

# Terevaka Archaeological Outreach 2014 field report: Meeting community objectives

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## Introduction

Work completed in July of 2014 marks the eleventh year that Terevaka Archaeological Outreach (TAO) has offered educational opportunities for high school students local to the Rapa Nui community. Fifteen Rapanui students enrolled in this year's program, representing La Aldea Educativa and Colegio Hermano Eugenio Eyraud—two of the high schools on the island. Five of those fifteen students were returning students, having successfully completed their first year of the TAO curriculum in July of 2013.

The goals of the TAO program have remained the same since its inception in 2003. First, our work aims to utilize archaeology as a foundation for education and opportunity within Rapa Nui's island community. Second, our projects promote awareness of and expertise in archaeology and cultural conservation. And third, we document, study, and conserve the remarkable treasures of the past that remain on Rapa Nui today.

In order to fulfill these goals, TAO staff and students have undertaken a variety of innovative projects on the island and presented findings through various media (Rutherford et al. 2008; Shepardson 2006, 2010; Shepardson & Torres Hochstetter 2009; Shepardson et al. 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Torres Hochstetter & Shepardson 2005).

As TAO becomes a more established institution on the island, one of our challenges is to make sure that projects are closely aligned with the ever-evolving community objectives in sustainable development. Our 2014 program focused on two specific projects: (1) non-invasive archaeological site documentation and surveillance, and (2) raising awareness of Rapanui artifacts that currently reside in museums overseas.

## Education

Students who commit to the TAO program spend an intensive two weeks camping on the property of Explora Hotel, outside the island's only town of Hanga Roa. Explora provides tents, transportation, and meals for all TAO students and staff. Our approach to education includes both classroom activities and experiential learning (e.g., Itin 1999; Kolb 1984).

In July 2014, TAO students attended daily presentations at Explora offered by experts from both the island community and the international community. Piru Hucke described her goals and experiences in a campaign that has spanned more than two decades to promote repatriation of cultural materials from overseas collections. Dale Simpson Jr. offered a broad overview of the island's geology and some specific new hi-tech research involving geo-chemical "sourcing" analyses of prehistoric basalt tools. Cristián Moreno Pakarati presented a detailed glimpse into the island's tumultuous historic times and conversion to a sheep-ranching operation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mahanua Wilkins gave a brilliant summary of the island's natural history, including evidence dating to long before Polynesian colonization of the island. Rounding out the 2014 TAO lecture series were presentations regarding the prehistoric red scoria *pukao* (topknots), the statue transport roads, and the statues themselves by Roberto Teao, Gina Pakarati, and Britton Shepardson, respectively.

Outside of the classroom, students not only visited dozens of archaeological sites on the island (Figure 1), but became actively involved in non-invasive documentation procedures for a variety of sites that are considered to be at high-risk because of the numbers of tourists now visiting those sites. Students learned how to operate handheld global positioning system (GPS) devices for the sake of mapping and reckoning. The students also learned how to systematically create scaled drawings, and record both quantitative and qualitative observations of archaeological sites in the field.

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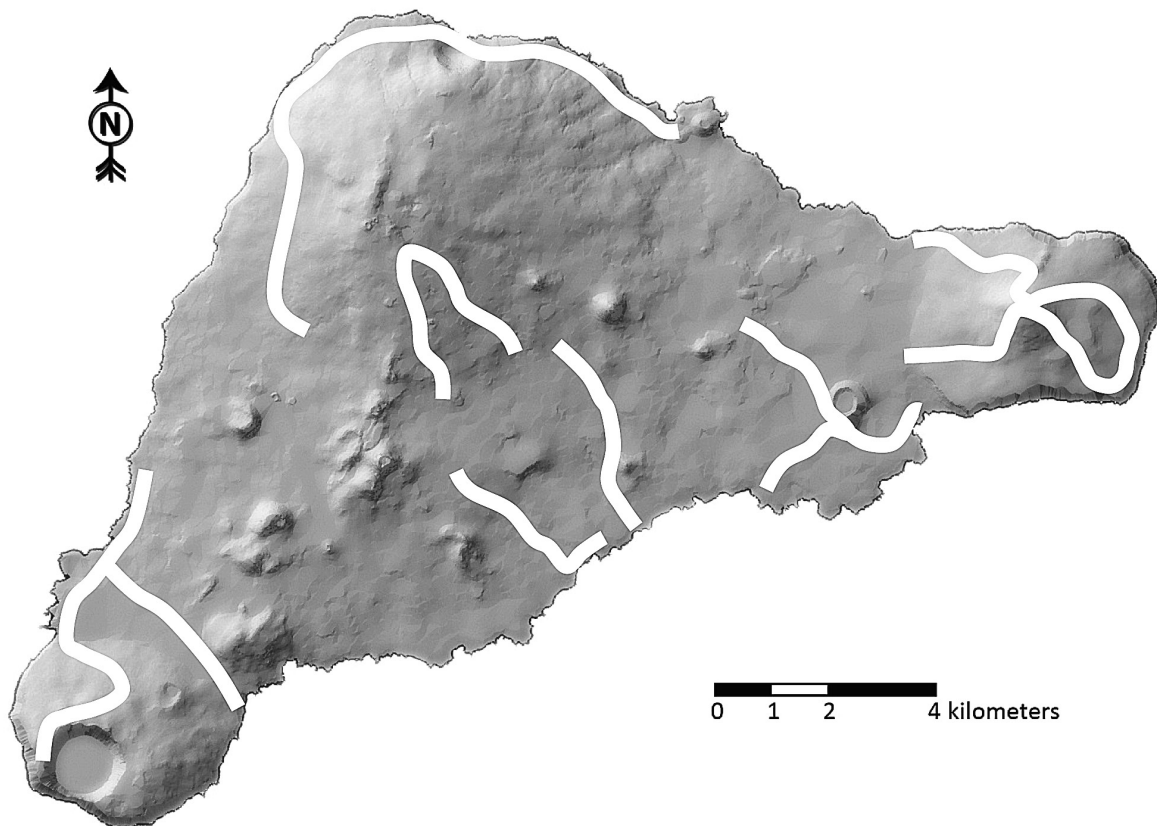


Figure 1. Areas in white indicate regions of the island that TAO students visited during the two-week program.

### Project 1: Non-invasive Site Documentation

Although tourism is not the only source of risk or damage to archaeological sites on the island, it is a rapidly growing one. The number of tourists visiting the island each year has nearly tripled over the last decade. The statue quarry at Rano Raraku and many of the larger coastal ceremonial sites provide the focal points for most tours. As tourism on the island grows, however, the pressure to develop new routes into lesser-visited areas of the island’s interior grows as well.

Explora and its team of Rapanui guides have been championing the development of responsible and low-impact tourism in more remote sectors of the island’s interior since 2006. Part of their mission is to share these spectacular sites with travelers, and another part of their mission is also to protect these sites in whatever way possible.

TAO students teamed up with Explora guides in 2013 to pilot a new system of site documentation, using Google Maps, that allows for Rapanui students and professionals to gather information about archaeological sites, to share that information with the island community in a user-friendly manner, and to continue to monitor those sites to document any changes. This

approach to site documentation and site monitoring requires minimal training, allowing the local community to use freely-available software to create interactive Google Maps of archaeological sites, enabling a grassroots approach to heritage management.

In 2014, TAO and Explora teamed up once more to document archaeological sites along two of Explora’s primary excursion routes: *te ara o te moai* and *te miro o one*. Together, local students and local guides mapped, measured, and photographed 25 archaeological sites. For each site, students also created a video as a brief virtual tour. Eventually, students uploaded all of the information to a website that is accessible through Google Maps and YouTube (Figure 2).

The Google Maps approach to archiving site information allows for the embedding of various forms of media and also provides an open-ended longitudinal study of sites, as additional photographs can easily be uploaded to archives for the sake of comparison and conservation studies over time. TAO students are effectively providing a user-friendly resource for Explora guides, so that these guides can learn about sites to provide the best excursions possible for travelers. Due to the fact that they visit each of these archaeological sites two or three times per week, the

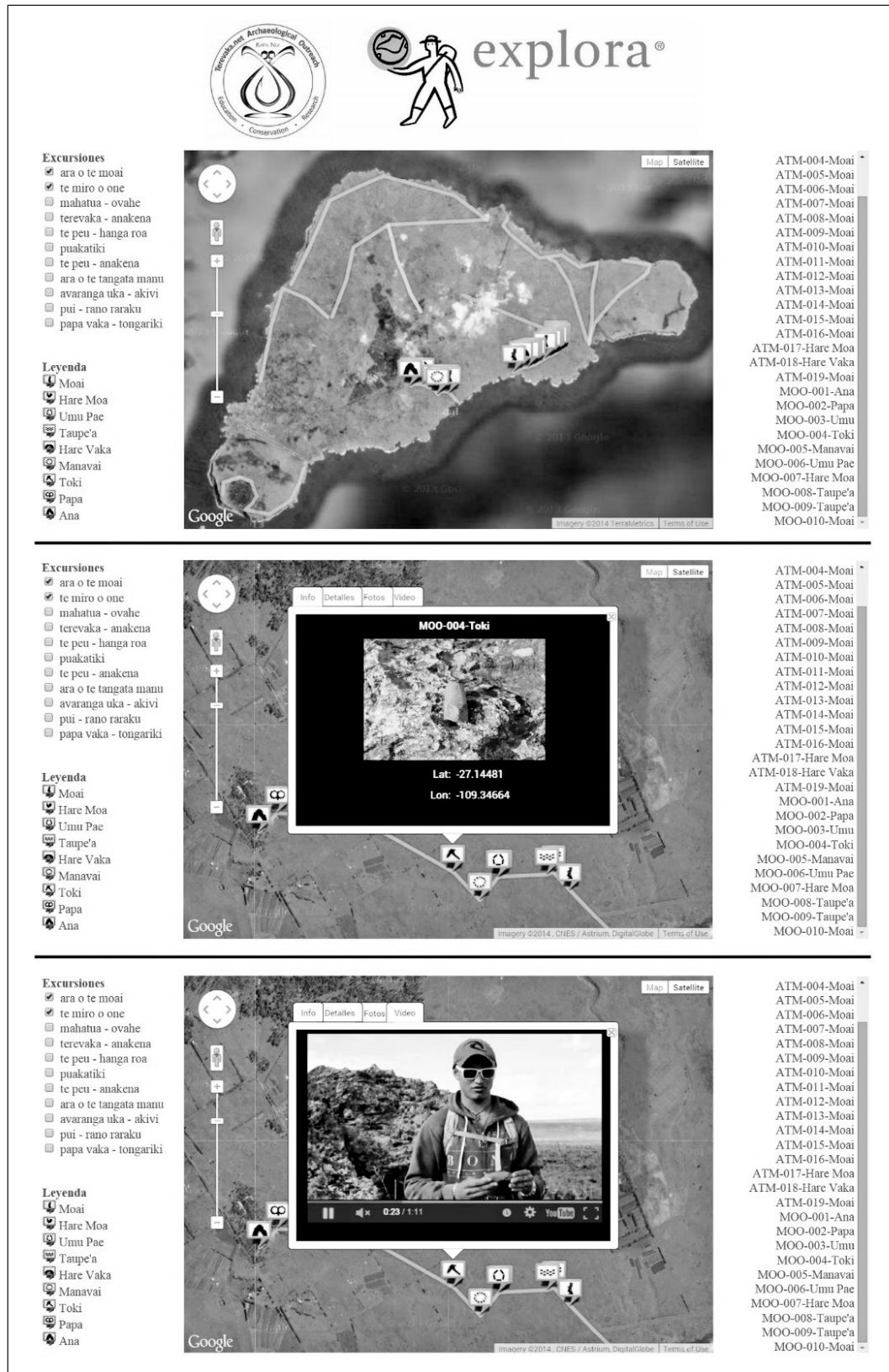


Figure 2. Screenshots from the interactive Google Maps approach to large-scale archaeological survey on the island developed during the TAO 2014 project. Students conducted non-invasive surveys along two of the many excursion routes regularly used by Explora (top). Along each excursion route, students recorded the location and details of all sites of interest (middle). At each site, students also created a virtual video tour of the site that can be accessed through Google Maps as well (bottom).



guides also become *de facto* site monitors. During the 2015 TAO program, students will continue to document Explora’s excursion routes. We also hope to develop a more general training program on the island, so that residents are empowered to document archaeological sites in a responsible and non-invasive manner.

## Project 2: Expatriated Artifact Database

During the 2014 program, TAO students also took part in continuing a project that Piru Hucke began in the 1990s. Students created a digital database of more than 3,500 artifacts that were taken from Rapa Nui during historic times and now reside in more than 60 museums overseas (Figure 3). The vast majority of this information was included in a collection of typed and hand-written letters that Hucke had compiled after several years of inquiry and persistent communication with these foreign museums.

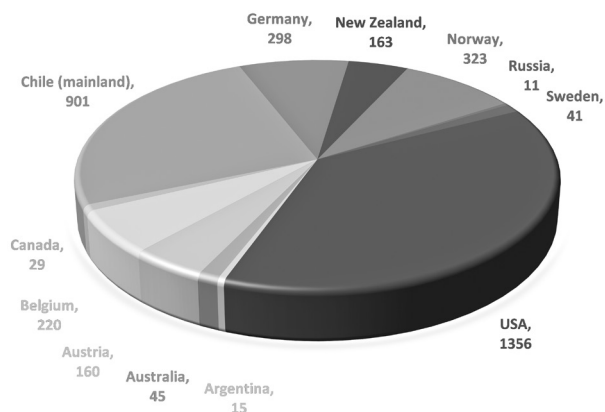


Figure 3. The number of artifacts included in the digital database, by country.

As the younger generation becomes more familiar with their expatriated cultural heritage, we hope that they might inspire a movement that results in repatriation of many of those artifacts that were taken inappropriately from the island. Our initial effort to organize this information is a good beginning, but there are likely thousands more artifacts in dozens of other museums and private collections around the world which we have not yet documented. This project will also continue with TAO students in 2015.

## Conclusion

The goals of TAO have always been to promote education, conservation, and research. Eleven years after our first educational program on Rapa Nui in 2003, we continue to find new ways to reach more students, to identify urgent challenges within the realm of heritage management on the island, and to develop innovative non-invasive solutions to these challenges using resources that are already available on the island. The grassroots approach to site documentation, site monitoring, and site conservation on the island that TAO and Explora have developed in collaboration shows great promise for the near future.

In 2015, Terevaka Archaeological Outreach faces one of its greatest challenges yet, as we expand our efforts and develop a sister program within the indigenous communities of the Atacama Desert of northern Chile. Our program is supported entirely by donations from concerned individuals and institutions from around the world. Please help us continue to strive for cultural awareness and sustainable heritage management by making a donation.



Figure 4. Students and staff of TAO and Explora (photo by Tate Larrick).

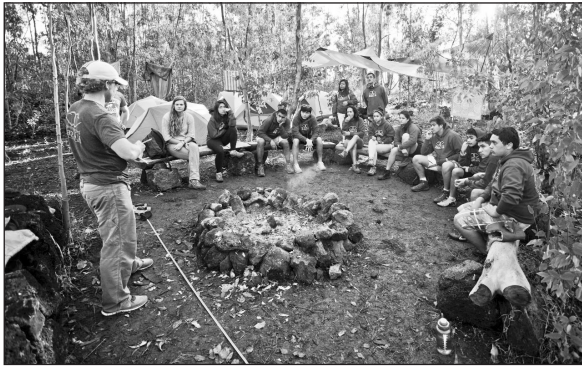


Figure 5. Students and staff of TAO during a mapping and scaled-drawing exercise in the TAO campground of the Explora property (photo by Tate Larrick).



Figure 6. TAO students putting their mapping and scaled-drawing skills to work (photo by Tate Larrick).



Figure 7. TAO students taking a break in the TAO campsite (photo by Tate Larrick).

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