

theirs was also the first modern survey of *ahu*, even though they have earlier (p. 112) cited Martinsson-Wallin's *ahu* inventory of 1994. It is also striking that absolutely no mention is made of the fact that all the basic foundation stones of the authors' scenario—such as the supposedly late date for human arrival, the alleged devastation of palm trees by rats, the lack of evidence for weapons or violence on the island—have been challenged and refuted in recent years, mostly in papers in this journal (e.g. Flenley & Bahn 2007, 2010; Flenley et al. 2007).

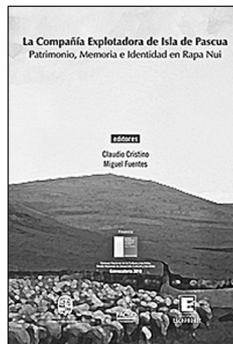
One of the greatest omissions is that there is no mention of the bird-man cult at 'Orongo. This is exceptionally convenient for Hunt and Lipo as it flourished especially in the 18th century which, they say, saw a complete collapse from disease. Actually, the bird-man cult seems to have provided a new form of government to replace the previous system. The cooperative carving and erection of *moai* ceased in the 17th century, one symptom of the first decline. The second decline, resulting in part from European-introduced disease, probably occurred mainly in the 19th century. Both the bird-man and *moai* carving seem to have been ingenious ideas by the highly intelligent Rapanui people to establish a stable yet competitive social system, as suggested in the third edition of our own book (Bahn & Flenley 2011).

The dust jacket claims that the authors have an “ironclad case” and provide a “definitive solution” to the mystery of what really happened on the island. Needless to say, neither of these claims holds water. It is always a telling and ominous sign when a book's enthusiastic jacket-blurbs are not written by specialists in the subject concerned, and when such specialists are also rare or absent in the acknowledgements. It generally means “buyer beware”.

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## Cristino, Claudio and Miguel Fuentes (eds.). *La Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua. Patrimonio, Memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui.*



Concepción: Ediciones Escaparaté, 2011. 338 pp. ISBN: 956-7-827992. Ordering information: [escaparaté\\_ediciones@yahoo.com](mailto:escaparaté_ediciones@yahoo.com)

Review by Riet Delsing

This edited volume, financed by the Chilean government's *Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Cultural y las Artes* (FONDART), constitutes a terrific contribution to Rapa Nui studies. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book is that all the authors are Chileans, many connected to the Universidad de Chile, including one of its editors, archaeologist Claudio Cristino, who headed the research team, as well as anthropologist Rolf Foerster and several recent *licenciado(a)s* in history, anthropology, archeology and law. Other well-known contributors are Nelson Castro, Edmundo Edwards and Rapanui islanders Alberto Hotus and Felipe Pakarati.

This irruption of Chileans—although long overdue—in a field largely dominated by American and European scholars offers exiting possibilities for future research. Another

interesting feature of the book is that most articles are based on recent archival research and oral testimonies, as well as new readings of older published materials, which allow for new data and interpretations of life on Rapa Nui in the early years of the last century.

As the title indicates, the volume concentrates on the protracted time span that Williamson Balfour & Co. had a virtual reign on the island. It emphasizes the “triangulation” that existed between the Company, the Chilean State and the Rapanui community, a term proposed by Rolf Foerster for this context, and a useful conceptual tool to get a handle on a period that some of us have written about without doing the so valuable and necessary archival research.

The book starts with a chapter by Claudio Cristino, based on his co-authored 1984 publication (Cristino et al. 1984), entitled “Colonialismo y neocolonialismo en Rapa Nui: una reseña histórica,” which makes for an excellent introduction to the period under consideration. This is followed by eleven thematic articles, two testimonial accounts by Rapanui, and a description of the *cantata* Rapanui inspired by María Angata.

Two of the more thought-provoking essays are by young historian Cristián Moreno Pakarati. He shows how the Rapanui had a political power structure in place based on their lineage system, which evolved over time, adapting to different forms of colonialism. In a second essay, he discusses how the Rapanui rebelled against these colonial incursions in the period between the death of the king, Simeon Riro Kainga, and the rebellion of Angata. Cristián looks for answers to his novel research questions in well-known published materials, with interesting and at times provocative results.

Historian Nelson Castro’s work has been of historical and theoretical importance ever since his MA thesis of 1996, which he later converted into the book *El Diablo, Dios y la Profetisa. Evangelización y Milenarismo en Rapa Nui. 1864-1914* (2006). In this current article he continues his structuralist analysis by showing how the first catechizers constructed a political space that allowed for a fusion between the sacred and Rapanui sovereignty, which translated into a strategy for political autonomy.

Anthropologist Rolf Foerster analyzes the role played by Bishop Rafael Edwards in the consolidation of Chilean colonialism in the early 1900s. He discusses the bishop’s critique of Williamson Balfour & Co., as well as his simultaneous defense of the Rapanui people and Chilean sovereignty over the island, which in turn led to diminishing Rapanui sovereignty. The question of Rapanui sovereignty is also taken up by young historian Miguel Fuentes—one of the editors of the book—in his extensive article about the relationship between the Company, the Chilean State and the island community between 1917 and 1936. This text is mainly based on the memoirs of *subdelegados marítimos* (maritime sub-delegates) Carlos Recabarren and Manuel Olalquiaga, with hitherto unknown data, e.g., about the 1928 strike of Rapanui Company workers.

An article by Edmundo Edwards deals with land ownership on Rapa Nui between 1868 and 1930, starting with an introduction about land tenure in Polynesia. In his treatment of the history of land tenure on the island, he makes extensive use of missionary letters which reveal fascinating data, such as the role of the church in the expropriation of Rapanui land and the concentration of the population in Hangaroa. Edwards’ text beautifully reflects his many years of research in a place he has made his own.

The publication continues with two articles about daily life, health and food in Company times by young anthropologists Francisca Santana, Constanza Roa and Rodrigo Retamal. They contain a lot of new and interesting data based on oral testimonies, which help to reconstruct living conditions on Rapa Nui in those days. These articles are followed by Miguel Fuentes’ and architect Felipe Rovano’s chapter entitled “Conformación del paisaje industrial a partir de la ocupación territorial de la Compañía Explotadora (1895-1953). Una aproximación desde la arqueología industrial y la arquitectura.” Here the authors employ the concept of “company land” as a type of territorial organization. This allows for novel interpretations of the ways the Company transformed the physical landscape of the island, as well as its people’s social organization.

Finally, we can read several testimonies recollected by historians Carmen Gloria Soto and Miguel Fuentes, and provided by Rapanui Alberto Hotus and Felipe Pakarati. While the former concentrate on life in Company years, Hotus tells us about his first trip to the mainland in 1940 and his experiences as a nurse in charge of patients in the leper colony. Felipe Pakarati gives a detailed account of his time as an employee of Williamson Balfour & Co. We are then offered the story of the creation of a musical work in “1914 Angata, Cantata Rapanui” by Sofia Abarca. The book finishes with an annex consisting of an excellent description of the historic relationship between the Chilean State and the Rapanui people by lawyer Paola González Carvajal.

All in all, this book is a tremendous contribution about life on Rapa Nui in Company years, financed by public funds in a time when the need for quality and financing of public education in Chile are being claimed by its civil society. This fruitful collaboration between faculty and students of the Anthropology Department of one of Chile’s major public institutions of higher education shows once again what can be accomplished through quality public education.

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