

the local traditions and patrimony of the people, he opened a museum in Rabaul, the capital of the German Protectorate. Unfortunately the treasures in this museum were largely destroyed in 1943 during an American bombing raid. As a resident expert, he also accompanied several important expeditions into the interior of New Guinea, for example, the expeditions of Albert B. Lewis (1909–1910), Richard Thurnwald (1913–1915), Richard Neuhaus (1908–1910), Ebner W. Brandes (1929), and Cornelius Crane (1928–1929). In 1926, he himself, on an expedition up the Ramu River, discovered a hitherto unknown group of pygmies about 10 kilometers west of Atemble in the Schrader Mountain. He described these people with photographs in the *Anthropos* journal (Kirschbaum 1927). He died on August 6, 1939, at the age of 57 in a plane crash shortly after takeoff from Alexishafen.

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## The rongorongo Schools on Easter Island

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### Introduction

The great civilisation of Easter Island, a remote plot of land in the Pacific Ocean, is well known not only because of giant statues, but also because of “talking boards” *kohau rongorongo*. This work is devoted to the study of such an important institution of the archaic society as the school. Only this form of the keeping and transmission of secrets of the script allowed preserving the knowledge of the written language up to the beginning of the 20th century.

I use the nomenclature of the Rapanui classical inscriptions and the tracings of the *rongorongo* glyphs offered by Barthel (1958). Besides, the study

is based on my own classification and translation scheme in deciphering the *rongorongo* signs.<sup>1</sup> Further, I always take into account the vocabularies and rules of alternating sounds of the Polynesian languages (cf. Tregear 1891: xiv–xxiv). The glottal stop is ignored in the transliterations of Rapanui words. First, there is not a special sign for this sound in the Easter Island script. Second, the sound may be omitted in certain words even in most reliable vocabularies of the Rapanui language (Langdon and Tryon 1983: 38, 43), so one can suggest that in some cases both forms of the words, with it and without it, coexisted. Third, natives who wrote manuscripts by Roman letters did not mark this sound in the records (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1965: Figs. 96 ff.; Barthel 1978: 304–356).

### Data about rongorongo Schools

Only several tablets and some other wooden specimens covered with signs were preserved. Few inscriptions were incised on stones. Some records from these sources attest that the Easter Islanders were at schools where they learned the signs, mastered the art of writing, and studied ancient myths, songs, and historical documents.

Métraux (1940: 390) says: “At Te Hare-titaha in Anakena I was shown stone curbs which were supposed to be remains of the most famous school for *rongorongo* men.” In compliance with the Rapanui legend “The War between Tuu and Hotu Iti,” this building located near the royal residence was also called Hare-titaa (Métraux 1940: 84). The Rapanui term *hare* means “house,” and the name Tita(h)a means “The border;” cf. Rapanui *titaha*, *titaa* (line, limit, to border on). The main aim of this school was the teaching of pupils to write signs from left to right and then to turn the tablets at the end of every line. Really, the method of the creation of the Easter Island hieroglyphic texts is known as boustrophedon.

Englert (1974: 250) informs us about a narrative of an old Rapanui man, who in his youth went to a *rongorongo* school at Ahu Akapu:

The discipline was very strict. At first, the pupils learned texts by heart. Plays or conversations could not be tolerated, the pupils were necessitated to be attentive permanently, and they kneeled with the arms folded. The manner of the writing was probably determined by one tablet that served as a primer and contained a hymn to the god Make-make. Having learned the recitations, the pupils began

1 Rjabchikov (1987: 362f., Fig. 1; 1993: 126f., Fig. 1; 1994: 3, Fig. 1).

to become familiar with the writing. Initially they made copies of signs not on wood but on banana leaves using the bird bone or pointed small stick. Having progressed to a certain stage of professionalism, the pupils wrote on wooden tablets from *toro-miro* trees generally, using either slender obsidian pieces or sharp teeth of sharks.

In our further research the following terms will be significant: *kohau* (tablet; < *ko hau*), *kohau rongorongongo* (tablet), *kohau kiri tuku ki te atua kia Rarai Hova* (tablet dedicated to the god Rarai Hova), *kohau kiri tuku ki te atua* (tablet dedicated to a god), and *kohau motu mo rongorongongo* (tablet).<sup>2</sup>

The long name, *kohau kiri tuku ki te atua kia Rarai Hova*, contains two verbs, Old Rapanui *keri* (to scratch) and *tuku* (to strike), cf. Rapanui *kerikeri* (to scratch) and *tukituki* (to strike). Both terms indicate that the shapes of glyphs were made with an obsidian splinter or a shark's tooth. The last name of the tablet contains Rapanui *motu* (to cut). So, a number of verbs with the meanings "to strike, to beat, to cut, to engrave, to scratch, etc." added to the word *kohau* denoted that the tablet was inscribed by a pointed instrument.

Only a few additional terms that had been sounded in the *rongorongongo* schools remained. The pupils waited outside the house until they were told by their teacher to come in. He saluted them: "*Mai-ra*," and they replied: "*Kokoea*." The assistant instructor was called *te pahu* (Métraux 1940: 390). The speech of welcome consists of the words *ma* and *ira*, cf. Maori *ma* (to come, to go) and Rapanui *ira* (to turn around to look). The expression *ma, ira* signifies "come in, look attentive!" The reply, *kokoea*, was a part of the greeting, cf. Rapanui *kokoe* (you). The term *te pahu* means "scribe" literally, cf. Hawaiian *pahu* (to strike). Thus, the term "scribe" was designated with a number of words "to strike, to beat, etc."

Let us study two place names, Ivi hati and Kohau hati (Barthel 1962: 105). The first expression means "scribe's bone (sharp instrument)," and the second expression means "inscribed tablet," cf. Rapanui *ati, aati, hati, hahati* (to strike).

### An Educational Text

Many natives recited one and the same text with slight differences beginning with the words: *He timo te akoako* ("the great old words") according to the native *Ure Vae Iko* (Routledge 1998: 248). One of

the versions of the record (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1965: Fig. 127), which had been taken down by Roman letters, was partially translated by Fedorova (1978: 314).

As has been shown earlier (Rjabchikov 1993: 139f., appendix 2, Figs. 5, fragment 75; 1997b), a *rongorongongo* version of this text was written down on the "Tablette échantonnée" (Db 2 ff.). It is clear that the old natives, who recited similar texts, as students in their youth, have learned them by heart. Teachers could change some words in the initial text to offer their synonyms or other terms for the memorising.

In this *rongorongongo* version of the "*He timo te akoako*" text the following special terms are included: *moko* (glyph 69) "to write, to engrave, to strike, etc.," *tara* (glyph 57) "ditto," *ati* or *ti* (glyph 5) "ditto," *tuu* (glyph 7) "to come" (of a glyph during the writing or the reading), *ta(h)a* (glyph 44) "to move" (of a glyph during the writing or the reading), "to go" (of a glyph), "to turn" (of a tablet), and *ako* (glyph 21) "pupil, to learn." The children wrote, in particular, names of birds: *kuia* (glyph 19), *kapakapa* (glyphs 63-63), *ta(h)a* (glyph 44), and the name of the supreme god Tiki-Makemake: Tikitiki (glyphs 1-1).

Old Rapanui *moko* (to strike) is comparable with Rapanui *mokomoko* (pointed). Old Rapanui *tara* (to carve; glyph 57 depicts both sides of a *rongorongongo* tablet) corresponds to Rapanui *tarai* (to carve) < \**tara-i*, *tara* (spur), Maori *taarai*, *taarei*, *taratarai* (to shape), *tara* (point), and *taratara* (spike).

The last two lines of this side of the tablet contain additional methodological remarks (see Fig. 1). A minor modification of this drawing has been made on the base of a photo from the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles, Punaauia, Tahiti. The record (Db 5-6) reads as follows:

**103 19-19 69 58 21 50 44 58 8-44 8-44**

*Pea, kiki, moko, taiko i ta(h)a tahi, matua, ta(h)a, matua, ta(h)a!*

Write, speak, write, repeat (the glyph) *ta(h)a* at first, (then the glyphs) *matua* (and) *ta(h)a*. (the glyphs) *matua* (and) *ta(h)a*!

Old Rapanui *pea* (to write) corresponds to Rapanui *peapea* (to scratch). Perhaps this term denoted the process of writing on banana leaves. Rapanui *taiko* (to fertilize) here means "to write one and the same glyph many times." Perhaps in this record the name of the first king, Hotu Matua, associated with the god Makemake, is mentioned (Rjabchikov 2001: 219; 2009a: 9).

<sup>2</sup> Routledge (1998: 243 f.); Métraux (1940: 389–394); Englert (1974: 249 f.).

1(Db 5-6): 

Fig. 1

1(Aa 3-4): 

2(Aa 4): 

3(Ab 7): 

Fig. 2

1(I 1): 

Fig. 3

### The rongorongo School of King Kai Makoi

The Tahua Tablet (A) was manufactured from an European oar (Métraux 1940: 392 f.).

The name of King Kai Makoi is written down on the obverse side of this tablet (see Fig. 2, fragment 1). The record (Aa 3-4) reads as follows:

**4/33 15 69-50 49 4**

*Atua roa Makoi, (ariki) mau, atua.*

(This is) the great lord (Kai) Makoi, the king, the lord.

In lists of Rapanui kings additional names of this ruler are presented: Kaimokohi, Kaimakoi and Kaimokoi (Métraux 1940: 90 f., table 2).

Besides, in the text on line Aa 4 the total solar eclipse of September 16, A.D. 1773 is described.

Now, one can decode the names of scribes who wrote down the text of this board. The text (Aa 4) is inscribed on the same side of this tablet, see fragment 2:

**15-25 44 5 24-24 15-25 4-4-25 3-5-44 3-5-44**

*Rohu Ta(h)a [= Kena] ati ari(k)iar(i)k)i, rohu tutuhu hina*

*[= marama] Tita(h)a, hina [= marama] Tita(h)a.*  
Kena, a scribe of the great king, is creating (the text), (this) priest *tuhunga* from the great school *Tita(h)a* is creating (the text).

Old Rapanui *rou, rohu, rau, rahu* (to create) correspond to Tahitian *rahu* (to create).

In conformity with Routledge's data (1914–1915), the scribe Te Kena Oneone taught King Kai Makoi, father of King Nga Ara, to write and to read. Hence, he was a court specialist and could be a teacher in the royal *rongorongo* school.

In some cases, glyph **44** (*ta(h)a*) reads *kena* as it does in a calendar record on the Aruku-Kurenga Tablet (Bv 9): **30-44 = 30 51 30**, “(the month) Anakena” (Rjabchikov 1990: 9). In some cases,

glyph **3** (*hina*) reads *marama* (night, moon, crescent) as it does in a calendar record on the Mamari Tablet (Ca 5-10) (Rjabchikov 1989: 123 f.). It is interesting to note that Rapanui *hakamarama* means “school.”

Almost all the signs of the Tahua Tablet are inscribed by a professional handwriting. At least, if here are several skilful handwritings, they are too similar. The study of the shapes of all the glyphs **44** *ta(h)a* representing the frigate bird allowed me to distinguish a fragment taken down by another handwriting. I have used photos of the board. Several features (the head, beak, and wings of a bird) bear witness that the author of this fragment was a pupil indeed. This record was inscribed on the last but one line of the reverse side of the tablet. It was a test of the “pen” of the student. According to Bishop Jaussen (1935: 537) of Tahiti, the native Tahua, originated from the Hotu Iti tribe union, once wrote down the text on the tablet. In fact, it is apparent that this person carved only several glyphs on it.

The record (Ab 7) is presented in fragment 3. It reads as follows:

**44-25 5-44 15-25 27 25 3-5 3-5 6-33 3**

*Tahua Tita(h)a rohu, ro(h)u hua, hina [= marama] Ti, hina [= marama] Ti, hau hina [= marama].*

Tahua from (the school) *Tita(h)a* is creating (the text), (he) is creating the same (text), (he is) from the great school *Tita(h)a*, (this) tablet (*hau* instead of *kohau*) is from the school.

In accordance with Routledge (1914–1915), the scribe Taua lived at the site Hanga Tetenga (i.e., in the territory of the Hotu Iti tribe union). I suppose that the natives Tahua and Taua were one and the same person.

### The rongorongo School of King Nga Ara

King Nga Ara, son of King Kai Makoi, was a great educator (Routledge 1998: 245 f.; Métraux 1957: 187). His titles are enumerated in the text presented on the Santiago staff.

The record Fig. 3 (I 1) reads as follows:

**22 (102) 4 49 59-33 (102) 28 6-39-6-39**

*Ao atua, (ariki) mau, kava Nga Araara*

Nga Araara (= Nga Ara) who is the lord, the king (and) the progenitor has authority.

Glyphs **102 ure** were inserted in this inscription as determinatives (fertility, abundance).

A tattooing design was painted by old men from the village of Hanga Roa for a native called Juan Tepano, and he passed it to Routledge, and she published its improved copy later (1998: 214, Fig. 88), see a part of this picture in Fig. 4.

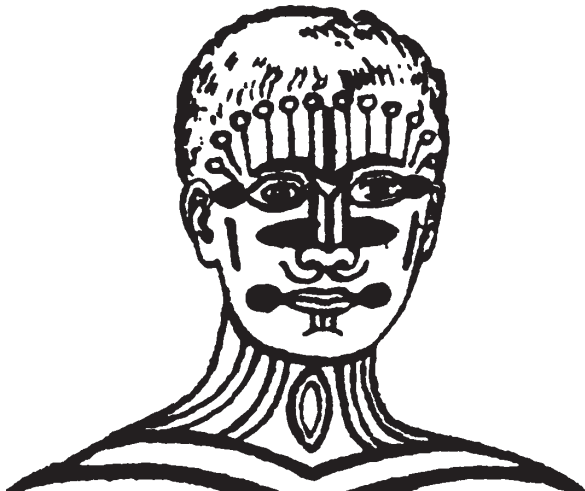


Fig. 4

At that time the old man Te Haha lived in the village; earlier he had been an *ariki-paka* (priest) in the entourage of Nga Ara (Routledge 1998: 242, 271). Thus, this wise man could represent elements of the tattooing of King Nga Ara. Indeed, on the neck of the tattooed native we can see glyph **28 nga** and four representations of paths (cf. Rapanui *ara* “path”). So, the name Nga Ara (the paths) was encoded in the well-known figure.

A picture is incised on a stone (Blixen 1977: 14, Plate I, Fig. 6; Lee 2002: 32, Fig. 4), see Fig. 5.

On the right, a drawing of the face of an old man is shown. A feathered headdress denotes that he was a king or chief. On the left, glyph **28 nga** and a representation of a path (*ara*) are shown. So, it was a portrait of King Nga Ara. I suggest that the same

natives, who participated in the drawing of the previous patterns, engraved this picture on this stone.

Three *rongorongo* boards – the Great St. Petersburg (P), the Small St. Petersburg (Q), and the Great Santiago (H) Tablets – were objects from the school of King Nga Ara (Rjabchikov 2009b: 4). Some modified fragments from the Mamari Tablet were copied on these boards. The last item belongs to the oldest known specimens. On the basis of the record about the star Pau (Halley’s Comet), the creation of this document has been dated to ca. A.D. 1682 (Rjabchikov 1994, 1997a). Orliac (2005) believes that this tablet was inscribed in the 17th century A.D., in pre-European time. From the text of the Mamari Tablet (C) it appears that a scribe from the Tupahotu tribe took it down. He informed about the great defeat of this tribe.

Let us consider some of such parallel inscriptions.

A record (Pr 2-3) on the Great St. Petersburg Tablet is shown in Fig. 6, fragment 1:

**6 69 4 4-4 24-28 43-6 26-69 12 44b-44b 79**

*Ha moko, ati: Atuaatua Aringa maha Momoko, ika. Tuatua eke.*

(They) had carved, (they) had carved: “The great lord Aringa is the food (*manga*) of (the tribe) Momoko, he is a victim (or a killed man)”; (the original text) is continued on the reverse side (of the Mamari Tablet).

Old Rapanui *maho* corresponds to Rapanui *mango* (cf. glyphs **43-6 ma-ha** in the combination with glyph **11 mango** “shark” in Rjabchikov 1988: 318, Fig. 4, fragments 8, 9, 10). The Rapanui place-name Vai-maho is already known (Métraux 1940: 313). Here Rapanui *vai* (water) is a generic determinative. The ancient name Vai-maho is a version of the name Vai-mango. Old Rapanui *eke* signifies “to continue,” cf. Rapanui *hakaeke* (to continue). One can conclude that this record was taken from the reverse (Cb) side of the Mamari Tablet.

A parallel record (Cb 12) on the Mamari Tablet is shown in fragment 2:

**12 4-4 24-28 43 62 69 26-69 11**

*Ika, atuaatua Aringa ma toa Moko, Momoko manga.*

The victim (or the killed man), the great lord Aringa, (was given) to the warriors of (the tribe) Moko, (otherwise) Momoko, as the food.

Here the victory of the Miru tribe (Hanau Momoko) is described. The information about the death of King Aringa (“the face”; Tupa-Aringa-anga) of the Tupahotu tribe (Hanau Eepe) is reported. In a royal genealogy the name of King Tuparingaanga is mentioned (Métraux 1940: 127).

Let us consider another pair of parallel inscrip-



Fig. 5

1(Pr 2-3): Fig. 6  
 2(Cb 12):

1(Pr 4): Fig. 7  
 2(Ca 1-2):

1(Hr 1): Fig. 8  
 Annotations: 15-25 rohu (down arrows), 69 moko (up arrows), 6 ha (up arrow), 26 (down arrow), 21 (down arrow), 26-21 (down arrow).

tions. A record (Pr 4) from the Great St. Petersburg Tablet is presented in Fig. 7, fragment 1 and reads as follows:

44-44-44 12 18 69 1 12 44 4-15-4-15 103 1 2 4-35  
 51 15 9 15 11 9-10 12-15 6-28 2 (= a reversed variant) 3 44 6-28 44 6-34 103 3-3 ...

Ta(h)a, ta(h)a, ta(h)a. Ika te Moko. Tiki Ika. Ta(h)a atua roa, atua roa, pea, Tiki, Hina. Tupa keru niu (= makoi) roa. SHARK Niuhi, Ika roa. Hanga Hina uri, Hina Ta(h)a, hanga – Ta(h)a Ara, pea hinahina [= maramamarama] ... There are frigate birds. (It is) the Fish [= the god Tangaroa] of (the tribe) Moko [= Hanau Momoko, Miru]. (It is) Tiki, (son) of the Fish [= the god Tangaroa]. It is the frigate bird of the great deities – carve! – Tiki (and) Hina.

(Someone from the) Tupahotu (tribe) inscribed (the text on the Mamari Tablet manufactured from) a great *makoi* tree. (It is the symbolism of) the Shark (and) the Large Fish [= the god Tangaroa]. The dark moon of the night *tane* is going, (it) is going [here it is the end of the copied record] – (the King) [Nga] Ara is turning (the Mamari Tablet from one line to another), the students are carving.

Old Rapanui *maramamarama* means “students” here, cf. Rapanui *marama* (intelligent). Old Rapanui *hanga* (to move, to go) correlates with Maori *anga* (to move in a certain direction). The initial text was changed. The god Tangaroa, the main religious personage of the Miru tribe, appeared here instead of

the god Tiki, the main religious personage of the Tupahotu tribe. Fish is a symbol of the sea god Tangaroa in the Maori mythology (Buck 1966: 439). The shark and the large fish are incarnations of the sea god in the Old Rapanui culture. In the calendar list on the Mamari Tablet glyph **44** *ta(h)a* (frigate bird) denotes the lunar phase (night) *rongo tane* (Rjabchikov 1989: 123 f.). It is common knowledge that an archaic variant of this name was *tane* (Green 1985: 15).

The parallel record (Ca 1-2) on the Mamari Tablet is presented in fragment 2:

**44b 4 44 5 44 6 1 21 26-48 6-4-6-4 6-28 6 44 2 6 20 6-28 20 48-15**

*Tua atua, ta(h)a atua, ta(h)a a Tiki ko mau. Hatuhatu, hanga a Ta(h)a Hina a Ungu. Hanga Ungu uri ...*

The back (the nest, figuratively) of the deity, the frigate bird – the deity, the frigate bird of King Tiki. The moon of the night *tane* associated with the crab is appearing (and) going, the black crab is going ...

Old Rapanui *hatuhatu* (to appear) corresponds to Samoan *fotu* (to appear).

### A Lesson to Remember the “LIZARD” Glyph

Let us examine instructions for pupils written down on the Great Santiago Tablet which belonged to the school of King Nga Ara (see Fig. 8; notice that the parallel texts on the Great St. Petersburg and the Small St. Petersburg Tablets are damaged).

The record (Hr 1) reads as follows:

**15-25 69 5-15 17 6 15-25 52 5-15 69 26 69 21 69 26-21 69**

*Rohu MOKO atua roa: te ha! Rohu, hiti: atua roa MOKO, ma MOKO °ko, MOKO ma- °ko, MOKO!*

Create (the words) “LIZARD, the great god” four (times)! Create, lift (the words from this line to another): “The great god LIZARD, *ma* LIZARD °ko, LIZARD *ma- °ko*, LIZARD!”

Glyph **69** *moko* depicts the lizard. This sign is presented in the Rapanui rock art (Koll 1991: 62, Fig.; see the interpretation in Rjabchikov 1997d: 23, 1997c: 37). Horley and Lee (2008) Have reached the same conclusion.

In conformity with this text, the pupils had to carve the signs *moko* (lizard) four times (cf. Rapanui *ha* “four,” glyph **6** *ha* in the inscription). The students wrote not only the basic glyphs **69** *moko* as ideograms (four times exactly!), but also two additional glyphs, **26** *maa* and **21** °ko, as quasi-syllables, first separately and then together, to demonstrate a phonetic reading of this word (*mo-oko*) and to learn

such subsidiary signs. Old Rapanui *rou, rohu, rau, rahu* mean “to create” (glyphs **15-25** *ro-hu*). In a Rapanui folklore text about the power of the king, the expression *to, rau* means “to make fertile” (Métraux 1937: 52–54), cf. Rapanui *toto* “to increase,” Maori *whakarau* “to multiply,” and Samoan *malaulau* “to grow vigorously.” Hence, additional meanings of Old Rapanui *rou, rohu, rau, rahu* are “to multiply, to add, to grow, to increase.”

Why were Rapanui verbal articles *ka* (markers of the imperative mood) omitted in this and other didactic *rongorongoro* texts? I believe that these particles were irregular in the archaic local language. It is pertinent to note that the grammatical article *ka* appears irregularly in a Rapanui folklore text (Routledge 1914–1915; see the interpretation in Rjabchikov 2009b: 22). Moreover, in some ancient Tuamotuan oral texts (Stimson 1933: 41) the particles *ka* with the same meaning are omitted as well.

In compliance with this research, the pupils learned glyphs **69** *moko*, **26** *maa* (cf. Rapanui *ma, mo* “for”) and **21** *oko* simultaneously.

### A Student Remark on Another Tablet

It is known that the Small Santiago Tablet (G) and the London Tablet (K) contain a common text with some distinctions. A segment inscribed on the last line of the obverse side (Gr 8) of the Small Santiago board is presented in Fig. 9.

1(Gr 8): 

Fig. 9

The text reads as follows:

**44 17 21 14**

*Ta(h)a te kohau!*

Turn the tablet (from this side to other)!

This message informed that the continuation of the inscription could be read on the reverse side of this tablet (cf. Rapanui *taha* meaning “to bend, to go hither and thither,” Maori *whakatahataha* “to turn from side to side,” and Samoan *tafa* “to turn on one side”).

### Conclusions

Many *rongorongoro* records were copied by Rapanui students and their teachers. As a result, some rare texts were saved. The activity of King Nga Ara was remarkable, so that several tablets from his school were preserved. The Mamari Tablet as an object of

the enemies was an important didactic source in the library of King Nga Ara.

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