

Cultural and artistic work of the group *Tu 'u Hotu Iti*

Paloma Huke, Santiago de Chile

In the following report I wish to describe the outstanding work that the Rapa Nui performance group, *Tu 'u Hotu Iti*, is doing. They have developed chant and dance performances which they present at the ancient sites where the gods and kings were venerated.

When I first saw one of their presentations in 1981 I was both perplexed and awed; it was like a dream. I felt as though I had been transported into another era, another world. The outdoor performances, illuminated with torches, clothing made from bark cloth, all helped to achieve an ambience where man was one with nature. Added to this was the fact that native Rapanui was being spoken. Later, when I became part of the group, I would experience this same feeling.

The group *Tu 'u Hotu Iti* was created in 1974 and its first presentation was during *Tapati Rapa Nui*, a week-long festival of culture and competitions. The first directors and participants were Carlos Huke and Joel Huke. The participants, numbering between 17 and 20 persons, were mainly from the Tuki and Huke families. Now there are between 40 and 60 persons, including children. Many participate by helping with costumes or in other ways besides performing. Since the initiation of the group, more than 300 youngsters have participated either directly or indirectly from the following families: Tuki, Huke, Teao, Hereveri, Pate, Pakomio, Pakarati, Ika, Haoa, Teave, Hotus, Pont, Tepihi, Tepano, etc.

The members of the group named themselves *Tu 'u Hotu Iti* because, as their last names indicate, Tuki and Huke belong to the tribes of the ancient inhabitants of *Mata Tu 'u Hotu Iti*, on the eastern part of the island which, as history tells us, was the place where the *moai* were carved. This land of fishermen and farmers came into conflict with the western part of the island which was the section of nobles and kings, *Tu 'u Aro*. The end result was inter-tribal conflicts and bloody wars.

The organizers of the group identified with that section of the island. Thus the tribe *Tu 'u Hotu Iti* comes back to vigorously avenge and give sense and value to its real culture. We must not forget *Hotu Matu'a*, the first king of the Polynesians to arrive to Easter Island who, on his death bed, told his youngest son, *Hotu Iti*, "Good luck, *Hotu Iti ko te Mata iti*, . . . the *niuhi* are found in Motu Toremō in Hiva . . .

. . ." That is to say that *Hotu Iti* is a worthy representative with the qualities of bravery, force and courage, the *Niuhi Tapa Kai*, sharks of the hammerhead family, came from the ancestral land of Hiva and *Hotu Iti* inherited these qualities from his ancestors.

The islanders involved in the performance activity do this as an effort to search for their identity in the way the ancestors did, but now it is not with a religious sense but one that is broader—to maintain and preserve the culture for new generations.

A question regarding the motivation of the group to develop this activity brought the following responses: "In order to elevate culturally the spirit of the people; to guide their consciousness, showing in this way the value of the group through a look at the past. . . in spite of modernization" (Carlos Huke); and "to recuperate and rebuild the history that our ancestors left. . . , for the new generations (Leticia Huke 1989).



The Tu 'u Hotu Iti group rehearsing at Orongo for the 4th Festival of Pacific Arts in 1985, held in Tahiti. Photo: Paloma Huke.

The original objectives were to rescue and reevaluate the ancient patrimony as an effective weapon for cultural projection; to collect, show and teach the roots of the ancestors, and to mold the range of expressions of the existing traditions. It has been a revelation; to raise consciousness about the great treasure they have in their hands and not to let others overcome and destroy an aboriginal community which faces a cultural bombardment from outside forces.

Leticia, in her last interview in 1990, affirms that she feels satisfied with the work that has been done for she knows that massive knowledge has been given to the next generation and she is at ease because now the children know their history.

Many young people have come to participate in the performances with the simple idea of enjoying themselves thus from a cultural point of view the group is doing an enormous job, not only for the knowledge and art that it delivers, but as an entertainment and cultural formation.

Many other groups have been inspired with commercial aims and have imitated the group in certain aspects, for instance, as for their garments. But they have not reached the perfection nor the artistic level of the *Tu'u Hotu Iti* group. It is a great cultural movement that the group has generated on Rapa Nui.

(Paloma Huke is the daughter of the late Rapanui artist, Melchoir Huckle. Born in Viña del Mar, Chile, she studied and teaches modern dance and ballet and is now enrolled in the anthropology program at the Universidad de Bolivariana in Santiago).

Correction:

A few glitches appeared in the article by Dr Irina Fedorova in our last issue. In her paper on Tominika's text, the Ramon Campbell reference should read : 1971, *La horencia musical de Rapanui*, Santiago de Chile.

On page 74 read 'productive', not 'predictive'.

In the Table,

11-15: should read 034 ʔ *** ʔ

31-34: should read 022¹

68-72 should read 'vai' not 'nai'

35-37, glyph 280: turtle, honu = turtle, honu(i) = noble

We regret the confusion. [*Rongorongo is hard to read!*]

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Laramie, Wyoming

A new University of Wyoming Art Museum exhibit opened in September: "Easter Island Modern Folk Art: Selections from the William T. Mulloy Collection". Items in the collection—both stone and wood—were given to Mulloy during his first trip to the island or were gifts acquired by his family when they lived there. Also on exhibit with the carvings are blown up images of petroglyphs based on the 'daubings' made by Robert Koll of Mexico who worked with Mulloy in 1974 and 1976. [The rubbings are on extended loan to the University Art Museum from the Easter Island Foundation.] The exhibit has been described as 'striking and artistic'.

Barcelona, Spain

An Easter Island *moai* that has been in the Chilean city of La Serena since 1950 was recently loaned to Italy for a museum exhibit, and then sent on to Spain for another

exhibition—'Arte y Cultura de los Mares del Sur'. The statue broke at the neck while being muscled into the cultural center of Catalona, *La Caixa*. Mónica Bahamondez, conservator from the Centro Nacional de Conservación y Restauración, Angel Cabeza, archaeologist from the Consejo de Monumentos, plus the Director of the Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos flew to Spain to assess the damage. Witnesses stated that the crane lifting the statue bumped against the main door of the museum several times. The statue (Englert's number 659) weighs 3 tons and is 3.38 meters tall.

National TV of Chile originally was denied entrance into the museum to photograph the breakage. Mónica Bahamondez stated that the damage was "an archaeological disaster"; the Mayor of La Serena said it was a "great loss for the city's tourism"; the assistant conservator at La Serena's Archaeological Museum added that it has been standing next to the road to the airport and was "converted into a public latrine and target for stone-throwing and other acts of vandalism"; and archaeologist Claudio Cristino blamed it on the Consejo de Monumentos and the Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos who had permitted the loan and he also denigrated comments from Spain that claimed the statue was a "victim of the degenerative process". The Alcalde of Hanga Roa, Petero Edmunds, had approved of sending the statue to Spain but criticized the Spaniards for not calculating the risks; and museum conservator Branko Marinov of the Museo de Antofagasta said that pieces of the country's patrimony should stay in their place of origin and only replicas should be sent.

The statue was subsequently repaired with two steel anchors and special adhesives.

This incident received surprising coverage around the world with notice appearing, for example, in the *Canberra Times* which quoted a spokesman from the La Caixa Foundation, Mr. Albert Roura, as stating that "...the piece had been exposed to pollution and weather for 30 years while on display in Chile before going on tour."

La Serena, Chile

El Mercurio de Valparaiso for 14 October quoted the mayor of La Serena, Adriana Peñafiel, who stated that the city of La Serena will not return to Easter Island the *moai* that is now part of a museum show in Barcelona. It is, she said, part of the cultural and historical patrimony of La Serena and was presented to the city over 40 years ago by islanders. The statue was given to recognize the active role played by the ex-president of the Republic, Gabriel Gonzalez Videla, who was from that city, and as a means of improving connections between the island and the continent. Alcalde Petero Edmunds of Hanga Roa had publically requested the return of the statue to Easter Island.

Viña del Mar, Chile

In a bit of fall-out from the Barcelona incident, *El Mercurio de Santiago* for 3 October stated that the mayor of Viña denied that the Easter Island statue now standing before