

2

‘Dwelling carelessly, quiet and secure’

A brief ethnohistory of Rapa Island, French Polynesia, AD 1791–1840

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Introduction

In 1826, the first European missionary to Rapa, the Rev. John Davies, quoted Judges 18:7 in seeing the Rapans as ‘dwelling carelessly, quiet and secure, and having no business with any man’ (in Stokes n.d.:28; an idiomatic rendering of the passage). It was to some extent, possibly to a great extent, quite illusory. Rapa was certainly isolated by comparison with most of East Polynesia, and it was small, mountainous and relatively cold, but even the first European visitors found that Rapans exhibited evidence of contact with the outside world, and within Rapan traditions, historical observations and ethnographic data which together form the stuff of ethnohistory, the theme of contact and change is illustrated continually.

Rapan society was East Polynesian in ancestry and culture. Rapans spoke an East Polynesian language, but its closest affinities were puzzling for a long time. The earliest historical contacts with Rapans showed that they found both Hawaiian and Tahitian largely unintelligible and later characterisation of Rapan by European scholars was confused because of the early introduction of Tahitian by missionaries and, after 1863, of other Polynesian languages by Tongans, Tokelauans and Cook Islanders, whose descendants came eventually to represent nearly half of the population (Stokes 1955). Samuel Stutchbury had observed, presciently, in 1826 (in Richards 2004:5) that the Rapan language was ‘something resembling the Marquesan’, but Horatio Hale (1968:141), about 1840, ‘obtained at Tahiti, from a native of Rapa, a brief vocabulary of the language spoken there, which turns out to be, with a few verbal exceptions, pure Rarotongan, and this in its minute peculiarities’, while the missionaries William Ellis (1838) and M. Russell (1852:205) thought that Rapan was closer to Maori than Tahitian. In the event, modern analysis shows that Rapan is part of the group of languages that also includes Mangarevan, east Tuamotuan and Easter Island, and probably once included languages on Pitcairn and Henderson islands, which derive from ‘proto Southeastern Polynesian’. This group was probably the first to be differentiated

within proto East Polynesian (Fischer 2001), quite probably because of the relative remoteness of the southeastern islands from the central archipelagos.

Rapan social organisation was divided historically (as described by Hanson 1970:19–22; Hanson and Ghasarian 2007:59–60) among clans or ramages (*kopu*), each of which normally occupied a single valley and adjacent fishing waters, the territory being commanded by a hill fort or fortified village (*pare maunga*, *pare tamaki* or *pa tamaki*). The clans recognised membership by unrestricted cognatic descent (i.e. through lineages of both parents) and access to land and other resources by primary, active (*araka*) and secondary, latent (*moekopu*) rights. Primary rights devolved both by descent and residence and held the clan together as a land-holding and defending unit. Such groups of territorial definition and ambilateral descent are also called ‘ramages’, the term Hanson (1970) prefers, but ‘clan’ is used in the historical sources and will be adopted here. The Rapan clan was headed by an *ariki* whose spiritual authority arose primogeniturally from the clan ancestor, but whose practical authority in peace and war was mediated through the consensus of family elders, the *hui ragatira* (Hanson 1970:22). The Rapan traditions of pre-European events reflect the competitive development of the historical clans, of which perhaps 18–22 existed by the arrival of Europeans (Hanson 1970:19).

Rapan traditions

During his stay on Rapa (April 1921–January 1922), as part of the Bayard Dominick Expedition to the Austral Islands by the B.P. Bishop Museum, John Stokes (n.d.:Preface), accompanied by his wife Margaret Stokes, collected historical traditions, mainly it seems from the official island chief, Pataritari. In addition, Stokes collaborated with the linguist, Frank Stimson, who checked Stokes’ material with Rapans living in Papeete. These included Teraau, son of the last main ‘king’ of Rapa, Terakau III, who died in 1887 (Queen Ruirau had succeeded but was deposed after several months when Rapa was annexed to France in June 1887). Teraau, born 1862, traced his descent primarily from the Gaitapana line, but he and his relatives, living in Tahiti, were also descended from the clan Takatakatea, which Gaitapana had eclipsed. Others who assisted Stokes were the Rapan men, Kareka (born 1867), Faaora (born 1865) and Gariki, plus Mato, ‘a native of Fakaho’ (Fakaofu in the Tokelaus) who arrived on Rapa in 1864 as part of a group of Polynesians returning from Peru, and whom Stokes regarded as his most reliable informant. Stokes’ account of Rapan traditions is the fullest available, but differs in its assignment of some clan origins to multiple landfalls with that of Caillot (1932), who regarded all pre-European Rapans as descendants of a single population (Hanson 1970:23 concludes that the data are inadequate to decide the matter).

Accounts of initial colonisation obtained by Stokes (n.d.:1–28, 918–924, 951–954) said that the first man to arrive on Rapa was Tiki (a common Polynesian mythological ancestor, often regarded as the first man), who came from Avaiki (Hawaiki) in the Tuamotus and married a Rapan woman. This is essentially a creation myth. They had two daughters, who also produced a male and female child by Tiki, and these became the progenitors of all Rapans, but the boy, Tamatiki, sailed off to Easter Island. There are other accounts of voyages to Easter Island or New Zealand, by Temarago, and of Hotumatua, the Easter Island ancestor, as having been king of Rapa.

The first settlers of Rapa included several peaceful peoples, such as the legendary Mana’une, who were discovered by the East Polynesian ancestral figure, Hiro (or Iro). Hiro stayed briefly in Rapa, and may have left a son there, while moving around the other Austral islands. By genealogical reckoning, in which Stokes (n.d.) used the Rarotongan traditions accumulated by

J.B. Stair (1895) and S.P. Smith (1899), this Hiro is thought most likely to have been the cousin of the equally well-travelled Tangiia, and is dated to about AD 1250, or possibly to about AD 1100. Buck (1954:119) has Tangiia searching for the son of Hiro, reputedly on Rapa, in the mid-13th century. While Stokes (n.d.:26) accepted the Hiro story as well-documented by 19th century sources, he doubted the historical validity of others, including those collected in his day from informants who were 'liable to include in the record what they think at the time and are frequently unaware of the necessity of segregating ancient and modern information'.

Nevertheless, Stokes' (n.d.:700–709) arrangement of accounts of the inter-clan history of Rapa, although noting disputed stories by informants of opposing lineages at various points, is probably as close to a chronicle of traditional, and putatively historical, events as we may get on the surviving evidence. He says that some of Hiro's followers remained on Rapa, intermarrying with the indigenous people and forming the Mato clan, which lived in the northern lands centred on Tupuaki Bay. About the same time, ancestors of the Takatakatea clan arrived at Anarua or Iri on the west coast and, by intermarriage, expanded into the southern and eastern areas, contesting with Ngate Mato the ownership of the flat land at the head of Ha'urei Harbour. No *pare* (hill forts) were built at this time.

The early ascendant clan was Takatakatea. Sometime after it, ancestors of the Taukina clan arrived on the western coast and settled among Takatakatea, but eventually disagreements arose and warfare began. Takatakatea was driven out of the northwestern bays and constructed *pare* at Karere, Paoreore, Motu and Rekie, then later at Mititipeiru, Napiri, west Pukutaketake, Pukumaga and Nogoorupe. The expanding Taukina people, represented by their descendant clans of Tipi and Okopou, continued to move southeast. Okopou occupied the Ha'urei lands in the main harbour, and a strip across the main ridge to their earlier base at Iri Bay. The clan wrested control of *pare* at Nogoorupe and Takitaga from Takatakatea, who then re-took them, and, by managing to hold on to Morongo Uta and Pukutaketake, created an uneasy stalemate in the west. The Tipi clan moved east and built *pare* at Ruatara and Vairu. At this point, Rapa was divided into a Takatakatea territory in the south and southwest, with Tipi and its allies in the north and east, and a small group of the Mato clan at Taratu, between them. The Tipi a Manumanu (Tipi a Tepaiamarama) clan was the strongest and to it is attributed the first historical high chief, Temarogo.

Several generations later, the Aureka people, who claimed descent from Tiki but probably included new arrivals as well, formed a clan based on the eastern stronghold at Pukumia and sought to bring the other clans under their control. Aureka built the *pare* at Tevaitau and from it defeated Okopou in their nearby stronghold at Napiri, and then the Tipi clans at Anarua. The Aureka clan, known later as Gaitapana, began its own kingly line with Aurariki I, dated about 1600–1650, and that dynasty persisted until 1887 through, successively, Aurariki II–VII and then Terakau I (AD 1775–1825), who lived through the period of European discovery and arrival.

European discovery

The European discovery of Rapa began on December 22, 1791. Captain George Vancouver, HMS *Discovery*, sailing a wide northeasterly track from New Zealand, saw three small islands that, as he sailed closer, coalesced into Rapa Island (Figure 2.1). Vancouver was familiar with Polynesians, having sailed on Cook's second and third voyages (1772–75, 1776–79), and he had no hesitation in seeking contact with the inhabitants. At 3 pm, about three nautical miles off the western shore, three canoes arrived, their crews unwilling to board the ship but signalling the

ship's crew towards land. Vancouver then sailed nearer to shore and several canoes paddled out, from one of which a man boarded the *Discovery*, touched noses with Vancouver, and was given an iron adze. Soon many men boarded and exchange began (Figure 2.2):

They all seemed perfectly well acquainted with the uses to which they could apply iron, and how to estimate its value amongst themselves; as also in the manner in which it was regarded by Europeans. They made no scruple, even with some force, to take articles of iron out of our hands; and in lieu of them with great courtesy and address presented, in return, some few fish, fishing-hooks, lines, and other trifles, which they seemed to wish should be accepted as presents, and not received in exchange. Looking-glasses, beads and other trinkets of little importance, at first attracted their attention, and were gladly accepted; but no sooner did they discover that articles made of iron were common amongst us, than they refused all other presents, and wanted to barter every other gift for iron. I could not prevail on any of them to accept a few medals.

Their visit seemed prompted only by curiosity, as they were completely unarmed, and brought with them (except the few fish &c) neither articles of food nor manufacture. A few spears and a club or two, were seen in one or two of the canoes only; two or three indifferent slings for stones were also noticed; with which they parted without the least reluctance. (Vancouver in Lamb 1984:372–373)

The Rapan men attempted to carry off anchors, cannons and other large iron articles, the weight of which surprised and frustrated them. They also stole what they could but had little means of concealment. Some opened the shirts of sailors, evidently to see whether they were women (Lamb 1984:372). Vancouver thought that the men most resembled Tongans. An Hawaiian lad, Towereroo, on board *Discovery* was hardly able to understand the Rapan language, but he had been in England since 1789. Vancouver attempted, with some difficulty and eventual uncertainty, to obtain the name of the island; 'at length I had reason to believe the name of the island was Oparo; and that of their chief *Korie*' (Lamb 1984:373). At 5 pm, after only two hours of contact, *Discovery* sailed off to the north, the officers noticing part of the north coast of the island as she departed. Vancouver summarised his impressions of Rapa thus:

Its principal character is a cluster of high craggy mountains, with perpendicular cliffs nearly from their summits to the sea [high cliffs are especially prominent on the northwest coast] ... the vacancies between the mountains would more probably be termed chasms than vallies, in which there was no great appearance of plenty, fertility or cultivation; they were chiefly clothed with shrubs and dwarf trees. Neither the plantain nor other spontaneous vegetable productions common to the inhabited tropical islands, presented themselves. The tops of six of the highest hills bore the appearance of fortified places, resembling redoubts [George Hewett, Surgeon's First Mate on the *Discovery* thought these were probably, 'like the hippahs of New Zealand' (Lamb 1984:374, fn 3)]; having a sort of block house, in the shape of an English glasshouse, in the centre of each with rows of pallisadoes a considerable way down the sides



Figure 2.1. A sketch of Rapa drawn on the *Discovery* expedition 1791 (Lamb 1984 Volume 1:Plate 18 'The island of Oparo'). Published with the permission of the Hakluyt Society and the State Library of New South Wales (item MRB/Q910.4/6 A/1).

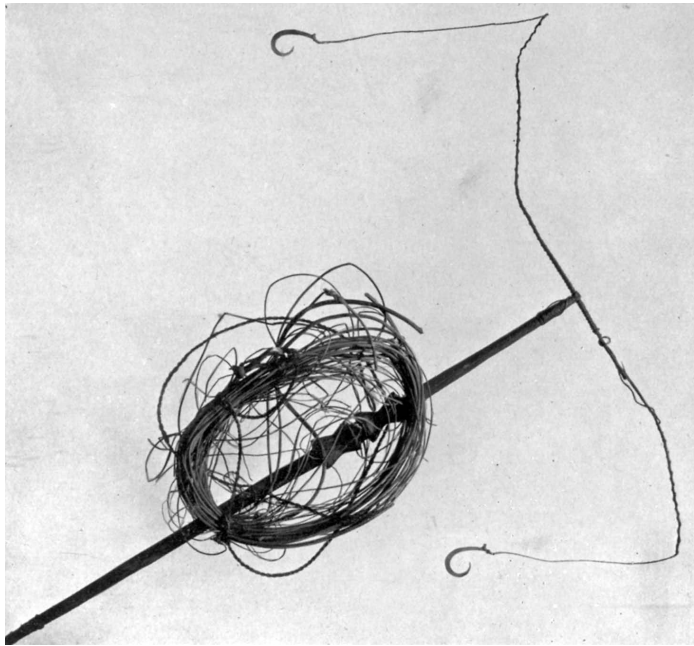


Figure 2.2. A fishing device collected at Rapa on the Vancouver expedition, 1791 (Beasley 1928:Plate LXXII). It consists of a fibre strip line, a wooden spreader, and two small shell bait hooks, which are attached by cordage.

of the hills, nearly at equal distances. These, overhanging, seemed intended for advanced works, and apparently capable of defending the citadel by a few against a numerous host of assailants. On all of them we noticed people, as if on duty, constantly moving about ... [the block houses] were sufficiently large to lodge a considerable number of persons, and were the only habitations we saw. Yet from the number of canoes that in so short a time assembled around us ... [we could infer] ... that the shores and not those fortified hills which appeared to be in the center of the island [Vancouver was unaware of the central harbour] would be preferred for their general residence. We saw about thirty double and single canoes, though most of them were of the double sort: the single canoes were supported by an outrigger on one side, and all built much after the fashion of the Society Islands, without having their very high sterns, though the sterns of some of these were considerably elevated; and their bows were not without some little ornament. They were very neatly constructed, although the narrowest canoes I ever saw. (Vancouver in Lamb 1984:374)

Vancouver (Lamb 1984:374) remarked that the canoe builders 'are nearly destitute of iron, and possessed of very few implements of that valuable metal'. This comment, and his earlier description of the behaviour of the men who came aboard *Discovery*, suggest that he saw evidence to imply that iron had reached Rapa before his arrival. Of the canoes he wrote:

The island did not appear to afford any large timber; the broadest planks of which the canoes were made, not exceeding twelve inches ... Some of the stoutest double canoes accommodated from twenty-five to thirty men, of whom, on a moderate computation, three hundred were supposed to have been seen near the ship. These were all adults and apparently none exceeding middle-age; so that the total number of inhabitants on the island can hardly be estimated at less than fifteen hundred. In this respect it must be considered prolific, notwithstanding its uncultivated appearance. The natives, however, appeared to be exceedingly well fed, of middle stature, extremely well-made. (Vancouver in Lamb 1984:375)

The plank-built construction of early Rapan canoes, evident in the various canoe planks found in rockshelters by Stokes (n.d.:Preface) gave way later to dugout construction, as introduced trees produced larger timbers (Haddon and Hornell 1975:147–151).

The Rapan men made every effort to get the *Discovery* crew to go ashore:

On their departure they took hold of the hand of everyone near them, with a view to get them into their canoe. They all had their hair cut short; and, excepting a wreath made of a broad, long-leaved, green plant, worn by some about the waist, they were intirely without clothing. Although the custom of tatowing prevails so generally with all the islanders of this ocean, these people were destitute of any such marks.

Independent of the protection their fortified retreats may afford, it did not appear that they were subject to much hostility, as scarcely any scars from wounds or other marks of violence were observed on their bodies. Their elevated fortified places ... led some of us to conjecture, that they were frequently annoyed by troublesome neighbours from some other islands not far distant. But, as the canoes we saw were not even furnished with sails nor had any appearance of having been equipped for an expedition beyond their own coast, it may reasonably be inferred, that they were not accustomed to voyages of any length. Yet, on the other hand, when the small extent of their island is taken into consideration, it is hard to reconcile that it is not the fear of foreign enemies, but the apprehension of domestic insurrection, that has induced the laborious construction of their fortified retreats. (Vancouver in Lamb 1984:375)

Archibald Menzies, botanist and surgeon on *Discovery*, was another experienced eyewitness of the first meeting, having earlier sailed around the northwest Pacific, including to Hawaii. He adds some useful details to Vancouver's narrative. His impression of the forts was that 'each bore some resemblance to a large block-house fenced round at a little distance with a high wall of stone or turf' (Shineberg 1986:66). The Rapans on board *Discovery* were prevailed upon:

... to count their numerals to ten, which we found to agree exactly with those of Otaheite, & a few other words which they repeated convinced us that they spoke a dialect of the same general language, but so modified from their local situation that even Toowowero [above] could understand very little of what they said. This being the case I think it is probable that Oparoo may not be the real name of the Island, though it was often their answer to our interrogation on that head and therefore adopted ... They suffer their beards to grow long, but their hair which is naturally straight was croppd short round about the nape of the neck & their ears were perforated though we saw them wear no ornaments in them excepting the nails they got from us. (Menzies in Shineberg 1986:67)

No signs of tattooing were observed, and 'the only cloathing they wore were a narrow strip of cloth made from the bark of a tree which passed around their waist and between their legs' (Shineberg 1986:67). Menzies thought the cloth was probably scarce because many men simply wore bunches of *Dracena* leaves attached to a girdle (Prebble 2005:156 suggests the bark cloth was more likely from *Hibiscus tiliaceus* than paper mulberry (below), and that *Dracena* was probably *Cordyline*). Turning to the Rapan canoes, Menzies described them as:

... small & narrow but neatly formed, rising a little at each end to a sharp point with outriggers fitted to them – similar to the generality of Canoes in this Ocean. They had also double canoes with Sails constructed in the same manner, & though we observed no wood or Timber on the Island of a size capable of making their canoes, yet they did not seem to be a scarce article among the Natives, for at one time we counted no less than 30 canoes about the ship & between us & the Shore, eight or nine of them were double canoes each of which had upwards of 20 men, & few of the single canoes had less than five men, many of them had more, so that we estimated that the number of people that came off in these Canoes from this Bay to be about 300, and as there were no women, children or any very old people seen amongst them I think it may be safely inferrd that they were not one fifth of the Inhabitants of this little Valley, which from whence would amount to upwards of 1500. But I would not conclude from this that the Island is very numerously inhabited, perhaps the environs of this Bay may contain one-half of the whole number. (Menzies in Shineberg 1986:68)

Both Vancouver and Menzies thought there might be other inhabited islands to the south of Rapa, and these could explain both the need for fortification and the existence of so many canoes in the apparent absence of substantial trees.

Menzies noted that 'excepting a few small fish, none of these canoes brought off any kind of refreshments – either Hogs Poultry or Vegetables, so that we remain entirely ignorant of the produce of this Island' (Shineberg 1986:68). Looking into the bay off which the *Discovery* lay, he could see scattered bushes among which were 'the habitations of the Natives & some little signs of Cultivation'. Otherwise, the island appeared fairly open. On the south slopes of the bay were some scrubby trees, especially in the hollows, and on the north side only grass. No coconut palms were seen.

The *Discovery* observations

Although the result of barely two hours contact, the *Discovery* observations provide an immensely useful picture of late 18th century Rapa. It seems that the Rapans had some iron but their evident wonderment on boarding *Discovery* – 'their attentions & curiosities absorbd with everything they saw' (Menzies in Shineberg 1986:67) so that it was very difficult to obtain their compliance in answering questions – was such that it is very unlikely that any earlier European voyagers had called in there. The iron must have come by travel to or from islands nearer to earlier European contact. Don Thomas Gayanagos, *Aguila*, discovered Raivavae, the nearest island to Rapa, in January 1775, and, in a brief encounter, traded some knives and nails with the inhabitants (Corney 1915:179). Cook, accompanied by Omai, found Tubuai in 1777 but was unable to induce anybody to step on board the *Resolution*. However, as the Societies had experienced extensive contact with Europeans since discovery by Wallis in June 1767, it is quite probable that iron had been traded into the Australs for 10–20 years before 1791. The Rapans, at the end of the line, had much less than they wanted, and no idea initially, on boarding *Discovery*, that they had chanced upon a fabulously rich source.

It is not certain just where the *Discovery* lay off the coast. As it sailed up from the southwest, the six forts seen (five being visible at one time) were almost certainly six of the seven which lie along the skyline of the west coast: south to north these are: Ungarere (Ororangi?), Ngapiri, Tevaitau, Morongo Uta, Puketaketake, Noogurope and probably Kapitanga. Puketaketake and Noogurope overlook Anarua Bay, which, as the only bay on the northwest coast, must have been 'the small Bay on the Northwest side of the island' (Menzies in Shineberg 1986:66) off which *Discovery* lay. As the valley runs directly inland behind the sandy bay-head, the *Discovery* crew would have had a good view of the inhabited landscape at a distance of about 1 km, and while sailing up the coast, the forts would have been seen at 2.5 km to 4 km away, no great distances for telescopic inspection.

European observations of the Rapans suggested that they were thought somewhat shorter and darker and more robustly built than the generality of East Polynesians, and that their language, although clearly East Polynesian, was a distinct dialect. It is difficult to understand what the Rapans meant by referring repeatedly to 'Oparo' in response to enquiries about the island, but it is possible that they interpreted those as questions about where they had come from and replied that they were 'Opare', meaning inhabitants of the forts. More speculative still is the possibility that 'paro' (stray or wander) and 'korie' or kore (absent, destroyed, annihilated), if these meant the same in Rapan as Maori (Williams 1971), were references to the fate of the people to whose place the Europeans were pointing. The name 'Rapa', it might be conjectured, is an allusion to Ha'urei Harbour as a vagina, the means by which mediation between ordinary and supernatural were negotiated with each passage (cf. Hanson and Hanson 1983:86–94).

Only men were seen, and there are no observations of differences in rank, either by deference or appearance. The men had short, straight hair and probably no topknots, unlike at Raivavae, for example (Corney 1915:179). There was little sign of weapons, there was no tattooing and pierced ears held only nails. Clothing was restricted to breech-cloths and similar coverings, some of them made from bark cloth, possibly from *aute*, the paper mulberry (*Brousonettia papyrifera*), and bunches of *ti* (*Cordyline* sp.) leaves. The *Discovery* lay inshore long enough, and was visited by sufficient canoes, that had there been local men of obviously substantial status then it is hard to imagine they would not have made themselves known, as was the case elsewhere in East Polynesia when Europeans arrived.

Other than the people who came aboard, the forts attracted most attention. The *Discovery* observations clearly suggest that the six western skyline forts were in existence in 1791 and perhaps that they were all inhabited. There is, at least, no comment to the effect that some appeared abandoned or in disrepair. The description of these sites indicates that a large building – possibly a communal house – had been erected in a central position, where it was surrounded by a stone or turf wall and, at regular intervals away from the centre, by rows of outward-leaning palisades. People were seen moving about within the defences.

Menzies saw structures that were possibly habitations, though they might have been garden sheds, in the valley, but relatively little sign of cultivation, although the land was very largely cleared. However, the European view of the valley floor of Anarua Bay, if that was the place, would have been somewhat obscured by a dune system above the beach. Nevertheless, Menzies saw no sign of pigs or poultry (or dogs, it can also be assumed, though he did not mention them). Coconut palms and bananas were absent to view and neither vegetables nor fruits were brought out to the ship.

Discussion of population size by the *Discovery* officers is particularly interesting. Vancouver, evidently reporting observations other than his own, said that 300 men were seen about the ship and the island population could hardly have been less than 1500, an estimate which has been widely used in the subsequent literature on Rapa. However, Menzies is more specific, and seemingly from direct observation. He describes the canoes, on which the population estimates depended, in greater detail, noting that some double canoes had sails of a common Polynesian type (as Vancouver seems not to have seen these, and as the *Discovery* lay close inshore, they were perhaps furled around spars in the bilges of the canoes and may, thus, have been of the form used by Maori), and the number of men in canoes of different type. Most importantly, he says these canoes came out from the bay inshore of *Discovery* and so his estimate of a total population of 1500 is for the bay alone. He was reluctant to extrapolate his data to the whole island, suggesting it had perhaps 3000 people, but then he had seen only the west coast at close range and knew nothing of Ha'urei Harbour or the large bays elsewhere on Rapa.

Early 19th century contact at sea

As European interest in the Pacific grew apace during the late 18th and early 19th centuries it seems quite probable that Rapa was visited on various occasions during that period, especially after the publication in 1798 of the first edition of *Voyage of Discovery* (Lamb 1984:267). However, there are few confirmed data. The Sydney trader, Captain Roger Simpson probably visited Rapa in 1802, Stephen Reynolds in the *New Hazard* sailed by it in 1813, and the Sydney vessel *Endeavour* clearly made contact with Rapans in July 1815, when it found, 'the Roppa Islanders to be pilferers of anything they could lay their hands on on deck' (Richards 2004:4. This seems to be the earliest reference to 'Rapa'). Captain John Powell of the *Queen Charlotte*

was becalmed near Rapa in 1815 or 1816 and a number of canoes came off but none of the men would go onboard. Instead, about 50 of them jumped into the sea and, grabbing a loose rope at the stern of the ship, began swimming towards land, 'labouring and shouting with all their might, as they supposed they were drawing the vessel towards the shore'. An ensuing tug-of-war with the ship's crew and the fortuitous arrival of a breeze ended the encounter (Ellis 1838:369–370).

The *Queen Charlotte* returned to Rapa with William Ellis of the London Missionary Society (LMS) on January 27, 1817. While sailing slowly along the western coast, 30 canoes came around the ship:

The men were not tataued, and wore only a girdle of yellow ti leaves round their waists. Their bodies, neither spare nor corpulent, were finely shaped; their complexion a dark copper colour; their features regularly formed; and their countenances often handsome, were shaded by long black straight or curling hair. (Ellis 1838:365)

A crayfish, lying in the bilge of a canoe among some spears, was exchanged for fish hooks. A man then came aboard, carefully sniffing Ellis' hand as he did so. Many others then boarded and began to take anything they could make off with, including a kitten. The crew eventually produced long knives to drive off the remaining Rapans who, not understanding the nature of the weapons, tried to seize them by the blade and were badly cut in their hands.

In the winter of 1820, Bellingshausen in command of the *Vostok* and Lazarev with the *Mirnyi* reached Rapa on a passage from New Zealand. They came up from the southwest and stood off the northern coast at a distance of at least 4.5 sea miles, in light and fickle winds. Fewer canoes ventured out than had been seen by Vancouver: 15 containing 80 people on June 29 (although another report says 23 canoes with at least five men in each on the first day; Barratt 1988:211), and 22 with about 110 people on June 30. The canoes, fastened with twisted bark cordage, and some of them 7.6 m long, showed no decoration (see Barratt 1988:Plate 26). There were double canoes and some large canoes with double outriggers (Simonov in Barratt 1988:205). No sails were mentioned.

At noon on June 29, several canoes, each with five to seven men (Figure 2.3), came out and greeted the *Vostok* with a speech of 'much heat and volume'. Coming on board, the Rapans presented 'us with sea crabs and some sort of fermented dough' (Barratt 1988:201). The dough was almost certainly *tioo* (fermented taro) and the sea crabs appear from later description to have been crayfish. One islander wore a bark sash, which he exchanged for a fish hook. Taro roots were presented, and cooked and eaten by the Russians, who enjoyed them as much as they abhorred the bitter taro dough. Shellfish, 'a dried pumpkin which had nowhere been cut through' (Barratt 1988:211) and was very probably a gourd, and bast cords, probably of *hau* bark, worn around the neck, were also in evidence.

The appearance of the Rapans (Figure 2.4) was much as it had seemed to Vancouver except that by now there were signs of earlier sexual relations with Europeans, including a half-caste youth (see Barratt 1988:Plate 27). On this occasion also a chief was recognised – indeed he was the first to go aboard – and given appropriate privileges and presents. Rapan thievery remained a problem but it was evident that the Rapans now understood the use of guns. The Russians asked for fish, poultry and pigs, showing examples of the domestic animals to their visitors, but none were produced. Looking at the island through telescopes, the Russians could see the forts, 'within which huts were visible' (Barratt 1988:217) and narrow paths running up to them. Yellowish-red and red patches on the hill slopes were surely signs of soil erosion (Barratt 1988:212, 216).

These later contacts at sea served to widen European knowledge of Rapans and, of course, knowledge of Europeans by Rapans. They showed the first indications of varied status in Rapan society and of a growing awareness of European things, including guns. Evidence arrived of the prominent means of subsistence, notably of taro in several forms and perhaps the gourd, but conversely, of the probable absence of domestic animals. A new form of canoe, the double outrigger, was seen, or at least asserted (it seems improbable given the western Pacific distribution of this type). Otherwise, Rapans looked and behaved as they had done in the late 18th century.

Early 19th century observations ashore

Between 1825 and 1830, Rapa was pulled into the European colonial world of industry, religion, commerce and disease. The first extended contact began in July 1825 when a cutter, the *Snapper*, owned by Tati, a Tahitian chief, but under the command of Captain Shout (Davies in Newbury 1961:279 has him as I. Shant), the first European to set foot on Rapa, arrived on passage from the Tuamotus to Tahiti. Two Rapans were on board when the captain, feeling under threat by many more canoes arriving, sailed off to Tahiti. There the two men, Paparua and Aitareru, attended school and church under the supervision of the LMS missionary, John Davies and, in October 1825, they were returned to Rapa, 'loaded with presents and accompanied by two Tahitians [Hota and Nene], who were sent to gain more accurate information relative to their country, and the dispositions of its inhabitants ... the captain of the cutter procured some tons of sandal-wood and when he left, the Tahitians [also] returned' (Ellis 1838:372).

The successful visit to Tahiti by the two Rapan men, 'tho they did not understand much Tahitian' (Davies in Newbury 1961:280), and their congenial homecoming, during which Teraau (also recorded as Teranga and Terakau), the 'head chief of the island', desired the Tahitians to return (Davies in Newbury 1961:280), encouraged John Davies to begin a mission on Rapa. The mission station was established 'in Aurai [Ha'urei] harbour' in January 1826. On the brig *Governor Macquarie* Davies took Hota and Nene and their wives, plus Mahana (a schoolmaster) and Pauo (a tradesman and boat-builder):

They carried with them not only spelling-books, and copies of the Tahitian translations of the scriptures, but also a variety of useful tools, implements of husbandry, valuable seeds and plants, together with timber for a chapel, and doors &c. for the teachers' houses ... Mr Davies ... was pleased with his visit, and, upon the whole, with the disposition of the people, although some appeared remarkably superstitious, and, as might be expected, unwilling to embrace Christianity. This arose from an apprehension of the anger of their gods, induced by the effects of a most destructive disease, with which they had been recently visited.



Figure 2.3. Drawing of a Rapan canoe with six crew produced from a sketch by Pavel Nikolaevich Mikhailov, June 29, 1820 (which shows faint sketches of seven crew; Barratt 1988:Plate 26). The canoe shows similarities to Maori craft, including, on the sternpiece, a shape that resembles the seated ancestral figure sometimes carved on the Maori sternpiece (taurapa) of a war canoe (Debenham 1945:Plate XVIII). Published with the permission of the Hakluyt Society and the State Library of New South Wales (item MRB/Q98/32 A1).

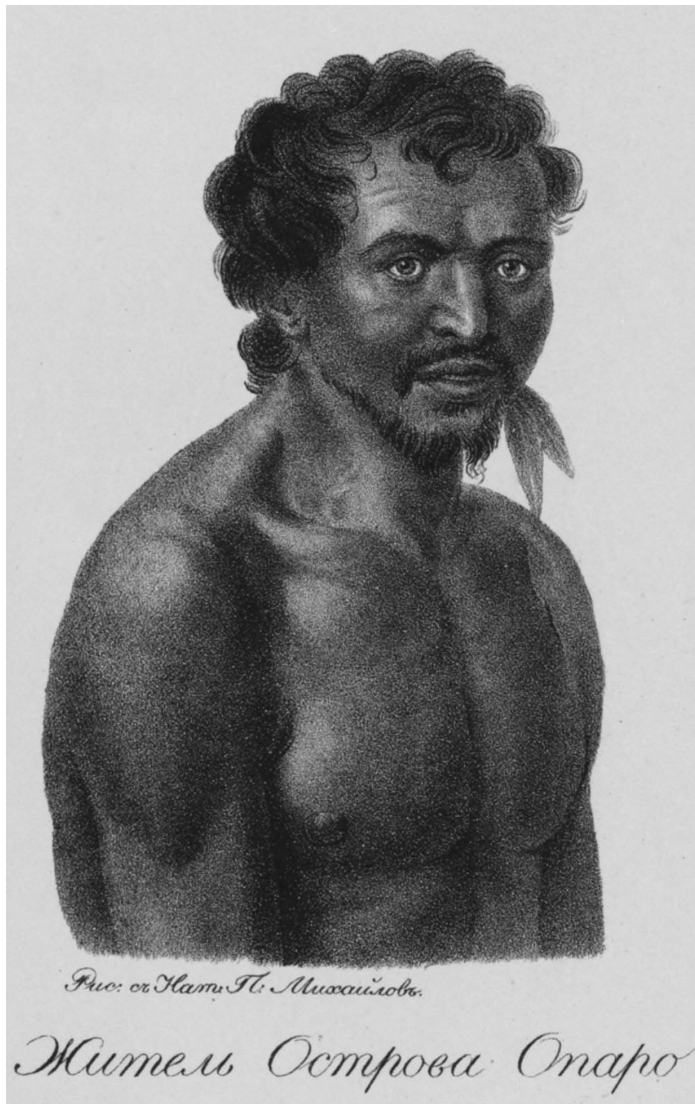


Figure 2.4. Drawing of a young Rapan man by Pavel Nikolaevich Mikhailov, June 30, 1820 (Barratt 1988:Plate 27), published with the permission of the Hakluyt Society and the State Library of New South Wales (item MRB/Q98/32 A1). The man is probably wearing leaves in his ear, as noted of some Rapan visitors, and it is his only form of decoration, as common among Rapans at that time.

The gods, they imagined, had thus punished them for their attention to the accounts from Tahiti. (Ellis 1838:373)

There had been ‘a great mortality amongst the people since they were visited by the Snapper’ and among the dead was Teraau, upon whose land the original chapel at Papara was re-erected (Newbury 1961:280), presumably at the request of Teraau’s son, Koinikiko, who supported the mission and gave it land and taro patches (Stokes n.d.:24). Davies was impressed with the plantations of taro:

which are well laid out and display a degree of skill and contrivance, evinced in nothing else we saw. The houses are miserable huts about five feet high, with holes to creep in, about two feet square. The natives have neither maraes nor altars, but only a few rude stones placed in the ground, which denote a va’i tapu or sacred place. These stones (they say) are mea mana nui, i.e. things of great power. There seems to be no images worshipped. Everything exceedingly rude; their stone adzes &c. are similar to those found in other islands, but more rude and uncouth. They do not tatau their bodies, and till they were visited by the Snapper and Minerva were all without clothing ... [Davies then says the two Rapans who had been to Tahiti told their countrymen that nakedness was disliked and since then the Rapan chiefs, at least, had worn clothes in the Tahitian fashion]... The vegetable productions of Rapa, with few exceptions,

resemble those of Tahiti and the Society Islands. There are found the various kinds of taro that are cultivated at Tahiti, one kind of *meia* or banana, the *umara* or sweet potato, and a species of yam; the *ahia* also, or red apple, but there is no bread-fruit nor cocoa-nut, neither the vi nor mountain-plantain. One cocoa-nut tree, indeed, was found by Hota and Nene, when they were here before, growing on the west side of the island; but this had been thrown up by the seas, and the natives did not then know what it was. Abundance of wild celery grows here in the moist grounds similar to that of New Zealand. (Davies in Stokes n.d.:25–26)

Davies comments usefully on the name of the island: ‘the natives call it Rapa only. The name occurs in some of the old traditional songs of Tahiti’, and he wrote that the population, ‘is supposed to be upwards of 2000, or nearly as many as those in Raivavae’ (Stokes n.d.:27). His investigations of Rapan belief established that:

Puero Poere is one of the chief gods of the Eriki, or chiefs, but their gods in general seem to be the spirits of departed ancestors. I wrote down the names of about forty of them, with a collection of Rapa words, but I has mislaid or lost the manuscript of them. That the natives of this island are of the same general origin as their neighbours, their language, customs, and superstitions afford sufficient proof. They have, however, many words not used at present in Tahiti, and retain the consonants k, g, ng, not used here [i.e. in Tahiti]. On the other hand they reject both f and h. Their numerals are nearly the same. (Davies in Stokes n.d.:28)

Davies reiterated his good impression of the state of taro cultivation, and observed that, ‘The planting, weeding, baking of it altogether the work of the women. In making canoes the Rapa-men do not excel’ (Stokes n.d.:29).

Although the early services, being in Tahitian, were ‘unintelligible’ to the Rapans, two mission stations had been established by June 1826. By 1829, the LMS missionaries, Pritchard and Simpson:

found that four chapels had been erected in different stations [Moturi, Tupuai, Iri, Aurai] at which, by native Missionaries, religious instruction was steadily imparted. The inhabitants manifested a pleasing attention during service, and their advancement in knowledge exceeded the expectations of their visitors. (Ellis 1838:374)

They also found that ‘the various seeds and plants that had been taken to the island from Tahiti did not thrive, the climate being much colder than that of Tahiti’ (Newbury 1961:281). Their observations on Rapan belief amplified those of Davies. They found that Paparaa or Paparua and Poere were the principal gods:

Paparaa was made of the coconut husk, neatly plaited in the form of a cask [Ellis 1838:364, reporting similar information, says it was ‘a kind of cylinder, full in the centre, and smaller at the ends’]. Its length is from 2 to 3 inches. To this god they prayed for victory in war, for the recovery of the sick, and for an abundance of turtle in the harbour. Poere was a piece of stone from 12 to 15 inches long. This was planted in the ground, and worshipped at the launching of a canoe, at the opening of a new house, praying that in it there might ever be an abundance of food; and that they might have much water in the springs ... no sacrifice was offered except fish. (Stokes n.d.)

As for the mountaintop forts, Pritchard and Simpson heard that:

Their wars were not so frequent, nor so cruel, as in some of the neighbouring islands. There are still remaining, several old castles, built on the tops of the highest mountains, to which the vanquished repaired, and continued the siege for a long time. These fortifications appear to have been standing for ages. It is now a long time since they have been used. Some of the oldest people say that they have no recollection of war in their time. (Stokes n.d.:31)

From Tahiti, had been brought fowls, pigs, kumara, pumpkins, melons, papaw, cabbages, onions, pineapples and potatoes. Breadfruit, mountain plantain (*fei*) and coconut, also introduced, did not thrive, according to Pritchard and Simpson. Three Europeans who had some ability in Polynesian languages, which they had used, reputedly, to recruit slaves, lived on Rapa for a short period about this time, probably 1827–1829. They were occupied particularly in distilling spirits from *ti* (Stokes n.d.:29).

Pritchard and Simpson baptised 251 people in 1829. Another missionary, Mr Darling, visited in June 1831 on the *Rarotonga*, and another 140 people were baptised (75 men, 65 women; a later note by Davies (Newbury 1961:282) says it appears that Darling baptised 147 people (76 men, 71 women) and also 44 boys and 51 girls of baptised parents). At the latter time, the names of the entire Rapan population were written down; there were 357 adults and 243 children, 600 in all (Davies in Newbury 1961:281). Among them was a Mangarevan man, Mapuagua, who was the only survivor of seven Mangarevans whose raft had drifted to Rapa many years earlier. Four had later set out in a strong westerly wind to attempt to sail back. Mapuagua died in 1829 (Ellis 1838:374; Richards 2004:5).

The mission had arrived in Rapa in 1826 with a sandalwood expedition by Captain Samuel Henry on the *Snapper* and Captain Thomas Abrill (or Ebrill) on the *Minerva*, which was owned by the Tahitian 'king' Pomare III. Sandalwood (*Santalum insularum*) was in limited supply on Rapa, but up to 20 tons were taken, and this encouraged the British Consul to send a Mr Young with some Tuamotuan labourers to Rapa, on the brigantine *Active* (Captain Elley), to cut more sandalwood and collect *beche-de-mer*. They were unsuccessful (Richards 2004:5), but Mr Young remained on Rapa for at least six months, certainly until June 1826. The Pacific Pearl Company's ships, *Sir George Osborne* and *Rolla*, visited Rapa briefly in April and June 1826, unsuccessfully, but the expedition leader, Samuel Stutchbury, made some interesting observations. He noted that 'the natives subsist on taro which is very abundant. They also have the Ti root ... Rats appeared innumerable and exceeding bold' (in Richards 2004:5). From Mr Young, Stutchbury heard that the Rapans were:

... very peaceable, living entirely upon fish and taro, and that the females [were] remarkably chaste, if a man dies or is driven away from the island in his canoe which sometimes happen as they fish a great distance out to sea, the widow will ascend one of the highest and most precipitous mountains and hurl themselves down ... When a person dies, they place the body in a rude kind of wicker coffin or basket and carry it to the top of one of the mountains, the relatives and friends assemble, and lament and cut themselves for many days continuance, after some weeks of exposure on the mountain, they will place the body or bones in an old canoe, tow it a considerable way out to sea, then fix on a number of large stones, and let it sink. If it is a chief, they will sometimes bury the body on shore. The generality of the natives go about perfectly naked. (Stutchbury in Richards 2004:6)

In June 1826, the US Navy schooner, *Dolphin*, seeking yams and taro, visited several small bays on the north and east coasts of Rapa, finding huts and taro patches in each, but was directed by inhabitants to the main harbour, where Mr Young piloted it in, somewhat inexpertly. The First Officer, Lt. Hiram Paulding, found that taro 'was planted everywhere, in large patches, where there was a small valley through which a stream of water [flowed] ... the hills were green with another species we had not before seen, called mountain tarrow. The latter is superior ... and will keep longer at sea' (Paulding 1831:252; Prebble (2005:162) suggests 'mountain tarrow' was either the common taro, *Colocasia esculenta*, or *Alocasia macrorrhiza*). The Rapans permitted the *Dolphin* crew members to dig as much taro as they wanted, perhaps because they were unable to do so themselves. An epidemic disease seems to have been in progress and the people 'had a sickly look, almost without an exception' (Paulding 1831:253). They were dressed in:

... a heavy mat of grass, weighing from ten to fifteen pounds, which was thrown over their shoulders, and another light mat, of the same material for their loins. Their deportment was modest and retiring, and they evinced a disposition to have but little intercourse with us. A few of their houses were scattered about on the hills. They were extremely miserable ... long and narrow, about three or four feet high, so that when one entered them, it was necessary to go down on hands and knees. (Paulding 1831:254)

Two whaleships visited Rapa in July 1826, and the British naturalist, Hugh Cuming, visited on May 17, 1828. Cuming was ashore for only four days but he took good note of what he observed of the Rapan people. Their dress consisted of:

Two pieces the size and shape of a very large door mat, thickly thrumbed. One of those they fasten over the neck which reaches the loins. The other is made fast to the loins so that the upper one covers the lower one a few inches. These species of cloaks are very heavy, are made of a large bush with the rind taken off, woven by hand with the leaves of the Te [ti or *Cordyline* sp.] Plant split in fine threads ... they can withstand the rain for a month. (Cuming in Richards 2004:7)

Cuming implies, very plausibly, that this was the traditional winter dress of the Rapans. Their summer dress was made in the same form, 'only it is made entirely from the leaves of the Te Plant finely drawn into threads and much longer than the winter dress, yet it is not above half the weight' (Richards 2004:7). There were also mortuary cloaks, some fragments of which have been recovered from cave sites (Buck 1925).

The Rapans did not like the mission plan of houses set out in rows of 12 to 14, preferring 'to live in their ancient sites and dwellings close to their taro grounds' in dispersed dwellings (Cuming in Richards 2004:7). Their houses were about 14 feet (4.3 m) long, 10 (3 m) broad and 3 (1m) high, with an entrance at each end, two small windows and a fireplace at one end. They were shaped like the top of a covered wagon, which presumably means rounded rather than ridged, and thatched to a thickness of about 0.6 m (Cuming in Richards 2004:7). Cuming could find nobody who knew much about the forts, except that they were places of refuge when Rapa was divided between two warring chiefs:

The losing party then had to fly to these mountain fortresses for safety as every male that was taken in the battle or afterwards was slain. The females and children was not molested and was permitted to carry up to their relatives, food until they made peace with the conquerors which was soon effected by the females. Most of those strongholds are square, the walls very thick about ten or eleven feet high with some rugged stones by which they could get up on the platform. On the top was an immense heap of large stones which they threw upon their pursuers. The mountains I ascended appeared to have steps cut in the mount, winding several times around it ... [the Rapan weapons, according to Cuming, were] ... a lance eighteen feet [5.5 m] long, very rudely made, and a short ugly unadorned club. Their fish hooks were made of the roots of trees bent and hardened by fire. Their household furniture consist of a low stool cut out of the solid wood [or possibly a wooden pillow], a stone knife and a few stones to keep the fire together ... Their food consisted of fish and tara. (Richards 2004:7)

The Belgian trader, Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout (1837) visited Rapa in 1834 to bring back Rapan men whom he had employed as pearl divers. He remarked that, 'fish and taro were the only food formerly. Tiao [tiao] was made of taro, in place of breadfruit as in the islands to the north' (in Stokes n.d.:33). *Tioo*, or fermented taro, was a particularly important Rapan food made by packing cleaned taro corms, or mashed raw taro, into pits lined with grass and leaves, which were then covered with earth. It would keep for six months during which it turned into a sour, pungent, but much esteemed paste (Stokes n.d.:24–26. *Tioo* storage pits (*rua tioo*) of 2–4.5 m in diameter and more than 2 m deep were recorded around and on many

pare by Stokes n.d.:277). Moerenhout was offered provisions of cabbage, onions, taro, chickens and pigs, an indication of the extent of change in agriculture. He heard that the trunk of the candlenut or tiari (*Aleurites triloba*), the largest type of tree on the island, was used for canoe building, and its nuts for lighting, and he was struck by the extent that men were evidently tabu and fed by their wives. Moerenhout thought that cultivation, cooking and other domestic tasks and crafts were the responsibility of women, while men made nets, presumably fished, and built canoes and houses.

European contact continued after the 1830s, of course, and with growing frequency, but observations were becoming repetitive and they were, increasingly, of Rapan behaviour modified by close European contact (e.g. Lucett 1851, who visited in 1843 and 1844; Hall 1868 in that year), which is largely irrelevant to this volume. Most importantly, Rapan society had been deeply transformed by a demographic catastrophe during the early 19th century.

Contact ashore had, predictably, a much greater impact on Rapan society than that at sea. Much of this remains effectively invisible. For example, it is impossible to be sure of the nature of the original Rapan pantheon. Later scholars remarked on the apparent absence of such major East Polynesian gods as Rongo, Tane and Tangaroa (Buck 1954:179), but how much this owed to the rapid destruction of the pagan belief system before it was recorded is unknown. Arrival of Europeans ashore, and doubtless disputes over women, brought violence, as in 1826 between Rapans and the crew of the *Minerva*, in which it seems some Rapan men were killed. Much more lethal, however, was disease, but it is difficult to estimate its full impact without knowing the approximate size of the Rapan population about AD 1790. In the light of discussion above, it is apparent that the popular estimate of 1500 people was not intended by Menzies to represent the entire population, which he put, extremely conservatively in the light of his method of calculation, at only 3000, twice that estimated for a single bay, probably Anarua. On the other hand, it is very improbable that the eight most habitable outer bays plus Ha'urei Harbour each supported an average population of 1500, making a total of more than 13,000. Eugène Caillot (1932:24), who visited Rapa in 1912, reports a Rapan estimate of a former population of 6000.

Stokes (n.d.:35, 436–440) attempted an estimate for the late prehistoric population using his detailed archaeological records of *pare* and coastal settlements. For each of 25 *pare*, he established the number and size of habitation terraces and allowed an average of five people for each (four to 10 according to size). For Morongo Uta this produced a population of 390, for Ororangi 280, and 215 for Tapitaga, but most supported fewer than 100 people. The *pare* total was 2377 people, and with 10 coastal settlements added on the same basis, the overall total was 3027 people. Bartruff et al. (this volume) calculate the maximum sustainable population according to an agricultural production model at around 2000, which is similar to the first recorded estimate of 'upwards of 2000' made by Davies in 1826 (above), but he reported that disease had already taken its toll.

It might be reasonable, therefore, to assume that the maximum population size in the early 1820s was close to 3000. It was nearer 2000 by 1826 and Darling's first census in 1831 recorded only 600 people. Stokes (n.d.:3) says that 85 per cent of the population disappeared in the eight years following missionary arrival in 1826. In 1836, Darling's census totalled 453 (more than the 300 estimated by the French trader Armand Mauruc in 1834, Caillot 1932:25; MacArthur 1968:307). By the 1860s, especially after the landing in February 1863 of Polynesians sick with smallpox and cholera, who were being returned from Peru, the population had plummeted to 100–150 people, from which it began a gradual climb in the 1880s to reach more than 450 today. As early as the mid-19th century, the demographic catastrophe had begun to transform

the social basis of landholding into an unrestricted cognatic system that, in time, conferred virtually universal rights upon everybody (Hanson and Ghasarian 2007).

Additional evidence from Stokes' informants

All of the informants upon whom Stokes relied had been born in the late 19th century, and not all of them were Rapan (above), so it is necessary to treat their observations about life before the arrival of Europeans with caution. On some subjects, Stokes found them unreliable. For example:

the opinions of the natives are very diverse on the subject of the original native house, even to the point of absurdity ... the older natives are in agreement that the huts were small and low, but none of them had seen one completed. The one point never disputed is that the thatch was of *ti* leaves. (Stokes n.d.: 333, 340)

There was some agreement that houses usually had a fireplace, although Stokes found this to be rarely in evidence on the house terraces of the *pare*, where only a few small stone-kerbed rectangular hearths were seen. Floor mats were evidently never made, the floors and sleeping areas being covered only in dried grass (Stokes n.d.:341). Tapa cloth was always plain according to Stokes' informants, and only plain fragments have been recovered from rockshelters (n.d.:342). Gourds were used to store water and for utensils; no wooden vessels were made because of the absence of suitable timber, and stored food was normally wrapped in packages of *ti* or *kiekie* leaves and suspended from the rafters (Stokes n.d.:342; Figure 2.5).

On religious structures, Stokes found little coherent information. Some areas of rudimentary paving, including several raised and terraced rectangular areas, were described as *marae*, but



Figure 2.5. Packages of food, probably *poi*, suspended to dry. From a framed photo in the Mairie at Ha'urei, and with the permission of the Maire. The provenance of this is unclear, but it might be from the Stokes expedition.

without particular details of ritual or deities beyond reference to cannibalism etc. There are several monoliths around the shores of Ha'urei Harbour that appeared to Stokes (n.d.:901–903) to have been boundary markers, although he thought they, and some cavities in the walls of terraces, might also have had ritual significance. No putatively prehistoric stone images or carvings were recorded. Routledge and Routledge (1921:454), who visited Rapa while Stokes was there, said:

No marae or ceremonial structure of any kind was seen by us. That name is given to three monoliths which stand on the main bay ... [and] ... which, it seems most probable, were boundary stones or had reference to the fish ponds, which are numerous. We could gain information about one building only, termed a marae, which was in one of the exterior bays we were unable to visit. It was said to be an insignificant enclosure, perhaps 20 ft. square, surrounded by a low wall about 2 ft. 6 in. in height, and having at one end a semi-circular platform of the same height. It is debatable whether the present inhabitants of Rapa really know what constitutes a marae.

Stokes found that Rapans recalled three types of canoes. Two were used in fishing: a single outrigger called *vaka* (or *kami'a*, a term otherwise found only in Mangareva), and the ordinary double canoe, *taurua*. A special double canoe (*taurua tamaki*) that could carry up to 40 men was used in war. His informants had no knowledge of former sails, nor did they use them in sailing the canoes and whaleboats of the 1920s. Stokes recovered pieces of canoes from caves on Rapa and deduced from them that the construction had consisted of strakes built up on a round-bottomed [dugout] hull, the latter generally requiring several pieces to be butted together because of the absence of large trees. By 1925, the Rapan outriggers had taken the form customary in Tahiti (in Haddon and Hornell 1975:147–148).

Rapan subsistence economy and crafts are known only sketchily from historical observations, but their scope can be amplified, with caution, from the records obtained by Stokes. In regard to plant foods, the Stokes' informants were generally agreed (Stokes n.d.:197 indicates minor disagreement) that at least one variety of sweet potato and one of banana (*tautau maori*) were grown prehistorically, along with taro, gourd (*koali*) and *Cordyline* (*karokaro*, of which the edible root was known as *ti*). The paper mulberry (*aute*) was also cultivated for making tapa cloth. Introduced in the missionary era were: sugarcane, arrowroot, manioc, the *ufi* form of yam (although it seems not to have thrived in Rapa), and a range of bananas, sweet potato and taro, among other Polynesian and European crops. The manufacture of *poi* or *popoi* from crushed and pounded taro (Figure 2.6) was probably introduced from Tahiti, although Stokes (n.d.:180–183) suggests some contrary evidence.

Cultivated plant foods were supplemented with native sources. The most important of these (Stokes n.d.:204–210) were *para* (stem bases of an edible fern), *aki* (tree fern starch) and *'omeka* (a type of wild yam). Others were the *Pandanus* (*kai'ara*) from which the juicy bases of the keys were eaten, but not the kernels, the *magu* (fruit of *kiekie*, *Freycinettia* sp.) *matoe* (a wild cliff taro), *poporo* (*Myoporum* sp.), *makiri* (the aerial tubers of wild yams of *Dioscorea* spp.) and *paraina* (or *puparira*, the stem bases of a sedge). Three kinds of edible seaweed were also collected.

The most commonly eaten shellfish according to Stokes' observation of the middens on *pare* was the *pa'ua* (*Chama* and possibly *Spondylus* spp.). Other species included *pipi* (*Tellina rugosa*), *mitata* (*Circe pectinata*), *ka'i* (*Asaphis* spp.), *tupere* (*Venus* spp.), *piu'u* (*Modiolus* sp.), *akaikai* (*Arca* sp.), *pangi* (*Patella* spp.), *i'i* (*Nerita morio*), *pu* (*Triton* sp.), and also *Trochus*, *Cerithium*, and various sea urchins. At least six kinds of crabs were caught, also the crayfish (*koura*), and river shrimps, and octopus and squid (Stokes n.d.:212–215).

Fishing from canoes with hook and line produced, primarily, the *rari*, described as a large-

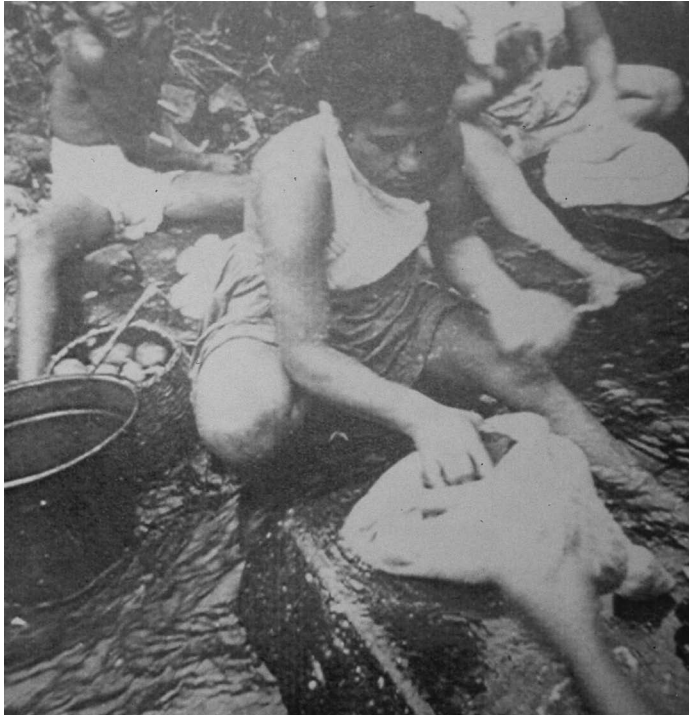


Figure 2.6. Women sitting beside a stream pounding and kneading taro to make *poi*. From a framed photo in the Mairie at Ha'urei, and with the permission of the Maire. The provenance of this is unclear, but it might be from the Stokes expedition.

mouthered red fish like a rock cod, with large anal spines. Bagnis et al. (1974:105) identify *rari* as *Cephalopholis coatesi*, a much-esteemed species caught on the outer slopes of coral reefs. It is probably the six-spot grouper, *C. sexmaculata*, in Lieske and Myers (1994:25). Two carangids (*matu*, *maaki*), which were probably trevallies (*Caranx* spp.), were also mentioned, and the *uhu* (a generic term for parrotfish species), which was speared near the shore (Stokes n.d.:212). Freshwater eel occurred commonly but was not eaten. In 2002, large freshwater eels were abundant in the streams and taro ponds and still were not eaten. Local people have a legend about a guardian spirit in the form of a blonde-haired woman who changes into an eel, which accounts for it not being killed or eaten. The turtle (*'onu*) was much sought after but not common. Several informants told Stokes (n.d.:153) that several kinds of seals (*kumi*) had once occurred abundantly in Rapa. In fact, they still occur, one being seen near Anarua while we were on the island in 2002.

There were several methods of fishing. Large seines (*rau*) of suspended *ti* leaves were dragged in the shallows of the main harbour, and fish were also driven into them by men in canoes, splashing the water. The tough, heavy wood of the *mairari* shrub (*Dodonea viscosa*) was used to make large and medium-sized bait hooks by training the branches to grow in the required shape. Small hooks were made from candlenut shell (*tuitui*) by using coral files. They were used to catch small fish called *gaga* and *komokomo*. A hook of *mairari* wood with a *tuitui* point was used to catch albacore (*ahi*). Temporary hooks were tipped with *rari* anal spines (Stokes n.d.:259–262). Pearl shell was absent at Rapa, but turtle shell and whale bone may have been used in earlier days. Basket traps (*'inaki ika*), generally made from *kiekie*, were also used for fishing and crayfishing, and fish were speared in shallow water, especially parrot fish. Marine eels were snared in the coral-reef shallows by women. They used two sticks, one of which held a bait, and the other a slip noose. Stone fish traps (*pa ika*), regarded as of ancient origin, can be seen along the margins of east coast bays (Stokes n.d.:265–280).

The native rat (*kiore*) was seldom eaten, but birds of all kinds were hunted. Noted by Stokes' (n.d.:211) informants were (using identifications in Fontaine et al. 1999) a dove (*turuturu*,

possibly the Tahitian ground dove of that name), spotless crane (*kotokoto*), grey duck (*mokora*), snipe or lesser golden plover (*torea*), blue-grey noddy (*paraki*), brown noddy (*n'goi'o*), common fairy-tern (*taketake*), little shearwater (*kakikaki*), Kermedec petrel (*ke'a*) and red-tailed tropic bird (*tavake*), which by legend brought fire to Rapa and was hunted on the cliffs. The latter remains a common activity today, both birds and eggs being taken.

Stokes' informants (n.d.:446–454) also added to the spare list of weapons in the historical data. They described a form of wooden pike with a blade at each end (*omore* or *komore*), a wooden dart (*ie*), of which a broken example has been recovered, and a fighting axe or adze (*tapu te toki*), which was possibly of a form similar to the Maori *patu*. Such an implement, described by Stokes (n.d.:448) variously as a 'truncheon', 'two-edged cleaver', or 'hand mattock' formed from a thin broad prism of basalt with a pecked handle, was found at Angairo. The former military use of pitfalls and nets (*kupega tamaki*) was asserted and also of the bow and arrow, which Stokes doubts.

Conclusions

Rapa was small and isolated and its period of pre-European habitation was probably quite brief, perhaps beginning in the 12th or 13th centuries, judging, very imprecisely, by the genealogical reckoning of traditionalist scholars. Through the pre-European era, and especially in the past few hundred years, inter-clan competition seems to have been endemic and fierce, even if the level of death and injury was relatively slight. It may have been driven by population growth which, on an island of few native resources and very little horticultural land, forced a change in settlement patterns from coastal habitation to hilltop defended settlements, with outlying groups of warriors on the lower hills above the plantations. Rapan social structure was similar to that in New Zealand. In both cases, cognatic descent defined membership of the clan (*kopu* in Rapa, *hapu* in New Zealand), and decisions taken mainly by family heads determined rights of residence and resource access. Before European discovery, it seems that control over Rapa had been consolidated into the dispensation of a single clan, in which a line of high chiefs had begun.

European discovery in 1791 was restricted to a fleeting encounter off the coast of Rapa with men that paddled out in outrigger and double-hulled canoes. These men were comparatively dark and stocky, unadorned, without tattoos, apparently of homogeneous status, and aggressively acquisitive of iron; their boats were well-made outriggers and double canoes, probably with sails on some, and capable of carrying more than 20 crew. Hill forts were seen surrounded by rows of palisades and had a large house at the centre. There was no sign of domestic animals and relatively little to be seen of cultivation, although much of the land had been cleared of forest.

By the early 19th century, more shipboard contacts disclosed the existence of chiefs and taro cultivation, and from 1825 when contact began ashore, the peculiarities of Rapan subsistence became clear. Taro was by far the most important cultivated plant, its wet-field plantations occupying nearly all of the coastal land; others were sweet potato, a banana, the gourd, paper mulberry and *Cordyline*. These were supplemented with pandanus, wild celery, edible ferns and other native plants. Strikingly absent were breadfruit, *ufi* yam, coconut, kava and most forms of banana. The pig, dog and chicken were also absent, but the Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*) was abundant and tame. Fishing and shellfishing were important pursuits, the protein they provided being augmented by the capture of seabirds and collection of their eggs.

The reduced subsistence diversity compared with more tropical Polynesian islands was matched by a comparably narrower inventory of material goods and crafts, according to Stokes (n.d.). Weapons seem to have been confined to club, spear, sling, and one or two additional

items. Along with an absence of tattooing, there were few ornamental items, no decoration of tapa cloth, no kava drinking, no use of fish poisons (despite the presence of suitable plants), no use of *Pandanus* in mat-making, and no featherwork. Despite the relatively late existence of high chiefs or 'kings', and the construction of impressive hill forts, there was very little development of constructed marae or shrines, or the maintenance of priests.

To what extent these features of Rapan society and culture can be ascribed to remoteness from most other islands in East Polynesia, a relatively cool climate, a small population (even if of relatively high density), scarcity of cultivable land, or some contingencies of history are issues that are addressed in the light of archaeological investigations discussed in this volume.

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