

Ascension: proposal for a reconstruction of Ure Vaeiko's *Apai* recitation

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The recitations of the Easter Island native Ure Vaeiko that were recorded in 1886 belong to the very small corpus of traditional Rapanui literature that has been preserved. Although the value of individual texts is disputed, the chants that were published as Atua Matariri, Eaha to Ran Ariiki Kete and Apai are generally considered to be genuine examples of so-called "Old Rapanui". Of these three, the Apai text is by far the most enigmatic, as it has been recorded and published in a way that renders it virtually incomprehensible. The accompanying attempt at translation is a confused narrative that appears to have only a fragmentary relation to the chant. This paper presents a tentative reconstruction of the original Apai text, together with a new translation. It is proposed that Apai contains an origin myth which intends to explain certain celestial phenomena regarding the sun and the planet Venus, set against the familiar Polynesian background of the eternal struggle between the brother gods Tangaroa and Tane. As such, it could provide valuable information on pre-missionary Easter Island astronomy, mythology, and literature.

Los recitados de Ure Vaeiko, nativo de Isla de Pascua, que fueron grabados en 1886 que pertenecen al pequeño grupo de literatura tradicional Rapanui que ha sido bien conservado. Aunque se discute el valor de los textos individuales, los cantos que fueron publicados como Atua Matariri, Eaha to Ran Ariiki Kete y Apai generalmente son considerados como ejemplos genuinos del así llamado "Antiguo Rapanui". De estos tres, el texto de Apai es el más enigmático, puesto que ha sido registrado y publicado de una forma que lo hace virtualmente incomprendible. La tentativa traducción que lo acompaña es una confusa narrativa que parece tener solo una fragmentada relación con el canto. Este artículo presenta un intento de reconstrucción del texto original de Apai y una nueva traducción. Se propone que Apai contiene un mito original que intenta explicar ciertos fenómenos celestes en relación al sol y el planeta Venus, comparándolo con la familiar historia polinésica de la eterna lucha entre los dioses hermanos Tangaroa y Tane. Esto podría proveer de información valiosa acerca de la astronomía, literatura y mitología pre-misionera de Isla de Pascua.

Introduction

The *Apai* text is thought to be one of the few remaining examples of traditional Rapanui literature. It was collected during the 1886 American expedition of the USS *Mohican* by Paymaster Thomson and his intermediary and translator, the Tahitian-born immigrant Salmon, in an attempt to find a key to the decipherment of the *rongorongo* script. Their source was an old man named Ure Vaeiko,¹ who was said to have been in the service of the literate king Nga'ara. In a single session that lasted from the evening of December 29 until the next morning, an initially reluctant Ure Vaeiko recited five texts to photographs taken from inscribed tablets in the collection of Bishop Jausen of Tahiti.²

The results of the session – the Rapanui texts and their translations – were published in Thomson's Smithsonian report of 1891, together with pictures

and drawings of tablets. Although each recitation is ascribed to a specific artifact, it is doubtful whether these associations are correct. The point is of minor importance, however, since it is generally accepted that Ure Vaeiko was not reading the inscriptions but reciting from memory (Fischer 1997:92). Thomson (1891:516) himself already came to this conclusion when he observed that changing the photographs did not cause an interruption of the recitation.

Unfortunately, the original notes have disappeared, the printed text is full of errors, the meaning of much of the Rapanui texts is obscure, and the English translations waver between very free and totally unreliable. This sad state of affairs has been attributed to the unfavorable circumstances surrounding both the recording and the publishing process. Doubts have been raised on the reliability of the memory of the informant,

given the fact that he was already 83 years old at the time and that he was offered alcohol to overcome his unwillingness to share his knowledge of the unchristian *rongorongo* writing. The late and long hours of the meeting and the obvious haste with which Salmon – stretched out on the floor of a simple cabin – had to take his notes and produce the English translation were another complicating factor. Although Salmon spoke Rapanui and had acquainted himself with the remains of traditional Easter Island culture, he had to record Ure Vaeiko's chanting going by ear, without the help of a dictionary or established spelling rules, and he had to interpret it from what the old man was able to explain.

These difficulties were greatly aggravated by the careless way in which Salmon's notes – or perhaps Thomson's manuscript – were converted into print at the Smithsonian Institution. The editing and typesetting of the text clearly indicate an unfamiliarity with Polynesian languages and Thomson probably never had the opportunity to correct the proofs (cf. von Heine Geldern 1938:826-831, 844-847; Fischer 1997:85-103).

Scholarly attention has been primarily drawn to the texts labeled *Atua Matariri* (Métraux 1940:320-324; Fischer 1997:94-100) and *Eaha to Ran Ariiki Kete* (Métraux 1937:52-54, 1940:133-134). Two other, shorter texts have been dismissed as modern-type songs (Routledge 1919:248; Fischer 1997:100-101) and the by far longest text entitled *Apai*, supposedly recited to pictures of tablet Keiti (Thomson 1891:517-520), has been judged as too corrupt to be interpreted with a reasonable chance of success. Von Heine-Geldern (1938:847), however, believed that in spite of the errors in recitation, notation, and translation, *Apai* was probably the most interesting, not only of Thomson's collection but of all preserved Rapanui texts. Although he did not clarify what led him to this opinion and never published anything further on the subject, his appraisal has been shared by other researchers.³ Barthel (1959:168), for example, included *Apai* in the group of precious Rapanui traditions which were handed down as *rongorongo* tablet chants, while at the same time characterizing the text as “heavily distorted, not yet adequately edited, English translation unusable” (1959:171, en. 46; my translation). He, too, failed to publish anything further on the enigmatic text.

This study seeks to remedy this unsatisfactory situation by presenting a reconstruction of the original text and an annotated translation. It will hopefully demonstrate that the interpretation of *Apai* is not as hopeless an undertaking as has hitherto been thought.

Story

The *Apai* text relates an episode from the ongoing cosmic struggle between the Polynesian gods Tangaroa, the lord of the ocean and its inhabitants, who is also

often associated with the night and the underworld, and his brother Tane, who manifests himself in the sun, in birds and forests, i.e., in the opposite domains of land, sky, and light. Tane is also connected to fertility and appears in several Polynesian traditions as creator of mankind. His name, however, is not found in traditional Easter Island myth, probably because his properties were transferred to other deities such as Makemake (Métraux 1940:314). In the beginning of *Apai*, he appears as Teko, a personage who also occurs in the well-known legend of Tangaroa's landing at Tongariki in the guise of a seal (Métraux 1940:310-311). After Tangaroa's attempt to make himself king of the island has met with an unfortunate end in the earth oven of his subjects-to-be, it is his brother “Teko with the long legs” who comes striding over the ocean to look for him. As the myth states that Tangaroa's *mana* was “over the sea” while that of his brother was “over the land”, it is not difficult to recognize in the latter the “Sky Propper” of Māori fame. The *Apai* text confirms this identification by presenting the Teko figure as a personification of the sun (which will be written here as “Sun”). The provenance of his long legs becomes apparent as they are referred to as *tokotokona to raa*, “the beams of the Sun” (line 105). According to Best (1923:107), the Māori scholar Hare Hongi stated that “Tane poled or propped up the heavens with his long pillars or shafts of light, hence his name of Tane toko rangi. The word toko denotes a pole or prop, also ‘to prop up,’ also a ray of light.” Interestingly, the epithet appears on Easter Island as the name *Tokoterangi* in Métraux's list of kings (1940:Table 2, opp. 90).

The story of *Apai* begins with a fishing Teko who accidentally catches the beautiful daughter of Tangaroa and becomes infatuated with her. Unfortunately, his attempt to transfer her from the depth of the ocean to his realm in the sky proves disastrous, as the girl cannot survive in his bright light. Although the affection is apparently mutual, she is forced to return to the water as her admirer is unable to control his radiance. When the girl seeks the help of her father for her desire to leave the water, Tangaroa proposes to hang her as a star in the firmament. To keep her safe, however, he intends to ban her lover from the sky. An enraged Sun then attacks the ocean in an attempt to abduct the girl by force, but he is quickly made aware of some of its formidable denizens such as the shark and the octopus. After some arguing, a compromise is reached: Tangaroa's daughter will be positioned close to the Sun, but she will only appear in the sky when the Sun is not powerful enough to do her harm, i.e., before sunrise and after sunset. While the Sun follows his path through the sky, she will return to the safety of the ocean. The chant ends with Tangaroa creating the Milky Way to guide his daughter to her place among the stars.

Origin

The inspiration for this mythopoetic narrative clearly came from the observation of certain astronomical phenomena – in particular the movements of the sun and the planet Venus. The orbit of Venus lies inside that of the Earth, which means that to an earthly observer, the planet never ventures more than about four hours or 47 degrees from the sun. The “impossible love affair” between the sun god and the photophobic daughter of Tangaroa in the *Apai* story elegantly explains why the sun and the planet are never seen together in the sky, despite the fact that they apparently stand in such close relationship to each other.

The girl is called a *tapairu*, which is a widespread Polynesian title for the (firstborn) daughters of royalty. It is also the name for certain classes of fairies who were renowned for their great beauty (Tregear 1891:470). These usually female supernatural beings are often associated with bodies of water and described as fearful of daylight (e.g., Gill 1876:256-258, 265).

Gill (1876:256) translates *tapairu* as “peerless one”, a description which is also very fitting for Venus, at her maximum visible magnitude by far the most brilliant celestial body after the sun and moon (Kelley & Milone 2011:38). Moving from inferior conjunction to superior conjunction with the sun, the planet is seen in the east preceding the rising sun as the “Morning Star” until she disappears in the sunlight. The text describes how the Sun promises not to rise until the rooster’s morning crow, thus allowing the *tapairu* to spend some time with him outside the sea. When the Sun’s harmful light intensifies above the horizon, she leaves the sky, apparently returning to her father’s care while the Sun runs his daily course.

When from the earth’s point of view Venus appears on the other side of the sun – moving from superior to inferior conjunction – the planet becomes visible as the “Evening Star”. After sunset, she appears in the western sky and starts moving towards the horizon, following in the wake of her “partner”. In the chant, Tangaroa enables his daughter to ascend after darkness has set in: “When the stars come together, you will hang among them” (lines 79-80; 88-89). She then disappears below the horizon into the “jaws” of her father, the ocean, waiting to rise again. This setting of the sun and Venus is described by Tangaroa with the words: “You will (both) grow dark in the West” (line 181).

The descriptions in *Apai* match the characteristic Venusian positions and movements in relation to the solar trajectory in a way that an identification of the *tapairu* with the moon, a superior planet or a bright star does not. The only substantial adjustment made by the story is the “alignment” of the complete synodic period of the planet, spanning an average of 584 days, and the twenty-four hour cycle of the sun.

This connection of the *tapairu* to the whole period provides an interesting piece of information regarding pre-contact astronomical knowledge as it shows that the “Morning Star” appearing in the eastern sky and the “Evening Star” of the west were recognized as the same celestial object. This is apparently contradicted by the existence of two different Rapanui names for Venus, *hetuu popohanga* (“Morning Star”) and *hetuu ahiahi* (“Evening Star”). However, Kelley & Milone (2011:419), among others, have argued that this would be an unwarranted conclusion: “A group, or some members of it, may be well aware that Venus seen in the west as Evening Star is the same body as Venus seen in the east as Morning Star. However, that does not preclude using a different myth/analog for the two positions, which will make it immediately clear where Venus is.”

Reconstruction

Although at first glance the *Apai* text seems far too corrupt to allow for a reliable reconstruction, under closer scrutiny the situation reveals itself as less hopeless. The main reason for this is that certain regularities can be traced in the errors. This is especially facilitated by the many repetitions that are usually spelled and segmented in various ways (see the appendix on p. 37 for an inventory of comparable phrases). The incomprehensible phrase *tapui rurenga* in line 10, for example, can be compared to *tapairu renga*, “beautiful princess”, occurring in line 20. This *tapairu* in turn can be related to *tapaini* in line 29, *tapa iru nei* in line 32, *tapui rei* in lines 39, 47, 48, *tapo rei* in line 55 and *tapa iru* in line 108. In a similar way, words written as *rau* (14, 23, 105), *kan* (16), *rara* (46), *ria* (74), *ra* (76), *ran* (93), *râ* (94, 95) and *Ra* (182) can be equaled to *raa* (“sun”, modern spelling *ra’a* or *ra’ā*). When errors of this type are corrected, the text gradually emerges as a coherent and intelligible whole that provides a framework for some calculated guesses for the parts that remain obscure.

The inaccuracies, inconsistencies and omissions that occur in the published text can be divided roughly into two categories, the ones made “by ear” and those made “by eye”. The former resulted from Salmon writing down the words of Ure Vaeiko and the latter were added by the editor or typographer of the Smithsonian Institution misreading these notes. It is possible that some were already made by Thomson if he copied them into his written report. A partial transcription of Thomson’s lost manuscript exists at the Bishop Museum, which according to Métraux (1940:31) contains fewer mistakes than the published version. Unfortunately, judging by the comparison of Fischer (1997:585, en. 25), its fragment of *Apai* has very little to offer for a better understanding.

Salmon had to depend solely on Ure Vaeiko's pronunciation for the spelling of words which were unfamiliar to him. This has primarily resulted in an inaccurate and irregular orthography, especially in the notation of vowels that are phonetically close such as /o/ and /u/ (the perfect tense marker is written both as *ko* (66, 146, 158, 199) and *ku* (47), the inalienable benefactive case marker as *mo* (3, 55, 130, 163, 171) and *mu* (40, 104, 125)), /a/ and /e/ (e.g., *vake* for *vaka* (81, 91), *korue* for *korua* (181), *tamaru* for *te maru* (24)) and /e/ and /i/ (*te teri* for *tetere* (194), *kote* for *koti* (31)). There is some inconsistency in the representation of /ŋ/, which is usually written as "ng" (*tangata* (2), *renga* (10), *rangi* (103)), but also appears as "n" (*honā* (3)) and "g" (*uga* (198)). The glottal stop occasionally surfaces as "h" (*hura* for 'ura (23), *taho* for ta'o (12)), "k" (*kina* for 'ina (14)) or in a vowel change (*ouku* for o'oku (189)) and there are a few indications of vowel length, either by duplicating the vowel (*ariiki* (100)) or adding a circumflex (*â* (110), *râ* (94)).

This far from dramatic situation would have been relatively easy to correct had it not been seriously aggravated by the editing and typesetting process at the Smithsonian, which apparently was undertaken without proper background knowledge of Polynesian languages. The majority of these additional errors are confusions of similar-looking letters, particularly consonants. Barthel has already pointed to the substitutions "u" for "n", "t" for "k" (1957:65, fn. 31), "n" for "u", "o" for "a", and "r" for "v" (1958:218, fn. 2). The most common of these is the switch of "n" and "u" (examples of "n" for "u" are *tantan* for *tautau* (27), *hun* for *huu* (56), *hetun* for *hetuu* (79), examples of "u" for "n" are *hahiue* for *hahine* (101), *mahai* for *mahani* (186), *uapa* for *nape* (196)). Several other substitutions can be added to Barthel's set, such as "u" for "r" (*pauoko* for *paroko* (120), *uake* for *rake* (140)), "r" for "n" (*rei* for *nei* (32)) and vice versa (*tun ama* for *turama* (24)) and "h" for "t" (*hainu* for *tai no* (105)) and vice versa (*atara* for *ahara* (69)).

The segmentation of the lines into words is very erratic, something which may have been caused by Salmon's unclear spacing. It is also evident that the editor did not compare similar passages, which could have prevented a number of mistakes, e.g., *kari mao* (30), *kiri mai* (41), *kairi mai* (33, 50) for *ka iri mai*. Errors which appear to be the result of downright sloppiness are omitted letters (e.g., *tahri* for *tahuri* (11), *k* for *ki* (16), *mirunga* for *mairunga* (132)) and swapped letters and syllables (*heuna* for *henua* (113), *kakae* for *kakea* (162), *irnuga* for *irunga* (145), *kahonotake* for *ka noho taha ke* (99)).

In a number of cases, it remains uncertain at which stage the fault was produced. It cannot, for example, be excluded that *kakaha* for *kakava* (1) was already present in Ure Vaeiko's recitation, but it is equally

possible that he was misunderstood by Salmon or that the letter "v" was mistaken for an "h" by the editor.

With the exception of a few brief fragments, the accompanying translation by Ure Vaeiko and Salmon can only be qualified as totally inaccurate. The incoherent account patently shows that the informant nor his interpreter had any real understanding of the text. Their failure to recognize keywords such as *tapairu* ("princess"), *hapai* ("to lift up"), *hetuu* ("star") and *raa* ("sun"), demonstrates that the story's basic theme completely eluded them. Although the vocative constructions *e Tangaroa e* (52) and *e te ahine ariki e* (188) clearly hint at the presence of direct speech and different speakers, they simply rendered the text as a continuous narrative.

As far as a method can be detected in their approach, it must have consisted primarily of selecting words that looked familiar and stringing them together into more or less coherent sentences. Obscure phrases were occasionally turned into proper names (e.g., *Mohouakuta* (3), *Era Nuku* (68), *Manana Take* (102)), but in most cases, the remaining text was simply ignored. For example, in the fragment published as *piria tamu ara te uaua na Heke* (124-125), Tangaroa warns the Sun of what will happen if he tries to invade his ocean territory and should be read as *piri ata mo ara te ua-ua na heke*: "(You) will encounter (my) 'shadow' if the octopus arouses (his) tentacles!" The translation "... the branches were laced together like muscles. Heke was the builder of these roads" is clearly constructed around the selection of *piri* ("to come together"), *tama* ("stick"), *ara* ("road"), and *uaua* ("muscles"), with complete disregard for word order and other rules of grammar. Where "triggers" of this type were absent, this procedure ran into problems, as can be seen in the two places where the translation is interrupted by the remark that the meaning of a particular segment had been forgotten (Thomson 1891:519). The first of these gaps can be traced to lines 110-112, describing the attack of the manta ray or *haahaarua*, a word that was evidently no longer understood. As a result, the surrounding text failed to offer anything intelligible and the passage was therefore declared to have been written "in some ancient language."

Presentation

The published chant is reproduced here unaltered, except for the segmentation of the lines and some words that were erroneously joined together (the latter's separation is indicated by a hyphen enclosed in parentheses). In the reconstructed text, the types of errors discussed above have been corrected as much as possible. To facilitate the comparison of original and reconstruction, no further attempt has been made to correct or modernize the spelling. Another

consideration for this choice is that for many words, the exact 19th century phonetics can only be guessed at. To suggest otherwise, for the whole text or parts of it, could only impede future improvements. This means that the glottal stop which was only gradually introduced in 20th century transcriptions remains absent and that /ŋ/ is written as “ng”. Stress and vowel length are likewise left unmarked. Words that for other reasons deviate from the spellings in the vocabularies of Churchill (1912),⁴ Fuentes (1960), and Englert (1978), and those that do not appear in these works, are annotated. The scarce and random punctuation of the original (commas, full stops, dashes) has been omitted, as well as the occasional capital letter – except for those in proper names. Words of which the reconstruction is very uncertain are followed by a question mark enclosed in parentheses.

The *Apai* text consists mainly of the conversation between the three characters who have already been discussed: Tangaroa, the god of the ocean, who is also referred to as “god” and “king”, his daughter, whose title *tapairu* has been translated as “princess”, and her admirer, the sun god, who appears in the beginning as “Teko”, but for the rest is alternately called “sun” and “god”. Their discussion is interspersed by a number of explanatory segments in which an anonymous, uninvolved, and all-knowing fourth “voice” narrates the developments that are not discussed by the *dramatis personae*. These parts are helpful to distinguish between the different speakers, as these are

not indicated separately in the text. The lines of this “narrator” are marked in the translation by “N”.

Since the “translation” of Ure Vaeiko and Salmon is of very little value, it does not need to be reproduced here. Where it is of use to correct the published chant, this is mentioned in the notes. The proposed translation has been kept very close to the reconstructed Rapanui text and may therefore appear somewhat awkward at times. The word order in most of the sentences that have an object is VOS. The translation uses the passive voice for these verbs to emphasize the deviation from the standard VSO order (with the object marked by “i”) and to draw attention to the infrequent presence of agentive “e”. For the purpose of readability, omitted subjects and objects have been added where appropriate, as well as a number of possessive pronouns, conjunctions, and interjections (all enclosed in parentheses). Alternatives to some uncertain interpretations are presented in the notes.

The process of reconstruction has been focused on extracting meaning while staying as close to the original text as possible. For this reason and due to the fact that so much about the phonetics of the old language is uncertain, no attempt has been made to fit the text into any of the metrical schemes which have been proposed for Polynesian chants, such as the so-called “Rule of Eight”. The impact that such an approach would have on the text is very clearly illustrated by Fischer’s metrical reconstruction of the *E timo te akoako* chant (1994:425-434).

The *Apai* text

Thomson (1891:517-518)	Reconstruction	Translation
1 Timo te kakaha piki apai te roria aruki e tangata Mohonākuta mohonga matangi e iri	timo te kakava piki hapai te rori a ariki e tangata mo onga kuta mo onga matangi e iri	Princess: (My) chest is pierced by cramps! N: Is the noose on the princess pulled up by a man? If (she) sees the foam, if (she) sees the air, (she) must be going up! Teko is there pulling up the “fish”!
5 apai ia ra Techo i te ika mahoi rua matangi apai tirori mahoi rua matangi tahoī te tha tahoī	hapai aira Teko i te ika mao i rua matangi hapai te rori mao i rua matangi tao i tea-tea tau	Princess: Leave (me) alone because the air makes (me) sick! N: (He) goes on pulling up the noose! Princess: Leave (me) alone because the air makes (me) sick! (My) fairness will be charred by (your) attacks!
10 hakavirri ia tapui rurenga tahri te ika tahoī te ata e tau ira tau na mimi hara rau kina ata rangi	haka-viri ia tapairu renga tahuri te ika tao i tea-tea e tau ira tau ana mimi hara Raa ina atarangi	N: The beautiful princess causes him to drop (her). The “fish” returns (to the water). Princess: (My) fairness will be charred by (your) attacks there! (It) will be affected if (you) shower (me)!
15 no no tupa kan k maka reva atea e tau ira matuku hara atarangi	noho no topa Raa ki mata ravaa tea e tau ira matakuku hara atarangi	The sunlight is wrong (for me), there is no shadow! (I) will stay (in the water) (or) the sunlight will fall on (my) figure! N: (Her) fairness will be taken away by (his) attacks there! (She) will be in danger (because) there is no shadow!
20 no no tapairu renga ava ki hoa(-) to. Houa kata-kata hura matini rau	noho no tapairu renga ava ki hoa too oona kata-kata ura ma tini Raa	The beautiful princess stays (under water), far away from (her) admirer. (It) takes away her joy, (but) (she) will be burned with the Sun right overhead!

hanga tamaru kia tun ama	hanga te maru ki turama	Tangaroa:(She) needs the shadow against (your) flares!
25 tavake	taha ke	(You) will stay apart!
toto tunmakeuka	toto turama ki uka	Those flares are harmful for the girl!
tantan mea te kura.	tau-tau mea te kura	People are very much affected by (your) light!
Ki hi	ki hihi	When (you) shine,
honga te kura e aku tapaini	onga te kura e aaku tapairu	the light will be seen by my princess!
30 kari mao aku hoa-hoa	ka iri mai aaku hora-hora	Sun: When my radiance appears,
tae kote kura	tae koti kura	the light will not be interrupted!
mata ki rei aaku tapa iru nei	mataki nei aaku tapairu nei	Tangaroa:(Then) my princess will see (it)!
kairi mai aku hora-hora	ka iri mai aaku hora-hora	Sun: When my radiance appears,
tae kote kura.	tae koti kura	the light will not be interrupted!
35 Mata ki rei mata ku	mataki nei matakū	Tangaroa:(I) see the danger
haka iri mara(-)	haka-iri maru	(so) (I) will raise the shadows!
i matairi maru	i mataki iri maru	When (you) look at (her), the shadows will go up!
matai maru	mataki maru	Sun: (I) am looking at the shadows!
ka irira tapui rei tapu(-)	ka iri ra tapairu tapu	When (I) rise, the princess is taboo!
40 i ranga muku	i ranga mooku	(She) is banished for me!
kiri mai aku hoa-hoa	ka iri mai aaku hora-hora	When my radiance appears,
tae kote kura.	tae koti kura	the light will not be interrupted!
Mata ki rei mata ku	mataki nei matakū	Tangaroa:(I) see the danger
haka iri maru	haka-iri maru	(so) (I) will cause the shadows to go up!
45 matai maru	mataki maru	(You) will be looking at the shadows
matai rara	mataki Raa	(or) (she) will see the sunlight!
ku uira tapui rei	ko ui ra tapairu	Sun: (I) am looking for the princess,
tapui rei tapu	tapairu tapu	(but) the princess is taboo!
ranga muku	ranga mooku	(She) is banished for me
50 kairi mai aku hora-hora	ka iri mai aaku hora-hora	when my radiance appears!
kapainga mai.	ka hapainga mai	Princess: When (he) lifts (me) up,
E. tangaroa te	e Tangaroa e	o Tangaroa,
mare kura	more kura	the light will wound (me)!
hapai e haka ihi	hapai e haka-hihi	(He) pulls (me) up, (but) (he) creates those rays!
55 mo topa rei kura taku tapo rei	mo topa nei kura taaku tapairu	Tangaroa:If the light falls (on you), my princess,
hun atu arua	hūu atu rua	(you) will be burned by that other god!
tae haath rangi	tae atarangi	Without shadow,
ura rangi	ura rangi	the sky will be on fire!
hara-tua	haratua	Princess: (You) surround (me),
60 oaku matua	ooku matua	my father.
oaku ma tenga	o aaku matenga	Let's hope (it) will not be the death of me,
otae ahiri noa	o tae iri no a	because (I) will never go up!
ranga ki te rangi	ranga ki te rangi	Tangaroa:(I) am going to send (you) to the sky,
no te munniri a rua	noho i te muri (?) arurua	(so) from then on (you) will dwell (there) together!
65 hiru te hetu takiri	huru te hetuu taviri	N: (She) will be like the stars going round.
ko mumu ana kia kake	ko mumu ana ia kake	When (they) come together, she will ascend.
mao-mao ake.	mau-mau kake	That ascent will bring (her there).
Haka tau Era a Nuku te atua.	haka-tau era a nuku te atua	That place there will be made hospitable by the god
Atara kahiria a uka hopua.	ahara ka hiri a uka hopu a	while that girl from the sea hovers (up there).
70 Tun haka maua kura.	tuu haka-maua kura	(She) will arrive (and) the sunlight will be restrained.
Tun te ha hei kura.	tute haahei kura	The light that circles around will be repelled.
Tun to tieuituiri kura.	tute tui-tui (?) kura	The light that stings will be repelled.
Tun te matangi	tute matangi	The wind will be repelled,
e ria a mangaro.	e Raa mangaro	the Sun will be tamed!
75 Tun tahake	tuu taha ke	Tangaroa:(You) will arrive (and) stay separate
oi taura	o tau Raa	lest the Sun affects (you)!
te hereunga taku ohu	te hereunga a taaku ohu	Sun: (That is) interfering with my trajectory!
tutuhinga tanku mato	te tuinga a taaku mata	(That is) banning my presence!
kapipiri to hetun	ka pipiri te hetuu	Tangaroa:When the stars come together,
80 tan aranga	tau avaenga	(she) will hang among (them),
noi ruga vake	noho irunga vaka	(she) will dwell above the houses!
noi runga. – Marua(-)	noho irunga maua	Sun: She and I will dwell up there,
ua ha heire mana	ana haahei ira maua	if we two circle there!
mahahine maua(-)	ana hahine maua	If we want to be together,
85 ira taake.	ina taha ke	(we) will not be separated (by you)!
Te hereunga taku ohu	te hereunga a taaku ohu	(That is) interfering with my trajectory!

	te tuinga taku mata mata ka pipiri te hetu tau avanga	te tuinga a taaku mata-mata ka pipiri te hetuu tau avaenga	(That is) banning my presence!
90	no iringa vake-vake. No iri uga vake rei mana(-) na hahinie E te mai ran o tun e katau, râ, ka piapiri râ e te marai(-) oturi e ka(-) kapura e kahakpiri e kahonotake	noho irunga vaka-vaka noho irunga vaka nei maua ana hahine eete mai Raa o tuu e ka tau Raa ka pipiri Raa eete mai Raa o tuki e ka ka pura e ka haka-piri e ka noho taha ke	Tangaroa: When the stars come together, (she) will hang among (them), (she) will dwell above the houses! Sun: We both will dwell above the houses!
100	mate aa tapu onote ariiki no Manana hahiue no Mana(-) na hahiue no Mananatake a nira mai te rangi kai a ku ia umika	mate a tapu no o te ariki momaua ana hahine no maua ana hahine no maua ina taha ke anira mai te rangi kai a ko ia mo ika	Tangaroa: If (you) go near (her), (you) will upset (her), Sun, because (she) will be hit by (your) aggressive fire, Sun! When (you) come close (to her), Sun, (you) will upset (her), Sun, because (she) will be corrupted by (your) fire! Sun: (I) must shine but (I) must (also) be close (to her)!
105	uri te hainu tokotokona to rau e nui a tapu te tai nate ariiki. E. hopu a ia e tapu te tai no te tapa iru e kore kaukau	huri te tai no tokotokona to Raa e nui a tapu te tai na te ariiki e hopu a ia e tapu te tai no te tapairu e kore kaukau	Tangaroa: (You) must stay apart! Sun: Any taboo regarding the princess will be powerless for us, if we want to be together! If we want to be together, (we) will not be separated! N: Immediately he attacks from the sky to get (his) "fish"!
110	â ia haharua tau kapa tau kaiugoh i te an mata, heuna mariunga te hou	aa ia haahaarua tau kapa tau hai ngutu ite ana mata henua mairunga te hou	The whole sea is disturbed by the beams of the Sun, (but) the taboo is enforced by the sea of the king. He dives down, (but) the sea of the princess is taboo. (He) is not going to swim (in it)!
115	i te an mataheune mariunga te houga ma tau arapeka hoa mai ia keho iti hiti aura	ite ana mata henua mairunga te hounga ma tau ara peka hoa mai ia keu iti hiti a ura	He will be surrounded by the manta rays! (They) will attack flapping (their) fins! (They) will attack with (their) beaks! Sun: (My) eye is seen by the earth! (You) will be punctured from above!
120	hiti apauoko hue taka haahaarua tau kape tau hai ugoto piria ta(-)	hiti a paroko hue taka haahaarua tau kapa tau hai ngutu piri ata	Tangaroa: (Yes,) (your) eye is seen by the earth. (It) could puncture (us) from above, (but) with this attack, the starfish will be aroused! It will be upset by a small movement! The crayfish will appear (and) the <i>paroko</i> -fish will appear! The manta rays will gather round! (They) will attack flapping (their) fins! (They) will attack with (their) beaks! (You) will encounter (my) "shadow" if the octopus arouses (his) tentacles!
125	mu ara te uaua na Heke i kai te hunue kura te nahoapu, pue hatataka i te an mata	mo ara te uaua na heke i kai te henua kura te nga hoa pu hue haka-taka ite ana mata	When the earth is attacked by (your) light, these friends (you) try to pierce, will gather around (you)!
130	mo tara haieka i te peka akatau o mirunga te hounga mo tara haieka. Panga tiorei nuku	mo tara hai hika i te peka haka-tau o mairunga te hounga mo tara hai hika pangahaa tiho nei i nuku	(They) will see (your) eye if (you) try to stab the starfish with (your) needles. (I) will incite (them) lest (they) are punctured from above!
135	horo papa tara na(-) ea ki i te pou tuu. Panga te orei nuku horo papa hoake	horo papa tara na hea ki ite pohutu pangahaa tiho nei i nuku horo papa hoa ke	If (you) try to stab (them) with (your) needles, the darkness will be thick in this place! The bottom of the sea will hide (them)!
140	mataue uake tahau te nauai e oho te nauai e rai te nauau nauai kino noho ava-ava	mataue e rake taha na te nanangi e oho te nanangi e rahi te nanangi nanangi kino noho ava-ava	Are (you) really going to stab (them)? Where then, when (you) are (only) seeing mud? The darkness will be thick in this place! The bottom of the sea will hide (your) new love! (Your) malice will be disciplined!
145	tauake te kete irnuga te niu ei ia hoa ko ni ni ei ia hoa o Rionou tona koake matone uake te nauai	tau a ka tetere (?) irunga te niuhi ehia hoa ko nini ehia hoa ko kio no too na hoa ke mataue e rake te nanangi	Are (you) really going to evade those bites? (You) must go past those bites! There will be many bites, vicious bites! (You) will remain at a distance! The sharks will attack until (you) retreat up there! How many (of your) loves flew off in sparks? How many (of your) loves became fugitives? Are (you) really going to seize another love? N: (His) malice will be disciplined by those bites!

150 e oho te nauai e rai te nauai nauai nauai kino nohi ava ava taua kate kete iringa te niu	e oho te nanangi e rahi te nanangi nanangi nanangi kino noho ava-ava tau a ka tetere (?) irunga te niuhi	(He) must go past those bites! There will be many bites! Those bites will be vicious bites! (He) will remain at a distance! The sharks will attack until (he) retreats up there!
155 haamatua nauai kino katangi te moko-moko uri katangi te moko-moko tea kohao kopirieuta moko-moko uri ua	haka-matau nanangi kino ka tangi moko-moko uri ka tangi moko-moko tea ohaho ko piri e atua moko-moko uri ua	(He) will be disciplined by (their) vicious bites! Tangarooa:(He) will regret taking away the darkness! (He) will regret taking away (your) fairness! Outside (the water) (you) have met with that god!
160 moko-moko tea takaia rangi kakaie hoki i te atua. Mohao haruru vai e	moko-moko tea taka i rangi kakea hoki ki te atua mo haho arurua vahi e	(He) will take away the darkness of the waves, (He) will take away (your) fairness! Princess: (I) will join (him) in the sky! (I) will be near that god again if (I) go outside (the water)!
165 kahihinga ma te touga(-) kapitia rangi moko-moko uri moko-moko tea kohao kopiri e atua	ka hihinga mai te Tonga ka piki (?) a rangi moko-moko uri moko-moko tea ohaho ko piri e atua	Tangarooa:(But) the both of you will separate when (he) starts shining from the East! When (he) climbs into the sky, (he) will take away the darkness (and) (he) will take away (your) fairness!
170 mamairi kauaha itu atimo eae arurua vori kahihuiua mo te Tonga kahuhinga ma te Tonga	mama ira kauaha itua ati mo ea e arurua vahi ka hihinga mai te Tonga ka hihinga mai te Tonga	Princess: Outside (the water) (I) have met with that god! (Your) jaws will open wide overthere! Behind (them) (I) will be waiting to rise!
175 nui kahinga i tongarou kapitia rangi moko-moko uri moko-moko tea	nui ka hinga i Tonga roou ka piki (?) a rangi moko-moko tea puru no kauaha	Tangarooa:(But) the both of you will separate when (he) starts shining from the East, (he) will become (too) intense (for you)! When (you) recline in the East, (I) will take care (of you)! When (he) climbs into the sky, (he) will take away the darkness (and) (he) will take away (your) fairness!
180 pruhu kauaha uri korueiha Hangarooa a Timeo eae e te Ra(-) ki ete roroe taua erua aaku manua. —	uri korua i a Hanga Roa ati mo ea e te Raa ki eete roro e taua e rua aaku manua	(Therefore) (my) jaws will close completely. You will (both) grow dark in the West! (You) are going to wait if (she) rises, o Sun, if (your) mind is disgusted by this quarrel!
185 Hakarongo noa i te reo o te moa e vai-vai mahauia ia ure roroi renga aha iho nei e te ahieue ariikie ouku ika na kio	haka-rongo noa i te reo o te moa e vahi-vahi mahani a huri roro ki renga aha iho nei e te ahieue ariki e ouku ika na kio	Sun: Yes, my thoughts are sick (of it)! (I) will always obey the voice of the rooster! That routine will separate (us)! N: (Tangarooa's) head turns to the beautiful girl. Tangarooa:What happens now, o royal maiden?
190 i varimariaria hopu(-) e hara koe e rara a eau i te taura hiku raverave a hiro kai te teri hepo	i vai mariaria hopu e hara koe e raranga e au i te taura iiku rava-rava a hiro kai tetere te po	Is this "fish" of mine really going to depart? (You) have been swimming in these still waters, (so) you may lose your way! (Therefore) I will weave this exquisite belt, streaked with many colors! (It) will not leave the night sky! You too will be hanging (there)!
195 e tao koe hoki uapa te ingoa taua ika ko mumu maranga ugaiatu ko pepuhu ko pepetangi.	e tau koe hoki nape te ingoa ataua ika ko mumu maranga unga ia atua ko pee-pee ko pee-pee tangi	(It) will be called our "fish"! N: When (the stars) came together, (it) rose up, (as) it was ordered by the god. (She) followed, (she) followed (its) call. (She) followed that call, summoning in the distance.
200 ko pepetangi taravi tavi. ko pepetangi tava taravi tava e hakanui	ko pee-pee tangi tara i (?) te (?) ava ko pee-pee tangi i te ava tara i te ava e haka-nui	(She) went on following that call in the distance, summoning in the distance: Tangarooa:(You) will become magnificent, you (going) into the mist, you (going) into the fog!
205 koe ki te ehua koe ki te kapua. Tun hitu hare ka more koe	koe ki te ehua koe ki te kapua tuu hetuu hare ka more koe	(You) will reach the stars, (they) will be (your) home! You must break free, (you) must ascend in (its) wake!
210 kapai tue.	ka hapai itua.	

Commentary

The language abbreviations that are used are: HAW: Hawaiian; MAO: Māori; MFA: Mele-Fila; MIA: Mangaian; MOR: Moriori; MQA: Marquesan; MVA: Mangarevan; PEN: Penrhyn; PN: Polynesian (reconstructed); PUK: Pukapukan; RAR: Rarotongan; REN: Rennellese; TAH: Tahitian; TIK: Tikopian; TOK: Tokelauan; TUA: Tuamotuan (in accordance with the Polynesian Lexicon Project (POLLEX), Biggs et al. 2013).

- 1 *timo*: MAO: *timo*: “to peck, as a bird”, “to puncture”, “to strike with a pointed instrument” (Tregear 1891:512).
- 2 *hapai*: according to Barthel (1958:20), the German archeologist K. Günther suggested that the chant’s name was taken from the fifth word, *apai*. The word is spelled as *hapai* in line 54. According to Fischer (1997:585, en. 27), *apai* is Rapanui *hapai*: “to raise, lift up”. *rori*: cf. MAO: *rore*: “snare”, “trap” (Tregear 1891:426); TUA: *rori*: “to strangle with a cord” (Tregear 1895:55). On Easter Island, sea eels were caught with a snare (Englert 1948:263).
- 3 *kuta*: the word appears only reduplicated in the vocabularies: *kūta-kūta*: “bubble”, “foam” (Fuentes 1960:773); *kutakuta*: “espuma”; *teatea te kutakuta o te vai kava i te vave*: “blanca es la espuma del mar cuando hay olas grandes” [white is the foam of the sea when there are big waves] (Englert 1978:183).
- 5 *Teko*: the name is written as *Techo*, which can be compared to Salmon’s spelling of *chiu* for *kiu* in the second line of the chant published as *Ate-a-renga hokan iti poheraa* (Thomson 1891:526). To my knowledge, the figure of Teko – whose name is rendered by Métraux (1940:311) as “Teko-of-the-long-feet” – has thus far not been associated with Tane. In an earlier published version of Tangaroa’s landing on Easter Island, the name of the brother is given as “el gigante Teteko” (Vives Solar 1918:418). This is inaccurate, since the name itself probably referred to his stature, as is also suggested by the attached article *te* and the entry *teko*, “hombre gigante” [giant man] in Englert’s vocabulary (1978:262). It is said of Teko that he was “of such extraordinary dimensions that only his legs could be seen, because the head and the upper part of the body were lost in the clouds” (Vives Solar 1918:418; my translation) and that “[h]is feet trampled on the earth, but his head reached the sky” (Métraux 1940:311). Relevant to the etymology of the name may also be MAO: *tekoteko*: “a carved figure on the gable of a house”; TAH: *teoteo*: “loftiness”; TUA: *tekoteko*: “to carry one’s head high”, “conceited”, “to strut” (Tregear 1891:504). Tane provided mankind with boats, fishhooks and nets to battle with the fish, the “children” of his brother Tangaroa (Grey 1855:8). Occasionally, Tane himself is portrayed as a fisher (e.g., on Mangareva: cf. Buck 1938:421;424;509). His sunrays were considered harmful for creatures living under the water (e.g., in the Māori legends of Tawhaki and the Ponaturi (Grey 1855:59-66) and of Rua-te-pupuke and Tangaroa (Best 1982:286-287)).
ika: the use of the term is twofold: being a child of Tangaroa the girl is a “fish” and in the figurative sense of the word she is the “victim” of Teko.
- 9 *fairness*: the beauty of the fairy-like beings called *tapairu* is especially connected to their light complexion. Tangaroa, to whom they often stand in a special relationship, is also described as “fair” or “red”, as is for example expressed by the name Tangaroa-mea (Métraux 1940:310). In Hawai’i, it was said that “Kanaloa was a tall god with a fair skin who usually appeared in human form, while his companion, Kane, was dark, with curly hair and thick lips” (Thrum 1923:260), and on Mangaia, fair-haired people were considered to be Tangaroa’s progeny as “the god himself had sandy hair” (Gill 1876:13).
- 10 *princess*: that *tapairu* is a title and not a proper name can be deduced from the definite article *te* preceding the word in line 108. The term also occurs marked in this way in the ninth verse of the chant *Eaha to ran ariiki kete* (Thomson 1891:523). Métraux (1937:53) translates *tapairu* in that context as “chiefess”. As the girl in *Apai* is the daughter of “king” Tangaroa and is also addressed as *ahine ariki*, “royal daughter/maiden”, in line 188, the translation “princess” seems appropriate. Englert (1948:285) mentions a Vai tapu iru as one of the underground holes in Roiho with fresh water. If the name originated as Vai tapairu, it would provide another example of the connection between these fairies and water.
- 14 *atarangi*: cf. MAO: *atarangi*: “a shadow”; HAW: *akalani*: “a heavenly shadow” (Tregear 1891:27). Although the word is very rare in Easter Island sources, it must have had a similar meaning, as evidenced by a chant about two *neru* girls: *i hiva oti nga uka a torio a hojata / eaha ana e uruuru pukao / atarangi ana / e tomotomo pukao veri*: “The girls Torio and Hoiata (are) in that remote place at the edge. Why would (they) be combing (their) topknots? That cave is a dark place! (Their) beautiful topknots will disappear inside!” (Rapanui text in Barthel 1960:844-845; my translation).
- 23 *ma tini*: cf. *raa tini*: “noon”; *ki te tini te raa*: “zenith” (Churchill 1912:260); *tini*: “(of the sun) to be right overhead” (Fuentes 1960:863); *he-tini te raá*: “estar el sol en el meridiano” (Englert 1948:310).
- 28 *hihi*: cf. MAO, MQA, TAH, TUA: *hihi*: “sunbeam”, “ray of the sun” (Tregear, 1891:66). In line 54, the word has the double vowel: *haka thi*, i.e., *haka-hihi*.
- 30 *when my radiance appears*: literally: “when my spread (of light) goes up”; cf. *horahora*: “to spread, unfold, extend” (Churchill 1912:206).
- 32 *mataki*: cf. *matamataki*: “to examine”, “to pry into” (Churchill 1912:226); MAO: *mataki*: “to look at”, “to inspect”, “to watch” (Tregear 1891:223); PN: *maataki*: “visit”, “inspect”, “observe” (Biggs et al. 2013).
- 36 *maru*: for Rapanui, the vocabularies have only *maru-maru*. Apparently, Tangaroa means to prevent the sunrays from penetrating certain places under the water.
- 51 *hapainga*: cf. *hapaiaga*: “elevation”, “to raise” (Churchill 1912:200).
- 56 *rua*: an alternative is *roa*: “tall”, referring to Teko or “far-reaching”, referring to the Sun.
- 63 *send to the sky*: Tangaroa is also encountered as creator of the planet Venus in a Tahitian tradition which tells of Ta’aroa installing Mercury and Venus as the left and right eye of Atea (the Sky) (Henry 1928:417).
- 66 *muu*: the word is synonymous to *pipiri* in lines 79, 88, 95. Cf. HAW: *muu*: “gathered together, of people”; PN: *muu*: “crowded together”; RAR: *muumu*: “cluster round”, “congregate” (Biggs et al. 2013). See also line 197.
kake: cf. MAO, MIA, TUA: *kake*: “to ascend” (Tregear 1891:120).

- 68 *nuku*: the word is present in most Eastern Polynesian languages for “place”, “island”, “land”, “earth”. Here, it refers to the sky or a place in the sky: cf. HAW: *nuu*: “a wide space”, “the air”, “the firmament”; MAO: *nuku*: “a wide extent”, “space” (Tregear 1891:271-272). In lines 134 and 138, the word is used for a deep part of the ocean.
- 70 *the sunlight will be restrained*: the taming of the Sun is a motif which is also found in the popular Maui-myths. Here, however, the intention is not to prolong the day but to give the *tapairu* the opportunity to appear in the sky. It is not clear whether Tangaroa is also thought of as the actual initiator of the setting of the sun, as is suggested by the Sun's utterances in lines 77-78 (repeated in 86-87).
- 72 *tui-tui*: the basic meaning of *tui* is to pierce an object (a bead, a fish) with a needle in order to thread it on a string, hence Rapanui *tui-tui* “necklace”, “string” (Fuentes 1960:870); *tui*: “coser esteras”[to sew mats], “hacer ristras”[to make strings]; *tuitui*: “ensartar varios objetos”[to string various objects] (Englert 1978:271). It is assumed that the word is used here to compare the rays of the Sun to (a circle of) stinging needles (see also the comment on line 130).
- 77 *hereunga*: probably from *heré'u*: “to hinder”, “to violate a higher disposition or order” (Fuentes 1960:737).
- 78 *tuinga*: it has been assumed to derive from *tui*: “to expel” (Churchill 1912:263).
- 81 *dwel above the houses*: an indication of the relatively low altitude of the planet Venus.
- 105 *tokotokona*: cf. *tokotoko*: “stick”, “cane”, “crutches”, “roller”, “pole”, “staff” (Churchill 1912:261). The word refers to the long legs of Teko, and *mutatis mutandis* to the rays of the Sun. Cf. Handy (1927:18): “*Toko* in the Maori dialect means not only ‘prop’ or ‘pole,’ but also signifies ‘rays of light’... doubtless in the sense in which English metaphor speaks of a ‘shaft of light.’ The significance of the use of this term in the cosmogonic account immediately becomes apparent in view of the fact that Tane, the separator of Heaven and Earth, was in the ancient worship the embodiment of sunlight.” In the Maui myths, the rays of the Sun are often referred to as his “legs”. The hero ensnares them in his ropes or breaks them off to slow his victim down (e.g., Luomala 1949:132). In Māori traditions, the initial “propping” of the heavens is sometimes done by the legs of Tane lying on his back (Grey 1855:4). If the *na*-part originated as the suffix *nga*, the nominalization *tokotokonga* could be interpreted as the “trampling” of the legs and the “beaming down” of the rays.
- 110 *â*: the circumflex apparently indicates vowel length. The meaning can be deduced from the use of *hue taka*, “to gather around”, in a similar context in line 121. Cf. Rapanui: *aa*: “to surround”, which may be related to MAO: *aa*: “drive along”; RAR: *aa*: “drive away”, “chase away”; TAH: *a*: “a method of catching men, beasts, or fishes, by a long reach or sweep; to sweep by forming a long reach to surround and catch men, beasts &c.; TUA: *aa*: “charge”, “rush”, “dash after prey” (Biggs et al. 2013). *haahaarua*: the word is written like this in line 121. To my knowledge, this name for the manta ray does not appear in other Rapanui texts. It is, however, widespread in Eastern Polynesia: HAW: *haahaalua*; MQA: *haahaa'ua*; MVA: *'a'arua*; PEN: *haahaarua*; PUK: *waawaalua*; RAR: *'aa'arua*; TOK: *faafaalua*; TUA: *fafaruua* (Biggs et al. 2013). On Easter Island, the meaning of the word was apparently forgotten – perhaps as a result of the demise of deep sea fishing. In modern times the animal became known under other names such as *pararaha*, a word which simply means “flat” and is used for all kinds of flat objects: “We have observed no rays of any kind at Easter Island. On questioning fishermen, however, some seemed to know of the presence of these fishes. The names they gave for rays were *pararaha* and *fei'i* (the latter of recent Tahitian origin)” (Randall & Cea Egaña 1984:6).
- 111 *kapa*: cf. MAO: *kapakapa*: “flap wings”, “flutter”; PN: *kapa-kapa*: “lateral fin”, “flipper”; REN: *kapakapa*: “flippers, as of turtle, stingray, whale; base of fish fins”; TIK: *kapakapa*: “fin, esp. lateral fin of fish, flapped in propulsion”; TOK: *kapakapa*: “(of sharks, stingray, turtle etc.) lateral fin, flippers” (Biggs et al. 2013). The word does not appear in the Rapanui vocabularies, but the reduplication is present in the *E timo te akoako* texts (cf. Fischer 1994) and also once in Metoro's chants in connection to a chicken: *e moa te kapakapa* (Barthel 1958:186).
- 113 *eye*: an alternative translation of *mata* as “face” is also possible.
- 117-145 *peka, ura, paroko, haahaarua, heke, niuhi*: this selection of sea animals is far from accidental. The *peka* or “starfish”, present as *péka-péka* in Fuentes (1960:819) and Englert (1978:224), is an allusion to the *tapairu* “fish” which is to be promoted to the sky as a “star”. The red colored crayfish (*ura*) and the dark *paroko* stand in the same opposition as the “red” Tangaroa and the “dark” Tane (cf. the note to line 9). On Easter Island, the *paroko* apparently stood in a special relation to Tane, probably because this small coastal fish – a blenny or goby species – is able to live outside the water for some time and to travel over land. An Easter Island myth describes it as the product of a failed attempt to create mankind by Makemake, Tane's reincarnation (Englert 1980:12;14). The manta ray (*haahaarua*) with its large “flapping” pectoral fins and its sharp, forward-pointing cephalic fins that resemble an open bird beak, is chosen as a maritime equivalent of Tane's birds, known to Māori as *nga aitanga kapakapa a Tane*, “Tane's wing-flapping children” (Cowan 1930:58). The bond between Tangaroa and the octopus (*heke*), which is explicitly announced by the god as his “shadow” is especially strong in Hawai'i where he – as Kanaloa – is god of the squid (Beckwith 1940:58). Large sea creatures, such as the shark (*niuhi*), were likely candidates to become Tangaroa's *ata*. In a chamber on a Tahitian cult site, for example, “an image of a whale, shadow of the god Ta'arua, made of the sacred puupuu (breadfruit) wood” was kept together with “another image made of the same kind of wood, representing the handsome blue shark of Ta'arua” (Henry 1928:133).
- 125 *tentacles*: *uaua* actually means “muscle”, “tendon”, and is translated as such by Ure Vaeiko and Salmon.
- 130 *hika*: the rays of the Sun are compared to needles, more specifically to netting needles. The net was one of the instruments provided by Tane to mankind in order to wage war on Tangaroa (Grey 1855:8).
- 141 *nanangi*: Ure Vaeiko's chant must have had *nanai* as the word is translated as “spider”. When the text's true meaning was lost, this apparently came to replace the original word *nanangi*, “to bite”, “to tear with the teeth”.
- 145 *niuhi*: the loss of the chant's maritime context accounts for the erosion of *niuhi* into *niu*. Coconut trees (*niu*) were – without much success – introduced in the second

half of the 19th century (Métraux 1940:159) and they became known to emigrants to other islands. The word, however, may have been already present in the Rapanui language if it survived as name for other nut-bearing trees and bushes (such as the extinct indigenous palm tree). Métraux (1940:323), for example, mentions that *niu* was also applied to the nuts of *Thespesia populnea*. This would explain why Ure Vaeiko and Salmon translated the word as “coffee trees”.

The transformation from *niuhi* to *niu* is also found in a text connected to the birdman cult that was recorded by Routledge and published by Fischer (1997:334-335): *kātu te niu kamaroa te niu kakeke te niu ito hiko pora o to hopu to manu te hapa hia he hawa tota ka hopu katito lito to manu i te ara roa rake*, which can be reconstructed and translated as:

ka tuu te niuhi

How they approach, these sharks!

ka maroa te niuhi

How they rise from the water, these sharks!

ka keke te niuhi

How they snap, these sharks,

i te hiku pora

at the tail ends of the reed floats!

o te hopu to manu te hapai

The birdmen’s proxies are thrown in the air!

hia he ava to taka hopu

How many will remain of this gathering of *hopu*?

ka tito-tito te manu

How they fight, these birds,

i te ara roa rake

on that long and terrible voyage!

- 162 *kakea*: alternative: *kake*: cf. TUA: *kake*: “to climb”, “to ascend” (Churchill 1912:213).
- 165 *Tonga*: the east is indicated as “Tonga”, apparently a reference to Tongariki in the eastern part of the island. Tangaroa has a connection to Tongariki as it was the place where he landed in his guise of a seal (Métraux 1940:310).
- 166 *ka piki a*: this reconstruction is uncertain as the only parallel phrase (177) is identical. There are, however, other examples of the confusion of “t” and “k” such as *hatataka* for *haka-taka* (128).
- 170 *kauaha*: the opening of the jaws in this line and their closing in line 180 suggest that Venus is swallowed by an enormous maw when setting below the western horizon. It is not clear whether this should be interpreted literally as a reference to Tangaroa in the shape of a giant sea creature, or simply as a metaphor for sinking into the ocean. Their lurking presence on the horizon could account for the name of a particular northeast wind called *te haha o te kauva’e*, “the opening of the jaws” (Charlin Ojeda 1947:86). A similar imagery is found in the Society Islands, where the upper jaw of Ta’aroa is said to rest on Bora Bora and his lower jaw on Huahine – islands that are some 80 km apart (T. Salmon 1904:3; as cited in Kahn 2000:11). Possibly, this jaw imagery developed in Eastern Polynesia out of a pseudo-etymological explanation of the god’s name as “Long Jaw”.
- 176 *recline in the East*: this is apparently the explanation of what happens to Venus when the “Morning Star” disappears in the light of the rising sun. The words *hinga*,

“to go down”; and *ro’ou*, “to take care of”, suggest that the *tapairu* returns to the safety of the ocean (analogous to the submerging of the “Evening Star” in the west).

- 181 *Hanga Roa*: the place name is used for the west in the same way as “Tonga” stands for the east. Tangaroa’s presence in western direction is also indicated by a west wind named Tangaroa-aria (Métraux 1940:54). According to Fornander (1878:43), in Hawai’i the west was known as *Ke ala nui maaweula a Kanaloa*, “the much travelled highway of Kanaloa.”
- 186 *that routine will separate (us)*: when the rooster crows, the sun rises and the “Morning Star” disappears.
- 188 *ahine*: this is probably not a truncation of Rapanui *vahine*, “woman”, which is considered to be a Tahitian introduction (Mulloy & Rapu 1977:19-20). The same word appears several times in Metoro’s chants with one occurrence in a similar vocative construction: *e te ahine e* (Barthel 1958:187). Possibly, the term stems from Mangarevan *ahine* (Tregear 1899:2). However, since Mangarevan also has *veine* (Tregear 1899:120), Rapanui too may have had a synonym for *vi’e*, as suggested by the word for “old woman”, *nuehine* (Churchill 1912:234) or *nuahine* (Fuentes 1960:802).
- 190 *vai mariaria*: this phrase is translated by Ure Vaeiko and Salmon as “still waters”, indicating that *vai* of the printed text must have been *vai*, followed by the reduplicated form of *maria*. Cf. *vai marie*: “still water” (Churchill 1912:225); *maria*: “calmness”, “fair weather at sea” (Fuentes 1960:784).
- 192 *raranga*: it has been assumed that a letter, probably “g”, was omitted from Salmon’s transcription. Cf. *raraga*: “to weave”, “to braid” (Churchill 1912:247). *exquisite belt*: cf. Barthel (1963:404): “kostbare Gürtel”. Some other Polynesian traditions associate Tangaroa’s belt with the rainbow (Scheffrahn 1965:224-225).
- 193 *streak with colors*: cf. *hirohiro*: “to streak with several colours” (Churchill 1912:205).
- 194 *tetere*: the translation of Ure Vaeiko and Salmon has “away, away” in this place, showing that *te teri* is actually *tetere*, the reduplication of *tere*, “to leave”, “to run”.
- 196 *our “fish”*: the Milky Way is in Polynesia often compared to a whale or a great shark. At least one Māori name connects it directly to Tangaroa: *Ika-matua-a-Tangaroa*: “Tangaroa is regarded as being Lord of the deeps of space; and by his ‘parent-fish’ (the Milky Way) we are to understand that it is this parent-fish which gives birth to many bright orbs or solar systems which are visible in space” (Hongi 1920:26). The concept of the Milky Way as a fish also appears in the improvised chants of Metoro. All nine *rongorongo* glyphs that are “read” by him as *goe*, i.e., *ngo’e*, “Milky Way”, depict sharks and sea monsters. Interestingly, all of these animals have gaping mouths and long tails (cf. Barthel 1958:177 (Bv2:754.76); 180 (Bv10:733); 181 (Bv11:735), 188 (Aa5:049f.477); 189 (Aa6:494); 191 (Cb2:730); 196 (Er6:730 (2x)); 199 (Ev8:755)). Of further note is the fact that in some parts of Polynesia, the Milky Way was regarded as the road of souls as they pass to the spirit world (Best 1922:37) and that Tangaroa was also related to death and to the underworld (cf. Scheffrahn 1965:274-280).
- 197 *maranga*: cf. MFA: *maraga/raga*: “rise (of sun, moon, wave)”; MOR: *maranga*: “arise”; RAR: *maranga*: “rise up”; TIK: *maaranga*: “to rise (to the sky, to surface of water)”; TUA: *maraja*: “rise”, “move upwards” (Biggs et al. 2013). Rapanui vocabularies only have *ranga*: “usan también cuando se ven muchos peces cerca de

la superficie del mar" [they also use this when they see many fishes near the surface of the sea] (Englert 1978:236).

198 *unga ia atua*: the reconstruction of *ugaiaitu* to *unga ia atua* is facilitated by Ure Vaeiko and Salmon translating this part as "was brought ... to our Great King."

205-206 *ehu* and *kapua*: the same combination appears at the end of other texts (e.g., Barthel 1960:842; 855), which suggests that it may have been a stock phrase or some form of traditional ending. It has been interpreted here as the mist hanging above the ocean through which the girl must ascend, pointing back to the foam that was mentioned in her first "ascent" (line 3). However, it could also be another reference to the Milky Way as Schuhmacher (1989:7) has suggested that Rapanui *ngo'e* is related to Hawaiian *noe*, "mist", "rainspray", and therefore means something like "star mist".

Conclusions

The reconstruction shows that the *Apai* chant does not require major changes in order to be understood as a coherent narrative. Although some parts may have become confused and certain details may have been lost, the story line is intact and the logical development of the events suggests that the text is essentially complete. This is quite remarkable given the fact that its actual meaning was not – or was no longer – understood by the person reciting it. Most importantly, it shows that there was little wrong with the memory of the 83 year old Ure Vaeiko and that he hardly could have been partaking too freely in "the cup that cheers", as some have deduced from the accounts of the session. To be sure, letting the man whom he considered to be his key informant on the *rongorongo* script become inebriated would have been very much out of character for Thomson, who emerges from his report first and foremost as a keen and purposeful investigator.

The fact that Ure Vaeiko comprehended almost nothing of the text is also the strongest argument in favor of the authenticity of the tradition. It suggests that by 1886 the chant had already been around long enough for its meaning to become forgotten, whereas the words themselves had survived – albeit not entirely without damage. Had the text instead been composed or imported in the post-missionary period, i.e., somewhere between 1864 and 1886, this rapid loss of understanding and the eroded state of many parts of the text would be difficult to explain. Of special importance is the presence of a number of terms which are rare or absent in the rest of the corpus such as *rori* ("noose"), *atarangi* ("shadow"), and *haahaarua* ("manta ray"). Since their meaning was clearly a mystery to Ure Vaeiko and Salmon, it is far more likely that they are indigenous reflexes than fairly recent loans. This is also supported by the remark of Fischer (1997:585, en. 24) on the text's "apparent lack of linguistic contamination (little Tahitian, no Mangarevan)."

Another indication for a pre-missionary date comes from the fact that Metoro, who improvised his chants for Jaussen between 1869 and 1874, apparently was familiar with some of the traditions recited by Ure Vaeiko. For *Apai*, Barthel (1958:218) has pointed, for example, to the presence of *ka pipiri hetuu tau vaenga* (*Apai* lines 79-80, 88-89) in Metoro's tablet "readings". Assuming that the line was not merely a stock phrase, the period of their collaboration – Fischer (1997:49) suggests August 1873 – would narrow the time span for a late creation date even further, i.e., to the few years following the start of Eyraud's missionary activities in 1864. It seems therefore probable that *Apai* was already an established part of Easter Island's oral tradition well before that time. This fact and the presence of an unknown etiological tradition which has much interesting information to offer on a variety of mythological and archaeoastronomical issues, affirm von Heine-Geldern's assertion that it could be the most valuable of Ure Vaeiko's recitations.

The Tangaroa myth of the *Apai* text may have been developed locally as a spin-off of the familiar Tangaroa versus Tane scheme. Although the conflict is not the central theme, it plays a much more important role than in the two already known Tangaroa traditions: in the aforementioned myth of Tangaroa's ill-fated landing as a seal, it has been reduced to brotherly rivalry and in the legend of the god fathering a son, it is completely absent (his brother is not even mentioned by name) (Métraux 1937:46-47). In the *Apai* text, however, Tangaroa still retains the features of a preeminent member of the Polynesian pantheon and his appearance as an enormous sea creature starkly contrasts that of the defenseless, human-faced seal, a degradation which may have been the result of the gradual decline of the institutions and activities with which he was traditionally associated, such as kingship and seafaring. The best evidence for this downsizing is the fact that he is actually killed by humans. The strange detail of his flesh staying raw (*mea*) in the earth oven may therefore have been a relatively late attempt to explain the no longer understood name of Tangaroa-mea. The myth also shows that the distinction between a god and his "shadow" had become blurred. It is therefore noteworthy that in *Apai* the octopus is specifically mentioned by Tangaroa as his *ata*, while it is clear that he himself is at the same time functioning on a different level – either as a behemoth or as the ocean personified.

Another interesting aspect of *Apai* is the sea god's extensive involvement in celestial affairs, which is only hinted at in the myth about Tangaroa's son. In that story, the child asking his foster mother for the whereabouts of his father (a typical Maui motif) receives the answer "There where there is a dark

cloud” (Métraux 1937:47). In *Apai*, Tangaroa is not only credited with the appearance of Venus and the Milky Way, but he may have been tampering with the sun’s trajectory and the fall of night as well (although this is less clear). His connection to the sky is also found in other parts of Polynesia: the moon, certain stars and constellations, weather phenomena, such as dark clouds, winds, storm, thunder and lightning, and the rainbow, could all be seen as manifestations of the god (cf. Scheffrahn 1965:223-228). The unlikely relationship of a daughter of Tangaroa and the Sun, an aspect of his eternal opponent, is not exceptional either. Best (1922:14), for example, has published a New Zealand tradition in which two of Tangaroa’s daughters by the name of Hine-raumati (the “Summer Maid – personified form of summer”) and Hine-takuru (the “Winter Maid – personification of winter”), become wives of the Sun.

The last point that needs to be addressed is the relevance of the *Apai* text for our understanding of the Easter Island script. From the fact that Ure Vaeiko was unable to read the *rongorongo* inscriptions does not necessarily follow that *Apai* is unrelated to the tablet recitations. It is quite possible that he connected it to *rongorongo* precisely because he had heard it recited from tablets during his employment at the court of *ariki* Nga’ara. Although it is highly unlikely that the chant itself is part of one of the few remaining *rongorongo* texts, Ure Vaeiko’s association could be an important indication that texts of this genre were among the inscriptions on wood. This opens the possibility for a structural comparison of *Apai* (and of Ure Vaeiko’s other recitations) and the surviving *rongorongo* corpus. If traditions similar to *Apai* have been inscribed on certain artifacts, we may expect to encounter some of the same characteristics, such as a rather abrupt beginning, substantial portions of direct speech, an exchange of dialogues without a specific indication of the speakers, repetitive patterns of shorter and longer sequences (some identical, others with variations), the use of certain stock phrases which are shared with other texts, a paucity of grammatical particles (in particular the pre-verbal tense/aspect markers) and transitive sentences that are predominantly VOS (of which the subject is not obligatory marked as agentive).

The so-called “lunar calendar” on the Mamari tablet shows that a certain amount of astronomical content is present in the inscriptions. The suggestion that we can expect this content to appear firmly embedded in a mythological context may well prove to be *Apai*’s most important contribution to the study of *rongorongo*.

Appendix (Inventory of comparable phrases listed by line number) on page 37.

Notes

1. Although at the present day the name is usually given as “Ure Va’e Iko”, I will use the spelling of Thomson’s report, as in my opinion it is very uncertain how it actually sounded. Routledge, for example, wrote “Uré Vai Iko”, and Englert – who usually included the glottal stop – “Ure Vae Iku” (see also Fischer 1997:88; 583, en. 10).
2. There are two accounts of the session, one by Thomson (1891:514-517) and the other by Cooke, the ship’s surgeon, who was present during the first part of the meeting (1899:699-700).
3. A more cautious position was taken by Fedorova (1978:10), who concluded – apparently from Ure Vaeiko’s and Salmon’s translation – that the *Apai* text was probably “a collection of several old myths and legends or fragments thereof” (my translation).
4. All the relevant entries from Churchill’s vocabulary have been checked against the original French in Roussel (1908). As the former have proven themselves to be accurate translations, I have refrained from providing the French source.

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Appendix: Inventory of comparable phrases listed by line number.

2	5,7,51,54,210	40	49	84	92,101,102	121	110,128	158	163, 169
5	2,7,51,54,210	41	30,33,50	85	25,75,99,102	122	111	159	156,167,178
6	8	42	31,34	86	77	123	112	160	157,168,179
7	2,5,51,54,210	43	32,35,37,38,45,46	87	78	128	121	163	158,169
8	6,73	44	36	88	79	129	113,115	164	64,172
9	12,17	45	32,35,37,38,43,46	89	80	130	117,133,136	165	173,174,176
10	20,29,32,39,47,48, 55,108	46	32,35,37,38,43,45	90	81,82,91	132	114,116	166	177
12	9,17	47	10,20,29,32,39,48, 55,108	91	81,82,90	133	130,136	167	156,159,178
14	19,57	48	10,20,29,32,39,47, 55,100,106,108	92	84,101,102	134	138	168	157,160,179
15	20	49	40	93	96	135	139	169	158,163
17	9,12	50	30,33,41	94	97	136	130,133	170	180
19	14,57	51	2,5,7,54,210	96	93	138	134	171	182
20	10,15,29,32,39,47, 48,55,108	53	208	97	94	139	135,148	172	64,164
24	26	54	2,5,7,28,51,210	99	25,75,85,102	140	149,155	173	165,174,176
25	75,85,99,102	55	10,20,29,32,39,47, 48,108	100	39,48,106,108	142	150	174	165,173,176
26	24	57	14,19	101	84,92,102	143	151,152, 155	176	165,173,174
28	54	64	164,172	102	25,75,84,85,92,99,101	144	153	177	166
29	10,20,32,39,47, 48,55,108	66	197	105	108	145	154	178	156,159,167
30	33,41,50	71	83	106	39,48,100,108	148	135,139	179	157,160,168
31	34,42	73	8	108	10,20,29,32,39,47, 48,55,100,105,106	149	140,155	180	170
32	10,20,29,37,38,39,43, 45,46,47,48,55,108	75	25,85,99,102	110	121	150	142	182	171
33	30,41,50	77	86	111	122	151	143	197	66
34	31,42	78	87	112	123	152	143,155	199	200,202
35	32,37,38,43,45,46	79	88	113	115,129	153	144	200	199,202
36	44	80	89	114	116,132	154	145	201	203
37	32,35,38,43,45,46	81	82,90,91	115	113,129	155	140,143,149,152	202	199,200
38	32,35,37,43,45,46	82	81,90,91	116	114,132	156	159,167,178	203	201
39	10,20,29,32,47,48,55, 100,106,108	83	71	117	130	157	160,168,179	210	2,5,7,51,54