
enthusiastic about learning how to use a microscope, and spent hours sharing one scope among two dozen of them. When I repaired the one overhead projector at the high school, it was a cause for celebration because it had been dysfunctional for several years. The lab experiments were a hit with both younger and older students because they loved “doing” science. Next year, on July 11, 2010, Easter Island will be the premium spot on the globe to observe the next total solar eclipse, with nearly five minutes of totality! With a telescope we took apart and cleaned, the students will have an enhanced opportunity to experience this phenomenon of nature.

It is important to remember that these children are members of one of the most endangered cultures in the world. There are very few remaining Rapanui people, so they are working desperately to teach their children the equally

endangered Rapanui language and its unique cultural associations. The dances, songs, traditional arts, oral history, and games all contribute to connections between the past and the present. The Rapanui are also deeply concerned that their children will be prepared for the future and want them to have global affiliations. The lack of Internet connectivity within the Easter Island educational system is problematical but there is a promise for more technological opportunities for the students in the near future.

When the sun sets on Hanga Roa, a place where the shadows of the *moai* stand as silent sentries between land and sea, I know the satisfaction of having lived in the best of places, doing the best of things.

Iorana!

NAHOE TO NAHOE

Joan T. Seaver Kurze

Easter Island Foundation

“We want you take us to Easter Island!” my two granddaughters pleaded last Spring. To my secret delight they refused to let me off the hook. So they, their mother and I began plotting our trip to Rapa Nui during the girls’ 2008 Christmas vacation. My family knew of the annual trips I had made to the island during the 1980’s to work on my doctorate in Anthropology¹ at UCLA, and they wanted a “hands on” tour. Yes, the trip would be costly, especially in a tanked economy, but I thought, like the MasterCard message, some things are priceless.

Flying from Tahiti to Rapa Nui on Christmas Eve and returning a week later on New Year’s Eve would give us five days to view that tiny, rocky triangle way out in the South Pacific. Unlike the early explorers, however, our first glimpse of Rapa Nui was not from the sea. Instead small black patches of the island slowly appeared through rents in the early morning cloud cover. And then, finally, we were there, where friends laden with fragrant *hei tiare*² greeted us at Mataveru airport.

Soon after arriving, we headed out to see the archaeological sites. At Orongo one day, we listened to a fascinating tale about our guide’s brother, the Franciscan priest Francisco (“Pancho”) Nahoe. The two siblings³ are the grandchildren of William Mulloy,⁴ anthropologist from the University of Wyoming. While Josie Nahoe Mulloy’s fair, pretty complexion reflects her mother’s Irish-American background, Pancho’s dark good looks stem straight from his paternal roots on Rapa Nui.

Josie told us about a village named Nahoe on the Marquesan island of Hiva ‘Oa whose present inhabitants believe their ancestors had, in ancient times, colonized Rapa Nui. When they heard about a Rapa Nui member of the Nahoe family who was a Franciscan priest who also spoke their own language, they invited him to come tell them “what happened

next to Hotu Matu‘a”.⁵ Josie proceeded to relate the elaborate way in which the villagers welcomed her brother. Pancho, in his typically unassuming fashion, e-mailed me the following description of this event, which took place during Eastertide in 2000:

Well, I'm pretty sure that they would do as much for any visiting priest. Although it is located on the island of Hiva 'Oa, the village of Nahoe is in one of the more remote sectors and a priest only comes from 'Atuona about once every three to four months. The point, I think, is not the transference of the ancient notion of tapu onto the Catholic priest, in the sense that he is understood to be the modern equivalent of the ariki⁶. Rather, I think, the welcoming ceremony, once used to avoid the catastrophe of one's village becoming contaminated by the sacred, is now an appropriate and traditional way to welcome any more-or-less important visitor. In this case, the villagers are deliberately preserving an element of their Polynesian tradition that no longer has the same cluster of meanings today as once it may have had. Still, the adaptation is entirely organic, it seems to me, given the 19th century disintegration of traditional concepts of the tapu of persons, on the one hand, and the genuine respect for and enthusiasm about a visiting priest, on the other. I went there with a priest-friend of mine, Père Joseph Taupotini, himself a Marquesan.

As we approached the boundaries of the village, a woman waving tī leaves called out “‘A mai! ‘A mai e matu‘a Nahoe ē! ‘A mai!” While four young men carried me into the village on a chair, about a dozen or so danced around the chair with spears and clubs.

Yet another young man armed with a club made repeated faux attempts to penetrate the circle of warriors surrounding me in order to do me harm, but each time was repelled by the young men dancing around me. Finally, we entered the village and they carried me over to the Maison du sport, where the older men, women, and children were eagerly awaiting us with a song that had been specially composed for the occasion in order properly to welcome Matu'a Nahoe (Fr Nahoe) to the village of Nahoe.

The really interesting Nahoe-specific feature of that experience, however, was that the villagers, about 200 of them, insisted that I recount my genealogy for them. I felt as if I were reciting the first chapter of the Gospel of the Matthew. They listened to me very attentively and tried very sincerely to determine if there were any overlap with any of their families' names or legends.

My conclusions? Centuries of Western acculturation combined with prolonged academic studies have not, evidently, succeeded in diluting the potency of oral history throughout the South Pacific!

NOTES

- ¹ In 1997 the research for my dissertation was published by the Easter Island Foundation in a catalog entitled *Ingrained Images: Woodcarvings from Rapa Nui*.
- ² *Hei tiare* are known to English-speakers by the Hawaiian term, *lei*.
- ³ My thanks to Josie and Pancho for sharing this tale with me.
- ⁴ William Mulloy came to Rapa Nui with Thor Heyerdahl in 1956. Every year thereafter, until his death in 1978, Mulloy returned to the island to continue his own anthropological and archaeological work. The diagnosis of lung cancer unfortunately cancelled his plans to retire there with his wife Emily in the 1980s. A memorial to Mulloy, beloved by the Rapa Nui, lies at the coastal site of Tahai where he and his wife are interred. The building of a research library to house his work and that of other researchers in the area was supported by the Easter Island Foundation, and stands next to the island's Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert.
- ⁵ Legend credits the Polynesian chief Hotu Matu'a with colonizing Rapa Nui. *Hiva*, from where he sailed, remains unknown.
- ⁶ "Chief", in Rapanui.



Photo courtesy of Francisco Nahoe: "Here's one of me, my sister Josie, and both our (now deceased) grandmothers: Josefina Avaka Pakomio and Emily Ross Mulloy. We're on the porch of our house on the island".