A new manuscript of Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu from the archives of William Mulloy, Part 1: Description of the manuscript

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Introduction

Oral traditions and folklore were of extreme importance in Polynesia, creating a link between the deeds of the venerated ancestors and the present day. Before the introduction of writing, legends, myths, genealogies, songs, and recitations would have been remembered by heart to ensure unbreakable transmission of traditional knowledge to future generations. Rapa Nui had a considerable advantage in developing rongorongo, the writing system that may have been of significant help in the preservation of oral traditions. With the arrival of missionaries, the islanders were taught to read and write in the Latin alphabet, which eventually became used as a tool to preserve and transmit oral traditions:

“In this rare climate of reconstitution, reinvigoration and renewal [at the end of the 19th century], the Rapanui began to reinvent their traditional history. Pua Ara Hoa, Nicolas Pakarati, Tori, Pakomio Ure Kino, Daniel Ure Va’e Iko and Tomenika Vaka Tuku Onge combined old and recently borrowed or expanded tales – such as the ‘Hotu Matu’a Cycle’ of stories – to create a new ‘traditional’ corpus of settlement and other legends. Out of this evolved the ‘ancient literature’ of the island that survives today. It was first written down in the 1890s, in the Rapanui language, in family ledgers and then hidden away (until the 1950s) from all non-Rapanui as ‘sacred lore’. These stories were usually adorned with pseudo-‘texts’ of rongorongo signs to form a collection that eventually came to be known as the ‘rongorongo books’ or the ‘Rapanui manuscripts’. The mastermind behind this process was Pua Ara Hoa, who, mainly for his leading role in compiling the ‘Rapanui manuscripts’, personified Rapa Nui’s most important source of oral tradition. One cannot stress too strongly the reverence with which the Rapanui people today still regard these recent ‘holy books’…” (Fischer 2005:148).

The discovery of the Rapanui manuscripts by members of the Norwegian Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific in 1955-1956 was very important. Before that, only separate leaves with writing were reported – such as Tomenika’s ta’u found by Routledge (1919:250, Figure 99). In contrast, the Rapanui manuscripts discovered in the 1950s were more complete, containing dozens of legends, lists of different
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by Bettocchi (2006a):

...looking for old document in the house of Juan Teao in Hanga Roa I came across probably a very incomplete copy of a rongorongo dictionary. It was copied from some other document which was the property of Pedro Pate. The latter inherited it from his grandfather Tomenika who was a ‘professor’ (maori rongorongo) and wrote this manuscript about sixty-five years ago [that is, in the 1890s] in order to teach his pupils.” Silva Olivares photographed this manuscript, but the film, so he says, was “lost or stolen.” He did, however, copy a genealogical list of chiefs which was recorded in the manuscript” (Knorozov 1965:392).

The further destiny of this manuscript is unknown to the authors. The genealogy was published by Butinov and Knorozov (1957:42). It is strongly reminiscent – though not identical – to the genealogy from Manuscript A, seemingly discarding the probability that the document seen by Silva Olivares was Manuscript A (though the latter bears the name of Tomenika on its pages, see Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figures 96 and 108). The discovery of several manuscripts in the late 1950s suggests that more unknown Rapanui manuscripts might exist on the island (Heyerdahl 1965:366).

The Rapanui Manuscript from William Mulloy’s Archives

The core of the bibliographic collection housed in the William Mulloy Library (Biblioteca William Mulloy, BWM) at the MAPSE (Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert) on Rapa Nui is formed by the personal library of the famous American anthropologist William Mulloy. This library has one of the world’s largest public collections of books, articles, periodical publications, maps, and photographs, and also includes...
multifaceted features the name Santiago Pakarati; however, there
is not a single inscription or signature on the back of
manuscript’s pictures that may clarify its provenance.
To simplify further discussion, we will use the term
“Manuscript H” for the present document, continuing
Barthel’s nomenclature (1965).

The set of photographs consists of twelve 9×12cm
contact-printed images and the corresponding sheet
film negatives. We scanned the negatives at 1200 dpi
and reproduce them here for the first time (Figures
1-6). The line numbers were added to facilitate further
reference and discussion. The manuscript was written
on pages labeled “Oficinas Fiscales, Republica de
Chile”. The pages were removed from the original
binding and were held together (at least at the moment
of documentation) with a dark thread that is partially
seen in the bottom parts of Figures 3 and 4. Judging
from the size of handwriting and lettering of the
label, the manuscript was of ledger size (11”×17” or
27.9×43.2cm). At some point after the pages were
already completed, the document was cut in half, perhapsto fit into a smaller envelope. This may have
possibly facilitated the concealing of the document
in the epoch of strict secrecy related to Rapanui
manuscripts (Heyerdahl 1965:362).

When photographed, the manuscript was laid over
a black background. Each page was pictured from both
sides, yet under different conditions: one face was
documented directly over a black background (Figures
1 & 4); the rest of the pictures show stacked pages
(Figures 2, 3, 5, & 6). This difference explains why
Figures 1 and 4 feature numerous black holes, while in
the photographs showing the reverse of the same leaves,
they are not so noticeable. A careful study of paper
creasing patterns and holes proved that the photographs
document only four leaves bearing page numbers 7-10
and 13-16. The leaf with pages 11-12 is missing. Both
top and bottom page parts were documented for the
leaves with pages 7-10; we did not find any image
showing the bottom part of pages 13-16. The different
parts of the document feature distinct preservation: the
bottom parts of pages 7-10 are barely legible, while all
upper parts of all pages are in a far better state.

The text of Manuscript H can be divided into
several parts. Pages 7-9 contain a list of rongorongo
characters that were most likely copied from Philippi’s
tracings of the Santiago staff (1875). The captions
that accompany them have no relation to Jaussen’s
list, but they are similar to a part of the lengthy sign
from Manuscript A (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figures
111-121). The text of Manuscript H continues with
the extensive list of place names (pages 9-10) that
is consistent with the list recorded in Manuscript E,

Another interesting addition is a faint pencil
inscription below the words “hohora toou kahu
ritoitoi” (see Figure 4 for general view and Figure 7
for a close-up). Its analysis is complicated because the
intensity of the line is comparable with that of an ink
inscription on the reverse side of the page. The most
pronounced “ghost” signs “4”, “O” and “H” from
to page 9, lines 10 and 11, are marked in the figure. The
first word written in pencil can possibly be read as the
dest(ea?) / Esteb(an?), or as the Spanish word
este [this]. In the latter case, it may be a comment added
for one of the names written nearby. The second
c penciled-in word is less clear, yet it has the letter “a”
seemingly entering a syllable “Ha”, “la” or “ta”. It is
difficult to say where the second word ends, as there is
a contour resembling the letter “o” (or “a?”) to the right
of the “ghost” number “4” (Figure 7). Assuming that
the pencil inscription may contain a personal name, we
studied the 1918 census carried out by R.P. Bienvenido
de Estella for similar names, finding Estela Haoa
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Figure 1. Page 7 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
Figure 2. Page 8 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
Figure 3. Page 9 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
Figure 4. Page 10 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
Figure 5. Fragments of pages 13 and 14 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
Figure 6. Fragments of pages 15 and 16 of Pua Ara Hoa manuscript (image courtesy of the Biblioteca William Mulloy).
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who was 19 years old at that time (Estella 1921:68) and Esteban [Tepano] Rano, who was 13 years old in 1918 (Estella 1921:66). However, it is still difficult to confirm positive identification of any of these names in the pencil writing shown in Figure 7. The meaning of a scribble below the first word also remains elusive.

Pua Ara Hoa and the Rapanui Manuscripts

On the top of each page there is a name, Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu, and a page number. Pua Ara Hoa was an important person; the Rapanui surname Araki started from him:

“Araki is not the name from the Island, but a corruption and abbreviation of a Christian name (perhaps Heraclio, which is Arakilio in Tahitian) which was used as a surname to the son of Aro Purunga. This Araki [Arakilio Pua Arahoa] married a daughter of the French Du-Trou Bornier. The ancestors of this Araki belonged to the tribe of Tupahotu” (Englert 1948:55, translation from Spanish by the authors).

Barthel (1978:297) suggests that patronymic ‘a Rapu may be a modification of Arikilio’s father’s name: Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Aro Purunga → Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu Runga → Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu. His birth date is estimated to be around 1840, meaning that he lived his youth in pre-missionary culture and may have been elected a sacred birdman, adapting a new name of Utupiro:

“According to Mateo Hereveri, Pua Ara Hoa was versed in rongorongo, had knowledge of secret caves, and had the reputation of being a successful planter. He does not seem to have been familiar with the European alphabet…. “His last soil” turned out to be the leper station, where he died in 1912 or 1913. It was at the leper station that he came in contact with the teenaged Arturo Teao (approximately 1896-

1947). Pua Ara Hoa may well be the most important source of oral traditions, which he passed on to Arturo Teao… Pua Ara Hoa was the central figure among the korohua, a group of old Easter Islanders, who during the second decade of this [20th] century were the last living eyewitness of the pre-missionary era…” (Barthel 1978:297-298).

The year of Pua Ara Hoa’s death is uncertain; Fischer suggests a later date:

“In her field notes Katherine Routledge calls him Gwa-La-Hóa. He, too, resided with the lepers. Barthel… estimates his birth to be c. 1840 and that shortly before 1866 he might have become a tangata manu (‘Birdman’) for one year…. Though Barthel (ibid.) believes that he died c. 1912-1913, it is clear in Katherine’s field notes that her Gwa-La-Hóa can only be the korohua Pua Ara Hoa. Apparently he died before Estella’s census of 1918” (Fischer 1997:129-130).

Pua Ara Hoa’s name appears as a heading on the pages of Manuscript B (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figures 171-188), Manuscript E, and is also briefly mentioned in Manuscript A (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figure 133).

Palaeographic Analysis of Rapanui Manuscripts

Upon finding the third manuscript labeled with Pua Ara Hoa’s name, it becomes especially interesting to confirm whether all manuscripts attributed to him feature the same handwriting style. To answer this question, here we report the results of palaeographic analysis of all known Rapanui manuscripts. It is possible to identify several handwriting types that are shown in Figure 8, with page-by-page attributions of each hand per manuscript summarized in Table 1.
As one can see, Manuscripts A and C were written by several scribes, including both multi-page contributions (MS A1, MS A2, MS A5, MS C1-C4) and single texts (MS A3, MS A4, MS C5-C8). The remaining manuscripts usually had a single author; it should be noted, however, that Manuscripts D and G consist of a small number of fragments, which makes their single-person authorship quite expected. At the opposite end of the spectrum stands Manuscript E with over a hundred pages, also written by a single person (Barthel 1978:290). Thus, we have clear indications that Rapanui manuscripts were created by both individuals and groups. The multi-person authorship, however, does not imply simultaneous writing of the document.

In spite of a high level of secrecy surrounding the manuscripts, at least two of them feature fluent non-Rapanui handwriting. Manuscript B is annotated in Spanish (in Figure 8 we presented only the letters that appear in the Rapanui language). Manuscript C features a part of Jaussen’s list written by a skilled calligraphic hand MS C4; the hand MS C3 with a very similar letter shape apparently being his pupil, who started to copy Jaussen’s list and stopped after writing four pages. Interestingly, the teacher takes up and completes the writing. The evidence for this is seen in Heyerdahl & Ferdon (1965:Figure 157), where the initial three lines of the page are written by MS C3 but the remaining seven lines (as well as the following five pages) are written by the scribe MS C4.

The preferred writing tool for Rapanui manuscripts was a quill or pen, producing different stroke thickness depending on the pressure applied. The pencil was very sporadically used, mainly for adding brief notes (hands MS C5-7) or filling in rongorongo glyphs (Manuscript C, Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figures 153-157). The shape of the letters pronouncedly imitates printed letters. When the newly-literate persons transmitted the knowledge of writing to their own pupils, it is natural that they were teaching the same letter shape resulting in about a dozen similar scribal hands (Figure 8). As a rule, the manuscripts use lowercase letters throughout with occasional interspersion with capital letters. This is why for several letters we were unable to trace the uppercase forms, while the lowercase forms abound.

Manuscript A was written by about five hands (Figure 8) that can be differentiated by the shapes of the letters $g$ (rendering velar nasal), $t$, and $u$. The lowercase $g$ was seemingly the most complicated letter with its collar and loop meticulously rendered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Pages/ Figures</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS A1</td>
<td>Figs. 96-122</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list, list of the months, rongorongo sign list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS A2</td>
<td>Figs. 123-8, 131-3</td>
<td>royal genealogy, arikiti hopea, he timo, list of moon nights, rains and plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS A3</td>
<td>Figs. 129-130</td>
<td>Text Ko Hau Maka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS A4</td>
<td>Fig. 133</td>
<td>text about Pua Ara Hoa and Tori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS A5</td>
<td>Figs. 134-6</td>
<td>Biblical text in Rapanui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS B1</td>
<td>Figs. 171-188</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list with additional characters added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS B2</td>
<td>Figs. 171-187</td>
<td>Spanish translation of sign interpretations added to MS B1, non-Rapanui hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C1</td>
<td>Figs. 137-8, 147-152</td>
<td>Ko Makemake, copy of Jaussen list, names of seven explorers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C2</td>
<td>Figs. 139-146, 163-9</td>
<td>text about Kahu Mea, royal genealogy, Ko Ruhi, Ko Korou o Rongo, Ko Hotu Matua, Ko Tangaroa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C3</td>
<td>Figs. 153-7</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list, Rapanui hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C4</td>
<td>Figs. 157-162</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list, non-Rapanui hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C5</td>
<td>Fig. 149</td>
<td>calendar-related fragment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C6</td>
<td>Figs. 153, 157, 158</td>
<td>records related to moon observation and lines about Ure o Oho Vehi and ahuatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C7</td>
<td>Fig. 169</td>
<td>phrase “tagata cogu”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS C8</td>
<td>Fig. 170</td>
<td>recitation “I Anakena korua i mate ai”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS D</td>
<td>Figs. 189-191</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS E</td>
<td>Figs. 192; Barthel 1978, front piece</td>
<td>a lengthy tradition about dream of Hau Maka, visit of seven explorers and migration of Hotu Matu’a to Rapa Nui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS F</td>
<td>Bettocchi 2006c</td>
<td>rongorongo sign list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS G</td>
<td>Bettocchi 2006a</td>
<td>copy of Jaussen list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS H</td>
<td>Figs. 1-6, this paper</td>
<td>rongorongo sign list, place name list, royal genealogies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 8. Different handwriting types observed in Rapanui manuscripts (traced after Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figures 97-192; Barthel 1978: front piece; Bettocchi 2006b, 2006c, and; Figures 1-6 of this paper). The manuscripts attributed to Pua Ara Hoa (MS B1, MS E and MS H, highlighted) feature very similar handwriting.
by hands MS A2, A3, and A5; the scribe MS A1 was writing the letter g more fluently, yet without reaching a common script form such as that of MS C4. Letter t was written either with a crossbar intersecting the ascender (MS A1, A2, and A4) or set to the right of it (MS A3 and A5). The letter u is rendered either as uppercase U (MS A1, A2, and A3) or a lowercase u (MS A4 and A5). The diacritics seen in Manuscript A are acute accents (áéíóú), a macron (ē) and breve accents (ěōū). The pages written by the scribe MS A5 were possibly completed at a later date, because only this text features occasional attempts to mark glottal stops (Davletshin pers. comm. 2014). The appearance of the letter K with a crescent-shape attached to its arm is quite unusual. We conducted a preliminary search for English and Spanish typefaces used in the 19th century, but were unable to find a good match for this particular letter shape.

Manuscripts B, E, and H, marked with the name of Pua Ara Hoa, indeed feature the same handwriting, which is easily distinguished by the overall preference of disjoined strokes, most notably in the letters a, h, m, n, r, and t. The letter g is always traced faithful to its printed appearance. The letter t has an arm set to the right of its stem, in most cases separated from it. The letter u is predominantly lowercase. The uppercase letters are written with serifs, which are centered to the stems for A, E, I, P, R, and T but point outwards for H, K, M, U, and V. The use of outward serifs together with disjoined strokes forms an easily-recognizable “stencil style”, e.g., with the letter M looking as M (Figure 8, MS E). The preferred diacritics in Pua Ara Hoa’s manuscripts are breve accents: ā – MS B1, E, and H; ć – MS E and MS H; ć – MS B1, E, and H; ā – MS B1 and E. Acute accents are less common: ě – MS B1; ĩ – MS B1 and MS E; ć – MS B1 and MS H; ū – MS B1 and MS H. In some instances, a grave accent is used: i and ū – MS E. Some other manuscripts feature remarkably similar handwriting: MS A3 (with the letters m and n tending to join the strokes), MS A5 (featuring adornments on the apex of letter A, which are consistent with adornments added to P and R in MS B1; the strokes of m and n are disjoined, yet these letters feature centered foot serifs). The text mentioning Pua Ara Hoa and Tori in Manuscript A (Figure 8, MS A4) features disjoined strokes for the letter m, but it uses the letter t with a crossbar centered over the ascender, which is uncharacteristic for the handwriting seen in Pua Ara Hoa’s manuscripts.

Manuscript C was composed by several scribes. The hand MS C1 is peculiar due to the drawing of triangular serifs on E and T, which are also seen in MS D. There are slight differences in treating serifs for K and M, yet the shape of other letters of MS C1 and MS D are much similar, possibly belonging to the same person. Scribal hand MS C2 produced large fluent letters with several calligraphic variations of K and g. The letter t has the crossbar centered at the ascender. The letter u is lowercase except for the final paragraph of Tangaroa lore (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figure 169), written in small-sized letters. It features r with serifs and uses uppercase N, which do not appear anywhere else in the texts belonging to MS C2. These subtle differences may possibly mean a different scribe. The diacritics used in MS C2 consist of an extremely long acute accent on ū, which is very similar to that of MS A3 (letter ī, Figure 8). However, MS C2 and MS A3 do not belong to the same person because they have considerable differences in writing the letters g, r, t, and u.

Hands MS C3 and MS C4 were briefly discussed above. It is important to mention that the pupil MS C3 wrote the letter p (both uppercase and lowercase) differently than the teacher’s form; other letter shapes are quite comparable with MS C4, including an elegant uppercase T. The hand of MS C4 is remarkable for adding curved tails to word-final vocals (Figure 8). The handwriting of the pupil did not inherit this detail. The passages about moon observations, added in pencil to several pages of Manuscript C, were probably written by different hands. The list of months (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:Figure 149) has lettering that is quite similar to Pua Ara Hoa’s manuscripts, featuring disjoined strokes of the letter m and the letter t with a non-centered crossbar. However, the lowercase r lacks serifs and its general shape is closer to that of MS C2. The hand MS C6 is reminiscent of MS A5 in the shapes of the uppercase A and lowercase g. However, these hands have different preferences for the forms of t and u. The hand MS C7 includes a phrase tagata cogu written below the tradition of Tangaroa. The use of the letter c in place of a k suggests Spanish spelling influences. The final text of Manuscript C, i Anakena korua i mate ai, is written on a small piece of paper attached to the manuscript. It is singular in writing of the letter g with an open loop and the use of a circumflex accent on ĩ.

In the case of Manuscript F, we had a chance to study only the image of a single page with the heading “Kohau Piri” (Betocchi 2006c). Based on this limited sample, we were unable to confirm Betocchi’s suggestion that the text he Timo from Manuscript A (Figure 8, hand MS A2) features the handwriting of Gabriel Hereveri (Betocchi 2009b:40). Manuscript G, published by Betocchi, displays uniform line thickness and straight-segment forms of the letters K and V adorned with minimal serifs. This, together with the shape of the letter g, brings this handwriting close to MS C1 and MS D. The coincidence would be even more complete if MS G used small triangles to denote serifs on the uppercase E and T.

Several handwriting samples also contain numbers, presented at the bottom of Figure 8. The numbering
used in Pua Ara Hoa’s manuscripts stands out by a flat-based 2, a pronouncedly rounded 3, the number 4 with a foot serif, and the number 7 with a diagonal crossbar. The very same features (except for the crossbar on the 7) are seen in MS A5. The hand MS A4 differs further by the form of the number 4. The numbering used in MS C5 and MS C6 is different in the shape of / (without a foot serif), 2 (curved base), and 9 (with a straight arc).

Conclusions

Photographs of the Rapanui manuscript inscribed with the name Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu were discovered in the collections of the Biblioteca William Mulloy on Rapa Nui and are published here for the first time. The way in which William Mulloy came to possess these pictures is unknown to the authors. The set of 12 photographs documents only eight pages of the original document: complete pages 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as the upper halves of the pages 13, 14, 15 and 16. Every page is inscribed with the name of Pua Ara Hoa ‘a Rapu. The analysis of the scribal hands carried out for all known Rapanui manuscripts proved that all known documents inscribed with Pua Ara Hoa’s name are indeed written by the same hand. The final two pages of the discovered manuscript feature large drawings of the sooty tern (manutara) that most likely adorned the entire page from both sides. This is the only known large-scale illustration in Rapanui manuscripts. A detailed analysis of the contents of Manuscript H will be presented in the second part of this paper.

Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful Don Alberto Hotus (Consejo de Ancianos Rapa Nui) for interesting and constructive conversation about Pua Ara Hoa. A special thanks to Reidar Solsvik (Kon-Tiki Museum) for his great help with high-resolution photographs of Rapanui manuscripts from the collections of the Kon-Tiki Museum. We deeply appreciate fruitful conversations about Rapanui language with Olivia Hey Riroroko (Ilustre Municipalidad de Isla de Pascua) and Albert Davletshin (Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities). Many thanks to Valeska Chávez Pakomio (Biblioteca William Mulloy), Rafal Wieczorek (University of Southern Denmark), Mara Mulrooney (Bernice P. Bishop Museum), and Albert Davletshin (Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities) for their important help with bibliographic references. We express our deep gratitude to Cristián Moreno Pakarati (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile) and Georgia Lee (Easter Island Foundation) for many fruitful discussions, which helped to improve the present paper.

References

This article has been peer-reviewed. Received 26 February 2014; accepted 12 March 2014.