

Oman. Every year, through his foundation scholarships, a young Māori designer is supported to travel to Dubai to work alongside Peter (Te Aratai Productions 2006).

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THIS REVIEW covers a two-year period from mid-2004 to mid-2006.

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### RAPA NUI

The main issue of local politics on Rapa Nui during the review period was the proposal for a special administrative statute for the island. The proposal, officially presented in August 2005, found both support and protest among Islanders. The debate on the island's political future was further boosted by Chile's new president, Michelle Bachelet, who expressed her strong support for the proposal. Meanwhile the numbers of tourists are growing exorbitantly, raising expectations of a wealthy future as well as fears about being overwhelmed by outsiders. At the same time, plans to build a casino on the island remain highly controversial.

The special administrative status proposal must be seen against the background of the current political status of the island, which, with its administrative complexity and multiplicity of local institutions, has become the object of criticism from various sides. According to the 1966 Ley Pascua (Easter Island Law), Rapa

Nui is part of the Valparaíso region on continental Chile, thus dependent not only on the national government in Santiago, but also on the regional administration in Valparaíso. On the local level, the island forms both a province, with a Santiago-appointed governor (since 1984 always an ethnic Rapanui) at its head, and a municipality, with a locally elected mayor and a six-member municipal council. Already these two local administration levels (provincial governor's office and municipal administration) are competing institutions with multiple overlapping responsibilities. The Ley Indígena (Indigenous Law) of 1993, which recognizes the Rapanui as one of Chile's six indigenous peoples, created yet another institution, the Comisión de Desarrollo de la Isla de Pascua (CODEIPA, Easter Island Development Commission), composed of five elected ethnic Rapanui representatives, six representatives of Chilean government entities, as well as the governor, the mayor, and the president of the Rapanui Council of Elders. The latter council, an institution founded in the 1980s, supposedly to represent each Rapanui family and defend local culture and language, had become a matter of contention since it split in 1994 into a moderate, pro-Chilean faction under Alberto Hotus, and a more radical, later pro-independence faction under Juan Chavez, Mario Tuki, and others. While only the first faction is recognized by Chile as a "traditional institution" under the Indigenous Law, out of the second was formed, in 2001, the "Rapanui Parliament," which advocates full independence from Chile.

Besides these various official and unofficial bodies headed by Islanders, there are also offices of various central government agencies on the island, some of them also partly staffed with native Rapanui: the National Commission for Indigenous Development, the National Forestry Corporation, a state agriculture company, and many others. The multiplicity of government agencies and allegedly representative island institutions creates a network of competing bureaucracies with overlapping fields of responsibility, which constantly hinder and block each other, thereby significantly impeding any sort of development project on the island (Di Castri 2003).

In order to remedy the situation, a special statute of autonomy for Rapa Nui has been discussed since 2002, spearheaded primarily by Mayor Petero Edmunds (*RNJ*, Oct 2003). A commission had then been formed—consisting of various Chilean politicians including former President Patricio Aylwin, as well as Rapa Nui Governor Enrique Pakarati, Mayor Edmunds, and the president of the "official" council of elders, Alberto Hotus—with the task of reviewing the island's present statute and elaborating a proposal for a new one. Meanwhile, more radical pro-independence voices of the Rapanui Parliament and others had become more and more vocal (*Qué Pasa*, 17 Sept 2003; *To'ere*, 1 July 2004).

In late August 2005, the statute review commission presented its final draft of a "Proposal for a Special Administrative Statute for Easter Island" to Chilean President Ricardo Lagos (*NRN*, Aug 2005). Under that proposal, the island would be taken

out of the Valparaíso region and form a separate entity as a “special territory,” directly under Santiago, the provincial governor’s office, thus assuming the responsibilities of a regional administration as well. The municipality would assume the role of the local government with more responsibilities than at present. The development commission (CODEIPA) would become integrated into the governor’s office as an advisory agency. Finally, the council of elders would be conserved in its currently recognized form (ie, the faction under Alberto Hotus) and become a consultative institution for cultural issues (Government of Chile 2005, 5–11).

A second part of the proposal deals with economic development and land tenure. The infrastructure of the island is to be improved, especially maritime and air transportation to Chile. The quality of medical care should also be improved. Special funds are to be set up for economic development, and immigration from the continent should be regulated in order to keep the Rapanui people demographically dominant on the island. One of the most significant changes in the proposal concerns land tenure: All state-owned land that is not used for state services (such as schools, offices, the airport, and military areas) would become the collective property of the Rapanui community. In order to administer that property, a new institution has to be created, a so-called Indigenous Community with an elected board of directors and a president, according to provisions in the Indigenous Law (Government of Chile 2005, 19–22).

In order for that statute to be con-

stitutionally possible, the president introduced a bill to amend the constitution in the Chilean congress, providing for the establishment of “special administrative territories” outside the Chilean regional administrative system for Rapa Nui as well as for the island of Juan Fernández off the Chilean coast (*La Segunda*, 23 Aug 2005; *El Mostrador*, 23 Aug 2005).

Even though the above-described statute proposal seems to be a large step toward political reform, in fact it is a watered-down version of the original proposals of 2002–2003. For example, unlike an earlier draft, the final document does not use the term “autonomous” but instead speaks only of a “special administrative status.” The earlier draft had proposed the complete dissolution of all current institutions and the creation of an “autonomous island entity” with an elected assembly and a chief executive that would have responsibility for all fields of policy except for defense, internal security, foreign affairs, and justice, which would remain under the Chilean government—an arrangement similar to that of the statute of French Polynesia. The council of elders was also to be reformed and democratized (*Hacia un Estatuto de Autonomía*, nd). Compared to these proposals, the institutional changes proposed in the final draft are rather minor. It seems as if the three local leaders who undersigned the final draft (Mayor Edmunds, Governor Pakarati, and Alberto Hotus) were keen on preserving their respective institutions, rather than constructing something entirely new. While the administrative separation from the Valparaíso region would

certainly simplify the administrative relationship with Chile, critics have pointed out that the internal administrative bureaucracy on the island could become even more complicated with the new statute.

While those in support of Mayor Edmunds and Hotus's faction of the council of elders were pleased about the proposal being officially adopted, the local opposition protested. On 30 August 2005, members of the Rapanui Parliament as well as other (mainly pro-independence) activists staged a protest march through the island capital, Hanga Roa. They wrote a letter to President Lagos protesting the statute project, arguing that it was the result of closed-door negotiations with the Chilean government involving only Governor Pakarati, Mayor Edmunds, and Elders Councilor Hotus—despite a previous agreement that any future negotiations on political reform should involve a broad range of representatives from the Rapanui community (Chavez and others 2005).

Meanwhile, another, more radical, pro-independence activist, Agterama Puhī 'Uira a Huki, proclaimed himself "king" of Rapa Nui and created a "national civil registry" for native Rapanui in order to issue "Rapanui passports." Many people did not take him too seriously, but Alberto Hotus filed an official complaint, asking the governor's office to intervene against Huki, whom he accused of perpetrating an "attack on our country and a reasonless offense against our culture" (*El Mostrador*, 23 Aug 2005; *Las Últimas Noticias*, 24 Aug 2005).

While any further initiative on the statute reform project was now left

to the Chilean government, the next important political event on the island was the Chilean presidential election. In the first round on 11 December, Socialist candidate Michelle Bachelet, who won 46 percent of the votes on the continent, received an absolute majority of 52 percent on the island. Right-wing candidate Joaquín Lavín (who, with 22 percent, scored third nationwide) came second on the island with 27 percent, while the other right-wing candidate, Sebastián Piñera (with 25 percent in Chile) received only 17 percent on Rapa Nui (figures from the Web site of the Ministry of Interior, Government of Chile). While Bachelet had the support of Mayor Edmunds, Governor Pakarati, and Alberto Hotus, Lavín was supported by the pro-independence Rapanui Parliament. Both Bachelet and Lavín had visited the island before and made promises for the development of Rapa Nui as well as indigenous issues in general. In the campaign before the election, Bachelet had promised to support the special statute project (*El Mercurio*, 18 May 2005; *TRN*, April–May 2005). Alberto Hotus became her main supporter in the local campaign.

On 15 January, Bachelet won the runoff election against Piñera, with a slightly higher percentage on Rapa Nui than nationally (55 percent on the island, 53 percent in Chile). Bachelet's victory became once again a boost for the local political elite, namely, Pakarati, Edmunds, and Hotus (*TRN*, Jan 2006).

Shortly after Bachelet was inaugurated as Chile's first female president in early March, she appointed Melania Carolina Hotu as the new provin-

cial governor of Easter Island. Hotu, who is the daughter of famed political activist Jerman Hotu (1925–2003), and Alberto Hotus's niece, had served as the director of the local branch of PRODEMU (a national organization for the progress of women) and was known to be very committed to the island's youth (*RNI*, May 2006). In her inaugural speech as the first female Rapanui governor, Hotu underlined her commitment to the welfare of the island community and announced as her main projects the lowering of transportation costs from and to the island, the improvement of the quality of health care, the promotion of alternative sources of energy, and the improvement of the water supply system (*TRN*, special issue, March 2006; *El Mercurio*, 17 March 2006).

The Bachelet government also announced its continuing support for the special statute project (*NRN*, March 2006), and in April, the Chilean senate finally began to set it on its agenda (*NRN*, April 2006). On 5 May, Bachelet made her first visit to the island as president (she had been there before as health minister under Lagos), participating in the annual "Ocean Month" celebrations of the Chilean Navy, which were held this year on Rapa Nui. Bachelet renewed her commitment to the special statute project and announced that she would soon introduce a bill in congress to create the statute. She also called on the entire population to actively collaborate in local decision making. She further promised the construction of a new hospital as well as improvements for the island's educational facilities. During her visit, the navy returned

the symbolic remains of Ariki Time-one Riro Kainga, the last king of Rapa Nui, to the island. Riro had been elected king in 1892 and died, probably from poisoning, while on a mission of protest against colonial abuses in Valparaiso in 1899 (Fischer 2005, 153). The symbolic remains were received by Benedicto Riroroko, the king's last surviving grandson. For the first time during a presidential visit, the Rapanui flag was flown alongside the Chilean flag (Presidency of Chile 2006; *La Tercera*, 6 May 2006; *NRN*, May 2006).

Meanwhile, as the statute project remained controversial within the Rapanui community, it was announced that a referendum should be held on the issue, while critical voices demanded the democratization of the council of elders, should it become an integrated political institution under the new statute (*NRN*, May 2006).

While the debate on the future political status of the island continues, Rapa Nui's tourist industry is booming. In 2005, a record number of 45,000 visitors was achieved (*TP*, 22 Feb 2006). Because the island has fewer than 4,000 inhabitants, this figure represents by far the highest number of tourists per capita of any Pacific Island entity, far exceeding even that of Hawai'i. In 2004 the number of tourists was over 30,000 (*RNI*, Oct 2005), and in 1999 it was 21,000, while in 1990 it had been only 5,000 (Fischer 2005, 250). In the last fifteen years the island has thus experienced one of the most spectacular increases in tourism in the world. The tourism boom promises a wealthy future for the Islanders, as the indus-

try is to a large extent in Rapanui hands, but it creates more and more problems as well. With 91 percent of the local economy based on the revenues from tourism (*RNJ*, May 2006), the Islanders have become unilaterally dependent on foreigners visiting their island, a problematic tendency given the fragile nature of tourism, which can easily collapse due to external influences over which the Islanders have no control. On a more visible level, the explosion of mass tourism has also created problems due to an insufficient infrastructure, with electricity blackouts caused by overloads such as occurred during the Tapati annual cultural festival in February (*NRN*, Feb 2006), and environmental concerns over garbage disposal and fears of water shortage (*RNJ*, May 2006; *TRN*, Jan 2006).

An especially intense controversy related to tourism began in June 2005 when a Chilean company, Grupo Martínez-AM Holding, announced plans to build a casino on the island, in a joint venture with Rapanui entrepreneur Petero Riroroko (*NRN*, June 2005; *RNJ*, Oct 2005). Mayor Edmunds expressed his support for the project, arguing that besides creating one hundred fifty jobs on the island, 10 percent of the income would go to the municipality. Because there is no income tax on the island, the casino income would make the municipality less dependent on Chilean state funding (*TP*, 14 Sept 2006). On the other hand, many inhabitants, including Governor Pakarati, stated their opposition, and many Rapanui students and academics on the Chilean continent collected signatures against the project (*RNJ*, Oct

2005). The opponents argue that the casino would only increase the problems accompanying mass tourism and would contribute to the erosion of Rapanui culture, because visitors coming to the island for the sole purpose of gambling would have no respect for the historical monuments. Schoolteacher and pro-independence activist Mario Tuki, an outspoken opponent, reminded everybody that a distinctive cultural tourism is the basis of the island's livelihood, and that if people want to gamble, they should go to Las Vegas or Monaco (*Santiago Times*, 5 April 2006). Due to the protests, as well as negative economic calculations, the project was halted in November 2005 and scheduled for re-examination (*NRN*, Nov 2005). In early 2006, however, the project resurfaced, awaiting a decision from the Chilean government for the casino to be authorized. The final decision is expected in December (*NRN*, June 2006).

Another very serious negative effect of mass tourism lies in its lure for immigrants. In the last few years, the immigration of Chilean settlers to Rapa Nui has increased dramatically. In mid-2006 it was estimated that, for the first time, probably more Chileans lived on the island than Rapanui (*RNJ*, May 2006), confirming fears raised by Rapanui about becoming a minority in their own homeland. Attracted by the tourism boom, most of the recent Chilean immigrants work as taxi drivers, or they sell cheap imitation woodcarvings, thereby undermining the Rapanui handicrafts trade. Proposals have been made to admit only continental Chilean visitors who hold an entry visa and a return ticket, as is

required for Ecuadorians in the Galápagos Islands (*RNJ*, May 2004). But unless Rapa Nui is given special political status, immigration controls of that kind cannot be imposed under Chilean constitutional law.

Because of the tourism boom (as well as the worldwide diaspora of more than a thousand Rapanui), Rapa Nui has become a global community. On the one hand, as mass tourism and mass immigration to other islands have shown, this situation poses a threat to the island's distinctive island identity. On the other hand, the Rapanui people now have more chances than ever to reintegrate themselves into the Pacific region and the Polynesian community from which they had become alienated during more than a century of Chilean colonialism. Culturally and socially, this reintegration is already happening. For example, Rapa Nui participated in the Festival of Pacific Arts in Palau in 2004 (*RNJ*, Oct 2004), and in July 2006 it sent a delegation to the Pacific Youth Festival in Tahiti (*NRN*, July 2006). If in the near future the island obtains a genuine statute of autonomy, it may be possible for Rapa Nui to also become part of organizations like the Pacific Community and eventually even achieve observer status in the Pacific Islands Forum.

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## SĀMOA

Political developments in Sāmoa during the review period were largely concerned with the general elections of 31 March 2006. Thus in the six months before the general elections, most political activities were related to campaigning, in one form or another, and subsequent events had to do with cabinet appointments and election petitions. These were still continuing in the latter part of 2006.

The year demonstrated the unprecedented extent of political power held by a single political party, the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP). In the 2001–2006 sessions of Parliament, for instance, the party held a two-thirds majority (33 seats out of 49), which enabled it to change the constitution on several occasions. Following the 2006 general elections, it actually increased its hold on power with 35 seats. This means it has the capacity to again change the constitution without a need for a referendum. In short, the Human Rights Protection Party holds a monopoly of power in Samoan politics. This raises important questions as to why and how this came about.

Looking back to the events of the

second six months of 2005, it can be argued that many of the major political events of that period were turned into campaign issues. In fact many of these events, such as the doctors' strike and Salelologa land issue, were blamed by the ruling party on the machinations of the opposition in their attempt to woo votes away from the government in the general elections. True or not, the fact remains that these were skillfully turned into political issues, and at the end of the day it seemed that the voters accepted the government version of those events.

It is not that the opposition parties—such as the Samoa Development United Party (SDUP), Samoa Party (SP), Christian Party (CP), and Samoa Progressive Political Party (SPSS)—were organizationally weak or lacking in political rhetoric to be able to unseat the government. Despite their best efforts, they were outsmarted by a brilliant strategist and technocrat, Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi. More important, the opposition parties were fighting against a government with one of the best records of achievement by any Samoan government of the past, a government that has been in power continuously during the last 22 years of its 27-year history, and one that has given Sāmoa social stability and an economy that has become a model for the Pacific region.

On practically every major political issue that preceded the general elections, the ruling HRPP government and main opposition party, the Samoa Development United Party, took radically opposed views. These issues include the strike by members of the