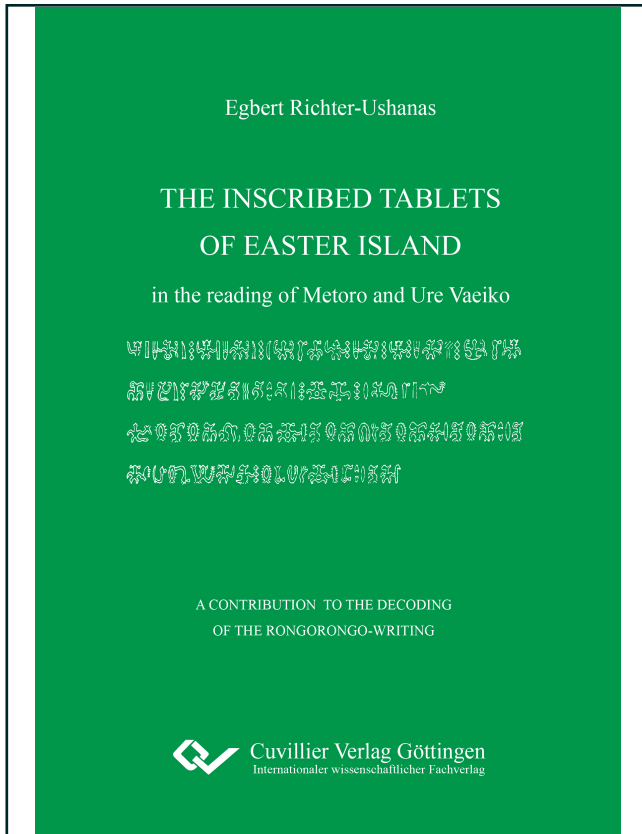




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The Inscribed Tablets of Easter Island
in the reading of Metoro and Ure Vaeiko



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INTRODUCTION

1. The Rongorongo-writing

When in the 1870ties bishop T. Jaussen made the first attempt to decipher the Easter Island script called Rongorongo nowadays, because the sticks and tablets (kohau) on which it is inscribed, were chanted (rongorongo), he had the assistance of the native speaker Metoro Tau a Ure who was working on a plantation in Tahiti at that time. Four tablets, known under the names of Aruku Kurenga, Tahua, Keiti and Mamari, were read to him by Metoro, and by comparing his readings word for word with the signs Jaussen elaborated a list of 253 signs and ligatures (J), which was published only posthumously by I. Alazard in 1893 and reproduced by Wolff (1973: 66-77) and Heyerdahl (1965: Fig. 85-94). Though the bishop explained the signs in this list at first in Rapanui, the language of Easter Island - the island being called Rapa Nui nowadays - and then in French, Jaussen was not able to find out a meaning in Metoro's reading of the tablets. The publisher of his book, I. Alazard, was of the same opinion, and illustrated this by translating the first line of the tablet Aruku Kurenga (Heyerdahl 1965: 353). When 40 years later the reputed ethnologist and expert of Rapanui, S.H. Ray, studied this line carefully he arrived at the same result (1932: 153-155).

It even seems, that Metoro was not interested in revealing the secrets of the script to a foreigner. It is also possible, however, that Metoro had a feeling of respect for the bishop, and that he only relied upon the method, by which he had himself learnt the script from his teachers on Easter Island. At any rate, the bishop saw only a bulk of words and short sentences quite similar to a dictionary. Already on account of the length of the chants he thought it inappropriate to publish them. Most likely he had objections against the contents too, since he could not have failed to notice the sexual meaning of many words. This may also be the reason why he did not invite Metoro for a second session. In spite of these circumstances, he collated his list, of which he believed that it would make Metoro's chants intelligible.

The ethnopsychologist W. Wolff tried in 1945 to read the first three lines of the tablet Aruku Kurenga on the ground of Jaussen's word-list (1973: 80-104), but he had access to Metoro's reading of the first line and in a corrupted form only. Though his 'translation' - the first line is mainly based on Ray's - contains several mistakes and does not go much beyond simple word-renderings, it is obvious at least from the first line that Metoro's chants are not completely meaningless. Wolff regarded Metoro as a competent interpreter therefore (1973: 90), though on the other hand he deemed it possible that the natives were consciously misleading the ethnologists (1973: 62). That Metoro, just because he is a competent interpreter could make himself understandable to the bishop only in the frame of the latter's limits of thought, is not taken into consideration by Wolff.

Eight years later, Lanyon-Orgill tried to translate the tablets Atua Mata-riri (Small Washington Tablet) and Mamari after Wolff's example with the help of the Jaussen-list only. Metoro's chant of the tablet Mamari was unknown to him and his transcriptions of the tablets were quite insufficient. Hence he could not achieve results that are scientifically verifiable, though he looked on the matter from the right point of view.

Thirteen years after Wolff's and only five years after Lanyon-Orgill's rather fruitless attempts the renowned German ethnologist Th. Barthel published Metoro's four chants for the first time in total, but without a translation, in his monograph on the Easter Island script in 1958. The list of about 700 signs that was published in the monograph as an appendix has no explanations either. The explanations of the signs are scattered throughout the monograph and Barthel's later attempts to read the script are confined to short quotations. In the sign-list of 1963 only 170 signs are explained, partly based on Metoro's readings, partly on arbitrary epigraphic suppositions. It is unrealistic to expect to obtain the meaning of whole tablets or of whole lines even by only translating short sequences relying on a small number of signs. Such a method cannot be called scientific either. S. R. Fischer (1997: 228) looks upon Barthel's *scientifically uncontrollable* explanations as *a house of cards built on sand*, the sand being Metoro. But Metoro cannot be held responsible for Barthel's explanations, since they are mostly his own conjectures.

Independent of Barthel's publication of Metoro's readings Th. Heyerdahl remarked after the study of the manuscripts kept at Grottaferri near Rome and irritated by the fact that different signs can have the same and identical or nearly identical signs a different meaning that *it would seem to be a direct disavowal of Metoro's abilities as tangata rongorongo-man if one tried to read from his information intelligible stories* (1965: 381).

Besides, the bishop did not succeed in translating Metoro's chants, because he expected a certain and at the same time comprehensive meaning for each sign. But even a child knows that it is impossible to construct a sentence from the words contained in a dictionary, even if they have only one meaning, which occurs sometimes. Not even a computer will be able to construct a comprehensive sentence, if it is fed only with words and short sentences. What we can do is simply to ascertain the structure of a language. And Metoro's chants are quite similar to a dictionary. Without it, one remains confined to a structural examination of the characters, which is useful for the verification of a pictographic explanation, but does not lead to a comprehensive phonetic rendering.

The supposition that each sign must have a certain 'name' or phonetic value is based on the confinement to 'alphabetic way of perception', which is not applicable for symbolic writings. The first missionary of Easter Island, E. Eyraud, betrays this confinement already, when he speaks in his letter to his convent of the 'names' of the characters he was looking for (1866; 71, 124):

Dans toutes les cases on trouve des tablettes de bois ou des bâtons couverts de plusieurs espèces de caractères hiéroglyphiques: ce sont des figures d'animaux inconnues dans l'île, que les indigènes tracent au moyen de pierres tranchantes. [Sans doute] chaque figure a son nom; mais le peu de cas qu'ils font de ces tablettes m'incline à penser que ces caractères, restes d'une écriture primitive, sont pour eux maintenant un usage qu'ils conservent sans en chercher le sens.

Les Kanacs ne connaissent ni la lecture ni l'écriture; ils comptent pourtant avec une grande facilité, et ils ont des mots pour représenter tous les nombres.

Leur mesure de temps est une année lunaire. Mais là encore les souvenirs s'affaiblissent, et il ne sont pas d'accord sur le nombre des lunes. Chose digne de remarque! ces sauvages montrent un extrême intérêt pour tout ce qui a trait à ces questions. Lorsque je parlais des mois, du lever du soleil, etc., tous s'approchaient, tous, jusqu'aux vieillards, venaient prendre place parmi les élèves. Même empressement quand je disais quelque chose de la correspondance épistolaire.

Un jour, pendant que je faisais la classe, j'aperçus un navire. Espérant qu'il aborderait peut-être à la côte, j'entrai dans ma case pour écrire quelques lignes. Mes élèves m'examinaient attentivement de loin; ils s'imaginaient que j'étais doué de la faculté de parler avec les absents, et que j'en faisais usage. Dès que je revins vers eux, il me demandèrent quelle avait été ma conversation avec le navire.

Eyraud thinks, that the natives – so far as he is acquainted with them – only know to write the characters, without knowing their meaning, that they were hence in the same position as he himself or somebody who writes down the signs of an unknown writing. He has no doubts, however, that the characters are remnants of a former writing, though of *primitive* structure.

The next missionary Zumbohm was equally unable to ascertain the meaning of the characters, since the natives he asked were contradicting each other, so that he felt after their reading of the tablets not better instructed than before (Fischer 1997: 24). The reason of this failure is that Zumbohm looked like Eyraud for one single equivalent of the character. The Russian ethnologist I.K. Fedorova goes still a step further in the wrong direction in supposing that the characters designate *morphemes* (1986: 241) and consequently translates 'caractère' with letter. Eyraud notes the concern of the natives for the script and their belief, that it is possible to contact absent and far away people with its help. Perhaps they have heard about telegraphy, at any rate they give a correct description of the function of writing.

Eyraud's mentioning of the ability of the natives to count and that they had words for numbers is of great importance. Fedorova notes (1986: 250), that Metoro reads repetition of characters (until five) as numbers (for the Austronesian numbers cf. § 2). This confirms his having read the tablets. Number-signs are a problem for letter-scripts too. It was solved in Europe only in the 17th century through the invention of the Arabian numbers whose ultimate source is India, where the zero was created too. Number-signs are found there already in the Indus script, where they have the form of fingers or teeth. From this reason the cowrie-shell was taken as currency. The skill of the natives in counting is also found in their workmanship and in the neatness of the Rongorongo-characters.

The discovery of a recurrent cosmogonic formula on the Santiago-staff and other tablets through the American linguist S.R. Fischer which he calls as *break-through*, is not more than a contribution to the decipherment, because the phonetic rendering is doubtful, though perhaps the most important since Barthel's *Grundlagen* (cf. § 12). Fischer speaks himself of a *second break-through after the first* (1997: 260). There can and must follow further 'break-throughs' until somebody is entitled to say that the Easter Island script is deciphered, which means in this case, that the tablets can be read as a whole. Metoro's chants can be helpful to attain this aim for a great extent, though Fischer denies this. Métraux, whose monograph on the ethnology of Easter Island has become a standard work, has correctly declared that Metoro's readings are indispensable even though they are incomprehensible, because otherwise most of the signs would remain unintelligible (1940: 307).

Disregarding their phonetic imperfection Fischer's research has proved, that the Rongorongo-signs form a script and that they are not only a memory-aid, a list of ancestors or simply ornamental. How can the signs be ornaments, if they were written one after the other on large tablets and read by thousands of experts on special assemblies? Even if they are used ornamentally, they would not cease to be a script as Arabian writing shows. Rongorongo-signs are not comparable with Hawaiian cloth patterns, that are regarded as a script by L. Melville (1986: 109), nor are they constellations, as the hobby-astronomist M. Dietrich maintains (1998). There are signs for star and Milky Way in the Jaussen-list, but the only constellation mentioned by Metoro and Ure Vaeiko are the Pleiades and Orion. The belt of Orion is written by a fusion of three signs for star (B 80), explained by Jaussen rather incorrectly as 'two stars' (J 26). The Pleiades are another reading of the sign for good, shining (J 27 = J 184). Dietrich, however, regards from pictographic reasons the sign for the Pleiades as the belt of Orion. But there is no proof for it as for Barthel's pictographic explanations of the signs.

Generally men, plants, animals, instruments and geographicals are easily recognizable as source of a Rongorongo-sign. This is not sufficient, however, to classify it as a script. Symbolic writings must be able to render grammatical functions, which cloth patterns and constellations are unable

to do. In Metoro's and Ure Vaeiko's reading of the Rongorongo-tablets this condition is fulfilled, even though the signs render only the skeleton of a sentence like catchwords. It is correct therefore to call Rongorongo the only writing in the Pacific. It is a peculiarity of all word-scripts that they only render the skeleton of a sentence as we can see from the Chinese and the Indus script. This means that the reader or hearer must know, what the speaker or writer is dealing with, in order to be able to supply what is missing. This applies for any collection of catchwords, but it is a characteristic of all agglutinative and isolating languages at the same time.

A detailed study of the four Metoro-chants reveals, that he has often read the signs indirectly or metaphorically, but that he has done what was in his power, to disclose their meaning to the bishop, the more so, when we consider that Metoro could think very much of the context because the bishop wanted to know the meaning of each single sign irrespective of the context and that his record is incomplete. That different signs can have the same meaning and similar signs different meaning is a characteristic of all symbolic writings and no obstacle for the decipherment. Metoro would not have cheated the bishop, if he would have read the same tablet in a different way at another opportunity, on the contrary, he would have done it, if he would have read it exactly the same way. Nevertheless, he renders an almost identical sequence on the tablets Keiti and Mamari almost identically. Fischer's assertion (1997: 227), that Metoro reads only the sign for heaven (*rangi*) *without contradiction*, except in ligatures, is based on insufficient study. Perhaps this negligence is caused by his bias for his structural method. If he would do justice to Metoro he could not cling to it as the only scientific method.

It took nearly 30 years till Heyerdahl's verdict was confirmed by the detailed scientific investigation of Metoro's chants through the Russian ethnologist and expert of Rapanui, I.K. Fedorova (1986: 238-254). But in her 'evidence based on circumstances', by which she tries to show that Metoro's readings are deceitful, she has made several mistakes. Like Métraux she admits that a number of signs can only be read on the ground of Metoro's reading (1986: 246), but then she resumes:

Everything, that has been said here, shows, that Metoro Tau a Ure, Jaussen's informant, differently from the old Ure Vae Iko, with whom U. Thomson worked together later, knew only how to find the beginning of the text and the direction of the signs but that he did not understand the meaning of the signs or that he has kept his knowledge secret. He has only chanted the name of the sign, trying as much as he could to give the impression that his reading are compatible, which created Jaussen's error, [that the tablets were read indeed], so that he prepared a catalogue of the signs with their explanations on the ground of Metoro's 'readings' (1986: 253).

In her examples for Metoro's different reading for the same sign Fedorova mentions several insects and their reading as man (1986: 249). But this proves on the contrary that Metoro knew the meaning of the signs. Since there are only few signs denoting insects, that resemble each other to such a degree that Barthel could combine them all in the sign B 92, different readings of the same sign are inevitable. The reading man for the insect-sign is correct too, because the insects could also be a symbol for man and even for a god (cf. § 11). This could even be a starting point for a decipherment. Besides, it is beyond imagination that a simple native could deceive a learned man of authority like the bishop in such a way for a long time, as it is pretended by Fedorova, which to proof she would need her whole scientific education, the more so, since for Metoro the texts were of sacred nature. Her supposition, that he has kept his knowledge secret, is without importance for her whole examination of the texts. Of course, Metoro can like anybody make a mistake or not know a sign. And this he did not even keep secret, as Fedorova has found out herself (1986: 247).

Like her predecessors Fedorova has only given an interlinear translation of line 1 of the tablet Aruku Kurenga apart from some examples taken from here and there of Metoro's readings. Moreover, she confines herself to the investigation of the realm of rational knowledge, as she admits herself (1986: 253). In a way, this is contradictory to her enthusiastic panegyric on the creative abilities of the Soviet researchers concluding her article, since creativity cannot be confined to the realm of rationality. S.R. Fischer follows Fedorova in his judgement on Metoro's chants (1997: 53), without testing her arguments.

After considering that bishop Jaussen wanted to know the meaning of each single sign and hence making no demands contrary to this preposition, Metoro's chants are the best means to study the Rongorongo script. Having undertaken the necessary efforts it will become clear that a coherent translation can be afforded without relying too much on fantasy, because every chant deals with a certain category and are sometimes even composed according to the rule of tension, climax and balance inherent in all works of poetry and music.

Beyond doubt, he was competent to read the tablets too, because he was taught in his youth by three teachers of Rongorongo (Fischer 1997: 49). Metoro need not fear the consequences of violating the taboo connected with the tablets either, since after the year 1862, when most of the islanders and among them nearly all Rongorongo men were brought as slaves to Peru and died there or on the way back of smallpox, nobody was left there to punish him. To read a syllabic writing is not more difficult than reading a letter script, if one is conversant with the oral tradition and the symbolic conception behind the pictograms. Therefore, even boys were taught to read and write the Rongorongo script.

In 1886, the paymaster of an American warship, W.J. Thomson, was able to persuade the native Ure Vaeiko to read photographs of the tablets that had been in the possession of bishop Jaussen. Ure Vaeiko had been a cook of Ngaara, the last independent king of Easter Island, who died around 1850, and had learnt the script from the king directly. But Ure Vaeiko's readings did not promote the understanding of the signs at all, since they were apparently not related to them. Moreover, the transcription of the original language of Easter Island and its translation into English is full of mistakes. Many words were misunderstood by Thomson's translator A. Salmon, a Tahitian of Jewish origin, who ran a sheep farm on Rapanui at that time.

Another source that could be helpful in understanding the script is the oral tradition in general, but besides the names of some tablets only the beginning of a tablet called *he timo te akoako* has been recorded apparently. It was quoted by the natives, whenever they were asked to recite the contents of the tablets and was even given as a name to all the tablets (Fischer 1997: 272). A traditional song going under this name has

been recorded by Routledge in several versions (Fischer 1994: 415-417) and a short rendering of it is contained in manuscript A in Latin writing collected by Heyerdahl (1965: Fig 127), but it is regarded as being unintelligible (Fedorova 1965: 401). Other manuscripts that have been written in Latin (B to F) have been translated, but had no effect on the understanding of Rongorongo.

Contrarily to Jaussen's sign-list Barthel's list from 1958 does not contain any sign-explanation and in the list from 1963 he explains only a few signs. The explanations that are contained in the body of his monograph and his later attempts in the years 1963, 1974 and 1990 to explain the signs are confined to short quotations. It is not to be expected that the meaning of a tablet or of a line only can be ascertained by the translation of short paragraphs. Such a method cannot even be called scientific. Fischer regards Barthel's renderings *as a house of cards built on sand* (1997: 228), whereby Metoro's chants be the sand and Barthel's scientifically unverifiable explanations be the house of cards. Though the judgment is justified, the comparison misses the mark, because Barthel relied on Metoro as little as possible.

The at first sight promising attempt to compare the Easter Island script with the outwardly similar looking Indus script undertaken by de Hevesy (1933) does not find the approval of modern scholars anymore, on account of many faults in his transcription of the Indus signs. At any rate, it is not helpful for the decipherment of each of the scripts, because he has compared the unknown with the unknown. S. R. Fischer admits, however, that de Hevesy *opened up a whole new era of scientific interest in Rongorongo* (1957: 153). Scholars who criticise de Hevesy often do not notice that in the title of his lecture held on this topic he has spoken of 'paraissant', appearing, in relation to the similarity of the two writings. The most important point of objection is, however, that even if the signs of the Indus script are similar to Rongorongo signs, they need not have the same meaning. Thus, de Hevesy compares the Rongorongo sign for sky with the Indus sign for the leaf of the pipal (fig)-tree with additional strokes that lend it the appearance of a maple-tree, but need not change its basic meaning. The tree represented by the leaf and the sky can be related to each other, if the tree is regarded as the world tree, but this concept is unknown to the oral tradition of Easter Island. The elements

of the Rongorongo sign for sky are the sign for white and for hibiscus that cannot be regarded as a candidate for the world tree.

In view of these failure, the greatest hope to read the Rongorongo script is still resting on the discovery of similarities between the oral and the written tradition. Although the oral tradition is unreliable, as pointed out beforehand by many ethnologists and linguists, at the latest by S.R. Fischer (1997: 268), there will surely nothing be found in the tablets, which is not known at least to a certain extent from the oral tradition. If anywhere, the Rosetta stone of Rongorongo lies in the discovery of such similarities. Fischer mentions the song-tradition in this relation too (1997: 304). Only on the ground of the oral tradition a complete reading of the tablets can be afforded, which was also called for by Barthel (1958: 224), without he himself being able to do it.

Before I ventured to approach the comparatively long texts of the tablets, I thought it recommendable to study the shorter material. For this purpose, the single line of the breast ornament Rei Miro 2 is especially suitable. Its study yielded a meaningful result to me at the very beginning, though several details remained unintelligible. Though the translation has been proved to be wrong in many aspects, its formal criteria have been retained until now. After translating the breast ornament I looked for identical passages in the recitations of Ure Vaeiko and of Metoro. Eventually, I discovered the model of Ure Vaeiko's love-song (Thomson 1889: 526) with the help of the sign for woman in the tablet Tahua. This discovery led to a provisional translation of the tablets Keiti and Aruku Kurenga on the ground of the Jaussen-list. The comparison with Metoro's readings made it clear, however, that much better results can be obtained by translating them directly on this ground. Even Fischer admits that these readings are not Metoro's invention, but that they are based on the oral tradition (1997: 52). Barthel has already discovered *fragments of genuine tradition [Bruchstücke echter Tradition]* therein (1958: 210) that have been collected in this volume on page 315.

2. The settlement of Easter Island and the war between the long-ears and the short-ears

The first report of the settlement of Easter Island goes also under the name of W. J. Thomson, but the real author is probably A. Salmon, since the original in Rapanui is missing here. In greater detail this tradition has been dealt with by Routledge (1919), A. Métraux (1940) and Th. Barthel (1958; 1974). The first archaeological research was carried out by Th. Heyerdahl and his group (1965). The history of whole Polynesia was investigated by P. Bellwood (1978). The modern state of research is rendered by S.R. Fischer in his monograph (1997). Thomson writes in this matter (1889: 526):

The island was discovered by King Hotu-matua, who came from the land in the direction of the rising sun, with two large double canoes and three hundred chosen followers. They brought with them potatoes, yams, bananas, tobacco, sugarcane, and the seeds of various plants, including the paper mulberry and the toromiro trees. The first landing was made on the islet of Motu Nui, on the north coast, and there the first food was cooked that had been tasted for one hundred and twenty days. The next day the queen started in one of the canoes to explore the coast to the Northwest, while the other canoe, in charge of the king, rounded the island to the Southeast. At Anakena Bay the two canoes met and, attracted by the smooth sand-beach, Hotu-matua landed and named the island *te pito o te henua* or the navel of the deep. The queen landed and immediately afterwards gave birth to a boy, who was named Tuuma-heke. The landing place was named Anakena in honor of the month of August, in which the island was discovered. All the plants brought in the canoes were used for seed, and the people immediately began the cultivation of the ground. For the first three months they subsisted entirely upon fish, turtle, and the nuts of a creeping plant found growing along the ground, which was named *moki-oone*.

The second part of the name of Hotu-matua means father, the first part is not found in the dictionaries. Barthel renders in his second sign-list (1963: 430) the sign B 37 (J 111), two small circles above each other, as *hotu*, without translating it, but in the article going along with the sign-list, he explains it as 'bearing fruit' (1963: 388). He relates it to Hotu-matua in a note. Metoro once reads the annexes of the sign for water (B 70) as *hotu*. Here it can be translated as to swell. Often the sign B 37 is fixed to the sign B 5/J136 for hibiscus



or following it. From the lines Er9 and Ca1 it becomes clear, that it has to do with the creation myth of god Make-make and that it is an image for the heaped up white sand, out of which the god created Hina, the first woman. With regard to the Make-make-myth Hotu-matua can be explained as ‘swelling father’ or as ‘father heaping up (the white sand)’. The name is related to kingdom and fertility of the earth, for which the god Make-make and the king were responsible. It is interesting to note that ‘swelling’ is the meaning of the root (*pi*) of the Sanskrit word for father (*pitā*). Fischer’s attempt to explain the name through the variant Hatu-matua (1997.3: 109) is not convincing, because the relation to Mangareva, on which it is based, is purely hypothetical. He also wants to replace Hotu-matua by Tuu-ko-Iho, who is the leader of the second boat according to a later tradition (Métraux 1940: 63), but Tuu-ko-Iho is a quite different figure in the oral tradition. In particular, he is known as the inventor of the script (Métraux 1940: 65).

The directions are not stated correctly, Motu-nui lies in the southwest of Easter Island (Métraux 1940: 8,60). Hotu-matua steered from there to the right along the northwest coast, as it is stated by Métraux’s informant Tepano, but wrongly translated by Métraux. This means that Hotu-matua came from the west. This is apparently in contradiction to the leaving of his homeland in western direction. The contradiction is solved, if we suppose that he only said so to deceive his pursuer Oroï. In later times this deception was taken as the truth by several persons. Heyerdahl argues on the ground of the main draft of the sea (1969: 204), that the two boats must have come from the opposite direction, but then they would have arrived at the east of the Island.

The two double canoes are nowhere mentioned on the tablets that were recited by Metoro. The sign B 100, that Barthel explains as such (1963: 433), is read by Metoro in line Bv3 of the tablet Aruku Kurenga as (two) sticks, on account of the feather that is attached to it. The name of Hotu-matua is referred to by him in line Br1 of the tablet Aruku Kurenga, where the birth of his eldest and youngest son are mentioned too. The fruit *moki-oone* is unknown today. *Oone* means sand. Perhaps it was a peanut.

According to Thomson, Hotu-matua arrived on the island with 67 inscribed tablets or sticks (1889: 514). Instead of 67, however, six or seven were meant probably (*tae atu* instead of *te kau-atu*) and not tablets, but sticks are told of, since tablets were only used in later times. Though the number of the sticks may be incorrect, there is no reason to attribute the origin of the script to another source than that of the first settlers. If the script was only invented after the visit of the Spanish ship in the year 1770, as is maintained by S.R. Fischer (1997: 367), the inventor of the script would certainly be known by his historical name and there would be no need to replace it by a legendary name like Tuu-ko-Iho. Moreover, there are no similarities between the Easter Island script and the European, as Fischer admits too (1997: 375). Above all it is not a letter script. There is no example in history of a symbolic writing having developed from a letter script. This would mean to roll back the cycle of history. And why does Fischer suppose that only the script is dependant on a European origin, why not the works of art too?

Though no European influence on the script can be maintained, there are strong arguments for a contact of the Polynesians with the Indo-Javanese Madhajakapahit-culture. This may also explain that the signs the Maoris of New Zealand wrote under the treaty of Waitangi (Fischer 1997: 5) have certain similarities with the Javanese Kawi script. In particular, the number of the signs and their arrangement in three columns of two times 13 and one 11 is similar to an alphabet. The final swastika has also been borrowed from this culture.

The Marquesian petroglyph  used in relation to youth initiation (Gell 1993: Fig. 4-5; Linton 1925: Plate XIII-XV) can be derived from the Kawi-sign  (*pa*). The purpose of tattooing was to protect the tattooed against evil spirits (Gell 1993: 192) similar to the purpose of inscribed or non-inscribed amulets. To protect means *pa/pale* in Proto-Polynesian. It is similar to Sanskrit *pā/pāla*. The Maori name *papa* for mother earth can hence be translated as ‘double-protectress’. The rites of youth initiation did not lead to the development of a script, however, as it happened with Rongorongo, neither before nor after the appearance of the Europeans on any Polynesian island. Nevertheless, the contact with the Indo-Javanese Kawi script may be the ultimate cause of the invention of Rongorongo.

Perhaps Tu-ko-Iho has become acquainted with the Kawi-script on one of his voyages or an Indian traveller or Buddhist missionary arrived at Hotu-matua's home island. He would certainly be regarded as a god.

The greatest coincidence between the two language-families is found in the word *tangata*, man, god, that is derived by Fuentes from old-Javanese *djagat*, Sanskrit *jagat*, world. Biggs regards it as proto-Polynesian (1966: 108), because it is found in a great number of Polynesian languages. The Hawaiian variant *kanaka* became the name of all Polynesians later. It is not very likely, however, that there existed a name for man or mankind in Polynesian prehistory. If it is a Sanskrit-word, it means, that *tangata* was the higher man. The Polynesians think themselves higher than the Melanesians even today. Only in the English context *kanaka* became a man having a lower value than a European.

There exist other Rapanui-words that can also be found in Sanskrit or in the Muṇḍa-languages. For instance *manu*, bird, may be related to Sanskrit *manu*, man. In the Rongorongo-script the bird is either a birdman or a birdchild. In the Indus-script there exists the ligature (𑀮𑀭) depicting a fish and bird in brackets that can be read as fishman or birdman. Manu, the founder of the Āryan race, has the form of a bird according to Ṛg-Veda IV.26.1 (Richter-Ushanas 2010b: 175). Manu is also called a seer there, the root *man*, of which his name is derived, is correlated with Greek μάντις, seer.

Rapanui *komari*, vulva, is almost identical with Telegu *komaru*, youth, flower. The woman is often called a flower in Rapanui and other Polynesian languages. Rapanui *tupa*, round stone-house, may be related to Sanskrit *stūpa*, memorial stone. Tupa is also the name of a Polynesian cultural hero (cf. § 14), i.e. somebody, for whom a memorial stone was erected. The Polynesian number-system is also related to the Indian. It includes the dual that is expressed in Polynesia by adding the number two to the noun as it is done in Sanskrit. Some of these similarities may go back to the old Javanese Kawi-script, but others belong certainly to a common stock of Polynesian and Muṇḍa peoples. The most striking parallel is that of *ariki* with Sanskrit *hari* and *ari* and of *papa* with Sanskrit *pā* that we shall discuss in § 5.

Metoro mentions in line Ab8 of the tablet Tahua the names of the two *tuhungas* Kahui and Kahui Manava and the kings Hira-kau-te-hito, Horo-ka-rua and Riri-ka-tea. The latter two are rendered in all genealogies (Wolff 1973: 16) as the greatgreatgrandfather and the greatgrandfather of King Ngaara. If we suppose that these names refer to the time of the manufacture of the tablet - and from what other reason should they have been mentioned? -, it would mean that tablet Tahua, that is held to be one of the youngest tablets, because it is incised on a European oar, was incised at least 100 years earlier than the arrival of the Spaniards in the time of the English buccaneer Edward Davis. Perhaps the oar came from his ship. Hira-kau-te-Hito lived several generations earlier than Horokarua, but only three generations after the *tuhungas* mentioned in all genealogies, which are separated from Hotu-matua by nine or ten generations of kings. This means that they must have lived approximately 200 years after Hotu-matua. Most likely they gave the script, that was invented by Tuu-ko-Iho already in the time of Hotu-matua's father Riri-ka-tea, its present form. It is certainly not only accidental that the name of Hotu-matua's father is identical to the name of the greatgrandfather of Ngaara.

The remembrance of the former country is still extant in the readings of Metoro and Ure Vaeiko, but it is wrapped in the form of the events that happened on the island itself. This is especially true for the youth initiation that belonged to the most important events in the life of the natives. Therefore it occupies an important place on the tablets and the Santiago-staff too. This is corroborated by the frequency of signs investigated by Barthel (1958: 165). On the mountain of Orongo, where the initiation took place, the warriors assembled too, as it is reported by Ure Vaeiko in the tablet called Apai by Thomson. Here the great wars started, that originated mostly by the violation of a taboo. One of the most important taboos was the virginity of the secluded girls called *neru*. Only the Timo, the leading shaman of the Island, whose obligations consisted in making rain, in announcing blood vengeance and in the mummification and burial of the death, had the right and duty of defloration during the ceremony of initiation, as is reported in the tablets read by Metoro.

The development of the script in the time of the *tuhungas* would also explain, why there are several signs in the script which have no counterpart on Easter Island, notably the frigate-bird and several plants.