

A LOOK BACK

As readers of the *Rapa Nui Journal* know, early reports about Easter Island frequently contain valuable insights as well as factual errors, but this paper includes some truly outrageous opinions and interpretations that reveal perhaps as much about the reporter as what is being reported.

— Shawn McLaughlin

“EASTER ISLAND AND ITS COLOSSAL STATUES”

By Captain H.V. Barclay, R.N.

Read April 14th, 1898.

When I consented to address the Royal Geographical Society on the subject of Easter Island, I had no conception that I should have to face a large public meeting, but rather to meet a few persons most of whom possessed a general knowledge of the subject, and were necessarily deeply interested therein. I therefore looked forward to having a general discussion, from which I hoped to gain information rather than be called upon to give a formal lecture.

Situated in an extremely isolated position in lat. 27° 10' S., and long. 109° 26' W., possibly few persons other than scientists have heard of this island or know its locality. Many other islands have been reported from time to time in its vicinity, and are shown on old charts. This, however, frequently occurs, owing to shipmasters unequipped with instruments of scientific value reporting the same island over and over again, in varying positions, according to their own notion of where they are. From time to time these doubtful islands are carefully searched for by the vessels of the Royal Navy, and if found wanting, are promptly obliterated from the Admiralty charts. The charts of the coast line of the whole world are originally made by the officers of the Queen's Navy, and these maps are constructed at vast expense. The Hydrographic branch of the Admiralty costs over £13,000 per annum¹ for the London office alone, and their maps are available to the world at very moderate charges, thus giving to humanity a huge boon, which our Continental neighbors are not slow to take advantage of, although contributing nothing thereto—thus the world's mercantile community are indebted to the generosity of the British public for charts that enable their shipping, with hundreds of millions worth of cargo, and thousands of valuable lives, to pass in comparative safety over seas, the configuration of which, but for this large-minded distribution of knowledge, would remain almost unknown.

Easter Island is but 11½ miles in length by 5½ miles in breadth at the widest part, and has an area of about 32 square miles.² A considerable portion of it is occupied by extinct craters and lava beds, some of which are of vast dimensions, whilst the whole surface is strewn with stones and jagged pieces of obsidian, rendering walking, excepting on the clearer portions, very unpleasant. The soil is of great fertility and well

covered with grasses, but there are no trees worthy of the name, the largest being paper mulberry bushes, with stems a few inches in diameter. It is recorded by some visitors that in former times there were larger trees on the island, but the accounts are contradictory and confusing.

Without entering into a detailed description of the geology of the island, I may say that the formation is purely of a volcanic character; lavas abound in widely diverse forms, from the hard basaltic to scoria quite as cellular as pumice, and in places conglomerate, showing that the older formations had been disturbed by volcanic convulsions, whilst a new flow of lava enveloped and formed the whole into a solid mass. Natural caves are numerous, and many of them bear evidence of having served as residences for the inhabitants at various periods of time. The hills have gently sloping sides, rising out of irregularly shaped plains, the soil of which is alluvial, having a substratum of volcanic ash, mud, and stones, covered with a formation of decayed vegetable matter and mixed with rich deposits of decomposed lava, washed down from the hills by the frequent heavy rains. Subsequent to the formation of this soil the expiring energy of the volcanoes appears to have been directed to strewing the surface with stones.

The coastline is precipitous, with lofty cliffs and headlands from 1,000 to 2,000 ft. above sea,³ having but very few inlets or beaches on which it is possible to land. On this unprotected coast, without harbors, vessels must be guided by the direction of the wind in selecting an anchorage. On the south there are good anchorages, with northerly or westerly winds, and with easterly winds Cook's Bay affords a fairly good anchorage. Generally Easter Island is a difficult place to land upon conveniently, and at times even dangerous, owing to the heavy swell. When I visited the island in H.M.S. *Topaze*, then the flagship on the South American station, we anchored in Cook's Bay, which is fairly sheltered from October until April, during which time the south-east trade wind blows constantly.

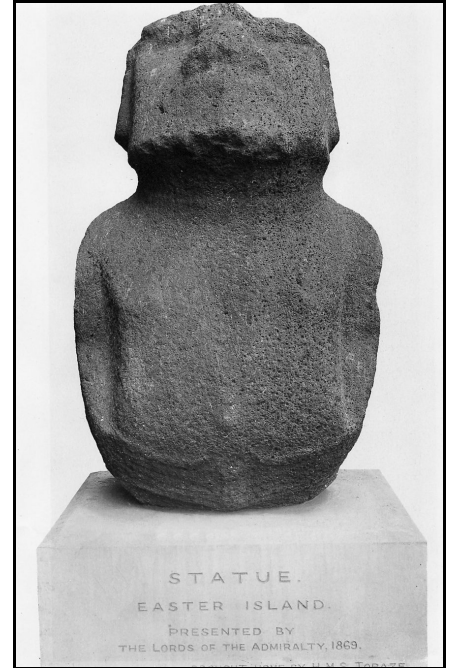
The earliest discoverer of this island known to history was Davis, the celebrated South Sea buccaneer, in 1687, although the position he assigned to it was far from correct. It was afterwards found by Roggeveen, and has since been visited by Cook, La Perouse, and many other navigators, nearly all of whom gave accounts of the island and its inhabitants which are at complete variance with one another, and in many instances the writers were evidently possessed of most vivid imaginations. For instance, Behrens solemnly states as follows :— “With truth I might say that these savages are all of more than gigantic size; the men are tall, and broad in proportion, averaging 12 ft. in height. Surprising as it may appear, the tallest men on board of our ship could pass between the legs of these children of Goliath without bending their heads; the women cannot compare in stature with the men, as they are commonly not above 10 ft. high.” Roggeveen states:— “The people are well-proportioned of limb, having large and strong muscles, and are great in stature. They have snow-white teeth, which are uncommonly strong; indeed, even among the aged and grey, we were surprised to see them crack large, hard nuts whose shells were thicker than our peach seeds.” La Perouse



Hoa Haka Nana I'a, when it stood on the portico of the British Museum in London.

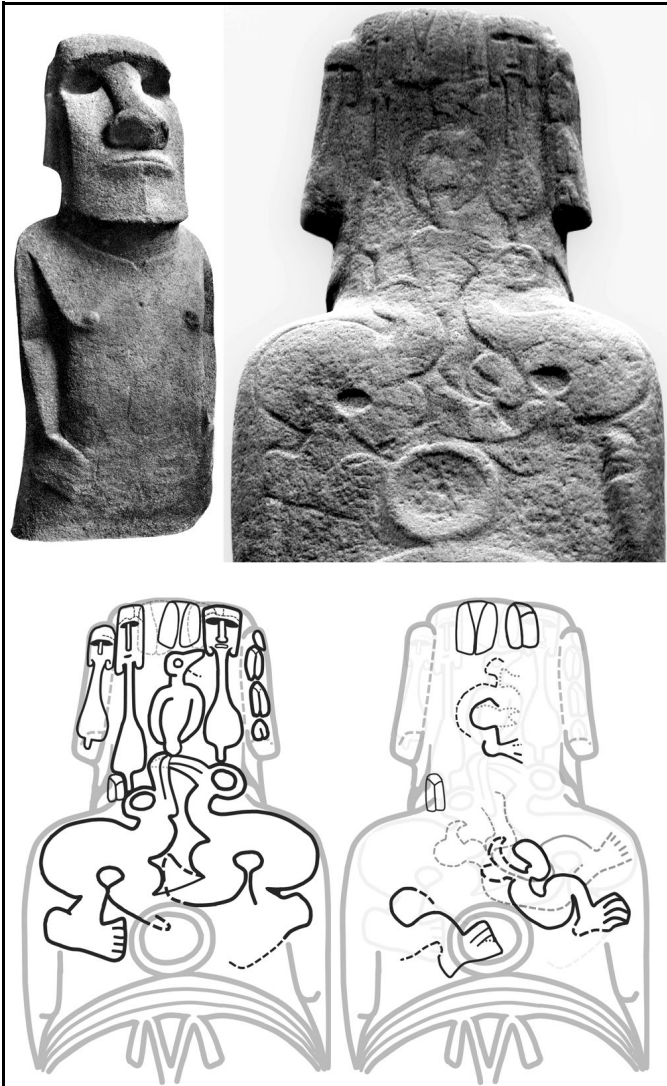
contradicts the account as to their enormous height, and praises the beauty of the women, whom, he says, resembled Europeans in color and features. In one respect, however, all the navigators who have visited the place agree in expressing unbounded astonishment at the vast prehistoric remains with which this island abounds. It is, however, so destitute of wood that it has little to boast of in the way of beautiful scenery, and compared with the verdure clad islands in other parts of Polynesia it is quite a desert. Prior to visiting Easter Island we had an extensive voyage through the Marquesas and Society Groups, and spent many days at that gem of all islands, Tahiti. We were greatly disappointed at the first sight of the landing place at Cook's Bay; its dreary aspect caused quite a depressing effect on the whole ship's company. Many of us were aware that ancient remains of some kind had been reported to exist on Easter Island, but we little thought they would be of so great interest as subsequently proved to be the case, or that we should be so fortunate as to obtain for the British nation the valuable image, representations of which, by photography, I recently obtained at the British Museum. Our primary object in visiting this out of the way island was to verify its position on the chart, to search for certain other islands that were reputed to be in the vicinity, and then to make such a survey of

the island as might be deemed desirable, in the course of which all available information regarding not only the physical formation of the country, but also such particulars concerning its present inhabitants, and the very extraordinary prehistoric remains, as could be obtained from all reliable sources. Many officers were employed on this service, and the result of their observations was handed to Commodore R. Ashmore Powell, the commanding



Moai Hava, another Easter Island statue among the rich holdings of the British Museum.

officer, who was distinguished not only for his eminent war service, but also for his scientific attainments. Quite recently the Lords of the Admiralty were good enough to permit me to have access to his report on Easter Island, and to furnish me with a copy of portions of it, and also with a report made subsequently by Captain Clark, of H.M.S. *Sappho*. Both of these reports ... are of great scientific value, having been made by impartial persons of high standing, with the best possible opportunity of obtaining all the available information worthy of acceptance. The image, or perhaps more properly "statue," ... was discovered during the course of our investigations half buried on the side of the great crater near Cook's Bay,⁴ whereupon Commodore Powell gave instructions to bring it on board. Now it is not altogether an easy matter to transport a stone statue 8 ft. in height, and weighing 4½ tons, over a mile of rough country without timber, and then float it off to a ship in an exposed roadstead, whip it on board, and secure it on deck. However, we had many willing hands, and eventually not only did we succeed with the statue shown in the photo, but also with a second, but much smaller and less perfect one.⁵ Both of these now stand within the portico of the British Museum, where they have been subjected to much critical examination by many learned persons without yielding the secrets of by whom and when they were formed. You will notice that one of the views represents the back of the figure, and that there are certain markings thereon.⁶ Now these markings are deeply and carefully carved in the hard stone, and are similar in character and style, but not identical; they are found on the back of every statue on the island that



Carvings on the back of Hoa Haka Nana I'a. (Rear view photo by Shawn McLaughlin; interpretive drawings courtesy of Paul Horley.)

remains in a sufficiently perfect condition. In all cases the backs of the statues are flattened, so as to display the markings, and there can be no doubt that these carvings have a direct reference to each of the statues. The stone of which they are made is a hard grey trachyte, with a specific gravity a little over two, and is very durable. Notwithstanding this, many of the statues are so defaced by time as to be almost unrecognisable. The workmanship throughout is remarkably good, but it is particularly noticeable that, although the carving on the back of each statue differs, the features and general expression of the face of all are alike, in fact wonderfully so, and utterly different in every detail to any known cast of face amongst the Polynesians of the present time. They have a singularly determined and calm look, and strike the beholder with a certain undefinable feeling of awe. The artists who constructed them seem to have expended labor only on the face and back, since the hands and arms are mere rude

indications that such exist. The expression of the faces is sternly disdainful, and the aspect slightly upwards; the eye sockets are deeply sunk, and situated close under the massive brows; the nose is broad and straight, with widely-expanded nostrils; the ears are comparatively rudely cut, and have long pendant lobes. The top of the head is cut off flat to receive the final and very extraordinary ornament, namely, a huge cylinder of reddish stone, shaped just like a modern belltopper⁷ without the brim. Each statue is constructed of a single stone, and some of them are of vast proportions, several being over 50 ft. high, and proportionately broad, whilst one measured 70 ft. high and weighed about 250 tons. These dimensions are exclusive of the cylindrical head ornaments, some of these alone being no less than 8 ft. high and 10 ft. in diameter, and weighing, by computation, over 20 tons. All of the statues terminate at the hips, and are cut off square and level, so as to permit them to stand when placed upright on their bases. When perfect, they stood on great platforms built of huge stones, in many cases admirably fitted together, and with well-dressed faces. Many of these platforms are of vast size, and are placed at irregular intervals all round the island near the coast, and on them these extraordinary statues stood facing the sea,⁸ as if to warn off all intruders, thus presenting a truly wonderful monument of the skill and engineering knowledge of the unknown people who constructed them. Over 500 statues have been counted on the island, and for their accommodation there are the remains of above a hundred great platforms, some of which are over 500 ft. long and 10 ft. high and wide, built of immense stones, put together without mortar.⁹ The statues are in all stages of completion, some being yet partly attached to the native rock in the quarry where they were in course of construction, surrounded by the chips of the workmen; others lying where they were left, on the way to the platforms they were intended to adorn. In short, everything points to a sudden cessation of work, and what more probable than that this was caused by some great volcanic catastrophe! Moreover, we have absolute proof¹⁰ that a great volcanic outburst occurred subsequent to the construction of most, if not all, of the statues, as many are now standing vertical, but partly buried in volcanic mud, dust, and scoria. In every instance when the statues were placed in a vertical position they stood on their carefully-prepared platforms. It is therefore only reasonable to assume that these were duly erected on their respective platforms, in which case we have evidence of an enormous outburst of volcanic energy that may well account for the sudden cessation of work and entire disappearance of the strange race of people¹¹ who built these vast platforms and carved the great statues with which they were finally adorned. I attach very great importance to the evidence we have of the sudden cessation from work of the statue-builders, from whatever cause it may have occurred, demonstrating beyond doubt the fact of a vast volcanic outburst¹² subsequent to the erection of those particular statues, which could not fail to have affected the whole area of this small islet, and every being thereon, if, indeed, it did not annihilate them altogether. It is worthy of note in this connection that the whole island is one vast sepulchre. Look

where you may, dig where you like, human remains are sure to be found. In fact I made quite a collection of skulls found under fallen statues or in the cavities beneath the platforms. These I subsequently presented to a scientific friend in England. The bones indicated that the people were not above the ordinary height, and the skulls referred to were in no way remarkable beyond that they appeared to denote an intelligent race. It does not follow, however, that they belonged to the statue-builders, and until a thorough investigation has been made in the island under the direction of scientific specialists, this point cannot be determined.

I have hitherto confined my remarks almost exclusively to the statues and a general description of the island, but the construction of the great platforms on which they were erected is worthy also of careful consideration. As is the case with the statues, a general similarity of design is very noticeable in all the platforms. Irregularly distributed over the island, but generally near the coast, and always facing the sea, these great structures are, like the statues, in widely varying states of preservation, some being now mere grass-grown mounds, whilst others retain their original form and show all the original details of their structure. The side nearest the sea is always a wall built with hewn stones of great size, frequently weighing upwards of 5 tons. These are very carefully fitted in a peculiar manner, many of the stones being triangular. There are also frequently smaller stones morticed into the larger ones, and in some instances having smooth polished surfaces. Behind this wall, and parallel thereto, is another, built of uncut stones, and between these two walls are numbers of small chambers, generally containing human remains, to which there appears to have been no means of access after the completion of the platform. Loose boulders fill the spaces between these chambers to the level of the top of the parallel walls, and the chambers themselves are covered over with large slabs of hewn stone. On the portions of the platforms where the statues stood, slabs of hewn stone were placed for their reception, and it is remarkable that, notwithstanding the great weight of some of the statues, they were placed on the platforms quite irrespective of the position of the chambers beneath, though always symmetrically spaced as regards the platform. At either end of the platform are long wing walls of uncut stone, backed with boulders, and on the side of the platforms furthest from the sea, a few stone steps descend to a terrace of earthwork sloping gradually backwards to the surface of the ground. Some of these platforms had no less than 15 great statues standing on them; but now all have fallen, probably through the agency of earthquakes. Several of the early navigators reported these statues as standing on the platforms; but now all have fallen, and are generally broken by the violence of the shock. In many parts of the island, and particularly on the cliffs at the southern extremity, there are sculptured rocks¹³ covered with human faces, birds, fishes, canoes, hieroglyphics, and frequently repeated representations of a strange animal having a cat-like head and face and roughly human-looking form,¹⁴ with arched back, and long, slender legs and arms. This animal might possibly be intended for a conventional representation of a South American puma. Throughout the

island there are numerous remains of ancient houses of curious structure, now for the most part ruined and buried in debris and volcanic dust. These dwellings are usually placed against a terrace of earth or rock, which forms the back. They are of all shapes, according to the formation of the ground, and are built of slabs of stratified basalt, of which there is abundant supply. They have only one small entrance, which is unpaved, but lined at the top and sides with large flat stones, and the walls being frequently 10 ft. thick. These passages are very difficult of access. The outer doorposts consist of vertical slabs of stone, frequently covered with remains of carving, planted in the ground on either side, the top being crossed by a heavy basaltic slab. The roof is very peculiarly formed by successive layers of slabs, each projecting beyond the other from either side towards the centre until they meet, when they are capped with another large slab of stone; the whole is then completed by covering the slabs with a mound of earth. The floors are of earth, trodden hard and smooth, the height from it to the ceiling being generally not more than 5 ft. The interior is divided into rooms, if they can be called such, usually about 12 ft. by 5 ft., and have communicating passages through the partitioning walls, which are generally 4 or 5 ft. thick. The interior doorways, which are somewhat more roomy than the exterior, rarely exceed 2 ft. square, or just space enough to crawl through slowly. The rooms are lined with smooth slabs, generally covered with quaint figures and hieroglyphics, occasionally sculptured, but much more frequently with the work of modern artists in red and white clays, which are common on the island. In each of these dwellings there is a recess in the walls that seems to have been designed for the reception of the valuables of the household.

Near a high bluff on the north-east coast there is an assemblage of dwellings extending for more than a mile by about half a mile in width. The buildings are generally elliptical in plan, with the entrance passage facing the sea; they appear the most ancient, and remain intact. It is particularly remarkable that the recesses in the wall are covered with a true arch, supported by a properly-shaped keystone, instead of by a flat slab as is invariably used in other parts of the island. In front of the settlement there is a small inlet, where the land slopes gently towards the sea. This slope has been carefully paved down to the water, and from its end a narrow channel formed through the rocks to the open sea, so that boats might land here and be drawn up to a place of safety.

There is, however, quite another class of objects of great interest on this island to which I must refer. Personally I doubt their antiquity, and hope to show you conclusively that they cannot be attributed to the statue-building people, nor even be connected with them by any satisfactory process of reasoning. Commodore Powell's report describes the people as they were at the time of our visit, and I may add that prior to the advent of the missionaries in 1803 they are stated to have possessed a number of wooden tablets, with incised picture writing on either side, which had been handed down from their forefathers and were greatly valued. Possibly under the mistaken notion that these tablets were idols of some sort, the missionaries ordered all that could be found to be burned; however, a

number of them escaped, and found their way into scientific hands, where they are yet undergoing much patient study.¹⁵ They also had a number of curious small wooden images, which doubtless represented either their gods or ancestors. We took home several of these, which are now in the British Museum. I am convinced that the small images have nothing whatever to do with the large stone statues nor with the race of people who made them. They are certainly remarkably ugly, but somewhat similar wooden images are to be seen in other parts of the Pacific. With regard to the tablets, it is uncertain whether they are really records left by the statue-makers; the preponderance of evidence is against their being so, and of one fact we may be certain, that none of the inhabitants possess the power of reading these tablets since the depopulation of the island by the Peruvians in 1864,¹⁶ when every man and woman that could be found was taken into deadly slavery, and the few that returned brought death in their train in the form of virulent smallpox. Those who are acquainted with the modern history of the island will remember that again in 1878 the missionaries deported some 300 of the unfortunate inhabitants to the Gambier Islands, leaving a miserable remnant of about 150 behind. When we visited the island in H.M.S. *Topaze* none of the natives pretended to know anything at all about the statues; indeed, they expressly stated so through the missionary who was residing amongst them, and, moreover, willingly assisted in any way they could in removing the statues and other curios that we took from the island. In comparatively recent times, however, the demand for information seems to have created a supply, and an American warship obtained from an elderly native, under the influence of rum, long and highly poetic translations of some of the inscribed tablets which have been published under the authority of the well-known Smithsonian Society.

I have drawn your attention to a number of partly buried statues, proving that a vast volcanic eruption had caused a sudden cessation of work, which apparently was never resumed. Now in the large collection of legends and supposed translations there is not a word about any such vast catastrophe;¹⁷ and yet had these people been descended from those living at that time some dim memory of it must have passed down from father to son. Remember for a moment how the tradition of the flood has permeated the whole world, even to the most distant parts of the globe. Therefore, either the tablets were made subsequently to the date of the half-buried statues and by a different race of people, who possessed no knowledge of any catastrophe; or else supposing them to be made prior to the catastrophe, then we have the untenable position that the knowledge of how to read them was handed down from generation to generation, through a period when the whole island must have been almost, if not quite, uninhabitable, owing to the violent outburst of the great crater; and yet, though remembering the smallest detail of an obscure picture-writing, all knowledge of this terrible time is lost. Not only is this the case, but many of the so-called translations bear evidence of modern teaching. Here is a sample from the Smithsonian collection:—

Translation.

“What power has the Great King on the land?”

“He has the power to produce the ferns, creeping plants, grass, bushes, and all vegetation.”

“All hail the power of the Great King, who enables us to use as food yams, potatoes, and sugar cane.”

“What power has the Great King on land?”

“He has the power to clothe the turtles in hard shell, the fish with scales, and protects every living thing.”

“All hail the power of the Great King, who enables us to overcome the defence of the turtles, fish, and all reptiles.”

“What power has the Great King in the universe? “

“He has the power to create the stars, the clouds, the dew, the rain, the sun, and the moon.”

“All hail the power of the Great King, who enables us to appreciate the blessings of the bright stars, the lowering clouds, the gentle dew, the falling rain, and the light of the sun and the moon.”

“What power has the Great King upon the land?”

“He has the power to populate the earth, to create both kings and subjects.”

“All hail the power of the Great King, who has created the human beings, given authority to kings, and created loyal subjects.”

And so on. I think you will all agree with me that this extraordinary litany has a suspiciously modern swing about it. That, however, in former years the present race of natives had, in common with other Polynesians, some knowledge of a species of signwriting or totems, is satisfactorily shown by the following circumstance :— In the year 1770 possession was taken of the island by Don Philipe Gonzalez on behalf of the King of Spain, and after the formal deed had been signed by all the officers of the expedition the native chiefs were invited to sign also, which they complied with by drawing certain characters on the manuscript.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that many of the Maori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi¹⁹ in 1840, using very similar characters, so much so as to lead to the conclusion that both are derived from the same source.... It is also a curious coincidence that the Maoris have a stone statue which, they informed me, their ancestors brought with them from Hawaiki on their first coming to New Zealand. This statue was buried on the island of Mokoia, and was tapu, or sacred. No inducement could persuade them to give me any indication that might lead to its discovery, but it was once

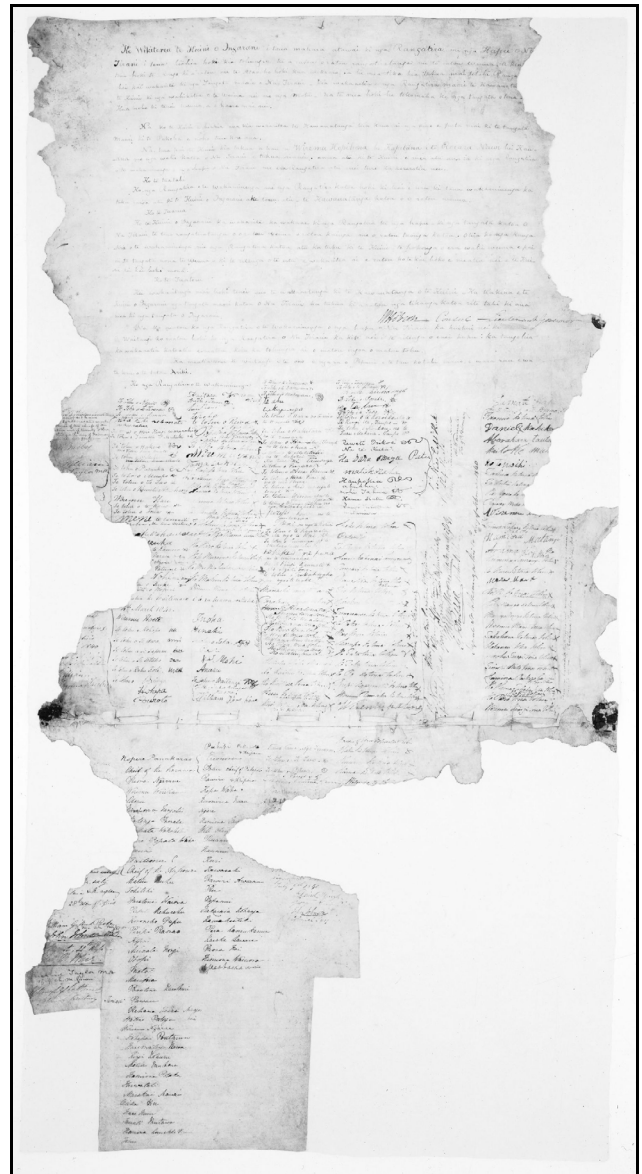


"Signature" by Rapanui elders on Spanish Treaty of Concession, 1770.

shown to Sir George Grey, whose person was also tapu, since he had been plunged, *volens volens*,²⁰ into a spring of very hot water. Subsequent investigation showed that this tale was at any rate partly true, if not wholly so. A stone statue was shown to Sir George Grey on the island of Mokoia, in the middle of Rotorua Lake. This is an extremely sacred spot to the Maori, where, they state, their most venerated objects are preserved. The Maori chiefs took him to the island and there showed him the site of an ancient temple, clearly marked by the flax plants — an oblong, with a curious recess at the end furthest from the entrance. Into this they went, and then, removing a few inches of the soil, disclosed a well-preserved statue of stone, life size. It was represented in a sitting posture, with the arms resting on the knees, and the face inclined upwards, and was made of a kind of porphyry. I believe that all trace of this curious relic has been lost since the great volcanic outbreak at Rotorua.

I have already drawn attention to the isolated position of Easter Island. I do not think that this can always have been so, it being highly improbable that so small an island could, even if carefully cultivated, of which there is no trace, have supported the vast population of which there are so many evidences of their existence. Either it was of much greater size, or was one of a group which have since disappeared. It may even have formed a part of a submerged continent connected with South America in ancient times. Long prior to the arrival of the Incas in South America a people existed there who have left monumental remains constructed with stones of huge size, in a somewhat similar manner to the great platforms of Easter Island.²¹ Moreover, there is a strong resemblance between the recently explored and partly deciphered inscriptions of the Maya Peninsula and those on the rocks and statues of Easter Island. For my own part I believe that if ever a clue is found to the statue-builders of Easter Island it will be through careful comparison with the Maya inscriptions; but before this can be done it is imperative that a thorough scientific examination should be made of Easter Island. Wherever desirable, excavations should be made, and specially the bases of the partly buried statues should be examined, as they

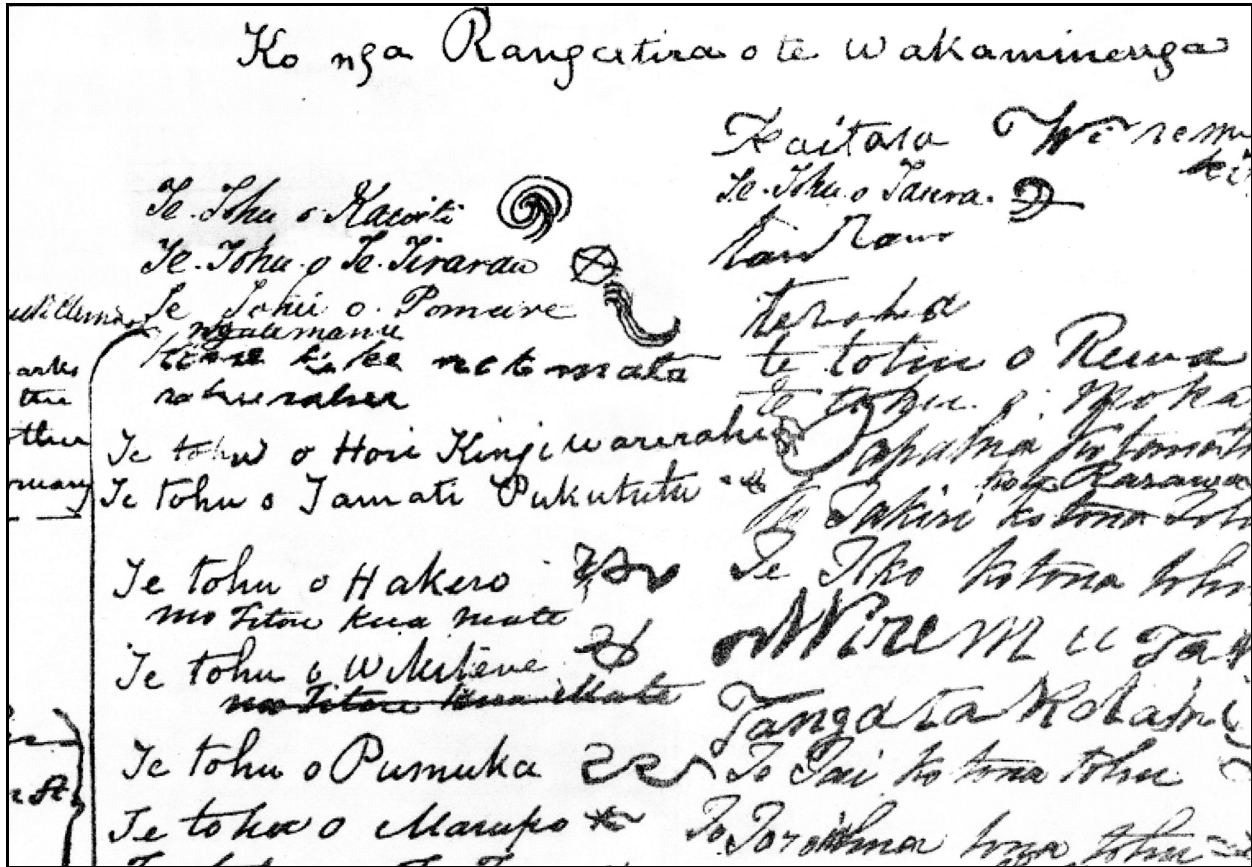
will most probably be found perfectly preserved by their shroud of volcanic dust. Thus a real service might be rendered to science, and more perfect knowledge obtained of the ancient inhabitants of the Southern Seas.



Treaty of Waitangi, 1840.

NOTES

- 1 This amount in 1898 is equal to £1,172,326 or \$1,924,409 in today's currency.
- 2 The island is actually 63.2 square miles in area.
- 3 The cliffs overlooking the sea at Rano Kau rise to about a thousand feet, but the highest point on the island is Maunga Terevaka at 1,758 ft. (536 m).
- 4 This is the famous basalt *moai* known as Hoa Haka Nana I'a taken during the visit in 1868 of the British Man of War H.M.S. *Topaze*. Two hundred persons were needed



Treaty of Waitangi (detail); compare use of symbols with the Easter Island Treaty of Concession.

to remove the statue from the ceremonial village of 'Orongo, atop the volcano Rano Kau, to the ship. The statue was originally placed on the outdoor portico of the British Museum, was moved years later to the Great Court (that opened in 2000), and now resides in the "Living & Dying" exhibition (opened in 2003). The statue is 8 ft. (2.42 m) in height and weighs 4.5 tons.

⁵ This other basalt statue, known as Moai Hava, was taken from an area halfway between Mataveru and Vinapu (according to Katherine Routledge) within the environs of the modern airport and runway. Standing 5.1 ft. (1.56 m) in height and weighing 1.16 tons, this *moai* is, sadly, not on display.

⁶ Detail of some of the carvings on the back of Hoa Haka Nana I'a include *tangata manu*, *manutara*, *rapa* (or *a'o*), and *komari* motifs.

⁷ A "belltopper" is a type of top hat.

⁸ Easter Island's *moai* do not face the sea (not even those at Ahu Akivi); rather than facing inland *per se*, they are all actually erected facing ceremonial centers.

⁹ Today's *moai* and *ahu* count is 887 and between 239 and 350, respectively.

¹⁰ It's a pity Barclay never explains what this "absolute proof" is, especially since we know that the last volcanic eruption occurred on the island 12,000 years ago, considerably earlier than the arrival of the first inhabitants.

¹¹ Although the Easter Island population did drop to a precarious low of 110, it didn't disappear entirely.

¹² Earthquakes have been occasionally suspected as possible causes for toppled *moai*, though this isn't generally accepted. Forster in 1774 wondered about the possibility of earthquakes, as have modern scholars, nor are they unheard of on Easter Island (the Rapanui even have a term for them: *papa papa*, which means "trembling" or "shifting rock"). And though there appears to be a concordance between the position of some fallen *moai* and seismic patterns on the island, there is little else to support the theory of earthquakes as a cause for statue collapse. For one thing, there is no historical or legendary account attributing fallen *moai* to earthquakes. For another, a quake registering 6.3 on the Richter scale struck Easter Island in July of 1987, with no effect on the re-erected statues. There is insufficient regularity in the *moai* toppling to attribute it to earthquakes alone and at least ample legendary and historical accounts that the *moai* were toppled as part of clan conflict.

¹³ These "sculptured rocks" at the "southern extremity" refer, no doubt, to petroglyphs at 'Orongo.

¹⁴ Although interpretation of a half-human / half-feline figure with a rounded back and long, claw-like arms and legs caught Heyerdahl's attention to substantiate his now defunct diffusionist theory, the parallel to the South

American puma has no foundation, as there were no animals in the cat family in Polynesia and, more importantly, we have identified today the imagery as the *tangata manu* or Birdman, which *does* have parallels with elsewhere in Polynesia.

- ¹⁵ The *rongorongo* tablets referred to here are still on display in the British Museum and are known as the London Tablet, the “London Rei Miro 6847”, and the “London Rei Miro 9295”.
- ¹⁶ The Peruvian slave raid occurred two years earlier, in 1862 and was responsible not for taking “every man and woman that could be found” but a nevertheless considerable 1,407 (out of a population estimated to be close to 3,000). It’s possible half the population was in hiding.
- ¹⁷ There is no story in the legends or history of Easter Island about a volcanic catastrophe because no such event occurred; the last volcanic eruption occurred between 11,500 and 11,200 before the first Polynesians ever reached Easter Island.
- ¹⁸ The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on February 6, 1840, by British representatives and various Maori chiefs from New Zealand. The Treaty established a British governor, recognized Maori ownership of their lands and other properties, and gave Maori the rights of British subjects. However, English and Maori language versions of the Treaty differ, such that consensus about what was agreed to is unclear and contentious. Debate gave rise to demands for clarification of translations, of breaches of provisions of the Treaty, and attempts on the part of the Maori to acquire land lost due to unequal treatment by the state. Settlements to date have consisted of hundreds of millions of dollars in money and assets, as well as apologies.
- ¹⁹ Easter Island was annexed by Chile on September 9, 1888 by Policarpo Toro via the so-called “Treaty of Annexation of the Island” (“Tratado de Anexión de la Isla”), signed by representatives of the Chilean government and the Rapanui people. Much debate has ensued about the extent to which Rapanui representatives signing the Treaty understood what this entailed as well as the imagery used in the “signatures”, which has been evaluated in the context of Easter Island rock art and *rongorongo* symbolism and whether *rongorongo* was an ancient script developed by Easter Islanders or a script inspired after first European contact.
- ²⁰ This is a Latin phrase meaning “whether willing or not”.
- ²¹ This is certainly amongst the earliest comparisons between Inca and Easter Island masonry, though the

comparison has been questionable at best even from the beginning because it is a matter of surface appearance only; the Inca used *solid* blocks of stone, whereas the *ahu* at Vinapu, like others on the island, consist of spaces back-filled with rubble). More problematical is the fact that the earliest available date for Peruvian polygonal block masonry is after 1440 CE, while that for the comparable stonework on Easter Island is *c.* 1200 CE.

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BIT O’ TRIVIA

According to a new book by Tom Davis about his personal experience with NBC’s famed TV show *Saturday Night Live*, a drug-influenced visit he and actor/writer Dan Aykroyd paid to Easter Island in November 1976 gave them the idea for the “Coneheads” skit that would become one of the show’s favorites.