

## NIKOLAI MIKLOUHO-MACLAY AND EASTER ISLAND

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The distinguished Russian traveler, scientist, and humanist Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay (1846-1888) owes his renown above all to his pioneering research in New Guinea, where he spent a total of over three years (Miklouho-Maclay 1982; Tumarkin 1982, 1988:13). In the 1870s and the 1880s, however, he also visited many other islands of Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia with considerable scientific results. The present paper surveys his contribution to the study of the traditional culture of the inhabitants of Easter Island (Rapanui).

This paper is based both on the published travel notes, articles, letters, and drawings of Miklouho-Maclay and on unpublished archival materials: the scientist's notebooks and the draft of his travel notes, which contains variant readings and phrases that did not get into the final text. Use has also been made of the reports of his fellow voyagers, Captain P. Nazimov, Lieutenant V. Pereleshin, and ship's doctor F. Krolevetsky.

In November 1870 the corvette *Vityaz*, sent to join the Russian Pacific squadron, left Kronstadt. By request of the Russian Geographical Society, the corvette was to deliver the naturalist Miklouho-Maclay to New Guinea. While the *Vityaz* was on her way from Copenhagen to Plymouth, the scientist visited several cities in Germany, Belgium, Holland, and Britain. He met eminent scientists and officials to obtain

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letters of introduction and consultations on scientific problems that interested him and bought needed expeditionary equipment (Miklouho-Maclay 1953:55-60; Nazimov 1986:74-75).

In Berlin Miklouho-Maclay talked with the well-known traveler and ethnologist Adolf Bastian, who drew the Russian scientist's attention to a published letter of the Chilean scientist Rudolf Amando Philippi in a German geographic magazine. The letter said that the museum in Santiago, which he supervised, had received two wooden tablets with mysterious writings on them delivered by a Chilean expedition aboard the corvette *O'Higgins* from Easter Island in 1870. Philippi quoted from the report of the head of this expedition, Ignacio L. Gana, who said that, hopefully, these writings, when deciphered, would help shed light both on the origin of the South Seas islanders and on their historical connections with the indigenous population of America. Gana said that the people of Easter Island no longer knew the content of the texts carved on the tablets--nor even the very designation of these objects (Philippi 1870). Philippi's published letter was accompanied by a photolithograph of an impression of one of the tablets, made on blotting paper and tinfoil.

"Bastian," wrote Miklouho-Maclay, "was absolutely positive that the carefully carved out lines of the signs were writings indeed" and emphasized the importance of this discovery because these were "the first writings to be discovered among the Pacific Islanders" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:47). Shortly thereafter, however, Miklouho-Maclay saw impressions from the same tablets at a session of the Ethnological Society in London, and the outstanding biologist Thomas Huxley, who demonstrated them, "had grave doubts that these boards should have depicted anything script-like." Huxley theorized that these boards could have served as a tapa-making stamp; he also believed that they might have been "accidentally brought to Rapa-Nui Island by currents" (ibid.). Such a wide difference of opinion between two recognized scientific authorities intensified Miklouho-Maclay's interest in Easter Island, about which, in preparation for his journey, he had read a great deal in books by Russian and West European navigators who had visited the island in the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century.

Leaving Plymouth, the *Vityaz* crossed the Atlantic and, following an anchorage at Rio de Janeiro, in early April 1871 entered the Strait of Magellan, thus finding herself off Chilean coasts. The twenty-day anchorage at Punta Arenas and several other stops in the strait enabled Miklouho-Maclay to make interesting observations of the nature and



**FIGURE 1. N. Miklouho-Maclay.** (Oil painting by K. Makovsky)

population of this area.<sup>2</sup> From here the corvette set out for Talcahuano and thence Valparaíso, where she stayed from 3 May to 2 June 1871.

A naturalist of many interests, Miklouho-Maclay took this opportunity to collect all possible scientific information about central Chile. He made many visits to Santiago and a number of excursions into the country's interior. Miklouho-Maclay met noted scientists and statesmen, including Belisario Prats, Chile's minister of internal affairs, who presented the Russian scientist with a set of geographical maps (Miklouho-Maclay 1871a:18, 27, 32, 34, 39). But the fact of greatest importance was his acquaintance with the famous Ignacio Domeyko, a foremost geologist, mineralogist, and ethnologist, who was then rector of Santiago University. "This fairly scholarly and useful figure in Chile," recalled Captain Nazimov, "noticed Miklouho and did all he could to acquaint him with all possible museums. . . . The same Domeyko announced in the newspapers the stay in Valparaíso of a Russian corvette aboard which the naturalist Miklouho-Maclay was setting out for the coasts of New Guinea with a view to remaining there to make a study of that country" (Nazimov 1986:77).

Hard at work gathering a variety of materials about Chile, Miklouho-Maclay at the same time strove to extend his knowledge about Easter Island. To this end, he went first to a Santiago museum that had by then received a considerable number of objects of Rapanui culture delivered by the Gana expedition.

Apart from a big idol made of black lava, the said museum has four bas-reliefs: two of them depict human figures of different sexes; one side of a third flat stone portrays a big human physiognomy, and the fourth bas-relief represents several animals: a fish, next to it an animal which looks like a rabbit hacked out near a wingless birdlike animal with a beak and five-fingered hands. Furthermore, the museum has a sphinx-shaped figure with human figures standing on their knees, their backs butting into each other. The bas-reliefs are made of soft volcanic tuff, which easily lends itself to processing.<sup>3</sup> (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:46)

These notes indicate that in the same museum and in the homes of several people in Valparaíso Miklouho-Maclay saw several little wooden figures also taken to Chile by the Gana expedition.

From Rapa-Nui have also been brought small wooden idols ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  metre high), which come from a later epoch and must

have been carved out with iron tools. Examining and copying these bas-reliefs, I arrived at the conclusion that they represented, as it were, an intermediate stage between the big centuries-old idols of Rapa-Nui and the later artistic works made of wood; this idea was suggested to me by certain highly characteristic features and details of the finish and the general character of the design and execution. (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a: 46-47)

Naturally, Miklouho-Maclay's particular attention was attracted by two tablets with writings. The Russian scientist found out that the participants in the Gana expedition had received those tablets on Easter Island from the French missionary Hippolyte Roussel (Miklouho-Maclay 1872b:79). Meticulous study of the tablets led Miklouho-Maclay to the conclusion that "the rows of signs are really writings and that these boards were not designed for tapa-making" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:47-48). He grew still more firm in this conviction after a long conversation with Philippi on 21 May. Miklouho-Maclay's notebook contains a list of prepared questions he put to Philippi and the answers of this Chilean researcher (Miklouho-Maclay 1871a:29-30).

Miklouho-Maclay did not confine himself to study of the objects and conversations with specialists. While in Chile, he himself acquired several magnificent samples of Rapanui art. Miklouho-Maclay's collections, kept in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in Leningrad, include nine objects from Easter Island (Miklouho-Maclay 1954:399, 400, 408, 411-413). These are little wooden figures *moai pa'apa'a* (coll. 402-1) and *moai tangata* (coll. 402-2), carved wooden depictions of a fish and a coconut linked by a cord made of human hair with a valve of a pearl-oyster shell (coll. 402-201 a, b, c), a spearhead made of obsidian (coll. 402-240), a massive wooden staff with a top shaped as a two-faced figure (coll. 168-192), and two tablets with writings, which will be discussed below. The authors of an article about the treasures of Rapanui culture collected by Russian travelers and kept in the MAE have traced the history of how Miklouho-Maclay obtained only two objects out of the nine (Butinov and Rozina 1958:307). However, the labels of the objects, filled in by the collector himself and thoughtfully preserved in the MAE, suggest that he obtained almost all of them in Chile: four (possibly five) of them were presented to him in Valparaíso by Captain Raymundo Pradel and the spearhead by Philippi. Only the time and place of the acquisition of the Rapanui staff, included in another Miklouho-Maclay collection, are unknown. But the attribution of this object raises no doubts.

After a month's anchorage in Valparaíso the *Vityaz* proceeded to cross the Pacific Ocean. In his letters to August Petermann, a well-known German geographer, and to the secretary of the Russian Geographical Society sent before the departure from Valparaíso, Miklouho-Maclay said that "from here the corvette will call at Easter Island, one of the most fascinating islands in the Pacific, and I hope to exert every effort to explore this locality" and "to make a few more additions to my recent finds" (Miklouho-Maclay 1953:68, 70-71).

Although Miklouho-Maclay must have received from participants in the Gana expedition certain information about the situation on Easter Island, he hardly had an idea about the scope of the tragedy that had befallen the population. In December 1862 Peruvian slave traders took away approximately fifteen hundred islanders. Almost all died in a foreign land. And fifteen Rapanuis who returned home in August 1863 brought to the island an epidemic of smallpox and other contagious diseases. The depopulation was accompanied by the progressive destruction of the local social organization, spiritual culture, and the entire traditional local life pattern. Contributing to this process were Catholic missionaries. The first of them, Eugène Eyraud, failed to gain a foothold on the island in 1864, but in 1866 he returned with Hippolyte Roussel. Shortly, the two were joined by another two envoys of the Congrégation des Sacrés-Coeurs. The missionaries converted the demoralized Rapanuis to Christianity, at least externally. They ordered the local people to destroy their tablets covered with mysterious signs as well as their wooden "idols" and other attributes of the "pagan" religion. As a result, the majority of these remarkable specimens of Rapanui culture were burned or hidden in caves and other caches (Métraux 1957:46-55; Heyerdahl 1976:44-47; McCall 1981:55-59).

In 1870 Jean Dutrou-Bornier, a retired French army officer, arrived at Easter Island to breed sheep. Soon he quarreled with the missionaries and kindled blood-spilling internecine strife among the islanders. In April or May 1871 the last remaining missionary, Roussel, was forced to flee from Rapanui, taking along over two hundred islanders (Heyerdahl 1976:53; McCall 1981:60-61).

On 24 June 1871 the *Vityaz* reached Easter Island and hove to off its western coast, at Hangaroa roads. Soon the corvette was approached by two boats with three Europeans (Dutrou-Bornier and his helpers) and several Rapanui rowers. Dutrou-Bornier said that he was going to establish a big sheep-breeding ranch on the island and that he had a partner, John Brander, a rich British merchant and shipowner who had settled on Tahiti. Dutrou-Bornier added that Roussel and a large group

of islanders had set out for Tahiti, that about 230 indigenes were left on Rapanui, and that the ship aboard which Roussel had left would soon come back for another large group of islanders. This story depressed the Russian scientist and his fellow voyagers. Later (from missionaries on Mangareva and Tahiti) Miklouho-Maclay learned further details and the background of these events. "The natives, seeing their dwellings burned down and their sweet potato plantations destroyed and thus intimidated by Bornier's actions, agreed to settle in Tahiti upon the condition that they would work for a certain period on the plantations which belonged to Brander, who, due to the smartness of his agent, thus obtained almost a whole island to breed sheep on and, on top of that, hundreds of cheap hands for his plantations" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a: 42-44).

Considering that "in this season Rapa-Nui, which has only open roads, offers no safe anchorage" and that Roussel, who was awaited by letters and parcels aboard the corvette, had already left the island, as well as the entire distressing situation there, Captain Nazimov canceled the contemplated landing. "In some two hours," recalled Miklouho-Maclay, "we got under way again, having seen only the outlines of Rapa-Nui, a dozen natives, and three sheep-breeders" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:43). Before the corvette set sail her officers had provided the three Europeans with "French and British magazines and cigars" and "shared with the natives linen, caps, and various baubles and parted with them like friends, wishing them all the best" (Pereleshin 1872: 12-14; Krolevetsky 1878: 185).

"I felt greatly vexed," wrote Miklouho-Maclay, "to be in sight of the island but to fail to visit it and to look at important evidence testifying to the islanders' former life, which makes Rapa-Nui the only island of its kind in the Pacific Ocean" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:45). Shortly, however, the scientist regained this loss, if in part.

Following a one-day stay off Pitcairn Island, on 8 June the *Vityaz* approached the Mangareva (Gambier) Islands and stayed there for six days. On the principal island of this group, which gave it its name, Miklouho-Maclay suddenly met Roussel and his flock. "These poor people, numbering about 250," he wrote, "taken aboard a small schooner, greatly suffered during the crossing, although it lasted not more than ten days. The shortage of fresh air in the hold and of decent food caused several of them to die en route; others, quite sick, reached Mangareva and two of them died already on the island" (ibid. :52). "The reason for which they have remained here," continued Miklouho-Maclay, "is that, brought to Tahiti, they were to have become workers (practically slaves)

at the plantations of Brander, the owner of the ship which had brought them here: whereas here they remained free people" (ibid. :52-53).<sup>4</sup>

Taking up quarters in a small seashore house, Miklouho-Maclay proceeded to gather information about the local people and, even more so, about the Easter Islanders. He not only had long conversations with Roussel but also, using him as an interpreter, questioned Rapanuis themselves about their lives in their homeland, their customs, statues, inscribed tablets, and so forth. The scientist also made several pencil portraits, including one of a Rapanui girl with a traditional tattoo (Miklouho-Maclay 1871b:4-7; 1872a:53-54; 1950:65, 67; 1954:30-31).

Answering questions about the wooden tablets with rows of signs taken to Chile by the Gana expedition, Roussel said many interesting things. "The natives," the scientist writes conveying Roussel's answers, "call them *Kohau rongo rongo*, which means approximately 'talking' or 'concept-conveying wood'. The natives went on to say that these tablets could yield information about major events which had taken place on the island and that the signs carved out on the boards had been clear to their fathers, who had been able to carve out similar signs; at present, however, not a single person who could make out these signs is left on Rapa-Nui" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:48).<sup>5</sup>

Miklouho-Maclay continued his interviews and observations during an eleven-day anchorage of the *Vityaz* in the Papeete harbor, Tahiti, at the end of July 1871. Regrettably, the scientist had no time to write about his stay on this island for his travel notes (the Rapanui section cites only some of the data about the tablets he saw on Tahiti). Therefore in this particular case our main source of information is one of his notebooks. The most interesting entries tell about his meetings with Monseigneur Jaussen, a Catholic bishop whose official title was *Évêque d'Axieri, Vicaire Apostolique de Tahiti* (Miklouho-Maclay 1871b:8, 20, 22).

Florentin Étienne ("Tepano") Jaussen holds a notable place in the history of the study of Rapanui culture, especially of *kohau rongorongo*. Having chanced to learn about the existence of flat wooden boards covered with rows of skillfully carved signs<sup>6</sup> on Easter Island, he evaluated the colossal cultural significance of these objects and ordered the missionaries who were staying there to send him as many such boards as they could find. As a result, the missionaries (who had put great efforts into their destruction, the fault, at any rate, of Eugène Eyraud) in 1868-1869 sent him five tablets and about half a dozen other samples of wood carving of sacral or ceremonial relevance (Jaussen 1893: 12-17; Heyerdahl 1976:47). Furthermore, Jaussen learned that among the



Rapanuis working on the Brander plantations in Tahiti was a man named Metoro Tau a Ure, who said that he was an expert on *kohau rongorongo*. In 1870 Jausen invited Metoro to his place and asked him to read (more exactly, to intone) the texts carved on the tablets. Jausen carefully wrote down what he heard, and although the value of the “Metoro readings” has elicited various assessments by modern researchers (Barthel 1958; Heyerdahl 1976:204-205; Butinov 1982; Fyodorova 1983), they were the first endeavor to approach the decipherment of *kohau rongorongo*.

Jausen showed to the Russian scientist several tablets, which the latter measured and described (Miklouho-Maclay 1871b:8; 1872a:49). And although not all measurements are precisely accurate (possibly owing to Miklouho-Maclay’s method of measurement), it can be asserted that he saw Tahua tablet (tablet A according to Barthel), Aroukou-kourenka (B), Kohau-o-te-ranga (C), and Ka-ihunga (D). Jausen must then have had at least one other tablet--Apai (E), which figured in the “Metoro readings” (Barthel 1958:14-21). But Miklouho-Maclay either did not see it or had no time to measure and describe it.

Studying the tablets, the scientist singled out some common features.

The tablets I saw were of varying size and made of varying wood;<sup>7</sup> it seems to me that this difference can be attributed to the major deficiency of wood, which makes the natives use for many purposes driftwood. Some of the tablets in question bear traces of a long stay in water; one of them was no other thing than the wide end of a European paddle. . . . The figures had different heights on different tablets, but on the same tablet it was almost equal everywhere. The boards had both sides covered with these signs, placed in lengthwise rows; there were no spacings between the lines. It is also characteristic that absolutely the entire surface of the tablets was covered with this script: all the notches, irregularities, and edges showed carved figures, The specific feature of the line distribution was that if one wanted to trace a line, one had to overturn the whole tablet to go over to the next (this feature is easy to find if one notices the heads of the figures). . . . Very many of the figures represented animals. Numerous repetitions of the same figure occurred on the tablets, and such a figure either remained unchanged or showed a change in the position of its parts. . . . Certain figures were linked together in twos, more seldom threes and more, As one examines the rows of these signs, one

arrives at the conclusion that one deals with the lowest stage of the evolution of writing, referred to as ideographic writing, (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:48-49)

Captivated by the young scientist's enthusiasm, vast knowledge, and yearning to unlock the secrets of *kohau rongorongo*, Jaussen made him the precious gift of one of the tablets (Miklouho-Maclay 1871b:8). The MAE has two boards with writings delivered by Miklouho-Maclay, called the "Big Leningrad" and the "Small Leningrad" boards (coll. 402-12 a, b; tablets P and Q according to Barthel).<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to tell which of them was the bishop's gift. But indubitably it was not any of the five tablets that came to Jaussen in 1868-1869. It can be assumed that Roussel sent this tablet to the bishop with the schooner that delivered him and the Rapanuis to Mangareva and then sailed on to Tahiti, that is, in June-July 1871. As regards the second tablet kept in the MAE's Miklouho-Maclay collection, he must have acquired it from the Rapanuis who had got to Mangareva or Tahiti. At any rate, he notes that he saw such tablets in possession of the "natives of Rapa-Nui" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:48).

The meetings with Miklouho-Maclay were apparently of benefit to Jaussen as well. The scientist shared with the latter his thoughts about the character of *kohau rongorongo* and the regularities governing the evolution of writing systems and told him about the keen interest exhibited by eminent European scientists in the announcement of the discovery on Easter Island of the boards with writings. This undoubtedly stimulated Jaussen's further study of *kohau rongorongo* and other relics of Rapanui traditional culture, which was on its way to extinction. The main results of these researches are outlined in his work published only in 1893, a year after the author's death (Jaussen 1893).

In view of the importance of the Easter Island materials he collected, Miklouho-Maclay decided to prepare them for publication before his long stay in New Guinea, which might have unpredictable consequences. While the *Vityaz* was on her way from Tahiti to New Guinea (with calls at Samoa, Rotuma, and New Ireland) in August-September 1871, he wrote travel notes for the journal of the Russian Geographical Society, emphasizing the inhabitants of Easter Island and their culture (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a). Still earlier, in mid-August, he completed a short article about *kohau rongorongo* for the German journal that had previously published Philippi's letter (Miklouho-Maclay 1872b). Sent by Nazimov to Europe, the two texts were published in 1872.

Considering the conditions in which the scientist collected and pro-

cessed the materials about Easter Island, it must be observed that his travel notes contained a wealth of aspects and information. They discussed the tragic plight of the island. The author attempted to explain the reasons for the dying out of the Rapanuis and their resettlement to Mangareva, and he offered certain information about their anthropological type, beliefs, and customs, including the bird-man cult and the related annual rites and ceremonies. He generalized the information he had about the big stone statues, noting that “many of them stand, others are overturned but still whole” and that “in certain places it could still be seen how in former times they had stood exactly on tall platforms or altars” (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:46). As noted earlier, he also described stone bas-reliefs and small stone and wooden sculptures and tried to bring out the interconnections between various forms of Rapanui plastic art. But perhaps his keynote story was how he studied *kohau rongorongo*, ranging from his conversation with Bastian in Berlin to his meetings with Bishop Jaussen.

His article about the wooden tablets with writings included in the German journal is, in the main, identical to the corresponding part of his travel notes. Bastian supplemented the published article with an extensive commentary in which he spoke highly about this “exceedingly valuable communication” and, proceeding from it, entered into polemics with two leading German specialists in Polynesia, Georg Gerland and Karl Meinicke, on such general problems as the origin of the Polynesians and their historical contacts with the American Indians. He also speculated about the contents of the *kohau rongorongo* texts (Bastian 1872).

“As I think of all I have seen and heard about the antiquities of Rapa-Nui . . . I involuntarily arrive at the conclusion,” says the draft of Miklouho-Maclay’s travel notes, “that the study of this island may yield many interesting and important data, more than could hitherto be assumed, and I wish full success to a knowledgeable person who will be happier than me and will not only see the outlines of hilly Rapa-Nui, but will also visit the island with a view to solving important questions” (Miklouho-Maclay 1871c:31-32). The scientist was not fated to return to the development of these problems. Nevertheless, he made a certain contribution to the study of this “island of mysteries.”

Furthermore, what little Miklouho-Maclay published, the excellent samples of Rapanui art he brought home--especially the two *kohau rongorongo* tablets--spurred the emergence in his native land several decades later of a whole school of interdisciplinary research--Rapanui studies. This research proceeds, in the main, in the Leningrad branch of

the Miklouho-Maclay Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences. As many as three generations of Soviet scholars have been regularly and systematically studying *kohau rongorongo*. Considerable advances have been scored in the analysis of this system of writing, cogent arguments in favor of its local origin have been put forward, and interesting hypotheses concerning the content of the texts under study have been formulated. Different variants of the reading of their individual fragments have been proposed, but the problem of their decipherment as a whole remains to be solved. The difficulties of the decipherment are compounded by the scarcity of extant texts and the fact that the recordings must have been made in the ancient Rapanui language. Therefore the Soviet scholars engaged in the decipherment of these inscriptions conduct their research on a broad front, meticulously studying the history and traditional culture of Easter Island, analyzing all available folklore texts and all attempts to "read" *kohau rongorongo* by local people, and reconstructing the specific features of the Rapanui language at various stages of its history (see, for instance, Butinov and Knorozov 1957; Tumarkin 1988a; Fedorova 1988). At the source of this research stood Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay.

## NOTES

A version of this paper was presented at the VI Inter-Congress of the Pacific Science Association, 7-10 August 1989, Viña del Mar, Chile.

1. Also can be spelled Fyodorova or Fyedorova due to varying transliteration systems.--ED.
2. The records made by Miklouho-Maclay while he stayed in Rio de Janeiro and the Strait of Magellan remained unpublished until 1950, when the first volume of his collected works appeared (Miklouho-Maclay 1950: 13-44). The scientist's stay in Chile is surveyed in a brief article (Polevoy 1988), partly based on archival materials. Regrettably, this interesting article is not free of factual inaccuracies.
3. Almost all these objects are now kept in the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Santiago (see Heyerdahl 1976). "A rabbitlike animal" is an anthropomorphous creature with upturned face and hands; similar images made from various angles occur on the *kohau rongorongo* tablets. "A beaked birdlike animal" is a picture of a bird-man (*tangata manu*). The small double human figure (shaped like Siamese twins) is now thought to be lost and is known only from a reproduction from an original photograph.
4. With respect to this question, Nazimov's report published in a Kronstadt newspaper said: "On Mangareva we saw up to 150 savages from Easter Island who had refused to go to Tahiti, where they would have been made Mr. Brander's slaves" (Nazimov 1872). Apparently, some of the Rapanuis were shipped aboard the same schooner from Mangareva to Tahiti. Concerning their fate see Métraux (1957:56) and McCall (1981: 139-140).

5. Here is how this part of the story is presented in the draft of the travel notes: "These tablets are indeed covered with writings once used on Rapa-Nui Island. Such is the common view of the natives. Old people are positive that their fathers and grandfathers could read the writings and that the history of their island is carved out on these boards. They even pointed to one of the living old men whom they said could read these tablets. Questioned by Roussel, the man said, however, that he did not understand the old writing" (Miklouho-Maclay 1871c:31).
6. One of the missionaries, Gaspar Zumbohm, visiting Tahiti, brought back a gift to Jausen from the Rapanuis just converted to Christianity--a long cord woven of human hair. It was wound on an old wooden board with broken-off edges. Jaussen noticed that it was covered with some writings (Métraux 1957: 183).
7. Roussel insisted that all tablets, like the wooden "idols," were made of *toromiro*: "the only plant to reach the size of a tree" on Rapanui. In this connection the scientist notes that *toromiro* "has been almost fully destroyed; only its bushes have survived" (Miklouho-Maclay 1872a:48; 1872b:79-90).
8. The first publication of these tablets, made by a Leningrad scholar in a French journal in 1925 (Piotrowski 1925), made them known to researchers of Easter Island culture all over the world.

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