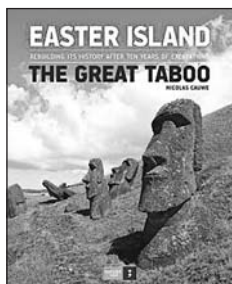


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Cauwe, Nicolas. *Easter Island: The Great Taboo. Rebuilding Its History after Ten Years of Excavations*.



Brussels: Versant Sud, 2011.  
160 pp., 100 color plates.  
ISBN 978-2-930358-55-0.  
EU\$24.50 (softcover).

Review by Christopher M. Stevenson, *Richard Bland College, The College of William and Mary*

This new work by the author consists of a two book set that includes a volume of text and discussion and a second volume of color photographs. The format of this publication is directed towards the generalist public. Brightly colored photographs of Rapa Nui's landscape, archaeological features, and vegetation convey the present day context of the island. However, the discussion is direct, reasoned and not over-simplified for the lay public.

During the prehistory of Rapa Nui two major corporate efforts were conducted over multiple centuries that included the sculpting of hundreds of tuff statues (*moai*) at the Rano Raraku quarry and their transport to, and installation on, religious altars (*ahu*). In contrast to much of the conventional thinking about these prehistoric activities, the author provides us with a new, and potentially controversial, interpretation of the archaeological record. At the Rano Raraku statue quarry, the current visitor sees hundreds of statues in the process of creation scattered on the face of the cliff and erected in a vertical position at the base. Are the latter statues awaiting transport? Apparently not, says Cauwe, who interprets the intentional positioning of the unfinished, partial, and standing *moai* as impediments to the removal of additional statues. Thus, we now see the statue quarry not as a production center that came to a quick demise but an intentionally closed precinct. Statues at the margins of the quarry lying in a prone position on the "*moai* road" are not in transport but were once vertically set warning signs to those who approach that the tradition of ancestor worship had come to an end.

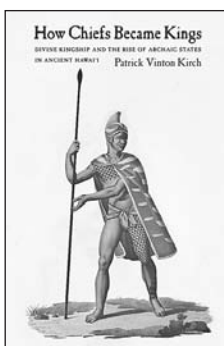
The author does not enter into the fray and excess verbiage concerning statue transport but provides the reader with an understanding of *ahu* refurbishment practices in prehistory. Ten years of careful excavation at smaller *ahu* around the island has shown that *ahu* platforms were constructed, utilized, abandoned, refurbished, and *moai* fragments were recycled into the fill of the reconditioned *ahu*. Again and again this happened, until the final time in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century when the *moai* began to be lowered for the last time, a process that took at least a century. The positioning, torso breaking patterns, and lack of damage to the face argue for a gentle lowering; a process that symbolically changed the *ahu* and surroundings from socio-religious precincts to burial mounds or necropoli. As with the statue quarry, ancestor worship had come to an end.

The data used to support the interpretation of the statue quarry, and statue lowering process, are likely to be closely scrutinized. A serious spatial analysis of the positioning and temporal order of the quarry *moai* is required, as is the retrieval of chronometric data from the quarry. At present the interpretation is mostly impressionistic, but not without merit. However, the statue lowering hypothesis will certainly raise some

eyebrows. How does one reconcile the broken statues on the ramps of the *ahu* with that of proposed gentle handling? Cauwe introduces the concept of “flexion” or that of material stress and eventual fatigue as the head of the prone *moai* is elevated above the ground for a prolonged period before it simply drops off. A fuller argument with a consulting engineer will likely be required to convince a skeptical readership.

In the final section, the reasons for the demise of ancestor worship and its replacement with a more generalized religion are discussed. What role did deforestation and climate change play in this mostly peaceful revolution? While the interplay of events and the reasons for their occurrence still remain unclear, the change of several basic interpretations about what happened in prehistory will cause us to continue with a lively dialog.

### Kirch, Patrick V. *How Chiefs Became Kings: Divine Kingship and the Rise of Archaic States in Ancient Hawai'i*.



Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-5202-6725-1. US\$39.95 (hardcover). E-book version available at [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu)

Review by Timothy M. Rieth,  
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Patrick Kirch is in a select group that includes very few people who can boast of 40+ years of research and ponderings about the prehistory and history of the Hawaiian Islands and their context within Polynesia. *How Chiefs Became Kings* is a synthesis and culmination of themes and ideas, both methodological and substantive, that Kirch has been publishing on for decades: a holistic historical anthropology incorporating multiple approaches and data sets; delineation of an ancestral Polynesian baseline from which unique cultural innovations can be determined; the interaction between environmental variants and socio-cultural patterns; the development of monumentality; agricultural expansion and intensification, and its relationship with demography, and; Polynesian chiefdoms. As indicated by the book's subtitle, Kirch's stated objective is to overturn “received anthropological wisdom” that has classified Hawai'i as a complex chiefdom, and to present evidence supporting the thesis that by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, just prior to Western contact, “Hawai'i

consisted of three to four competing archaic states, each headed by a divine king” (pg. 2). Although not the first to take this position (e.g., Hommon 1976), Kirch has produced the most comprehensive argument incorporating some of the latest archaeological data. As a whole, he presents a plausible argument for classifying pre-contact Hawai'i as a state (based on his stated criteria), and as such, will assuredly foster debate and continued analyses on this issue.

*How Chiefs Became Kings* is structured in five chapters, beginning with a definitive chapter on archaic states in general. This chapter also situates contact-era Hawai'i in relation to its phylogenetic predecessor, the reconstructed ancestral Polynesian society. Chapter 2 relies on the historical accounts of Hawaiian scholars, Western voyagers, Western missionaries and merchants, and ethnographic and historical scholarship to characterize Hawaiian society at the time of European contact. Chapter 3 uses traditional Hawaiian genealogies and traditions to trace the political developments in Hawaiian society for the centuries leading up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeological data are presented in Chapter 4 to reconstruct demographic trends, variations in agricultural systems and resource production, the development of religious and elite centers, and ultimately the emergence of archaic states. The chapters preceding Chapter 5, the final chapter, present evidence from multiple complementary approaches to create a narrative description of “how” and “when” archaic states developed in Hawai'i. The final chapter is Kirch's attempt to move beyond the historical description and provide an explanation (“why”) for Hawai'i's unique regional sociopolitical development.

The data presented in the first four chapters address the six criteria Kirch proposes for archaic states: 1) well-developed class endogamy; 2) ruling by kings, typically with godly ancestry; 3) central control of political economies by the king's bureaucracy; 4) state cults with a formalized temple system and full-time priests; 5) a kingly monopoly on force and retention of a standing army, and; 6) royal residences with privileges and luxury goods provided by full-time specialists. Based on these characteristics, Kirch provides a convincing compendium of data for the pre-contact development of archaic states in Hawai'i. Pulling from Hawaiian chiefly genealogies and traditions, historical accounts, and archaeology, evidence for each of these criteria is presented. In the end, it is clear how unique Hawai'i was from its Polynesian cousins in terms of complex social organization.

Kirch approaches his explanation for the development of archaic states in Hawai'i by discussing proximate and ultimate causes, citing Mayr (1997). He places proximate causation in the decisions, actions, and intentions of individual *ali'i* (kings), as they are recorded in genealogies and traditions. Ultimate causation