



JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 129 No.4 DECEMBER 2020

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

CARVED *KOMARI* (VULVA) STONES FROM RAPA NUI: MUSEUM OBJECTS, LEGACY DATA AND CONTEMPORARY LOCAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT: The authors examine selected stone objects in the J.L. Young Collection, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu. Two were named by Young “Maea Momoa” (ma’ea momoa; lit. ‘stone for chickens’). One of the ma’ea momoa is a “pillow stone” (ʔarua) or basaltic beach cobble incised with komari (vulva motifs). The other is a “Bar of stone” lavishly embellished with similar motifs. Six other objects are said to be “fetish stones”. A possible ‘Orongo provenance for the incised “Bar of stone” is raised and tested, and toponymic and linguistic data are offered in support of a new interpretation of the origin of the hakatoro repe ‘elongation of the clitoris’ ritual and the function of one incised “fetish stone” in that process. This research calls attention to the traditional role of women in ‘Orongo ceremonies and employs relatively obscure museum collection objects and their previously overlooked documentation, thus uniting multiple data strands to reveal new details of Rapanui ritual life.

Keywords: komari (vulva motifs), stone artefacts, ‘Orongo ceremonies, gender-based rituals, J.L. Young Collection (Bishop Museum), Rapa Nui

Our focus here is on one of several objects in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum sent on loan to Rapa Nui in November 2018 for a special exhibit at the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert, Hanga Roa.¹ We address three questions: What is this apparently ancient object? What is its history? What new information does it add to our understanding of Rapanui ceremonies?² The object of interest is referred to as a “Bar of stone” in the J.L. Young Collection list. Young included it and eight other objects in this list, which accompanied the collection when it was sold to the Bishop Museum. The “Bar of stone” (i) and one of the “3 small fetish stones” (iii–v) are neither previously researched nor published but are central to this discussion. A 3D image of the “Bar of stone” is available at <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/stone-w-petroglyphs-ki-r-11167b131b0e4df78d46fd9a8180a923>.

- (i) “Bar of stone, Maea Momoa carving. Rapa Nui” (Figs 1a, 1b)
- (ii) “Flat, rounded, stone, Maea Momoa. Rapa Nui” (Figs 2a, 2b)
- (iii–v) “3 small fetish stones (one carved). Rapa Nui” (Fig. 3a–c)
- (vi) “1 small stone amulet, carved fish head. Rapa Nui”
- (vii–viii) “2 fetish stones. Rapa Nui”
- (ix) “1 small black fetish stone. Rapa Nui”

Young includes the meaning of the descriptive Rapanui words quoted above as he understood them: “Maea Momoa. Phallic stones carved with conventional figures of the Vulva feminae used in the ceremony of Hakatoro Repe ... Maea, stone; Momoa, offspring, descendants; called also Maea Ika, stone of the fish.” According to Englert (1978: 178, 184, 198) *ma‘ea mo moa* is literally translated as ‘stone for chickens’, and *komari* is ‘vulva, pudenda’ but also a class of motifs carved on bedrock, boulders (as petroglyphs; Lavachery 1939) or objects. We describe these nine objects, discuss the collector, summarise legacy archaeological data, offer newly collected local knowledge for *ma‘ea mo moa*, hypothesise ritual uses for the “fetish stones” and assess the role of these types of objects in Rapanui rituals.

THE COLLECTOR

The collector of the “Bar of stone” was James Lyle Young (1849–1929), a well-known Pacific trader and eventually the managing director of Henderson and MacFarlane, Ltd., general merchants of Auckland, New Zealand (Kaeppler 2001: 309–10). Young was born in Londonderry (now Northern Ireland) and immigrated to Australia with his parents in the mid-1850s. In 1870 Young became associated for five years with a cotton plantation in Taveuni, Fiji. In April 1875 he embarked on a trading voyage from Fiji to Sāmoa via Futuna and Wallis, and in 1876 he sailed for the Marshall Islands. At Ebon Atoll he operated a trade station for Thomas Farrell of Auckland. Young was in Micronesia from 1877 to 1881.

It is claimed that J.L. Young made multiple sea voyages “including to Pitcairn and Easter Island” (Neich 2008: 331–32). However, we are unable to corroborate that Young ever visited Rapa Nui. Métraux (1940: 263–64), in referring to collections made in 1886 by Paymaster William J. Thomson of USS *Mohican*, says that Thomson was at Rapa Nui “a few years before Young’s visit”. Métraux probably assumed, based upon his collections research at Bishop Museum, that Young had visited Rapa Nui, and then Neich reiterated that assumption. It is certain that Young lived intermittently in Tahiti, where he married Mary Stringer in 1884 (that is, two years before the arrival at Rapa Nui of USS *Mohican*). Young (1904) says that he obtained information in Tahiti “from time to time during the past 18 years from natives of Rapa Nui”.



Figure 1a (top). "Bar of stone, Maeca Momoa" (B3592), $67 \times 15 \times 11$ cm, J.L. Young Collection, Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Photo by Jesse W. Stephen, Bishop Museum Archives.
Figure 1b (bottom). "Bar of stone, Maeca Momoa" (B3592), J.L. Young Collection, Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Drawing by Wendy All.



Figure 2a (top) and 2b (bottom). Front and back views of “Flat, rounded, stone, Maca Momoa”, 26 cm long, known as a “pillow stone” (B4454), J.L. Young Collection, Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Photo by David Franzen, Bishop Museum Archives.

Young eventually sold most of his collection to Bishop Museum in 1920, but before that he loaned to the museum director the flat, rounded basaltic beach cobble (*poro*; B4454; Young catalogue [ii]) incised with vulva (komari) symbols and illustrated in the Director’s Report for 1903 as part of a short article by Young entitled “Remarks on Phallic Stones from Rapa Nui”. That article and the illustration were reproduced as an occasional paper of the Bishop Museum in 1904 (Van Tilburg 1994: 170, n16). Young (1903/1904) quotes in both articles unnamed Rapanui men who described ceremonies involving the much smaller pebbles they called “Atua Mangaro” (*atua* ‘god or gods’; *manaro* lit. ‘to tame or to break’) (Fig. 3) as follows:



Figure 3. Three views of one of three small “fetish stones”, weight range 15–19 g, (a. top) top view (B3557), incised and grooved for attached string; (b. middle) side view 1, with museum number (B3557) visible, showing continuity of groove for attached string; and (c. bottom) side view 2 (B3557), showing groove superimposed over and through design elements including angular/linear motif(s), a curvilinear motif and one or two anthropomorphised faces. J.L. Young Collection, Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Photo by Jesse W. Stephen, Bishop Museum Archives.

It is said by some of the old [Rapanui] men, who until lately resided in Tahiti, that these stones were used in the ceremony of “hakatoro repe” (hakatoro=to cause to stretch, to elongate; repe=clitoris) also called by one old man “hakatoro matakaho” (matakaho=clitoris). This rite was practiced on girls shortly before they arrived at puberty. A similar rite was in use in the Marquesas Islands in former years. It is worthy of remark that at Ponape (Carolines) the labia minora was stretched until they were [more] projecting than the labia majora. No detailed account of the ceremony could be obtained, except that the operator, who was always an old man or “tuhunga” (priest or wise man) pinched the clitoris with finger and thumb, or between pieces of reed or bamboo, so as to make the end swell. Having thus enlarged the end of the organ so that a string could be fastened to it, he proceeded to put a noose of fine twine over the swelled end with a slip-knot, and fastened a small stone as a weight to the twine, which gradually elongated the clitoris until it was, in course of time, two or three inches long. Care had to be taken, said the narrators, to relax the noose occasionally, lest the end of the organ should drop off; in which case no one would want to take the girl to wife, she would be kopori (adhering together), also conveying the idea of deformity or being misshapen.

It is said that the rite of hakatoro repe was ordained by Tane Harai, the father of Hoatumatua [Hotu Matu‘a], who, before his son left the land of Marae Toehau,³ said, “forget not the practice of hakatoro, for by that shall it be known whose sons ye are.” (Young 1903/1904)

That is, hakatoro repe produced female identity markers socially required or recognised by high-status males when seeking marriage partners of similar status.

Englert (1978: 157, 245) gives *hakatoro* as ‘to castigate’ and, aptly enough, ‘to punish or mortify the flesh’, and *reperepe* as ‘to stretch or extend below’, with the specific example of extending the earlobe during ancient times; also, ‘labios [labia] de la vulva’. In related meanings Du Feu (1996: 200) gives *tino* ‘sex organs, female’, *tataki* ‘vagina’ and *komari* ‘vulva’. The term *matakaho* should probably be *matakao* (lit. ‘uterus, womb’; Englert 1978: 193) and thus suggestively appropriate to the discussion here.

Routledge (1916; 1917; 1919: 256; 1920) declared that the large, incised beach cobbles such as one collected by Routledge (1919, 1920) and another obtained by Young (B4454; Figs 2a, 2b) and weighing 1.81–2.26 kg were “used as pillows” in the stone buildings of the ceremonial site of ‘Orongo. She collected several and understood them to have magical abilities to cause dreams or visions and to ensure fertility, especially that of chickens. Ramírez-Aliaga (2016b) describes additional “pillow stones” (*ñarua*) and concurs in their use.

Métraux (1940: 187–88, 263–64, 258 fig. 42e, f) presents a sketch of Bishop Museum B4454, identified as a “boulder” and one of several

“Good-luck objects” that also includes the “fetish stones” discussed here. He interprets the small beach pebbles as “line sinkers”, which is unrealistic considering how light they are (14–19 g).

Stones incised with designs of the vulva are common on the island and had no connection with the purported ceremony of the *hakatoro* (stretching of a girl’s clitoris) suggested by Young. The stretching of the girl’s clitoris (*repe*) was not a special rite, but a long process of deformation which lasted for years under the care of a girl’s mother. (Métraux 1940: 264)

Métraux (1940: 104) is not saying that the rite of *hakatoro repe* did not take place; nor is he saying that priests were uninvolved. What he stresses is that it was a time-consuming practice carried out on children who were “probably of chiefly families” under the watchful eye of a female family member.

According to one popular Easter Island tale, a girl in seclusion was daily washed (*hopu*), deloused (*aruke kutu*), combed (*hari hari*), stained (*akui*) with turmeric and red earth, and her clitoris was stretched (*haro matatuu*) so that it would be long and hanging. (Métraux 1940: 104)

The “*Maea momoa*” in the [*hakatoro repe*] ceremonies were necessary adjuncts to the function, and without its presence the rite could not be performed. It was “*taonga tuhunga*”=the valued implement or amulet of the priest. It was also stated that each clan or “*manga*”=division or family of a tribe had a separate stone, called by the name of the ancestress, as the carved staves were, but identification of the stones as belonging to any one clan could not be obtained. Very few of the old men are left, and most are quite unreliable. (Young 1903/1904)

Métraux (1940: 104) related that “Easter Islanders pointed out to me two caves in Poike which were said to have been inhabited by *neru*, boys and girls who were separated according to sex and who were secluded by their parents in caves where they lived for years. They were probably of chiefly families and, as in Mangareva, were isolated in order to become white and stout and to manifest by their appearance the distinguished position of their families.” He quotes the following song:

You are secluded, O *neru*, in the cave.
Hanging is the gourd with red ochre of the *neru*.
You have been secluded for a long time, O *neru*. (Métraux 1940: 104)

Englert (1978: 207) names two caves in the Poike region of the island where *neru* children were isolated: Ana More Mata Puku (for boys) and Ana o Keke (for girls).

MA'EA MOMOA (“BAR OF STONE”) IN THE BISHOP MUSEUM

The “Bar of stone” (B3592) collected by Young is shaped of yellow-brown basaltic stone uncharacteristic of the ‘Orongo area. Its measurements as determined by Bishop Museum are $67 \times 15 \times 11$ cm.⁴ It is rectangular and squared off with irregular, non-bevelled edges. The end portions are unfinished and porous, while the larger area of the central portion has been smoothed. It is on that portion that the nine iconographic motifs discussed here are incised. Four motifs (1–4) are described from the view we call “A” (Fig. 4a). Five motifs (5–9) are described from the reverse view we call “B” (Fig. 4b). Three motifs are larger, better carved and more complex, and one of them (“A” view; Motif 3) can be read from both views. Most such motifs are traditionally referred to as komari (vulva; vulvae).

There are two complex, anthropomorphised komari on this “Bar of stone” (“A” view; Motifs 1 and 3). Motif 1 includes a human arm and hand (Figs 5a, 5b). The hand has the correct number of digits and is curved and lying above (calling attention to) the genitalia (as in the flat, female woodcarvings known

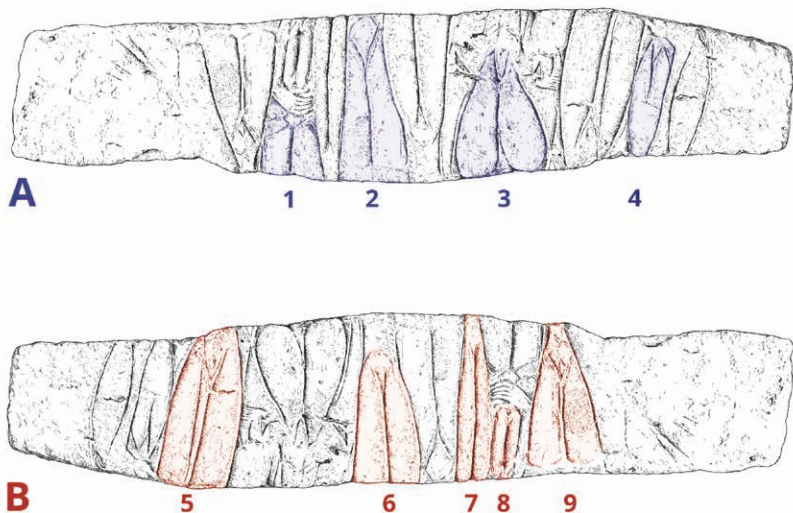


Figure 4. (a) Embellished “Bar of stone” (B3592), 67 cm long, “A” view, komari motifs 1–4. (b) “B” view, komari motifs 5–9. Drawings by Wendy All.

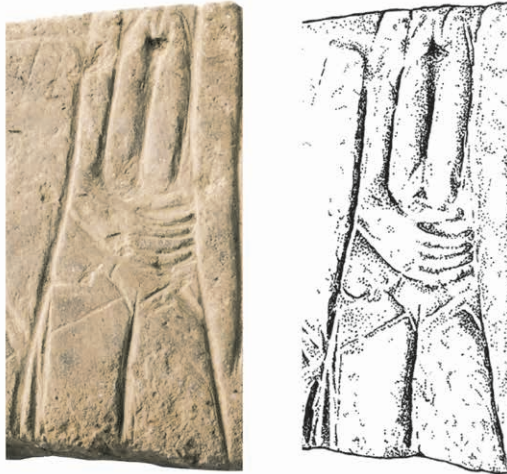


Figure 5. (a, left) “A” view, Motif 1 (B3592), detail on “Bar of stone” of low-relief human hand lying above indication of female genitalia and legs; above the hand, a high-relief komari. (b, right) “A” view, Motif 1 (B3592), detail on “Bar of stone”. Drawing by Wendy All.

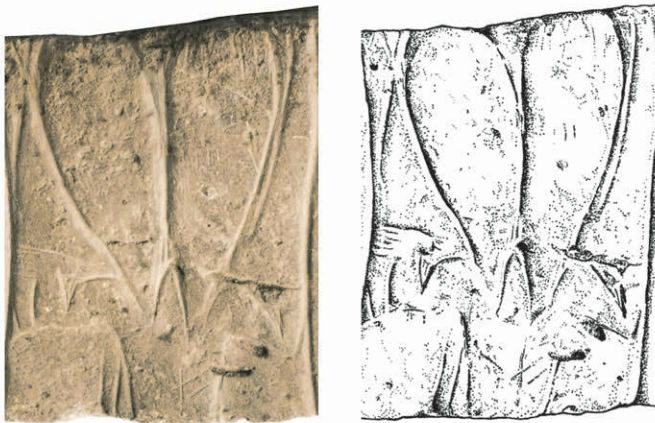


Figure 6. (a, left) “A” view, Motif 3 (B3592), detail of low-relief figure with splayed legs of a human or lizard (moko), incised indication of spine/ribs and enlarged labia. (b, right) “A” view, Motif 3 (B3592). Drawing by Wendy All.

as *moai papa* or *moai paa paa*). Motif 8 (“B” view) is a strikingly graphic komari, directly above the hand but not an attached part of it. Motif 3 (“A” view) depicts the lower torso and splayed legs of either a human male or, perhaps, a lizard (*moko*). However, the leg and foot are as in the *tayata manu* ‘birdman’ petroglyphs. The figure has female genitalia with enlarged labia and, in this view, a tail/penis (Figs 6a, 6b). Both Motifs 1 and 3 are conventionalised but explicitly depict human sexual organs or acts we interpret as representing a ritual concern with procreation and fecundity.

The other motifs consist of Motif 2 (“B” view; in the middle), which is paired with another that is nearly the same but reversed (“B” view, Motif 6). Motifs 2–7 and 9 are all typical, highly stylised komari with enlarged labia and having a centrally placed, incised Y-shape that is a key part of rock art iconography, superimposed on portable objects and included in the complex dorsal designs that embellish some megalithic statues (*moai*). Vargas *et al.* (2006: fig. 4.47) report a beach cobble embellished with a motif nearly the same as Motif 3, “A” view on the “Bar of stone.” It was found in the south coast survey in 1977 and was embedded in the pavement of a high-status, elliptical house (*hare paepa*; Site 7-556A; fig. 4.46).

The “Bar of Stone” and Rano Kau (Kao)

Significant or impressive natural Rapa Nui geographical features, including the volcano Kau (Kao), may be regarded linguistically as aniconic localities traditionally considered as mythic or supernatural places. The name of one of these places, the lake-filled volcano today known as Rano Kau, was rendered by ethnographers or mapmakers in the past as either Rano Kau or Rano Kao.

In 1868 Lieutenant Colin M. Dundas, RN, HMS *Topaze*, superimposed the label “Rano Kau (crater)” over the lake he depicted on his map of Rapa Nui. Another map, published in 1877 after the 1870 visit of the Chilean corvette *O’Higgins*, labelled the crater as “Ranokao”. In 1886 Paymaster William J. Thomson (1891: 451), USS *Mohican*, understood that “Rana Kao” applied to the volcano, not to the lake. Routledge (1919: 252) rendered the name of the volcano or “western headland” as Rano Kao. Following her widely read book the name continued to be alternately rendered as either Rano Kau or Rano Kao, with Heyerdahl and Ferdon (1961) following her lead and using Rano Kao. Such confusion is not uncommon for the time, but it does encourage the question: What’s in a name?

Kau is given by Englert (1978: 168) as “amplio, grande” (‘wide, large’), a correct description of the volcanic crater Rano Kau. Englert (1978: 167) offers other meanings for *kau*, for example, “muévete nadando” (lit. ‘move around swimming’). The importance of the lake is thus emphasised. He also gives *kau* “cundir plantas” (lit. “to spread plants”), specifically *kūmara* ‘sweet potato’. This fits neatly with the importance of the volcano in settlement

legend, where it is given as the first landing spot (Barthel 1978; Métraux 1940; Routledge 1919). It also makes sense in terms of the probable early use of the inner region as a sheltered place to nurture transferred plant stock (Yen 1988).

The primary definition of *kao* is “costado; canto o borde”, with *kaokao* (*kao kao*) a variant of it that means ‘side or flank’, ‘steep’, ‘thin’, ‘almost perpendicular’ or ‘an escarpment’ (Du Feu 1996; Englert 1978: 165, 168, 202). The secondary definition of *kao* is “los labios menores de la vulva” (‘labia minor’) (Englert 1978: 165, 202). Motu Kao Kao, one of three islets lying off the flank of Rano Kau (Kao) (McCoy 1976, 1978), fits both primary and secondary definitions. It is a steep pinnacle rising out of the sea, and Lieutenant Dundas called it “bird rock” on his map. Viewed from Rano Kau (Kao) it is graphically and strongly indicative of female anatomy, specifically labia minor. We suggest, therefore, persuasive links between conventional linguistic meanings, the physical landscape and female gender (fertility) symbolism.

We further suggest that the Rapanui use of *kau* and *kao* or *kao kao* for the geological and ceremonial locale defined by the volcano, the lake and the offshore islets is a deliberate reference that links those features conceptually as components of a mythic and supernatural landscape. The ethnographies do not make clear the precise time frame for the use of these place names. Linguistically, however, the emphasis is on fertility (of nature, especially *kūmara*) and fecundity. Graphic personalisation of the female genitalia is evident in the iconic petroglyphs of ‘Orongo, and Routledge (1919) quite reasonably concluded that the *komari* (vulvae) was an identity marker created during ritual.⁵

The Kao Lineage Group

The Miru were the most highly ranked and most widely distributed of the Rapanui social groups (*mata* ‘tribe’; Métraux 1914: 125; Routledge 1919). Hotu Matu‘a, said to be the founding paramount chief and royal ancestor, was descended from the major god Tongaroa through “Ko Rongo-Rongo-a-Tangaroa” (Métraux 1940: 127). The title and estate of the paramount chief descended through the first-born son (*atariki*) of Hotu Matu‘a. According to Rapanui consultant Victoria Rapahango the “Honga and the Te Kena claimed descent from two brothers of that name, sons of Tuu-ma-heke [Miru], the heir of Hotu Matu‘a” (Métraux 1940: 93, 126).⁶ Moreover, “the king was always a member of the Honga lineage”. Female partners in family building were traditionally drawn by Honga males from the Te Kena line, founded by the second son, or the Ure-o-kao sub-lineage. The Te Kena and Ure-o-kao groups were branches of the same Miru tree, *tumu* or *tumu taina* (lit. ‘trunk of a tree’; ‘those who ascend the genealogical tree’; Englert 1978: 272).

All Miru as a group were known as *'ariki paka*, 'divine' or 'superior'. Those who held the highest rank within the lateral descent groups "exercised religious functions" (Englert 1978: 103). Sub-lineage heads formed a formidable advisory group (*hōnui*) to the *'ariki paka*. This division of sacred (priestly) and secular (chiefly) rights and obligations is poorly understood, but there is no evidence that would cause one to doubt that the Miru are the only Rapanui kin group to establish and hold *'ariki* 'chiefly' titles. Protecting one's identity, and especially the order of descent within the Miru line, was therefore both a sacred duty and a political obligation. Thus, the Miru were admonished by the ancients to "forget not the practice of hakatoro, for by that shall it be known whose sons ye are" (Young 1903/1904).

A powerful Miru *'ariki* named Tu'u ko Ihu "to whom most of the sacred rituals are attributed" is said to have arrived with the paramount chief or perhaps in a second canoe at or near the same time (Métraux 1940: 126). His son founded the Kao sub-lineage, and the Kao and Ure-o-kao are blended or interchangeable Miru sub-groups (Métraux 1940: 126–27). As the population grew Miru descendants expanded from the region of *'Anakena* to Rano Kau (Kao) and eventually formed at least 13 sub-lineages. The Kao were so numerous that they "lived in the districts of Marama and Haumoana [lineages], near the village of Hanga-roa and the bay of Hanga-piko, and on the slopes of Rano-kao" (Métraux 1940: 126).

The "Bar of Stone" and 'Orongo

The ceremonial complex of *'Orongo* is located on the southeastern outer rim of the volcano Rano Kau (Kao). Ferdon (1961) described three loci during his investigation of *'Orongo* as Complexes A, B and C. Complex A (290 m above sea level) includes two structures, one of which is a small *ahu* 'ceremonial structure'. Complex B has 40 clustered, distinctive stone buildings and associated features. Complex C has eight linked stone buildings built upon embellished bedrock and surrounded by carved boulders having multiple petroglyphs. A single radiocarbon determination on unidentified wood charcoal from an excavation was interpreted by Ferdon as establishing abandonment of Complex A ca. AD 1420 (T-193; 540 ± 70 BP; 2 sigma). Recalibration arrived at a date range of ca. AD 1300–1617 (Robinson and Stevenson 2017). Further research on this chronology is underway.

The Complex B buildings all have entrances facing southwest, and many have shaped doorposts. Some doorposts are embellished with petroglyphs. Two objects of interest to this discussion are probably from *'Orongo*. The first is a carved, egg-shaped, brownish basaltic boulder weighing 27.21 kg and having a colour and texture like that of Young's "Bar of stone". It was collected by the USS *Mohican* expedition in 1886 (128378; US National Museum of Natural History; Fig. 7). It is carved with komari and low-relief



Figure 7. Carved, egg-shaped basaltic boulder weighing 27.21 kg (128378). Collected by USS *Mohican* in 1886. Original location unstated but probably 'Orongo. Note relationship of hands to komari and bird beaks shaped as komari. Photo courtesy United States National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Figure 8. Carved side of basaltic boulder (05-2-70/64852) collected by A. Agassiz, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Drawing by Wendy All.

birdman motifs, including a distinct tableau of two birdmen and a komari that recalls Motif 1, “A” view, above. In technique and subject matter it is linked to carvings on the dorsal side of the famous moai known as Hoa Hakananai’a, removed in 1868 by the crew of HMS *Topaze*.

According to Routledge’s consultant Gabriel Revahiva, Hoa Hakananai’a was found buried to its shoulders and facing inward in the building named Ko Tau Re Renga O Miru or “Taura renga” (‘the red belt or cord of the Miru’; Van Tilburg 1992; 1994; 2006: 35, 64, n146 citing RGS/WKR 4/3/2). The precise original location of the egg-shaped boulder is unknown, but it appears to have been embedded upright in soil; hence, it likely came from one of the Complex B houses. Another, similar carved boulder was collected by American scientist Alexander Agassiz in 1904–1905 (Fig. 8).⁷ It is carved on one side by opposing birdman and komari motifs, including one that is the visual counterpart of Motif 8 on Side B of the “Bar of stone”.

‘Orongo Complex C (280 m asl) is known as Mata Ngarahu (*mata ngarahu*; lit. ‘eye’ but also ‘kin group’; ‘soot or sooty’). It is a cliff-side, basaltic outcrop on which multiple bas-relief and incised petroglyphs are carved. The outcrop supports carved and embellished boulders and an elliptical cluster of eight cave-like structures with entrances comparable to those in Complex B. Ritually, it is associated with chanters known as *tahata rongorongo* (‘rongorongo men’; those who read ritual text carved in wood) and probably with the practice of tattoo.

Métraux (1940: 106), who builds upon Routledge’s notion that komari petroglyphs at Complex C were identity markers, says that young girls went to ‘Orongo where they were entrusted to specialist priests and “each girl stood upon a rock called papa-rona [*papa*, lit. ‘flat rock or wood surface’; *rona*, lit. ‘figure cut or carved in wood or stone’; Englert 1978: 220, 249], with legs spread open and two men below examined her vulva ... Then they carved a rock with an image of the vulva.” Routledge (1919: 263) explains it more decorously when she says, “It was the custom for women of the island to come up here and be immortalised by having one of these small figures (‘Ko Mari’) cut on the rock by a professional expert.” The counts of komari petroglyph motifs at ‘Orongo vary. The more recent inventory gives a total of 334 komari motifs (Lee 1992: 31, fig. 3.4).⁸

‘Orongo Cave Annex (Routledge 19A)

Based upon the relationship we have established between female genitalia and the iconic depiction of komari to the practice of hakatoro repe, and on the linguistic and geographical association of all with Rano Kau (Kao) and the offshore islets and ‘Orongo, we turned to Routledge’s (RGS/WKR) fieldnotes in the Mana Expedition papers in the hope of establishing a contextual relationship between Young’s embellished “Bar of stone” and

‘Orongo. On Saturday 11 July Routledge (Diary Entry RGS 4/9) “went up to Orongo” with the expedition’s surveyor, Lieutenant D.R. Ritchie, RN. He mapped buildings numbered 16 to 21, and Routledge described House 19 and Cave Annex 19A in her rough fieldnotes for that day.⁹

No. 19. Condition: practically perfect. Passage 5’0”, outer end broken, inner end 1’8” × 1’7½”, still perfect. Chamber: 14’0” × 4’0” × 4’0”. Construction typical throughout. Ends oval. Floor level with sill. A properly built hatch 9” × 9”, opens into No. 20. Decoration: slabs opposite door have been painted, almost obliterated; on roof, birds red on white, a figure 8” × 4” which may be a mataa, and various other designs.

No. 19A. Cave Annexe [*sic*] to No. 19. Condition: half of slabs forming roof have fallen in, large amount of earth worked in from above, floor very wet. Passage: 8’0”, outer end 1’8” × 2’2”, is a concealed entrance behind a slab in No. 19, the inner end opens into the cave. Chamber (cave): circular 6’0” in diam. × 5’0” in height, hollowed out of natural rock and walled up in places. Roof formed of flat slabs.

Decoration: lintel of door behind slab covered with ko mari [*sic*] figures; opposite door a painting on natural slate, red outlined in white, possibly a canoe under canvas. White patch on ceiling; Routledge 1920: 440–41.

Routledge’s House 19 is now numbered 20 and assigned to Ko Te Kauki on the ReStudio (n.d. [2013]) digital map of the interiors and exteriors of ‘Orongo buildings. The map was accomplished for the Rapa Nui National Park. Routledge’s Annex 19A is ReStudio E20 R2.

There are 38 ‘Orongo buildings and one cave having some type of embellishment incorporated. Of these, 14 houses and the cave have komari motifs. The highest concentration of komari motifs was recorded in the buildings on each side of Routledge’s House 19 (ReStudio 20), House 18 (ReStudio 19) and House 20 (ReStudio 21), and in House 40 (ReStudio 41) and House 41 (doorpost between ReStudio 44 and 45) in Complex C. There are komari on building exteriors in the Complex C courtyard and on boulders. These are not factored in with those counted for the houses and the motif count is incomplete.

Routledge’s House 19 [20] and the others arranged around the same courtyard were photographed during the USS *Mohican* expedition that removed painted slabs from a nearby building (Fig. 9). Our original hypothesis was that the layout of Routledge’s House 19 [20] and its small, hidden cave annex suggested confinement, privacy and secrecy of the type one might wish to have when pursuing hakatoro repe, especially if it was being practised under the noses of colonials and Christian priests. We speculated that Routledge’s “lintel” was Young’s “Bar of stone”.



Figure 9. The entrance to Routledge's House 19 [20] is in the foreground at the far right in a photo taken during the USS *Mohican* expedition. NAA Photo Lot 76-26 (INV 04952800), courtesy of the US National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

In support of our hypothesis, which was based in part on the discoloration pattern of the “Bar of stone”, is the probability that the “lintel” was not a load-bearing structural element but a fascia or decorative piece that could be removed without causing significant structural damage. Secondly, we know that if Routledge had removed it, she would have stored it temporarily at Matavereri with hundreds of other objects she collected. An unknown number of those objects was taken surreptitiously by Rapanui men, some of whom worked for Routledge, and later sold (Van Tilburg 2003, 2014). Perhaps, we thought, the lintel was one of them. Yet, as we show below, the chronology of collecting does not link the “Bar of stone” to Routledge's House 19 [20] or her Cave Annex 19A.

Chronology of Collecting

A chronology of the “five original *Maea momoa*” known to J.L. Young is sketched in his written record.

One is in the U.S. National Museum, one in Santiago de Chile, and three in the possession of the writer—one of which is at present in the Bishop Museum. Of the two others, now in Auckland, one is somewhat similar in shape to

that in the Bishop Museum: the other is a rectangular bar of hard stone 20 in. length by 4 in. square, all of one side being covered with the figure of the pudendum. The writer obtained the first stone in 1885 and the two others in 1887. (Young 1903/1904)

Thus, the “Bar of stone” we are discussing here was in Young’s possession by 1885–1887 and therefore cannot be Routledge’s “lintel of door behind slab covered with ko mari [*sic*] figures” which she saw in situ nearly two decades later. As we note above, it is unproven that Young ever visited Rapa Nui. So how did Young acquire the “Bar of stone” and the other objects on his list that we have associated with hakatoro repe?

It is well-established that, in the 1880s, Alexander Salmon, Jr. (Ari’i Pa’ea), was engaged in commercial selling of Rapanui artefacts as well as objects made for trade. For example, Henry Adams, of the American political dynasty, acquired Rapanui objects from the Queen of Tahiti, Arii Tamai, in 1881 (Kaeppler 1996). Presumably, she had acquired them from Ari’i Pa’ea. Lieutenant-Captain Wilhelm Geiseler (1995) of the German Imperial Navy also purchased objects from Ari’i Pa’ea and even advanced him funds to purchase a *kohau roŋoroŋo* ‘staff or board with lines of carved symbols’. In 1886 Paymaster William J. Thomson got most of his ethnographic collection from Ari’i Pa’ea, including two *kohau roŋoroŋo* which may be the same ones paid for in advance by Geiseler. Therefore, we argue that Young acquired the “Bar of stone” in 1887 in Tahiti, and that Ari’i Pa’ea was the original collector or broker. It is not the “lintel” Routledge saw in her House 19 [20]. Nor is it in any other of the ‘Orongo buildings. Nor is it in any other museum collection known to us. During reconstruction of Complex B, Mulloy (1975:18) permanently closed Cave 19A as unsafe after only a perfunctory examination.

The ‘Orongo ceremonial centre evolved from a single locale including at least one early ahu most likely incorporating one or perhaps two moai—possibly but not necessarily the basalt statue known as Hoa Hakananai’a—to become two clusters of stone buildings (Routledge 1919: 221, 257). The seminal ethnographic data for ‘Orongo (Métraux 1940; Routledge 1919, 1920) were provided by male members of known families in a group known as the *korohu ‘a*, with Juan Tepano a Rano and his mother Veriamo a Huki a Parapara (Victoria) acting as primary consultants. We suggest that this ethnographical information and the toponymic and linguistic evidence presented above strongly supports our thesis that the original hakatoro repe rituals were controlled by the aristocratic Miru. Other kin groups eventually became involved as the *taŋata manu* competitions at ‘Orongo expanded to their endpoint in 1867–1868.

DISCUSSION

We concur that “Maea momoa” (ma‘ea momoa) or large basaltic beach cobbles embellished with komari (vulva) motifs and known as pillow stones (ŋarua) were used by temporary inhabitants of ‘Orongo buildings. Their function is linked to the attainment of dreams or visions, and there is little reason to doubt that their probable association is with fecundity or fertility. We pointed out other, similarly embellished boulders and cobbles, one of which is localised to the pavement of a high-status, elliptical house on the island’s south coast.

The smaller, inscribed and grooved carved pebble or “fetish stone” is of the type Young (above) said was the “valued implement or amulet of the priest” and “a necessary adjunct” to the proper functioning of the rite of hakatoro repe. He further states that such stones were held by families and reflected their status identity as a group. Young’s information came from male elders in Tahiti, few of whom he found reliable. Nonetheless, he carefully catalogued the information they provided, which (as we show below) is compatible with contemporary local knowledge of the practice of hakatoro repe.

Although we have not established the original location of the “Bar of stone”, the functional link between the “fetish stones”, numerous komari rock art motifs and hakatoro repe as a ritual practice at ‘Orongo is solid. Rano Kau (Kao) is highlighted in the oral histories of settlement, mentioned in the life and death of the founding ancestor, and tied to the aristocratic Miru. We propose linguistic and toponymic links between the Miru lineage(s) known as Kao and the variant place names recorded for Rano Kau (Kao) and Motu Kao Kao.

We suggest that the ritual of hakatoro repe was likely a secret practice original to the Miru primary line. The likely purpose was to identify suitable marriage partners within highly ranked women of a secondary Kao line. In this way hakatoro repe conforms to the ancient Polynesian concern of retaining and passing on sacred *mana* ‘power’ from one generation to another, particularly within a single, hereditarily elite group.

During the elaboration of the *taŋata manu* ceremonies that took place over time at ‘Orongo all ritual practices evolved, and the original distinctions that established the Miru as special were appropriated by other groups. The original Miru practice, we suggest, was central to the *taŋata manu* institutional goal of identifying, through the komari rituals described by Routledge (1919: 263), the woman destined to become the exalted companion (*neru*) of the competitively triumphant “birdman”. The result of their sacred union was a *poki manu* ‘bird child’ who, in turn, acquired status and gained privilege.

We have previously suggested that at least one young male observed by Western visitors in 1852 was a probable participant in ‘Orongo competitions (Kaeppler and Van Tilburg 2018: 9, figs 13a, 13b), and two or perhaps three of Routledge’s (1919) 12 to 15 male consultants were as well. Veriamo, Juan Tepano’s mother, participated in a coming-of-age ritual at ‘Orongo that was a later version of *poki manu* ceremonies and involved the statue *Hoā Hakananai’a*. Its removal to England in 1868 was facilitated by a Miru man named *Torometi* who colluded with missionaries and an exploitive French colonial, thus writing *finis* to ‘Orongo rituals. The relative abundance of information on male activities is contrasted to the more nuanced “living memory” of female consultants. The intimate information that females possessed was not collected by Routledge, although there is little doubt that most women of the time knew about *hakatoro repe*.

Contemporary Information

Information about *hakatoro repe* is still known among some Rapanui male and female persons. In December 2018 Kaeppler interviewed several individuals at Rapa Nui who gave important new information. They noted, for example, that the *hakatoro repe* tradition had two elements. First, the extended *repe* gave more desire to the woman and more pleasure to both women and men. Secondly, the extended *repe* was thought to produce more powerful children.

One person thought that a mother started the elongation when the girl was a baby, while another thought that it began at the age of 8 to 12 or at first menses. They agreed that this was done with the permission of a *tuhunga*, a male officiant who would eventually be looking at the girls so that one could become a *neru* companion for a *taŋata manu*. It was important that the *neru* be a virgin. At a specific, named place at Mata Ngarahu, ‘Orongo, the girl was examined to make sure she was, indeed, a virgin. A child of the subsequent union between a *neru* and a *taŋata manu* became a *poki manu* and wore the carved wood ornaments known as *tahonga* (Routledge 1919: 267, fig. 114), especially if the parents were Miru.

* * *

The ethnographical emphasis when recounting and interpreting ‘Orongo ceremonial activities is almost exclusively placed upon male leadership, male activities and male iconography or symbolism. Here we have endeavoured to refocus research attention by examining in detail what is currently known about a specific group of previously obscure, female-gender-related stone objects in the J.L. Young Collection of the Bishop Museum. In doing so, we hope to restore the cultural role and significance of females and, specifically,

their importance in the Rapanui belief system as evident in fertility and puberty ceremonies and a ritualised emphasis on procreation. We have called attention to museum collection timelines and to previously overlooked or inadequately researched documentation of key objects, thus throwing new light on the unexpected, intimate details of early Rapanui ritual.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Cristián Arévalo Pakarati for translation assistance in Kaeppler's interviews with Rapanui consultants, who wish to remain anonymous. Easter Island Statue Project (EISP; www.eisp.org) research team members Alice Hom and Amanda Tsai prepared the manuscript and images for publication and Kate Pham edited the references. Thanks also to Mara Mulrooney, late of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum; Karla Morgan, Bishop Museum Library and Archives; Alice Christophe, late of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum (now at The British Museum); Daisy Njoku, Anthropology Archives, Smithsonian Museum Support Center; Paula Valenzuela, Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert; and Sonia Haoa Cardinali, organiser of the Congreso de Migración y Navegación Polinesia, 2018. The conference created opportunities for information-gathering and discussion. Finally, thanks to an anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments.

NOTES

1. We draw here upon an outline of preliminary research summarised by the authors at the Congreso de Migración y Navegación Polinesia organised by archaeologist Sonia Haoa Cardinali and the Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation, Hanga Roa, Rapa Nui, November 2018. The exhibition in which the objects described herein were shown opened during that time at Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert (MAPSE; <https://www.museorapanui.gob.cl/sitio/>).
2. We follow the established orthographic convention in which Rapa Nui is the modern name of the island and Rapanui refers to the people and their language.
3. The toponym Marae Toehau, collected by J.L. Young in the 1800s in Tahiti, is important in that it is essentially the same as Marae-Toe-hau recorded by Thomson (1891: 523) in 1886 at Rapa Nui and said to be the ancestral land of Hotu Matu'a. Routledge (1919: 277) subsequently recorded "Marae Tohio", and Barthel (1978: 9) gives "Marae Tohia".
4. Measurements of the "Bar of stone" were taken at the Bishop Museum and differ slightly from those reported by Young; however, he was approximating from memory.
5. A komari parallel in woodcarvings is the Boy Austin figure (Van Tilburg 1994: 144, fig. 116). A figure from the Luigi Pigorini Museum (Heyerdahl 1975: pl. 90) and a *moai kavakava* 'carved wood male figure with protruding ribs' from the former Raton collection (Métraux 1940: 250, fig. 37) display characteristics relevant to this komari discussion. However, following Kaeppler (1996, 2003), these and other Rapanui objects often have little available documentation. Some Nukuoro woodcarvings are of interest to this discussion (Kaeppler 2013).

6. According to four genealogical sources summarised by (Metraux 1940: 90–93), Tuu-ma-heke and Miru may be two separate individuals or two names for one individual as the first-born son of Hotu Matu'a. Miru-a-Tuu-ma-heke appears in one source as lineage head and heir of the kingly title, but then Tuu-ma-heke disappears entirely from all versions of the royal genealogy. Miru survives as the primary descent line and name of the highest-ranked mata. Traditional explanations for this situation are that the two individuals were twin brothers and one of them (Tuu-ma-heke) died or returned to the home island.
7. It is speculated (Horley and Lee 2012) that the boulder collected by Agassiz (Fig. 8) is the one first seen in the wall of an 'Orongo building by Geiseler in 1882 (Geiseler 1995: 41).
8. Koll (1991) inventoried 130 komari inside 'Orongo houses. Further research will produce an accurate count and motif analysis of komari in the 'Orongo buildings of Complex B and in the courtyard of Complex C, and those embellishing related objects having good provenance in museum collections worldwide.
9. There are six published versions of the numbering for building 19. It is Englert's (1948: 181–91) No. 18; R-19 for Ferdon (1961; the R means Routledge, and he uses her numbers); Nos 31 and 32 for Mulloy (1975); Nos 20A and 20B for Ramírez-Aliaga (2016a); and E20 R1 and E20 R2 in the map by ReStudio. The Easter Island Statue Project uses Nos. 20 for the house and 53 for the cave. According to Mulloy (1975: 18) the interior of R-19 [20] had not physically changed since Routledge's description. During restoration he walled off the entrance to Cave Annex 19A as unsafe.

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