

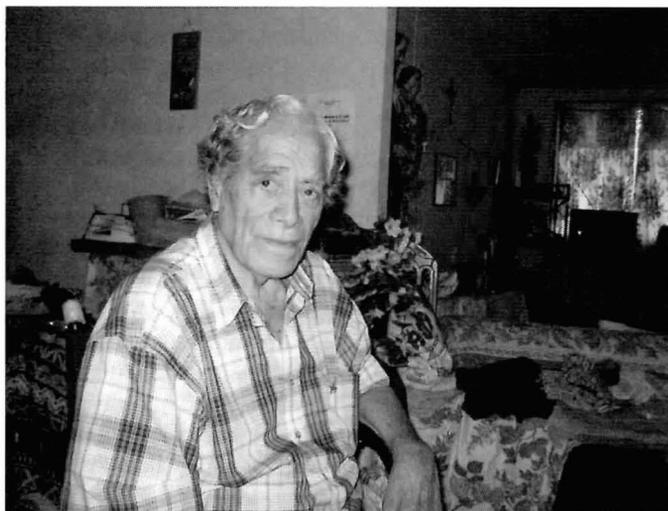
OBITUARY

LUIS PATE PAOA (“PAPA KIKO”)

May 15, 1926 - October 11, 2008

Anyone who has listened to recordings from Rapa Nui (Easter Island) will recognize the voice of Luis (Avaka) Pate Paoa (or “Papa Kiko”), soaring high above the rest with his distinctive tonality.

Luis Pate was born on Rapa Nui when people still were penned within their village and not permitted to travel outside its boundaries without special permission. The Chilean authorities kept an iron grip on the island in those days, controlling access to all but a few visitors, either as tourists or researchers. There was an annual ship for the sheep ranch that occupied and exploited the entire island and this ship brought some supplies and took away the by-products of the island’s ranching operations. As well, a Chilean naval vessel would make periodic visits.



Luis was one of nine children, all but three of whom died either at birth or shortly after. Only first-born Martin (6 years Luis’s senior) and sister Delfina, survived to adulthood — the former passing away in 1978, the latter in 1940.

Luis showed early promise as a singer and was devoted in particular to church music. He was raised by his mother’s mother “Anastasia” Rengahopuhopu (1852-1942) who provided him with knowledge of the pre-missionary days on Rapa Nui. Rengahopuhopu was one of the inhabitants of the island when it reached its population low point of 110 persons in 1877. In his youth, Luis also was close to two aunts who were recognized as custodians of Rapanui musical heritage in the 1920s and 30s. Luis, then, knew old stories, songs, chants, customs, and beliefs about the island — although it was not until he was well into maturity that he could tell outsiders about this material, as access to the island was so restricted.

In time, Luis became known as “Kiko” and many visitors will know him only by this name. One interpretation of his island name is that he was fat, so his body had a lot of “kiko”,

meat. More likely is that it is a contraction of a great uncle’s name, “Arakiko” (or “Hercules” in the Tahitian of the day). Luis’s maternal Rapa Nui relatives called him “Orare”, but few outsiders or islanders knew or used that name. With age, following Tahitian custom, Kiko became “Papa Kiko” and the pejorative inference of his island name changed, becoming in the eyes of his juniors a reference to his “weight”, or stature, as a guardian of the island’s cultural heritage.

Kiko was active in the Rapa Nui Catholic church throughout his youth, working closely with the influential priest Sebastián Englert (1881-1969) and with prominent orators and community leaders of the 1930s and 40s. For a time, Kiko was employed in the local Chilean state school to teach children the old songs and stories. Over the course of a decade, he built up an ensemble that was capable of performing an assortment of traditional Rapanui and modern Tahiti-influenced songs that were sufficiently varied and substantive enough to prove popular with visiting and local audiences alike. This ensemble became the basis for performance tours to New Zealand in the 1970s and, later, participation in the quadrennial Festival of Pacific Arts.

Kiko Pate’s prominence in community music-making was conducive to his involvement in the work of outsiders. His reliable store of oral history informed the music research of eminent Chilean folklorist Margot Loyola (1961) and musicologist Ramón Campbell (1966); 64 of the songs transcribed in Campbell’s valuable music ethnography are attributed to Kiko. The first commercial recording of Rapanui music began in the 1970s, shortly after the establishment of regular commercial flights to the island. Countless numbers of tourists have also captured recordings of the Rapanui soundscape, particularly the Rapa Nui Mass where Kiko’s voice figured so prominently. Amongst the many anonymous productions of Easter Island Music that can be obtained commercially, Kiko performed for the recording projects of Claude Jannel (1974), Christos Clair-Vasiliadis (1976), Joakin Bello (1995), Jörg Hertel (1995), and Ad Linkels (1996). To these, and to many other researchers of Rapa Nui history and culture, Kiko offered an insight into an ancient past. He saw no conflict in his mind between his fervent Catholic beliefs and the ideas of his ancestors.

Kiko Pate was an invaluable inspiration to the generations of Rapa Nui musicians who followed him. From the 1970s onwards, the preservation of Rapanui cultural heritage became an important aspect of the island’s ongoing relationship with Chile, and music and dance therefore assumed new importance as vehicles for the expression of cultural identity. Kiko’s personal store of musical knowledge, together with his efforts in educating Rapa Nui youth, provided many of these younger performers with an ancient repertoire, and his influence permeates the music of ensembles such as Kari Kari and Matato’a that now travel the world representing their island (and, on occasion, Chile) at festivals and diplomatic engagements. In recognition of his service to the community, Kiko was honored in his old age with the title of *Hijo Ilustre* (“Illustrious Son”) by the Easter Island Municipal Government.

In 2002, the authors both spent considerable time on Rapa Nui and in the company of Kiko Pate. During our discussions, he revealed with great joy that he had experienced a vision indicating that he was going to die. He seemed very happy with this knowledge and, when Grant asked him when he thought this might happen, Kiko replied with the Spanish expression: “Cuando Dios quiere” — “When God wishes it”.

And so it has happened.

— Grant McCall & Dan Bendrups

Editor's note: Anthropologist Grant McCall first met Kiko Pate in 1968 and worked closely with him throughout the ensuing 40 years. Ethnomusicologist Dan Bendrups writes on Rapanui music and was a student and friend of Papa Kiko

during the former's PhD fieldwork (2002-2004) and thereafter. Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert, on Easter Island, has a sound archive of traditional Rapanui music containing many of Kiko's songs.

For anyone interested in knowing more about Papa Kiko and his life, Dan Bendrups wrote a biography of the man... “Easter Island Music and the Voice of Kiko Pate: A Biographical History of Sound Recording”. It was published in 2007 in *The World of Music* (Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 125-141). As Bendrups wrote, “Kiko Pate gave tirelessly of himself and his knowledge to anyone who sought his counsel, yet he remained largely anonymous in the historical record that he was largely responsible for generating. This biography was written in recognition of Papa Kiko's unique contribution to Rapanui heritage”.

A LOOK BACK

“EASTER ISLAND”

With annotations by Georgia Lee & Shawn McLaughlin

The following anonymous report first appeared in the Washington DC *Star* on July 27, 1889 and was later re-printed in the Orcutt, California, *West American Scientist*¹ in January of 1891. The misinterpretations and mistakes in the following leave us breathless. The account was taken, at least in part, from William Thomson's *Report of the US National Museum for 1891*. But many of the comments by the author appear to be his personal observations (perhaps from viewing an exhibition?). Thus we hear about hemp (instead of *hau*) and bulrushes (instead of *nga'atu* or *titora*), granite and slate (not!), plus numerous other misinterpretations due either to a fast and casual reading of the Thomson report, or to the fervid imagination of a novice (and forever anonymous) reporter. Words are misspelled, even more so than is found in Thomson's report, and from the types of error it seems that the author got some of the information orally and simply misheard the words. One can only wonder about the three kinds of carvings cited by the author as being male, female, and ribbed. Ribbed? As in a third sex?

...

The hideous [!] stone images and carvings in stone and wood in the U.S. National Museum attract attention to the curious people who inhabit Easter Island. The island was the home of the image makers, and the products of their skill and imagination are emblems of hideous idolatry. Paymaster Thompson [*sic* – Thomson] gives an interesting description of these curious people and their relics. It is doubtful, he says, whether the present race are descendants of the image makers. He is inclined to think that there was an earlier prehistoric

race. One of the most noteworthy facts discovered through their archaeology is that they had a written language. The collection from Easter Island includes images, stone and wood carvings, stone spear heads, various implements, weapons, and utensils of industry illustrative of the “civilization” of the people. In his description of the relics of the Easter Island collection Mr. Thompson states that it does not appear that the ordinary stone and wooden images, in which the island abounds, were in any sense idols. They seemed rather to be erected as our bronze is erected in the parks, to commemorate individuals.

Be this as it may, the visitor at the National Museum must be strongly disposed to look upon these monstrosities [!] in carving as the idols of a heathen race. The wooden images are of comparatively recent date. They are divided into three classes — the male, the female and the ribbed. The stone images are very rudely carved and are of earlier date than those of wood.

There are three stone idols, however, of higher rank than these — nothing less than that of stone gods. These are the fish god, called by the native “Mea Ika”; the bonit's god, called “Mea Kahi”; the fowl god, called “Mea Moa”.² These are all ill-shaped and apparently without distinguishing characteristics but they are considered worthy of worship by the natives. While the various other images were intended as effigies of chiefs or other persons of importance, these received a profound religious homage.

These gods were never common and were possessed by communities or clans, and never by individuals. The legends all claim that they were brought to the island by the first settlers. An especial god being set apart for the bonits, as distinct from the other fish, is attributed to the fact that fish has always been abundant and highly prized as food. Fish always constituted an important article of diet with the natives, and the abundance in which they were found is ascribed to the faithful and constant adoration to the stone fish gods. The fowl god was believed to ward off evil influences by being placed