

COLONIALISM AND RESISTANCE IN RAPA NUI¹

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This paper addresses the relationship between the Chilean colonization of Easter Island and the Rapanui resistance against it. Two acts of resistance will be discussed in detail. The first one occurred in 1914, sixteen years after the Chilean takeover; the second in 1965, the year before the island was finally incorporated in the Chilean Civil Administration.

The goal of this paper is to indicate the possibility of a genealogical analysis of this material in Foucauldian terms. This is to say, to show the thread of power relations running through this colonial account by uncovering some of the discursive practices, disciplinary regimes and "genealogies of exclusions" which constitute and enforce these power relations in this specific, local, history of colonization. It will be pointed out that certain actors, as carriers of the "truth" of the institutions they represent, such as Catholic missionaries, European entrepreneurs and Chilean administrators, enforced their "truth", and how the Rapanui people halted and counteracted these colonial incursions. This paper is conceived as an exercise of genealogical analysis, which may allow for a future fuller application of the methodology for the case of Rapa Nui.

A BIT OF HISTORY

What we know about the ancient culture of Rapa Nui is based on the accounts of navigators and missionaries, on some early ethnographic studies, and on the intensive archeological activities that took place on the island, beginning with the expedition of Thor Heyerdahl in the 1950s.

Archaeologist Patrick Kirch (1984) divides Rapa Nui's pre-contact history in two periods: The *Ahu Moai* Phase (AD 1000-1500) and the decadent (*Huri Ahu*) Phase (AD 1500-1722). It was during the first phase that the *moai*, the giant megalithic statues for which the island is renown, were carved and put on ceremonial platforms (*ahu*), as an expression of a system of beliefs based on an ancestor cult. This was a highly hierarchical society, headed by the *ariki-mau*, who belonged to the royal Miru clan. Similar to other Polynesian societies, the prestige of the *ariki-mau* did not depend on his economic or political power, but on his *mana*, an innate and inherited quality, which was the source of his leadership. Social equilibrium was maintained through a system of *tapu*, related to age (seniority), gender and clan affiliation, which guided people through their lives according to specific rules and prohibitions. Cutting down of the island's forests and the gradual over population of the island caused the ecological and social equilibrium of Rapanui society to collapse.

In the second period the Birdman (*tangata manu*) Cult developed. This cult was the expression of a much more competitive society. In the spring of each year, with the arrival of the sooty tern, an island-wide competition was held. The contestant who managed to collect the first egg of this bird from a small offshore islet and bring it safely to the ceremonial center of Orongo, would become the *tangata manu*. This office was

held for one year only, in representation of a clan or a group of clans, which were called *matatoa* (warriors) (Routledge 1919). The *matatoa* maintained a precarious social equilibrium in their struggles for the increasingly scarcer resources of the island; a social order "as fragile as the shells of the eggs that were the focus of the annual quest" (McCall in Kirch 1984:278).

Thus the sacred and hereditary power of the *ariki-mau* was transformed in the secular and temporary power of the *matatoa*. The *ariki-mau* of the Miru clan was no longer the island-wide leader, and the *ariki* of other clans were asserting themselves by the use of force². It was during this period of tribal feuds that the statues were toppled in order to destroy their *mana*, the sacred power that inhabited them. These factors, together with the disruptive effects of the first contacts with Europeans during the 18th and 19th centuries, caused a deep cultural crisis, which culminated in the devastating decade of the 1860s.

Starting in December of 1862 and continuing during 1863, Peruvian slavers took more than one thousand Rapanui to Peru where ninety percent died due to diseases and adverse climatic conditions. By intervention of the bishop of Tahiti, a handful of survivors returned and contaminated the two thousand or so Rapanui who were still on the island with smallpox (Porteous 1981:13). The result was that the population of Rapa Nui was eventually reduced to the critical number of 110. The last *ariki*, Kaimakoi, died in Peru in 1863 and the last heir to the "throne" of the royal Miru clan, Manurangi (baptized Gregorio), succumbed to the smallpox epidemic at the tender age of eleven. Most of the nobility and priestly class, custodians of Rapa Nui's symbolic heritage, took their knowledge and expert skills to their graves in Peru.

At the same time the Catholic Church secured its symbolic domain over the island. After a first period of reconnaissance, starting in 1864, French Brother Eugène Eyraud returned in 1866 with Father Hippolyte Roussel, followed by two other missionaries. The bishop of Tahiti had entrusted them to establish the Sacred Heart Mission on Rapa Nui. The year 1866 was also – and not surprisingly so under the circumstances – the last year that the Birdman Cult was held. Roussel and Eyraud were present at the proclamation of the last *tangata manu* in September of that year. When Eyraud died in August 1868, all the islanders had been baptized. From then on the Rapanui were to replace their Birdman Cult with the rituals of the Catholic Church.

In 1866, the French sea Captain Jean Baptiste Dutrou-Bornier paid a first visit to the island, bringing with him the missionaries Zumbohm and Escolan. He was back in April 1868 to start the commercial exploitation of Rapa Nui, associating himself with the Tahitian-based mercantile house of the Scotsman John Brander. He established his headquarters at Mataveri on top of the foundations of the *hare paenga* (boat houses), from where the yearly ascent to Orongo for the *tant-*

gata manu cult had taken place. While Dutrou-Bornier's self proclaimed kingship was short lived – he was killed by islanders in 1876 – he did the groundwork for the transformation of the island into a company estate.

At the end of the decade the crew of HMS *Topaze* removed the basalt *moai*, Hoa Haka Nana Ia from the ceremonial site of Orongo, to be taken to the British Museum. This act of symbolic vandalism forecast the important place Easter Island was about to occupy in western archaeological and ethnological research.

During the decade of the 1860s then, the physical and cultural integrity of the Rapanui was seriously damaged, and their distinctiveness as a people irreversibly altered. In those same years Dutrou-Bornier's commercial adventures initiated the island's gradual incorporation into the global economy.

THE CHILEAN ANNEXATION³

Without the guidance of the traditional leaders, the islanders were easily subdued by foreigners. After the death of Dutrou-Bornier and John Brander, the part-Tahitian Tati Salmon took over the sheep raising activities. However, legal ownership of land and animals remained in dispute between French, British and Tahitian entrepreneurs, the Catholic mission and the Rapanui people. No nation had yet claimed the island. Although the French were most deeply involved, interest was growing in other countries as well, especially in Britain, Germany and Chile (Porteous 1981:21).

Chile finally made the claim: on 9 September 1888, Captain Policarpo Toro Hurtado of the Chilean Navy took formal possession of Easter Island in the name of the Republic of Chile. In a solemn ceremony, twelve Rapanui chiefs ceded "sovereignty" of the island. From the very beginning there was a misunderstanding about this transaction, since the term sovereignty had a different meaning for both parties. Rapanui oral tradition conveys that their leaders had only transferred the use of their land, not the land itself.

As Porteous states, this annexation should be seen in the light of 19th century empire building. Chile had gained independence from Spain in 1818, but it was still consolidating its territory during most of the 19th century. In the 1880s it gained two major territorial victories. To the south, after a struggle that had lasted for 300 years, the last campaigns with the Mapuche Indians finally confined them to reservations in 1883. To the north, both Peru and Bolivia were defeated in the War of the Pacific (1879-83) and Chile annexed large sections of their territories.

Because of these successes, Chileans came to regard themselves as a Latin American master race, on the way of becoming one of the world's great powers. Successes in the War of the Pacific were greatly due to an effective and powerful navy. Trained by British experts, the Chilean navy rapidly had become a force to be contended with. Commercial adventures had also linked Chile to Britain. The port of Valparaíso became an Anglo-Chilean port and Chilean vessels were encouraged to visit Australia and British Asia. In the process Chilean sailors and merchants became familiar with Polynesia. This led to dreams of Western expansion into the Pacific. Since Easter Island was the nearest inhabited island, Chile focused its attention there, principally for military and

commercial reasons. While several European countries and the United States were competing to occupy any islands or groups of islands that were left in the Pacific, Chile was able to dismiss claims or prevent claims by others on Easter Island. An added factor was that the French missionaries had ceded their rights to the Archbishop of Santiago when they abandoned the island in 1871, largely because of disputes with Dutrou-Bornier. A favorable image of Easter Island had developed from the reports of the missionaries and naval authorities, which persuaded the then-president of the Chilean Republic, José Manuel Balmaceda, to annex the island in 1888.

However, soon after the annexation Chile began to experience both internal and external political problems. Thus its attention was diverted from Easter Island during the following decades. Lack of capital and manpower kept Chile from asserting complete control over the island. After a failed attempt to colonize the island through Chilean settlers, the Chilean Republic finally leased the original Brander-Salmon estate, which then comprised virtually the whole island, to the British entrepreneurs of Williamson, Balfour and Company, who constituted the *Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua* in 1903.

Williamson and Balfour built a large commercial empire in South America, starting in 1851, with two main offices in Britain (London and Liverpool), six in the United States and five in Chile. Subsidiary offices were established in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. In Chile the Company soon spread beyond the import-export business. Starting with nitrates in the north and flour milling in the south, they diversified into wheat, railways, wool, oil, tin, cocoa, cement, fruit, guano, sugar, lumber and banking (Porteous 1981:51-66). It was this company that would set up a sheep ranch on Easter Island and exercise sovereign rights for several years to come.

The first example of Rapanui resistance to colonial authorities takes place in 1914, less than a decade after the Company had taken charge of the island.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON RAPA NUI

Before describing and analyzing the event of 1914, I will place it into context it by discussing the role Catholic missionaries played in the creation of a renewed Rapanui subjectivity and agency around the turn-of-the-century. I suggest (see also Grifferos 1997) that missionary colonial practices, which on the surface seemed to have led to the disintegration of the Rapanui cultural paradigm in the 1860s, were propelled into becoming an important factor in Rapanui identity formation and resistance.

As we saw, the Rapanui traditional hereditary lineage system, through which members of the royal *Miru* clan succeeded each other as *ariki-mau*, had been destroyed by the death of the last *ariki*, Atamu Tekena, in 1867. After the missionaries had left, Dutrou-Bornier and subsequent sheep farmers had taken virtual control of the island. Concerned with the Rapanui's souls, but also with the Church's worldly possessions on the island, which consisted of a chapel, land and animals, the missionaries nominated a new *ariki* in 1882.⁴ The re-installment of the figure of an *ariki* empowered the

Rapanui; he became their representative in the conflict with the colonizers, the Chilean government and sheep ranchers alike. During subsequent years the colonial administrators came to see the *ariki* as the source of recurrent problems and they eliminated the office, replacing the *ariki* by an islander that could be manipulated by the colonizers in 1902 (Grifferos 1997: 25). However, the Rapanui insisted on a parallel "government" and appointed one *ariki* after another.⁵ At the same time the missionaries had installed native catechists who performed the Catholic rituals and took care of the church property. It seems important then to point out that, unwittingly, the Catholic mission of Tahiti became instrumental in the reestablishment of Rapanui leadership and a new cultural order.

There is yet another element to be considered in relationship to the missionary colonizing process. The deep cultural crisis of the 1860s had caused a loss of *mana* which the ancestors (represented by the *moai*) and the *ariki* had possessed in Rapa Nui's early history. When the missionaries took hold of Rapa Nui during the 1860's, all the islanders converted to Catholicism in just a couple of years. Nelson Castro (1996) explains this mass conversion by proposing that the missionaries were seen as the carriers of a strong *mana*, which filled the cultural gap created by the crisis. He proposes that "the native imaginary saw in the conversion to Christianity, in its rites and prayers, a ritual language essential to provoke access to the universe of the missionaries, to their goods and their God" (Castro 1996:6).

The missionaries thus provided fundamental elements to overcome the cultural deadlock, and towards the creation of a renewed Rapanui identity. The native catechist would become a vital link between the symbolic universe of the missionaries and the Rapanui, and the figure of the *ariki* and the concept of *mana* were traditional elements the Rapanui had been able to recuperate through the intervention of the missionaries, to be used in their resistance to the colonizers. As we will see, there was a third element of the missionary symbolic universe that would empower the Rapanui in their struggle with the colonizers: the Catholic Church's discourse on truth and justice, which would be appropriated by the islanders to their own advantage.

ACTS OF RESISTANCE TO CHILEAN COLONIZATION: A NATIVE RISING

In March 1914, Katherine Routledge arrived on Easter Island with her husband and a few other members of the expedition on their yacht *Mana* – specially built for the occasion – to carry out a mandate by scientists from the British Museum. Their task was to start work on the archeological "mysteries" which surrounded the island's ancient culture. Little did they know that their expedition, which had been planned to last for six months, would be extended to a full year and a half, due to the outbreak of World War I. In this extended period of time Routledge gathered a wealth of archeological and ethnographic information, part of which is reflected in her popular book *The Mystery of Easter Island*, first published in 1919, and still a classic for anyone interested in the culture and history of Rapa Nui.

When Routledge and her expedition arrived on the is-

land, they set up camp near the house of the manager of the Company, an Englishman by the name of Percy Edmunds. A reading of her first descriptions of the islanders reveals her conceptions of private property, morality, legal codes and work ethics, which clearly reflect her belonging to the turn-of-the-century British ruling class. She asserts, for instance, that "Their general *morality*, using the word in its limited sense, is, in common with that of all Polynesians, *of a particularly low order*;" (Routledge 1919:140, my emphasis) She is surprised that "There seems *no desire to improve their condition*; 'Kanakas no like work, Kanakas like sit in house,' was the ingenuous reply given by one of them, when my husband pointed out the good results which would accrue from planting some trees in village territory." (ibid. :141, my emphasis) She also is of the opinion that "Perhaps the *greatest barrier to native progress lies in the absence of security of property*; they steal freely from one another, as well as from white men, so that all *individual effort is rendered nugatory*. At the same time they are curiously lacking in pugnacity, and if detected in theft quietly desist or return the property." (ibid, my emphasis). She adds to this that "Their own native organization was peculiarly lax, no kind of justice being administered, and they have never had for any duration the *civilizing effect of religious instruction or civil power*." (ibid., my emphasis)

Routledge constructs her concepts of morality, work, progress and justice, fundamentally different from the islanders' ideas about these issues, as if she possessed a universal "truth". Her discourse exemplifies Foucauldian notions of truth, right and power. It is also from this perception that she could assert, in a totally matter of fact fashion, that "[The village of Hanga Roa] is the only part of the island which is inhabited, the two hundred and fifty natives, all that remain of the population, having been gathered together here in order to *secure the safety of the livestock, to which the rest of the island is devoted*" (ibid. :125, my emphasis). In an equally self-righteous fashion she states that "the keeping of sheep and cattle is not permitted by the Company, owing to the impossibility of discovering or tracing theft." (ibid. :140)⁶ By making these statements she is inadvertently emphasizing the Company's right to the colonized land and the livestock that is occupying it.

The event I am about to narrate happened three months after the expedition had arrived on the island. On June 30th a "semi-crippled old woman" with "a distinctly attractive and magnetic personality", named Angata⁷, went to the manager's (Henry Percy Edmunds) house accompanied by two men to tell him that she had had a dream from God, according to which the island belonged to the Kanakas, who were going to take the cattle and have a feast the next day. A few hours later a document was handed to Edmunds, written in Spanish, in which the same demands were reiterated. This declaration shows an amazing appropriation of Western legal and religious discourses, and reads as follows (Routledge 1919: 142, my emphasis):

June 30th, 1914.

Señor Ema, Mataveri,

Now I declare to you, by-and-by we declare to you, which is the word we speak today, but we desire to take all the animals in the camp and all our

possessions in your hands, now, for you know that all the animals and farm in the camp belong to us, *our bishop Tepano gave to us originally. He gave it to us in truth and justice.* There is another thing, the few animals which are in front of you, are for you to eat. There is also another thing, tomorrow we are going out into the camp to fetch some animals for a banquet. *God for us, His truth and justice.* There is also another business, but we did not receive who gave the animals to Merlet⁸ also who gave the earth to Merlet because *it is a big robbery.* They took this possession of ours, and *they gave nothing* for the earth, money or goods or anything else. *They were never given to them.* Now you know all that is necessary.

Your friend, Daniel Antonio, Hangaroa".⁹

The appropriation of the discourse is as astonishing as it is powerful. While Routledge says that the islanders had no sense of truth and justice, no sense of property rights and had not been subject for an extended period of time "to the civilizing effect of religious instruction or civil power", the document shows that the islanders seem to have had an implicit understanding of the power discourse based on sovereignty, justice and truth, as applied by the Company and endorsed by Routledge.

It is interesting though that the islanders did not appropriate the discourse in the name of their own ancestral rights to the land, but in the name of the Christian God and the Catholic bishop of Tahiti who had colonized their land by establishing the Sacred Heart mission in the 1860s. It seems to me that the islanders keenly understood that they could only enter the arena of power relations, and assert their rights by adopting the discourse of the missionaries and thus confront the Company on their own terms.

The delivery of the document was followed by due action. The islanders took ten heads of cattle and "the smoke from many fires was shortly to be seen ascending from the village" (Routledge 1919:143). A few days later Angata had had another dream in which God informed her that "he was very pleased that the Kanakas had eaten the meat and they were to eat some more". The next act of resistance was a big wedding ceremony in which five couples married simultaneously, even though Edmunds, in his capacity of Chilean official, had declined to perform the civil part of the ceremony. The wedding feast was, of course, furnished by the sheep of the Company. Meanwhile, the raids continued, and on one day fifty-six head of cattle were killed.

Routledge and her party – they had decided to set up camp on the other end of the island – were pulled into the conflict. One reason was that they stood by Edmunds, who they considered to be their "host", and another reason was that the islanders had set eye on the expedition's food supplies and particularly on Katherine's clothes.

The confrontational climate is described in the following passage: "One day I had just come back from a stroll, when the cry was raised 'the Kanakas are coming', and a troop of horsemen, about thirty strong, appeared on the skyline some four hundred yards distant. Fortunately S.¹⁰ was at

hand, we hurried inside my house, shut the lower half of its door, which resembled that of a loose-box, and carelessly lent out. Any unpleasantness could then only be frontal; at the same time all weapons were within easy grasp, though not visible from the outside." (Routledge 1919:146). As it turned out the men had only come to offer eggs, potatoes and chickens, as a present from Angata to Routledge and her friends, for which, according to Rapanui custom (see McCall 1976), they were obliged to give presents in return, which Angata expected to be in the form of the desired European goods.

Interestingly this interchange was again validated by a religious ritual. In approaching the house "They formed a semi-circle round the door and dismounted. The "priest"¹¹ who was with them, and who carried a picture of the Virgin, read something, presumably a prayer, at which the company crossed themselves" (Routledge 1919:146). This action can again be interpreted as a discursive practice in Foucauldian terms, in which the islanders used Catholic Church rituals, and relied on the *mana* with which the "priest" was invested to protect themselves, and thus reverse the power relations in which they were caught in their feud with the Company's manager and his friends.

Meanwhile, the situation escalated. Angata was increasing her demands to Routledge "sending to us for anything she happened to want and as the requests continually grew in magnitude the breaking point seemed only a question of time" (ibid:147). One afternoon, on August 4th, Routledge received a note from Edmunds that he could not leave his place, as the Kanakas were planning to take his house and threatened to kill him if he would resist. His life was saved by the fact that at the very moment that the islanders were assembling in the village to go up to the manager's house at Mataveri, a ship appeared on the horizon. It was the Chilean naval training ship the *General Baquedano*, whose visits to the island occurred at intervals of anything from two to five years (ibid. :144). After this incredible piece of luck for the handful of besieged Company people "three of the four ring-leaders were set at liberty, and no corporate punishment was inflicted; indeed, the Captain had told me he considered that the natives had behaved well not to murder Mr. Edmunds prior to our arrival." (ibid. :148). Although Routledge doesn't say what happened to the fourth person, another source tells us that he was taken to the continent, where he died in prison (Castro 1996:12).

The Captain of the *Baquedano* also wrote an official note to the Head of the British Scientific Expedition to the effect that the Chilean navy could not guarantee the expedition's safety and offered to take them back to Chile, which was declined by Routledge, since she wanted to continue with her archeological work. Angata died 6 months later and after her funeral there was "a great feast of pigs". Routledge says that, although there was no further open resistance by the islanders, their independence and demands increased daily and that shortly after the expedition left the island a white employee of the Company was murdered and thrown into the sea.

This "native rising" has been dismissed in historical accounts as being "moved by religious superstitions", but I

would like to suggest something different. During the months the conflict lasted the islanders approached the Company on its own terms in a very effective way, using the truth and justice discourse that was the legacy of the missionaries.¹²

If we look at the event in Foucauldian terms we can clearly apply his discussion of sovereign and disciplinary power. Percy Edmunds was exercising sovereign power on the island, since he was simultaneously the representative of Williamson, Balfour and Company, and the official representative (*subdelegado marítimo*) of the Chilean government. He was the absolute ruler, who with a few non-Rapanui ran the sheep farm, raising animals on their ancestral land, while at the same time denying them the right to have animals of their own, forcing them to live in the walled-in village of Hangaroa, prohibiting them to fish and to use the few fresh water springs on the island (Castro 1996:10). The power of this discourse of truth – or the power of true discourses – is also reflected in Routledge's acceptance and appraisal of the situation, as I suggested above. Extending Foucault's analysis one could say that the islanders had simultaneously developed and accepted another discourse of right, that of the Catholic God and his earthly servants, the bishops of Tahiti and Santiago, which they would finally apply to their advantage in the revolt of 1914.

It seems to me that early twentieth century Rapa Nui offers an illuminating example of how the production of a discourse of truth, as reflected in the deeds of Percy Edmunds and the words of the witness Katherine Routledge, conceals the violence and domination intrinsic to sovereign power. Sovereign power called for obedience through the mechanisms of domination and subjugation, to which the Rapanui responded by appealing to another discourse of right, that of the missionaries and, at the same time, by acts of bodily protest and resistance, as instigated by their leaders.

The Rapanui case also shows that the entanglement of sovereign and disciplinary power was already firmly in place and put into practice by the European and Chilean colonizers. For Foucault, "This new mechanism of power is more dependent upon bodies and what they do, than upon the earth and its products. It is a mechanism of power which permits time and labor, rather than wealth and commodities to be extracted from bodies." (Foucault 1980:104)

This mechanism of power is exercised by means of surveillance and material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign. While the early representatives of the Williamson and Balfour Company, such as Percy Edmunds, can be considered to have been the absolute sovereigns of Rapa Nui, the Chilean government decided soon after the uprising that the sheep farmers should not represent it any longer and appointed a Chilean functionary (*subdelegado marítimo*) to represent Chile's sovereign interests. At the same time the colonial government tightened its grip by prohibiting the offices of *ariki* and the native catechist.

It is at this point that the Chilean government started to make full use of the same disciplinary mechanisms the Chileans had presumably been subjected to earlier, in the 17th and 18th centuries, during their own process of colonization.¹³ Civil marriage and the inscription of births in an official register would substitute the Catholic weddings and baptisms,

which had become important ceremonies that confirmed the specific Rapanui cultural space that had flourished in the years after the French missionaries had left. The creation of a prison and an elementary school, whose head teacher became the representative of the Chilean government, (Grifferos 1997:45) were part of the legal and bureaucratic practices of what had become the Chilean nation-state. We can thus propose that, in the years after the uprising, the Rapanui were subject to disciplinary mechanisms as proposed and explored by Foucault in his investigations of prisons, schools, barracks, cities and families (see Foucault 1977, 1980). Each of these institutions were forced onto the Rapanui with a clear precision, in order to discipline their minds and bodies. The small physical space and the limited amount of actors make Rapa Nui into a prime subject to study and clarify the entanglement of sovereign and disciplinary power. It shows how Chile needed to fall back on disciplinary mechanisms in order to secure sovereign power on Rapa Nui.

ACTS OF RESISTANCE TO CHILENIZATION: ALFONSO RAPU AND THE CHILEAN NAVY¹⁴

The second act of resistance I will briefly discuss was the movement headed by a 22 year old school teacher named Alfonso Rapu who was educated on the continent where he acquired insight in the Chilean ways of thinking and acting. Through his movement the Chilean administration was finally forced to pull back the naval authorities that had been governing the island since the end of last century, and particularly after the rebellion headed by Angata in 1914.

Chilean Navy officials, in representation of the Chilean government, had been ruling Rapa Nui with an iron hand for fifty years, tightening control as much as they could. The French writer Francis Mazière who paid a prolonged visit to the island in 1963 described the situation as follows: "[On the island there are] 47000 sheep, close to 1000 horses, 1000 cows, some 50 Chilean military men and, in 1964, 1000 Rapanui survivors, who live in the most incredible misery and without any freedom". (Mazière in Grifferos 1997:81)

On December 15 of 1963, several Rapanui signed a letter to Chilean president Eduardo Frei Montalva. The letter consisted of a long list of demands that mostly questioned the disciplinarian practices of the naval authorities. "Complaints were made about unpaid labor, travel restrictions, confinement to Hangaroa, suppression of the Rapanui language, ineligibility to vote, and arbitrary naval decisions which could not be appealed" (Porteous 1981:171). The letter ended by saying that "If we get the things we ask for, colonialism will end, and we will be once again the Easter Islanders¹⁵ we used to be, this is to say, a community that is able to sing, without being told what to sing". (Grifferos 1997:131)

Three days after the letter was sent the Rapanui called for elections and Alfonso Rapu was voted in as mayor-elect by a large majority of the people. Rapu, who had received a teaching degree on the continent in 1963, had returned to the island to teach in the school. During the months after his return he had engaged in various communal activities: he founded agricultural cooperatives, sport clubs and made plans for an archeological museum. By so doing he had become a

community leader and his principal desire was to see Rapa Nui incorporated into the Chilean administration. It is interesting to note how Rapu projects himself as an *ariki*, a leader of the community in the Rapanui tradition and, simultaneously, as their representative towards the Chilean nation-state. This seems to reflect a desire to incorporate modern ways and is fundamentally different from Rapanui aspirations in the beginning of the century. In a way, it obscures such aspirations, by submitting to the principal of sovereignty of the modern state.

The naval authorities did not recognize Rapu's election and intended to send him to the continent on a ship that was lying in the harbor. Rapu went into hiding in one of the many caves on the island, where he stayed for almost a month, with the support of the Rapanui community. Meanwhile, a Navy ship had left Valparaiso with 46 marines on board to reestablish order on the island. Naval functionaries justified the measure by saying that it was meant to protect "Chilean people" (Porteous 1981: 171).

When the ship arrived, the captain took charge of the island. He started with intimidating the people by asking who had signed the letter to President Frei, why they had signed it, etc. Then he wanted to talk to Rapu, who came out of his hiding place accompanied by a large group of women. The captain later confessed to one of the islanders that there was a plan to kill Rapu. Rapu said in a 1996 interview (Grifferos 1997:104), that what may have saved his life was the presence of a Canadian Medical Expedition on the island and also of some international journalists covering the events. On the other hand the people were determined to protect Rapu, in order to prevent what had happened to "our king Riroroko", thus showing their sense of history.

On January 12 the new elections for mayor were held. Ninety-six percent of the people, 288 out of the 300 inscribed in the official register, voted; of those, 98% voted for Rapu. As in the case of Angata, the transformation of the teacher Alfonso Rapu into the leader of the movement was due to the prestige built up in the community in the period prior to the elections for mayor. This is reminiscent of the prestige of the *ariki-mau* in the pre contact period, which had depended on his *mana*, rather than on his economic or political power. Perhaps we might suggest that, as in the case of the *ariki* who were appointed by the missionaries at the turn-of-the-century, Rapu's *mana* was no longer an innate hereditary quality, but it resulted from the central place he had acquired in his community. Was this a fundamental shift from the original cultural paradigm? The result of Rapu's election was that Easter Island became part of the Chilean Civil Administration as a Department within the Province of Valparaiso.

Once again we can apply a Foucauldian analysis of sovereign and disciplinary power. The Chilean state tried desperately to exercise sovereign power over Rapa Nui, but despite the incredible amount of disciplinary mechanisms they had unleashed over the island community, the Rapanui people resisted. Interestingly, their demands were this time for equality, for incorporation into the Chilean national project, by which, in a way, they would destroy their keen refusal to be domesticated. As in the case of Angata, they bought into the truth and justice discourse, this time not to reaffirm their dif-

ferences, desperate as they were to be treated as equals in the continentalized eyes of the young Rapu. It would not be until the 1990s that a discourse of difference, of the recognition of Rapanui as Polynesians, would emerge once again.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this paper I have tried to show how a Foucauldian analysis can enrich the analysis of historical data, which otherwise might be put in the realm of plain historical "facts". His genealogical method allows for the uncovering of power relations inherent in any local history, such as the history of Rapa Nui. The production of discourses of truth was apparent in the Angata uprising, when both the manager Percy Edmunds and the archeologist Katherine Routledge abided by them, and the islanders reproduced them by their adherence to the discourse of the missionaries. The juridical-political theory of sovereignty, so carefully constructed between the 16th and 19th centuries in the European feudal and administrative monarchies, the Catholic and Protestant anti-monarchists and finally the parliamentary democracies, was halted for an infinite moment on this tiny speck in the Pacific by a forceful and fearless people. The impetus of resistance was repeated once more in the month of December of 1964, although it was much more blurred and diffused in this occasion, and more co-opted.

Sheer isolation and a handful of actors allow for transparent insights into the workings of a system that is often invisible in the larger centers of power. The blatant application of disciplinary mechanisms, so foreign to their own cultural practices¹⁶, surfaced immediate reactions by the Rapanui people, which are traceable in the multiple acts of resistance to colonial hegemony, of which the two cases presented here are the most prolonged and visible, but certainly not the only ones.

It seems to me that once disciplinary practices become institutionalized and turn into natural rules or norms, as Foucault has so brilliantly analyzed for us, it becomes much more difficult to track them down and subvert them. Obedience and submission just did (and does) not come naturally to the Rapanui as a people, and the disciplinary mechanisms, which should have secured the principle of sovereignty on Rapa Nui, as apparatuses of knowledge, were installed so imperfectly that they were never understood nor embraced by the people as such.

If there is one element of the pre contact Rapanui history that stands out during Rapanui resistance to colonialism in the first half of this century, which the Chilean nation-state had not been able to crush, it is perhaps its emphasis on communal decision making, as expressed through their *ariki*. This may be considered to be an example of Foucault's inquiries when he proposes that: "If one wants to look for a non-disciplinary form of power, or rather to struggle against disciplines and disciplinary power, it is not towards the ancient right of sovereignty that one should turn, but towards the possibility of a new form of right, one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty" (Foucault 1980: 108).

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ This paper was written in 1998, in the context of a class on Colonial Discourse, under Prof. Carolyn Martin Shaw, University of California, Santa Cruz. Much has happened over the past five years: I returned to the island in 2001 to conduct fieldwork for my Ph.D. dissertation, which I am in the process of writing. I did not change this text to reflect my prolonged and moving conversations with Alfonso Rapu. While these would have enriched the text, I prefer to postpone these reflections for a later date.
- ² The sudden appearance and abundance of obsidian spear points in the 16th century offer archeological evidence for tribal feuds.
- ³ The information in this section is taken from Porteous 1981.
- ⁴ It is not clear if the *ariki* was nominated from Tahiti or Santiago. Grifferos (1997:21) states that the new *ariki* was baptized and put into office by Father Roussel, who was one of the French missionaries that abandoned the island for Tahiti in 1871, after which the mission was transferred to the archbishop of Santiago.
- ⁵ In the period between 1882 and 1902 one *ariki* (Atamu Tekena) died, while another by the name of Simeon Riro-roko was poisoned on a trip to the continent, where he had gone to present the islanders' complaints against colonizing practices.
- ⁶ Starting in the first decades of the century the Company started to enclose the village of Hanga Roa with stone walls. The islanders were not permitted to leave the village without a special permit. (Porteous 1981:147)
- ⁷ According to other sources Angata was a catechist trained in Mangareva (Castro 1996; Van Tilburg 1994). Van Tilburg also says that she was a relative of Simeon Riroroko, the *ariki* who was poisoned in Valparaiso.
- ⁸ A Chilean entrepreneur who had bought the land from the Brander-Salmon estate, but was obliged to sell it to the Williamson and Balfour Company, for lack of resources.
- ⁹ Daniel Maria Teave Haukena was Angata's son-in-law and a respected spiritual leader (Van Tilburg 1994:34).
- ¹⁰ Katherine's husband, Scoresby.
- ¹¹ This was Nicholas Pakarati; there had been no Catholic priests on the island since the French missionaries left in 1871 and had ceded their rights to the Archbishop of Santiago. This is another example of how even the Chilean Catholic church had abandoned the island. Catechists were in charge of church ceremonies in that period.
- ¹² Using another theoretical framework we can also propose that the appropriation of this discourse could point to an implicit strategy of cultural survival and revival, in which traditional cultural and social practices were adapted to more modern relations, as proposed by Eric Hobsbawm and other invention of tradition theorists (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).
- ¹³ In Foucault's analysis, the disciplines became general formulas of domination in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Foucault 1977:137). We can assume that they were applied in the Spanish colonies.
- ¹⁴ The information about Alfonso Rapu is taken from the chapter entitled *El movimiento anti-colonialista de 1964*

in Grifferos 1997:81-107.

- ¹⁵ The letter uses *Pascuenses*, which refers to the inhabitants of *Isla de Pascua* (Easter Island). The older term Rapa Nui is of much more recent usage and is due to the recent cultural revival movement.

- ¹⁶ Would it be possible, on the other hand, to consider the system of *tapu*, which had maintained social equilibrium in the pre contact period as a disciplinary mechanism, as a natural rule, a norm?

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