

News

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WHAT'S NEW ON RAPA NUI

Land disputes continue in Hangaroa

Since March 2010, a number of areas in Hangaroa have been occupied by various Rapanui family groups. These *tomas* (take-overs) were organized to gain access to ancestral lands that had been turned over to the armed forces and/or the government from 1918 onwards. In the last year 22 pieces of land have been occupied, including the museum, Hotel Hanga Roa, and a number of other areas containing government buildings. Although most of these occupations have come to an end, negotiations continue and the situation has not been fully resolved.

During the occupations, Chilean police officers attempted to evict the protestors. On September 7, 2010, they detained 20 people who were occupying the Hotel Hanga Roa. In late October, the Chilean government attempted to end the disputes and address additional issues by signing a plan for the development of Rapa Nui. Chile's Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter announced that the government was pledging nearly US\$270 million dollars toward improving infrastructure. The money is aimed at improving education, public works, and tourism on the island. Reactions to this pledge were mixed in the community, and shortly thereafter, a "march for peace" was organized on October 28. Banners such as "*Respeto entre nosotros*" (respect amongst ourselves) were displayed as more than 400 members of the Rapa Nui community marched down the main streets of Hangaroa (*El Correo del Moai*, November 2010).

On the 3rd of December, violence erupted when police officers attempted to remove individuals from a government building near the center of Hangaroa. At least six people were injured, including the president of the "Rapa Nui Parliament", Leviante Araki. Three people were flown to mainland Chile for treatment. This event drew much international media attention.

Following the eviction on the 3rd of December, negotiations continued and reactions to the land disputes among the community remained mixed. This was shown during a second "march for peace" carried out on January 14, following the end of protests at some previously occupied areas. Banners such as "*La violencia no es solo represión policial también es falta de solidaridad entre los Rapa Nui*" (violence is not only police repression, it is also the fault of solidarity between the Rapanui) were waved during this event (photos published online by *El Correo del Moai*, January 2011).

The most highly publicized and disputed land occupation is that of the Hotel Hanga Roa, which has been occupied by members of the Hito family since August 2010. Seventeen people were arrested for trespassing on January 13th and negotiations continue in and out of court regarding this land dispute. The hotel is currently privately owned by members of the Schiess family, who are negotiating with the Hito family regarding the land.

On the 22nd of February, new proposals were presented that focused on the hotel as well as six other areas that were contested by Rapanui families. The proposals offered other properties as compensation due to the placement of permanent government buildings on the contested lands. The Chilean government's proposals have not been accepted by the Rapanui family members, and negotiations continue (Briggs 2011, published in the *Santiago Times*, February 22, 2011).

On March 1, the Chilean government named Carlos Llancaqueo, the ex-sub-secretary of Bienes Nacionales (domestic goods), as the commissioner of a new special commission for Rapa Nui. According to an article published in the *El Mostrador* newspaper on March 1, 2011, the commission will be responsible for resolving the "pending conflicts" on the island, including the land disputes as well as issues concerning proposed migration regulations for individuals moving to Rapa Nui from mainland Chile.

Toromiro re-introduction efforts in full bloom

Sonia Haoa reports that her project, in collaboration with CONAF, which is working to re-introduce *Sophora toromiro* to Rapa Nui, has had much success this year. There are presently nearly 40 *toromiro* plants on the island and they are certified by the Jardín Botánico de Viña del Mar (the botanical garden of Viña del Mar). The photo below shows the 8-10 year-old *toromiro* in bloom in Sonia Haoa's garden at her *parcela* in Piataro. The plants are thriving and Sonia and her team have replanted 20 of them in the gardens of CONAF along a road called "Ara o te Toromiro." The *toromiro* are



planted within distinct types of rock gardens that are typical of archaeological remains found across the island. This project aims to show the importance of rock gardens to local residents as well as visitors to the island. As Sonia notes, “the only way to educate people is to show [the benefits of rock gardens] because people cannot imagine the value and importance of rock gardens.”

Italian team developing a treatment for lichen on moai

(From “Fighting the fungus” by Tina Lepri, published online on 5 October 2010 in the Art Newspaper Online (available at <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Fighting+the+fungus/21420>)

Professor Lorenzo Casamenti and students from the Lorenzo de’ Medici restoration school in Florence, Italy, have developed a treatment to be applied to *moai* in order to eradicate the lichen that cover the statues. According to Professor Casamenti, the team has “at long last discovered a solvent that destroys the lichen but not the statues” and they plan to work with local archaeologists to apply this treatment to statues in order to rid them of destructive lichen, which aid in the deterioration of statues.

Update: A new sustainable visitor center at ‘Orongo

Eduardo A. Villafranca (Parks Canada) of Winnipeg, Canada, has reported that the development of the new visitor center at the ceremonial village of ‘Orongo continues in collaboration with CONAF. Mr. Villafranca and his team visited the island in October/November 2010 to begin Phase II of the project, which includes the installation of new interpretive components (including new signage and interpretive panels), and the renovation of the ‘Orongo Visitor Reception Center. The visitor center is scheduled to open in May 2011.

A new project on the effects of climate change on Rapa Nui is currently underway

Petra Campbell reports that the International Help Fund Australia has commissioned a study that explores the effects of climate change on Rapa Nui. The study examines the possible effects of a number of scenarios for temperature change / sea level rise. This study has identified three “high risk” sites, which include the Hangaroa coastline from Hanga Piko to the cemetery near Tahai, Tongariki, and ‘Anakena. Lincoln Quilliam, who is an environmental engineer from the University of New South Wales, travelled to the island in late February 2011 to meet with local government officials to discuss the project’s scope. He also carried out a coastal field survey to create shoreline profiles that can be used to model coastal hazards. He made site visits to waste, water,

energy and transport infrastructure for assessment and gave a public presentation at the museum.

Recent fires damage archaeological sites and result in cancellation of popular Tapati event

(As reported in *El Correo del Moai*, February 2010)

An 800-acre fire damaged archaeological sites in and around Puna Pau (the *pukao* quarry) in early January 2011. Interpretive signage at the site was destroyed by the fires as well. According to CONAF, there have been at least 8 suspicious fires that have been lit in recent months. Fires were also lit near Rano Raraku and Papa Vaka, and shortly before the Haka Pei competition on Maunga Pui. This annual event that features in the Tapati celebration was subsequently cancelled as a result.

International cliff diving competition held on Rapa Nui

On March 13, 2011, the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series kicked off on the shores of Rapa Nui. The competition featured 12 divers from around the world. A 27 meter high wooden platform was constructed over the cliffs at Mataveru just south of Ana Kai Tangata, where over 2000 spectators gathered to watch the event (*El Mercurio*, March 14, 2011). Further information, including video footage, can be found at http://www.redbull.com/cs/Satellite/en_INT/World-Series/Cliffdiving-Page/001238874343857.

What’s new at the MAPSE

Staff members at the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert report that the museum re-opened its doors on January 5, 2011 after being closed for more than 3 months due to land disputes on the island. While the museum was closed to the public, museum staff participated in a number of events in the community. In October, staff from the museum participated in the 50th Anniversary celebration of the restoration of Ahu Akivi (see Brigid Mulloy’s commentary in this issue for a full synopsis of the event). In November, the museum put together a display of photos of faces from various years for the annual “*Día de la Lengua Rapa Nui*” (day of the Rapanui language) and participated in the “*Día de la No Violencia contra la Mujer*” (day against domestic violence towards women) on November 25.

Since re-opening, the museum has put on a number of events. In early February, a new installation entitled “*Murmillos Ascendentes*” (ascending murmurs) was installed at the museum. On the 3rd of March, Lincoln Quilliam, a researcher at the University of New South Wales, presented a talk entitled “*Cambio Climático en Isla de Pascua para el 2100*” (Climate Change on Rapa Nui in the year 2100).