The Country Where My Heart Is

Historical Archaeologies of Nationalism and National Identity

Edited by Alasdair Brooks and Natascha Mehler

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Historical Archaeology and Easter Island

Cultural Destruction and the Aborted Formation of National Identity

DANIEL SCHÁVELZON AND ANA IGARETA

The Transformation of Easter Island Society

This is a chapter that—intentionally—sharply contrasts with the earlier chapters in this book. Whereas the earlier chapters are primarily about the construction and manipulation of national and cultural identities in the post-medieval period, this chapter is about the *destruction* of identity in the same period, and the negative impact of European colonialism on the development of national identities in an indigenous community. Yet past colonialism is not the only factor; an archaeological focus on pre-history at the expense of the historical past has also had ramifications for how external scholars have approached the issue of identity.

The subject of the present study, Easter Island, is—and has long been—one of the most geographically and culturally isolated places on the planet. Today its famous stone sculptures, or *moai*, nonetheless bring an influx of tourists to the island every day, often outnumbering the island's permanent population, despite that isolation—proof, if it were needed, that the island's art and culture are considered exceptional. However, the story of the island's occupation is itself remarkable, involving both a spectacular environmental collapse before the arrival of Europeans and a sustained assault on the island's traditional

culture after European contact. These two factors are key to any understanding of the island's socio-historical development, including explaining the "mystery" of why the Rapa Nui (the indigenous population) abandoned the construction of the iconic moai statues. For the purposes of the present discussion, these factors are also key to understanding the issue of identity construction on Easter Island.

Easter Island was reached by humans comparatively late. Some researchers say it was settled as recently as the twelfth century AD, while others claim it might have been occupied as early as the fourth century, but this is a discussion for elsewhere. The important point for the present chapter is that the islanders are of Polynesian origin, and seem to have been cut off from any further external cultural influence for centuries after settlement as a result of the island's isolation. Evidence of this isolation can be seen in, for example, the absence of ceramics despite the availability of clay quarries (Smith 1988).

The island's landscape was heavily exploited by the settlers, probably to the degree of creating major environmental erosion (Mieth and Bork 2005), although it is arguable whether or not this was equally intense in each period of settlement. Most significantly, the island's palm forest gradually disappeared after settlement, as did the islanders' capacity to obtain certain resources from that forest, either directly or indirectly (Orliac 2000; Orliac and Orliac 1998). As the forest shrank, the diminished wood supply affected the islanders' ability to make suitable fishing boats. Meanwhile, rats destroyed the seeds, which drastically reduced the forest regeneration rate (Hunt 2007; Hunt and Lipo 2011) and further exacerbated the environmental problems.

However, the present authors do not accept theories of ecological suicide as sufficient explanation for the subsequent collapse of traditional Rapa Nui culture, more specifically for the subsequent suspension of the erection of the moai sculptures and other public works (Diamond 2005). There is no doubt that the social issues caused by the environmental problems were very serious, and that they increased alongside population growth and increased social stratification, but these are problems common to many societies—including other insular societies. Although it is not clear precisely what triggered the series of seventeenth-century conflicts and changes in the way of life of the Rapa Nui, it is clear that deforestation does not sufficiently explain the whole story. Understanding the importance of deforestation and the

associated breakdown in the island's delicate ecological balance has been a great advance, but other recent data—especially palynological data—have opened up new debates here (Bahn and Flenley 1992).

The present authors argue that existing archaeological studies have not been able to fully account for the precise interaction of cause and effect between environmental and social stress on Easter Island. Contrary to some traditional accounts, it seems likely that, as the environment continued to degrade, the Rapa Nui made intelligent and intentional survival choices regarding food acquisition. They simultaneously reduced futile resource expenditure on monumental building projects, which is probably what happened to the giant sculptures. The abandonment of the moai was therefore not the result of a social collapse brought about by environmental collapse, but was rather a considered and careful reaction to the changing environmental conditions (Bahn and Flenley 1992).

1680: The Crucial Year?

The issue of environmental and social decline on Easter Island is so central to our understanding of the island's development in the historical period that it requires closer study than the general overview offered above. Archaeology and oral traditions agree on very few things about Easter Island, perhaps on only one: that the so-called cultural collapse occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. A combination of Carbon-14 dates and different historical chronological reconstructions to a great extent agree on the end of the period of moai construction—something generally held to be indicative of an accompanying social collapse—although they differ in their interpretation of the events that led to the collapse.

From Thor Heyerdahl onward, it has been assumed that the seventeenth century was a crucial moment in the island's history (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1961); this includes both the possible erection of the last moai around 1650 and the semi-legendary late-seventeenth-century Battle of Poike. According to local legend, the latter saw the extermination of one of the island's ethnic groups by the other, and is often associated with the final collapse of traditional island culture. The legends relate that the battle ended an inter-ethnic war resulting from famine and one group's desire for power over another. The

islanders subsequently took shelter in hidden, inaccessible caves, leaving corpses scattered around the island that even James Cook reportedly saw.

The date of the battle is open to interpretation, but 1680 fits the existing historical chronicles regarding the battle. According to the latter sources, the great battle ended traditional cultural life and ushered in a period of savagery which would only come to an end with the arrival of Westerners and Christianity. However, it is likely no coincidence that these traditional accounts stressing the role of Christianity in ending the long years of savagery were collated, edited, and, to some extent, rewritten, by two Catholic priests, Fathers Eyraud and Englert.

Archaeology does confirm that significant changes occurred in the late-seventeenth through mid-eighteenth centuries. They included an end to collective public monument construction; changes in diet; the end of the ceremonial use of open public space and subsequent favoring of enclosed spaces (such as caves and overhangs); the emergence of obsidian tips called *mata'a*; the creation of a unified settlement in Orongo (Mulloy 1975); possible evidence of malnutrition and stress; and the re-use of abandoned *ahu* (the moai's supporting platforms) as burial places (Shaw 2000). The period also saw the emergence of new forms of social relations and power structures, as well as a new religion based on the worship of the Bird Man. The latter did not involve environmentally elaborate social rituals and therefore did not require large-scale ceremonial constructions like the moai. Building on early-twentieth-century research undertaken by Katherine Routledge (1919), Bahn and Flenley (1992) estimate a date of 1670 for the start of Bird Man–related egg worship in the island caves of Notu Nui.

These struggles also led to a substantial change in the diet, in the use of lower-quality materials for fire building, and the establishment of ten regions—this may have been older—as lands to protect and fight for. Other social changes included the appearance of obsidian weapons with etchings that indicate regional differences in material culture, an increased mortality rate, the use of previously marginal animal species for food alongside highly debatable evidence of cannibalism, and the final replacement of the worship of sculptures by petroglyph art. These changes occurred over a brief period in the second half of the seventeenth century, and clearly indicate that something serious happened in those years. But it is precisely at this point that archaeological study

Figure 12.1. Easter Island in an etching titled, "Voyage to the Southern Lands," 1728, made by Jacob Roggeveen's expedition (courtesy of the Library of the Institute of American Art, University of Buenos Aires).

of Easter Island, more specifically the archaeological study of Easter Island's pre-history, traditionally ends. It is no coincidence that there has been little to no study of post-collapse historic objects on the island, despite the fact that material culture does not cease in circa 1680.

The year 1680 therefore seems to be the temporal point after which the Rapa Nui have been interpreted as a hungry and desolate people, constantly at war, who looked in awe on the arrival of Westerners, but who had no great interest in the outside world until the nineteenth century when Christianity and slavery brought the surviving post-collapse island culture to an end. The collapse is understood as a pre-European internal phenomenon. Arguments over the causes have inspired multiple studies in an extraordinary academic storm that agrees on one

central fact: the West did not have much to do with the collapse. Only a few texts have outlined a different point of view, but the emphasis here is on the cultural destruction caused by post-contact slavery after 1722 (McCall 1976; Peiser 2005; Pakandam 2009). What we want to stress is that very few studies of the island have addressed whether or not there were other factors worthy of consideration (Hunt 2007; Owsley et al. 1994; Mulrooney et al. 2010). But whatever the precise interaction of cause and effect in the island's late-seventeenth-century transformation, the Rapa Nui could never have anticipated the arrival of Westerners (Figure 12.1).

The Impact of the West

The first known European contact occurred on April 5, 1722, on Easter Sunday, when the Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen arrived on the island (Foester 2012). The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European visitors had a violent, although not necessarily physical, impact on that isolated island, which no one appears to have observed in detail in this early contact period, despite the thousands of articles written about the anthropology of the island in many guises. We believe that the approach with which the initial texts have been typically read, with a focus on looking for historiographical data, has not shown the psychological and social impact of contact. A single nineteenth-century European ship could bring more visitors than there were island residents—residents who had no form of maritime transport by this time and were utterly isolated from the outside world. These European ships arrived from another universe, with strange objects, clothes, food, animals, plants, and weapons that were all alien to the islanders; and then the ships left, often stripping away the island's traditional material culture for the benefit of European museums and collectors.

It is hard to visualize what the sudden intrusion of European visitors meant to the Rapa Nui after hundreds of years of history shut off from the unknown and unimagined outside world. As Isak Dinesen noted in a very different context, indigenous groups "can do things that you can take no precautions against, and which are impossible to escape from: they can turn you into a symbol" (Dinesen 1937: 74). Nothing was ever written on what the Rapa Nui may have thought of these strange new arrivals who looked neither like the islanders nor like the legendary

Figure 12.2. The expulsion of the Dutch from the island, etching from Jacob Roggeveen's 1722 expedition (courtesy of the Library of the Institute of American Art, University of Buenos Aires).

image of their founding king, Hotu Matu'a (Figure 12.2). A single European vessel was made of more wood—at once the island's most necessary but also most over-exploited environmental resource—than could have been used to move the enormous moai over several centuries. Post-contact, Easter Island was suddenly no longer a "Land-Island" as recent archaeologists have defined it, but something that was just a remote part of a far larger and more complex universe.

Yet the islanders did not react passively to the new arrivals. The Europeans gave the Rapa Nui trinkets and nails, while the islanders exchanged what the Europeans perceived as curious and strange objects that would have potential value for collectors back home. When James

Cook arrived, one of the islanders who came on board spent "one day dedicated to measuring the sealing ship with great admiration" (Foester 2012; authors' translation). The islanders sometimes tricked the visitors, for example, giving them "a rabbit for a needle" (Viaud 1872/1873) where the rabbits were actually Polynesian rats. Furthermore, many of the islanders' trade objects were specifically made in expectation of the arrival of a new ship in full knowledge—gained since the first foreigner set foot on the island—that the outsiders would want to trade.

This experience of exchange left such an impact that some specialists argue that Easter Island's distinctive rongorongo script is not precontact, but rather that it originated from an attempt to copy the written papers that the natives saw in the hands of José Martínez Haedo in 1770. It has also been argued that the known signature of the last chief was not the last, deformed trace of a lost culture, but the first expression of an adaptive culture copying from the outside world, and evolving independently from the rest of the Polynesian world (Fischer 1997). If this hypothesis is valid, it helps to indicate the level and speed of Rapa Nui cultural development and adaptability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in a culture once considered primitive by Europeans and subsequently almost exterminated by nineteenth-century slave trading and disease (Fischer 1997; Orliac 2005).

A Century of Archaeology on Easter Island: A Focus on Pre-history

The impact of contact was not solely in one direction. European archaeologists were among those deeply affected by the great moai, their quarries, their ahu platforms, the inexplicable transport of the great statues without any readily apparent resources, the observed abandonment that implied destruction, and the collapse of Rapa Nui culture. However, until very recently archaeology focused almost solely on studies of the island prior to European contact.

The year 2014 marked the centenary of the practice of scientific archaeology and ethnology on Easter Island, which began with Katherine Routledge's important early survey in 1914 (Routledge 1919). Until then, there were two parallel island histories: what really happened to the island's inhabitants, and what visiting travelers said, imagined, understood, drew, looted, or photographed. The Western version of the

island's history began with Roggeveen's arrival in 1722. In describing the island, the Dutchman launched the initial trickle and subsequent flood of inquisitive travelers (including, among others, James Cook and his crew). Some of these ships passed without leaving a visible trace, others contained individuals who looked on the island with curious eyes and tried to explain their experiences, and nearly all exchanged objects and/or sex. These first chronicles are fundamental for understanding not just the processes of contact between these two different universes but also how archaeologists traditionally approached the study of the island's past.

In the second half of the nineteenth century came visiting waves of the inquisitive, the religious, professionals, romantic travelers, naturalists, museum collectors, and even professional looters disguising their practices in the name of international institutions (Pinart 1878; Thomson 1891). Many left behind only their intangible opinions of the island community, but took away whatever they could carry. Meanwhile the island's population continued to suffer further problems in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century present that were ignored in favor of the study of the archaeological past. Routledge was the first author to have a different perspective on what by this point was often characterized as a "dying" culture, perhaps because she was the first female scholar to address the subject. But her 1919 book about the island did nothing to change an ongoing policy of extermination directed toward it (Van Tilburg 2003). Shortly afterward, Easter Island was officially annexed by Chile, and the Rapa Nui were restricted to a virtual concentration camp around the main settlement of Hanga Roa, banned from walking around their own island.

Anthropologists would arrive looking for informants among the captive islanders, even into the twentieth century. But there was one thing they all agreed on: the "unfathomable" antiquity of the monoliths, the separation between the modern Rapa Nui and their predecessors, and the "mystery" of how these sculptures had been abandoned half-finished (Hunt 2007). These three factors were inarguable, and were part of the mystery that made the place attractive to visitors and scholars. As Samuel Beckett wrote, "Death has never demanded that we save it a date" (Beckett 1965: 17).

The possibility that the abandonment of moai sculpting was a conscious and collective cultural choice was something that was very far

from the imagination of the first archaeologists (Shepardson 2013). The great statues were the primary focus of archaeological work, until the second half of the twentieth century brought studies showing that there was also important evidence for domestic architecture (Mulloy 1975; Stevenson and Haoa 2008), the enormous altars for the moai that used more resources than the sculptures themselves (Martinsson-Wallin 1994), the exploitation of crops, collective ritual spaces, pictographic art, mural painting, and a rich material culture (Kjellgren et al. 2001). Indeed, archaeology has since shown that faced with the ecological crisis—perhaps even before—the Rapa Nui created an effective system for growing crops on volcanic and rocky land, something that involved as much or more in the way of collective human effort as making and moving the great moai (Shepardson 2013).

However, while archaeology has helped provide more detail on the pre-contact state of the island, the contact and post-contact periods were largely ignored. Until very recently, archaeologists had never reported the presence of a single object (or fragment thereof) of European origin or otherwise foreign to the island. The only time European ceramics had been found and described, they were classified as intrusive and lacking proper context—something that is itself curious (Smith 1988), but that only helps to emphasize the extent to which the historical period was considered outside of the normal sphere of archaeological study.

This does not mean that artifacts associated with European material culture are absent, only that archaeological descriptions are absent. Known European or European-influenced objects from the island include a wooden walking stick made with the wood of an oar or rudder featuring inscriptions, and various wooden sculptures etched with iron and Carbon-14–dated to the post-contact period. Furthermore, given the fact that over one hundred ships arrived in the first century of contact, sometimes staying a week or more, it would be curious if absolutely nothing European had remained behind. The lack of archaeological study of these items leads us to hypothesize that there has been an archaeological bias against studying recent, non-local artifacts, something that many historical and post-medieval archaeologists working in other regions will sympathize with. The first report on colonial ceramics of South American origin on the island dates only to 2014 (Schávelzon et al. 2014). Other recent studies have shown an

interest in the locations associated with the company that exploited the island in the second half of the nineteenth century (Moreno Pakarati 2012; Fuentes 2013; Cristino and Fuentes 2011); these works build on new historical perspectives that recognize the potential archaeological importance of the last century.

The Nineteenth Century and the Genocide: The Destruction of Identity

Because there was no structured archaeology of the post-contact period locally, at present archaeologists largely have to rely on historical studies to understand the difficult nineteenth-century history of the island. The historical record shows that on the 12th of December 1862, a fleet of whaling boats attacked the island, taking with them over one thousand inhabitants for guano mining on the islands of Peru. This group included the Rapa Nui "king," his son, and a large part of the priest class. While Peru was roundly condemned for its role in stripping the island of most of its population, there had been prior visits from slave boats based in the United States as early as 1805, as well as ships from England and other countries. The lack of interest in the non-Peruvian raids means that more research is still necessary on the impact of these other slaver ship visits.

The focus on Peru is understandable, as the nineteenth-century post-independence history of Chile—the island's modern governing power—is, to a great extent, the history of its conflict with Peru; Chile's 1888 annexation of Easter Island itself took place in the aftermath of Chile's victory over Peru and Bolivia in the 1879–1883 War of the Pacific. From the point of view of official Chilean historiography, especially military history and the history of military governments, Peru has been responsible for all of Chile's woes. This arguable perspective has been used to gloss over Chile's own historical irresponsibility toward Easter Island.

Florentin-Étienne "Tepano" Jaussen, the French bishop of Tahiti, was the first person to bring the nineteenth-century slave raids to international attention. Jaussen's interest in the island stemmed from a rongorongo script tablet that had been sent to him as a gift by early Rapa Nui converts to Catholicism; he was one of the first individuals to realize the significance of these important items of local material

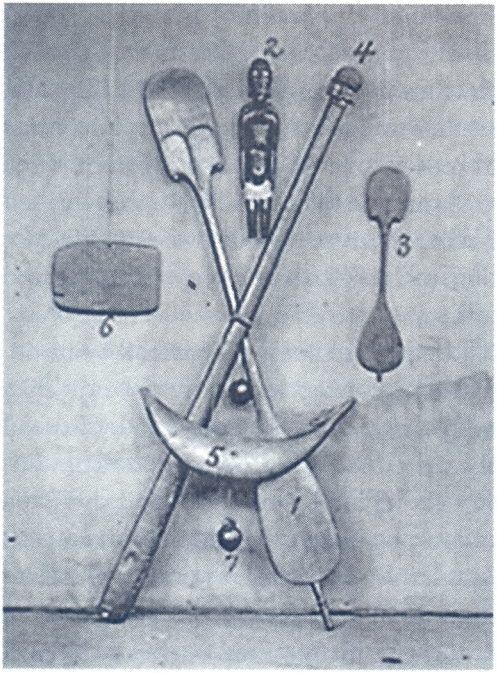

Figure 12.3. The first known curated collection of objects from Easter Island, made by Bishop Jaussen of Tahiti, ca. 1864 (photo from the Archive of the Institute of American Art, M. J. Buschiazzo collection [print dated 1946], University of Buenos Aires).

culture (Jaussen 1893). He also built one of the first intentional collections of Rapa Nui material culture (Figure 12.3). At this point no external power claimed control of the island, and Jaussen managed to convince the French and British governments to intervene in the wake of the 1862 Peruvian raid, forcing the aggressors to agree to return around one hundred survivors to the island. However, smallpox, tuberculosis, and dysentery had already devastated the kidnapped islanders, and only fifteen Rapa Nui returned home alive. Jaussen's well-intentioned intervention led to further tragedy as one of the fifteen returnees was carrying smallpox, leading to an epidemic so severe that the survivors lacked the ability to bury all of the dead.

A year later, the Tahiti diocese sent the first resident Christian priests to the island (Altman 2004). The priests did not initially pay much attention to Easter Island's antiquities—not even to the moai sculptures—until they believed they had converted all of the Rapa Nui circa 1868. Yet reliable quantitative data about the inhabitants of the island was never very exact until the introduction of reliable censuses in the twentieth century. Some Rapa Nui lived in caves away from the encroaching European civilization, and this practice appears to have

continued as recently as the previous generation of islanders, something that scholars are now slowly appreciating (Stambuk 2010). The historical anecdote that the first resident missionary, Father Eyraud, died happily upon hearing that the supposed last pagan Rapa Nui had been baptized is therefore not only implicitly childish on some level, but also offers an example of the manipulation of reality via quantified numbers in this period. Nineteenth-century population estimates are themselves a form of domination, or at least a way of appropriating and controlling the mysterious other.

For the missionaries, all that had come before them had been destroyed, regardless of whether their conception of the island's past was real or not; they represented change and they carried the Roman Catholic Christian God within them, the latter being no small concept. Although the missionaries found ancient objects, and the Rapa Nui tried to maintain their customs, language, dwellings, and material culture, it seems as if the missionaries saw little or nothing of the island's reality. We understand today that in those few years the material remains of the past, whether recent or distant, had ceased to be part of everyday life and had become conceptually archaeological, things associated with an antiquity so great that it was not even feasible to understand them. The Catholic priests heard but failed to understand the islanders' explanations, not because they were incomprehensible, but because the historical continuity between the archaeological past and the lived present had been broken by a combination of the events of 1680 and the impact of contact. The present authors understand this shift as part of the "archaeologization" of the island and its past, the creation of conceptual mystery and remote antiquity. The Rapa Nui had become Christians who owned objects from an ancient and unfathomable past, which were worthy of being studied and exhibited in the museums of the world, but which no longer belonged to them. The modern Christianized inhabitants' sense of identity had been separated forever from their ancient pagan predecessors.

The slave raids and Christianization of the population were not the final stages in the separation of the Rapa Nui from their past. The year after the arrival of the first resident priests, the convicted murderer and arms dealer Jean-Baptiste Dutrou-Bornier arrived on the island and proceeded to turn it into a private sheep ranch (Raybaud and Raybaud 2013). This meant that the local agricultural economy

was mercilessly destroyed, as his company appropriated almost all the land on the island (except for the missionary base around Hanga Roa) through armed force. Dutrou-Bornier forcibly shipped a few hundred Rapa Nui to Tahiti to work for his financial supporters. In 1871, the missionaries—having fallen out with Dutrou-Bornier—sent most of the remaining islanders to French Polynesia in order to "save" them from the Frenchman (Fischer 2005: 113). Although Dutrou-Bornier was murdered in 1876, so terrible was the situation that by the time his successor, Alexander Salmon, arrived from Tahiti in 1878 to take control of the island, only 111 resident Rapa Nui remained (Fischer 2005). After a decade of power struggles between the priests and Dutrou-Bornier's company, the Rapa Nui culture had been destroyed almost to its roots.

The cultural destruction was not necessarily sudden. As late as 1872—a year after the evacuation of most of the remaining population—Pierre Loti observed islanders occupying ancient dwellings, dancing, and painting their bodies (Altman 2004). Nonetheless, it would be hard to underestimate the devastating impact of Dutrou-Bornier's brief period in charge. Even under Salmon and the subsequent Chilean administration, the local language was prohibited until 1952. Moreover, until 1953, most of the island remained as the private sheep farm of the Scottish-Chilean Williamson-Balfour Company (under their Compañia Explotadora de la Isla de Pascua subsidiary); and it wasn't until 1964 that the remaining Rapa Nui were not restricted to a small area around the capital, Hanga Roa. There was no hospital on the island, and an unknown number of residents lived with untreated leprosy. The only available education was at the primary school level and of a religious nature. Following the Chilean annexation, the island's government was militarized, and contact with Chile was undertaken through a naval ship (Fischer 2005).

Ethnologist Alfred Metraux, who worked on Easter Island in 1934–1935, said: "Easter Island, neglected by the Chileans, or influenced disastrously by officials who have been sent to it, has not fallen into decadence: it has simply rotted in a poverty without solution" (1940: 59). Life on the island had become a form of permanent and inescapable punishment, and it was understandable that the islanders came to take refuge in their connection with a past at once great and inexplicable, despite the severing of any cultural continuity with that past.

Constructing Identity, Destroying Identities

If the 1800s were the century of the construction of modern nations and national identities—as outlined in many of the other chapters in this volume—the opposite was the case on Easter Island. Here the nineteenth century saw not just the destruction of the local culture, but also the near extinction of the indigenous population. The island's traditional religion, its past, and its conceptual place in the world were replaced. What remained was the language and a few starving and often leprosy-afflicted individuals, a few legends, and the material remains of a past that was broadly understood to have been glorious, even if it was also widely misunderstood. Whatever it was that led to the abandonment of those sculptures and monuments, they were still awe-inspiring. Perhaps the islanders were now nothing in the eyes of many external observers—but at least they had once been something. Yet the irony is that so devastating was the nineteenth century to cultural continuity and memory that any attempt to reconstruct a Rapa Nui memory and identity after the nineteenth century rested on European records and European descriptions and understanding of the Rapa Nui's archaeologicized past.

A further irony lies in the contrast between the destruction of Easter Island's cultural identity and the contemporary identity construction of the newly independent South American countries. The 1879–1883 War of the Pacific between Peru, Bolivia, and Chile ended with Chile taking most of the spoils. In their own way, each of these countries consolidated their own identities by using the war to underline the ideological basis of their national states (Skuban 2007). Neighbors, such as Brazil, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Argentina, underwent similar processes as the modern states of South America emerged from the chaos of the post-independence period (for example, Shumway 1991).

Different aspects of Chile's 1888 territorial appropriation of Easter Island have been discussed at length; but the reality is that this small, late-imperial expansion was not a military conquest, but was—in a process no doubt familiar to other indigenous groups—based on a linguistic misunderstanding. The Rapa Nui response to the Chileans was mistranslated so that it sounded as if they were agreeing to the annexation (Delsing 2013). What *is* debatable is to what extent this mistranslation was deliberate. The annexation was organized by a Chilean

military officer who had visited both Polynesia and Easter Island and had seen the naval potential of the island as a strategic port in possible future wars his country might be involved in. The most likely of these was against Argentina over control of Patagonia. Ironically, this war never materialized as Argentina had started its own campaign of conquest and genocide in the indigenous territories in the south of the continent. Nevertheless, it became important for Chile both to use Easter Island as a strategic military asset, and to prevent Easter Island from reconstructing its identity or its independence.

It took many years for political change in Chile to slowly bring change in turn to the island's status. While some reforms had been undertaken earlier in the century, it was Eduardo Frei's election in 1964 that ushered in a period of significant reform in both metropolitan Chile and on Easter Island (Stambuk 2010). It was in this period that the Rapa Nui started in earnest to construct a new identity based on the recovery of the language, the history recovered during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by archaeologists and ethnologists, and what survived of the islanders' ethnic memory.

However, as was outlined earlier in the chapter, the available written histories about the island's past had been compiled by Catholic priests. Outside of the latter sources, all that survived were a few oral histories, a few costumes, and the almost miraculous survival of the Rapa Nui language. Any identity was a construction, a shared illusion. As the other chapters in this book have outlined, a constructed artificial identity can still rest on some form of transmuted past reality, and is not necessarily without its own power, but in the case of Easter Island, it lacked the strength to move toward any form of national independence.

Only recently, after a century of archaeological study, have archaeologists and ethnologists started to engage more directly with the Rapa Nui community and understand the impact of past studies within their fields on the island's inhabitants. Among the many ironies of Easter Island's post-contact history is that the current Rapa Nui National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that protects the island's archaeological sites, encompasses the same lands as those owned by the old sheep-farming companies. Although much has been done to improve the quality of life for the Rapa Nui in recent decades, most of the island is therefore still out of their control.

The local population today is facing serious problems in expressing its identity in the face of the Chilean state's control. The near-illiterate and often violent soldiers who ran the island for so many years, taking personal gain from the situation by going into partnership with the company that exploited the land, have gone. They have now been replaced by a very different invasion: mass tourism. And most of the tourism-generated money goes to the Spanish-speaking Chilean migrants who arrived on the island with the capital necessary to invest in hotels and services. Today, Spanish is not only the primary language, but almost the exclusive language in the capital of Hanga Roa.

Meanwhile, Chilean national politics often project the image that just because there is democracy in modern Chile (and on modern Easter Island), the island's problems are solved. But the struggles over the land continue, and small groups of protesters occasionally express their desire for an independent Rapa Nui that seems impossible to achieve. The impact of the modern globalized world is nonetheless in the process of destroying the struggle for even the modern reconstructed Rapa Nui identity, creating picturesque myths for tourists, collective ecclesiastical songs at Mass on Sundays, re-created indigenous costumes to be used in artificially reconstructed "traditional" ceremonies, and a history that idolizes the priests Eyraud and Englert who rewrote the Rapa Nui past to suit their own ideological purposes.

Conclusion

Whereas the preceding chapters in this volume discussed the role that historical archaeology can play in unpicking the construction of identity, implicit in the current chapter's discussion is the argument that an archaeological focus on Easter Island's mythic pre-contact past, at the expense of historical archaeology, has distorted both our understanding of Easter Island's history and the process of identity construction. To fully understand both, to understand the transition from the mythologized past to the modern present, and the implications—both positive and negative—for Rapa Nui identity, it is necessary to initiate a kind of archaeology that until now has not been done on the island: contact archaeology.

The reconstruction of identity needs heroes to be placed alongside a shared sense of cultural imagination, foundational moments,

and important dates (Gatter Espinoza 2011). The fact that the basis of Rapa Nui identity currently rests on archaeology of the pre-contact past and the ideologically oriented ethnographies of Catholic priests is restricting conceptual access to the heroes, foundational moments, and cultural imagination of the island's difficult—but still important—post-contact past, something that a historical archaeology of the post-contact period could potentially help address. As a result of these factors, it seems likely that Easter Island will not achieve a form of independence that draws on the different types of national identity discussed in this volume precisely because it remains a small colonized island whose traditional culture was destroyed by nineteenth-century imperialism, rather than a "nation" whose identity was forged in the fires of nineteenth-century post-Enlightenment nationalism.

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