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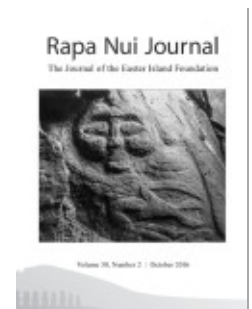
Correspondence between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster  
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# Correspondence between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster concerning Rapanui Manuscript E

Reidar Solsvik

*The paper presents, for the first time, various photographs of Rapanui Manuscript E, discovered in the Archives of the Kon-Tiki Museum in the correspondence between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster. Despite some of these images being out of focus, they show that the manuscript does not always follow the pagination known from Barthel's 1978 book "The Eighth Land: The Polynesian Discovery and Settlement of Easter Island." One of the pages does not appear at all in Barthel's transcription. Two pages with clearly distinguishable rongorongo signs can be extremely important for the future studies of Rapanui script.*

*El artículo presenta por primera vez varias fotografías del Manuscrito E Rapanui, descubiertas en los Archivos del Museo Kon-Tiki, entre la correspondencia de Thor Heyerdahl con Max Puelma Bunster. A pesar de que algunas de estas imágenes no están bien enfocadas, se nota que el manuscrito no siempre sigue la paginación conocida del libro de Barthel de 1978 "The Eighth Land: The Polynesian Discovery and Settlement of Easter Island." Una de las páginas está omitida por completo en la transcripción de Barthel. Dos páginas con los signos rongorongo claramente distinguibles pueden ser sumamente importantes para los futuros estudios de la escritura Rapanui.*

## Archival Discoveries

Discoveries of missing manuscripts or long-lost letters of correspondence between individuals of great importance, which have the potential for changing our understanding of historical events, are not very common. More frequent is the finding of documents or photos thought to have been lost, which makes a great story but only holds significance for a few very interested people. The finding of the second known photo of Billy the Kid in a second-hand shop in California a few years ago, and the work leading to it being considered authentic, is one example of the former. Working in the archives of Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl, located at the Kon-Tiki Museum in Oslo, however, I have frequently searched through stacks of documents needing to be filed and in between all the loose pages of letters, notes, and manuscripts, I have found information that is new to me. Those little discoveries are like suddenly hearing your trowel scraping over a new artifact during an archaeological excavation, stirring a personal excitement or satisfaction of finding something that has not seen the light of day in years, decades, or centuries. This paper will detail the rediscovery of material that was new to me, and, perhaps to many others: the letters in Thor Heyerdahl's archives detailing the correspondence between him and the Chilean national Max Puelma Bunster. The reason these are interesting enough to warrant a paper is that they discuss circumstances surrounding the discovery and acquisition of Rapanui Manuscript E. Attached to

two of the letters were also three photos of this missing manuscript, reproduced here for the first time. As with all correspondence, the letters between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster contain short references to interesting persons, events, and discussions of the time, which gives some color to the history of research into Rapanui culture.

In July 2016, the International Conference on Easter Island and the Pacific, or Rapa Nui Rendezvous, as it was called earlier, had just finished in Berlin when researchers, who took the opportunity of visiting Europe, began turning up at the Kon-Tiki Museum. It was a very hot week with the sun shining from an almost cloudless sky, and since this is not the case during most Norwegian summers, time should have been spent on the beach, and not locked up in a non-air conditioned office. However, visits by researchers interested in Rapa Nui are not something that occurs daily, and now a whole group of them had come by in just a week. The last one out was an exceptionally tall Ukrainian on the hunt for any information on *rongorongo* manuscripts, and in particular about those that we know to exist, but have not been documented properly – including the so-called Manuscript E, seen by Thomas Barthel on Rapa Nui in the late 1950s. The Kon-Tiki Museum has two manuscripts that were bought from Rapanui individuals during the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island in 1955-56. All the visitors to the museum this summer had seen them, and these documents are well known from the photos published in 1965 alongside extensive analysis of their contents

in the second volume of scientific reports from the expedition, edited by Edwin N. Ferdon and Thor Heyerdahl. Manuscript E is a completely different question, with only a couple of photographs showing its pages published to date, so the search went on. After looking through photos and folders of documents and notes related to the expedition without finding anything interesting, only one lead remained: the extensive archives of Thor Heyerdahl's correspondence, which might contain letters from Max Puelma Bunster, the last known owner of Manuscript E. We unlocked the door to the document archives and began hauling out boxes. There were many, and not all were sorted in chronological order, so it became a question of how many boxes we would be able to check in the two remaining days.

After sorting through all of the boxes from 1959 to 1966, we had 19 letters from the correspondence between Heyerdahl and Puelma Bunster. Clearly, there are letters missing, and in one instance some papers and manuscripts that were attached to one letter had been removed, but we believe that we identified a wealth of information about the manuscript. More about this will follow. The big prize, however, was a couple of letters with color slides still attached. Three of them were from a manuscript that Max Puelma Bunster had been given, or bought – we don't know – from an Easter Islander who visited him in Santiago.

## Max Puelma Bunster

Max Puelma Bunster was a Chilean citizen who lived in Santiago (Figure 1). In 1959, he visited Rapa Nui as a passenger on board the yearly ship bringing supplies to the island. He went on a mission, whether private or official we do not know, for the 27th president of Chile, Jorge Alessandri Rodríguez, carrying a letter from the President to the Rapanui people. Puelma Bunster delivered it to the mayor of Hanga-roa, Leonardo Pakarati, who made it public by letting the island priest, Father Sebastián Englert, read it aloud after the Sunday sermon. Return letters were, of course, sent back to the mainland along with some presents, by both Leonardo Pakarati and Father Sebastián Englert. Puelma Bunster hoped that the contact between the Chilean President and the local population would “get the Government more interested in the island's problems and see if they can get better schooling, planned agriculture and technical assistance for fishing, raising crops, etc. (Puelma Bunster, letter dated October 3, 1959). Puelma Bunster thus became interested in the welfare of the Rapanui, and supported the idea of Chile taking a greater interest in the island. Among other interests, he supported the effort to increase the number of ships visiting the island each year from one to four. When Puelma Bunster first visited Rapa Nui, a number of

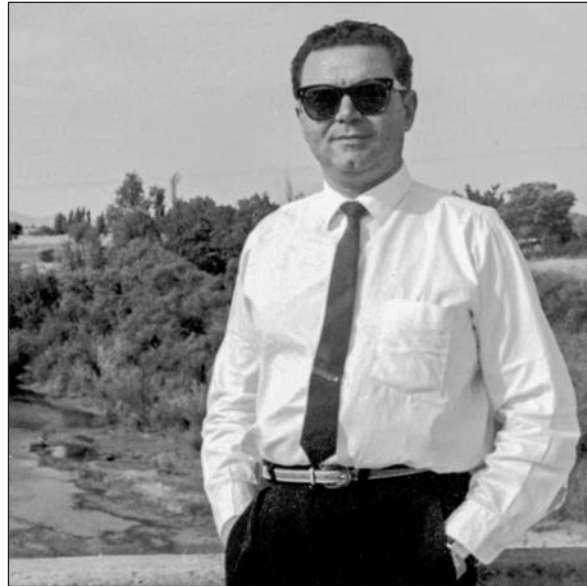


Figure 1. Max Puelma Bunster, the last known owner of Manuscript E. Photograph sent to Thor Heyerdahl in a letter dated September 23, 1966.

Rapanui individuals, Pedro Atan among them, had begun emigrating to the mainland. Puelma Bunster kept in touch with them and in particular with the family of Moises Paoa, with whom he had stayed when he visited the island in 1959, and later Leonardo Pakarati, with whom he became friendly when the latter lived for a few years on the Chilean mainland.

## The Correspondence

The documented correspondence between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster dates from 1959 to 1966. Up until the publication of *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific, Volume II, Miscellaneous papers* in 1965, the correspondence was quite intensive. It is Puelma Bunster who initiated the correspondence, introducing himself as an amateur archaeologist who had studied cultures in the north of Chile, and one who had been to Rapa Nui. However, when he confides in Heyerdahl, and tells him – and only him – that he (Puelma Bunster) has acquired a *rongorongo* manuscript, the correspondence becomes significant and more frequent. Thor Heyerdahl and Edwin N. Ferdon were in the middle of editing their second volume from the expedition, and three Russian *rongorongo* experts: Knorozov, Fedorova, and Kondratov, in addition to Barthel, were writing contributions to the report. Heyerdahl, interested in getting as much material as possible to be published, invited Puelma Bunster to write up a report on his manuscript or provide photos of it for publication with full credit, together with the other four professionals:

“You will realize that it is impossible for me to delay the publication of our Volume II until I have received your text, unless it arrives in time before we start printing that volume [. . .] As an alternative suggestion I may perhaps add that we include in our volume only good photographs of your Rongo-Rongo book, with a brief text by you stating whatever information you have concerning the origin of this manuscript, it’s Easter Island owners, time of discovery, etc. Of course, all credits will in any case be given to you. However, I leave it entirely up to you to judge what will be the best thing to do.” (Heyerdahl, letter dated July 17, 1962)

Max Puelma Bunster’s answer to this invitation was silence. He did not reply to Heyerdahl’s letter until later, writing: “I have been silent since your last letter of July 17th 1962 because I have been working and studying hard; I have not forgotten the Easter Island we are all interested in, but I couldn’t answer you before reading your book and before assimilating its material with the one I am working on” (Puelma Bunster, letter dated November 18, 1963). No explicit answer to the invitation to publish a paper was forthcoming until Heyerdahl renewed the offer in another letter. On February 25th Puelma Bunster wrote:

“Talking about your new book with Mr. Ferdon, I would consider it an honor to have the chance to add something covering my Manuscript, and my idea would be to send you the original text typed in Vananga Rapa Nui plus the translation and the Rongo Rongo dictionary and its explanation. It would cover some 20 typed leaves of letter-writing paper.” (Puelma Bunster, letter dated February 25, 1964).

This is a bold statement. In twenty pages Bunster would summarize the 130-page manuscript, including a *rongorongo* dictionary. We will return to why he believes that this is so easy to solve, but will first look at his general theories.

It is worth considering why Thor Heyerdahl offers this amateur archaeologist an opportunity to publish a scientific paper on the Rapa Nui *rongorongo* script. In a previous letter of November 18, 1963, Puelma Bunster goes into some detail about his views on Rapa Nui history and culture:

“I have come to the conclusion that Easter Island culture has an Egyptian base, influenced by Budism [sic] later, and Inca (or Pacific coast culture), Maori & Polynesian invasions later. The Tahitian language and culture came with the Missionaries 100 years ago and is more easily seen, but there is a lot of Egyptian and Budist [sic] habits and ways that need

to be investigated. [. . .] We have to excavate to be able to come to conclusions” (Puelma Bunster, letter dated November 18, 1963).

It may be tempting to believe that in Max Puelma Bunster, Thor Heyerdahl saw a fellow archaeologist with a different view on the origin of Rapa Nui culture from that of the mainstream archaeological community. However, that conclusion would be premature. It is indeed possible that Heyerdahl did welcome views that differed from the generally accepted version of how the Polynesian islands had been settled. But Heyerdahl also had, together with his co-editor Edwin N. Ferdon, a loyalty to the other researchers that would author papers for this second volume of scientific reports from the expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific. Thomas S. Barthel, the self-styled world-leading expert on the *rongorongo* script, was going to contribute to the volume. So were three Russian experts on linguistics, Juri V. Knorozov, Irina K. Fedorova, and Aleksander M. Kondratov, who had carried out their own studies of the famous Rapa Nui “talking boards”. The papers in the two volumes were also rigorously edited and peer-reviewed, as evidenced by the fact that a major paper by Heyerdahl on “Easter Island Culture” was rejected for publication because strong objections were voiced by both Edwin N. Ferdon and Carlyle S. Smith. Heyerdahl would go to great lengths in order to get the record on Rapa Nui culture and prehistory as complete as possible. He financed the expedition in 1955-56 from his own pocket. Including a report by Thomas S. Barthel in a self-financed publication was also not very common. Barthel, who had made overtly optimistic claims in the media that he had solved the centuries-old mystery of the Rapa Nui *rongorongo* script, both privately (in letters to fellow scientists) and in public, resorted to an extensive critique of Heyerdahl’s work beyond any objective academic standards. Eventually, he would be the direct reason why Thor Heyerdahl left the field of Polynesian studies in the late 1960s. In an effort to contribute to the field of Rapa Nui studies, Heyerdahl did not hold a grudge, nor did he insist on academic titles. Max Puelma Bunster owned, as far as Thor Heyerdahl was concerned, one of the most complete Rapanui manuscripts with *rongorongo* pages, and in his view, this should have been made available to both Rapanui people and fellow scientists.

## Manuscript E

Puelma Bunster’s manuscript, as seen in the photos sent to Thor Heyerdahl, is bound in a red, embossed hardcover, which was possibly added after the manuscript arrived to Santiago. It consists of 120 pages of Rapanui legends and a short *rongorongo* “dictionary”. Puelma Bunster offers the following story about its provenance:

"I got my manuscript through an islander who brought it as a present knowing I was interested and working on the island's past, I was told it had belonged to Pakarati Ure po Tahi first and Leonardo told me that when his father died Timoteo inherited it from him as a gift as Leonardo did not need it because he knew the legends by heart as he was appointed the keeper of the family traditions by his father." (Puelma Bunster, letter dated April 26, 1965).

How did Puelma Bunster get hold of such a manuscript? Thor Heyerdahl had, during his visit in 1955-56, taken an interest in trying to discover whether or not any *rongorongo* tablets or writing still existed on the island:

"The writer and his wife noticed for the first time that a certain interest in the lost art of rongo-rongo still survived on the island, ninety years after the disappearance of the tablets with the arrival of the first missionaries. Gabriel Hereveri, a man somewhat above middle age and one of the most advanced cases at the leprosarium, was seen sitting in the open window of his room drawing with pen and ink in what seemed to be some sort of a register book" (Heyerdahl & Ferdon 1965:359).

This intrigued Thor Heyerdahl to a great extent. He could possibly become the first researcher to recover a *rongorongo* tablet or some written clues to its translation in many, many years. In this way he discovered several old texts and lists of *rongorongo* signs with purported "translation" into the modern Rapanui language.

"Trying to gain their confidence in revealing the contents of some of the secret caves on the island, none of which had yet been visited, the writer was surprised to learn from Esteban, a man of thirty-two years of age, that one of his possessions was a 'book' made by a grandfather (abuelo), who had known how to make and sing rongo-rongo." (Heyerdahl 1965:360).

The locals explained the existence of these manuscripts in the following manner:

"According to Esteban, several people had learned to write in Roman letters while deported to Peru during the slave raid (1862-64), and his abuelo had gotten help with the 'Chilean letters' from one of the few that returned to the island [...] At this remark, his younger brother Atan left the room and soon after came back with an old worn and faded sheet of paper with a handwriting in faded brown ink. He was visibly proud of his possession which, he claimed,

was an inheritance from the same abuelo to him. The old sheet contained a few lines of apparently normal rongo-rongo signs together with a text in written Rapanui in Roman letters that filled about four times as much space as the rongo-rongo signs on the sheet. When Atan felt that I had had ample time to admire this heirloom, he withdrew the sheet, and it was never seen again" (Heyerdahl 1965:360).

Some of the discovered manuscripts were given as gifts or sold to Thor Heyerdahl, others he was allowed to photograph, and still others he was only shown for a brief moment before they disappeared into the social fabric of this isolated and mysterious island.

Then when Thomas S. Barthel arrived on the island in 1957, he was shown several other Rapanui manuscripts, which he labeled D, E, and F (Barthel 1965:388). Barthel (1978:288) describes his work with the largest manuscript as follows:

"In 1957, Ms. E belonged to Jorge Pakarati but was kept by his father Timoteo Pakarati [...] When I compared the original manuscript with the photographs from 1956, I realized that several changes had been made. A strip of roughly 3 cm had been cut from the top of all images, which had eliminated not only the original numbering of the pages but also the name Pua Ara Hoa, which is crucial in trying to determine the origin of the manuscript."

And further:

"After the death of old Timoteo Pakarati, the manuscript went to Chile in 1960, where it is now in the possession of Max Puelma Bunster of Santiago de Chile. During a visit to Germany in 1965, the young Nicolas Pakarati told me that the manuscript had been lost on the way to Chile, but he was merely trying to disguise the fact that the Pakarati family, whom I know well, had given this very valuable present to someone else. Based on the description by Puelma and on pictures (NA II [Heyerdahl 1965]:365 and Fig. 192), there can be no doubt that Puelma has Ms. E, the same manuscript I had the privilege of studying in 1957 – both in the original and as the photographic copy of 1956" (Barthel 1978:289).

A further search for the original Manuscript E did not have much success:

"In 'Rapanui MS E' [...] are supposed to be drawn *rongorongo* glyphic sequences which are unknown in the corpus of surviving inscriptions [...]. Unfortunately, no illustration or photograph of



these pages is available. The 130-page manuscript was given by Leonardo Pakarati, on the death of Timoteo Pakarati in 1960, to Max Puelma Bunster of Santiago, Chile [...]. On the death of Max Puelma Bunster in the early 1980s, the manuscript went to his sister Elizabeth Puelma Bunster [...]. Repeated attempts over several years to secure at least a photocopy of these pages have proved futile.” (Fischer 1997:518).

In this paper, the photographs of several such pages are published for the first time. Attached to his correspondence with Thor Heyerdahl are several photographs and slides showing the spread-out views of Max Puelma Bunster’s manuscript, most notably documenting the pages with *rongorongo*, intended for publication. Unfortunately, several of these photographs are out of focus, possibly due to technical reasons. It should be remembered that the cameras of the 1950s did not always allow the user to fine-tune the lens focusing interactively. Instead, the focusing distance had to be set directly on the lens body. Low-sensitivity film required large apertures, which reduced the depth of field. Thus, a minor error in setting the focusing distance may have resulted in images that were out of focus, and only visible after the film or slides were developed. Most importantly, the archives of correspondence between Heyerdahl and Puelma Bunster features two color slides documenting the manuscript in acceptable quality.

It should be emphasized that the only easily-readable pages of the manuscript published to date are page 5 (Barthel 1978:frontspiece) and page 7 (Heyerdahl 1965:Figure 192). Additionally, Heyerdahl’s figure presents a general view of the manuscript foldout that is too small for discerning any writing or study of the nine lines of *rongorongo* appearing on the page. Barthel published the manuscript in its entirety as a retyped text, which, as it will be shown below, omitted many important details. All further research of the manuscript – including the new improved translation (Alarcón 2008) – is based on Barthel’s retyped text. Oddly enough, Barthel did not include any photographs of the *rongorongo* passages from the manuscript in his book. Due to these shortcomings of previous publications, it was decided to reproduce here the blurred photographs of Manuscript E despite their poor image quality. First, they provide a unique view on page composition, showing that the *rongorongo* lines for some reason were written mostly on the right (odd-numbered) pages. Also, an attempt to match the text with Barthel’s transcription, performed to identify the corresponding page numbers, revealed considerable pagination problems that were not noticed due to the absence of a proper photographic publication of the manuscript.

The manuscript is written in a Chilean copybook with checkered paper, still bearing the inscription “Escuelas Primarias de Chile” on some of its pages. It is bound in red hard-cover with designs embossed over the corners (Figure 2), measuring 21.5×17cm

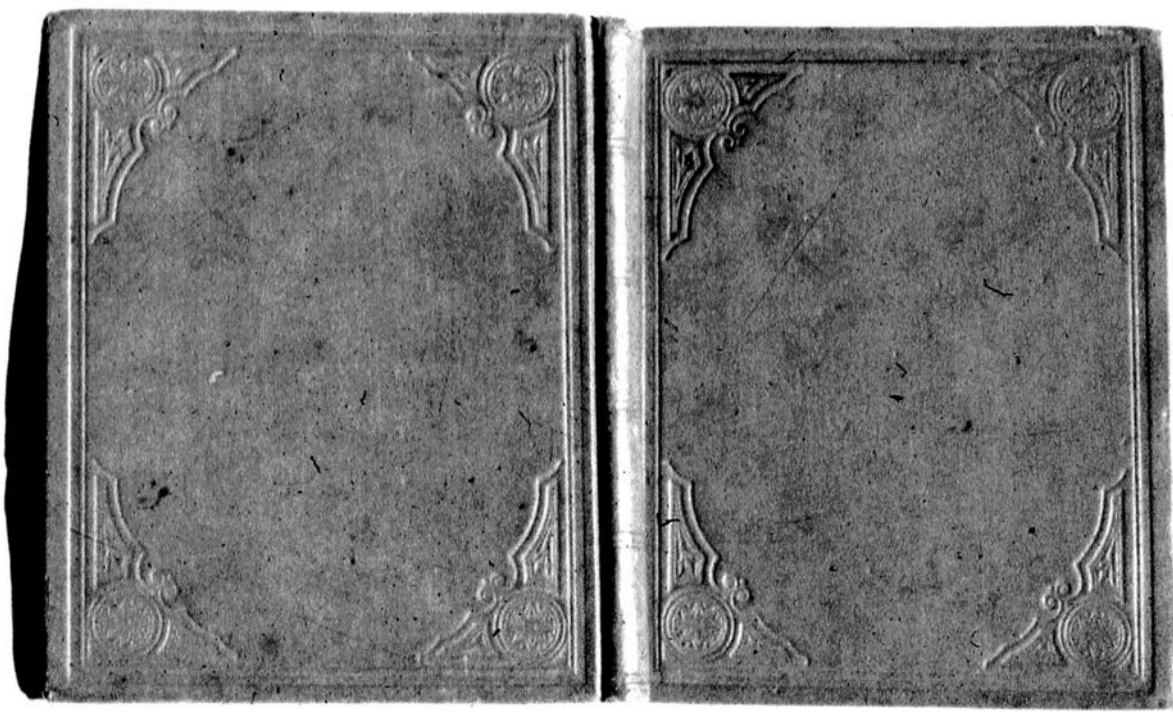


Figure 2. Embossed red cover of Manuscript E.

(Barthel 1978:289). The first page of the manuscript was possibly left blank, as the beginning of the text with the Kings of Hiva list starts on the right-side page (Figure 3). Barthel (1978:288) mentions that “on the cover [there] was the date “de 1957 febrero”, probably the date when the cover was added.” As no such inscription can be seen on the outside of the cover, one may draw from conjecture that this text was probably written on other side of the empty left page seen in

Figure 3. According to Barthel (1978:304), there should be four lines of Rapanui text following the list of the Kings of Hiva. Figure 3 instead features a far denser block of text which, as will be shown further, is because the majority of manuscript pages were added with interline Spanish translation.

Figure 4 shows the foldout that features four lines of *rongorongo* text at the bottom of the page. According to Barthel (1978:290), this could be either page 93 with

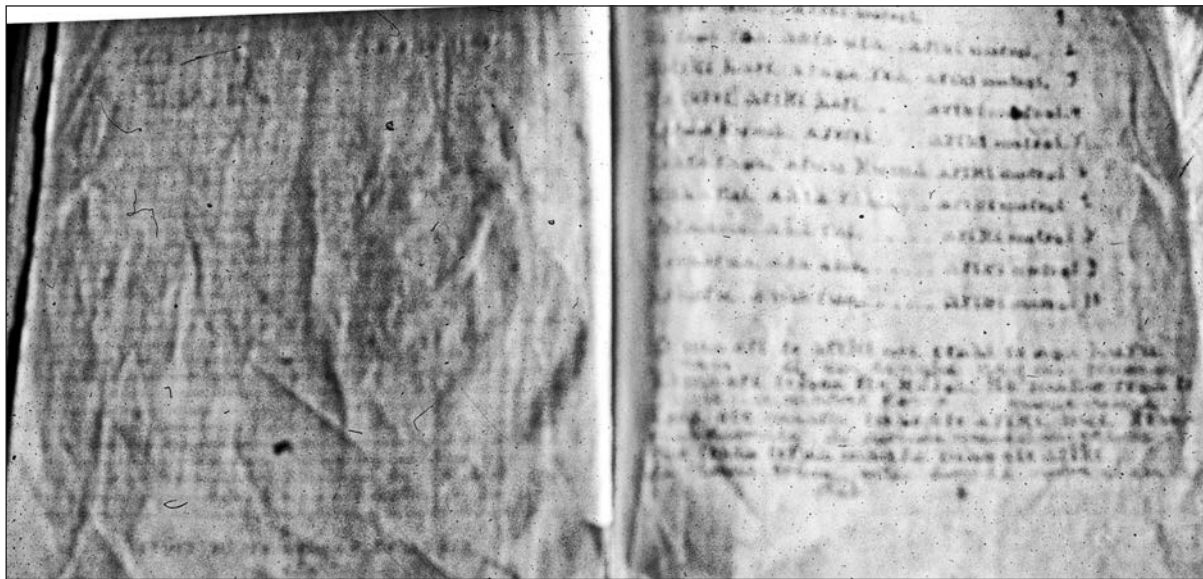


Figure 3. First page of Manuscript E listing the kings of Hiva. Each phrase ends with “*ariki motongi*” and a number 1-10.

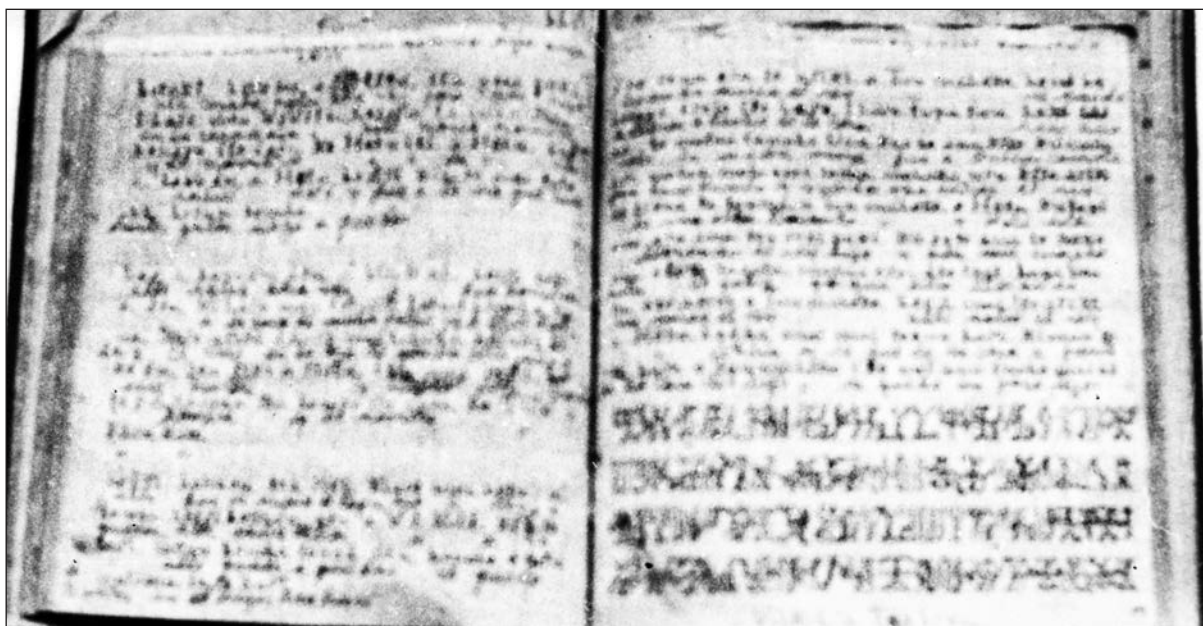


Figure 4. Foldout of Manuscript E with four *rongorongo* lines at bottom right. The right page can be identified as 93, with the first line “*i po remo era te ariki. a Tuu maheke. he noho*” (Barthel 1978:350). The left page does not match page 92 as transcribed by Barthel, which should start with “*he noho a Hotu. i te hare tupa tuu. he hagai i a Tuu maheke*” (Barthel 1978:349).



“4 lines of unknown origin. Phase markers?” or page 95 with “segments from Kr2, Kr3, Kr4 and Kr5 [London tablet] (copied after RM [Routledge 1919]:Fig. 98).” Comparison of the text starting on both pages suggests that the right page in Figure 4 should be 93, as the name “Tuū maheke” is clearly seen in its first line. Surprisingly, the text written on the left page does not match that recorded by Barthel for page 92. The presence of three well-defined paragraphs makes this page layout similar to that of page 89, which should start with “*he too mai a Pure ō.i te pureva. he ava.ki runga*” (Barthel 1978:348). However, the text of the first line on the left page shown in Figure 4 seemingly contains fewer words. This discrepancy cannot be explained due to the poor quality of the image; what is clear, however, is that the page preceding 93 is different from page 92 as documented by Barthel.

The foldout shown in Figure 5 also features four *rongorongo* lines at bottom right, hence it should be page 95 (Barthel 1978:290). This identification seems sound – the left page is thus 94, which, according to Barthel (1978:350) contains two marked paragraphs, the first of which ends with the short phrase “*hare he noho*”. The short phrase seen in the middle of the left page is consistent with this text. It is a pity that this foldout is out of focus, because, if it indeed features drawings of *rongorongo* signs from the London Tablet as Barthel states, it could be possible to verify them with the original text with the hope of understanding how accurately and reliably the scribe reproduced the signs – a question of importance for well-focused *rongorongo* passages in the manuscript.

The pages of the manuscript with the numbers above 100 include the word “Tori” that Barthel (1978:353-356) interprets as “above 100” or “above”. Two such foldouts are documented with acceptable quality, allowing one to read the text and study the glyphs. One of the slides sent by Max Puelma Bunster contains the foldout with Tori 3 (Figure 6) and Tori 4 (Figure 7).

Despite the fact that the pictures are slightly blurred, they are perfectly readable. As one can see from Barthel’s transcriptions, there are several duplicates of “Tori” pages, with Tori 4 and Tori 5 appearing twice (Barthel 1978:354-355). Tori 3 is also listed in Barthel’s book (1978:354), but it bears a completely different text. Thus, it is highly likely that the original manuscript contained two pages labeled Tori 3, one of which, for some reason, was omitted by Barthel and is published here for the first time (Figure 6). The *rongorongo* lines on the page labeled Tori 4 are described by Barthel as “5 lines of unknown origin” (1978:290). However, the signs of the first two lines appear in Manuscript A (Heyerdahl 1965:Figure 122; see last two lines on the page) and the incomplete Manuscript H (Horley & López Labbé 2015:Figure 1). The possible identification of the remaining signs is not straightforward and requires a more in-depth study.

The foldout illustrated in Figure 8 has seven lines of *rongorongo*, which, according to Barthel (1978:290) provide a “summary of the signs of the Jaussen list”, corresponding to the page Tori 10. The previous page, remarkably, is neither Tori 9 nor Tori 8 recorded by Barthel, but rather Tori 5 that starts with a distinctive

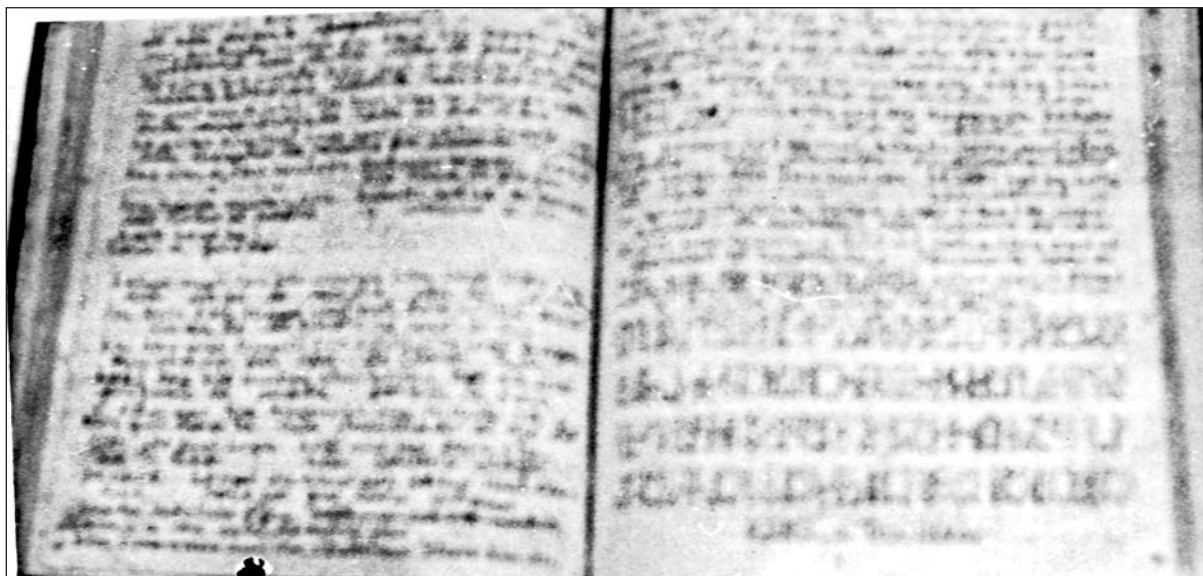


Figure 5. Foldout of Manuscript E with four *rongorongo* lines at bottom right. These pages can be positively identified with page 94, featuring two paragraphs, and page 95.



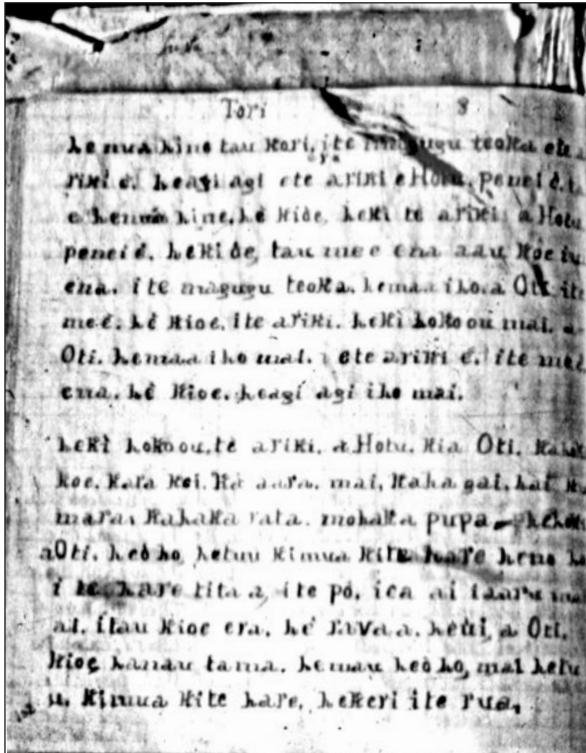


Figure 6. Page from Manuscript E labeled Tori 3. This page is absent altogether from Barthel's transcription. Possibly, this photograph was one of the first taken by Max Puelma Bunster, because no interlinear Spanish translation is present.

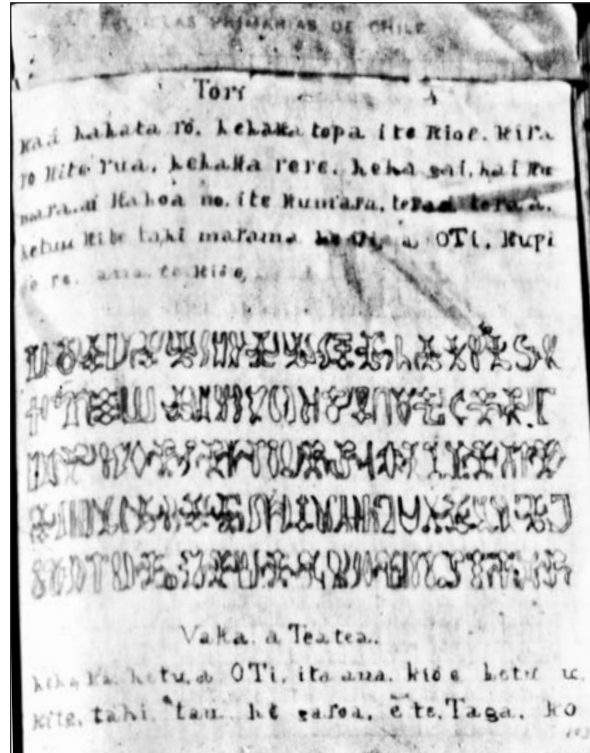


Figure 7. Page from Manuscript E labeled Tori 4. This page is consistent with Barthel's transcription (1978:355). Note the inscription "Escuelas Primarias de Chile" visible on the page in the background. No interlinear Spanish translation is present.

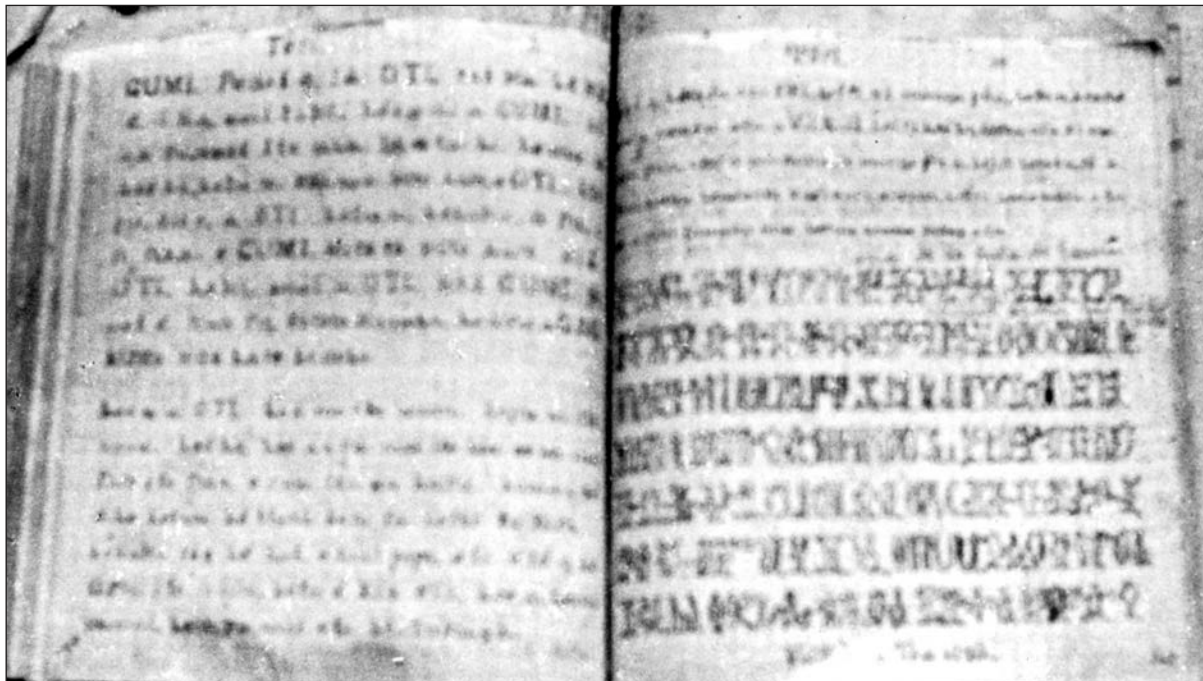


Figure 8. Foldout of Manuscript E with seven *rongorongo* lines at bottom right, identifiable with page Tori 10 (Barthel 1978:290, 356). Surprisingly, the previous page is not Tori 9 (recorded by Barthel), but Tori 5 starting with clearly distinguishable "Ngumi. Penei e.i a Oti.te ika hē kio" (Barthel 1978:355). Note that the *rongorongo* section has interlinear comments.

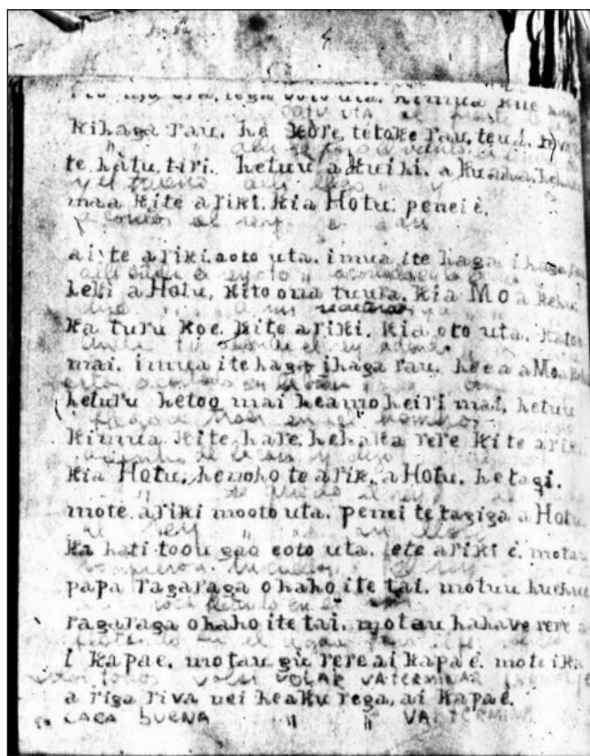


Figure 9. Page from Manuscript E, identifiable as page 90 (Barthel 1978:348-349). Note interlinear Spanish translation.



Figure 10. Page from Manuscript E with label 'Tori 8'.

uppercase “GUMI”. This example clearly shows that, while Barthel used “ng” to denote the corresponding Rapanui letter, the scribe used only “g” instead.

The next foldout is documented in the best quality (Figures 9 & 10), offering an unprecedented opportunity to study in detail the pages published in 1965 in small size (Heyerdahl 1965:Figure 192). The interlinear Spanish translation is very clearly seen. The left page of the foldout (Figure 9) is page 90 from the manuscript, which faces page Tori 8 (Figure 10). This is unexpected, as Barthel records no less than 16 pages between them (Barthel 1978:348-356). The *rongorongo* signs appearing on page Tori 8, according to Barthel (1978:290), are “4 lines of badly copied signs, apparently with the sides reversed” and “5 lines of the same. Phrase markers similar to those on Santiago-staff? Connection with the apocryphal text of the second series of signs in Ms. A?” Additional studies are definitely required to clarify this question.

## Conclusions

This paper presents the results of a rediscovery and study of the correspondence between Thor Heyerdahl and Max Puelma Bunster from the late 1950s and early 1960s. For the first time, several previously unpublished images of Rapanui Manuscript E are

reproduced here: four pages in good quality (one of which was not transcribed in Barthel’s 1978 publication of the manuscript), and four foldouts of, unfortunately, poorly-focused images. Out of 11 passages of *rongorongo* signs reported by Barthel for Manuscript E, this paper illustrates six, three of which are detailed enough for future dedicated studies. Despite some images being far from perfect, they reveal considerable inconsistencies with manuscript pagination, with facing pages not following each other in order. These inconsistencies were not noticed until now, because essentially the only source available for study was the retyped version of the manuscript published by Barthel, which did not explicitly mention all of these details.

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