

The Pacific

Post

Oceania's voice on campus.

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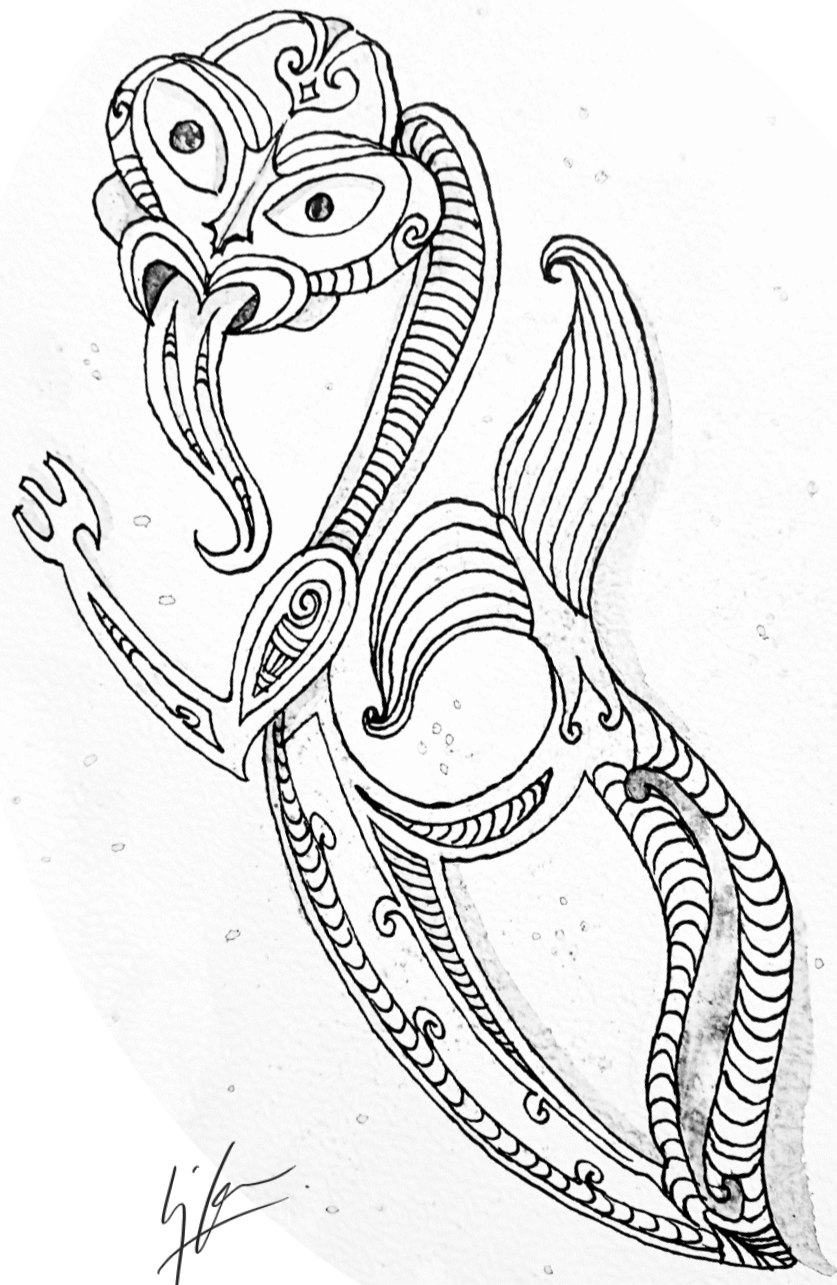
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Taniwha — New Zealand's Dragon.

Written by
Luca Viscapi

Met: the TANIWHA. The taniwha (pronounced TAH-nee-fah) is a highly respected and feared creature from Māori mythology, frequently compared to dragons. The taniwha, despite being frequently depicted in traditional Māori art, has a very vague appearance due to Māori art's traditional abstract style. Moreover, taniwha are described in most legends as having a shifting appearance, resembling a whale or large shark whilst out at sea and then a large lizard when on land. Taniwha are known as guardians of particular places, and take their jobs very seriously, devouring anyone not customarily associated with the area in Māori culture. This behaviour has earned them a dual reputation as both benevolent protectors and vicious monsters, thus making them the middle ground between the Asian dragon with its grace and the Western dragon with its ferocity.



CONSERVATION WOES.

Abhilasha Nagendra

In a remarkable wildlife sighting, the Kakarratul, a rare northern marsupial mole, has been observed by traditional custodians in a remote region of Australia. While exciting, this re-discovery also points to a very poignant question – Can these elusive, lesser-researched animals survive in the wild with the onset of climate change?

Despite initial enthusiasm, research by wildlife conservationists highlights the fact that multi-level policies for working groups, co-ops, trade agreements and conventions have had little impact on wildlife conservation.

In fact, the Pacific islands' notorious reputation for their dwindling biodiversity has only been exacerbated in recent years. With the onset of habitat loss, pollution, environmental degradation and rising sea levels- the future of these islands and their animals looks bleak.

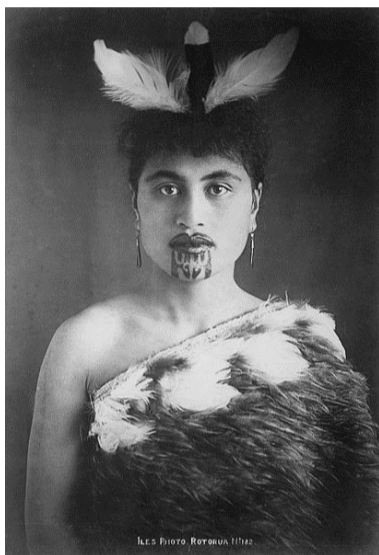
KĀKĀ, KIWI, KERERŪ AND KĀKĀPŌ.

Lilou Hardonnière

When they arrived in Aotearoa (NZ), Polynesians discovered a massive array of flightless birds. The largest of them, the Moa, is now extinct, but its feathered skin ornates different archaeological finds. Tales and records of the 18th century show women wearing maro (frontal aprons) made of kākā feathers.

Fully feathered cloaks were popular practice in the 19th century, especially in the second half. These clothes are highly prestigious, with the most valuable being those made in red kākā feathers. Indeed, throughout the Pacific, red symbolises power, prestige and sacredness.

Kākā feathers, symbols of protection and used for warmth, were not the only birds are praised for their plumage, notably: the kiwi, kererū, kākāpō, tūi, kākāriki, toroa (albatross) ... To create feathered garments, thousands of feathers are each individually woven carefully into the bodice of the cloak. Feathers, like those of the huia, were also popular for adorning the head, alongside traditional combs called heru.



NEW ZEALAND'S TREATY PRINCIPLES: CO-GOVERNANCE OR RACE-BASED POLICY?

Luca Viscapi & Connor Donaldson

The Treaty of Waitangi, or Te Tiriti, is New Zealand's founding document, a contract of trust between the British and indigenous Māori people. This constitutional text recently has risen back to the surface of NZ politics with renewed divisions as to its interpretation. The Pacific Post has enjoyed an exclusive interview with Te Tiriti expert Sharelle Govignon-Sweet.

Signed in 1840, it contains three articles recognising British governance, Māori ownership of their land and the full rights of Māori as British subjects. However, translation issues plagued the agreement, making it an opaque and unequal treaty. Nevertheless, Te Tiriti has since become a banner for Māori rights activists nation-wide leading the NZ Parliament to recognise its principles in 1975. A full history is available on our website.

Treaty issues are once again becoming a prominent issue in NZ politics as both the left and the right become increasingly dissatisfied with the current arrangement.

David Seymour, leader of the right-wing libertarian party ACT, encapsulates the feelings of many on the right through his campaign to overhaul the interpretation of Treaty principles recognised by the NZ Parliament. Seymour describes Parliament's interpretation of Te Tiriti as discriminatory, perpetuating a right-wing thought initiated in 2004 by Don Brash, leader at the time of National, the main right wing party in NZ. Brash described the Treaty as affording Māori "special privileges", and some on the fringes of the right have gone so far as to compare the perceived disparity in rights between racial groups to Nazi Germany. Many on the left, on the other hand, do not consider the interpretation of Te Tiriti

as currently inscribed in the law to go far enough. This stream of thought generally advocates co-governance, a model in which attributes of sovereignty would be shared between state organs such as Parliament and traditional indigenous governance structures such as iwi (tribes). Implementation of certain aspects of co-governance is a very popular policy idea with many groups on the left. In fact, the left-wing government in power prior to the current government took many steps in this direction. More radical proponents of co-governance, such as Dr. Moana Jackson, a prominent NZ constitutional lawyer, even advocated the application of separate legal systems for Māori and non-Māori. Jackson promotes this due to inherent differences in Western and Māori views on rehabilitation, which necessitate a "one justice for all" rather than "one law for all" system.

Moreover, while right-wing groups advocate for the wrapping-up of the settlement process for Treaty grievances, certain iwi and hapū, such as Govignon-Sweet's iwi, Te Pakakohi, continue to fight for redress due to disagreements over their inclusion in other groups' settlements. Govignon-Sweet theorises these disputes to occur because the government wishes for expediency in the settlement process, demonstrating the feelings of contempt that permeate this aspect of Treaty issues. The unsettled nature of these questions contributes to the continued prominence of Treaty issues in NZ politics.

Right-wing groups' policy proposals to deal with Treaty issues primarily revolve around Brash's idea of "one rule for all", and the removal of any consideration of race in New Zealand law. Seymour's recently proposed Treaty Principles Bill does just that, replacing the Treaty principles currently recognised in NZ law, which afford iwi rights, stakes, and roles in the governance process. The Bill instead proposes three principles affording all individuals the same rights regardless of race, vesting all power solely in the nation's Western democratic institutions, and making "discrimination" based on ethnicity, including affirmative action, illegal. Statistics show Māori remain a heavily marginalised group, facing disproportionately bad outcomes across the board. Even while constituting only 16% of the population, Māori are more than half of the prison population, for example. When considered in addition to Māori's ongoing struggle for the preservation of their culture, this has led many to assert that the Bill's removal of official Crown protection could be "catastrophic", as Govignon-Sweet puts it.

Left-wing groups, on the other hand, generally propose reinforcing the role traditional Māori governance structures play in the governance process to achieve “co-governance”. The left-wing government in power prior to the 2023 election instituted many policies to this effect, such as the creation of Māori seats on local councils, the inclusion of iwi representatives in local resource gestion authorities, and the establishment of Te Aka Whai Ora (the Māori Health Authority), an independent body managing Māori health services. The appointment of Māori representatives many feel were not selected democratically to such positions of authority has contributed to feelings among many non-Māori and even certain Māori that the Treaty has gone too far, exacerbating tensions. Treaty issues and the associated tensions are becoming an increasingly prominent issue in the NZ political sphere. Left-wing groups’ ideological moves towards co-governance and policy actions during their last stint in power have led many non-Māori to feel alienated, whereas the current right-wing coalition government’s actions have resulted in feelings of fear and apprehension among Māori.

The Treaty Principles Bill has not been an isolated facet of coalition government policy. The current government has already implemented other closely related policies disproportionately impacting Māori. These included the disestablishment of Te Aka Whai Ora, while scrapping anti-smoking legislation, and reducing use of te reo Māori (Māori language) in the public sector. On the issue of the Māori Health Authority, Govignon-Sweet remarked:

‘I can’t help but feel like it’s a blatant attack on Māori. Because if you’re intelligent enough to look at the data you can’t deny that Māori need extra support.’

Cultural differences and demographic challenges are a major determinant of health outcomes in NZ, especially for Māori. Shortly after the policies’ announcement thousands of protestors took to the streets of Wellington, contending policies that they argued would set Māori rights back by decades. Senior Labour MP Willie Jackson warned that if the Treaty Principles Bill were to be put to referendum, the likely final step in its implementation, political divisions could lead to unprecedented civil unrest with demonstrations of hundreds of thousands. Jackson stated Māori would “go to war” over the Treaty.

Recognising the challenges faced by the Bill, PM Christopher Luxon announced National would not support it past an initial reading in Parliament. NZ press has generally declared the Bill now ‘dead in the water’, as without a second change in heart from National it lacks sufficient support to clear the legislature. Although, turns of the table are not unheard of in NZ politics and Govignon-Sweet does not overlook ACT’s strategy to win back National when the Bill will go under committee review:

‘I don’t think anything is given, to be honest. I don’t think we’re politically savvy in New Zealand...we are really isolated [as a country] and not often challenged in our opinions. [Like] they managed to do with Brexit, [it could be easy for prominent politicians] to convince people that this is the best thing for us. So that is my concern.’

The Pacific Post’s full, exclusive interview with Sharelle Govignon-Sweet will be made available online.

ANZAC DAY 2024: REMEMBERING OUR ANZAC HEROES FROM GALLIPOLI.

Ryoma Suzuki

Today, 25 April has become known as Anzac Day in Australia and New Zealand to remember and honour the heroic duties of the Australian and Kiwi soldiers who fought and died in WWI. However, very few outside of Australia and New Zealand have heard or even know of these brave Anzac soldiers. The bravery of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, or Anzacs, was especially highlighted in the Gallipoli Campaign, which was an Anglo-French landing campaign that lasted between April 1915 and January 1916 in the Ottoman-held Gallipoli Peninsula. The campaign consisted of a series of amphibious assaults conducted by Allied forces, including the Anzacs, where they encountered heavy resistance from Ottoman forces upon landing in Anzac Cove and Cape Helles. It quickly descended into a gruelling stalemate that would see over 8000 Anzac casualties, marking the first-ever major military action fought by Australian and Kiwi forces. The campaign has come to hold significant cultural and historical importance in Australia and New Zealand, where it is remembered as a symbol of national identity and sacrifice. It is however important to note that the campaign remains controversial due to poor strategic planning and leadership from Allied commanders leading to the high casualty rate, therefore differing historical interpretations exist in regards to its significance and legacy.

(The 2024 Anzac Day Dawn Service in Europe will take place at the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux, France at 5:30 am on Thursday 25th April).



FINDING A FEMALE VOICE IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY.

Ffion Bright

The gender role division that characterised the Pacific fishing industry in the past, notably assigning men to fish at sea and women from the shore, continues to give men a greater voice in the industry today.

In the Solomon Islands where women catch 50% of all fish consumed, this is becoming a contested reality and efforts to increase the female voice in the industry are rising.

Notably in Honiara, The Solomon Islands from 9-11th April, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and the Pacific Community gathered and acknowledged that Pacific culture often limits women’s involvement in the fisheries industry, the groups began to brainstorm solutions and pledged to transform these talks into initiatives soon. They promise to reimagine women’s voices in the industry.

TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE PACIFIC : THE REALITY OF TIMBER TRAFFICKING.

Nina Treguer

The distinctive characteristic of the Pacific region is its important reliance on natural resources making it highly vulnerable to transnational organized crime. Timber, among many other species composing the flora and fauna of the Pacific such as corals and fishes, has fallen victim to poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Usually forgotten, timber remains an important revenue for large and small islands. In the Solomon Islands for instance, exports of timber represent between 50% to 70% of the annual export revenue of the country. However, each year, tons of timber are traded illegally, costing the world economy more than 30 billion USD. Hence, not only does it disrupt the preservation of timber but it has had a severe socio-economic impact on their populations.

2024 SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTIONS: A VICTORY FOR CHINA?

Aimee Rogers

The 2024 Solomon Islands elections have been anything but straight forward. With election day being held on April the 17th, who will hold government and fulfill the role of Prime Minister was not confirmed until May 2nd. Following elections, no party or coalition was able to gain a majority of seats in the parliament, with over 20% of seats going to independents.

The two major players, OUR Party and the CARE Coalition both gained seats through forming alliances with minor parties to expand their blocs, but fell short of the seats needed for a majority. In the face of a difficult government formation, and a far from assured victory, previous Prime Minister and leader of OUR Party, Manasseh Sogavarre, stepped down, nominating Jeremiah Manele as his successor. Reacting to a failure to form government, Governor-General, David Vunagi, announced a parliamentary vote to elect the Prime Minister of May 2nd. Manele and OUR Party won with 31 votes to leader of the CARE Coalition, Matthew Wale's, 18 votes.

Although Manele and the OUR Party ultimately succeeded, accusations of foreign intervention throughout the elections have been plentiful due to the party's support of China. Russian state-owned media agency, Sputnik, published an article claiming that the United States was planning an 'electoral coup' in the Solomon Islands in an attempt to maintain regional influence.

These concerns were repeated by Chinese Communist Party run newspaper, the Global Times. Criticism increased amid the Australian government's proposal to provide financial assistance in running the elections,

although Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, denied these accusations, highlighting similar historical relationships between the two countries.

Despite elections issues seemingly centring on domestic development, global response has largely focused on the Solomon Island's relationship with China, and whether the controversial security pact they signed in July of 2023 will withstand the 2024 elections. Eyes in Washington, Canberra and Beijing have been closely watching the Solomon Islands, and will no doubt continue to do so as OUR party member and newly elected Prime Minister, Manele, settles into his new role.

Following the Solomon Islands' security pact with China, the US and Australia have heightened diplomatic and economic relations with the islands, in an attempt to maintain influence in the region. Manele's victory over CARE coalition leader, Wale, presents disappointment for anti-China critics, as Manele seems content to continue his predecessor's relationship with China.

However, compared to Sogavarre, Manele is known for taking a less controversial and more diplomatic stance on foreign relations, having once worked as the Minister of Foreign Affairs under Sogavarre's government. Much of Manele's campaign and post-election rhetoric has centred on the idea of 'unity', which maintaining relations with China may promote.

Concern has been raised over the tumultuous political climate returning to recognising the Republic of China (Taiwan), as the Solomon Islands did pre-2019, would cause after already committing to economic and security partnerships with the People's Republic of China.

Ultimately, the elections represent an important step forward for national unity within the Solomon Islands, and may signal the beginning of a less turbulent position in Pacific-relations for the island nation.

TANIWHA – NEW ZEALAND'S DRAGON

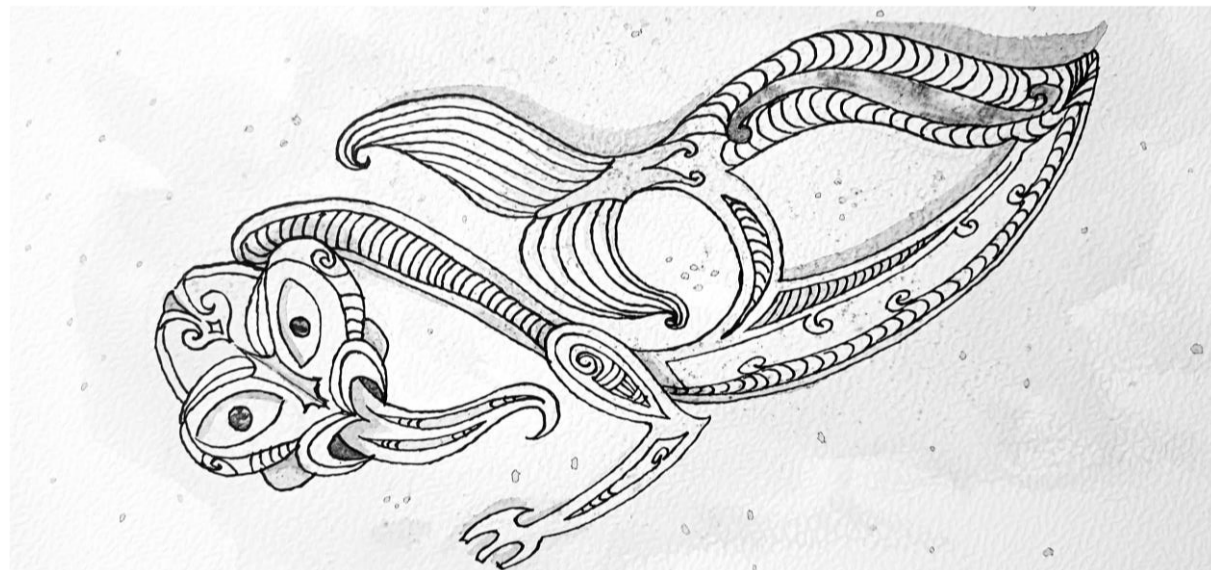
Luca Viscapi

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Moreover, taniwha are described in most legends as having a shifting appearance, resembling a whale or

large shark whilst out at sea and then a large lizard when on land. Taniwha are known as guardians of particular places, and take their jobs very seriously, devouring anyone not customarily associated with the area in Māori culture. This behaviour has earned them a dual reputation as both benevolent protectors and vicious monsters, thus making them the middle ground between the Asian dragon with its grace and the Western dragon with its ferocity.

However, unlike dragons, taniwha are, in a sense, quite real. Māori oral tradition ascribes the origin of certain geographic formations to taniwha, such as the harbour of Wellington, New Zealand's capital, Hokianga harbour, a sacred site for Māori, and Lake Waikaremoana, a popular hiking destination. In addition, the great white shark is known in Māori as mangō taniwha, the "taniwha shark".



A GLIMPSE OF FRENCH POLYNESIA HISTORY:

Gabriel Yeung

Located more than 17,000 km from metropolitan France, in the southern Pacific Ocean, French Polynesia and its 118 islands spread over a maritime area of 2.5 million km², which gives France the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world. The first settlers in Polynesia arrived in the 1st century from Southeast Asia (Taiwan).

Subsequently, Polynesia was colonized by France starting in 1842 and later became an overseas collectivity with autonomous status. The Chinese community, on the other hand, arrived in the mid-19th century in Polynesian territory to work in cotton and coffee plantations. Today, the Polynesian society is multicultural and provides an environment where Polynesian, French, and Chinese traditions coexist harmoniously.

MELISSA NAYRAL ON CAMPUS: 18/04/24.

Lilou Hardonnière

A few weeks ago, on Thursday 18th April, we had the honour to invite Dr. Mélissa Nayral on campus for our first event!

University professor and anthropologist, Dr. Nayral made the trip to rainy Le Havre all the way from the South of France. With the support of Havrais Dire, we organised a conference for the student body on the linguistic makeup of the region, as well as a dive into the anthropological scene of the Oceanic islands.

Lucky for us, Dr. Nayral made her presentation in English. Hence, 50 or so students were able to attend the two hour course. I will only remind here of some of the key moments of Dr. Nayral's lecture, but if you are curious to learn more about the subject, don't hesitate to check our website for an in-depth account of the course.

The professor began by the sub-regions Oceania is commonly broken up into. Between Micronesia in the North, Polynesia in the East and Melanesia in the West, Dr. Nayral also reminded us of the initially racial and colonial nature of this divide; although it is in fact used by indigenous populations today who have reclaimed the terminology.

In an attempt to make her in-depth analysis brief, the professor highlighted the linguistic interest of the region. Indeed, Oceania is the most linguistically rich region in the world. With its population making up less than 1% of global demography, Oceanic languages make up a whopping 19% of all those that exist on planet earth.

Finally, Dr. Nayral showed us the region in a pluridisciplinary approach: crossing linguistics and anthropology.

INTRODUCING THE DUGONG, THE MAJESTIC SEA COW.

Georgia Langworthy

The majestic sea cow, more commonly known as a Dugong is a graceful giant who lives in the shallow coastal waters stretching from Australia to the Indian ocean and to the coast of East Africa. They are herbivorous, eating on average 30 to 40 kg of flowering plants in seagrass meadows per day to sustain their 3 meter long, 400 kg bodies. They are close relatives of manatees, but live exclusively in salt water.

However, today these rotund mermaids are sadly endangered. Tourism, pollution, coastal urbanization, unsustainable traditional use and injuries from sea boat propellers have led their populations to decline to dangerously low levels. Thankfully, it is not too late to save the animal that first inspired the myth of mermaids!



HATUPATU AND THE BIRDWOMAN: FEATHERS IN MĀORI MYTH.

Connor Donaldson

Long ago, there lived a boy named Hatupatu. He was camping with his older brothers, both skilled hunters. Each morning they would set out to hunt, leaving Hatupatu to guard the pātaka (perched storehouse). In the pātaka, the brothers kept all the food they had accumulated. One day, after his brothers had left, Hatupatu was overcome with hunger. Unable to wait for their return, he climbed into the pātaka and stuffed himself with all the food inside. When his brothers came back, they were furious. Enraged, the brothers chased Hatupatu into the forest where he quickly became lost.

Suddenly something moved in the foliage before him, startling him. He struck out with his taiaha (spear), but what he hit was no bird. At least, not as he knew them. What emerged, would have been a woman if not for the wings on her arms, talons at her fingernails and long beak where her mouth should have been. She was the Kurangaituku (Birdwoman). Infuriated, the Birdwoman ushered a terrifying shriek, snatched up Hatupatu and took off with him to her dwelling, a cave filled with all kinds of little birds and lizards. Also inside, were three enchantingly beautiful kahu huruhuru (feather cloaks), each with its own unique pattern. Cloaks like these were great taonga (treasures) and Hatupatu imagined how majestic he would look in them.

Each day the Birdwoman left to hunt for food, threatening Hatupatu that if ever he ran away her pets would tell her and she would find him. Nevertheless, Hatupatu longed to return back to his brothers. One day, while the Birdwoman was out hunting, he killed each of her pets with his spear, grabbed up all three cloaks and ran for his life. He did not get far, however, before he noticed a fearsome shadow overhead.

In his desperation, Hatupatu had missed the smallest of the Birdwoman's pets, a riroriro (grey warbler). Having escaped, the little bird had flown swiftly to the Birdwoman to tell her how Hatupatu had destroyed her home. Now, the Birdwoman had found him and was quickly bearing down. With nowhere to run, Hatupatu fell to his knees and called out to the rock in front of him for some miracle to save him. By some strange magic, an opening appeared in the rock and Hatupatu rushed inside. The rock closed itself around him. He waited sitting in silence until he could no longer hear the Birdwoman's claws scratching at the surface. Finally, in the dead of night when all was silent, he slipped out and ran again.

Although, before long he heard screeches overhead The Birdwoman had found him once again. Luckily for Hatupatu, he had made it to the waiariki (hot pools) he had grown up around. He knew them like the back of his hand and this time when the Birdwoman dived for him, he jumped nimbly out of the way, leaving her to plunge headfirst into the scalding water. A bloodcurdling scream rang out and from that day the Birdwoman was never seen again.

In the morning, his brothers found Hatupatu sound asleep, back in his bed at the camp. They forgave him for his previous misdeeds, in part, because of the two splendid cloaks he had laid out for each of them.

DISCLAIMER: Multiple variations of Māori myths exist. The sources used are based on different Māori retellings. Writing and editing were undertaken by non-Māori and reflect the version the author was most familiar with.

THE FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING IN THE PACIFIC.

Gabriel Yeung

For over 30 years, France has conducted 193 nuclear tests on its polynesian territory. When the war in Algeria escalated, the French government decided to move their nuclear testing in the Pacific, to French Polynesia where they could have a geographical isolation from the world. The CEP (Centre d'expérimentation du Pacifique) was created in 1961 and has operated on the islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa with 46 aerial nuclear tests between 1966 and 1974, and 147 underground nuclear tests from 1975 to 1996.

In the midst of the Cold War period, France tried to establish its nuclear deterrent force, stuck between the American and Soviet giants, but at what cost? However, these tests took place without the consent or consultation of local populations who were unaware of their sacrifice.

This led to the rise of protests and concerns about health and environmental risks over the past few decades. Local population, site workers and French soldiers were exposed to high levels of radiation.

By analyzing recent declassified French military documents, searchers at Princeton University, as explained in their book *Toxique*, 2021, have determined the impacts of the explosion of Centaure, the 41st and last aerial nuclear test on Moruroa. This test was a failure for multiple reasons.

First, the mushroom cloud did not reach the expected height (5200m instead of 8000m) and took a direction that was not planned by the french authorities. The population of French Polynesia, about 125 000 at the time, such as the inhabitants of Tahiti and the surrounding islands, were exposed to significant amounts of radiation.

According to their estimation, this represents almost 110 000 potential victims for only very few compensations. Today, the fight continues as the local population seeks an official apology with better recognition and help for victims of those nuclear tests.

THE PRECIOUS PARTICULARITY OF POUNAMU.

Lilou Hardonnière

Much like in China, New Zealand holds in its deepest rivers an endogenous type of greenstone. Better known in the Māori name, pounamu, New Zealand jade stone, by its compositional properties, pounamu was used by the Māori to create weapons. *Mere* for instance is one of these weapons. However, pounamu is also used to craft beautiful jewellery. *Hei tiki* motifs representing wide-eyed anthropomorphic characters often rest on the chest of its



wearer. Hence, these blocs of jade, or *taonga*, are seen as a precious treasures. As mentioned, these precious stones can be found in the depths of riverbeds, lending its name to the Maori name of the South Island of *Aotearoa: Te Wai Pounamu* (waters of the green stone).

As a sign of distinguishment in society, wearing pounamu gains strength and *mana* with time as the pieces are passed down from generation to generation. Today, the custom has somewhat changed to include non-Maori pounamu enthusiasts such as *Pakhea* or tourists: it is now accustom to gift pounamu only. In other words, oneself should not purchase a necklace, earring or ring for oneself, but only receive it as a gift, or gift it to another.

MATAVAA O TE HENUA ENANA WITH MÉLISSA KODITUWAKKU.

Lilou Hardonnière

We had the opportunity to interview Mrs. Mélissa Kodituwakku (also known under her native name Henua Enana), a French anthropologist working on the Marquisean islands. Currently working on her doctoral thesis, she took for subject the annual artistic festival of the islands: *Matavaa O Te Henua Enana*. In our discussion, Mrs Kodituwakku highlighted the cultural, colonial and especially identity challenges and issues that the festival shines a light upon and seeks to resolve.

She stresses the heavy political role of the French government, as well as that of the Tahitian one. A theme that came up a lot was that of assimilation. How the French perspective imposed the teaching of Tahitian in Henua Enana's schools. We then discussed the term "art" to describe the festival itself, is it appropriate? Is that how Marquesians describe it themselves?

She explains how the festival, *Matavaa O Te Henua Enana*, was born out of the protection and defense of singularity of Marquesian identities. However, we also touched on the inter-generational problem that has recently arisen: between tradition and modernity, between conservation and contemporary. We've transcribed the whole interview, so we invite you to go read our website to understand these themes in depth.

Photography by Dr. Melissa Kodituwakku – Fatu Hiva festival, 2022.



BLACKBIRDING: A HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN SLAVE TRADE.

Anoushka

In 2020, the Australian PM Scott Morrison casually claimed that slavery never existed in Australia. One must delve deeper then, into the history of the word, "blackbird", a pejorative slang for those native to the South Pacific Islands in the context of: slavery. Termed by historian Clive Moore, as cultural kidnapping, "blackbird-ing" refers to the sordid slaving practice of deceitfully luring Islanders into lifetimes of indentured servitude for burgeoning Australian industries from 1863 to 1904. Originating from modern day Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea, many islanders were either kidnapped, coerced or enticed to go work in Australia under harsh conditions. Demand for labour, particularly for the nascent sugar cane industry in Queensland, gave impetus to conscienceless traders who decimated small island communities in a bid to supply cheap manpower. In order to commemorate the profound economic and cultural impact of the victims of blackbirding, the 25th of August has marked the annual South Sea Islander National Recognition Day in Australia since 1994, when the Australian government first recognised their descendents as a distinct minority group.

FUNERALS ON RAPA NUI- A LOST CULTURE.

Ffion Bright

Although Easter Island or Rapa Nui is the most isolated island on earth, with its closest neighbour more than 2250 km away, it was not far enough to hide the island from external inputs. European influence and then Chilean annexation in 1888 has meant much of our knowledge about the original citizens of Rapa Nui is either unknown, lost or told through the words of the settlers, whose evangelisation caused Easter islanders to deviate from their culture and religion. Nevertheless we still have limited records on Rapa Nui's culture and notably its most important rite - the funeral process.

Bodies were notably wrapped in vegetation and exposed to open air on the ahu (a ceremonial platform with the famous moai (statues) which represent the ancestors). Here the dead were left for two years to decompose, following which their bones would be cleaned and placed into a funeral chamber in the ahu which allowed for the spirit of the dead body to be reunited with its ancestors. This long process allows the ancestors to then aid their descendents from beyond the grave and reflects the reverence given to ancestors in Rapa Nui.

The practice greatly declined in the periods of food scarcity during the 17th & 18th centuries, but it remains important to remember such important practices, and see Rapa Nui for its culture and history and not just for the tourist attraction it has unfortunately become.



AUSTRALIA-TUVALU FALEPILI UNION: A TREATISE ON NEIGHBOURLINESS?

Anoushka

Falepili, a Tuvaluan word denoting “care and mutual respect” marks the landmark Australia-Tuvalu bilateral agreement signed into effect on 9 November 2023. The treaty is the first of its kind, explicitly linking anticipated upticks in migration with climate change. Add to that, Australia’s “security guarantee” to Tuvalu, everything looks on the up and up until one reaches the clause providing Australia with veto power over Tuvaluan diplomatic relations. Thankfully, this gross oversight on the small island nation’s sovereignty has been corrected in the recent amendment under Article 4(4) of the Falepili Union and the release of the joint statement on both country’s commitment to the treaty.

THE AUSTRALIAN 'BRUMBY' AT THE HEART OF MANY CONTROVERSIES.

Nina Treguer

On the 27th of October 2023, the local government of New South Wales in Australia agreed to ‘aerial culling’ of wild horses in the national park of Kosciuszko. Aerial culling, shooting through the air of animals, is considered by the scientific community as the most humane and cost-effective method to reduce large populations over remote areas. Australia finally resorted to this drastic measure in order to efficiently manage the intensely growing horse population of the park. Estimates reveal the presence of 19 000 wild horses in Kosciuszko out of 400 000 horses inhabiting the lands. However this announcement has led to the rise of multiple controversies after aerial culling has been banned for two decades in the region.

First of all, this decision has to be considered in the broader context of preserving the unique fauna and flora of the island. Indeed, many scientific experts as well as Indigenous guides in the region regret the damage the horses did to the rare ecosystems and denounce the threat they represent to species such as the corroboree frog or the broad-toothed rat, found nowhere else. The first ethical debate that sparked then, concerns the notion of value humans placed on animals : a common farm animal against lesser known animals.

Indeed, animal rights activists found themselves tied between the heartbreaking decision of killing more than a dozen thousand individuals (to reach the objective of 3000 horses by 2027) and the preservation of other animals which risk extinction. Moreover, the second debate which arose concerning the welfare of the horses concerns the means used to tackle the problem.

Some hinted at other measures such as the deportation to sanctuaries or fertility management tactics. However, not only can those cannot be implemented at the scale needed, but the vast majority of horses are rarely ‘re-

homed’. Most of the time they are transferred to slaughterhouses. Nevertheless, horse activists voiced their worry about the real accuracy of the pilots onto which the tedious task will fall.

Secondly, wild horses hold a special place in Australia's history and colonial legacy. Indeed, nicknamed “brumbies”, they are the descendants of the first horses that were imported from England by European settlers in 1788. More than that, they are the source of inspiration for many songs and poems – the poem The Man from Snowy River by Banjo Paterson was even adapted into a movie. The horses were even celebrated at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics Games of 2000.

Hence, if for some, especially ranchers, they are a national symbol, others see them as only an invasive specie, brought by colonial authorities in order to erase the cultural singularity of the territory they ‘conquered’. By letting them proliferate, the identity of Native Australia is once again threatened by colonialism. In an interview with the New York Times, a 60 year old rancher even declared that it was a “culture war”. This declaration reveals the underlying tensions that the announcement has provoked.

Last but not least, the argument of a matter of ‘environmental protection’ put forward by politicians might lead to criticism, especially as other projects, such as the one financed by Snowy Hydro also had huge environmental impacts. Furthermore, Kosciuszko National Park was the home of two aboriginal groups, the Walgalu people and the Ngarigo people, which might make us wonder if the management of the park by the national government is more effective and environmentally friendly than the populations living there traditionally.

Following the same trajectory as the American Mustang, the divide and tensions elicited by the Australian Brumby are a perfect example of the long-term consequence of historical events which happened 200 years ago.

THE TEAM



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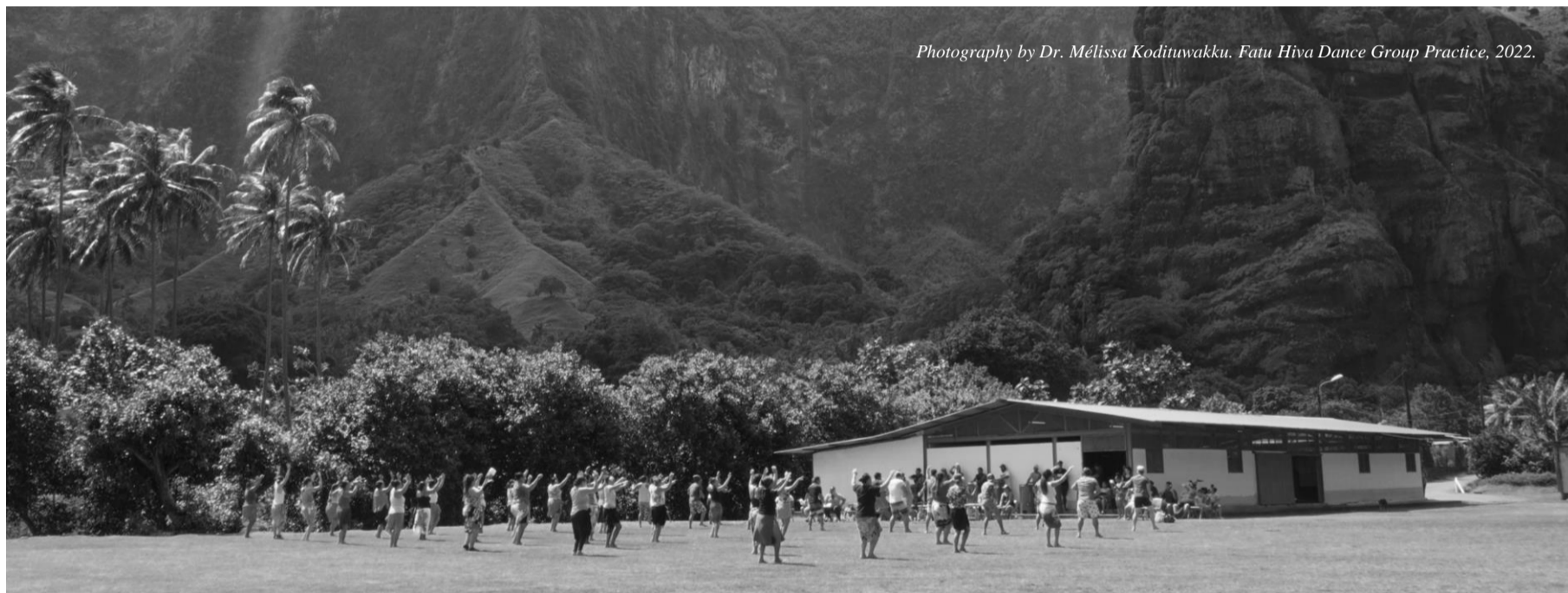
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Photography by Dr. Mélissa Kodituwakku. Fatu Hiva Dance Group Practice, 2022.



Thank You



I hope you enjoyed this last edition of The Pacific Post for this year! Exploring law, history, animal rights, arts and anthropology, we're opening the door for you to explore a wonderful region of the world.

It has been an honour for us as a team to bring you knowledge and openness on our beloved Oceanic region this year. We started working on this idea a year ago, and seeing it completed today makes us so proud. Above all, thank you for the sustained support to each edition, as well as our first conference on anthropology and linguistics with Dr. Mélissa Nayral!

This newspaper would have been impossible without the help of our sponsors. Thank you to Sciences Po Paris, Le Havre campus for continued logistical and financial support. We also thank the Association of France – New Zealand, based in Paris for their interest in our project, their partnership and financial support. The Pacific Post's articles can be found on our social media platform, to keep up with new editions coming up and the hottest takes in our articles. Head over to our Instagram page to discover more about the Pacific and delve into its waters.

