

Katherine Routledge and Madeleine Colani: Victorian Trowel Blazers or Honorary Men?

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ABSTRACT—Katherine Routledge and Madeleine Colani, two pioneering European archaeologists, were born in August 1866. Routledge's groundbreaking study of the Easter Island *moai* was made possible by her family's vast wealth, while Colani's tenacity overcame humble beginnings, and a childhood marred by war, to triumph academically and secure scientific missions to the Plain of Jars in Laos. A century ago, perseverance and commitment allowed these women to create their own legacies through challenging archaeological explorations in the autumn of their lives. Both women defied male authority and refused to conform to gender expectations, but met with unequal success in the personal sphere. The year that international prehistorians saluted Colani as one of their own, Routledge met a lonely death in a mental institution. This article discusses their scholarship, the environment in which they operated and the value of their respective legacies.

Introduction

Katherine Routledge conducted the first systematic documentation of Easter Island's statues and Madeleine Colani did the same for Laos' Plain of Jars. For centuries, the *moai* of Rapa Nui and the Laotian stone jars were shrouded in mystery as to their respective genesis, purposes and makers. The statues of Easter Island (Figure 1) command admiration as being among Polynesia's more remarkable cultural expressions, while the Laotian jars (Figure 2) are a unique megalithic phenomenon in Mainland Southeast Asia. These qualities, and the hundreds of extant units despite the passage of time, were decisive factors in both archaeological sites being listed as World Heritage Properties in 1995 and 2019 respectively.

A century ago, Routledge and Colani conducted extended seasons of archaeological fieldwork in remote corners of the world and were exposed to a range of hazards, from manpower mutiny to conflict, war and undeveloped infrastructure, adding a layer of complications to their work and ability to accomplish their missions.

Family background

Katherine Routledge was born Katherine Maria Pease into a Quaker family in Darlington, north-east England, on 11 August 1866, the daughter of Gurney Pease (1839-1872) and Katherine Wilson Pease (1840-1915). On 13 August, Madeleine Colani was

born in Strasbourg, Alsace, north-east France, to Waldensians Timothée Colani (1824-1888) and Joséphe Marie Vincente Gauthey (1843-1917). Born two days apart, the lives of Katherine and Madeleine developed in ways which neither could have envisaged.

From a young age, Katherine was surrounded by a strong network of devout Quakers, a branch of Christianity founded in the 17th century by George Fox (1624-1691), the English missionary, on principles of self-worth and personal rights. She could recite lengthy Bible passages before the age of five and had a lifelong commitment to her faith. Katherine's unwavering religious belief endowed her with a well-defined moral sense, fortified by the knowledge that her financial resources could easily prevail over difficulties. On the *Mana*, the purpose-built expedition yacht, she carried the worn Bible of her childhood and on Rapa Nui she often prayed to resolve conflict or when she feared for her safety or that of her crew.

The Colanis were Waldensians, members of a Christian reform movement founded circa 1170 by Peter Waldo (d. circa 1205), a wealthy French merchant from Lyon. In addition to her paternal grandfather, Antoine Colani (1783-1844) and her father, Timothée, who began serving as a Protestant pastor in 1856 (Kintz 1984: 526), Madeleine's family included other men of the cloth. Yet, her writings are largely devoid of references to religious practices or beliefs, with unfamiliar or mysterious practices often attributed to superstitious behaviour.



Figure 1. *Hoa Hakananai'a* on display at the British Museum in London. Photo: Lia Genovese.

The family background and parenting present some direct comparisons, but few common traits exist in the areas of economic circumstances and social standing. Katherine's family had built up vast wealth from banking, wool, railways and mining, with her mid-Victorian privileged background supported by a retinue of cooks, nannies, stable boys, gardeners, governesses and assorted domestic help. The considerable financial resources at her disposal were instrumental in ensuring collaboration with British institutions seeking mutually beneficial associations with wealthy individuals. This was the case with Sidney Legendre (1903-1948) and Gertrude Legendre (1902-2000), a wealthy couple who travelled to Southeast Asia to collect plant and animal specimens for the American Museum of Natural History, reaching the Plain of Jars on 24 December 1931, in time for a "Christmas egg-nog in front of a roaring fire" (Legendre 1932: 494).

Madeleine's family was steeped in religion and service, supported by modest incomes from teaching and small shops. So fervent was the faith of her grandfather, Antoine Colani, that he trained as a baker to support his family after a fire destroyed their shop, and was finally ordained as a

Protestant pastor in 1811 at the age of twenty-eight. In keeping with the Calvinist tradition of dedication to knowledge, personal betterment and financial independence, the Colanis tended to marry late – as was the case with her father, Timothée, who married 22-year old Josèphe at the age of 41 – or not at all: Madeleine and her three siblings were all *célibataire* (unmarried).

Equally, Pease women avoided marriage for religious and financial reasons. Prohibition on marrying outside the faith created a tight genealogical barrier of “family circles” (Van Tilburg 2003: 11), where unions with Quaker consanguineous partners were encouraged and transgressors liable to be disinherited. This tradition

created the right conditions for the mental illness that plagued some members of the Pease family, who were related by blood with the Wilson family. From her early twenties, Katherine suffered from schizophrenia and her older brother, Harold (1864-1928), died in a mental hospital after a lifetime of “unpredictably violent behavior” (Van Tilburg 2003: 16). Law brought relief to Katherine and millions of wives of all religious denominations, when the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870 allowed wedded women to be the legal owners of property they inherited (Brown 1891: 3).

As in Waldensian belief, gender parity is a Quaker tenet and the faith’s innate equality of women and men required no vows of obedience in marriage. Devotees sought marriage on equal terms, including the bridegroom’s financial standing, and it behove the daughters of wealthy families to exercise prudence in seeking unions with men of lesser standing. In a union that displeased both families, on 6 August 1906, five days before her fortieth birthday, Katherine married William Scoresby Routledge (1859-1939), an Australian adventurer, failed medical student and self-styled anthropologist.

Some of Katherine’s relatives viewed William as a fortune hunter, but “tolerable enough” (Van Tilburg 2003: 53-54) as a husband. The misgivings warranted the prenuptial agreement drawn up by Katherine’s younger brother, Wilson (1867-1923), a lawyer, which stipulated that in the event of a separation, William would receive the sum of £20,000, or three million dollars in today’s money, “a fortune by [William] Routledge standards but modest by those of the Pease family” (Van Tilburg 2003: 54).

Both women developed close bonds with individual family members, Routledge by confiding in Wilson, while Colani became protective of Eléonore (1877-1943), the youngest sibling, who excavated with her at prehistoric caves and at the Plain of Jars.



Figure 2. Phu Da Phor, Luang Prabang. An exceptionally remote site of sandstone jars and discs documented by Colani in April-May 1933. Photo: Lia Genovese.

Paternal figures and social standing

Madeleine and Katherine derived numerous traits from their paternal figures. Both Timothée Colani and Gurney Pease experienced a mismatch between their vocations and what was expected of them, when they were forced into roles for which they were ill prepared. Gurney Pease, a religious man but a mediocre and uninvolved businessman, had hoped to become a Quaker minister but was assigned to oversee Hutton Ironstone Mines, an imposition he resented. Embittered and conscious of his business inadequacy, he felt spiritually unworthy and suffered “persistent migraine headaches” (Van Tilburg 2003: 16).

From her father, Madeleine inherited determination and an almost evangelical belief in justice. Timothée became an ardent nationalist and promoter of French language and culture after meeting Léon Gambetta (1838-1882), the republican statesman and architect of France’s Third Republic, a patriotic fervour difficult to reconcile with his status as the first generation of Colanis born on French soil, after his father, Antoine, left Switzerland for France in 1811 to lead a Protestant congregation in Lemé, in the outskirts of Paris.

Madeleine started life as the first-born in a modest household in Strasbourg’s Rue des Hallebardes, a stone’s throw from the Cathedral of Our Lady and a short walk from the Church of St. Nicolas where Timothée served as a pastor. If his income as a biblical scholar kept the young family in modest comfort, he counted numerous influential figures among his acquaintances, including Edward Reuss (1804-1891), a renowned Protestant scholar from the local Faculty of Theology, and Jules Sengenwald (1809-1891), Knight of the Legion of Honor and president of the local Chamber of Commerce.

An affluent background gave Katherine considerable levels of confidence and allowed her to come into contact with high-ranking people from an early age. In 1884, aged eighteen, Katherine was presented to Queen Victoria (1819-1901) in a rite of passage when daughters of influential families entered fashionable society. This is in stark contrast to Madeleine, who qualified for a teaching diploma (*brevet supérieur*) the same year and began her career in education, on a meagre salary that nevertheless augmented her father’s modest income, lending financial support in a household with three siblings still in primary or secondary school.

When Katherine began to build a yacht for Easter Island, she was unperturbed by objections from friends and family, and the fact that she undertook the challenge is a direct measure of her “self-confidence” (Van Tilburg 2003: 82) and the driving power of her vision. Confident of a positive outcome, she sued the boat builder, Whitstable Shipping, despite her dissatisfaction resulting from frequent design changes demanded by William, concerned by the *Titanic* disaster of April 1912, an ocean liner deemed ‘unsinkable’.

Less clear-cut are the factors underpinning the self-assuredness of Madeleine, who endured discrimination despite support from men in positions of authority at the Geological Service of Indochina (GSI), which she joined in 1917. There she worked closely with the institution’s chief, Honoré Lantenois (1863-1940), and was supervised by Henri Mansuy (1857-1937), whom she was being groomed to replace.¹ On reaching

¹ Report of 12 July 1917 from Honoré Lantenois.

the pensionable age of 55, she resisted calls for statutory retirement and fought vigorously for parity of treatment with retired male colleagues, who were awarded post-retirement contracts from year to year, finally retiring in 1928.

Education

Katherine and Madeleine were born in an era when a girl's apprenticeship for adulthood was served at home. There were notable exceptions, however, like John Smith, the Scottish Presbyterian lawyer, who brought up his twin daughters, Agnes and Margaret, born in January 1843, more or less "as if they had been boys", defying the traditionalist view of a woman "as a wife and mistress of a household" (Soskice 2009: 10).

Madeleine grew up in an academic family, with her father, Timothée, graduating in 1864 with a doctorate in theology. Jeanne and André, two of her younger siblings, attended tertiary education and became university lecturers. Eléonore, the youngest in the family, was orphaned in 1888 at the age of eleven when her father died suddenly during a visit to Switzerland, but a state scholarship in 1889 allowed her to complete her secondary education. She was the only Colani offspring not to attend university.

Studious Madeleine overcame the interruptions and displacement caused by the family leaving her native Strasbourg for a life of exile, when Prussia annexed Alsace in 1871. After qualifying as a primary school teacher at the age of eighteen, she taught at schools in Paris until 1898, when she was accepted for colonial service in Indochina, where she studied remotely for her first university degree in 1914 and a doctorate in geology in 1920.

Katherine engaged in conflict with family members, who saw little or no benefit in educating a daughter beyond cooking, sewing and keeping home, as exemplified by her aunts, Jane (d. 1894) and Emma (d. 1895), products of a "selfish ideal of female servitude" (Van Tilburg 2003: 41) inflicted on their single, joyless lives by her paternal grandfather, Joseph Pease (1799-1872). Striving for independence and desiring the same opportunities as her male relatives, Katherine qualified in 1891 for a place at Somerville College, becoming one of the first female Oxford University graduates four years later. The award of her degree was withheld until October 1920, when the first ceremony for female graduates was held in the grand auditorium of the Sheldonian Theatre, crammed with graduates and "supporters of women's education" (Moulton 2019: 85). However, emancipation was not universally advocated by high-achieving Victorian females, including Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), the archaeologist and political officer who opposed the female vote: "These women perceived their accomplishments as individual achievements, fearing the suffragists would usurp their reputation and professional recognition" (Asher-Greve 2006: 159).

We need to ask ourselves why Routledge and Colani were posted to remote locations to lead lengthy and logistically complex missions, in an era when paternalistic attitudes sought to protect the female species from unspecified threats. The answer partially lies in their credentials. Fundamentally, Katherine's wealth allowed the Routledges to engineer a mission out of a desire "to see the Pacific before we died" (Routledge 1920: 3). Their meticulous preparations eventually won the backing of several British institutions,



Figure 3. March 1938. Madeleine Colani with Johan G. Andersson (right), founder of Stockholm's Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, and Nguyễn Ngọc Trăn (centre), of the EFEO, at the excavation site of Dong Mau, Bay of Tonkin, Vietnam. (From the Johan Gunnar Andersson photo archive, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm).

including the Admiralty, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Museum, the latter declaring Easter Island the most promising “field of research” (Routledge 1917: 322) for anthropological work in the Pacific.

As for Colani, crucial factors in being appointed mission leader were her academic titles and extensive field experience, skills acquired during her tenure at the GSI between 1917-1928, when she led missions to prehistoric caves in Vietnam and Laos. In 1929, she was appointed corresponding member of the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), the Hanoi-based research school under whose auspices she conducted “the first large-scale documentation of the Plain of Jars” (Genovese 2021: 133) in 1931-1933.

Expedition companions

On 28 February 1913, the *Mana* sailed from the tidal estuary of Southampton, packed with ample provisions for consumption on the year-long voyage to Easter Island. On reaching Rapa Nui, the impoverished islanders equated the Routledges' extravagant food stocks with “manna from heaven” (Van Tilburg 2003: 116) and pilfered goods and foodstuffs while moving crates from the *Mana* to the island. Despite threats of dire punishment, the islanders stole goods and stock animals from the foreigners on the island, under promise of prosperity and protection from harm by the resident prophetess Angata, a “spokesperson of the supernatural” (Van Tilburg 1992: 34).

The crew resented the Routledges' perceived status as wealthy amateurs trying to meddle in matters of ship management and navigation, combined with poor people skills and contradictory lines of authority. Lt. David Ritchie (b. 1886) of the Royal Navy did not take orders from them or from H.J. Gillam (d. 1918), the ship's Master. Katherine micromanaged the crew and outlined their duties from dawn to late evening. Deserting crew members, like Smith the cook, who left the ship in October 1913 at the Chilean town of Punta Arenas, were simply replaced at the next port. Tensions were never far

Figure 4. Katherine Routledge measuring the length of the foundations of a *hare paenga* (overturned canoe-shaped house), in Rapa Nui, 1914-15. British Museum's Lantern Slide Collection, asset no. 507952001. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



away even when goodwill was intended, with the crew throwing overboard part of a large birthday cake offered by William.

While the on-board cook indulged the couple with varied recipes from Katherine's cherished cookbook, the crew's unappetizing diet included ham packed in charcoal (to keep damp and rats at bay), sausages wrapped in thick layers of fat and "boiled tripe in vinegar" (Van Tilburg 2003: 91). The contrast was difficult to ignore in the confines of a medium-sized ship, with Routledge (1920: 115) disingenuously stating that the crew "much preferred tinned milk and declined fresh even when it was available". The Routledges' conspicuous appetites were a match for the delicacies carried by Alfred Raquez (1863-1907), the French explorer, during his travels around Laos in 1900, when he lost one crate of beer and one of champagne to parasites: "They have good taste these woodlice!" (Raquez 1902: 403).

In stark contrast was Madeleine's lifestyle in the field, not dissimilar from subsistence level. Unlike *bonne vivante* Katherine, whose rich and varied diet gave rise to tensions on the *Mana* and on Rapa Nui, Madeleine's porters shared her insubstantial daily rations. She refrained from lamenting the Spartan conditions of her fieldwork in Laos and it fell on her close associates to portray the difficulties of leading missions to undeveloped corners of Laos early in the twentieth century, when her daily diet consisted of a banana and a bowl of rice (Cœdès 1943: II), often sleeping on a bed of leaves hastily arranged by a stream near a field of jars. Madeleine was frugal and invited random acts of kindness from those with whom she came into contact in Indochina, as when Madame Benoit, wife of the local chief, placed "a piece of fresh bread" (Colani 1939: 27) in her satchel as she left before breakfast to explore Vietnam's Bac-son, a memory made more poignant by the knowledge that, a few days later, the kind lady drowned with her infant daughter while crossing a river.

During fieldwork, Colani (Figure 3) and Routledge (Figure 4) had constant companions by their side. William, Katherine's combative husband, frequently

antagonised the Rapanui, the very people Katherine relied on for information. The islanders took exception to his insensitivity when he stuffed human bones in his saddlebags, for transport to their base in Mataverí, or when he tried to remove a skull from Motu Nui cave. Despite his medical training, he failed to identify the remains of cremations at *ahu* sites, the stone platforms most likely used as ritual locations, like the *marae* in Central and East Polynesia. Some villagers used caves to store items stolen from visiting ships or from other islanders, but when William found nothing, because the caves were regularly pillaged, he accused the guides of leading him “astray” (Van Tilburg 2003: 125) and withheld their fees.

Katherine found a kindred spirit in Juan Tepano (1867-1947) and credited him as key to her success. Baptised as a Catholic, Tepano’s belief system was a complex mix, which included countenance towards the *akuaku*, spirits believed to protect family and property but “mischievous or even hostile” towards all strangers (Fischer 2005: 29). To experience life outside Rapa Nui, he joined the army in Chile, where he learned Spanish and English, before returning to the island in 1901 as a headman.

Katherine was intelligent, outspoken and strong-minded, qualities admired and encouraged in a male, but deemed “unpleasant” (Van Tilburg 2003: 13) in a woman. On the *Mana*, undervalued by William and humiliated by the crew, she had to assert her position as paymaster for the expedition. Her decisive personality was a source of friction with William and the all-male crew, equating her domestic role on the yacht with that of “a concubine” (Van Tilburg 2003: 101). For Fulkerson and Tushingham (2019: 389-390), relegating women towards “clerical roles” reflects the ghettoisation of women in archaeology, theories advanced by Joan Gero (1994: 38), for whom the bias towards excavations that still dominates archaeological research relates to “larger cultural stereotypes about male and female roles in society”.

Exasperated by the limitations imposed by customs of the era, Katherine identified as “a woman with the feelings of a man” (Van Tilburg 2003: 3), echoing the “*garçon manqué*” (Gran-Aymerich 1991: 8) of Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916), the convent girl and ardent feminist, who wore a male soldier’s uniform to serve as a sharp-shooter in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war. Dieulafoy continued to adopt masculine costume and a short haircut as a symbol of equality with men, surpassing what was considered to be feminine at the time.

On occasion, it was necessary for Katherine to remind William that they were leaders of the expedition *as a couple* and she expressed her resentment when he invited members of the Argentinian press on a tour of the *Mana* in her absence, followed by an article in the English-language Buenos Aires *Herald* where William represented himself as the leader and omitted to mention Katherine “as his expedition partner” (Van Tilburg 2003: 100). The latent rivalry between Katherine and William never surfaced in the working relationship between Madeleine and Eléonore, a malleable expedition companion. After relocating to Indochina from France in 1903, Eléonore worked for the colonial post and telecommunications until 1929, when her employment was terminated. She joined Madeleine on archaeological missions and became a dutiful and trusted companion, where the elder was the undisputed leader and the younger sibling the unofficial co-leader entrusted with peripheral surveys (Colani 1935, v1: 6-7, 244,

257). Eléonore's role was acknowledged at the December 1943 memorial conference (Lévy 1944) organised by Paul Lévy (1909-1998), Colani's disciple and director of Prehistory and Ethnography at the Louis Finot Museum in Hanoi.

Research questions

As pioneers of sites long considered mysterious, Routledge and Colani posed themselves similar research questions from different starting points and with singular objectives. Routledge's expedition was an individual quest to explore an archaeological frontier, under the auspices of British institutions and supported by personal wealth. It was facilitated by the conspicuous corpus of literature from a long line of researchers, with contributions from individuals and institutions, including several Rapanui people, over a long period of time.

At the British Museum, Katherine inspected *Hoa Hakananai'a* (see Figure 1),² a superb example of Rapa Nui stone carving and a "work of skilled hands" (Routledge 1920: 166), an opportunity which allowed her to develop four basic research questions: (a) the identity of the original people who discovered and settled Easter Island; (b) from where had these people come; (c) the meaning of the statues; and (d) how do they connect to the present inhabitants?

As for Laos, the first European missionaries arrived in the country during Soulligna Vongsā's rule (1637-1694), but accounts of visits to the Plain of Jars were not published for another 250 years. Auguste Pavie (1847-1925), the French explorer, and his officers led mapping missions to Indochina between 1879-1895, but few people had ventured beyond Vientiane, Luang Prabang or Champasak, notable exceptions being educators or surveyors taking stock of Laos' borders, ethnic groups, religions, customs and the administration of justice. In May 1888, five years before most of modern Laos became a French protectorate, Captain Pierre Cupet (1859-1907) made one of the earliest recorded visits to the stone jars of Xieng Khouang (Cupet 1900: 37).

For her missions, Colani framed her research questions mostly within the academic environment of colonial Indochina, and particularly the EFEO, which provided scarce printed literature, mostly developed from visitors' chance encounters in north Laos, consisting of reports by explorers who had encountered jars during border surveys or fact-finding missions on behalf of the French or Siamese governments.

Unlike areas to the south, where the Khmer presence is visible in relics, like the 10th century temple of Vat Phou in Champasak province, ancient Xieng Khouang was untouched by Hindu or Buddhist influences, precluding research by French scholars versed in inscriptions. An exception was the manuscript by Henri Parmentier (1870-1949), the architect, lodged at the EFEO after completing a survey of religious structures in Xieng Khouang, published posthumously by his widow (Parmentier 1954). A sketch map prepared in 1903 by the colonial administrator, Paul Morin (b. 1867), was made available to Colani for her second Plain of Jars' expedition in October 1931.

Colani sought to establish the gender of the stone artefacts, an influence stemming

² For a discussion on the etymology of *Hoa Hakananai'a*, see Van Tilburg 1992: 41-42.

from contact with researchers like A.N.J. van der Hoop (1893-1969) and Major Erik Seidenfaden (1881-1958), whose work discussed fertility symbols and phallic emblems in the region's monuments. For Routledge, the question never posed itself: the majority of Rano Raraku statues "are male figures, truncated at the waist" (Van Tilburg 2003: xvi). Her interest in the statues and their analysis rested on the contrast between the *moai* in the crater and those on the deserted rest of the island, and the crater's ability to unlock the island's remarkable prehistory, which included the technique of lithic mulching where rocks are added to areas of cultivation as a vital part of the "subsistence practices on prehistoric Rapa Nui" (Hunt and Lipo 2013: 180).

Logistics and scale of undertaking

Located 3676 km west of Valparaíso, Chile, at 27° 05' S latitude and 109° 20' W longitude, the surface land area of Rapa Nui is 163.6 square kilometers. With Pitcairn Island of *Bounty* fame over 2000 km to the north-west and the Galápagos nearly 3600 km to the north-east, the true remoteness of Rapa Nui (Map 1) cannot be conveyed



Map 1. Easter Island, showing the Rano Raraku quarry and Mataverí, the Routledges' base. On the north of the island, the popular Anakena beach, hosting several *moai* and a cave. (© Encyclopædia Britannica).

by "ordinary maps" (Hunt and Lipo 2011: 4). Together with Fiji, Tonga, Sāmoa and Hawai'i, the island is culturally Polynesian. The Rapanui belongs to the Austronesian language family, with its roots in the Polynesian culture and Southeast Asian homeland.

The Plain of Jars covers Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang provinces (Map 2) in landlocked Laos, a country bordered by China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. Most of the sites

fall in Xieng Khouang at 19° 25' N latitude and 103° 9' E longitude. A few sites in Luang Prabang are set at 102° E. Xieng Khouang is one of Laos' seventeen provinces and shares domestic borders with Hua Phan, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Xaisomboun and Bolikhamxai provinces, and an international border with Vietnam's Nghe An province. Colani and Routledge opted to research in remote areas, and their respective arrangements gave rise to different lines of accountability on their expedition results. From a position of privilege, Routledge was willing to travel to the ends of the earth, at her own expense, but carried letters of introduction to British embassies, consulates and influential people en route. She negotiated with government representatives and was not bound by the same administrative rules or budgetary constraints as Colani: "We were fortunate in obtaining the sanction and support of the Government of Chile, to which country the island belongs, and also that of Messrs. Williamson and Balfour, who have

a pecuniary interest in it” (Routledge 1917: 322). Williamson-Balfour was a company at that time based in Valparaíso and involved in the export of wool and other products to England.

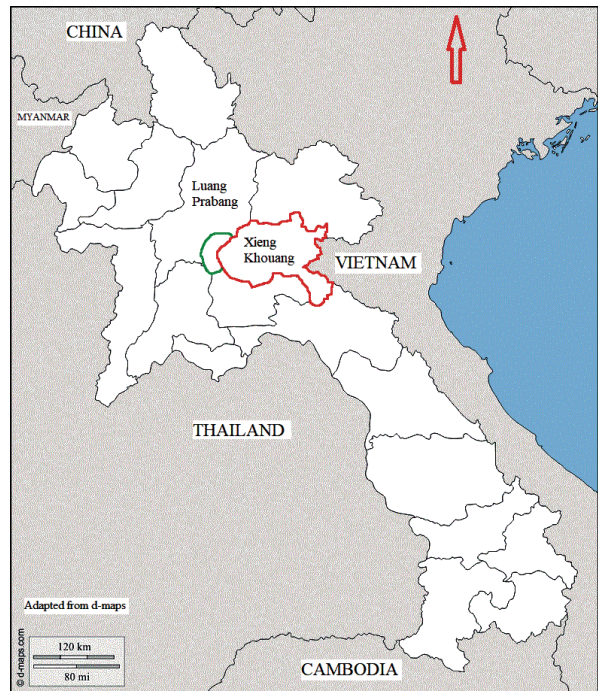
The status of Laos as a French protectorate afforded Colani unhindered research, constrained only by available funds and the poor road infrastructure. She was duty-bound to report to cash-strapped EFEO at a time when the School’s remit extended to the conservation of Indochina’s cultural heritage and the need to manage “the inventory, upkeep and restoration of historical monuments” (Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2007: 36).

As in other pioneering explorations, the scale of the Plain of Jars was more daunting than envisaged, convincing Colani that the jars of Xieng Khouang would be best understood in conjunction with those in Luang Prabang. In January 1932, she petitioned George Cœdès (1886-1969), the EFEO director, for additional funding “to research other groups of monolithic urns” (Colani 1935, v1: 5). A similar pattern emerged with Routledge, with the original estimate of six months turning into sixteen months of fieldwork, on the ground alone at Rapa Nui.

Routledge and Colani noted the gulf that separated the objects of their research from the communities surrounding them. Routledge (1920: 165) bemoaned the natives, for whom the statues were “facts of everyday life”, while Colani (1935, v1: 121, N2) was exasperated by the villagers’ “total indifference” when she witnessed damage inflicted on a stone jar.

There are “well over 950 statues” on Easter Island, of which more than 500 were transported over considerable distances and installed facing inward with their backs to the sea, “watching over their descendants day after day” (Hunt and Lipo 2011: 1-2). On her first mission to Xieng Khouang in May 1931, Colani faced hundreds of uniformly tubular stone vessels at Ban Nao, modern-day Site 1. She did not carry out an accurate inventory for Site 1, which is now known to host 334 jars, including several massive units, but repeated the estimate by Parmentier (1954: 31) of “as many as 250” (Colani 1935, v1: 126).

Routledge interviewed the guides, who had ancestral connections with the island, and people, who had witnessed the large-scale christenings of 1863-1868. She analysed the ten lineages, or clans, known to have evolved on the island from an initial division,



Map 2. Lao PDR, with Xieng Khouang in red and Luang Prabang province’s Phou Khoun district in green. (Adapted from d-maps).

with individual families connected with specific parcels of land. By determining boundary lines, she hoped to restore the broken links between image *ahu* and clans (Van Tilburg 2003: 124), to connect the statues to the present inhabitants. She also enquired about the role of quarries in the carving and storage of the *moai*, to explore their function in the production of the stone giants. By inspecting quarries and workshops, she discovered stone picks and obsidian fragments and developed an understanding of materials and techniques used in the production process. She noted the recumbent, face down or broken statues, reasoning that they had not been oriented or erected after any particular design, but deposited in a spot convenient to the quarry or even “in the quarry itself” (Routledge 1917: 331), an arrangement which mirrors Laos, where the stone jars are deposited seemingly at random in the field.

Routledge suggested a carving sequence for the *moai* at the Rano Raraku crater, in a process that ended with the figure lying on its back like a boat on a “keel” (Routledge 1917: 329), a theory corroborated by Hunt and Lipo (2011: 75, 77), who detail the “keel” as a final ridge of tuff running along the length of the emerging statue. The numerous incomplete statues standing vertically suggest that not all *moai* were carved horizontally, however.

Colani did not actively seek to discover quarries or suggest a possible carving sequence for the jars, which was proposed in a recent doctoral degree (Genovese 2015: 83-91). From excavations at jar sites she collected grave goods to furnish the ethnographic pavilions of museums, fuelled by amateur excavations in the 18th and 19th centuries, when archaeology was “essentially treasure hunting” (Cohen and Sharp Joukowsky 2006: v). The lack of reliable maps, compounded by financial and time constraints, forced Colani to rely on informal reports for the presence of stone artefacts along Highway 7 towards Luang Prabang’s Phou Khoun district: “We did not have the time to conduct any researches. No trace of funerary artifacts has been found in the vicinity, according to the construction workers” (Colani 1935, v1: 263).

In the workplace

Routledge was an amateur anthropologist, an experienced observer and writer, published author and co-author, but “a messy and unscientific excavator” (Van Tilburg 2003: 37). Colani’s long career in teaching—first in France and then in Indochina—had endowed her with the necessary discipline to plan her documentation work to coincide with the rainy season, when fieldwork was impractical and dangerous.

At a time when no regular instruction in excavations was given at any British university, geology and archaeology were deemed interchangeable. Routledge’s knowledge of excavation methods was acquired from notes written on a single sheet of paper by Robert Marett (1866-1943), an anthropologist at Oxford University, who read the proofs of her expedition account (Van Tilburg 2003: 37).

At the GSI, Colani was under the supervision of Henri Mansuy, who also hailed from the north-east of France and had experienced France’s conflict with Prussia in 1870. The deep sense of reverence she developed towards her supervisor proved to be a misplaced sentiment after 1917, when Mansuy accused Jacques Deprat (1880-

1935), the GSI geologist, of scientific fraud (Genovese 2011: 272). Colani's loyalties were divided, but in siding with Mansuy, her legacy was forever tainted when French geologists spared Mansuy but demonised Colani for publishing a critique of Deprat's work on fusulinids (Colani 1924).

Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1992: 84) describe as "token" females in traditionally male jobs like maintenance, or males in female-typed occupations like clerical work. Job ladders in male-dominated organisational structures are typically segregated by gender, where women experience reduced access to information about jobs and are less likely to find female mentors due to a "lack of women in high-ranking positions" (Stamarski and Son Hing 2015: 6), as experienced by Colani at the GSI, where she was the only female geologist until her retirement in 1928. She was virtually unknown among French geologists, to the extent that Suzette Gillet (1893-1988) is credited as "the first woman, in France, to earn a doctorate in geology" (Gall 1988: 24) in 1925, despite the University of Paris granting Colani a doctorate in geology in 1920.

Living and working close to her field of research was a distinctive advantage for Colani, who was able to corroborate her theoretical knowledge with extensive fieldwork at prehistoric sites in Indochina. It also allowed her access to the writings of prehistorians researching cave complexes and megalithic sites in South and Southeast Asia. Chief among them was A.N.J. van der Hoop, whose studies of Indonesian megaliths (Van der Hoop 1932) she quoted in her publications (Colani 1935, v2: 315). She also referred to the work of J.P. Mills (1890-1960) and J.H. Hutton (1885-1968), the British colonial administrators, who jointly (Mills and Hutton 1932) and individually (Hutton 1922) published the results of their research into the megaliths of north-east India, also quoted by Colani (1935, v2: 315-316).

The economic anxiety Colani experienced as a result of her father's bankruptcy in exile manifested itself at the GSI. In 1917, hired as a staff member after volunteering for two years, she successfully negotiated a yearly salary of 12,000 francs and benefits totalling 4,955 piastre, a sum higher than the remuneration paid to the GSI director, Charles Jacob (1878-1962), married with four children.³

If Colani's humble origins betrayed her approach to money, Routledge's wealthy background fails to explain her unpredictable spending, veering from frugal penny-pinching to "careless or outrageous extravagance" (Van Tilburg 2003: 8). O.G.S. Crawford (1886-1957), the geologist hired from Oxford as a purser on the *Mana*, accused the couple of "appalling stinginess" and endured frequent confrontations with William, as well as cross-examinations from Katherine "about the cost of each purchase", to make sure that he had bought items at the cheapest rate (Van Tilburg 2003: 95-96).

Colani's tendency to please those around her was on occasion betrayed by pugnacious behaviour, a trait she employed to full effect in her fight for gender parity at the GSI. Finally retiring from the GSI in 1928, she was not idle for long. In January 1929, Louis Finot (1864-1935), the EFEO director, invited her to join the *École* to widen its remit by including research into Indochina's prehistory. Her experience in cave exploration made her the ideal candidate for the assignment. Institutions like the EFEO, chartered

³ Personal communication dated 13 March 2010 from Michel Durand-Delga.

in 1900, played a vital role in the world of imperial research, and gave rise to a network of colonial institutions, schools, museums, learned societies and missionary orders to spearhead research “on the new colonial world” (Aldrich 2011: 202).

Katherine’s life was complicated by illness when William and some crew members contracted typhoid, and eight deaths were recorded among the islanders during an outbreak of dysentery. A detail not disclosed before their arrival was the existence of a leper settlement housing most of the people knowledgeable about Rapa Nui’s history and culture. Routledge could not allow the last vestige of knowledge in Easter Island to die out without an effort, so after interviewing the elders at the colony, she disinfected her clothes and studied her “fingers and toes” (Routledge 1920: 212), hoping for the best.

The Laotian jars and the Easter Island statues offer isolated settings, which transcend the landlocked nature of the former and the maritime configuration of the latter. Colani and Routledge valued the silence and stillness of their remote locations, with their temperance in the face of challenging and inhospitable conditions rewarded by spiritual awareness. Madeleine spoke in lyrical terms of the beauty and stillness of the Plain of Jars, with its capacity to transport visitors to a “world of dreams, where souls go for walks” (Colani 1935, v1: 93).

Challenges

The islanders resented the Routledges’ “sense of entitlement” (Van Tilburg 2003: 128) and for refusing to pay for the objects they removed, now housed in British institutions like the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the British Museum, London. When Colani left the Plain of Jars with a rich haul of artefacts, Laos was an impoverished protectorate under French rule. All the objects she collected were transported to Hanoi, but their current status and whereabouts are being updated.⁴ The close diplomatic ties between present-day Laos and Vietnam, cemented by a common one-party system, may have prevented discussions on the return of these objects, missing from displays since Colani’s demise in 1943.

The Routledges’ random digging called on the same labourers required for sheep-shearing and ranch work, a competition which was never resolved. In July 1914, during a local uprising, the islanders demanded more meat and better working conditions, prompting William to threaten the rebels with firepower to ensure the safety of Henry Percy Edmunds, resident manager of the commercial firm leasing Easter Island for raising sheep. Colani’s missions were largely free from confrontations, barring the attempted murder of an individual named Mr. Espona she may have witnessed during research in Khammouane province in 1931.⁵

The islanders’ wages were paid in Chilean pesos to Edmunds, who then retained a fee and paid the workers in supplies from the company store. The men started on a daily

⁴ The National Museum of Vietnamese History (formerly the Louis Finot Museum) is in the process of re-evaluating its inventory of artefacts excavated by Colani at the Plain of Jars in 1931-33 and 1940.

⁵ Letter of 17 January 1931 from Victor Clémenté (commissioner for Mahaxay, central Laos), to Madeleine Colani, seeking her written testimony to launch an investigation into the plaintiff’s complaint.

wage of 40 centavos but the women received 10 centavos, a quarter of this amount (Van Tilburg 2003: 145).⁶

Colani endured her fair share of manpower woes, including desertion triggered by bad weather, dengue fever or dwindling food stocks, with porters threatening to flee unless she agreed to “leave the next day” (Colani 1935, v1: 8). Instances of truancy in the field are frequent, as reported by William DeBuys (2015: 152-153), who witnessed rice stocks mysteriously reappearing during an expedition to Laos in 2011, when the porters were threatened with reduced daily rations until completion of the mission, after “eating up the supplies” to go home sooner.

Whereas the Routledges’ return home entailed months at sea, even after the August 1914 opening of the Panama Canal, Colani could return to base in Hanoi in a matter of days after surveying remote corners of Laos, granted the country’s absence of a railway system and an undeveloped road system. The *Mana* was forced to sail for weeks to the Chilean Mainland to effect engine repairs or for provisions, making Rapa Nui almost as remote today “as it was in the time of Roggeveen” (Routledge 1917: 321), a reference to Jacob Roggeveen (1659-1729), who reached Rapa Nui on Easter Sunday in April 1722.

Whereas some of the islanders interviewed by Routledge had witnessed the removal of *Hoa Hakananai’a* from Orongo in 1868 (Van Tilburg 2003: 129), Colani’s research was hampered by the scattered nature of the sites and the centuries that separated her surveys from the age of the jars, with no recollections in living memory.

On the year-long voyage, the Routledges were unaware that the First World War had broken out and were unprepared when German warships anchored near Rapa Nui to restock on coal: “We had not, of course, the slightest idea that war had broken out, still less that our lonely island was the meeting-place, cleverly arranged by Admiral von Spee, for his ships from Japan” (Routledge 1920: 152). Fearing consequences, including the loss of their vessel, William sailed to Chile, returning to Rapa Nui in March 1915 with the *Mana* fully-insured against “war risks” (Routledge 1920: 155) and ready for the return journey to England that summer, as the war continued to rage.

Gender and other hindrances

If the early part of the 20th century may seem like a distant past, some paternalistic attitudes persisted at least until the 1980s, when Sally Rosen Binford (1924-1994), the American archaeologist, needed to embroider her field jacket with “I am not here to cook, I am here to dig” to ward off inappropriate requests.⁷ Paternalistic attitudes were commonplace and petite Colani was the target of remarks offensive by modern conventions, as when the British ethnographer, Ivor Evans (1886-1957), qualified her 1935 monograph as the *magnum opus* of the “apparently delicate, but intrepid and indomitable little lady to whom we owe much for throwing light upon the prehistory of South-East Asia” (Evans 1937: 688). In this era, anthropology was not deemed a subject “for women” (Drower 2006: 117), as claimed in 1913 at a meeting of the British

⁶ The centavo was a coin equivalent to 1/100 of an old Chilean peso. It has since been demonetised.

⁷ Clinger, J. 2005. *Our Elders: Six Bay Area Life Stories*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, quoted in Quinlan 2019: 1.

Association for the Advancement of Science, when Margaret Murray (1863-1963), the British Egyptologist, advocated training in anthropology for women and men destined for colonial outposts.

Other staff members at the GSI—Léon Dussault (1866-1934) or Umberto Margheriti (b. 1882)—were amateurs to varying degrees in knowledge and expertise, lacking Colani's academic titles and field experience. Her place in the organisation, and fitness to practise, were frequently called into question when compared to younger geologists from Metropolitan France.⁸ According to Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1992: 84), women are more likely to experience conflict in the workplace due to “seniority issues” caused by intermittent work history, a problem that reflects Colani's non-linear career path, from school teacher in her twenties and thirties to geologist in her forties and fifties and archaeologist in her sixties and seventies. In a policy modern theorists call “open door” (Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach 1992: 81), Colani pleaded directly with figures of authority to request post-retirement contract work,⁹ bypassing the customary chain of command and boundaries of hierarchical norms. This kind of institutional informality illustrates her confidence, but it coveted criticism from her detractors, who cited her father's association with the French patriot, Léon Gambetta, as the chief reason for colonial ministers agreeing to defer her statutory retirement, despite her supervisors' alleged “unfavourable reports” (Durand-Delga 1990: 172).

Colani was rarely accorded merit for her own achievements and her detractors argued that her knowledge was derived from the expertise of her supervisor, Mansuy. Circa 1990, French geologists' disdain descended into irrationality, when Léonard Ginsburg (1927-2009), Professor of Paleontology at the Natural History Museum in Paris, conducted a pseudo-scientific analysis to link Colani's “curiously slanted”¹⁰ signature to the personality of a tireless workhorse whose joyless life caused disillusionment and anxiety.

Routledge's flawed, but important, work gave the Easter Island people “the gift of her intellect” (Van Tilburg 2009), allowing them to preserve a version of their history for the benefit of future generations. She refined and developed a solid strategy and her interviewing style produced valuable ethnographic results, in part due to her ability to deal with people from all walks of life and economic backgrounds. As preparation for the expedition, she learned Spanish and studied Rapanui on arrival at the island. We know most of her informants' backgrounds, their personal stories, commitment for steady work, confrontations or working relationships with seemingly incongruous characters, as when she befriended Bailey, the drinking and card-playing roughish cook one would not imagine “Routledge getting on with” (Van Tilburg 2003: 102).

As for Colani, there is anonymity in the scores of porters and villagers posing next to a jar to convey its size. Their omission from the documentation and publication practices of the excavation process identifies them as visual accessories in the

⁸ Report of 20 March 1928 from Fernand Blondel (1894-1968), chief of the GSI, to the Governor-general of Indochina.

⁹ Letter of 24 October 1927 from Madeleine Colani to Governor-general Alexandre Varenne (1870-1947).

¹⁰ Personal communication, dated 29 March 2010 from Michel Durand-Delga.

“exclusively physical tasks they were hired to perform” (Mickel 2019). Her first-level documentation raised the prospect of the Plain of Jars covering a sizeable area over two provinces, spurring subsequent scholars to make sense of the jars, as well as the burials and grave goods associated with their tradition. In her 1935 monograph, Colani detailed twenty-six sites as well as other megaliths in north Laos (Genovese 2015: 58, 83), but remained modest about her achievements. Firm in her belief that later archaeologists would discover dozens of undocumented sites, she was vindicated when the number of known sites rose to eighty-five “within the boundary of Xiengkhuang Province” (Lao PDR 2018: 87), excluding Luang Prabang.

In July 2019, Colani was honoured for contributing to our knowledge of the Plain of Jars, when eleven sites were listed as World Heritage Properties, with her work quoted at length in the dossier (Lao PDR 2018: 36-37, 40-41, 44). The Rapa Nui National Park was inscribed in 1995, but the documents available on UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre website appear to omit Katherine Routledge as an early researcher of the *moai*.¹¹

The work of Routledge and Colani has informed modern researchers. Routledge wrote a voluminous and readable account (Routledge 1920), rich in detail about the islanders, from a resident native medium (Angata) to an adventure-seeker (Tepano), who wore a military uniform in Chile and then became an important resource for her data collection. Colani’s two-volume monograph is focused and has a balanced mix of technical data and descriptive material. It was a commissioned work that adhered to the terms stipulated by the EFEO, who financed the missions, a groundbreaking work at a time when research into the Plain of Jars consisted of brief and unschooled accounts by occasional visitors.

Discussion and conclusion

Colani and Routledge were resolute in overcoming challenges and obstacles, which persist for modern female archaeologists, with a gradually changing employment pattern still revealing invisible “barriers to women” (Sørensen 2006: 78). They expressed their gender non-conformity differently, but their disregard for male authority arose from common experiences of females operating as ‘honorary men’ in a male-dominated world, affected by disservice and personal humiliation. Other life experiences, like Routledge’s Oxford graduation, were potentially inspiring for others during an era of outspoken female expectations.

In Indochina’s male-dominated world of geology, Colani fought for gender parity, while in London, Routledge demonstrated as a suffragette in June 1908. However, she failed to perceive the injustice in the overt discrimination towards hired labour in Rapa Nui, with females receiving a fraction of the daily wages paid to male labourers. Did she turn a blind eye because of the savings for the expedition, or perhaps because she understood women’s rights as rights for English (or Western) women, but not *all* women?

Each woman’s mature years fortified their resolve and commitment to their respective field of study. Both suffered as members of the ‘second sex’ and acknowledged

¹¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/715/> (accessed 31 January 2023).

the assistance of their closest companions, Routledge (1920: 4, 155, 161-163, 335) by crediting her husband in numerous ways and Colani (1935, v1: 6-8, 244, 257) by citing Eléonore's contribution.

Colani and Routledge developed deep affection for the countries they researched. Aged 74 Madeleine chose Laos as her final research destination, in March 1940, returning to the Plain of Jars and undertaking the documentation of the country's ethnic jewellery and textiles. Katherine paid the highest price for her deep affection towards Easter Island, however, which is said to have exacerbated her mental state, causing her finally to succumb to mental illness in 1928. The prenuptial agreement afforded Katherine no protection when William confined her to a mental institution, where she met a lonely death in 1935, the same year that Madeleine achieved fame with the publication of her monograph on the Plain of Jars. As the life of one pioneering female archaeologist came to an ignominious end in England, her almost twin in age was being saluted on the international stage for her prehistoric research.

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