

# Images, which are not seen, and stolen friends, who steal: A reply to Van Tilburg and Arévalo Pakarati

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In their “Response to A. Davletshin’s unconvincing assertion”, Jo Anne Van Tilburg and Cristián Arévalo Pakarati assert that the designs “do not exist” and that their documentation employs “objective methods including digital scanning”, while my methods are subjective, not replicable, and inferior. They also require me to explain my rendering of the statue’s name. First of all, I should emphasize that my paper is not about criticising their extensive works on Easter Island culture, which I constantly refer to throughout the paper.

Van Tilburg and Pakarati’s commentary includes a figure presenting results of their 3D digital scanning. Strangely enough, the designs under discussion are seen even better there than on the photos I had available before. Additional images, for example, a *komari* symbol above the statue’s right nipple,<sup>1</sup> are discernible. This is due to the better lighting of the upper part of the torso during the scanning process. I should notify the reader that I have a JPG file at hand and I can zoom in and out on the image; this makes the recognition of eroded details easier.

I am eager to have a closer look at the 3D scanning, because it might permit us to discern elements of a different origin and find alternative explanations for lines, amongst them, later scratches. I have kindly asked the authors for a copy of their 3D scan. Unfortunately, I have not received a response. It is a pity, because the figure does not serve as more than a photograph; the results of 3D scanning should be presented as three to four renderings from different angles with light from a different direction. I will explain my hesitations. They don’t give the X,Y resolution of their scan, making estimations difficult. They state that the accuracy is “sub-3mm”. Let us assume that they want to say that it is greater than 2mm and less than 3mm. It means that the resolution is probably around 5mm or more; any feature on the topography less than 4-6mm is not going to be recorded. These numbers may be worse if a filter or data smoothing was applied to get rid of the noise (as their image suggests) when individual scans were merged. I am familiar with the standards of 3D documentation of Maya monuments by the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Harvard University and the accuracy of +/- 2mm would be inadequate for Maya monuments of

similar size (Tokovinine and Fash 2011). For example, the bulk of Copan Stela 63 was recorded with the accuracy of +/- 0.08mm and some finer details were scanned with the accuracy of +/- 0.04mm (Alexandre Tokovinine, pers. comm. 2012). The Copan stela is about the same size as *Hoa-haka-nana’ia*.

When submitting my paper, I made a suggestion to send my working PSD composition of *multiple layers*, where the based on a photo drawing had been made. I am aware of the fact that the only way to control my or somebody else’s subjectivity is to have such a file in order to switch over different layers to see how a person drawing the image interpreted elements of the relief. Strangely, I was not asked about my working file by the reviewers. When a documentation process is completed, whether it be either a 3D scan or a photo, subjective methods of interpretation are to be applied. Ironically, subjective methods are also necessary for understanding how adequate the documentation we obtain is.

In her earlier work (2006:37, 64) Van Tilburg speaks about the supine body of *Hoa Hakananai’a* being dragged by English sailors during its transportation to *Topaze*. Indeed, two contemporary published depictions of the event represent the statue being dragged face up (Van Tilburg 2006:37; Orliac & Orliac 2008:80). Admitting that the “curved line on the torso is tantalizing”, Van Tilburg and Arévalo Pakarati probably agree that such an intricate line cannot result from an occasional scratch during transport. An attentive look at the figure of the 3D rendering discussed and at many photos available on the official website of the British Museum reveals a clear line corresponding to the back and leg of a crouching birdman figure, obliterated lines suggesting a head of a circular eye supplied with a long beak and a crown, and a hand holding an egg. The area between the described designs is rather unclear (Davletshin this issue: Figure 5); I cautiously suggested a hypothetical scenario for its explanation as any scholar should do in my place. Let us forget about the problematic in-between area for a while. Then, it would be difficult to imagine how occasional scratches could find their perfect place in order to so nicely form a consistent image of a birdman with its back, leg, egg-holding hand and head supplied with the characteristic beak and eye.

I explain my rendering of the statue's name in a footnote, and I believe the explanation given to be sufficient for the reader familiar with Rapanui language. Let me reword it. Sebastian Englert (1938) was the first to notice the existence of glottal stop in Rapanui. Olaf Blixen (1972) was the first to systematically record the phoneme in all positions. Thus, the glottal stop that appears in the name of the statue is a reconstruction resulting from philological analysis. Van Tilburg follows Steven Fischer's suggestion (Fischer 1991) that the name means 'Stolen Friend', cf. *nanai'a* 'robber/thief' (Fuentes 1960). However, the second part of the name represents a derived verb used as an attribute in the nominal phrase. It includes the causative-simulative *haka-* prefix, which has two meanings: "to make something X" or "to act like X". A verb derived with the *haka-* prefix cannot have a passive reading when used as an attribute. This rule is not stated in the published grammars, but it follows from the definition of the causative. I went through a solid collection of original texts and I did not find examples of the construction with passive reading (see many examples with active reading under the heading HAKA in Englert 1948). Thus, the name cannot mean 'Stolen Friend', but only 'Stealing Friend'. Following Grant McCall's suggestion, which compares the name with the modern word *nanaia* 'surfride' (McCall pers. comm., as cited in Van Tilburg 2006:64), we arrive at a grammatically correct interpretation *Hoā-haka-nana'ia* 'Surfing Friend' and suddenly this interpretation is close to the translation 'Breaking Waves' recorded by Katherine Routledge (1919:257). I have located the word in Englert's latest dictionary (1978), which includes some additions in comparison with his works of 1938 and 1948: *nana'ia* "romperse la marejada, estrellarse las olas en la costa". Englert (1978:150) also gives a translation of the statue's name as "dueño-rompedor de olas", which Van Tilburg (2006) does not take into account. While the English translation of the literal meaning of the name would be something like "Fellow who makes movements that are similar to waves breaking against the coast/who makes waves break", this kind of movement is also used to describe 'surfride'. Because of this, I believe 'Surfing Fellow' to be a better translation, even contextual. The entry *nana'ia* implies that the glottal stop should be reconstructed preceding the penultimate vowel. The suggested reconstruction and interpretation of the name are hypothetical, but should be accepted until a better translation is presented.

In conclusion, I would like to raise a question which has been puzzling me from the time when I read the anonymous review. The images carved on the statue's back (and on its ventral torso) are of a proportionally

large size, well arranged, centered; they constitute an impressive figurative whole together with the statue itself. The statue and the carved images form a part of one iconographic program. In this respect they are very different from petroglyphs randomly carved on some statues (see, e.g., Van Tilburg & Lee 1987; Van Tilburg 2006:40, 41, 46). Why should we consider the images under discussion to be "rock art elements" and not an integral part of monumental sculpture?

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## Notes

1. It was Paul Horley (pers. comm. 2012) who noticed the second *komari* symbol in the upper portion of the torso.

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