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The ‘*enata*’ way of war: An ethnoarchaeological perspective on warfare dynamics in the Marquesas Islands

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Introduction

At the time of Western contact, warfare had become a critical feature of Polynesian chiefdoms, varying in both scale and intensity (Kirch 1984:197). East Polynesian societies have been described by early Western visitors as violent and often caught in a state of ‘endemic warfare’. This has been archaeologically recognised through the emergence of fortified sites, some of which have developed in a unique way similar to the fortified villages or *pare* in Rapa Iti (Anderson and Kennett 2012). The famous Maori *pa* in Aotearoa/New Zealand have also captured the attention of scholars for more than a century (see Best 1975; Daugherty 1979).

The Marquesas group were among the Polynesian chiefdoms that cultivated a ‘warrior spirit’ (Denning 1978:134). Many observers related the blood thirst of the warriors, who proudly exhibited trophy skulls of their enemies, captured human victims for sacrifices at temples and led large, allied wars. But to what extent are these accounts trustworthy? And how do they really reflect the complex role of conflict and violence in the making of Marquesan culture? With the Tahitian chiefdoms, the traditional ‘*enata*’ society may be one of the best documented in central East Polynesia. ‘*Enata*’ is the indigenous word used to refer to the Marquesan people. Classic ethnographies (e.g. Handy 1923; Linton 1925) addressed the salience of conflicts; however, they attached little importance to understanding the societal dynamics both causing and deriving from warfare.

Kirch (1984:198) noted that Polynesian warfare has been extensively discussed through the lens of demographic and ecological pressures. These factors have long occupied a prominent position in historical narratives in New Zealand (Duff 1967; Vayda 1960, 1976) and Rapa Nui (McCoy 1979), and are found in a more nuanced fashion in studies of Hawai‘i (Cordy 1974). Suggs (1961) drew on the correlation between population growth and land limitation to justify an intensification of warfare in the Marquesas Islands during this period of expansion. The ecological argument of environmental constraints was also employed by anthropologist Sahlins (1958). The harsh environmental conditions in the Marquesas guaranteed the emergence of such a perspective. The *fenua ‘enata*’ (traditional territory) consists of 12 inhabited islands, which

lack both coral reefs and lagoons (Figure 6.1). Valleys radiate from central volcanic cones and are circumscribed by steep slopes, while the cliffs plunge directly into the sea on the coastline. This particular environmental setting led Ottino (1996:60) to characterise the sociopolitical organisation as a ‘valley system’ in which the valley would form an exclusive and limited territory occupied, used and transformed by *‘enata*. The rugged character of the Marquesan landscape is intensified by regular climatic crises and droughts, which severely impact vegetation development and crop culture (Allen 2010).

Figure 6.1. Map of the Marquesas Islands.
Source: Guillaume Molle and Vincent Marolleau, adapted from Molle (2011a).

It therefore makes sense to factor in ecological explanations to explain the emergence of warfare within the archipelago; however, as Kirch (1984:195) has argued, neither the cause nor function of warfare in Polynesia can be explained or understood from purely demographic or ecological perspectives. Kirch further insisted that internal sociopolitical dynamics facilitated the pursuit of *mana* and prestige, status achievement, usurpation of power and challenge to the chieftainship. Societal mechanisms as alternative instigators of conflict demand more detailed investigations of the local cultural context. The rich ethnohistorical material concerning the Marquesas also presents insights, which allowed Denning (1980) and Thomas (1990) to substantially enhance our understanding of 'enata society prior to European contact—thus opening new avenues for exploring the nature and form of conflict in the archipelago from a refined systemic perspective (and building on an ambition of historical anthropology as described by Thomas (1996)), which we discuss in the first part of this chapter.

Despite substantial ethnohistorical information, the manner in which ancient warfare materialised in the archaeological record remains overlooked. This can be attributed to the limited evidence of material conflict in the archaeological record of the Marquesas. Reassuringly, researchers have recorded fortified sites and defensive features in the context of general surveys and settlement pattern analyses, which provided a basis for local classifications (Bellwood 1972; Green 1967; Sinoto 1970; Suggs 1961); however, no study has systematically focused on the archaeology of Marquesan warfare nor attempted to date the development of such sites. This clearly creates a gap in our general understanding of 'enata chiefdoms that must be prioritised in future research. The second part of this chapter will synthesise available archaeological information about defensive sites while highlighting some theoretical and methodological considerations.

The ambition of our synthesis is nonetheless hampered by both the absence of clear chronological context for the development of fortified sites and the inherent limitations of ethnohistorical analysis in inferring early historical processes. This means that the proposed reconstruction of warfare dynamics concerns only the last pre-European period (roughly defined from the mid-seventeenth to late eighteenth century CE) when conflict became institutionalised. Forms of warfare and conflict may have existed in earlier 'enata society as the Marquesas Islands may have been discovered as early as 900 CE based on results from the Hane site (Conte and Molle 2014), and the archipelago was surely occupied by 1000–1100 CE (Allen 2004; Rolett 1998). However, archaeological evidence for this is lacking and we can reasonably suppose that the causal mechanisms of early warfare, if they existed, differed from those operating at the time of Western contact.

Society, food and forms of conflict in the Marquesas Islands

The 'enata chiefdoms

Anthropologists have examined the contribution of different societal dynamics to conflict in the Marquesas Islands. In his famous article on status rivalry and cultural evolution in Polynesia, Irving Goldman (1955) came to define the traditional Marquesan society as an archetype of the so-called 'open chiefdoms', placing the 'enata culture in a transitioning phase towards a more stratified society. By setting status rivalry as the main cause for culture change, Goldman emphasised the role of outstanding warriors in counterbalancing the traditional chiefly authority and creating a fluid situation in which power could be achieved through 'military' performance. Marshall Sahlins (1958) also supported the notion of open chiefdom but further stressed the deterministic role of environmental settings in the emergence of Marquesan intertribal conflicts.

Nicholas Thomas (1990, 1996) later criticised Goldman's categorisation, notably for its overreliance on secondary ethnographic material collected by anthropologists E.S.C. Handy and R. Linton from the Bishop Museum (Handy 1923; Linton 1925). The detailed ethnohistorical analyses of Greg Denning (1980) and Thomas (1990) redressed previous inaccuracies and redefined the sociopolitical dynamics operating within the *'enata* chiefdoms, while going beyond the simple notion of status rivalry. Among the critical points raised by Thomas especially is the competitive character of the *'enata* society that manifested at both internal and external levels of the tribal organisation.

By European contact, *'enata* chiefdoms (or *mata'eina'a*) displayed an organisation distinct from neighbouring groups. While Polynesian chiefs traditionally held both secular and sacred authority over the group, Marquesan *haka'iki* (chiefs) seem to have been progressively deprived of these functions, to the benefit of other leaders, who achieved higher rank through performance and strategy. Among these alternate leaders were the powerful *tau'a* who appropriated most of the religious authority. *Tau'a* were shamanistic priests chosen by the deities themselves during intense phases of inspiration. The spirit of the god was believed to reside in the *tau'a*'s own stomach, thus creating a physical connection with the individual, now a very sacred figure. These inspired priests were in charge of many important rituals, including mortuary treatments of high-ranked individuals but also fertility renewal ceremonies through the placing or removing of *tapu* (Handy 1923:106). Allen (2010) has hypothesised that a series of environmental crises, including long periods of drought, may have diminished the confidence of people in the chief's ability to maintain equilibrium and ensure the survival of the group. *'Enata* would have sought the intervention of *tau'a*, who held more prestige and authority thanks to their direct connection with the deities (Allen 2010:95). *Tau'a* were the most feared individuals in the tribe mostly because they decided on human sacrifices and would send a group of warriors to capture their victims. Interestingly, during the nineteenth century, powerful *tau'a* were also in charge of negotiating treaties with Europeans and peace treaties were often agreed upon in their name, another form of agency that they usurped from the chiefs (Molle 2011a).

Among the highest-ranked individuals in the group were the war leaders or *toa*. These were distinguished as professionals serving under a chief, compared to the common fighters, who were only summoned at times of war and otherwise had other daily activities. As the chief rarely participated in battle, the direction of combat fell into the hands of the *toa* in charge of gathering, leading and stimulating the men, as well as organising the defence of the community (Handy 1923:126). Due to their critical function within the group, the *toa* had many privileges, which placed them among the Marquesan elite. Such prestige was acquired by demonstrating prowess in combat for which they could be rewarded with land and servants. In addition to becoming landowners, accessing higher ranks allowed them to marry women of chiefly families, guaranteeing their social position through strategic alliances. Warriors also achieved higher rank by accumulating *mana*. Capturing enemies during war usually served sacrificial purposes, although it aided the *toa* in appropriating their *mana* by preserving their skulls—heads were said to be the seat of the soul essence (Delmas 1927; Gracia 1843). On many European engravings, warriors are depicted with their weapons such as the long and finely carved wooden head clubs (*u'u*), spears and slings, and war accessories (conch shells) and dresses (Figure 6.2). Weapons were not only tools for war but also symbolic artefacts charged with the *mana* of their owners and as such were often displayed in public events (see Mills 2009). The main insignias were the *ta'avaha* headdress, made of black cock's feathers atop a pearl-shell ornamented with tortoiseshell, and the white or red *tapa* cloak (Handy 1923:128). Weapons and accessories were kept in the warriors' house, a part of the chief's properties, where the *toa* shared their meals together and remained secluded in wartime.

Figure 6.2. Mouina, chief warrior of the Tayehs (Tei'i tribe, Nuku Hiva).

Source: Lithography by William Strickland after a drawing of David Porter, in Porter (1822).

As illustrated in this brief review, many tensions traversed the Marquesan organisation, firstly between hereditary chiefs and shamanistic priests, secondly between traditional leaders and achieved-status individuals. Among those, landowners (*akati'a*) seem to have formed a category of their own. By inheriting and/or acquiring parts of lands, *akati'a* capitalised means of production and played a pivotal role in the chieftdom. As a result, the dispersion of traditional chiefly powers that may have started as early as the fifteenth century ended into a 'broadening of the pool of potential secular leaders' (Allen 2010:96). *'Enata* society was consequently characterised by high performativity. Competitive performances, either at an individual or collective level, served the pursuit of prestige and manifested in both feasting cycles and warfare (Kirch 1991:131).

Feast, food and conflict

Feasts (*koina*) had become an essential feature of *'enata* lives by the eighteenth century. They celebrated various occasions such as harvests, betrothal, marriage or rites of passage for members of the chiefly family (Handy 1923:203). The most important was the memorialisation, and often deification, of great chiefs and *tau'a*. These lavish commemorative feasts (called *mau*) required much labour and resources, including human victims for sacrifices, which further demonstrated the power of the honoured individual.

These gatherings occurred at the tribal *tohua*, a large community place comprised of a central court surrounded by houses on stone platforms reserved for each social and gender category. The increasing importance of feasting cycles is reflected in the rapid development of *tohua* in all inhabited valleys of the archipelago (Linton 1925). Festivities could last for several days and involved dances, chants, sports competitions, and oratory and ritual performances. According to Western observers, the display of foodstuffs usually marked the peak of the event. Large quantities of food were brought to the *tohua* to be shared by members of the tribe with visitors from other communities (Crook 2007:83; Radiguet 1882:193; Thomas 1996:73). Generous providers, often landowners, used such occasions to exhibit their economic wealth and power. By offering crops, fruits, fish and sometimes prestigious goods such as pigs, they intended to rival and exceed those presented by the chiefs and, by doing so, to achieve status. Demonstration of this kind relates to a unique form of 'performative agency', which is not uncommon in Polynesian contexts (see Bell 1931). The display of food during feasts at the *tohua* allowed individuals and social groups to show generosity, thereby accumulating *mana* and prestige. Therefore, it relates to a form of nonviolent—and, in a way, invisible—conflict.

However, sometimes violent actions would result. Thomas (1990:78) argued that the two main forms of intertribal warfare, raids and conquests, derived from socio-economic endeavours stemming from the competitive nature of Marquesan feasts. Collective labour required to organise these events aimed to demonstrate the power of the community to visitors. The large-scale presentation of food tacitly obligated the invited groups to return the favour, a subtle but critical feature of the Polynesian exchange systems. They were then expected to host an event of at least equal or superior quality. This escalating intertribal competition, centred on food presentation, was a part of the higher stakes for chieftdoms engaging in a productive economy, of which a large part was eventually allocated to the *koina*. Intertribal competition appears to be a common incentive for raids, that first aimed to destroy resources (mostly breadfruit and coconut trees) of other communities, preventing them from fulfilling their obligation. Additionally, the uncertain nature of the Marquesan climate, with spatially and temporally variable rainfall, certainly influenced the production and social organisation (Allen 2010). From this constrained environmental context, *'enata* may have found another reason to conquer lands and resources.

Forms and consequences of conflict

It appears that conflict would arise from specific motives embedded into sociopolitical and religious strategies. Such a simple explanation could mask the complexity of 'enata warfare. Western accounts convey a sense of 'disorganised' conflict, which almost certainly derives from intersections between personal and collective endeavours. Some individuals did not hesitate to engage in hostile activities for personal motivation, like retaliation or land dispute; on the other hand, large-scale conflict such as conquest, while primarily a community engagement, served personal endeavours of the involved individuals (chiefs, *toa*, priests).

However, the ethnohistorical records from the nineteenth century must be treated with caution as they also reflect new patterns of violence emerging within a society already destabilised by European contact and its dramatic consequences, especially demographic (Molle and Conte 2015). New forms of conflict arose following the installation of colonial administration and missionaries, and the breaking of the traditional *tapu* system and socio-religious order. Consequently, 'the violence Marquesans showed to outsiders (*te aoe*) was different from the violence they showed to themselves (*te enata*)' (Denig 1978:137).

Minor raids were conducted, mostly aimed at capturing unarmed and isolated individuals from an enemy tribe, wandering alone by the shore or in the valley (Crook 2007:84; Stewart 1833:273). These raids were often motivated by the capture of women and children, a quarrel between families or an act of revenge (Robarts 1974:60). However, most of these operations served to capture victims for human sacrifice (*heana*) held on the *me'ae*. In which case, they were called *e ika*, or 'fishing parties', which refers to the symbolic treatment of the victims—they were hanged by their jaw from banyan trees with large wooden or bone fish hooks (Denig 1980:55; Tautain 1896:448). These captures were usually commanded by the *tau'a* in charge of the sacrificial ceremonies and consisted of isolated ambushes conducted by a small group of warriors travelling quickly by land or sea. The practice of *e ika* was institutionalised within 'enata chiefdoms and pertained to the overall *tapu* system that governed the communities (Denig 1978).

Other forms of conflict involved collective actions with larger groups of warriors entering deep into enemy territory, intending to either destroy or seize land and resources, often ending in bloodshed. Because these needed to be well coordinated, these operations were decided upon by the chief and his/her council, including executives *tuhuna*, warriors and *tau'a* (Clavel 1885:49; Handy 1923:56; Radiguet 1882:160; Winter 1882:298). Consequently, these forms of warfare had become institutionalised by the end of the eighteenth century.

As previously mentioned, the destruction of enemy crops and harvests were common motivators for raiding parties, although the number of warriors involved would have been limited as such actions required rapidity. These raids often took place at night, warriors moving through the valley and systematically 'destroying the breadfruit tree by stripping off the bark, and the cocoa nut tree by beating to pieces the heart which grows between the branches' (Crook cited in Thomas 1996:100; see also Robarts 1974:60). The *ma* pits, in which breadfruit paste was stored as a basic resource, were commonly targeted.

The open conflicts—skirmishes and wars of conquest—need be distinguished. The former occurred when no peaceful agreement could be reached. The decision to go to war was made and all were warned of the place and time of the upcoming battle. Various ceremonies accompanied the preparation of the warriors and included many offerings to the gods (Crook 2007:84; Delmas 1927:141; Jouan 1858:319; Handy 1923:131). Groups of warriors led by the *toa* reached the location, which was usually an open space in the uplands between valleys. The initial phase consisted of the mocking and provocation of adversaries through face pulling, shouting or the performance of belligerent dances (Handy 1923:132; Porter 1834: 188). Sometimes, only the *toa*, as the representative of the tribes, engaged in battle and the conflict abruptly ended, depending

on the outcome of the fight. At other times, the remaining warriors rushed in to the fight, armed with their head clubs and spears. Such combat could last for some time, small groups chasing one another through the bushes, retreating then attacking again (Gracia 1843:84). Skirmishes of this kind were not particularly violent—if one or two warriors were killed then parties would retreat and regroup and the fight would continue the following day, until they called a truce.

Wars of conquest on the other hand, while not as frequent, were deadlier. Chiefdoms or alliances of chiefdoms would engage in conquest to seize enemy land and subjugate populations. These large-scale conflicts, in which all of the tribes of an island could be involved, epitomise organised and high-intensity warfare (Clavel 1885:49; Crook 2007:83; Stewart 1833:273). These massive assaults were carried out by both land and sea. Although there is no evidence of maritime warfare *per se*, attacks on the valleys by sea served both to push enemies inland and prevent escape. Descriptions of Marquesan war canoes differ between authors, some stating that they could be operated by 140 warriors (Handy 1923:160). This is likely an overstatement as Vancouver (1801:140) reported only 20 men on such canoes. Success in entering a valley consequently led to the slaughter of the whole population in addition to the systematic destruction of buildings and resources. Such massacres were considered a source of great prestige for the victors (Jouan 1858:126).

The degree of violence in Marquesan conflict is difficult to reconcile in light of contradictory Western accounts. Many depict an extremely violent *'enata* society (a character one could attribute to a colonialist attempt to denigrate islanders). Resident Lawson reported that the Naiki slaughtered 50 people from the Maku-oho tribe at a feast on Ua Huka in 1830 CE (Lawson 1867). Victims of *e ika* were also numerous and Dening (1980:248) proposed an estimate of 260 individuals known to have been sacrificed for the period between 1798 and 1842 CE. One must differentiate between the ferocious nature of such actions and their demographic impact. The modes of combat described above do not support the idea of conflicts as deadly as some authors have suggested. Instead, large-scale massacres took place only in the exceptional context of the 'extirpation' of some groups from their land (Crook 2007). Rather than a direct impact on mortality, warfare undeniably contributed to the geographic mobility of social groups within the archipelago, a proposition well supported in the literature (Fanning 1833; Jouan 1858; Porter 1822; Robarts 1974). Wars of conquest could lead to either the appropriation of the defeated group or their banishment. Regarding the relative fluidity of the *'enata* organisation and the permeability of social relationships, allegiances to chiefs seem to have been readily denied, which surely favoured group mobility. Robarts (1974) mentioned people frequently changing residencies, either abandoning their valleys for another, or adopting new leadership. Following war, people were often forced to flee and seek asylum with their relatives or allies (Gracia 1843:85; Kellum-Ottino 1971:32,147; Vincendon-Dumoulin 1843:238). The changing sociopolitical map of the Marquesas in the nineteenth century reveals such patterns of inter-valley and inter-island migrations (Pechberty 1995a, 1995b).

Related ethnohistorical accounts also seem to overstate the role of introduced guns in indigenous conflict during the nineteenth century. In 1813 CE, Captain David Porter of the US Navy arrived in Nuku Hiva, took possession of the whole group (an annexing gesture that was not recognised by his government) and constructed a fortified base in the bay of Taiohae. Having concluded an alliance with the local chief Keatonui, Porter found himself involved in a series of conflicts opposing the tribe of Taioahe with their Hapa'a and Taipi enemies. Following the American commodore's military success and the demonstration of the efficiency of his weapons, *'enata* started to no longer see rifles as simple commodities but rather as an exchanged artefact with high-ranked value, therefore giving rise to a new 'musket economy' (Thomas 1991:100). Over the next two decades, Marquesan chiefs acquired many guns that were redistributed among warriors and allied tribes and by 1840 CE, 'there were several thousand [muskets] on Nukuhiva alone and every warrior on Tahuata had two or three' (Dening 1980:244). The hand-to-hand

fightings progressively disappeared after the introduction of rifles, most efficient when used at a distance through gunports at the fortified sites. Yet, introduction of muskets did not necessarily contribute to an increase in mortality. For Radiguet (1882:135), traditional weapons like clubs, spears or slingshots caused more damage and lethal or incurable injuries than rifles, for which accuracy was often inconsistent among Marquesan warriors.

War-induced mortality is nuanced and should be examined from an integrated perspective. Early nineteenth-century accounts show a continuation, and sometimes intensification, of warfare throughout the archipelago while also focusing on the dramatic famines caused by droughts (see Allen 2010). The constant destruction of food resources during conflict accentuated precarious situations resulting from climatic uncertainties. Through a detailed examination of the Ua Huka case study, Molle and Conte (2015) have suggested that it was the systemic connection between these factors (warfare, drought and famines) rather than the violence of conflict itself that impacted local demographics. These dynamics were certainly well engaged at least from the seventeenth century, but were surely aggravated by the later introduction of European diseases, alcohol and opium (see Rallu 1990; Saura 2002: 61).

Tracking warfare in the archaeological landscape

Some considerations on the archaeological signals for warfare in the Marquesas

From an archaeological perspective, identifying 'enata forms of conflict is quite problematic as the common warfare proxies prove limited in the archipelago, particularly in relation to human remains. Analysis of skeletal trauma (see Scott and Buckley 2014), modes of inhumation and demographic representation in burials (Pietrusewsky 1986; see also Sand et al. 2006 for a case study on Wallis/'Uvea) could theoretically inform us on ancient warfare. However, the complexity of 'enata mortuary treatments, coupled with current issues of representation leave us very few clues to definitively identify the burials of warriors or war victims (Maureille and Sellier 1996; Molle 2011a; Vigneron 1985). Marquesan trophy skulls are the only 'artefacts' that attest to the special treatment of human remains connected to processes of war (Figure 6.3). Handy (1923:136) claimed that some raids focused on collecting skulls; however, dedicated headhunting is not clearly evidenced in the ethnohistorical literature and it may have occurred in the context of large-scale wars. That being said, trophy skulls provide us with little information about the form of conflict itself, but mostly represent an output embedded in socio-religious activities (see Boes and Sears 1996; Valentin and Rolland 2011).

Figure 6.3. Marquesan trophy skull.

Source: Suggs (1961:169).

Archaeologists often rely on the monumental remains of warfare, even if these remains only relate to 'organised forms of conflict' to the exclusion of the other types of hostile interactions described above. Small-scale raiding parties and skirmishes left no particular material evidence. Conversely, the archaeological signature for warfare becomes more visible when it occurred at a larger scale and on a collective level. Both the multiplication and repetition of violent attacks may force a community to engage in the construction of war-oriented structures, for which collective labour is justified. This is connected to another bias in the archaeological record: those sites had defensive functions, either to stop or slow the enemies down and to provide refuge for the non-combatants of the group. Consequently, they exclusively inform the single perspective of the group that endured violence. On the other hand, identifying the agency of the aggressors is challenging as no traceable residues remain—the destruction of natural resources or even storage structures are impossible to detect in the Marquesan record. Yet, wars of conquest often resulted in the destruction of symbols of identity, such as temples. *Me'ae* sites, as critical places of interaction with gods and ancestors, were often targeted, the stone images placed down, platforms plundered and human remains stolen or destroyed (Stewart 1833:215). In 1897 CE, German ethnographer Karl von Den Steinen (1925–1928) recorded oral traditions connected to the *me'ae* Lipona in Puamau valley of Hiva Oa. Probably during the eighteenth century, a conflict erupted between three local chiefs from the Naiki tribe of Puamau and their neighbours from the west coast of the island. The Naiki were defeated and forced to flee the valley. It is said that the new occupants transformed the Lipona chiefly residence into a *me'ae* with platforms named after the victors. The site of Lipona is notably famous for its large red-tuff human figures or *tiki*, standing on the stone platforms. One example supposedly represents Takaii, a prestigious ancestor of the clan who took possession of the land after this war. Excavations suggest that the only broken figure found at the site, the one of Maiauto, one of the three Naiki chiefs who started the conflict, was intentionally left at the feet of Takaii as a reminder of his defeat (Ottino 1996:364). Such symbolic actions, especially when they occurred at sacred *me'ae* sites, would certainly reveal the behaviour of the victors, although difficult to recognise based on the archaeology alone. The supposed existence of pits serving as prisons for captives could also reflect the agency of attackers. Some pits have been identified as such, due to their large dimensions and greater width at the base, dissimilar to traditional *ma* storage pits (Butaud and Jacq 2010; Chavaillon and Olivier 2007:76, 165; Conte et al. 2001:89; Maric and Noury 2002:48) but we lack ethnohistorical information on this matter.

As a result, current limitations in the material record, partly deriving from the local forms of conflict, incite us to rather speak of an 'archaeology of defensive warfare' in the case of the Marquesas Islands.

Archaeology of defensive warfare

Probably from the sixteenth century CE onwards, increasing intertribal warfare and violence triggered the construction of 'defensive structures', a general term encompassing various types of sites. We hereafter define a defensive system as a combination of features scattered across the territory (usually the valley) that fulfilled three main functions: (1) observing and signalling the approach of enemies; (2) stopping or slowing down the progress of enemies; and (3) protecting resources and non-combatant members of the community. Although some defensive features may have been set up to protect individual properties, the implementation of such large-scale systems was a collective effort initiated by the ruling elite and involved community labour. As warfare became a highly dynamic process, defensive systems were likely subject to constant changes including rearrangements, reconstructions and relocations. Locations of these structures derive from their functions and thus tend to take advantage of environmental conditions and features.

They further demonstrate adaptive responses to the emergence of specific spatial patterns in the attacks, either by sea or by land. As such, they evidence the strategic use of territory and show critical developments in local settlement patterns, which archaeologists attempt to reconstruct.

Building on archaeological surveys throughout the archipelago, Table 6.1 summarises 'defensive structures' securely identified as such by various authors. In our current state of knowledge, 37 sites fall into this category. Larger numbers of sites on Ua Huka and Hiva Oa likely derive from more extensive surveys on these two islands. We then must acknowledge a potential bias towards Fatu Hiva and Tahuata, where systematic inventories are yet to be undertaken. As recordings are heterogeneous, we only retained the general types of site proposed by archaeologists. However, as discussed below, some sites may have had multiple functions, thus blurring the categories previously defined by Suggs (1961), Green (1967), Sinoto (1970) and Bellwood (1972).

Table 6.1. List of Marquesan defensive sites identified as such in the archaeological literature.

Island	Valley, ID of the site	Type	Archaeological features	References
Ua Huka	Hanaei, HNE-42 and -43	observation post	walled terraces	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Hanahouua, HNA-22	observation post	stone platform	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Vainaonao, VAN-34	observation post	stone platform	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Vainaonao, VAN-51	fortified site	stone walls and terraces	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Hane, HIT-2 and -3	observation post	walled terraces; <i>ua ma</i>	Molle 2011b; Maric and Noury 2002
Ua Huka	Hane, Penau ridge	transformed ridge	trenches; stone platforms	Sinoto 1970
Ua Huka	Hinitaihava, HTV-31 and -32	observation post	walled terraces	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Hiniaehi, Mouka Tapu	observation post	stone walls and platforms	Molle 2011b
Ua Huka	Vaikivi, VKV-8	breastwork	stone wall	Conte et al. 2001
Ua Huka	Teanaonamaui	fortified site	trenches; stone walls and platforms; <i>ua ma</i>	Butaud and Jacq 2010; Molle 2011a
Ua Huka	Mahaki	refuge/fortified site	trench; stone walls; <i>ua ma</i>	Molle 2011b; Molle and Marolleau, In press
Nuku Hiva	Taiohae, NTa1	observation post	trench; terrace	Suggs 1961
Nuku Hiva	Taiohae, NTa10	fortified site	trenches; stone platforms	Suggs 1961
Nuku Hiva	Taiohae, NTa11	fortified site	trenches; stone walls and platforms	Suggs 1961
Nuku Hiva	Hatiheu, Teaka'ua	fortified site	stone walls	Suggs 1961
Ua Pou	Hakahetau, site 73 (Vaiponiui)	'fort'	stone platform	Linton 1925
Ua Pou	Hakahetau, site 74 (Totamahiti)	'fort'	stone platform	Linton 1925
Ua Pou	Hakahetau, site 75 (Hapava)	'fort'/observation post/refuge site	stone walls and platforms	Linton 1925
Ua Pou	Hakahau, site 88 (Hautemumu)	'fort'	stone platform	Linton 1925
Ua Pou	Hakahau, site 89 (Kuatau)	'fort'	stone platform	Linton 1925
Ua Pou	Hakao'oka, Teniuaefiti	observation post/refuge site	stone platforms	Ottino and De Bergh 1990

Island	Valley, ID of the site	Type	Archaeological features	References
Hiva Oa	Atuona, B09-02-03	observation post	stone platform	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Atuona, B09-05	transformed ridge	trenches; stone platforms	Linton 1925; Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Atuona, B09-30	transformed ridge	trenches; stone platforms; <i>ua ma</i>	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Tehutu, B08-05-03	observation post	stone platforms	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Taaoa, B05-02-19	observation post	walled terraces	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Taaoa, B05-03-01	fortified site	stone platforms	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Eiaone, B31-01	transformed ridge/refuge site	trenches; stone walls and platforms	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007; Millerstrom 1985
Hiva Oa	Hanaiaapa	fortified site	stone walls, incl. loopholes	Sinoto 1970; Peltier 1973
Hiva Oa	Hanaiaapa, Tauiiti	fortified site	stone walls, incl. loopholes	Sinoto 1970; Peltier 1973
Hiva Oa	Hanaiaapa, B39-06-01	fortified site	stone walls	Sinoto 1970; Peltier 1973; Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Hanatekua, Pa 1	fortified site	stone walls, incl. loopholes	Bellwood 1972
Hiva Oa	Hanatekua, Pa 2	fortified site	stone walls and platforms	Bellwood 1972
Hiva Oa	Tahauku, B10-01-03	fortified site	stone walls	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007; Linton 1925
Hiva Oa	Hanamenu, B55-01	fortified site	stone platforms	Chavaillon and Olivier 2007
Hiva Oa	Hanamenu, site 162	'fort'	stone walls and platforms	Linton 1925
Hiva Oa	Hanapeteo, site 154	fortified site	stone walls, incl. loopholes; stone platforms	Linton 1925

Source: Authors' summary of data from citations throughout table.

Note: 'Fort' was the generic term used by Linton (1925) and he rarely distinguished between a fortified site, observation post and a refuge. As some of these sites have not been described since then, we chose to use his term until further studies can better detail structure function. *Ua ma* were storage pits for the fermented paste of the breadfruit. With the exception of sites reported by Linton (1925) and Suggs (1961), the site IDs used in this table come from the official recordings by the Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine in Tahiti, in charge of the archaeological inventory of French Polynesia.

Observation posts

Observing the movement of enemies was crucial during wartime. As risk of violent raids or conquest increased, it became essential to spot any hostile movement by land or sea in order to alert the community and give them time to respond. Watchers usually beat drums or blew conch shell trumpets to warn people down in the valley. Identifying observations posts in the archaeological landscape is not easy and we often rely on the geographic location of sites to hypothesise a lookout function. Some simple low stone platforms or pavements have been recorded on high ridges between valleys or at elevated locations overlooking a valley. In Hanaei valley, Ua Huka, an isolated site on the northern crest comprised of a few stone borders and a flat area, can be found. The location offers a panorama not only of the valley itself from the

coast to the inner caldera, but also of neighbouring valleys to the south. For these reasons it has been tentatively identified as an observation post (Molle 2011b:219). Local informants on Ua Huka also reported a series of small square platforms standing at regular intervals along the highest ridge surrounding Vaipae, from where warriors would have maintained access to the valley under surveillance (Molle 2011b:104). A group of terraces and platforms standing on the narrow ridge overlooking the southern valleys of Ua Huka probably served the same function (Figure 6.4). We lack detailed descriptions of such structures in early historical accounts but it is likely that some lookouts were simply built with perishable materials, thus leaving no discernible remains. Furthermore, many strategic environmental features also served as natural observation posts and did not require any additional construction. An oral tradition on Ua Huka recalls that the promontory of Hatuana, at the south-east end of the island, served for controlling and preventing attacks from the Taipi coming on their canoes from Nuku Hiva (Kellum-Ottino 1971; Molle and Conte 2011).

Figure 6.4. Map of observation posts on the Penau ridge, Ua Huka.

Source: Guillaume Molle and Vincent Marolleau, adapted from Molle (2011b).

Stone walls and stockades

Numerous remnant stone walls are visible in Marquesan valleys, with the majority associated with horticultural practices and delineated gardens. In some cases though, stone walls were erected to prevent access to particular areas in the villages while attempting to stop or slow down attackers. Stewart came upon an extended breastwork of this kind in Ho'oumi (Stewart 1833:313).

Whether such stone walls were replaced by wooden fences or not remains uncertain, but stockades were witnessed by Europeans in the early nineteenth century, attesting the advanced fortification techniques. Porter (1822:20) described defensive stockades in Nuku Hiva:

The manner of fortifying these places is to plant closely on end the bodies of large trees, of forty feet in length, securing them together with pieces of timber, strongly lashed across, presenting on the brow of a hill difficult of access, a breastwork of considerable extent, which would require European artillery to destroy. At the back of this a scaffolding is raised, on which is placed a platform for the warriors, who ascend by the means of ladders, and thence shower down on their assailants spears and stones.

Despite the exaggeration of the height of the poles, this type of structure seems to have been used throughout the archipelago. Linton (1925:20) suggested they became obsolete following the introduction of firearms.

Trenches

Wooden stockades were sometimes used in association with trenches or ditches, a defensive feature commonly described in the archaeological literature. They are often referred to as ‘cut ridges’ (Linton 1925:21; Suggs 1961:163). On Ua Huka, Sinoto described and mapped a series of three trenches dug across the ridge at the back of Hane valley, once providing favourable access to the high plateau of Mahaki (Sinoto 1970:122). The ditches are 12–15 m deep and about 8 m wide. Between the ditches are long and narrow areas up to 130 m long, one of which includes terraces, which were likely the foundations for houses, as well as two purported breadfruit-storage pits (Figure 6.5). The succession of trenches cut onto this narrow ridge created a series of obstacles for enemies while defenders could easily hold their position to the rear. Similar ditch systems have been reported on Hiva Oa (Chavaillon and Olivier 2007), particularly in Hanaiaapa valley, where some are stone-faced (Sinoto 1970:123).

Figure 6.5. Map of the cut-ridge of Penau, Hane valley, Ua Huka.

Source: Guillaume Molle and Vincent Marolleau, adapted from Sinoto (1970).

Fortified complexes and places of refuge

Previous authors have classified 'enata fortifications into two main categories—the cut-ridge forts and the stone-walled forts (Bellwood 1972; Sinoto 1970; Suggs 1961; see also Green 1967). The latter category includes both pre-European stone enclosures and historical loopholed ones that developed after the introduction of muskets in the early nineteenth century (Linton 1925). This classification of fortified sites was originally based on a very limited number of sites and mostly on surface recording, therefore limiting the understanding of the chronology of these sites. The classification is also problematic as the two types of forts are characterised by supposedly diagnostic features (ditches and stone walls), which can be present across both categories. The plan of the terraced hill fort on the East Ridge of Hanaiaapa, Hiva Oa (Sinoto 1970:125) shows a stone-walled enclosure constructed on a levelled area on top of the hill, and immediately south of it, with a deep ditch protecting access to the site. Sinoto suggested that palisades were erected on top of the walls and identified some pits within the enclosure as breadfruit paste storage. At other sites in Hiva Oa, large enclosures also contain stone platforms and paved areas, usually interpreted as foundations for houses, as seen in the neighbouring valley of Hanatekua (Bellwood 1972:33). Such sites should then be described as 'combined settlement units' that aggregate various features—ditches, stone walls with or without palisades, terraces, platforms, pits—within a pattern uniquely adapted to the topography (Bellwood 1979:313). Much of the variability in the layout of fortifications stems from environmental constraints and the need to control higher ground. Forts often took advantage of high hills, uplands, promontories and ridges (Suggs 1961:27). Mobility strategies of the groups were likewise taken into account. On Hiva Oa, Linton described a well-preserved fort built against a high cliff at the western end of Hanamenu beach. This strategic location was likely chosen for resisting attacks from the enemy tribe occupying the upper valley while providing the opportunity to escape by sea if necessary (Linton 1925:21). With regards to the topographic factor, the default position of many authors—that any occupation evidence on high locations attests to a refuge or defensive site—introduces a detrimental bias. 'Enata visited and occupied so-called 'marginal' areas (or 'hinterlands', following Kahn 2020) for economic, mortuary and ceremonial purposes. For instance, evidence of ritual *me'ae* structures built on high and isolated ridges are reported on all the islands (see Molle 2011a:245). Of course, this does not prevent some high locations traditionally used for non-defensive purposes being turned into refuges when necessary. It thus matters to carefully interpret the archaeological record in these marginal areas within an experienced landscape changing through time, as demonstrated in the case of Mahaki on Ua Huka (Molle and Marolleau, In press).

Such complex sites must also be integrated into larger geographic scales in order to comprehend local defensive systems set up by each community. The example of Hanaiaapa illustrates an extensive system, including many sites and clusters on almost all ridges located on the eastern border of the valley, with trenches protecting most access to the main ridge leading to the fort (Sinoto 1970:123; see Figure 6.6). Although these sites may have been built progressively, they eventually contributed to the emergence of large-scale complex defensive systems, which reflects increasing warfare during the century preceding European contact and beyond.

Aside from the formal classification of fortified sites, the question of their function remains. The identification of sites as either defensive or refuge is problematic. Defensive places are defined as fortified areas that could be located both in the valleys in the vicinity of village centres and in marginal remote locations in the mountains. On the other hand, refuges are not always fortified but they are set up in isolated areas, on the valley ridges or in the upper valley in the centre of the island. Remoteness and difficulty of access prove the main criteria to identify a site as a refuge. However, a closer inspection of the archaeological record and European accounts reveal that both functions were closely connected—stone-walled enclosures, even when located in the valley, provided a secure place for members of the group even if standing primarily as

a line of defence. Similarly, areas strictly defined as refuges could display defensive features along access pathways. Distinction between defence and refuge thus does not appear relevant. Instead, we argue hereafter that both the number of individuals and the duration of residency defined the nature of occupation at those sites and influenced their layout.

Figure 6.6. Map of Hanaipa defensive system, Hiva Oa.

Source: Guillaume Molle and Vincent Marolleau, adapted from Sinoto (1970).

Enata sometimes chose to retreat into natural locations in the valleys. The Marquesan word *mouka* refers to a mountain or high peak and also to a natural feature providing protection—Dordillon (1931:272) even translated it as ‘refuge place’. On Ua Huka, a traditional story recounts an attack led by the Hokatu warriors on the Hinitaihava tribe, whose chief was Vaiti‘ia. He was the single remaining combatant in the village at the time—the rest of the men had gone fishing. In order to defend and protect the women of his group, they took refuge on top of the neighbouring peak. Despite his effort, Vaiti‘ia was eventually killed and the women, refusing to be captured alive by the assailants, threw themselves off the cliff. The name given to this peak, *mouka tapu*, commemorates this episode. Archaeological surveys of the steep slopes surrounding the peak, as well as the narrow ridge serving as the unique access to the mountain, revealed the existence of a few stone walls and platforms (Molle 2011a:217).

Von den Steinen visited a narrow gorge called Anaotako located at an altitude of approximately 600 m in Taiohae uplands (1925–1928:Volume II, 34; see also Rollin 1974:235). He was told that people from Hakau took refuge in this gorge following attacks by sea. In 1847 CE, George Winter, the translator for the Governor Brunet, was sent to negotiate a truce with dissident chief Motane-hitu. The latter was wounded during a fight and found refuge in Anaotako with 200 warriors (a number that could have been exaggerated). Winter (1882) reported that the entrance

tunnel was barricaded with the large trunks of breadfruit trees and boulders. Aside from some *ma* pits, these locations display no remains of any huts or shelters, and likely served as short-term refuge. Nevertheless, Gracia (1843) recalled that women and children of Taiohae once hid for 15 months in the mountain caves.

In contrast, other locations have been heavily transformed and converted into temporary residences for longer periods of time. Such places not only display defensive features but also domestic structures, storage units, wells and sometimes religious edifices, providing relative autonomy to the group for a few days or maybe weeks in the case of a longer siege. The site of Teniuaefiti is located in a marginal area of the Hakao'hoka valley on Ua Pou (Ottino and De Bergh 1990:53). It stands on top of a rocky spur, at an altitude of 530 m, and the faces are difficult to climb, with access only through a narrow, easily defensible ridge. Six platforms covered an area of 80 m x 50 m. A stack of sling stones was found on one platform. Other small structures were found in the vicinity, with some containing human remains, suggesting a funerary function. Finally, simple pavements functioned as posts to observe the strategic location of the spur, which overhangs the whole valley and neighbouring bays. Ottino interpreted Teniuaefiti as a refuge for a part of the population or a particular social group, while also being a sacred repository of human remains.

Another complex site has recently been investigated by the authors on Ua Huka (Marolleau 2016; Molle and Marolleau, In press). Mahaki is a high plateau developing at an altitude of 800 m, which offers a complete view of all surrounding valleys. The whole area covers 8 ha² (Butaud and Jacq 2010:105). Oral traditions relate that Mahaki was the main refuge place for the Maku-oho tribe of the Hokatu valley, whose population used to retreat during frequent attacks from the Naiki of Vaipae (Kellum-Ottino 1971). Extensive surveys of the plateau revealed the existence of numerous structures fulfilling various functions. The most impressive feature is the large western trench protecting the only access to the plateau from Vaipae and Vaikivi. The ridge has been heavily dug into a 15 m vertical cliff, which one can only ascend with ropes (Figure 6.7). At the top of the cliff is a levelled area that may have received a stockade from where warriors could repel assailants. Above, a large stone platform overlooks the trench and the main access. This construction includes some coral slabs and branches at the foundation, as well as petroglyphs and *tiki* figures carved on boulders, attesting to a ritual function. Suggs (1961:27) also reported a *tiki* face petroglyph cut in the wall of a trench at the Mouake site in Taioahe. Further east, in the centre of the plateau, we recorded another small ritual structure, three domestic stone platforms, some paved areas potentially serving for culinary preparations and 50 storage pits for fermented breadfruit paste. Some stone walls are also erected on the main pathways to defend access to the site, as attested by stacks of sling stones. The Mahaki site illustrates a combined settlement unit adapted to longer residency of the Maku-oho during times of war. The site is a combination of highly developed defensive features with more permanent domestic and economic structures that would have afforded a degree of autonomy for the group. The exact purpose of the storage pits remains unclear for they may have provided food to groups of refugees, although the uncommon density of *ma* pits also points to their function as emergency reserves, efficiently protected, in case the main resources located in the valley were destroyed during conflict. A similar situation is documented on a high ridge in the bottom of Atuona valley (Hiva Oa). A series of 15 pits associated with platforms and terraces were interpreted as storage pits (Chavaillon and Olivier 2007:67). This would imply the permanent residency of a few individuals in charge of site maintenance and indicate a long-term management strategy to ensure the survival of the chiefdom. Additionally, the discovery of ritual structures within the fortified area further informs us on the intersection of sociopolitical and religious dynamics in traditional 'enata warfare. Construction of the ceremonial stone platform overlooking the western trench is especially relevant. It symbolically marks the role of ancestors and deities in protecting the community and the remains of vital territory during times of great fragility.

Figure 6.7. Photo of the western Makahi trench, Ua Huka island.

Source: Guillaume Molle and Vincent Marolleau.

Why does an archaeology of Polynesian warfare matter?

‘Enata were always violent. Death marked their Land in a very particular way. Their institutions, of course, were intertwined. E ika, tapu, haka‘iki, pekio, koina, could not have been changed in part without changing the whole, and violent death was a theme of them all. Violent death sustained their tribal divisions; violent death sustained the social divisions between kikino and tapu; violent death of the heana sustained the lines of descent and the position of the haka‘iki; violent death sustained the male as toa. Violent death had its functions in the creation of order, status and identity. (Dening 1980:247)

Dening’s (1980) and Thomas’s (1990) reassessments of Marquesan ethnographic material have demonstrated the importance of the interweaving of sociopolitical, economic and religious endeavours to the development of intra- and intertribal competition. Resulting warfare became a preeminent feature of ‘*enata* chiefdoms and varied in both scale and intensity, from raids to wars of conquest. Conflict undoubtedly contributed to shaping the histories of local communities and shed light on some unique characteristics of ‘*enata* society by the time of Western contact.

Current narratives, which are based on abundant ethnohistorical literature, incorporate conflict as a key factor in the development of chiefdoms, but material evidence to support any hypotheses remains weak. For this reason, an in-depth investigation of warfare is a necessary trajectory for archaeological research in the archipelago.

From a material perspective, warfare did not radically transform the traditional 'enata lifeway. As the fortified sites were temporarily occupied, they differed from the *pare* on Rapa and the Maori *pa* in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In these latter cases, warfare drove an almost complete restructure of community activities within the fortified villages, which consequently became the main focus of settlement patterns. In the Marquesas, the development of war-related structures described in this chapter demonstrates a dynamic and extensive use of territory, particularly in marginal areas. Mountains, peaks, high ridges, remote and difficult-to-access natural features have often been characterised through their *tapu* mortuary functions. But they were also used and sometimes impressively transformed and integrated into complex defensive systems. Not only does this reveal 'enata knowledge of their environment and its strategic potential, but also contributes to redefining the notion of *fenua*, or 'traditional territory', beyond the physical boundaries of the valley itself. Including this warfare perspective would greatly enrich our comprehension of ancient settlement and mobility patterns.

Increasing identification of defensive structures in the archaeological landscape will also allow us to revisit previous categories. We here argued that defensive systems should be considered as complex combinations of various features (trenches, walls, platforms and terraces) rather than closed types. Additionally, anchoring the development of the war-related structures in time becomes critical, owing to the current lack of temporality. Efforts need to be focused on the acquisition of radiocarbon dates from these sites, which would further assist in testing our model, which links social competition, feasting cycles, food displays and warfare.

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