

# Voluntary Trip or Deportation? The Case of King Riroroko and Policies of Deportation on Easter Island (1897-1916)

Rolf Foerster\*

*Department of Anthropology, University of Chile, Santiago, Chile*

“... riding home through the village, I saw a group on the green engaged in dressing a girl’s hair; on inquiry it was found that she was to be married next day. Congratulations had hardly been expressed, when another young woman was pointed out who was also to change her state at the same time, and another and another, till the prospective brides totaled five in all. The idea, it seemed, was prevalent, that if punishment was subsequently inflicted for the raids, it was the single men who would be taken to Chile, hence this rush into matrimony...”

*Katherine Routledge, The Mystery of Easter Island*

## INTRODUCTION

NUMEROUS REFERENCES TO THE 1897-8 VOYAGE of Rapa Nui king Simeon Riroroko and his three “ministers” to the Chilean mainland, suggest that theirs was a voluntary trip, with its purpose a visit to the President of the Republic. They were to inform him about the pitiful situation of his countrymen, the pillaging of their lands and animals, and the exploitation and mistreatment received from Enrique Merlet and Co.<sup>1</sup> A second point of agreement among scholars is that the king was poisoned by one of Merlet’s clerks only days after his arrival in Valparaíso. I suggest a different reading of the first topic, on the basis of documentation found in the Ministry of the Navy of the National Archive in Santiago, Chile.

According to my investigation, this was not a voluntary trip but a deportation to the mainland of those considered as “disturbers of the public order,” and whose visible leaders were the king and his closest allies (his “ministers,” “counselors,” or “princes”). This deed can be compared with the deportation of King Beri Beri (around 1900) and to the six deportations of 1902 and the one of 1914, plus the failed deportation of Bautista Cousin’s assassins<sup>2</sup> in 1916. Banishments were not common during the period<sup>3</sup>, and their motivation, in far away Easter Island, indicates a desire to terminate Rapanui “royalty” because of their sovereign acts of opposition that were contradictory to the requirements of cattle exploitation by the company of Enrique Merlet, and the establishment of the authority of the Chilean state in Easter Island (which supposed, among other things, the legitimacy of the company’s exploitation and rights).

*This paper has been peer reviewed. Received 4 April 2010; revised 16 April 2010; accepted 25 April 2010.*

\* Translation by Riet Delsing, Fernanda Villarroel and Vikram Tamboli. Note that spelling in direct quotes has been left as it appears in the original documents.

<sup>1</sup> We should remember that Enrique Merlet, in 1895, on the one hand bought Brander’s properties for 4000 pounds and, on the other hand, leased for 1200 pesos per year the lands, buildings and animals he owned to the state treasury for a period of 20 years (Ramírez 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Cousin was an employee of Balfour and Company; he was assassinated in August 1915. Reports mention Nicolas Pakomio and Vicente Pont as responsible, with Jorge Riroroko as an accomplice.

<sup>3</sup> This is unlike the first decades of the 19th and during the 20th century under the dictatorships of Presidents Carlos Ibáñez and Augusto Pinochet. I am grateful to Historian Julio Pinto for this information.

## THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY TRIP OF KING RIROROKO

The earliest references to Riroroko’s trip are from 1900 and can be found in the newspaper, *El Mercurio de Valparaíso*. The first is dated April 8<sup>th</sup> and reads as follows:

To the court of Easter Island their majesties Tepalo and Pisibato. Their majesties princes Tepalo and Pisibato, who were ministers of the unfortunate King Riro Roko who passed away some time ago in Valparaíso, will embark to Easter Island on the ship *Jeneral Baquedano*, which leaves this afternoon for a trip around the Pacific. Riro Roko came to this Republic with the intention to celebrate an interview with his Excellency Mr. Errázuriz and to claim part of his territory invaded by the tenant of the island, Mr. Enrique Merlet. He was accompanied on his trip by his ministers Juan Araki, Juan Tepalo and José Pisibato. We don’t know the result of the actions taken by his majesty the prince of Easter Island with the government in la Moneda to regain his rights, but we do not believe that it was favorable for the crown of the neighboring island. Some time after the arrival in Valparaíso of his majesty King Riro Roko, his first minister Juan Araki, to whom corresponded the crown of Easter Island by right, was not able to return to his domain because he was seriously ill with tuberculosis in the city of Los Andes. For this reason and maybe following some old custom,

Riro Roko's throne will be occupied by the ministers and princes Tepalo and Pisibato, who since their arrival in this city have been lodging in the military quarter of Maipú, because they both served in the National Guard.

Will the new sovereigns be recognized on Easter Island? This is probably the case, considering that their right to the crown can now be added to the prestige of their military knowledge and to the fact that they have returned to their domain in a manner to be expected from a king, this is to say, not on board of a merchant ship but rather on a warship.

Twelve days later, *El Mercurio* states that the "first minister" of King Riroroko, Juan Araki, died of tuberculosis in the city of Los Andes: "The poor Indian, in spite of all the attention provided, has fallen just as his lord and king and has died in a strange land, far away from his people. Araki passed away on a day of the Holy week."

As one can appreciate, *El Mercurio* does not make any reference to the date of the trip, the assassination of King Riroroko, or his deportation. Nevertheless, this entry provides valuable information as it relates to his companions and their hierarchies: his "minister" Juan Araki and his princes Juan Tepano and José Pirivato.

Allow me a small parenthetical statement on Juan Araki. Recent literature has taken conflicting positions regarding the "identity" and "destiny" of Juan Araki. José Miguel Ramírez (2006) agrees with *El Mercurio* that Araki died on the mainland; Steven Fischer, on the other hand, believes that Araki returned to the island, and took a high level position in the company: "Juan Araki, Juan Tepano and Jose Pirivato had all returned to the island from Chile ... Juan Araki displayed total submission to the company, working for it for the rest of his days..." (Fischer 2005:155).

I suggest that there were two persons named Juan Araki. The first, who accompanied King Riroroko and died on the mainland, would be the "soldier Ariki-tia", also known as "Iovani Araki Puarahoa" for his participation in the War of the Pacific, and for being the author of the famous Manuscript E (*E Manuscript*). Therefore, he had all the makings of a "first minister" of the king and his possible successor. The second was his son, Juan Araki Bornier, who was approximately 12 years old<sup>4</sup> when the king traveled to the mainland

in 1897 and later, in 1920, became one of the informants of Capuchin Missionary Bienvenido de Estella: "Carolina Bornier de Araki is currently alive and well and has a family: more precisely an intelligent and honest son, Juan Araki. He is the interpreter for these historical narrations about the Island" (Estella 1920:138-139).

I would like to point out the ironic acknowledgement in *El Mercurio* about the dissolution of Rapanui authority. Recall the report, dated October 1900, by the commander of the training ship *General Baquedano*, naval Captain Arturo Wilson, in which the sub-delegate and company manager, Sánchez Manterola, appears to be playing the role of inquisitor of Chilean nationalism:

They (the Rapanui) complained because the mail they might send to Valparaíso offered no guarantee of security, having nothing but the schooner to do so; that their king was not recognized by the administration; that they were not allowed to use their flag at all and, finally, that they were not always heard nor given justice... Mr. Sánchez assured them that the letters delivered to him would always reach their destinations, but that he would not allow them to send letters with crew members of the schooner; that as the only authority on the island, he could not recognize any king that would interfere with his action, nor that Chilean laws recognize such an authority, and, concerning the flag, he could not allow them to hoist it next to the Chilean flag when ships arrive or in other circumstances, but he had no objections for them to use it for their funeral ceremonies, as long as it was with his permission.<sup>5</sup>

Twenty years later, three "reports" provide new material about the trip of King Riroroko, specifically referring to the date of the trip and the king's assassination by Merlet's agents. The first report can be attributed to Ignacio Vives Solar (who between 1914 and 1918 acted as official of the civil register and as naval sub-delegate on the island), who published an article in the magazine *Sucesos*, titled "The Last King of Rapa Nui":

Since King Rire-Roke of renowned memory died in 1898 in a hospital in Valparaíso, where he had gone loaded with teremires and gifts to pre-

<sup>4</sup> According to the 1929 census, taken by Sub-delegate Carlos Recabarren, Juan Araki Bornier was 44 years old, *ergo* in 1897 he would have been 12 years old; Juan Tepano, in the meantime, was 59 years old in 1929, so he was 27 years old in 1897 (and 20 years according to the 1916 census). If we go to the 1886 census, Pirivato would have been 24 years old, "Joane Arakitia" appears with no age (but was already married to the young, 17 years old Carolina Bornier) and, strangely enough, neither king Riroroko nor Juan Tepano were present on this listing (a point in favor for the thesis that Tepano was already on the mainland?). The 1886 and 1916 census can be found in the Museum of Easter Island. The 1829 census is in the National Archive, Intendencia de Valparaíso, Vol. 919. I am grateful to Jimena Ramírez for collecting these census data.

<sup>5</sup> *El Ferrocarril*, 12 October of 1900, and the *Diario Oficial*, 11 October of 1900. The account of the trip is found in Vol. 894 of the *Ministry of the Navy* and was published afterwards in the *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, T.23 (1901). The instructions for the trip are in the National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 891.

sent to the government his claims over the island's lands and animals – a death which was the result of alcohol intoxication and which the canacas attributed to poison administered by the concessionary of the Island in order to enable him to complete his mission ..., the throne of Easter had stayed vacant (Vives Solar 1920).

The second report is found in the book *Los Misterios de la Isla de Pascua* (The Mysteries of Easter Island) written by Bienvenido de Estella, who traveled to Rapa Nui, first in 1917, accompanying the military vicar Monsignor Rafael Edwards, and again in 1918 when he stayed for eight months on the island. This text seems to show the insoluble tension between the claims of the king and the company:

King Riroroko had fought with the sub-delegate, because he was paying the people poorly: 20 cents and meat at midday; to which the sub-delegate argued: I cannot pay more, because the firm does not allow me to. For this and other obstacles, the good king kanaka tried to present himself to the Chilean authorities to bring justice to his people *and to find a way to remove from the island the firm which harassed and oppressed them so much. He undertook the trip and arrived in Valparaíso in the company of Juan Tepano, kanaka who had been on the continent for three years, and two other kanakas.* Upon arrival in Valparaíso they went to speak with the governor, who had arranged the trip to Santiago and a ship for their return to the island... But as it so happened, in the hotel or German pension, where an acquaintance had advised him to stay, he suddenly fell ill, collapsing on the floor as if fainting, at the very moment he was about to take a coach to the station and travel to Santiago. He was accompanied by the German who had suggested lodgings in Valparaíso; this German was a friend of the company and had earlier signed a contract to sell land on the island that did not belong to him, to the society. Once the king fell sick, the German took him to the house where he was now staying, which was different from the one where he had stayed on arrival. According to the newspapers who were commenting on the king's continued residency in the German hostel, the German in this story advised the king two days after his arrival, that he should change his lodging, because the German hostel was expensive (\$10). The king allowed himself to be pushed around and to be deceived by this fictional friend and paid it... The companions of the king advised him not to trust the company of such an individual and not to drink liquor, because it could be poisoned; the kanakas who told me this story add further that many Chileans in

town were telling the king when they saw him on the streets: "... be careful, king kanaka, you may be poisoned". The point is that five days after his fainting spell, the poor king was dead.

According to the king's companions, the governor had arranged the matter in their favor, but Mr. Merlet presented himself to the governor once the king had died and arranged things again in favor of the society. Soon after this event, Merlet, a member of the exploitative society, prepared his first trip to the island, which he did in his own schooner, named *Maria Luisa*. He brought with him the news of the death of King Riroroko. Two weeks later, Mr. Merlet came back to the mainland bringing wool and hides. (Estella 1920:143-145, [*emphasis mine*]).

The third "report" is dated March 28th of 1921, and was written by the Company's Administrator and Marine Sub-delegate Alberto J. Sánchez Manterola (1896-1901). His story explains several issues that, as we will see, are fundamental to our proposed version of deportation (for example, the arrival of the three "guardians" in 1897). The text tells about his performance as the national authority on the island and also provides a systematic denouncement of Merlet's "crimes." Let me review the aspects that are most pertinent to my analysis:

The ship that would take us to the island was the schooner *Maria Luisa*, that measured 81 tons and was recently acquired by the firm of Enrique Merlet and Co. It set sail to the mentioned destination during the first days of October in 1897 and after a pleasant navigation we anchored in the cove of Hanga Roa, after 20 days of travel ...

Great was the surprise of the canacas when they found three guardians dressed in uniform on board, who were going to maintain order on the island. We came ashore and some days later I sent the schooner back to Valparaíso with Benjamin Donoso and some other Chileans on board. I was left practically alone, because the Chileans I took to the island during the first trip (March 1896) had almost all gone back to the mainland, some of them bored with hardship, and as far as the others, it was not convenient to let them stay. Since the first day I noted more submissiveness on the part of the canacas and that is why I ordered the king that from this moment onward I *would not allow them to hoist another flag than the Chilean one, making them immediately pull down the canaca flag*, which remained hoisted on the mast that had been placed in Hanga Roa for that purpose.

I started working very contently, since I was able to assure that since the first day all the canacas accompanied me to do the shearing which

the schooner *Maria Luisa* had to take and ship to Valparaíso within twenty days.

On the day of the departure of the schooner *Maria Luisa*, King Riro Roco made clear to me his desire to go to Chile and ask protection of the Government, because their land and plantations were taken by the concessionaire of the island Mr. Enrique Merlet. In effect, I had forbidden them to go to the countryside without my permission, reducing them to a space of one thousand hectares, which I made them fence off with a magnificent stonewall. I expressed to the king the danger that, since there was no communication with the island, Merlet could deny him permission to return on his ship, to which he replied that in that case he would wait until he could return on a warship. I extended an order for the captain to receive him on board, and wrote to Merlet about the trip mentioned by the king.

Once the schooner arrived in Valparaíso, (Merlet) forbade him to go ashore until he had made a plan concerning the king. He entrusted him to a German Jefferles, who had been to Easter Island before and knew Riro Roco, and he made sure to get him drunk and take him to suspicious places until he got sick and was taken to the hospital seriously ill. There he died soon after. The news of the death of the king came to be known on the island when six months later the schooner *Maria Luisa* arrived to take the fleece of March. From the moment the death of the king was known I made a strong effort to finish this dynasty and I think I managed to succeed, because there was no more talk about Riro Roco's successor on the island. (Sánchez Manterola 1994:321-322, [*emphasis mine*]).

Alberto Sánchez Manterola knew by experience that Enrique Merlet was a person who had no scruples to reach his goals and he was his accomplice. His criminal activities on the island would be widely known – the burning of crops, sacking of lands, stealing of cattle, etc. – and were justly denounced by Bishop Edwards, who dealt with him personally on his trip to Rapa Nui in 1916. Therefore it is surprising that Sánchez Manterola, Merlet's loyal clerk in 1897, allowed the king and his "companions" to undertake a trip to the mainland to denounce his patron and employer for pillaging and exploitation. Something does not fit, and there is an inconsistency in the story. It is impossible to believe his

<sup>6</sup> This communication reads as follows: "Attached I return to you the request of the tenant of Easter Island Mr. Enrique Merlet in which he asks the Ministry to put in practice several measures to assure the tranquility of the island and make respected the recently assigned authority of the Navy Sub-delegate (Horacio Cooper). Likewise I send to you a copy of the note in which the General Naval Headquarters have expressed an opinion about the petitions formulated by Mr. Merlet. In order for this Ministry to express our opinion about issues which it is appropriate for you to determine, it waits for you to resolve if there is a need to send a warship to make known and respected as the only authority on the island the one that is named by the Chilean Government, as well as to let us know if it is not inconvenient to use the royalties of renting the Island for the payment of police personnel and a crew for the lifeboat which will have to be provided to the Marine sub-delegation" (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1115, (f.:36-37)).

statement that precisely the same day that the schooner *Maria Luisa* was departing:

King Riro Roco manifested his desire to go to Chile and ask protection from the government, because their land and plantations had been taken by the concessionaire of the island, Mr. Enrique Merlet. Indeed, I had forbidden them to go to the countryside without my permission, reducing them to a space of one thousand hectares (Sánchez Manterola 1994: 322).

As we will see later it is possible to suggest that the captain of the schooner *Maria Luisa* was ordered to deport the "disturbers." My thesis is that the king and his "young companions" were not informed of this mandate and had been taken by deception. In other words, the King and his companions believed that they were going to the mainland voluntarily without knowing that they were the first of a long series of deportees and much less that there they would be punished and/or disciplined. It is plausible that Juan Tepano, Juan Araki and José Pirivato never were aware of this situation.

#### THE VERSION OF THE DEPORTATION

Historical evidence for a hypothesis of deportation is found in documentation existent in the Ministerio de Marina of the National Archive of Santiago. In addition, these data allow us to demonstrate the construction of deportation policies, which begin in 1897 and abruptly end in 1916.

The most relevant document concerning the initial deportations is from July 26<sup>th</sup> 1897. It is an order from the minister of foreign affairs and colonization to the naval minister to send a warship to "...make known and respected the designated authorities;" and for the commander of the ship to have enough authority to "...remove from the island if necessary the disturbers of public tranquility":

Republic of Chile, N° Section N° 1541

Naval Command Headquarters

Valparaíso, 26 July of 1897

To the Naval Minister in today's Communication N° 560 which says:

To the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Colonization on day 19 of the current month which says as follows:

This Ministry has received the communication of N. S. N°516 dated the 9<sup>th</sup> of the current month<sup>6</sup>.

*The undersigned considers it convenient to send a warship to Easter Island, to introduce and make respected the authorities designated by the Supreme Government.* For this reason the commander of the ship should be adequately informed, and have the authority to remove from the island, if necessary, the disturbers of public tranquility.

The police personnel for the Island can be composed of three individuals from the police corps for the colonies. In this way the royalties of renting the island do not need to be touched and this idea also removes the character of strict personal dependence of the police, which the proposal of renter Mr. Enrique Merlet would give to them.

The undersigned is expected to know the date of departure of the ship to arrange the embarkation of the mentioned police officers.

I write to you to inform you, so that you will be able to organize the following in agreement with the information provided by you in communication N°965 Secc.1ª dated the 10<sup>th</sup> of the current month. That the transport barge *Casma*, upon its return from Magallanes and once docked in Talcahuano to clean its hull will be transferred to Easter Island for the objective expressed in the quoted communication.

A lifeboat should be delivered to the Naval Sub-delegation of said Island, the value of which should not exceed five hundred pesos (\$500), and Mr. Merlet will be allowed to take the cattle that comfortably fit on the barge to Valparaíso on his return from the island. Mr. Merlet, on his part, should commit himself to contribute half the cost of the coal consumed on the ship and provide, free of any charge, all the fresh meat required for the crew during their stay on the island and for their return trip.

I transcribe this to you for your information.

God be with you,

Signed Benjamín Vergara

(National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1115 (f.57 y 58) and Vol. 1279, [*emphasis mine*])

The Navy vessel designated for this mission was the *Casma*, as established in communication N°564 dated 24 July 1897: "... instructions have already been given to the Naval Command Headquarters to direct the transport ship '*Casma*' to Easter Island." This communication also refers to the transfer of three policemen with the purpose of "forming the security police of Easter Island": "This Ministry waits for you to indicate the date of departure of the vessel in order to

give the appropriate instructions to the respective officials, with the objective of ordering the embarkation of the police officers of the colonies that will form the security police of Easter Island" (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 772).

However, the same ministerial documentation specifies the factors that prevented the *Casma* from realizing this trip. On 1 October of 1897 the Naval Command Headquarters informed the Naval Minister:

This command office cannot foresee as yet when the transport *Casma* might be ready to leave and to fulfill any assignment. At the moment it is in Talcahuano unloading rails it brought from Punta Arenas. Once this long operation is completed it will enter the dockyard to clean its hull and then it will have to come to this port with the purpose of changing some tubes in its boilers. These repairs are absolutely indispensable before undertaking any trip and at the moment it can not be anticipated when these repairs are going to be finished. (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 772)

Thus if the *Casma* was not able to fulfill the mission "to remove from the island if necessary the disturbers of public tranquility" ("the king and his three advisors" to use Toro's terms<sup>7</sup>), who did it and who took the officers? The ship that was assigned, the schooner *Maria Luisa*, belonged not to the Navy, but to the *Company*.

Which other documentary antecedents are there to support the hypothesis of political deportation? The most relevant, possibly, would be those regarding the need to use again the "decree of deportation of July 26th of 1897". I will start with a communication, dated February 1900, from Naval Sub-delegate Sánchez Manterola, to the Director of the Naval Territory, subsequently transmitted to the Naval Ministry:

The naval sub-delegate of Easter Island informs me on February 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year: "I communicate to you that, because the natives rioted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of the past month, and a group of them intended to designate a successor to Riro Roco who passed away in Valparaíso two years ago, it has become urgent to immediately deliver a warship in order to remove the leaders and promoters of unrest as arranged by the supreme government according to the decree dated July 26th of 1897. By acceding to this request the supreme government will render outstanding service to the Chilean and foreign inhabitants of the island, returning to them the

<sup>7</sup>"The said chief, elected by all men older than 18 or 20 years, after the death of his predecessor, is assisted by *three advisors*, a kind of ministers" (Toro 1892: 205, [*emphasis mine*]). The version of Juan Tepano, Juan Araki Ti'a and Pirivato traveling to the mainland "to comply with the military service in the Regiment No. 2 'Maipo' of Valparaíso" (Hotus 1988:302) seems questionable, especially because of its lack of documentary evidence. This kind of order required written documentation.

tranquility needed to continue their works, especially since we have not been visited by any warship during the past five years. - Regards (signed Alberto Sánchez)- I have the honor to transcribe this to you, for your information, allowing myself to remark that the inserted communication was only received yesterday in this office. It is also very possible that the commander of the training ship 'General Baquedano' has taken the required measures of the case when it passed by the island.

I transcribe this to you for your knowledge  
Regards to you,

J. Montt (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy,  
Vol. 893, [*emphasis mine*])

Was it in this context that Riroroko's successor, Moises Tu'uhereveri, was deported? According to Estella and his informants, he had been exiled in 1902 (according to Vives Solar, it was in 1908 and, to Hotus, in 1914). As we will see, Moises is not present on the list of exiles in 1902. Therefore it is possible that he may have been taken to the mainland before this date. Let us remember that Moises was educated in Tahiti, served on the schooner *Baquedano* for two years (Estella 1920:147) and, according to Vives Solar, had been "lucky enough to travel around the world." However, the only time that the *Baquedano* traveled around the world for more than a year was under the command of Luis Gomez Carreño, when it set sail in September 1903 and came back in January 1905.

The second reference to the deportation decree of 1897 can be found in a letter from Enrique Merlet to the General Director of the Navy, dated 14 March of 1902. This document says that the colonial order had been disturbed and that the Rapanui had reestablished the king and their "armed forces": "... they have elected a chief titled King of Easter Island, forming an armed force and absolutely undermining our government and its delegates. They find themselves in conditions of complete subversion against the order there established." Thus, Merlet asked the Navy in 1902 to apply the same measures as were taken in 1897:

*... to reproduce the orders and measures taken in the previous analogous situation. In the year 1897, as a consequence of disturbances that had occurred on the island, of which I appropriately informed the government, the respective minister issued the decree of July 24th, N°560, in which the release of a warship to Easter Island was authorized, taking the precaution that the commander of the ship would receive ample instructions and have sufficient authority to remove the disturbers of public tranquil-*

ity from the island, if necessary." (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1279, [*emphasis mine*]).

And effectively, what Merlet had asked for in 1897 occurred again in 1902. The report of the *Baquedano's* Captain, Basilio Rojas, dated the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, clears away any doubts:

Moving to issues raised by the Naval Sub-delegate Mr. Horacio Cooper, and the natives, I will tell you that my arrival was very opportune considering that resentment and provocations had begun to intensify, which obliged Mr. Cooper to gather all the company employees that worked in the countryside in the house of the administrator as well as those living in his residence in Mataverí, and to organize guards and night patrols.

The originals of July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, which are the real declarations of Mr. Cooper for clarity and as evidence of what had happened there<sup>8</sup>, will make you understand the reasons which obliged me to embark and take to Valparaíso the following natives:

Nicolas Grande, 22 years old  
Hito, 55 years old  
Jose Piri Batto [Pirivato] 30 years old  
Luperto [Nai] 50 years old,  
and to authorize to embark and bring to  
Valparaíso in the schooner *Hector*:  
Tepano Callufe 40 years old and  
Yohane Viejo 60 years old

I believe these individuals should not come back to the island. It would be possible to place Nicolas Grande and José Pisibato at the service of the Navy as coalmen, and look for the possibility to place the others as workers or sailors in the Merchant Marine, because they are strong men, fond of the seas, as all the canacas are.<sup>9</sup>

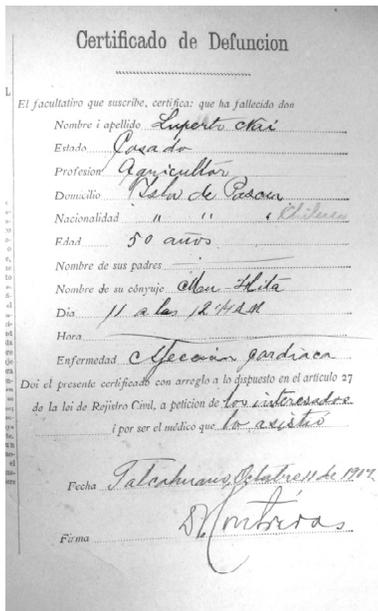
In other words, "the young" – Nicolas Grande and José Pirivato – and not "the old" should enter the Navy. The same thing happens then as in the case of the young companions of King Riroroko. The consequences of the disciplinary actions against the latter are known because of their diversity and contrast (see Fischer 2005:155). Striking is the case of José Pirivato. We should remember that he already had been deported in 1897. The difference is that now he would never return to his land. Nothing was known in Rapa Nui about what happened to them on the continent. McCall mentions in several of his texts that they were thrown in the sea:

<sup>8</sup> We searched for these declarations in the National Archive and have not been able to find them, but, without doubt, they contain the letter dated March 14<sup>th</sup> of 1902.

<sup>9</sup> National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1282. McCall, the first person to mention these deportations (1997:116-117) quoted this document from "Archivo del Instituto de Isla de Pascua, de la Universidad de Chile" – most likely from a copy available there.

1. "Before this incident [the Angata uprising of 1914] around twelve dissident Rapanui had been deported and murdered by the Chilean authorities, events testified in reports in the naval archives in Valparaíso" (McCall 1996:36).
2. "Six names, including that of Pirivato, were given as deportees, to be taken to Valparaíso and left to their own devices. Nothing more is heard from these persons, nor is there evidence that they actually were disembarked in Chile. I was told that they were dumped at sea" (McCall 1997:116-117).
3. "During Cooper's regime, Rapanui rebels were deported to Chile (They were actually thrown overboard in the sea!)" (McCall 1998:119-120).

Unfortunately, McCall does not mention or quote the documents from the "Naval Archives of Valparaíso" to verify such a brutal inhuman act. My impression is that throwing dissidents into the sea was not common practice in the Chilean Navy (at least not in that period of its history); even less so when there were official documents with names and ages of those implicated. For this reason, when one of the deportees passed away in Talcahuano, from a "cardiac disease", the commander of the *Baquedano*, Basilio Rojas, had to report it to his superiors:



Valparaíso, 18 October of 1902.

Mr. Minister:  
The Commander of the training ship *General Baquedano* in edict N° 2060, dated the 11th of the current month, tells me the following: 'I am sad to have to communicate to you that today during the early morning the canaca Luperto Nai, who was coming to the mainland as a deportee, passed away on this ship. After informing the

The death certificate of Luperto Nai, dated 18 October, 1902 and signed by Montt.

Commander in Chief of the dockyard, he will be buried tomorrow in the cemetery of this city.

I have the honor of transcribing this to you for your information. Please find attached the death certificate.

Regards, G. Montt"

On the other hand, Rojas had been clear in his report to the authorities about what should be done with these deportees: some of them should never return to Rapa Nui, others should be "disciplined" by the armed forces, in other words, the same policy as applied to Tepano and Pirivato between 1897-8 and 1900.

I will have a last look at the link between the deportations of 1897 and 1902, and the construction of Chilean sovereignty on Easter Island. Basilio Rojas perfectly understood the game being played with the Rapanui authorities: he was aware that until this moment, Easter Island did not have a clear status within the state<sup>10</sup> and he believed that the islanders were taking advantage exactly of this ambiguity:

To which jurisdiction and court do the decisions about crimes and misdeeds committed in the island pertain? There they are not at all convinced of any decree concerning this crucial point, even more so, no known law or decree exists that determines that this island, formerly a mission and French protectorate, now became an integral part of our territory as sub-delegation of a province or as a territory of colonization of such and such a province. And this is why the natives who, as I have demonstrated before, are intelligent people do not want to lose the right to elect their leaders which they acclaim in general assemblies under the title of king and currently of cacique, as well as the use of their national flag, which I saw myself obliged to take away and replace with the Chilean flag on the day the edict was published in front of the port.

Facing this situation, the measures taken by Rojas were framed within the old Chilean tradition of state, belonging to the era of Portales (and which complicate a single critical reading of these policies of "internal colonialism"). The first point on his edict of July 27<sup>th</sup>, read in the public square of Hangaroa, pointed out that: "... because Easter Island is and forms part of Chilean territory, the only sovereignty and the only flag is Chile's national one and no other one may be raised under any pretext." Let us remember here the initial passage of the book written by the Elders' Council in 1988, *Te Mau*

<sup>10</sup> Please keep in mind that in 1916 Easter Island was incorporated into the sub-delegation of Valparaíso (Decree N° 444) and in 1917 it was left under the "control and dependency of the Navy" (Law N° 3220). The Navy's interpretation of this law was that: "Law N° 3220 of January of the current year, places Easter Island under the jurisdiction of the Department of Marine Territory, and subjects it to the hierarchies, laws and regulations of the Navy. From now on, the lives and rights of the inhabitants of Easter Island remain under your tutelage and of the authorities which depend on you. Bound to the primordial interests of Easter's inhabitants is the honor of our sovereignty which must be for the natives a token of wellbeing and safeguarding of their rights" (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 2899, [emphasis mine]).

*Hatu 'O Rapa Nui*, regarding the “History of the *Reimiro* flag”:

According to Rapanui tradition, in February of 1888, the Elders or Rapanui chiefs and the Bishop of Tahiti Mr. José Maria Verdier, agreed to raise the *Reimiro* flag, whose design was made in Tahiti before Chile took possession of the island, with as purpose to demonstrate that this was a socially organized island... In 1913, the Chilean Naval Commander Mr. Basilio Rojas, who ordered the removal of the *Reimiro* flag, which *was taken to the mainland*, left orders to Naval Sub-delegate Mr. Enry Percy Edmunds<sup>11</sup> to refuse to accept that the islanders raise a flag other than the Chilean one (Hotus 1988:3, [*emphasis mine*]).

The second point could only refer to the authorities:

The native canacas will recognize as the superior authority and representative of the Chilean Government, the naval sub-delegate Mr. Horacio Cooper or his replacement assigned by the supreme authorities, and in the event of his absence, the person he will assign, during the time the Government appoints a person to replace him.

The third point talked about the need that:

The natives appoint a chief or cacique who will watch over them and represent them in their complaints, establish order amongst the populace etc.; he will make sure that their complaints reach the naval sub-delegate; it should be well understood that, since the naval sub-delegate is the highest ranking authority, his orders and dispositions will have to be obeyed and made to be obeyed.

The community elected “ex-deportee” Juan Tepano:

Go ahead and appoint the canaca Juan Tepano as chief or cacique, who has been elected amongst his companions, in the understanding that said cacique cannot be removed or replaced by another one without the permission of the naval sub-delegate, who, after studying the arguments, will or will not give the corresponding certificate.

The fourth point established that there was no turning back concerning the distribution of land:

The lands for housing and farming of the natives are those assigned by the Government of Chile and that are already in their possession. Under no circumstance can anyone trespass or destroy somebody

else’s fences, which serve as boundaries, or those that correspond to the tenant Mr. Merlet. Traffic must be restricted to public roads and these can not be made impassable by stonewalls and fences.

The fifth point regarded the work in the Company, paid but compulsory and, if rejected, one was punished for ‘heading a mutiny’:

The natives are not subjected to forced labor by the tenant and every time they do, it is covered under prior contract: excluding rodeos, shearing, etc., for which every family must provide a person, with a previously agreed-upon daily wage. The native or natives who resist these works, or who advise or prevent others by word or deed from completing them, will be punished for heading a mutiny.

The sixth issue pointed to a crucial matter, the building of a ghetto in the interior of the island, which among other things would limit their access to the coast:

In order to be able to go to the countryside and to go fishing on the parts of the coast that belong to the tenant and where his grasslands are located, the natives will ask permission to the naval sub-delegate, detailing the number of people and days they are going to remain on the beach, leaving free and clear the watering holes, so that the animals can come and drink from them at their necessity.

The seventh measure also restricted their freedom to communicate, but this time with the exterior:

The canoes and ships of the natives must be registered in the naval sub-delegation and under no circumstance will they be able to approach the ships anchored in the port without the permission of the naval sub-delegate” (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1281).

In brief, the series of measures and regulations imposed by Commander Basilio Rojas in July 1902, must be understood as inseparable from deportation and exile (and death) of the Rapanui governing elite and their symbols (their *Reimiro* flag). There is no doubt we are dealing here with a “foundational violence” of national sovereignty on Easter Island, which was specifically manifested in 1897, 1900 and 1902.

Twelve years later, in 1914, the Chilean authorities are informed again of “disturbances” on Easter Island. They had to do, as we know, with the “rebellion of Angata”. What was one to do in the knowledge that at that moment there was no mainland Chilean on the Island and that the Naval Sub-

<sup>11</sup> This information is mistaken since Basilio Rojas was on the island in 1902 (not 1913) when Horacio Cooper was naval sub-delegate and not Percy Edmunds, as suggested here.

delegate was an Englishman (Edmunds)? How did the Navy and the Chilean state respond on this occasion? It sent to Easter Island, as was already customary, the training ship “*General Baquedano*”, this time under the command of Captain Almonzor Hernández, with precise instructions that confirm the policy of deportations enacted against “turbulent natives”:

Naval Command Headquarters  
Valparaíso, May 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1914  
Sir Minister,

According to your authorities, the training ship “*Jeneral Baquedano*” [sic] will depart soon on a training voyage as coastguards, passing by Easter Island on its way, as indicated in its itinerary. National battleships only visit this island from time to time. The last of its trips was more or less two years ago.

For a while now it has been considered opportune to send a battleship to Easter Island from time to time to make known and respected the authorities designated by the Supreme Government.

For this purpose and with the aim of asserting national sovereignty over this remote region of the Territory, it is indispensable to grant ample facilities to the ship commander, according to the military and naval ordinances.

Lately it has come to the attention of this head office, of the tenant of the Island, Mr. Enrique Merlet, and probably of the Supreme Government, that disturbers of public tranquility have been trying for some time now to promote discontent and turmoil in this place.

In view of these antecedents, I judge it opportune to hint to you the convenience of requesting from the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Department of Colonization) or from the Minister of the Interior, as you regard it convenient, the authorization required to remove from the Island the disturbers of public tranquility who might be brought to the mainland, set free, or put for a while to serve in the merchant marine or in the military, *measures which have already been taken on previous occasions, as you can see outlined in document N°560 of July 24th of 1897 of the Ministry in your charge of which I attach a copy along with an extract passed by the Commander of the ‘Baquedano’ on September 24th of 1902, which relates to analogous measures taken on the Island, against turbu-*

lent natives. In view of what I have exposed, please give the required authorization.  
Greetings to you (signed: Goñi).”  
(National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1967 & 1980, [*emphasis mine*])

This document cannot be clearer: it is necessary to repeat in 1914 the model of 1987 and 1902. A new document from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Colonization, dated on June 12<sup>th</sup>, stresses the need to use legal instruments for this purpose:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Santiago, June 12<sup>th</sup> of 1914

The undersigned esteems it necessary that, in accordance with the declarations by the General Director of the Navy in the communication which you transcribed to this department in document N°283 of May 29<sup>th</sup> just passed, ample instructions must be given to the Commander of the *Baquedano* in order to be able to make respected the authorities assigned by the Supreme Government during his visit to Easter Island, *authorizing him to remove the disturbers of the public tranquility from the island, if necessary.*

This in response to your letter dated this past May 29<sup>th</sup>. God be with you (signature)” (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1967 & 1980, [*emphasis mine*]).

The *Baquedano* arrived in Rapa Nui on August 5<sup>th</sup> (1914) and set sail heading to Talcahuano on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that same month. In 1988, the president of the Elders’ Council, Alberto Hotus, published the proceedings put forth by Almonzor Hernández, consisting of the reading of declarations made by Rapanui that clearly denounce the arbitrariness and injustices committed by the *Exploitative Company of Easter Island*. Now, even though Hernández was sensitive to the accusations made by the Rapanui,<sup>12</sup> he finally recommended the politics of exile:

Having taken all the declarations and in view of the fiscal order, I left the canaca Daniel Maria Chavez on board so as to bring him to the mainland. He looked like the head of the main crimes which I report to you in a special confidential note including the proceedings. This individual will remain on board until you decide (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 1968).

<sup>12</sup> “The day after my arrival on Easter Island I could, without much effort, convince myself of Mr. Merlet’s lack of sympathy because of the innumerable abuses and even criminal acts committed by this man and his administrators against these unfortunate and uncultured inhabitants, rather worthy of humanitarian sentiments more elevated than the ones practiced by the cited tenant. My long stay in the company of the named Mr. during the trip, and the multiple occasions in which I was unfortunate enough to hear him express himself in highly inhuman terms against the unfortunate inhabitants of Easter Island, allows me to assure that it would be difficult to find another person who can remain so untouched by the misery in which they live and who, completely void of any altruistic sentiment, could scold with such fierceness these unlucky beings” (Hotus 1988: 335).

Along with this measure, Hernández published<sup>13</sup> an edict on August 13<sup>th</sup>, which reproduced almost point by point the edict of 1902:

- 1° Because Easter Island is and forms part of Chilean Territory, the only sovereignty and flag is the national one and it will not be possible to raise any other flag under any excuse.
- 2° The natives will recognize as superior authority and representative of the government Naval Sub-delegate Mr. Enrique P. Edmunds or his high ranking replacement and in case of his absence, he would designate Mr. Vives until the Government appoints a replacement.
- 3° Because native Johann Tepano is the chief or cacique named by the previous edict, the one who today represents all the natives in all their claims and who is in charge of keeping public order, the mentioned chief will be kept in this appointment, to whom the natives must obey under all circumstances. This chief or cacique will garner respect and fulfill the expectations and orders of the naval sub-delegate, who is his superior chief.
- 4° The Chilean government has assigned lands for housing and farming to the natives, of which they are already in possession. (This was declared in the previous edict by Commander Mr. Basilio Rojas). Under no circumstance can anyone trespass or destroy neither the fences of others that serve as boundaries, nor those that pertain to the tenant, Mr. Merlet. The traffic must be limited to public roads and these cannot be blocked off by stone walls and fences.
- 5° The natives are not subjected to forced labor by the tenant and if they do so it would be under a pre-defined personal contract defining the terms of the daily wage. Those natives who might by word or action advise or impede others from fulfilling them, will be punished for heading a mutiny (*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1914).

One of the differences of this new edict was that, in the future, cattle “robbery” would be punished with a jail sentence on the mainland: “9° It is strictly prohibited to kill cattle or sheep belonging to the tenant Mr. Merlet, and those who effectuate these actions will be punished and taken to the public prison on the mainland.”

Another development was the internal exile of the “lepers”: “12° It is strictly prohibited to go to the enclosure of the lepers, or for them to come to the village. When food needs to be taken, it will be left in a designated place where the lepers can retrieve it after alerting Mr. Vives.” It is important to place the word “leper” in quotation marks, because in the future there are numerous accusations, made by Ra-

panui against the naval sub-delegates, for sending “healthy” people to the leprosarium as means of punishment.

#### THE END OF THE DEPORTATION POLICY

One year after the “rebellion of Angata”, in August 1915, company employee Bautista Cousin was murdered. Everybody on the island knew who was responsible. Nevertheless, the company and the Chilean state (the sub-delegate and his police) did not have sufficient force to detain them. The Rapanui community gave evidence of its strength, warning with this sign that the deportation policy was not producing the expected disciplinary effect.

Vives Solar’s first report, of August 18<sup>th</sup>, warned the authorities “of certain demonstrations of indiscipline and rumors of a coming revolt by the canacas.” The second report, written once the crime had been committed, was precise about the measures that should be taken:

“Regarding the punishment which must be given to Cousin’s assassins I consider it indispensable that he be executed on Easter Island and in plain view of all the inhabitants. Deportation to Chile, to be judged there, would not be considered, by those that remain, as a punishment and there might even be some who are envious” (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 2093).

The book *Te Mau Hatu ‘o Rapa Nui* of the Elders’ Council contains a document that provides evidence of Vives Solar’s demand for exemplary punishment on the island and not on the mainland:

Mr. Director: I insist in asking you that the Commander of the ship you will send should receive ample instructions to impart severe punishment. I esteem it convenient to execute on the island at least two responsible for the crime. Otherwise these events will be repeated (Hotus 1988:358).

One of the reasons that Vives Solar possibly had for opposing the deportations was to avoid what had happened to exiled King Beri Beri:

When Tueri-Beri was accused of being rebellious, he was taken aboard the corvette where he was put to work as deckhand, but due to his good behavior he was ascended to the degree of guard and he was lucky enough to travel around the world on the training ship in the year 1908. Tueri-Beri, who changed his name to Beri-Beri on board, was afterwards elected police commander... (Vives Solar 1920).

What happened in June of 1916 when the *Baquedano* returned? We know that the murderers were neither executed nor deported, even though the commander of the *Baquedano*,

<sup>13</sup> “Take three copies of the present order, one will be placed in the chapel of the town of Hanga Roa, another will be delivered to the chief or cacique and the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the naval sub-delegate of Easter Island. Take note and let it be published by edict.”

Naval captain Luis Stuken, had been given orders to do so: "... to proceed with the legal investigation of the last events on the island and *bring to the mainland those who turn-out to be responsible for the assassination* of Company clerk Juan Bautista Cousin in order to put him at the disposition of the judicial authorities" (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 2090 and Vol. 2102, [*emphasis mine*]).

The only things Stuken took to the mainland were some objects belonging to Cousin: "a couple of used sandals, a revolver, a piece of ribbon and a handkerchief." (National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, Vol. 2102). The report of the company Administrator, dated almost fifteen years later, certifies that the perpetrators enjoyed complete liberty, and that two of them were community representatives during negotiations with the company.<sup>14</sup>

What were the reasons that brought the deportations to an end? Were these perhaps the public punishments on the Island, so often denounced by the Rapanui? No, the reasons had to do with public health: the Rapanui might bring leprosy to the mainland, they were "bearers of the germ of the disease." Let us remember that when the *Baquedano* returned to Valparaíso, there were numerous reports in the local press, like never before, particularly in *El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, because, on this particular trip, Military Bishop Rafael Edwards was on board, and he proved to be very critical of the conditions in which the Rapanui were living. After his return he started a campaign against Merlet and the Company, in favor of the islanders and of the interests of the state treasury. *El Mercurio* published the following in its afternoon edition:

During the recent trip of the *Baquedano* precautions were taken to avoid contact between the natives and the crew, because in a previous visit the doctor on board had confirmed the presence of leprosy in certain abundance and he deemed it necessary to prevent contact, in order to avoid later regrets ... There are some sick people that cause horror. Leprosy strips bit by bit their flesh and converts them into repulsive beings, from whom everybody shies away as if from a demon. We were told about an elder, reduced to a piece of human meat by the bite of the disease. Only his daughter would go near to him ... *The legal investigation of the assassination of Mr. Cousin, verified long ago, confirmed the culpability of those signaled as the authors; but they were not brought to the mainland out of fear that they might be carrying the germ of the disease that has sadly made Easter Island famous of late*" (*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1916, [*emphasis mine*]).

Allow me to end with a series of questions: Who could have imagined that leprosy would have such unexpected results: the end to deportations? On the one hand, how to pun-

ish future "disturbers of public order"? What to do with those who are, to use Merlet's terminology, "in complete subversion against the order there established"? And, on the other hand, was "the complete subversion of the order there established" the ultimate goal of the Rapanui leadership? Does the history after 1916 – once the "excesses" of the company were mitigated by state intervention and by the "charity" of the church and the presence of the Navy – suggest that such "subversion" never existed, but that it rather was a series of protests against theft and exploitation that violated the agreements between Rapanui and Chilean society? To use the terms of the Rapanui Elders' Council: Weren't the "disturbers" seeking to reconstitute the "Agreement of Wills" of 1888, or in other words, the harmony between the transfer of sovereignty to the Chilean Government, and the demand for the recognition of and respect for "the investiture of the Rapanui chiefs and the legitimate ownership of the Rapanui people of their island territory"? Did not the end of exile – which required dissidents to be processed on the island itself – and the presence of an authority of its own, lead to hybridism in the structures of power and a kind of "legal pluralism" on Rapa Nui?

The search for answers to these questions can be found in Rapanui political and cultural history, and in the as yet unwritten history of Chilean colonialism in the Pacific.

## REFERENCES

- Estella P.B. de 1920. *Los Misterios de la Isla de Pascua*. Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes.
- Fischer, S.R. 2005. *Island at the End of the World. The Turbulent History of Easter Island*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Hotus, A. et al. (Consejo de Ancianos) (1988) *Te Mau Hatu' O Rapa Nui*. Santiago: Editorial Remisión.
- McCall, G. 1996. El pasado en el presente de Rapanui (Isla de Pascua). *Culturas de Chile. Etnografía. Sociedades Indígenas contemporáneas y su Ideología* J. Hidalgo, V. Schiapasse, H. Niemeyer, C. Aldunate & P. Mege (eds. ):17-46. Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello.
- McCall, G. 1997. Riro, Rapu and Rapanui: Refoundations in Easter Island colonial history. *Rapa Nui Journal*, 11:112-122.
- McCall, G. 1999. *Rapanui. Tradición y sobrevivencia en Isla de Pascua*. Los Osos: The Easter Island Foundation.
- Ramírez, J.M. 2006. Cronología y fuentes de la historia Rapanui, 1722-1966. *ARCHIVUM, Revista del Archivo Histórico Patrimonial de la Ilustre Municipalidad de Viña del Mar*. Año VI (7):185-209.
- Routledge, K. 1919. *The Mystery of Easter Island*. London: Sifton, Praed & Co. Ltd.
- Sánchez Manterola, A.J. 1994. Cinco años en la isla de Pascua, 1896-1901. *Isla de Pascua. Horizontes sombríos y luminosos: historia documentada*. J. Conte Oliveros (ed.): 311-326. Santiago: Centro de Investigación de la Imagen.
- Toro, P. 1892. Isla de Pascua. Santiago, noviembre 15 de 1892. *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores, Culto I Colonización*. :187-216.

<sup>14</sup> National Archive, Ministry of the Navy, confidential section. "Of the commander of the ship '*General Baquedano*', Edgardo von Schroe- ders, to the Naval Minister, at sea, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930".