanic rock, within in which there were aggregates of pieces of lava and gravel. It was very friable and it must have been carved in



Plan de l'une des chambres sépulcrales du pakaopa d'Opulu, Drawn by A. de Bar after a sketch by Pinart. (These stones are foundations for a boat house (*hare paenga*), not a tomb).

situ very close to the terraces themselves. The rock appeared to have been formed relatively recently and it is likely that, given its extreme fragility, the rock will not withstand the destructive forces of the island's climate for much longer.

To the right of this *pakaopa*, there was a fallen statue of the same type and the same rock as those in the crater at Ronororaka. On top of the terrace there were more of the little piles of stones of the type already described. We found them, basically, all over the place. Platforms, tumuli and elevated sites were all covered with them and they formed an impressive display that resembled an army of crouching men. All these remnants of the past were found in abundance on the south coast, with every point that looked out over the sea having *pakaopas*. We kept coming across tumuli and, on all sides, piles of rocks covered the remains of dead islanders. We were in the center of a vast necropolis and we wondered what kind of people had made up this huge population, what forces had led to the extinction of these tribes – one might



Réception de M. A. Pinart par la reine de l'île de Pâques. Drawing by E. Bayard, after text and photographs.

even say these powerful tribes, if we judge them by the gigantic monuments that they have left behind to mark their stay on this earth.

The present inhabitants of the Easter Island, as we had seen, had retained no memory at all of those who had come before them. This total absence of traditions suggests, perhaps, that the sculptors of long ago might not even have been the ancestors of the present-day Kanacs and that these generations had disappeared entirely, perhaps because of insufficient space on the island, perhaps as a result of emigration, perhaps even as a result of destruction by an invasion by Polynesians, from which the natives at Vaihu appeared to have been descended.

A vast and undulating plain extends from the Opulu inlet as far as the interior plateaus of the island, at the base of Ronororaka. This broad area is densely covered with grass and serves as a rich pasture for flocks of sheep.

The distance from the *pakaopa* of Opulu to Vahou, where we had just arrived, might be about ten kilometers.

There are few remains of Kanac villages in this part of the island: a few dry-stone walls of 1.00 to 1.25 meters in height, arranged in circles or quadrangles, are the only indications left of the sites of earlier homes. Nonetheless, these walls remain intact.

The mission church is a vast building made of planks from the United States, capable of holding six hundred people. On the left of the church, a wall surrounds two little houses and a garden. One of the little houses is made of wood, the other has dry-stone walls. In the garden, which has been abandoned, there are a few vines, some fig trees, some Chinese peonies that are thriving as well as they might in their native soil. We guessed that it was in this part of the island that Dutrou-Bornier had settled to rear his barnyard animals before he went to live in Mataveri. We had six more kilometers to cover before reaching this last village.

We continued our journey along an easily passable dirt track, gaining height gradually and leaving, to our right, fields of banana trees and sugar cane. The ground everywhere was covered with the kinds of grass that we had seen in the valley. The verbena-type plants became rarer and the Ranakau volcano rose up on our left. Its southwest slope is known as the district of Vinapu. It is a fertile region where crops should be very successful. Leaving Orito and Tarai to our left, we reach the central axis of the island, from which we could see the masts of the *Seignelay* on our right and the village of Mataveri on our left, where French flags were floating in the breeze.

When we were about two kilometers from the village, almost all the inhabitants came out to meet us. Their cries of *ia-ora-na* were deafening. They were carrying bananas, which they distributed among us; they relieved our men of their loads to carry them themselves, and they took us directly to the home of the queen. She was wearing a wide piece of tapa cloth, in the Tahitian manner; a panama hat, and a piece of Scottish plaid around her shoulders. In bare feet, standing between her daughters, she was waiting for us at the door of her home. She had an intelligent face, which was framed by long hair that had been cut carefully above her ears. She took off her hat gravely with both hands to respond to our greetings, extended her hand and introduced her two daughters to us. The older girl, a child of five or six, resembled a Neapolitan, with large pensive black eyes and long brown hair, crowned with a tiara of shiny base metal, the decoration of some wooden statue of a saint that the missionaries had taken away with them. Her mother explained that this daughter was, in fact, the queen and that she, her mother, was only acting as regent.

The second daughter, with dark chestnut hair, looked more like an exile from a Paris neighborhood, abandoned far from home, than like the offspring of a European and a Kanac.

We asked the regent if it would be possible for us to have a place to stay and she replied, with an eloquent gesture, by pointing to the house of Dutrou-Bornier, indicating in this way that she was putting it at our disposal. The entire village

was assembled in the interior courtyard. A kind of major domo with a baton in his hand seemed to be maintaining order. Upon the invitation of the regent, we entered her house and the second part of our reception program began. A sofa and some chairs were brought. The regent took her place between her two daughters. Once these formalities had been completed, she had us understand that she was offering us a sheep for dinner and that she expected to share it with us.

Soon it was dinnertime. The regent took her place among us. During the entire meal, she kept repeating that her daughters were called Caroline and Hariette, that her name was Koreto, and that her two children looked very much like their father, Dutrou-Bornier. She also told us that all the cows, sheep and goats on the island belonged to her and she was putting them at our disposal. She asked us not to touch the chickens since they were the exclusive property of the Kanacs and she also told us that all the pigs that we might encounter ought to be killed.

She imitated our table manners and copied every gesture, drinking and eating as we did; saying *Mereti* (*merci* = thank you) when she was served. She insisted that the knives and forks that she and her daughters used be changed, banging impatiently on the table when the sailor who was serving us did not follow her orders sufficiently promptly. It was very strange to observe the gestures and behavior of this native queen, now the regent of Easter Island, as she made an effort to imitate French customs, combining the ignorance of her primitive background with the inherent demands of her title – a combination that, given her exalted rank, was simultaneously both laughable and sad.

After the meal, Koreto revealed the cause of the death of Dutrou-Bornier, which had occurred in August 1876. Just as the Kanacs had told us on our arrival, his death had followed a fall from his horse. Before he died, the colonialist captain had burned his papers, bequeathed all his property to the queen and her daughters, and distributed his clothing among the most important Kanacs in the village. Koreto told us how much she and her people wished to come under French protection, and she did not disguise her aversion for the Chileans, the Americans and the Germans – an aversion shared, moreover, we must immediately add, by the island

notables who were present during this conversation. She begged us to write several letters to Tahiti and also to write to the captain of the *Seignelay* asking him to come the next day.

At eight o'clock we left the regent, who had arranged a room for us, and we settled down for the night, waiting impatiently for the return of daylight.

The next day, Koreto took us to the grave of Dutrou-Bornier, which was located on a little rise to the left of the village, beside a flagpole up which a French flag had been hoisted. There, crouching on the ground, with tears in her voice, she asked us for a cross to put on the grave of the man who had linked her life with his and whose death she now mourned. Later, leaving the regent to her pain and accompanied by Monsieur Thoulon, we set off a second time towards Vaihu, where we planned to excavate a *pakaopa*. This *pakaopa* was very similar in all respects to the ones that we have already described. Under the statues, which were lying down, their faces resting on the upper side of the terrace, there were two bodies that

were still wrapped in straw matting, which had been secured at both ends. The bodies had been placed in the open space below the statues. This space was enclosed by a dry-stone wall. Monsieur Lafontaine had left us to go and visit Kaou and to record the main features, while Monsieur Berryer had stayed in the village to photograph representative natives with the most characteristic features.

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

In spite of our precautions, the natives had caught sight of us and we were absolutely astonished when, a little while



Map showing the route taken by Pinart and others from the *Seignelay*.

later, they came up to us carrying all kinds of bones, which they gave us willingly in exchange for a little tobacco.

The village of Mataveri consists of about thirty huts, all built along the same lines and forming a rectangle that surrounds the village square. The home of Dutrou-Bornier, now occupied by the queen, is on the left. The huts are mostly made of wood from shipwrecks and resemble huts in Europe except in so far as they lack windows. They have one opening, which serves as the door, which is 60 to 80 centimeters high. A few ancient reed huts, also with very small entrances, can also still be seen at this site.

Dutrou-Bornier had built himself a home of the type favored by planters in the Southern states, surrounded by a vast verandah around which a vigorous growth of vines was entwined. On one side there were iron receptacles for drinking water. The garden was divided into squares, with paths bordered by arbors made of vines. It was full of fig trees, almond trees, peach trees and mulberry trees, all of which were flourishing. Behind his house, Dutrou-Bornier had planted a vast plantation of vines and in front of it, he had planted the finest sugar cane that we had seen on the island.

Not far from the village, in the little inlet of Hanga Piko, the access to which is difficult and which is entered via a narrow channel bordered by rocks, Dutrou-Bornier had built a small harbor where he could safely anchor the two-masted sailing boat that he had built for his excursions in the coastal waters of the island. Dutrou-Bornier must have been a man of remarkable energy who had been blessed with many talents, as was obvious from his efforts among these wild people. He had cultivated the inhospitable soil; induced useful plants to prosper; raised horses, cows and sheep; and succeeded in all these endeavors as a result, exclusively, of his unquenchable spirit.

The extent of his success suggests that future colonization should be both advantageous and inevitable. He was a friend to the Kanacs, on whose support he could count. However, his efforts made some people angry and it seems that the missionaries, far from encouraging him and offering him a useful collaboration that he would certainly have accepted immediately, became hostile towards him. The struggle did



Bois parlant, after a document found by Pinart. (This rongorongo tablet is also in Chauvet 1934: Figures 160-161).

not last long: helped by his friends the Kanacs, Dutrou-Bornier was the victor and the missionaries had to leave the island. Their converts followed them and almost all of them went to live in Tahiti.

The average height of the native men on the Easter Island is 1.57 meters and that of the women is 1.52 meters.

Their chest is narrow and slightly concave, the clavicles are prominent, the head is relatively elongated, the forehead is non-protruding, the cheekbones are moderately prominent, the nose is rather slender with fairly wide nostrils, the lips are thick, the eyes are black, lively and expressive, and the skin is a bronzed brown. Even though they are not very muscular, they are able to carry fairly heavy loads on their heads. We saw Old Tago carry, in this way, a sack weighing about 35 kilograms from Ronororaka to Mataveri. These people are indefatigable walkers. Many of them have, on the nape of the neck, a large callus.

In all, the population consists of only 111 men, women and children. Their diet, which is basically vegetarian and is composed almost exclusively of bananas and a type of watermelon, probably contributes to their weak constitutions. The men exhibit remarkable sobriety. They obstinately refuse any alcohol, even wine. By contrast, they are very keen to acquire European clothes and tobacco. The conduct of the women is irreproachable. We only counted 26 in the entire population. Both the men and the women demonstrate their great affection for their children. It is not unusual to see men acting as the most devoted caretakers of their seven- or eight-month-old infants.

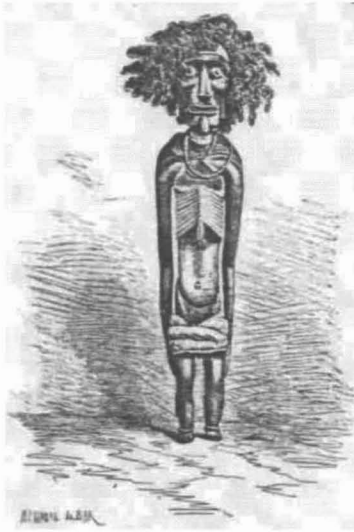
Almost everyone is dressed in European clothes but some, nonetheless, only have a type of jacket or overcoat around their shoulders and a piece of cloth between their thighs. Only one old man, Tago, had a full-body and very complex tattoo. Most of the women had tattooed faces. The designs consist of a circular blue line that extends from the temples almost to the eyebrows and ends near the center of the forehead, at the hairline. It is accompanied on the outer sides by a series of blue dots and another line, also blue, surrounds the mouth. Another type of tattoo represents a stone ax with a handle. The end of the handle starts at the ear lobe. The ax is drawn on the cheek such that the blade extends to the outer angle of the eye.

The ear lobe, which is pierced, hangs down to the level of the chin and is horribly deformed. The entire contours of the hole, and the cartilage, are decorated with a line of blue dots. Circular tattoos surround both the wrist and the ankle. Women wear their hair back in a chignon. The queen and her daughters have long hair and Koreto is the only woman without any tattoos apart from those around her lips and wrists.

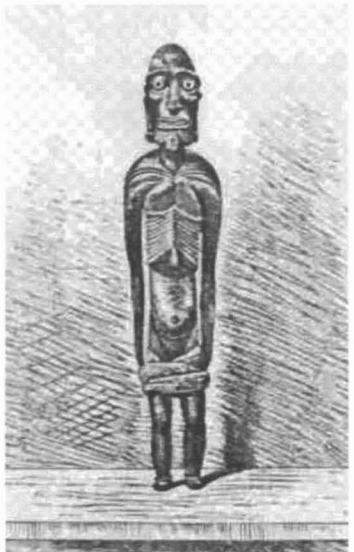
In addition to the monuments that we have described, there are other objects of great interest on the island, namely, the wooden tablets and wooden staffs which other travelers have mentioned and which are engraved with remarkable hieroglyphics. Many examples of these carvings, which are very rare today, are preserved at the museum in Santiago. Easter Island is the only Polynesian island on which such tablets have been found and they are very likely the work of the same people as the ones that erected the monumental statues. The signs on talking wood, as it is called by the islanders, are indecipherable by the present-day islanders. The very occasional tablets that one comes across are used by the natives to spool the cord that they use for fishing lines or nets and it is to this use that is responsible for the survival of such tablets as remain.

Many of the islanders wear small statuettes, generally

carved from a type of mimosa that is quite common on the island. They value these statuettes highly, as we found when we tried, with difficulty, to get them to exchange them for tobacco. The figures represent both males and females. The Kanacs store them in little bags made of linen or cotton fabric. Some of the statuettes have necklaces and a huge head of carefully arranged hair. There are also statuettes made of



Statuette en bois, Drawn by A. de Bar after a sketch by Pinart. (This figure is also shown in Stephen Chauvet's book, *L'île de Pâques et ses Mystères*).



Statuette en bois. Drawing by A. de Bar after a photograph. (This appears to be the same image as above, but without the hair. Covering the genitals with cloth is not traditional).

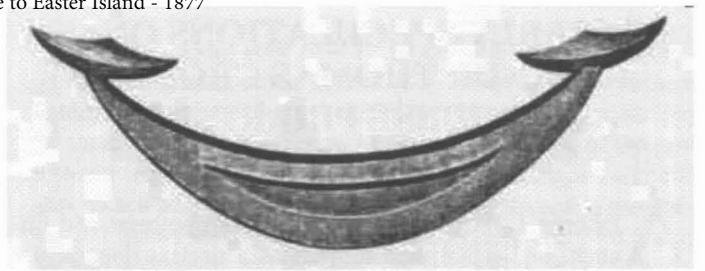
stone that are exact miniature reproductions of the statues in the crater. The Kanacs have, in addition, a crescent shape ornament – a kind of neck guard – whose purpose we were unable to determine.

At a little distance from Mataveri, we were able to study a little *paka-opa* that supported statues that had been barely completed. There, as at Opulu, there had been some that had been better finished than others, for example, the one whose head *La Flore* removed in 1872 and that is now deposited among the anthropological riches of the Paris Museum. Another terrace, without statues, can be found near the launch site at Hanga Piko.

On April 6, we set off to see the Ranakau volcano, which O'Higgins officers estimated to be 408 meters high. Monsieur Escande, for his part, set off towards Tauatapu, the site from which the natives carved the cylindrical hats of the statues and where he saw a considerable number that had already been completed.

The crater of Ranakau, which we reached after a painful trek, has very steep interior slopes, covered with fallen rocks, which make access difficult. It was eight hundred meters deep and fifteen hundred meters wide. A spiraling path leads to the bottom,

which is full of reed-covered ponds. The south part of the crater forms a cliff that falls vertically to the sea. Standing on a site that was a mere 75 centimeters wide between the edges of the cliff and the crater, we could see, at our feet, the nee-



Ornement en forme de croissant. Drawing by A. de Bar, after a sketch by Pinart. (This appears to be the Oslo #2437 *rei-miro*. Cf: *The Art of Easter Island* by T. Heyerdahl, 1976; Plate 47b and 48a).

dle-shaped island of Motu Nui. On the sides of the crater, there were numerous *dracæna* plants, ferns, a type of acacia with yellow flowers, a large clump of locust trees, and a considerable number of *lagenaria* vines. Approximately in the center of the narrow space on which we stood, we thought we could make out some traces of an inscription on a rock but we were unable to decipher it.

The climb up the southwest side of the crater was extremely arduous. The many subterranean chambers must have served the islanders in times past when they came here to take part in the election of their chiefs. One could enter these chambers via a small opening of only 60 centimeters in height. In the center, another opening, covered with flat slabs of stone provided fresh air or served as a chimney. In front of the opening that served as an entrance, the ground was flattened and swept clean. On each side, walls made of stone formed the façade of these subterranean chambers.

Having finished our explorations of the volcano, we returned at 2.00 p.m. to Mataveri.

With respect to agricultural production on Easter Island, suffice to say that apart from a few domestic animals and the rare plant species that we have mentioned, there is nothing to catch the attention of a naturalist. However, we must emphasize the fertility of certain parts of the island where the useful plants introduced by Dutrou-Bornier have prospered quite remarkably. We should repeat what some travelers have said also, namely, that the future of this island rests with the exploitation of the wine industry and tobacco, as well as bananas, sugar cane and dracena.

We still had one duty to perform. A little while after our return to the village, our men brought a cross for the grave of Dutrou-Bornier, as Koreto had requested. After we had bowed our heads in front of the silent grief and grateful looks of the poor queen of the Kanacs, we made our final farewells. A short while later, we were on our way to the shores of Poumotu and Tahiti.

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