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Intelligent eyes: Visualising Rapa Nui (Easter Island) archaeology

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On 18 October 1914 Katherine Routledge (1866–1935) and her husband, William Scoresby Routledge (1859–1939), co-leaders of the Mana Expedition to Easter Island, were camping near Ahu Tongariki and conducting excavations of monolithic stone statues (*moai*) in Rano Raraku quarry, Rapa Nui¹ (Figure 18.1). That same day in faraway Prospect Park, Brooklyn, USA, a baby girl named Rhoda Bubendey was born. Rhoda grew up to become a famed cultural anthropologist and in 1942 married Alfred Métraux. Two years earlier he had published *Ethnography of Easter Island*, a seminal work still indispensable today. As a member of the Franco-Belgian Expedition to Easter Island in 1934–35, Alfred Métraux followed directly in the footsteps of Katherine Routledge (Figure 18.2), who had departed Rapa Nui on 18 August 1915 after 17 months in residence. Métraux, like Routledge before him, depended on a remarkable Rapanui man named Juan Tepano a Rano (known as Juan Tepano) as field guide and for introductions to the same elders Katherine had once interviewed, although, in the intervening two decades, many of those venerable persons had died. This essay provides a glimpse into the early development of the Rapa Nui archaeological survey as seen through the ‘intelligent eyes’ of

1 The modern name of the island is rendered Rapa Nui; the names of the people and language are Rapanui.

Katherine Routledge and Juan Tepano, two remarkable people from vastly different cultural backgrounds who built upon shared human qualities and similar perceptions to create a scholarly legacy of substantial value.



Figure 18.1. Map of Rapa Nui showing key places or sites.

Source: Cartographic Illustration by Alice Hom, Easter Island Statue Project.



Figure 18.2. Katherine Pease Routledge (1866–1935) c. 1919.

Source: Photograph by the late Peter Bucknall.

Backward glances

When reflecting on her own experiences in the field and those of her female colleagues, Rhoda Bubeney Métraux stated that ‘a woman can more easily obtain a wider picture’ of the society she is studying in the field ‘because she can enlist male support and confidence more readily than a man’ can gain access to female consultants (Swidler 1989:265). The accuracy of that subjective statement is debatable, of course, and it is obvious that collaboration is most productive when it is a two-way exchange offering mutual benefit. However, there is no doubt that support and confidence were provided to Katherine Routledge by Juan Tepano during their fieldwork together on Easter Island. He was the key conduit between her and the community’s elders and essential to her ethnographical achievement, as she herself recognised. ‘Any real success’ in her interviews with approximately a dozen Rapanui male elders and a few women in a group known as the *korohu’a* was ‘due to the intelligence of one individual who was known as Juan Tepano’ (Routledge 1919:214). ‘He made clear to the old men anything I wished to know’ and then ‘explained their answers to me’. Tepano also ‘assumed the attitude of watch-dog to prevent my being imposed on’.

There were several general research questions that the Routledges hoped to answer during their archaeological and ethnographic foray on Rapa Nui, and one of them was at the forefront for Katherine: how are the statues linked to the present inhabitants? Her personal goal was to ‘unite the information gained from locality and memory’ (Routledge 1919:214). This is an almost perfect expression of a thoughtful fieldwork plan, although it only emerged in retrospect from her Rapa Nui experiences and was not shaped in advance by a research design. The Routledges were equally energetic collectors of artefacts and human remains, although they tended to emphasise gender-specific definitions of fieldwork categories. Katherine’s framework of inquiry was provided by the nascent field of historical anthropology. Scoresby, who trained in medicine, claimed the more ‘scientific’ study of physical anthropology. Over time, however these divisions tended to blur.

It was Katherine's collaboration with Juan Tepano that salvaged oral histories preserved by knowledgeable Rapanui elders, an important aspect of cultural heritage that was at the time seriously threatened by colonialism.² Together they collected toponyms that were fast disappearing due to the forced removal of Rapanui families from ancestral lands. They mapped the rolling landscape and described the coastline's ceremonial and burial sites that Rapanui people were forbidden to access. The hand-drawn maps and place names they amassed are naturally flawed in some ways and were only summarised in Routledge's (1919, 1920) publications. However, in the 1980s the value of these documents became evident when Routledge's field notes became more widely available and as the Rapanui community emerged from the depths of colonialism to assert ancient land claims. Routledge's partial write-up of her survey notes has allowed modern archaeological field teams such as my own to attach survey points to long-ago memories.

Visibility and self-identity

I suggest that Katherine Routledge and Juan Tepano were each faced from an early age with different but equally limited options for self-expression within their respective cultures. It is also apparent that each visualised the individual trajectories of their lives as transcending the very different worlds into which they had been born. The personal invisibility each experienced, the visibility each craved and created, and the intellectual insights they gained by casting 'intelligent eyes' over the archaeological landscape of Rapa Nui are all fundamental aspects of their seminal ethnographic achievement.

The ravages of nearly a century of missionisation and colonialism created the 'mixed character' of the colonial Rapanui world that greeted the Routledges upon arrival of the Mana Expedition to Easter Island. In such a world 'elements of settler and local culture combined to shape a distinct cultural entity' characterised by hybridity and ambiguity (Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002:7). Such a blended world is problematic at best

2 La Compañía Explotadora de la Isla de Pascua (the Company or, literally, the company to exploit the island) was formed by a Chilean colonial with Williamson, Balfour Co., a successful, Valparaíso-based Scottish shipping and trading firm. It imported a starter flock of 400–500 merino sheep and established a sheep ranch. The islanders were all 'in service to the Company' at 'very low wages' (Van Tilburg 2003:81, 2018). When the Mana Expedition arrived, Percival (Percy) Henry Edmunds, who became ranch manager in either 1905 or 1908 (records conflict), was in charge. He was by far the most successful manager; he married into the community and established a distinguished family line that survives to this day. His ranch manager was Juan Tepano Rano.

and was especially difficult for highly privileged British subjects of the time to visualise. Empathy was a quality Routledge often lacked but it was required to sort out patterns of behaviour and gain understanding.

Katherine had grown up in the lap of luxury in the north of England, her life deeply touched by Quaker spiritualism and shaped by that religion's long tradition of activism in the context of suffering. She loathed social injustice, and over time learned to recognise it within the Rapanui community. During one crisis she ransacked her wardrobe to provide Rapanui leadership with the fabric they required to sew a new flag and fly it when a Chilean military ship arrived. Scoresby came from an intellectually striving, modestly successful merchant family having immigrant roots in Canada and Australia. He was a committed atheist and yearned for a life of adventure far off the beaten track. Katherine and Scoresby were both self-involved but well-educated travellers who had suffered family tragedies, illnesses and personal losses. Among their worst qualities, individually and as a couple, were snobbishness, stinginess and an abiding fear of being taken advantage of by others.

To better understand the workings of the remarkable partnership that developed and played out between Katherine Routledge and Juan Tepano it is necessary to acknowledge here the philosophical gulf that developed at the same time between Katherine and her husband. It was rooted in the value – or lack of it – each saw in the people and history of Rapa Nui. Their respective views were a partial consequence of the Routledges' marriage of convenience and emerged within the context of Western materialism. The more Katherine immersed herself in her research and fieldwork, the more Scoresby removed himself from it. The more he saw of the Rapanui people, the less he liked or respected them. Eventually, he dropped many of his assigned field tasks and found respite by voyaging back and forth between Rapa Nui and mainland Chile while Katherine carried on with the survey.

Visionary choices: Limited options and acculturation

Katherine Maria Pease was born into wealth and privilege but also sadness, domestic violence and emotional deprivation. As a young, brilliant and ambitious woman she was completely invisible within an idle English country family living off a fortune made generations earlier. Her world

was the suffocating mid-Victorian realm of second-class citizenship all women of the time endured. She entered the social whirl but did not possess the traditional looks or talents thought at the time to be desirable. She refused to be forced into a domestic role and escaped to university, where she achieved honours in modern history without ever convincing her family that her education was worthwhile. As one of the first women to breach the ivy-covered walls of academia, Katherine was often lonely. She had one or two close friends but never felt 'a sense of solidarity' with other females on the same journey, although she often talked self-consciously about playing a role in the more abstract, general cause of women's suffrage (as did many others at that pioneering time; Díaz-Andreu and Stig Sørensen 1998:6–11).

Katherine eventually married Scoresby and then promptly decamped with her husband to what was then British East Africa and, later, to Easter Island and the Pacific. Her sojourns abroad, like those of many other women of her day, appear to have provided freedom and access to people and fieldwork opportunities she would never have had in England. Just as Rhoda Bubendey Métraux predicted, Katherine's gender gave her certain privileges in the field. For example, she was allowed by Kikuyu women to observe African tribal practices not widely known at the time. She became perhaps the first white woman to personally witness the practice of female circumcision (Van Tilburg 2003:63, 2018). To the chagrin of her family she spoke out loudly and publicly against abhorrent English colonial practices in Africa that are easily recognisable today as child prostitution and human trafficking.

While Katherine Routledge joined the subculture of 'new women' forged in the crucible of women's suffrage, she never became fully acculturated in it, no matter what part of the world she was in at the time. Although she enjoyed shocking prudish family members and friends by dressing in costumes from Africa and telling tales from the South Pacific, Routledge retained many values and prejudices of her upbringing. She was class-conscious, suspicious and unfair in her relationships and could be enormously contradictory and pretentious. For example, she rode with an assistant into the field wearing an old duster and floppy hat that had seen better days but carried a picnic basket bulging with exotic foods. At luncheon in the field with Rapanui guides or consultants she spread a clean cloth on the ground and ate using monogrammed silverware from her yacht's galley (Figure 18.3).



Figure 18.3. Selected pieces of Katherine Routledge's monogrammed silverware.

Manufactured by William Hutton & Sons, Sheffield, England for the Army and Navy Co-operative Society, Ltd., London, c. 1900–10.

Source: Private collection.

Personal visibility and assured self-interest

Juan (Iovani) Tepano a Rano (Parare'e) was a highly visible member of the local Rapanui community. He was gifted with good looks, keen intelligence and personal ambition but was also pious and prudish. Tepano was the son of Victoria Veriamo a Huki a Parapara and her third husband, Rano (Kaeppler and Van Tilburg 2018:47, note 2; McCall 1986). In a legal declaration made on 7 August 1914 Juan Tepano stated that his age was 38, making his birth year 1876 (Consejo de Jefes de Rapa Nui, A. Hotus y Otros 1988:319). Métraux (1940:3) says that Tepano was 'about 60' in 1934–35, thus suggesting he was born in 1874–75. However, Tepano was baptised in 1872 (Grant McCall pers. comm. 2016).

Tepano's parents were of the Tupahotu kinship group that, with other lineages, occupied Hotu 'Iti, the eastern, lower-ranked of two hereditarily designated, discrete sociopolitical regions of the island. Veriamo was born and had lived literally in the shadow of the great statues of Rano Raraku quarry. Tepano was married to María Hiona 'Aifiti Engepito Ika Tetono, with whom he had eight children (Consejo de Jefes de Rapa Nui, A. Hotus y Otros 1988). One of them, Amelia, later remembered the beautiful boots Katherine Routledge wore in the field. Tepano spoke his native language but also Spanish and knew some English. He served in the Chilean Navy and travelled far beyond his island's shores. He had the assured self-interest gained through his prominent positions as the recognised 'head man' of the island's only village and foreman of the colonial sheep ranch. He was visible to all foreigners and set apart from the local community 'by his adaptability to outsiders and willingness to participate in larger Chilean culture' (Van Tilburg 2003:80).

Tepano gained status and earned substantial economic reward by working with foreigners but also paid dearly for doing so. Some in the Rapanui community were jealous, resentful or critical; some thought he was selling their heritage to the highest bidder. He did not reject his Rapanui background but showed the world in every possible way – including by wearing elegant suits, crisp white shirts and ties, and polished boots – that he was not completely within it.³ A bare-chested photographic portrait of Tepano made by someone in the Mana Expedition shows him looking down and away from the camera, effectively separating his private persona from the 'gone native' pose he assumed.⁴ Juan Tepano, like so many others who have served as important anthropological consultants in different parts of the world, trod a tightrope stretched 'between worlds' (Karttunen 1994), neither of which he inhabited with complete comfort.

3 'Dress constitutes a fundamental marker of social and ethnic identity and was one of the ways in which Christian missionaries in Oceania sought to alter native self-representation' (Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002:17).

4 The Mana Expedition set up a photography tent at Mataveru and had the latest equipment. An improvised portrait studio was created by hanging up a bolt of cloth brought for the purpose. Katherine, Scoresby and Frank T. Green, engineer aboard *Mana*, took photos at various times. Tepano and Scoresby had a major falling-out over the removal of human bones from the island, so it is doubtful that he would have sat for this photo if Scoresby was behind the camera. The photographer is unknown.

Intelligent eyes

In the preface to the second edition of her self-published *The Mystery of Easter Island* Katherine Routledge summarises, rather modestly, the value she feels the Mana Expedition's Rapa Nui work will have in future. She makes two points. First, she notes that her survey maps are backed up by hundreds of statue measurements, sketches and negatives, adding:

This record will, we venture to think, hold increased value in the future, as there is a constant tendency for the remains to suffer deterioration at the hands of nature and man. (Routledge 1919:xii)

Second, she states about the ethnographic record that 'it was our good fortune [despite] language and other difficulties, to be able with patience to rescue at the eleventh hour much of high value'. While some of her interpretations of this wealth of data do not always hold up well today, and although some of her field notes still remain to be located, the 'intelligent eyes' she and Juan Tepano each focused on the Rapa Nui landscape (Routledge 1919:xi) created an irreplaceable archive in support of Rapa Nui archaeology, conservation and ethnohistory.

Katherine Routledge felt that she had developed 'intelligent eyes' when looking at the remains of the past on Rapa Nui only after spending about six months in the field. She understood that understanding was created by time, good intellectual vision and focus aided by a strong lens of experience, and curiosity tempered by caution and humility. Understanding only comes when field experience has produced enough data to allow good comparisons and sound conclusions. Routledge brought with her the best survey tools available at the time: cameras, alidades, compasses and binoculars (Figure 18.4). She often ran out of paper to make her scribbled notes but worked with a good companion in the field who enriched the content of what she recorded. Despite their language and other differences, Routledge and Tepano communicated well. They had enough time together to be thorough in their observations and Katherine had enough leisure to digest what she saw while remaining physically within a well-defined ethnographic realm.



Figure 18.4. Boxwood alidade by Stanley, London with leather case (left); binoculars with leather case lined in blue silk (background); brass directional compass (foreground) and round wood case containing a sparkplug for yacht *Mana* (right).

Source: Private collection.

Visualising Rapa Nui

I consulted Katherine Routledge's original field notes in person in the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) Archive for the first time in 1986–87 (Routledge and Routledge n.d. [1914–15]; Fieldnotes RGS/WKR).⁵ I returned many times to them but have also field checked many of the places on the island that she described. I followed the tracks she traced on her sketch maps and typed survey notes. I visited her campsites on Rapa Nui and every home she lived in throughout the UK and Africa. Most of the time I was accompanied in the field by my own research colleague, the great-grandson on his mother's side of Juan Tepano.⁶

5 The late Sir Nicholas Harington (1942–2016), son of John Charles Dundas Harington (1903–1980) (Van Tilburg 2003:228–229), donated some *Mana* Expedition notes to the Royal Geographical Society, London, and stored some left by W.S. Routledge with Sir Richard Harington (1861–1931). In the late 1990s I met with Sir Nicholas Harington to examine the stored materials. They were sold in 2021 at auction in London to a private collector. At least two other private collectors still hold *Mana* Expedition materials.

6 Cristián Arévalo Pakarati is the grandson of Amelia Tepano Ika and Santiago Pakarati and, in turn, the great-grandson of Juan Tepano and María Ika. He is an artist and joined the Easter Island Statue Project team in 1989.

I have concluded that – despite the illnesses and hardships Katherine Routledge faced after departing Rapa Nui – the Mana Expedition data constitute a trustworthy legacy. In the past decade my Easter Island Statue Project (www.eisp.org) team has compiled and edited information drawn from Katherine Routledge’s unpublished field notes to create an annotated comparative research data set. Imperial values for statue dimensions, excavation levels and statue distances collected by Katherine Routledge are entered in our database under her name. Juan Tepano’s drawings, Lt. D.R. Ritchie’s survey maps and Scoresby’s site and object diagrams are entered separately under each of their names. We have localised much of their data, combined it with our own and that of other researchers, and arrayed this important information on a suite of newly constructed survey maps to visualise Rapa Nui at a specific point in time. Our draft maps have been accessed by concerned Chilean and Rapa Nui public agencies for nearly a decade, thus supporting them in undertaking what Routledge understood were crucial conservation imperatives. Ethnographic accounts of land ownership and social group identity identified in her notes help to address concerns implicit in modern development, something Juan Tepano would surely appreciate today (Consejo de Jefes de Rapa Nui, A. Hotus y Otros 1988; Métraux 1940:119–128; Routledge 1919: 223–224).

Hindsight

Looking back, we can see tangible products that came out of the Mana Expedition, each of which was invaluable to the expedition but especially important individually to Katherine Routledge, William Scoresby Routledge and Juan Tepano (Van Tilburg 2003:229). Although the yacht *Mana* was funded by Katherine and she was co-leader with Scoresby of the expedition as well as the voyage, Scoresby received and kept in his own collection the silver Challenge Cup. It was awarded to him in 1917 by special resolution of the Royal Cruising Club (Routledge 1919:388; Figure 18.5). Katherine kept her monogrammed silver plate and her field notes, packed them in numbered and labelled boxes that had once carried supplies and guarded them jealously, treasuring above all the one book she succeeded in producing: a first edition copy of *The Mystery of Easter Island*. Juan Tepano studied the many photographs Katherine showed him of Rapa Nui woodcarvings curated by the British Museum. Later in life

he took up woodcarving and used this knowledge to rediscover his own talent. Today, Juan Tepano is acknowledged by his community as central to the rebirth of woodcarving as an art form. I have identified some of his works, though they are not signed, in collections worldwide. Many modern carvers trace their artistic lineage to him as teacher or mentor (Figure 18.6).



Figure 18.5. The Challenge Cup presented to William Scoresby Routledge by the Royal Cruising Club, London, 1917. Shapland Silversmith, London.

Note: Inscribed 'Cruising Club Founded 1880 Challenge Cup 1917 Awarded by Special Resolution of the Club to W. Scoresby Routledge for his cruise in the Pacific on "Mana" and Exploration on Easter Island'.

Source: Private collection.



Figure 18.6. Two woodcarvings by the late Cristóbal Pakarati Tepano (d. c. 2000), former carver and leader within the Rapanui crafts industry encouraged by Juan Tepano Rano: *moai kavakava* (50 cm) and *moai tanata* (30 cm).

Source: Private collection.

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This text is taken from *Uncovering Pacific Pasts: Histories of Archaeology in Oceania*, edited by Hilary Howes, Tristen Jones and Matthew Spriggs, published 2022 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/UPP.2021.18