

January Letter-Home

Pablo Seward

Umaña Tupuna

Dear Stronach Family:

In January, the setting of my project changed from Easter Island to Santiago, from the field frantically running around working with multiple oral historians to the study editing videos. I have already purchased my ticket back to Easter Island for February 27. It will take lots of work to finish editing the audiovisual material I collected and making fun and coherent videos out of it to share with the community. I feel I am on track.

My work this month has consisted in three main tasks. First, I have slowly learned how to use Adobe Premiere Pro, a wonderful program for editing videos. I had had minimal experience with the program out of personal interest in the past. Antonia spent several days teaching me basic skills. Since, I have engaged in a time-consuming yet rewarding process of trial and error. I have found that modern video-editing technology is an extremely powerful tool for making a faithful representation of a complex social reality. The ability to mix images (including video footage and illustrations), sounds (including voices), and texts (e.g., historical narratives) pertaining to different people and contexts is resulting in what I hope will be material with which Rapanui people from multiple backgrounds may relate.



Figure 1. The photo shows me working editing the audiovisual material, while Antonia is making illustrations that we will then include in the edited material. Photo taken by Pablo Seward. Santiago, January 23, 2015.

Concurrent with this task, another major task I have undertaken this month is to summarize the many audio files that I collected from different oral historians. I have

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made use of another program to help me do this: Excel. As seen in the table below, for each video we made with a different oral historian, I am in the process of dividing and color-coding the audio file corresponding to that video by fragments of time in which one of six themes is elaborated upon. I defined each theme based on quickly going through all the material collected. The themes include heritage; ancestral system and oral transmission; spirituality, topology, and disease; colonial times; immigration and Chilean politics; and *umanga* and community.

A	B	C
17	NISO	Frases
18	0:53 - 2:05	Preguntas
19	02:25 - 03:48	
20	5:02 - 5:21	
21	5:32 - 6:59, 7:56 - 8:13, 8:22 - 8:36, 09:14 - 09:53, 10:35 - 13:19, 13:26 - 14:20	Autosustentabilidad de alimentación? Es más fácil o más difícil vivir hoy en día?
22	14:36 - 15:24	Umanga hoy en día: Niso dice que no es como el umanga antiguo.
23	15:28 - 16:47	Uso de comida moderna en las caminatas: invenciones en comida. Aprender historia dentro de contexto de encierro. Cambio por época: a veces no hay permiso. Labyrinth vs. maze (didactic activity)
24	17:01 - 17:21, 17:30 - 18:04	
25	18:25 - 20:47 - 21:20 - 22:08	
26	23:46 - 23:52, 24:32 - 25:50, 26:36 - 31:25	Autenticidad / teorías de cultura, luna, consciencia de Rapanui dentro del contexto polinésico: "an ocean of islands" (Hauofa)
27	33:01 - 33:47	Patrimonio vivo
28	34:09 - 40:29	Varua es un concepto histórico, como muestra Niso: como ha cambiado hoy en día el concepto?
29	40:30 - 42:00, 45:15 - 47:30, 48:11 - 49:45	Que tan importante ha sido la influencia del dinero? Patrimonio vivo: por que se necesitan arqueólogos? Moai hoy en día sólo es un monumento de piedra? Re-insertar los ojos? Abundancia de pescados? Causas naturales vs. sagradas: corriente del niño.
30	52:16 - 53:18, 53:50 - 55:28, 55:52 - 58:08, 1:00:32 - 1:01:32,	Historias ancestrales vs. historias modernas.... Tener un sistema preciso o dinámico.
31	1:02:00 - 1:02:37	
32	1:04:20 - 1:06:05	
33	1:06:50 -	
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Figure 2. Screenshot of one of the summaries of audio material I am currently working on. Screenshot taken by Pablo Seward. Santiago, February 1, 2015.

In the upper leftmost cell, the name of the oral historian whose video the summary pertains to appears. The rest of the leftmost column corresponds to time fragments. In the next column to the right, a short summary of what was said in the corresponding time frame is shown; the color of the text indicates what theme the time frame covers. Finally, in the third column to the right, there are initial questions that came out from that time fragment. I only have a few audio files that I

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have not yet summarized using the method above. Once I summarize all of the audio files, I will print out the entire Excel document and manually draw connections between the themes in the nineteen videos I am working with, trying to find a logic with which to connect each of the instances of conversation about the theme in question. The goal is to produce six videos, one on each of theme, mixing moments with multiple if not all of the oral historians that have participated in the project for each video. That said, I might find that one of themes does not include a sufficient amount of material, in which case I will incorporate that theme into another theme. The final goal is to hold six or so workshops that will be open to the entire community, especially schoolchildren. In each workshop, one video corresponding to one of the six themes will be presented, followed by a discussion stimulated by the questions that emerged from the video in question.

The third major task I have been undertaking this month is researching the historical background of each theme and thinking of ways to include this background in the videos, such that history is made fun and accessible. To this end, I have compiled a list of academic and popular texts that are relevant for each theme. I will then include texts with corresponding images (historical and contemporary images as well as illustrations) in each video in order for each video not only to be ethnographically, but also historically representative of each theme. My original intention was to provide you with a link for one of the six videos in this letter. However, summarizing the statements of oral historians into themes and initial editing of videos has taken longer than expected. I will provide one or more links to these videos in my next letter home.

This month I have also dedicated some of my time to recruit Rapanui people in Santiago to serve as oral historians. Although it is important for video “interviews” to take place in the island itself, given the extent to which videos are tied to historical places, in some cases it may be fine to include statements that are not related directly to the place where they were made. I have scheduled two video interviews so far, one with a Rapanui archaeologist and another with a Rapanui spokeswoman, both of whom are currently in Santiago. I have also scheduled video interviews with several oral historians in Easter Island who had not been available last time I was there.

Other than continuing to work on the three tasks that I adumbrated above, this coming month I will better define the final product that will come out of the project. As I have mentioned in previous letters, one option is to have a web platform. In this web platform I would share the six produced videos, as well as incorporate (in several forms) the debates that these videos elicited in the discussions held in workshops. The idea is to develop pragmatic proposals that solve the issues in question and to post them in the web platform. That way, the web platform will be useful for Rapanui people lobbying for political change. Because Internet is still limited on the island—though soon, with new innovations, it will become more popularized—I plan to make a DVD video out of the content that will appear online.

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This DVD will then be distributed to the Rapanui community. I will have a meeting with a web developer this coming week to discuss the possibility of making a web platform.

Best of wishes in all of your projects and, as always, thank you very much for your support!

Pablo