

HUGH CUMING'S ACCOUNT OF AN ANCHORAGE AT RAPANUI (EASTER ISLAND), NOVEMBER 27–8, 1827

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Among the manuscripts in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, is the unpublished 'Journal of a Voyage from Valparaiso to the Society and the Adjacent Islands performed in the Schooner Discoverer, Samuel Grimwood Master, in the years 1827 and 1828, by Hugh Cuming' (A 1336, CY Reel 194, 145 frames). Between its humble covers lies a veritable treasure-trove of early 19th century information on an impressive list of Polynesian islands. Pages 7–12 (frames 14–9) of this journal include a detailed account of an anchorage at Hangaroa (Cook Bay), Rapanui, effected November 27–8, 1827. Because such early reports about Rapanui are so rare, and, in particular, as this one is exceedingly wealthy in significant observations, it is reproduced here verbatim.

"On the 15th of Nov' made Sail with a fine Breeze from the S.E. for the Island de Pasqua of the Spaniards who discovered it about 200 years since and now generally [sic] known by the name of Easter Island it is about 12 Miles long and 4 broad its shores are bold and rocky without good Anchorage or Shelter. The Island is destitute of Timber Trees and very little brush Wood and rises into gentle Hills extremely well cultivated the ground being laid out in square patches and those close to each other gives it a pretty appearance. Yams, Sweet potatoes, Plantians, Sugar Cane, and Cocos appear to be principally Cultivated. The Inhabitans are numerous and extremely well made particularly the Men of a light Copper Colour having their Lips Dye'd Blue, strong, Active and nearly beardless both Sexes are Tatoo'd each sex differing from each other, fine Teeth and have their Bodies painted with Red and Black Earths and generally go naked, very few having a Covering and those I presume to be Chiefs.

"On standing into the Bay on the West side of the Island which appears to be the most highly cultivated, we saw the Natives collected in great numbers on the Rocks and on nearing the shore they took to the Water and swam onboard each person having a small Net or Basket or a Bunch of plantians on his Back for Sale or barter. when the Sea becomes rough which occurd in the afternoon some of them made use of small Balsas or Bundle of Flags about 2 Feet long, Six Inches thick at one End and tapering to a point at the other. this the[y] place betwixt their legs to assist them in Swimming at which the[y] are very expert as I ever witness'd, having come onboard the[y] appeared perfetly at home showing the utmost good Nature and freely gave what the[y] had brought for any small trifle that was offerd them they where [were] particularly partial to Wood and Fish hooks for one only the[y] gave a Net or Basket full of Fruit or Vegetables. Money they appear to not have an Idea of when offerd to them they tried to bite it, from every appearance what I saw they neither have

any Quadrupeds or Tame Fowls neither could I find they had any defensive Weapons, they brought onboard a few small poles about 6 feet long, headed with a stone but from the softness of the Wood and the insecure manner the sharp stone was secured it could be of small service as a defensive Weapon. I rather should suppose them to be used for Fishing Spears. They had also some about 18 Inches long which I suppose where [were] used as Knives from the brittleness of the stone I am of an opinion they would not be able to cut any hard substa [substance] with them. they also had a number of small Figures Carv'd of Wood in the shape of men and Fishes, but whether they where [were] Household Gods or Toys for their amusement I could not discover. after some little parly with them I got some of the Idols from the owners, they would not part with them except for some Species of Cloth as Hankerchiefs or Shirts of which the[y] appeard very fond of. previous to the delivery of the Idol the[y] set up a great Shout lifting up the figure above their Heads several times all joining in Chorus and when upon delivery they would prop it against their brest several times. Although their Chorus was very boisterous it was not unmusical, it gave me great pleasure to see their extreme good Nature shown on every occasion, they appeared perfectly at home as if we had been acquainted for Years. I had a Native of the Pomotian [paumotu] Island onboard but he could not hold conversation with the Islanders, he understood but a few words they spoke and to him the[y] paid a great attention supposing he was a Countryman of theirs, they where [were] extremely talkative and loud in their speech. my Vessell being small and having upwards of Fifty Men onboard of the Natives I began to be oneasy as I had but Eight persons belonging to the Schooner, fearing they might observe our weakness compared to theirs, particularly as the[y] began to inspect every thing that could be movd from its place. two men more bolder than the rest tried to lift the Main Mast thinking the[y] had a fine prize but as it would not Yeild to their strenght the[y] gave it up. some few little things they dextrously stole although we kept the best Watch possible with which the[y] immediately swam onshore on Observing a middle aged man who was highly Tatoo'd particularly the back neck and Face sitting down abaft very Sedately I thought he must be a Chief upon which I made signs to him I did not like so many persons onboard upon which he order'd every one overboard and would not allow a Single person to come onboard without my consent

“On finding what respect the[y] paid the above personage I could not consider him less than a Chief. Therefore I made him several small presents amongst the rest a Bottle of Wine which I gave him to drink. on Parting he return'd it again and would not accept it Empty Bottles he appear'd to set a Value on Although those merry Islanders thought they had a right to take what they could lay their hands on, yet in bartering they never once used any fraud but on the Contrary where [were] Generous, for when I declin'd to purchase any more Fruit or Vegetables having a sufficiency untill my arrival at Pitcarn's Island for the Crew the Natives threw onboard all the[y] had brought off and

left the Vessell with Cheers

"Easter Island. Is situated in 27°9 South and 106°25 West Long. and distant 2000 Miles from any inhabited Spot and how to accou[n]t for their Island being populated at such a great distance it is a risk to offer an opinion The whole of the Pomotian Islands is scarce of Trees and those of small Growth perhaps they made use of Rafts of Logs of Wood but how could people exist for nearly 700 Leagues without Water and perhaps provi[sion] for amongst the whole Group of Low Islands they have not a Vessell or Substitute to Carry Water. Landing at this Island is particularly hazardous from its Rocky shores tremendous surf continually running and from the pilfering habits of the Natives. all those that have attempted to Land have been rather uncourtously handled which prevented me from making the attempt. Therefore I caused the Vessell to stand near as possible to the Shore to observe the Monuments of ancient days Vesse[ls]. Their Houses Plantations & on standing Close to the shore we saw an immense multitude assembled around the Rocks from whence the[y] generally swam of[f] to the ship. amongst them I saw several appearantly cloth'd in a long cloak hanging from the neck to the heels the Face and body painted Red and Black with a Species of head dress like a Turban. the whole party where [were] extremely clamorous to the right appear'd those carv'd Stone somewhat in the human figure but of Giantic forms. here and there betwixt them I saw a few plantian Trees. their Houses are low in shape like the covering of a Waggon but not quite as high with a door at each End exactly alike those of the Island Opara in Lat 27°26 South and 144°11 West Longitude The Ladies here ornament their Ears with a piece of Wood from an Inch to an Inch and half being thrust into the Fleshy part of the Ear. around the neck some few have a piece of shell made fast to a small line, around the Loins the[y] have a Cord made of the Human Hair neatly made to which the[y]] attach a bunch of long Grass made fast before and behind to cover their private parts. by sounding I found the Rocks to be Coral generally of a deep Red and the Sand to be composed of broken Shell and Coral. as I could not make them comprehend that I wanted Shells I could only procure a few Norites exterior, Black with Yellow Mouths. about half a Mile's distance from the South End of the Island is a notable high Rock when seen at a league distance appears like a Ship under full sail with the exception of the Fore Top Full Mast with a Stiff Bridle, Ensign flying & — it is truly a novel sight. having for the part of Two days enjoy'd the intercourse with those happy unsophisticated beings, we gave them some trifling presents and made Sail for Du[c]ies Island on the 28th of Nov. ..."

COMMENTS

Alfred Métraux, the first scholar to mention this historic visit to Rapanui,

was evidently unaware of the existence of Cuming's original account, and cites merely a later private letter by Cuming to an otherwise unidentified Dr Hooker, whose interest appears to have been chiefly botanical. To quote Métraux's information in its entirety (1940:41):

A manuscript letter written by H. Cuming to Dr. Hooker (dated London, March 21, 1832) reveals that in 1831 the island was visited by the schooner *Discoverer*. Since the document is still unpublished it is of interest to reproduce the passage concerning Easter Island:

'On the 28th arrived at Easter Island and lay to all the day. Number of the natives came on board; were a lively good natured race, rather inclined to take anything portable but free to give for the merest trifle. Supplied us With Plantains, Yams, Sweet Potatoes and a Root called Cocos in the West Indies. Could not procure any botanical specimens from fear of the numerous inhabitants who lined the shore. Could not discover anything larger than the Plantain and that was not high. The sides of the hills, were extremely well cultivated, laid out in squares and in great number together.'

Unfortunately, Métraux does not indicate where he obtained this information or where the letter itself now is. It is most peculiar that Métraux should — allegedly according to Cuming's London letter of 1832 — give the date of this voyage as 1831, especially in view of the fact that the letter was written in London in March: had Cuming indeed been in the South Pacific in November of 1831, he could never have accomplished a return voyage to England in so short a time. Yet the earlier date of 1827 is incontestable, as the Mitchell Library MS 1336 is clearly an autograph, and there is no further evidence that the *Discoverer*, with or without Cuming on board, had ever made a second voyage to Rapanui after that of 1827. Métraux's date of 1831 can, therefore, be regarded as an error.

Equally erroneous is the day given in this 1832 letter, as, considering the original journal entry, the *Discoverer* anchored "for the part of Two days" then left Rapanui on November 28.

With these exceptions, however, Cuming's letter does appear to provide a correct, if skeletal, synopsis of his visit: that a number of Rapanui came on board; that they were "a lively good natured race" (original MS: "showing the utmost good Nature"); that they were given to pilfering, but were also "free to give for the merest trifle" (original MS: "freely gave what the[y] had brought for any small trifle"); that they supplied the *Discoverer* with "Plantains, Yams, Sweet Potatoes and a Root called Cocos in the West Indies" (original MS:

"Yams, Sweet potatoes, Plantains, Sugar Cane, and Cocos appear to be principally Cultivated"); that Cuming feared a landing because of the numerous Rapanui on shore; that he saw nothing "larger than the Plantain and that was

not high”; and that the sides of the hills were “extremely well cultivated, laid out in squares and in great number together” (original MS: “extremely well cultivated the ground being laid out in square patches and those close to each other”). From the above correspondences, there can be little doubt that Cuming had referred either to his original journal or to a verbatim copy before penning his London letter to Dr Hooker.

In Rapanui scholarship this letter of 1832 has remained the sole account of the 1827 anchorage, and Métraux's erroneous date of 1831 became scripture, for want of better information. Englert (1948:150) mentions the arrival “of a schooner ‘*Discoverer*’ in 1831 “. Heyerdahl (1961:67) tells us, “A manuscript letter from H. Cuning [sic], London, 1832, reveals that the schooner *Discoverer* had briefly called at Easter Island in 1831”, and then proceeds to quote Métraux's information (above); a short, revised account; with the same errors, appears also in Heyerdahl's most recent work (1989:60–1). McCall has been the only scholar to mention the Mitchell Library manuscript (1976:91 and fn.4, unfortunately failing to provide the MS number), but only writes about it, somewhat strangely: “Cuming's coy remarks that the Ensign of the *Discoverer* had much to do with the Islanders while they lay off Hangaroa for five days [sic] in 1827 may be a reference to this traffic” (i.e., prostitution). It will be noted, however, that the only “ensign” mentioned in Cuming's manuscript is his comparison of the “Rock” (Motu Kaokao) to a ship underfull sail with a ship's ensign flying (MS pp. 11–2, not 10, as McCall, fn. 4, claims), in other words, a flag, not a ship's officer; the *Discoverer* lay off Hangaroa for “the part of Two days” (MS p. 12), not five; and Cuming made no “coy remarks” as such, as the account records no actual traffic with the Rapanui women, although it is clear from Cuming's statements that women must also have boarded. Finally, in his “Easter Island Chronology”, Hoorebeeck (1977:4) lists tersely: “1831 — ‘*Discoverer*’”.

This is the sum of references in Rapanui scholarship to this 1827 anchorage.

Before Métraux (1940:41), it was wholly unknown, and, even today, most books and articles treating of early visits to the island still ignore the *Discoverer*'s sojourn. This is unfortunate, as Cuming's report reveals information that is quite unknown in other early accounts.

THE TEXT

Cuming specifically refers to the “Island de Pasqua of the Spaniards who discovered it about 200 years since and now generally known by the name of Easter Island” (MS p.7). Cuming appears to be the only visitor of his era who seemingly acknowledged the 1770 claim to the island by the Spanish Crown, even calling it “Pasqua” (pascua), Spanish for “Easter”, although the Spaniards themselves had renamed the island “San Carlos” in honour of King Carlos III of Spain.¹ He is, however, wrong when he states that it was the Spaniards who “discovered” Rapanui, apart from the obvious Polynesian settlement: the first Europeans known to have visited this most isolated inhabited island were the

three multinational crews under Roggeveen's Dutch command, who then called the island Paasschen Eil, Easter Island, Osterinsel, île de Paques, Isla de Pascua, etc., for having arrived there on Easter Sunday, 1722.²

That the island was already then "destitute of Timber Trees" as well as the fact that the land was cultivated in "fields" or "square patches",³ was remarked upon by earlier visitors.⁴ Also mentioned in earlier reports are the yams, sweet potatoes, roots (here called "Cocos"), sugar-cane and plantains.⁵ Although Cuming's description of the Rapanui themselves agrees with what was already known,⁶ nowhere in the literature of the island is there mention of the practice by the Rapanui men of dyeing their lips blue.⁷ Further, only Cook (1777:1:290), from whose party most of the Rapanui women appeared to have been hidden away, had remarked in 1774 upon the Rapanui women being slightly tattooed in contrast with the Rapanui men, as Cuming similarly notes a half-century later. However; in 1825, Beechey (1831:52–3) had found the women to be more tattooed than the men. It seems most likely that Cuming, like Cook, observed too few women to offer a valid assessment.

The Rapanui's custom of swimming out to a visiting vessel with a "small Net or Basket or a Bunch of plantians" is well attested at an early date, but it was a custom that was, with increased traffic, apparently practised later only infrequently because of several violent incidents.⁸ Cuming's crew was, then, especially fortunate to receive a "Polynesian welcome" at Rapanui at this generally violent period in international relations.

Cuming further notes (MS pp. 7–8) how the Rapanui make use of "small Balsas or Bundle of Flags about 2 Feet long" that taper to a point at each end to assist them in swimming out to the *Discoverer*, this *pōra* (type of raft) was first mentioned by Lisiansky (1814:1:58).⁹ Although Beechey (1831:54), visiting two years earlier, had noticed "three boats hauled up on the shore re-sembling the drawing in Pérouse's Voyage", Cuming notes seeing only an indeterminate number of "Vesse[ls]" on shore (MS p. 10), and forgoes a description.

The Rapanui's partiality to any object of wood and to (metal) fishhooks, the island's luxury commodities in the early 19th century, is apparently first documented here by Cuming,¹⁰ as is their complete ignorance of the significance of money.

Cuming is incorrect when claiming the Rapanui have no quadrupeds (MS p. 8) — the indigenous Polynesian rat had already been noted by Cook (1777:1:288) — nor "tame fowls": both Cook (p. 285) and La Pérouse (1797:1:76) had specifically lamented the fowls' scarcity, not absence. Though his remark that he could not discover any defensive weapons generally agrees with the observations of most early visitors,¹¹ it is equally wrong: the Rapanui possessed an abundance of such weapons, many very similar to a variety of known Polynesian artefacts, as Cook and the two Forsters had already noted.¹² The six-foot-long spears (throwing spear or javelin) are clearly the Rapanui *kakau*, and the shorter variety are thrusting

spears or pikes (vero). Cuming dangerously mistakes their purpose.

That figurines were often traded on Rapanui for various objects of wood, fishhooks and cloth is well documented.¹³ However, Cuming is the first to mention figures in the shape of fish.¹⁴ He is also alone in his speculation whether these figures represent household gods or "Toys for their amusement". The Rapanui's apparent ceremony upon relinquishing these cherished artefacts is particularly striking, the only such ceremony ever witnessed on the island.¹⁵

Of singular linguistic interest is the comment (MS p.9) that the "Pomotian" (paumotuan; later form: Tuamotuan) on board the *Discoverer* was quite unable to hold conversation with the Rapanui, although he could understand "a few words they spoke". The only similar linguistic experiment on Rapanui at such an early date was that by Cook in 1774, evidently with similar futility.¹⁶ It is also one of the earliest statements we possess that the Rapanui were "extremely talkative and loud in their speech".

Cuming felt considerable consternation at the well-documented Rapanui custom of pilfering "every thing that could be movd from its place".¹⁷ Not participating in this frenetic practice was the highly tattooed "middle aged man" who was sitting abaft: Cuming was probably correct in assuming this gentleman to be a "chief" (local ariki), as a fuller tattooing like his was generally regarded in Polynesia¹⁸ as an expression of personal wealth, and also because he demonstrably exerted authority among those Rapanui present. The episode of presenting this alleged ariki with a bottle of wine to drink: is quite unique among early Rapanui accounts, with regard to social standing, and the ariki's unimpressed reaction to the Western concoction is equally singular: in no other Rapanui account do we learn of empty bottles being prized over filled ones, although in two other early reports they were accepted as novelties.

The observation that, in bartering, the Rapanui "never once used any fraud" (MS p. 10) is most remarkable, when compared with other early accounts, and is attributable perhaps to the possibility of a temporary period of material sufficiency, internal peace, external rapprochement for still unknown reasons¹⁹ or, of course, Cuming's own artlessness. One must basically regard Cuming's account as particularly naive, one standing, however, not wholly alone among the many recorded (and many unpublished) visits to Rapanui in the first half of the 19th century, a period that brought the Rapanui not only much commerce but also much violence and injustice at the hands of Europeans and North Americans. Although refreshing in its narrative, Cuming's positive experience at Rapanui still does little, however, to dispel the general impression of the basic hostility of the Rapanui at this time towards the many foreign visitors to their island, a hostility engendered principally by the respective visitors themselves.²⁰

Turning to Cuming's geographical observations (MS p. 10): Rapanui actually lies at latitude 27°09'30" S and longitude 109°26'14" W and ca. 3600 km west of the Chilean mainland and ca. 2600 km east of Mangareva.

Whereas earlier visitors were far more explicit in their descriptions of

the famous Rapanui moai (the large standing statues),²¹ Cuming pays them scant attention (MS pp. 10–1), evidently more interested in the unusual dress of several Rapanui, identifiable as the standard *kahu* or *nua* (tapa cloaks) worn by both men and women (more the latter than the former) as general expressions of wealth,²² their faces and bodies painted red and black,²³ wearing a “Species of head dress like a Turban”, no doubt the traditional Rapanui hau moroki (conical feather cap).²⁴

Cuming’s terse description of the Rapanui thatched *hare* agrees with known accounts.²⁵ However, he is alone among early observers in comparing these structures, apparently from personal experience (he gives the nautical position, implying a previous visit), explicitly with those of “Opara” (i.e., Rapa), the first observer to claim this similarity.²⁶

The “Ladies” ear ornamentation, as described by Cuming (MS p. 11), is identified here for the first time as being of wood.²⁷ The Rapanui men must, by this time, have already abandoned this practice, as Beechey (1831 :52) had noted in 1825 that “the custom is not so general with the men as formerly”. On his visit two years after Beechey, Cuming apparently saw only women with extended earlobes. Flat shells worn about the neck had already been noticed by Roggeveen (1908:22) in 1722, and the cord of human hair about the loins to which was attached “a bunch of long Grass” had also been described by Beechey (1831:45) in 1825 as a “small triangular *maro*, made of grass and rushes”.

The “notable high Rock” (MS p. 11) Cuming admires “about half a Mile’s distance from the South End of the Island” is Motu Kaokao, the islet between the shore and Motu Nui, the latter then still featuring prominently in the annual Orongo *tangata manu* (“Birdman”) celebration during which the first-laid egg of the *manu tara* was gathered on Motu Nui in fierce, ritual competition. Cuming’s poetic description of Motu Kaokao as resembling “a Ship under full sail” stands alone in early Rapanui literature, a most poignant conclusion to a quite exceptional account.²⁸

NOTES

1. Cf. Métraux (1940:33): “...this name lasted no longer than the memory of the soon-forgotten expedition”.

2. Cuming is careful to note that the island is “now generally [sic] known by the name of Easter Island” (and its European forms), as he was doubtless aware of the other names for the island listed by the Spaniards (Isla de Davis), Cook (“Davis’ Land”, Teapy, Tamareki, Whyhu), and Forster (“Oster-Eyland. oder Waihu”). The two names “Easter Island” (and its European forms) and “Waihú” (Vaihu, a former settlement on the southern coast) held themselves in balance internationally as recognised names for the island until the apparently external coining of the name Rapanui in 1863 as a result of the international slave raids (1862).

3. Behrens in 1722 (1737:135), Gonzalez in 1770 (1908:90), Hervé in 1770 (1908:123), Cook in 1774 (1777:1:281), Forster in 1774(1777: 1:556–9), Delano

in 1804(1817:356) and Choris in 1816 (1822:11).

4. Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:21), Gonzalez in 1770 (1908:101), Cook in 1774 (1777:1 : 285), Forster in 1774 (1777:1:559), La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:318–9) and Rollin, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:2:238).

5. Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:21): bananas, potatoes, sugar-cane “and many other kinds of fruits of the earth”; Gonzalez in 1770 (1908:90): yucca, yams, sweet potatoes, plantains, sugar-cane; Hervé in 1770 (1908:123): plantain gardens, sugar-cane, sweet potatoes, taro, yams, white gourds “and plants like those whose leaves are employed at the Callao for making mats”; Cook in 1774 (1777: 1 :587): bananas, potatoes, yams, eddoes, and (p.282): sugar-cane, plantain trees; Forster in 1774 (1777: 1:559): bananas, sugar-cane, yams, sweet potatoes, taro; Rollin, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:2:238): potatoes, yams, sugar-cane, “etc.”; De Langle, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:332–3): bananas, mulberry trees.

6. Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:15), Behrens in 1722 (1737:136), Agüera in 1770 (1908:96 and 99), Hervé in 1770 (1908: 127). Cook in 1774(1777:1:290), Forster in 1774 (1777:1:564. 584–5). La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:321–2) and Rollin. by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:2:332–3).

7. Beechey (1831:53) mentions only: “Most of their lips were also stained”, and observes that the females tattooed the “fleshy part of their lips”.

8. The degree of Rapanui welcome varied often according to the degree of hostility on the part of each preceding vessel. Whereas Roggeveen (1722), Gonzalez (1770), Cook (1774), La Pérouse (1786) and Lisiansky (1804) were all welcomed in “Polynesian fashion”, all later landings or attempted landings were invariably ventured under mortal danger as a result of subsequent “slave raids” (1805) and otherwise unattested incidents, including those by Adams (1806), Windship (1809), Kotzebue (1816), and Beechey (1825). Yet Beechey (1831:44) reports the hundreds of Rapanui bringing “bananas, yams, potatoes, sugarcane, nets, idols, &c.” to his beached ship’s boats; it is noteworthy that the Rapanui did not, however, swim out to Beechey’s ship with these products, as they did for Cumming only two years later. See also notes 19 and 20 below.

9. For a physical description of this raft, see Métraux (1940:208). *Pora* were also used for surf-riding. Their use most likely originated uniquely on Rapanui for want of appropriate wood to construct proper *vaka*; i.e., they would probably not represent an importation of similar Peruvian craft, as Heyerdahl has repeatedly suggested.

10. Rapanui scholarship has, to date, always cited Du Petit-Thouars (1841:2:227), who visited the island on February 25, 1838, as the earliest report in this regard.

11. Behrens in 1722 (1737:136); Agüera in 1770 (1908:99), who mentions only some “sharp-edged stones” (*mataa*); La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:320) and Beechey in 1825 (1831:53), both observing only short “clubs”.

12. Cook in 1774 (1777:1:291): “As harmless and friendly as these people seem to be, they are not without offensive weapons, such as short wooden clubs, and spears; which latter are crooked sticks about six feet long, armed at one end with pieces of flint” (the shafted obsidian *mataa*). For a study of the different types and their Polynesian affinities, see Métraux (1940:165–72). Georg Forster in 1774 (1777:1:563) speaks also of “lances or spears, made of thin ill-shapen sticks and pointed with a sharp triangular piece of black glassy lava...” and further quotes from his father Johann Reinhold Forster’s journal recording the same shafted

obsidian *mataa* as well as a “battle-axe, resembling that of the New Zealanders, though much shorter” (p.587).

13. First by Cook in 1774 (1777:1:293). Forster in 1774 (1777:1:580–1) describes these sculptures in detail. Only two years before Cuming’s anchorage, the Rapanui had approached Beechey’s beached ship’s boats with, among other things for trade, “idols” (Beechey 1831:44) and an “image” (p.54).

14. Hitherto, the first mention of such fish figures had been acknowledged to be that by Brother Eugène Eyraud (1866–7:69) in 1864: “Dans toutes les cases on trouve bien des statuettes, hautes d’une trentaine de centimetres, et representant des figures d’hommes, de poissons, d’oiseaux, etc. Ce sont sans doute des idoles...”. Such figures are to be found today in museums throughout the world, some genuine and adorned with an alternative Rapanui script (*mama*), others later imitations for the tourist trade. One must, however, also allow the possibility that some of these early figurines might already have been produced specifically for trade with visiting vessels.

15. Eyraud (1866-7:69) notes in 1864: “Parfois j’ai vu les Kanacs prendre ces statuettes, les élever en l’air, faire quelques gestes, et accompagner le tout d’une espèce de danse et d’un chant insignifiant”.

16. Cook in 1774 (1777:1:278) notes that the language of the first Rapanui to board “was, in a manner, wholly unintelligible to all of us,” also to their “official” translator, Otiti (actually Mahine, a minor chief from the Society Islands), who, Cook continues (p.293), “understood their language much better than any of us, though even he understood it but very imperfectly”. Forster (1777:1 :562) noted that “Mahine was much pleased to find that the inhabitants spoke a language so similar to his own”. In 1864, Rapanui’s first known European resident, Brother Eugene Eyraud (1866–7:54), wrote that, on his voyage to Rapanui, the Mangarevan first officer Daniel “se trouvait ...en mesure de s’entendre avec les habitants de l’île de Pâques, dont la langue a beaucoup de rapport avec celle de Gambier”; two years later, Brother Eugène returned to Rapanui with Father Hippolyte Roussel, who wrote (1926:356) of “leur idiome, qui ne diffère presque en rien de celui des Gambier”. Rapanui forms its own separate subgroup among the Eastern Polynesian languages, owing, no doubt, to the situation that its speakers presumably departed first (ca. A.D. 400?) from the central Eastern Polynesian “homeland”. Cf. Emory (1963:81): “Easter Island’s vocabulary stands in weaker agreement with the other islands of East Polynesia, ranging from 69% with Tahiti, 74.5% with Mangareva, 75.5% with Hawaii, to 76.5% with the Marquesas and New Zealand, a mean of 74.4%”. See also Langdon and Tryon (1983) and especially Green (1988).

17. Such European depictions of Rapanui “thievery” and “dishonesty” must, of course, be judged in the light of historical Polynesian society in general and of local Rapanui conditions in particular, by which the concept of “private property” was mainly restricted to what was worn or carried, and even this was often regarded as common property: Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:14), Agüera in 1770 (1908:98–9), Gonzalez in 1770 (1908:98), Cook in 1774 (1777:1:279), Forster in 1774 (1777:1:563) and Beechey in 1825 (1831:44, 46–8).

18. Cf. Métraux (1940:240).

19. When, only two years earlier, in 1825, Beechey (1831:44) records how some among the hundreds of Rapanui on shore had tossed into his beached ship’s boats

their bananas, yams, potatoes, sugar-cane, nets, and “idols” without even attempting to barter, one might suspect a feint here, perhaps to subdue the English, in view of the Rapanui's supposed aggressive, open “plunder” that shortly ensued and led to tragic (again only Rapanui) loss of life. Cf. however, McCall (1976:92): “Peard [in his journal] believed that the Islanders may have feared the foreigners were about to move off without further trading, and so wished to prevent their departure”. McCall suspects “some internal conflict on shore”.

20. The crew of the *Pilgrim* in 1801 (McCall 1976:91) and the Russian Lisiansky in 1804 (1814: 1: 83–98) could still receive a friendly welcome at Rapanui in the first years of the 19th century; however, both parties were prevented from landing because of inclement weather; Lisiansky managed to send a lieutenant ashore in a yawl for only one day. The generally “trusting” attitude of the Rapanui up to this time, despite the tragic conclusion of Roggeveen's 1722 visit (a dozen Rapanui murdered, and several wounded), appears to have been destroyed virtually overnight following the two heinous visits of the (Salem, Massachusetts?) schooner *Nancy* in 1805 (see McCall 1976:92, note 10, 93). For all that, Captains Page in 1806, Chase (who carried on “extensive trade” ca. 1820) and Raine in 1821, for example, could still claim a “decent” reception. Captain Chapman, on the other hand, penned in 1821: “This island is inhabited by savages” (cited in McCall 1976:91). Cf. McCall, p. 91: “In 50 accounts, fear of an attack by Islanders is mentioned in seven, and only five attacks actually occurred. It seems that while some Captains found the Islanders hostile, others enjoyed good relations, often in the same year”.

21. Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:15–6), Behrens in 1722 (1737:136), Agüera in 1770 (1908:93–5), Cook in 1774 (1777:1:284, 294–6), Forster, in 1774 (1777:1:568, 575, 586–7, 593), La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:322–3), De Langle, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:331–3), Bernizet, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:2:550–2), Lisiansky in 1804 (1814:1:83–5, 87), Kotzebue in 1816 (1821:1:55–6) and Beechey in 1825 (1831:42, 55–6).

22. Cf. Métraux (1940:218–9).

23. Cf. Beechey in 1825 (1831:46): “Some [of the men] had their faces painted black, some red; others black and ‘white, or red and white, in the ludicrous manner practised by our clowns; and two demon-like monsters were painted entirely black”. Already recorded as early as 1722 was the Rapanui women's custom of streaking themselves with a red pigment (Behrens 1737: 136).

24. Cf. Métraux (1940:225, incorrectly spelt *hau moroke*; cf. *hau moroki* on p. 224, fig. 25).

25. Roggeveen in 1722 (1908:17), Agüera in 1770 (1908:102), Hervé in 1770 (1908:123), Cook in 1774 (1777:1:291–2), Forster in 1774 (1777:1:560, 569–70), La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:323–4); Bernizet, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:2:347–52), De Langle, by La Pérouse in 1786 (1797:1:331) and Lisiansky in 1804 (1814:85–7).

26. Cf. Métraux (1940:20 1–2): “The general shape of the Easter Island thatched house resembles the small, low huts with elliptical floor plan of the Tuamotus (in former days) and Rapa. The curving walls formed by bent rafters of Easter Island houses are also typical of Tuamotuan, Rapan, and Mangarevan houses”. However, in comparing the Rapanui *hare* to those of Rapa, Cuming is specifying only the “door at each End exactly alike those of the Island Opara” (Rapa). Yet cf.

Métraux, p.202: “The position of the door in the middle of the side links the Easter Island house more closely with the Mangarevan or the Rapan type than with the Tuamotuan which had the door at one or both ends”. Cuming is clearly in error with putting a door “at each End” (cf. Agüera 1908: 102; Hervé 1908:123; Forster 1777:1:570; etc.).

27. Cf. Métraux (1940:228): “...there is no reference to wooden ear ornaments...”.

28. Even today, Motu Kaokao very much resembles “a Ship under full sail”, as can be observed in the most recent photograph by Heyerdahl (1989: 175).

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