

**OBERSEMINAR - VORTRAGSREIHE DES INSTITUTS FÜR ETHNOLOGIE  
WINTERSEMESTER 2023/24****LEITUNG: PROF. DR. MARTIN SÖKEFELD**

Institut für Ethnologie  
Montag, 18-20 Uhr  
Raum L-155  
Oettingenstraße 67, 80538 München

5. 2. 2024                      Dr. Diego Muñoz (LMU München)

Paradoxes in the cession of Indigenous Sovereignities.  
Comparative notes from the Rapanui and Māori cases

*Abstract*

Examining the bilingual treaties that provoked the annexation of Easter Island by Chile in 1888 and the annexation of New Zealand by the British Empire in 1840 through the Treaty of Waitangi, my focus will be on the cultural misunderstandings and paradoxes inherent in the purported 'cessions of sovereignty'. This inquiry involves understanding the concepts used to delineate (Indigenous) sovereignty and deciphering how Rapanui and Māori chiefs might have understood these concepts.

In both cases, the core of the misunderstandings lies in issues of chief authority, land ownership, and the integration of territories into larger political entities, leading to a series of paradoxes. Although the concept of 'sovereignty' is a European construct, it was recognized as an existing faculty in certain Indigenous societies in Oceania, such as the Rapanui and Māori. As a result, when the British Empire and the Chilean state expanded across Oceania, they did so not only by manu militari, and by commerce but also by concluding treaties with Indigenous chiefs.

This reality introduces a firth paradox: the Western recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, but as a condition for ceding it. At the same time, both treaties recognized the authority of the chiefs. This sets the stage for a second paradox: if the chiefs retain their authority, what have they really given up? Through linguistic analysis and consideration of memorial elements within the history of treaty-making, I will present interpretive and comparative insights into the perspective of Indigenous chiefs and explore the contemporary political implications of these treaties.

Der Vortrag ist öffentlich – Interessierte sind herzlich willkommen!