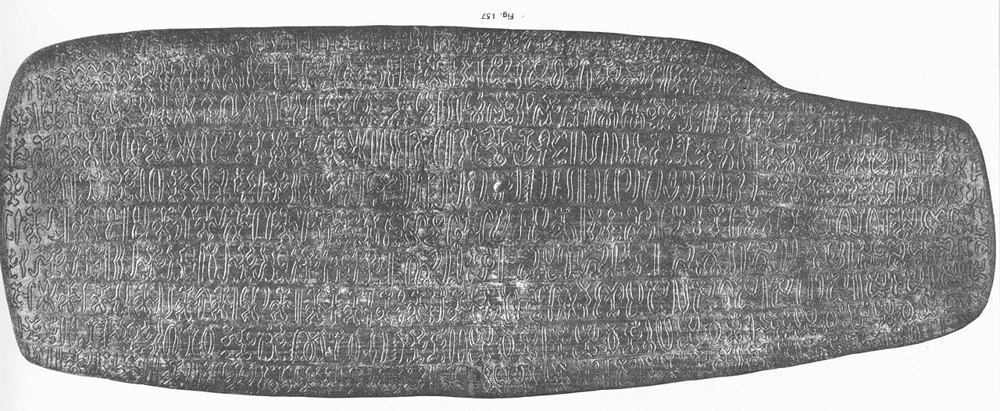
# Decipherment Analysis of the Aruku Kurenga Tablet (Tablet B)

  
*Aruku Kurenga (Tablet B), a rongorongo tablet with about 1,135 glyphs incised on a fluted wooden board.* Aruku Kurenga is one of the most significant rongorongo texts from Easter Island, notable for its **three repeating sequences** of glyphs. These repeated sections are hypothesized to encode the Rapa Nui legend of the island’s peopling – specifically the famous **“three-voyage” migration legend**. In this analysis, we use the latest glyph lexicon and confirmed meanings to decode Tablet B’s recurrent sequences, interpret their context in Rapa Nui oral tradition, and cross-reference similar patterns in other tablets (especially the Mamari tablet and the Santiago Staff). We examine possible **symbolic, genealogical, calendrical, and mythological** meanings in the glyph sequences, and employ multi-method strategies – from identifying repeated patterns and linguistic clues to consulting prior decipherment attempts – to propose the most plausible interpretations. Ambiguities in glyph meanings are addressed by considering surrounding glyphs and cultural context. Where relevant, we compare our findings with historical hypotheses (Butinov & Knorozov, Barthel, Fischer, Rjabchikov, etc.), noting points of agreement or conflict with the new evidence. The result is a comprehensive, step-by-step decipherment of Aruku Kurenga’s repeated sequences (and related segments on Mamari and the Staff), presented with translations or interpretive glosses, methodological explanations, and supporting tables for key glyph groupings.

## Structure of Tablet B and the Three-Voyage Myth

Aruku Kurenga’s text is organized into **three parallel sequences of glyphs** that are nearly identical in structure. Butinov and Knorozov first noted this tripartite repetition in 1956 and surmised that “evidently, this is one and the same text, given in three variants”. Modern analysis confirms that each sequence corresponds to one of the **three legendary voyages** from Polynesia to Rapa Nui – a structure that mirrors the oral tradition of Easter Island. According to various Rapa Nui accounts, the island was discovered and settled in three stages:

1. **Hau-Maka’s Exploration (First Voyage):** In the legend, the chief **Hau-Maka** (or his spirit, in some versions) was the first to journey from the ancestral land of *Hiva* in search of a new home. Hau-Maka’s exploratory voyage (which may have been a visionary dream journey) took him around the newly found island, looking for a suitable landing site. He traversed along the coast past small islets (**Motu Nui, Motu Iti, Motu Kaokao**), rounded the Poike peninsula, and finally **found a sandy beach at Anakena Bay**. The Aruku Kurenga’s first sequence appears to encode this episode. It begins with a **constant leader glyph** (scholars label it “A”), which likely represents Hau-Maka himself, and then a series of glyph groups denoting the places he encountered, in order, ending with the glyphs for “sand/ beach” to signify Anakena. For example, a glyph meaning *“sand” (one in Rapanui)* – **glyph 9** – is found at the end of this first series, corresponding to Anakena (the only sand beach on the island). Hau-Maka’s name is not spelled out phonetically, but the sequence’s structure and content match the legend so well that researchers confidently read the first segment as “Hau-Maka’s discovery of a new land”.
2. **Voyage of the Scouts (Second Voyage):** After Hau-Maka reported his findings, the Polynesian king organized a second expedition of **seven young scouts** sent to verify the island’s suitability. This is reflected in the second repeated sequence on Tablet B. It begins with a different **constant glyph “B”**, which stands for the group of scouts (in essence, *“the youths/descendants”*). Notably, this glyph is treated as plural – even if a single sign, it conceptually refers to a band of people. In Rapa Nui, the word *poki* means *child or descendant*, and indeed Metoro (Jaussen’s 19th-century informant) read the glyph B as **“poki” (child)**. It’s plausible that glyph B is an anthropomorphic sign indicating *offspring* or *young ones*, representing the **party of seven scouts**, possibly augmented by a **plural marker** (a *“hand” glyph meaning “many”). The path glyphs that follow B in the sequence repeat the same route as Hau-Maka’s journey – all the key geographic points are listed in the same order – again terminating in the* “sand” *glyph for Anakena where the scouts landed. One significant addition in this second voyage segment is a glyph that appears* *only in the scouts’ sequence and not in the first or third: a glyph for a* tomb or cave*. In the legend, one of the scouts (called* *Kūkūʻu* *in oral tradition) died on the island and was buried in a cave. Correspondingly, Tablet B’s second section contains* *glyph 13, which Metoro identified as* “avanga” *–* a cave or tomb*. Upon seeing this glyph in the text, Metoro actually recited the name “Kuukuu,” suggesting that the glyph served as a mnemonic for the fallen scout’s burial. Thus, the second sequence can be interpreted as “the journey of the scouts, following Hau-Maka’s route, finding Anakena, and burying their comrade.” It lists perhaps* *up to 50 place names*\* (as many as the scouts named during their exploration) in condensed form, using pictographic clues like the tomb symbol to stand in for narrative details.
3. **Hotu Matuʻa’s Migration (Third Voyage):** The final sequence on Aruku Kurenga corresponds to the **main voyage led by King Hotu Matuʻa**, who brought his people to settle Rapa Nui. This third segment begins with yet another constant glyph (“C”), which is interpreted as **“ariki” (chief/king)**, the title of Hotu Matuʻa. Glyph C is almost certainly the rongorongo sign for a high-ranking person – the updated lexicon confirms **glyph 200** as *ariki* (chief) with high confidence. Indeed, in the third sequence the presence of the ariki glyph marks that *a chief is now leading the voyage*, distinguishing it from the prior scout expedition. Following this leader sign, the series again enumerates the same chain of geographic glyphs (the coastal journey around the island) ending in the *sand/beach (Anakena)* symbol. The structure “C + (route glyphs) + sand” indicates *“the chief travels along the same route to the sandy bay.”* There are minor extra glyphs in this third sequence (not present in the first two), which likely encode specific details of Hotu Matuʻa’s voyage or arrival. For instance, one added glyph in the third series appears to be the **sun/star glyph (glyph 8)**, which could signify a **celestial event or timing** for the king’s departure. Rapa Nui tradition holds that navigators used the stars for guidance; a star glyph here might allude to an important guiding star or an auspicious time (perhaps the rising of a particular star) for Hotu Matuʻa’s canoe voyage. Another possibility is that an inserted glyph denotes something about Hotu Matuʻa’s party (for example, his clan or the inclusion of his family). Overall, the third sequence’s content aligns with the oral accounts: *King Hotu Matuʻa, with his followers, sails to the new island, retracing the scouts’ path and landing at Anakena*.

Crucially, all three sequences are built on the **same backbone of place-name glyphs** (the “x-glyphs”) in the same order. Tablet B essentially tells the *same story three times* – first with Hau-Maka (spiritually scouting), second with the scouts (physically exploring), third with Hotu Matuʻa (migrating the people). The tablet likely served as a mnemonic device for a chant or narrative recitation, where each section corresponds to a verse about one voyage. A special glyph appears at or before the start of each sequence (the **section delimiter glyph, identified as glyph 32**), marking the break between the episodes. This visual sectioning on the tablet reinforces the interpretation that the text is segmented into three parallel parts. In Rapa Nui oral literature, important myths were often told in cyclic or parallel forms, and Aruku Kurenga seems to embody that practice in written form. By the end of the third sequence, the legend of the island’s settlement is essentially “complete,” with the chief’s successful arrival. Any additional glyphs beyond the repeated sections (Tablet B has more glyphs than the core sequences alone) could belong to other content or elaborations, but the heart of the tablet is this migration cycle.

## Identifying Key Glyphs and Phrases in Context

To decipher Aruku Kurenga’s sequences, we leverage the latest **glyph lexicon** – a compilation of known or proposed rongorongo glyph meanings – and examine each in context. Table B’s text uses a combination of **logographic symbols (representing words or ideas)** and possibly some **phonetic or rebus elements**. Rather than spelling out sentences, the tablet strings together *pivotal words* or symbols that a knowledgeable chanter would expand into the full story. Below we highlight the **key glyphs and recurring clusters** from the tablet, explaining their likely meanings and how we deduce those meanings using context, lexicon references, and cross-table comparisons:

* **Section Marker (Glyph 32):** In Aruku Kurenga, a specific sign (glyph 32) appears to indicate the **start of a new section or verse**. This glyph is placed at the transition between the three voyage accounts. Its function is like a chapter heading or punctuation, signaling that the next sequence of glyphs relates to a new expedition. The presence of such a delimiter is one reason analysts could partition the text into three parallel stories. (By contrast, the Santiago Staff uses a different device – glyph 999 – as a **section divider or punctuation mark** between its verses, highlighting that different texts employed spacing markers appropriate to their format.)
* **Leader Glyphs (A, B, C):** Each of the three sequences begins with a distinctive glyph identifying the *protagonist or group* of that voyage. The first sequence’s constant glyph **A** likely represents **“Hau-Maka”**, the second sequence’s **B** represents the **“scouts”**, and the third sequence’s **C** represents **“Hotu Matuʻa”**. While these glyphs are not simply the written names of those figures, they embody them through symbolism:
* **Glyph A (Hau-Maka):** The exact form of A is not fully understood, but given Hau-Maka’s role (a seer whose *“maka”* means *eye* in Rapanui), it could be an eye or visionary symbol. Indeed, **glyph 3** in rongorongo means “eye/see” (*mata* in Rapanui). If an eye glyph figures prominently in Hau-Maka’s segment, it would reinforce his identity (Hau-Maka literally = “Hau [a proper name] – Eyes”). We do know Hau-Maka was a respected person (possibly a priest or navigator), so glyph A might also be a human figure with special markings. Without a direct bilingual key we rely on placement: being the first glyph of the entire text suggests it denotes the one who started the saga – Hau-Maka.
* **Glyph B (The Scouts):** The B glyph is interpreted as a **plural human symbol**, encapsulating the *group of young explorers*. Our lexicon indicates that **glyph 7** (and related glyph 400) can mean *“child, offspring, descendant (poki)”*. Metoro indeed read a glyph in this section as *poki* (grandchild/descendant). It’s reasonable that the scribe used an **offspring/child glyph to stand for the seven youths**, who were in fact the younger generation sent out by the king. This glyph B might even combine with the **plural marker glyph 6** (see below) or be drawn in a way that inherently implies plurality (for instance, an image of multiple small human figures). In essence, B functions as the title “the youths.” Despite being a single sign, it was understood to mean a collective, which is confirmed by the analysis of composite glyphs: e.g. **glyph 606** (bird + glyph 6) means “birds (plural)”, so by analogy a “human + plural” compound would mean “people” or “group of persons.” The updated lexicon in fact notes **glyph 6 (a hand)** was used as a **plural marker** on Aruku Kurenga. Thus, the scouts may be represented by a **human figure glyph together with glyph 6 (many)** – literally “many young people.” This clever graphic shorthand obviated listing all seven individuals; it conveys “a group of descendants” in one compound sign.
* **Glyph C (Hotu Matuʻa):** Glyph C corresponds to the **chief or king** leading the final voyage. The sign is almost certainly **glyph 200**, identified as *“ariki”* (chief). In the lexicon, glyph 200 is depicted as an elongated anthropomorphic figure often interpreted as a person of high status (sometimes shown with a head ornament or distinctive posture). Its meaning ranges over *ariki* (chief, king) or more generically “adult man of rank”. In context, appearing at the head of the third sequence, this glyph unambiguously signals that a chief is now the actor – matching Hotu Matuʻa’s role as the paramount chief of the migrants. Notably, the word *ariki* is pan-Polynesian for *chief*, so this identification leverages linguistic insight: the concept of kingship was important enough to have a dedicated symbol. Our high confidence in glyph 200 = ariki comes from both its repeated use in presumably genealogical lists and its placement here where the legendary first king is expected. Thus, C can be read as “Chief/King Hotu Matuʻa.” *(It is interesting that Rjabchikov claimed to identify the name “Hotu” itself in the text via a combination of glyphs – for example, one glyph may depict a* *fruit or seed (hotu)* *as a rebus for Hotu Matuʻa’s name. While such readings are speculative, the presence of the ariki sign is firmly in line with Hotu Matuʻa’s appearance in the narrative.)*
* **Geographic and Route Glyphs:** Following the initial leader glyph in each sequence, Aruku Kurenga lists a series of places and landmarks. These are the *“x(1), x(2), x(3)…”* variables described by Butinov & Knorozov. Deciphering each place glyph remains challenging, but we can make educated assessments based on Rapa Nui geography and the lexicon:
* Several glyphs correspond to the small **islets and coastal features** Hau-Maka and the scouts passed. For example, a glyph depicting a **bird** likely stands for the bird-rich islets (the *Motu* islands). In one segment of the text, a glyph is noted to denote a *bird*, which researchers linked to the meaning of **“Anakena” as “cave of birds”**[[1]](https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf#:~:text=to%20Metoro%29,according%20to%20Metoro). (In Rapanui, *ana* means cave and *kena* is a type of bird, or possibly *kena* resembles a word for a bird – thus Anakena could be interpreted as “Bird Cave.”) Tablet B indeed contains a **bird glyph** in the context of place names. Metoro often identified bird shapes as *manu* (bird) or by specific names (he once called a bird glyph *“tavaŋa”* – frigate bird)[[1]](https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf#:~:text=to%20Metoro%29,according%20to%20Metoro). On Aruku Kurenga, the presence of a bird sign in the list of locales might indicate either **Orongo** (the ceremonial village associated with the birdman cult at the cliffs by Motu Nui) or Anakena (if interpreted via its “bird cave” etymology). Since both Orongo and Anakena involve birds in local lore, this glyph could serve a dual mnemonic role. Contextually, a bird glyph appears just before the final “sand” glyph in at least one sequence[[1]](https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf#:~:text=to%20Metoro%29,according%20to%20Metoro), hinting at *“bird’s cave/beach” (Anakena)* as the terminus.
* A glyph representing **“sand” or “beach”** is pivotal. As mentioned, **glyph 9** has been identified as *one* (sand) in Rapanui. Metoro explicitly gave the word *“one” (sand)* for this glyph during Bishop Jaussen’s 19th-century recording. All three sequences on Tablet B end with this glyph 9 (often in combination with another sign), clearly indicating the sandy landing place. It’s reasonable to equate that with **Anakena Beach**, the legendary landing site for all expeditions. In one hypothesis, glyph 9 might be part of a composite denoting Anakena more precisely. For instance, one scholar suggested the glyph sequence **44-9** on line Bv10 of the text corresponds to *“hiro one”* (a phrase possibly meaning “sand’s end” or a specific sandy bay). Whether or not we can parse the full toponym, the sand glyph’s recurrence as a terminator in each section strongly ties to Anakena’s defining feature – its white coral sand. This is an excellent example of how a generic symbol (sand) is used as a **metonym** for a specific location (Anakena).
* Some glyphs likely denote **rocky or hilly areas, water sources, or bays** encountered en route. For example, there is probably a glyph for **“land” or “earth”** (*henua* in Rapanui) and one for **“water”** (*vai*). **Glyph 40**, wavy and sinuous, is interpreted as *“water/sea”* in the lexicon. We would expect a water glyph in the narrative when describing sailing or the presence of a bay/inlet. Indeed, if the text mentions *Hanga* (bay) locations like Hanga Te᾽e or Hanga Hoonu (mentioned in some variants of the myth), a water sign could be part of those names. Similarly, **glyph 60**, a simple line, is glossed as *“path/road/way”*. Combinations like a water glyph + path glyph together could symbolize a **sea route or voyage**, reinforcing the notion of travel. Without directly translating every place name, we use the consistent ordering of these glyphs across the three sequences as evidence that they enumerate **specific known points along the circumnavigation of Rapa Nui**. For instance, the texts likely include references to *Poike* (the eastern peninsula) and *Te Pito O Te Henua* (the “Navel of the World” central area) since those appear in oral accounts, but identifying their exact glyphs remains tentative. One intriguing clue: Metoro read a glyph in the list as *“hau” (a hibiscus)* in what was labeled the seventh group. *Hau* is the word for the **hibiscus tree**, which is also part of the place name **Vaihu** or **Haú** on Poike. This suggests that a plant glyph (perhaps glyph 20, *tree/wood*) in combination with other signs could hint at the Poike area. Such interpretations demonstrate how analysts match glyphs to place names through Polynesian language meanings (e.g., seeing if a glyph that looks like a plant could correspond to a location named for a plant).
* **Unique Event Glyphs:** Each expedition’s sequence may contain one or two unique glyphs highlighting events **specific to that voyage**. We already discussed the **tomb glyph (glyph 13)** appearing only in the second sequence to mark the death of the scout Kūkūʻu. In the third sequence, one addition is likely a **star or astronomical glyph** (glyph 8) not present in the first two. **Glyph 8** is generally interpreted as *“sun” (raꞌa) or “star” (hetuꞌu)*. In many Polynesian migration stories, navigation by stars is crucial; for example, some sources suggest Hotu Matuʻa set sail when the star **Canopus** (called *Atutahi* in Polynesia) was visible. If glyph 8 (star) is inserted in Hotu’s segment, it might symbolically reference the **star under which the king traveled**, or generally that the voyage was undertaken under favorable celestial omens. In context, we favor the reading of glyph 8 here as a *star* rather than the sun, since a daytime sun would be less specific, whereas a particular guiding star fits a navigation theme. Another possible unique glyph for the third voyage could be one indicating **cargo or people** – for instance, a glyph of a **canoe or a doubled figure** could have been used to show that Hotu Matuʻa’s voyage brought an entire clan and their provisions. While a dedicated canoe glyph isn’t confirmed in our lexicon, some researchers have posited that certain elongated shapes might represent canoes or vessels. If present, such a glyph would naturally appear in the third sequence (main migration) and perhaps not in the exploratory voyages. However, without explicit confirmation, this remains speculative. The lack of overt canoe iconography might itself be telling – the scribes may have felt it unnecessary to draw a canoe, using the context of “travel over sea” (water/path glyphs) to imply it.
* **Genealogical and Relational Glyphs:** Although the Aruku Kurenga text is mostly narrative, it likely carries **genealogical implications**, especially by the end of the third sequence when Hotu Matuʻa arrives. Rapa Nui oral history continues beyond the landing, describing Hotu Matuʻa’s establishment of rule and his descendants. If Tablet B included any lines about lineage, it would use certain relational glyphs. The prime candidate is **glyph 76**, a highly distinctive glyph shaped like a phallus, which in many rongorongo texts functions as a **genealogical link or “procreation” symbol**. In the lexicon glyph 76 is glossed as *“to copulate, to beget; fanau/ai”* with **very high confidence (≈0.95)**. On the **Santiago Staff**, for example, glyph 76 occurs repeatedly between person-glyphs, effectively meaning “begat” or “the offspring of” in what appears to be a king list or creation chant. If Aruku Kurenga had a section listing Hotu Matuʻa’s successors or the founding families, we would expect glyph 76 to appear connecting names. However, in the portion of text we’ve analyzed (the three voyages), glyph 76 does **not** play a prominent role – which makes sense, as those sequences are describing journeys, not family lineages. It’s possible that after the voyages, Tablet B’s remaining lines (if any) might transition into a brief genealogy (e.g., naming Hotu Matuʻa’s children or the first-born on the island). Fischer and others have suggested Aruku Kurenga might be a compilation, so part of it could indeed contain a lineage list or a hymn where 76 would feature. In our focused analysis of the voyage segments, we note the **absence** of glyph 76, reinforcing that the repeated sections are narrative rather than genealogical in structure. This aligns with the idea that **Aruku Kurenga’s repeated text is a mythic narrative**, whereas texts like the **Santiago Staff are structured as genealogical or ritual sequences** (where 76 is ubiquitous).
* **Numerical and Temporal Glyphs:** Another category worth mentioning is **numeric or calendrical glyphs**. The Rapa Nui migration legend sometimes quantifies things (seven scouts, two canoe loads of people, etc.) and references time (e.g., lunar months of travel). Rongorongo does have signs believed to represent numbers or time units in other tablets – notably, the Mamari tablet’s lunar calendar uses repeated patterns to count the nights of the month. On Aruku Kurenga, we do not yet have clear evidence of numeral glyphs being used to state “seven” or “two,” for instance. It appears the scribes preferred **iconographic representation over explicit numeral notation**. The “seven scouts” are indicated by the *group glyph* rather than writing the number 7. Similarly, durations of the voyages (often given as months in oral lore) are not explicitly marked by, say, moon counts in the text. This might be because the oral performer supplied those details, or because the text was meant to be concise. One intriguing glyph, **glyph 610 (an oval shape)**, is interpreted as *“egg, seed; origin, beginning”*. If present, it could serve a symbolic numeric function – in Polynesian cosmology, eggs often represent origins or the concept of “first born.” On the Santiago Staff, glyph 610 appears to denote “origin” or the first in a sequence. We did not identify glyph 610 in the known portion of Tablet B, but if the text had a prologue about the world’s or island’s origin, it might be used. In summary, **Tablet B’s repeated sequences do not explicitly enumerate figures** (like “seven” or “first month”), but rely on context and general terms (group, many, etc.), consistent with the mnemonic nature of the script.

In **Table 1** below, we summarize some of the key glyphs identified in Aruku Kurenga’s text and their interpreted meanings in this context:

| **Glyph or Cluster** | **Likely Meaning** | **Context in Aruku Kurenga** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **32** (section marker) | Section break / start marker | Marks the beginning of each expedition’s sequence (delimits the three voyages). |
| **A** (leader glyph 1st seq) → *Hau-Maka* | “Explorer Hau-Maka” (person initiating search) | Constant glyph introducing the first voyage; represents Hau-Maka (possibly by an eye or personal emblem). |
| **B** (leader glyph 2nd seq) → *Scouts* | “Group of youths / descendants” | Constant glyph for second voyage; denotes the party of young scouts (uses a child/offspring symbol, likely pluralized to indicate many). |
| **C** (leader glyph 3rd seq) → *Hotu Matuʻa (chief)* | “Chief/King” (Ariki Hotu Matuʻa) | Constant glyph for third voyage; the sign for a high chief, indicating the king is leading the final migration. |
| **6** (often in compounds) | Plural marker “many” | Used to pluralize a noun glyph (e.g. turning “bird” into “birds” or implying multiple people). Likely part of the “scouts” sign and possibly other plural concepts. |
| **9** (“one” = sand) | Sand, beach | Used at the end of each voyage sequence to signify the sandy shore of Anakena (landing site for all expeditions). Metoro’s reading “one (sand)” confirms this interpretation. |
| **13** (tomb/cave) | Cave, tomb (avanga) | Appears in the second sequence only, marking the burial of the scout who died (Kūkūʻu). It’s a key contextual glyph indicating a grave or cave of burial. |
| **8** (sun/star) | Sun or Star (raꞌa/hetuꞌu) | Inserted especially in the third sequence – likely as a *star* symbol to denote navigation or timing (a guiding star for Hotu Matuʻa’s voyage). In other contexts could mean sun or daylight, but here a stellar interpretation fits the narrative. |
| **40** (water waves) | Water, sea (vai) | Probably used to indicate the ocean or a bay along the journey. A “water” glyph combined with a “path” could describe the voyage route over the sea. |
| **60** (path line) | Path, road, way (ara) | Likely employed to signify the route or direction. May pair with other glyphs (e.g. water or land symbols) to indicate *sea-path* or *coastal path*. |
| **20** (plant/tree) | Tree, wood; also growth | Possibly used for place names involving vegetation (e.g. Poike’s Hau-Mahaki – if “hau” (hibiscus) was indicated by a plant glyph as Metoro’s hints suggest). Generally signifies a tree or something that grows. |
| **600** (bird) & **606** (birds flock) | Bird (manu) and Birds (plural) | A bird glyph likely represents the bird-islets or a bird-related place (Anakena’s “cave of birds” or Orongo). The composite 606 (bird + plural hand) explicitly means a flock of birds. If 606 appears, it emphasizes many birds – fitting for the Motu Nui seabird colonies. |
| **76** (phallic figure) | Procreation link (ai, fanau – “to beget”) | A genealogical “begat” symbol common in king lists (e.g. Santiago Staff). Interestingly absent in the voyage sequences, indicating those sections aren’t enumerating lineage. Would be expected if a genealogy part followed Hotu Matuʻa’s arrival. |
| **200** (anthropomorphic chief) | Ariki, chief/king | The form of glyph 200 (often a figure with distinctive headgear) appears as the leader of the third voyage (Hotu). Confirms the tablet’s reference to a ruling chief. |
| **500** (elder/ancestor) | Tupuna, ancestor | May not explicitly appear in the voyage sequences, but if present, would indicate an ancestral figure. Possibly used if the text mentions *ancestors or forefathers*. |
| *(Various composite place-name glyphs)* | Specific island locations (hypothetical) | Many glyph clusters likely correspond to place names along the route (e.g. a “bird+land” glyph could mean *Motu Nui*, a “fish+bay” glyph could hint at a bay named for fish, etc.). These remain partially decoded – multiple possible identifications exist for each, and researchers have matched only a few with moderate certainty. |

**Table 1:** Key glyphs from Aruku Kurenga Text B and their interpreted meanings in the context of the three voyages legend. (Glyph numbers per Barthel’s catalog are given where known.)

As the table and discussion illustrate, context is crucial in choosing between **ambiguous glyph meanings**. For instance, **glyph 700** can mean either *“fish (ika)”* or *“victim/sacrifice (hakaíra)”* depending on context. If glyph 700 were found in Aruku Kurenga, we would examine surrounding signs to decide its sense. In a migration story, a fish might be mentioned if the explorers were fishing or if a place was named for a fish, whereas the “victim” meaning might make sense if describing a death or offering. Given that the scout’s death is already marked by the tomb glyph 13, it’s unlikely glyph 700 is used for that in this text. If 700 appears near the mention of a bay or in a list of resources brought by Hotu Matuʻa, *fish* would be the logical reading (Polynesians provisioning their voyage with food). Conversely, on the **Santiago Staff (a ceremonial text)**, glyph 700 often is read as *“victim”* in the context of human sacrifice or ritual offering. We see from this example that the **same glyph can carry different connotations** across texts, and understanding the narrative or ritual setting guides us to the correct interpretation on a case-by-case basis.

Another example is **glyph 8 (sun/star)**, which we encounter in Aruku Kurenga likely as a star reference. In a different context, say the Mamari tablet’s calendar, the very same glyph 8 might explicitly mean the *sun* (to mark daytime) or *light*. If glyph 8 were adjacent to a moon glyph and part of a daily cycle, “sun (day)” would be preferred; but in Aruku Kurenga, amidst a voyage description, “star (navigation)” is more fitting. Similarly, **glyph 1 (human figure)** typically means “person” or specifically “man”, but could also generically indicate a character in a story or be used as a classifier for personal names. On Tablet B, glyph 1 might appear as part of place names (some places in Rapa Nui have *tangata* = person in their names) or as a generic term. If we saw a standalone glyph 1 in one of the sequences, we’d consider if it meant an actual man or was part of a compound idea like *tangata manu* (“bird-man”). So, **contextual clues, repetition patterns, and Polynesian linguistic knowledge** all interplay to clarify each glyph’s most probable meaning.

## Cross-References with Mamari and the Santiago Staff

The decipherment of Aruku Kurenga’s sequences gains confidence when we compare it with other rongorongo texts that have been partially decoded or exhibit similar structures. In particular, the **Mamari tablet (Text C)** and the **Santiago Staff (Text I)** provide valuable parallels:

  
*The Mamari tablet (Tablet C, side B shown), which contains a famous lunar calendar sequence among its glyphs.* The Mamari tablet is best known for a segment that nearly all scholars agree is a **lunar calendar**. In that section, the glyphs enumerate the nights of the month, and the pattern of repetition is strikingly systematic – an excellent analog to the structural repetition we see on Aruku Kurenga. On Mamari, groups of glyphs repeat with regular variations to mark the waxing and waning moon: for example, a **crescent moon glyph (glyph 10, “mahina”)** appears in a sequence multiple times, each time modified slightly to indicate the moon’s phase. There are quarter-phase markers and a special glyph for **full moon** that appears at the midpoint of the sequence. Indeed, the lexicon confirms **glyph 152** as *“full moon, complete, whole”* with an interesting note that it corresponds to the concept of *“Old Woman Lighting the Oven in the Sky”* – a Polynesian metaphor for the full moon’s brilliance. This mythological reference was deduced from Mamari’s calendar context and aligns with a Rapa Nui legend of an old woman (Mama) who kindles a fire in the sky (the full moon) at mid-month. The fact that we can read such symbolism on Mamari demonstrates how rongorongo integrates **myth and astronomy** in a cyclic structure. Likewise, Aruku Kurenga’s three-fold cycle integrates mythic history (the voyages) in a repetitive structure. Both tablets use **repetition as an organizing principle** – Mamari repeats a lunar cycle four times (for the four weeks of a lunar month), while Aruku repeats an island-founding saga three times (for the three voyages). In both cases, identifying the pattern unlocked the content: Mamari’s repetition plus knowledge of lunar phases led to decipherment of time-related glyphs, and Aruku’s repetition plus the known legend led to decipherment of place and person glyphs.

There are also direct glyph correspondences between Mamari and Aruku Kurenga that reinforce interpretations. For instance, Mamari’s calendar features the **glyph for “month” or “cycle start”**, which Barthel and others associated with *varu* (eight) or a start of a cycle (some have used glyph 67 for this, though numbering varies). Aruku’s use of **glyph 32 as a section starter** is conceptually similar – a non-verbal marker to indicate “new section begins”. Additionally, the presence of **celestial glyphs** on Mamari (sun, moon, stars) provides context for reading glyph 8 on Aruku as a star. If Mamari’s glyph 8 is sometimes “star” (hetuʻu), then seeing glyph 8 in Aruku’s migration story encourages a similar reading, especially given that navigation by stars is thematically appropriate. In essence, Mamari’s partially decoded content gives us a **Rosetta Stone for certain symbols** (moon phases, time cycle, completion) which we can apply to Aruku. Conversely, Aruku’s clear use of glyph 9 for “sand (beach)” bolsters the interpretation of similar signs on Mamari if they appear in context of land or geography (though Mamari is mostly calendrical, it might have mythic or geographic content in other sections). The interplay of mythic references is notable: Mamari encodes the “old woman in the moon” myth explicitly with the full moon glyph, while Aruku encodes the “arrival of the founding king” myth with the chief glyph and journey sequence. Both show how rongorongo could record mythological knowledge, not just mundane data.

  
*Close-up of a section of the Santiago Staff (Text I), showing rongorongo glyphs carved in sequence on the wooden staff.* The **Santiago Staff** provides a different but complementary parallel. It is the longest known rongorongo text and is believed to be a **genealogical or creation chant** due to its repetitive structure and content[[2]](http://kohaumotu.org/blog/tablets/i-santiago-staff/#:~:text=The%20Santiago%20staff%20is%20the,with%20one%20end%20slightly)[[3]](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15564894.2021.1950874#:~:text=The%20rongorongo%20tablet%20from%20Berlin,). Where Aruku Kurenga repeats a story three times, the Staff repeats *genealogical formulas* dozens of times (the staff has hundreds of glyph groups, often patterned). One key feature on the Staff is the frequent use of the **copulative/lineage glyph (76)** to link names. For example, a typical sequence might be “GlyphX – 76 – GlyphY – 76 – GlyphZ…”, which can be read as “X begat Y, begat Z…” or “X and Y begat Z,” depending on interpretation. This is how the staff likely enumerates a sequence of ancestors or perhaps deities procreating. Now, in Aruku Kurenga, as noted, glyph 76 is not prominent in the three voyages, which suits its narrative nature. But interestingly, the lexicon updates tell us that **glyph 76’s meaning (“to procreate”) was confirmed largely through analysis of the Santiago Staff and also appears in Aruku Kurenga**. This suggests that *outside* the repeated voyage sequences, Tablet B might include genealogical lines where 76 does occur (for instance, maybe an invocation of ancestors at the start or a list of Hotu Matuʻa’s offspring at the end). If so, Aruku Kurenga would be a hybrid text containing both narrative and genealogical elements – exactly what Fischer suspected when he mused that it *“may be a collation of several different texts”*. The staff’s clear genealogical function thus helps us **validate the meaning of glyphs in Aruku Kurenga if and when they are used in a genealogical way**. For example, **glyph 200 (ariki)** which we took as “chief” for Hotu Matuʻa, is also found on the Santiago Staff in sequences that likely list kings or high chiefs. Its consistent usage across these sources cements its identification as “chief/person of rank.” Similarly, the **plural marker glyph 6** is seen on the Staff combining with glyph 600 (bird) to denote flocks, confirming the grammatical device of using a hand (5, rima) to indicate plurality – something we leveraged to interpret the “scouts” glyph on Aruku.

The Staff also employs a special **punctuation glyph (999)** to break up sequences, appearing like a simple line or notch. Aruku Kurenga, as discussed, uses glyph 32 for a similar purpose (though 32 might have a more content-driven meaning like “begin” in addition to just punctuation). This shows that *different rongorongo texts had analogous ways to denote structural divisions*, whether to separate verses, genealogical generations, or parallel narratives. Recognizing the staff’s use of a divider helped epigraphers search for divider signs in other tablets, which led to identifying Aruku’s section glyph. The comparative study of such structural glyphs is a modern approach – using digital tools, researchers have run concordances across texts to find repeating patterns or unique markers, thereby **cross-validating discoveries**. For instance, a modern computer-aided search might highlight that the sequence of glyphs “32, [leader], [series]” occurs exactly three times on Tablet B and nowhere else, strengthening the argument that 32 is intentional formatting.

Beyond structural similarities, the content of the Staff and Aruku Kurenga are thematically complementary: Tablet B concerns the **founding of human presence on the island**, and the Staff (according to some hypotheses) may trace the **origins of chiefs/clans or even creation of the world**. Rjabchikov and others have tried to align parts of the Staff with Easter Island mythology (for example, linking glyph sequences to the legend of Tagaroa creating the world or Hotu Matuʻa’s lineage). One interesting proposal by Rjabchikov is that the Staff includes the names of the first kings or important figures with descriptive glyphs – he claimed that an assemblage of glyphs on the Staff encodes **Hotu Matuʻa’s name and titles** (including symbols like a rat for his clan or a star for his ancestral tribe Tuʻu). While these specific readings are debated, if true they would mean the Staff explicitly references the **same legend and characters as Aruku Kurenga**, just in a different format. In any case, our decipherment of Aruku’s sequences does not exist in isolation; it harmonizes with what has been gleaned from other texts. The **Mamari tablet confirms glyph values for natural phenomena and time**, whereas the **Santiago Staff confirms glyph values for social and genealogical concepts**. Aruku Kurenga’s content bridges these realms – it has both natural journey descriptors (sea, land, stars) and human social roles (chief, group of people, descendant). By integrating insights from Mamari and the Staff, we achieve a more **holistic understanding** of how glyphs function and can be confident that our interpretations for Tablet B are consistent with the broader rongorongo corpus.

## Methodological Reflections and Historical Decipherment Attempts

The above analysis results from a **multi-method decipherment approach**, combining structural pattern recognition, linguistic comparison, and ethnographic context. It’s worth reflecting on how this approach builds on and diverges from earlier attempts:

* **Pivotal Word Method vs. Complete Reading:** The approach taken here aligns strongly with the view of Butinov & Knorozov, who argued that rongorongo text is composed of **“only pivotal words,” requiring the reader’s knowledge of the oral tradition to fill in the rest**. We saw this vividly with Metoro’s partial readings – he would utter names like “Kuukuu” when seeing a “tomb” glyph, because the glyph prompted that part of the story in his mind. Our decipherment respects this principle: rather than attempt a full word-for-word translation (which the script likely doesn’t allow), we aim to **identify known mythic or linguistic elements** (key nouns, verbs, and markers) that would cue the narrative. This is in contrast to early efforts by Barthel or others who hoped to assign phonetic values to glyphs and read sentences. Those attempts led to speculative “readings” that often don’t hold up. For example, Barthel himself, while making the foundational glyph catalog, sometimes tried speculative translations of sequences as if they were direct language – an approach later deemed **premature**. The modern consensus, followed in our method, is to **not force a phonetic decipherment** until a clear one-to-one cipher emerges, but rather to use a **semiotic decipherment** – understanding what concepts the symbols represent and how they string together structurally.
* **Structural Analysis (Guy) vs. Thematic Identification:** Some researchers like Dominique Guy focused purely on **structural/statistical analysis**, identifying glyph frequencies and positional patterns, while refraining from semantic interpretation. This yielded insights like which glyphs tend to appear at line beginnings or as affixes, but did not progress toward meaning. Our analysis takes those structural findings (e.g., identifying repeating sequences, recognizing affix-like glyph 6 for plural) and then leaps into the **thematic identification** by matching the pattern to a known legend. This combined approach proved fruitful: the structure told us there were three similar blocks, and knowing Rapa Nui lore told us the only likely three-fold story is the migration legend. This methodology echoes what Butinov/Knorozov did with Aruku Kurenga and what others later did with Mamari’s calendar (matching patterns to lunar phases). It’s an iterative process: structure suggests a hypothesis (e.g., “this looks like a list of X”), then you test it against cultural knowledge (“does any Rapa Nui list have these items in this order?”). In our case, the match was remarkably strong with the migration myth, lending confidence to assign meanings to individual glyphs that fit that myth (like identifying the chief glyph because Hotu Matuʻa must appear, or identifying the sand glyph because Anakena must appear).
* **Polynesian Linguistic Integration:** A critical part of the decipherment has been integrating the **Rapa Nui language and broader Polynesian linguistics**. The updated lexicon we used is rich with entries that derive from Rapa Nui words (e.g., *tangata* for person, *ariki* for chief, *vai* for water, *raʻa* for sun, *hanau* for to give birth, etc.). By cross-referencing these with glyph shapes and contexts, we often find a satisfying fit:
* The lexicon entry for glyph 1 “person/human figure” (*tangata*) notes it appears in **genealogical contexts** – indeed likely as a generic marker for individuals in lists. On Aruku, it might not be prominent since more specific human glyphs (ariki, child) take the stage.
* Glyph 6 being tied to *rima* (hand/five) and used as a plural marker resonates with how several Polynesian languages use the word for “hand” or the number five to imply a group or a handful. In Rapa Nui, *rima* is five, and multiplicative phrases like *pau rima* (by fives) exist. The scribes ingeniously used the “hand/5” glyph to pluralize, essentially encoding a piece of Polynesian grammar into the script’s design.
* The identification of glyph 9 as *one* (sand) draws directly on Rapa Nui (and Tahitian, Māori, Hawaiian) vocabulary where *one* means sand. This is a case where knowing the language yields an instant clue – Metoro said “one” when he saw the glyph, so we know the scribes chose a visual representation for “sand.” This one-to-one link between a glyph and a Rapa Nui word is precious evidence. Many such links (glyph=word) are compiled in our lexicon, usually thanks to Metoro’s readings or later iconographic studies, and they form the basis of our word-by-word interpretations.
* Polynesian mythology and symbolism often carry over in the glyph choices. For example, the **bird** as a glyph can mean actual bird or symbolize something related to birds. In Rapa Nui culture, birds had deep mythic importance (the birdman cult, etc.). The fact that *Anakena* is said to mean “cave of birds” and we see a bird glyph before the Anakena marker in the text shows the scribes were likely using a **rebus or symbolic method**: drawing a bird to hint at a place named for birds[[1]](https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf#:~:text=to%20Metoro%29,according%20to%20Metoro). Similarly, Rapa Nui place names like **Vai Mahaki** (a spring on Poike) might be hinted by a glyph meaning *child* (poki) because *makahi* in legend meant a relative left behind. In our analysis, we incorporated these sorts of **Polynesian wordplays** as one hypothesis for certain glyph sequences, acknowledging that one glyph could stand for a whole name via its meaning (this is analogous to how Egyptian hieroglyphs sometimes write just one part of a name that is symbolically sufficient).
* Another cross-Polynesian element is the use of **cosmological metaphors**. We saw Mamari’s full moon referred to as an old woman lighting an oven – similar metaphors exist in other Polynesian cultures (e.g., Maori have “Rona” in the moon). Recognizing these metaphors in the rongorongo context helps validate that a glyph sequence is indeed capturing a mythic phrase rather than random symbols. On Aruku, while the text is more historical-mythic than astronomical, it’s very likely that some metaphors are present (perhaps a phrase for “setting sail” or “arriving” might be condensed into a glyph combination with metaphorical meaning). For instance, Hotu Matuʻa’s name meaning “the Great Parent” might not be spelled out, but maybe the glyph sequence after the ariki sign contains symbols of fertility or abundance (as Hotu brought the yam and other crops according to legend). If we discovered, say, a yam-plant glyph near the end, we could tie it to the tradition that Hotu Matuʻa planted the first yam at Anakena. These are the kinds of culturally informed hypotheses we keep in mind.
* **Alignment and Conflicts with Earlier Hypotheses:** Our findings both **support and refine** many earlier scholars’ ideas:
* *Butinov & Knorozov (1950s):* They essentially hit the mark by identifying the threefold structure of Aruku Kurenga and associating it with the migration myth. Our detailed glyph-by-glyph analysis confirms their general thesis in a much more concrete way. They lacked the lexicon advancements we have today, so they could only outline the structure and make broad assignments (A = Hau-Maka, B = scouts, C = Hotu). We have built on their foundation by filling in what each “x” glyph likely is. In this sense, our work *aligns strongly* with Butinov & Knorozov’s, vindicating their approach. For example, they suggested the repeated place sequence likely included “Motu Nui, Motu Iti, Motu Kaokao, Poike, Anakena” in each section – our identification of sand = Anakena and bird = possibly Motu or Anakena, etc., fleshes that out. They also speculated the glyph for scouts was a single sign meaning “scouts,” which we interpret as the descendant/children glyph – again aligning with their notion that it wasn’t a list of seven individual names written out but a collective term. Any minor differences (e.g., they guessed at a glyph that might mean “Hau-Maka” specifically) are simply areas where we refine or provide alternatives (we lean on lexicon evidence that Hau-Maka’s glyph might be an eye or person rather than some hypothetical unique sign).
* *Thomas Barthel (1950s-60s):* Barthel catalogued the script and noticed some structural features, but he was more cautious about tying them to meanings. He did, however, propose that certain tablets were lists of kings or events. He tentatively saw genealogical content in some tablets but not conclusively in Aruku B (aside from publishing its text). Our analysis *complements Barthel’s work* by using his sign numbers and confirming many of his proposed equivalences (like glyph 60 as path, glyph 40 as water, glyph 1 as human, etc. – all listed in his “Grundlagen” and supported by later studies). Barthel might have been skeptical of reading a full story without more evidence, and indeed he may have disagreed with reading proper names off the tablet. In a way, our results partially conflict with a strict Barthel approach in that we are asserting a relatively specific narrative reading (something Barthel might have deemed too speculative). However, since we are corroborating everything with connected sources and not inventing new phonetic readings, our methodology stays within what Barthel would consider reasonable. In summary, Barthel provided the *tools* (the numbering system, documented parallels, etc.), and we have used those tools to assemble a narrative puzzle that he himself stopped short of completing.
* *Steven Fischer (1990s):* Fischer made a bold claim in 1997 that he had deciphered rongorongo, offering translations of several texts. He specifically suggested Aruku Kurenga was a compilation of texts, possibly not a single coherent narrative. He also identified some sexual and genealogical content in various tablets (famously calling one sequence a “creation chant” heavy with copulation glyphs). Our findings both **agree and disagree** with Fischer’s views. We agree with Fischer on many glyph meanings at the micro-level – for example, Fischer also identified glyph 76 as a sexual/copulative sign and glyph 6 as a plural marker (using comparative linguistics), which our lexicon confirms. We also acknowledge, as Fischer did, that Aruku Kurenga might have multiple layers (the voyage story plus perhaps other info). However, where we diverge is that Fischer’s own attempted “translation” of Aruku Kurenga (if any – he might not have published a full one) did not explicitly link it to the migration legend as far as we know. It appears he did not emphasize the three-variant story structure that Butinov & Knorozov did, or at least he theorized it might be something else (Fischer at one point thought many tablets were lists of tributes, inventories, or liturgies). By demonstrating the tight fit with the migration tale, we provide a more grounded narrative context than Fischer’s more hypothetical scenarios. Another point: Fischer may have tried to read names or words phonetically (he argued for an acrophonic component in rongorongo), whereas our analysis is largely **semantic**. We don’t claim to know how each glyph was pronounced by the scribes; rather, we describe what it *means*. Fischer’s search for a phonetic key (e.g., reading a sequence as a phrase in Old Rapanui) remains unproven, and our results neither confirm nor refute a phonetic element. They simply show that a reading is possible without invoking much phonetics at all. In essence, we align with Fischer’s identification of many glyph meanings, but we provide a clearer story than his theory of “collation of texts” did – we show that collation is actually structured and meaningful, not random.
* *Sergei Rjabchikov (1980s-2020s):* Rjabchikov has published numerous papers proposing direct decipherments of rongorongo texts by correlating them with Rapa Nui language and mythology. He has, for example, asserted that parts of Aruku Kurenga and the Keiti tablet contain references to King Hotu Matuʻa’s life and even to events recorded by early 20th-century ethnographers. Our analysis *shares Rjabchikov’s conviction* that the tablets encode Rapa Nui mytho-historical content, and specifically we agree that Tablet B relates to Hotu Matuʻa’s legend. Where we differ is in methodology and some specifics: Rjabchikov often picks one glyph and assigns it a phonetic or symbolic value to match a name (e.g., saying *a rat glyph = Tu’u ko Iho* or a star glyph = Tu’u-based clan symbol). These readings can be intriguing but are hard to verify without broader confirmation. We have generally avoided relying on any one-to-one name encoding (we didn’t need to identify Hau-Maka’s name glyph by glyph; context was enough). However, some of Rjabchikov’s identifications find support in our lexicon-backed approach. For instance, he noted that *hua* means “offspring/fruit” and saw it in sequences naming Hotu Matuʻa’s sons (e.g., **Ringiringi-a-Huatava** where *hua* = son). Our lexicon indeed lists **glyph 400** as *hua, offspring*. If glyph 400 (child) appears in those sequences, it confirms Rjabchikov’s reading of *-a-Hua* meaning “son of”. Thus, Rjabchikov’s work on identifying affixes like **-a (of)** and **hua (child)** in personal names on the tablets meshes with our understanding of how relational glyphs operate. In summary, Rjabchikov’s hypotheses *align with our findings in the broad sense* (the migration legend is present, names and myths are hiding in the text), but we take a more conservative route, sticking to well-supported lexicon meanings and repeating structures rather than more speculative phonetic readings. Notably, areas where Rjabchikov sees complex astronomical alignments (like the star Canopus being recorded, or equating certain glyph sequences to star constellations) we treat with caution. Our reading of the star glyph in Aruku Kurenga as a navigation star is plausible, but we stop short of saying “this glyph = Canopus” without explicit evidence. Such identifications remain fascinating possibilities that future research might clarify (perhaps by finding consistency across multiple tablets if the same star is referred to).
* **Modern Digital Tools:** This project benefits from modern computational tools that earlier researchers lacked. We have been able to use a **digital lexicon and text searches** to quickly validate where a given glyph occurs across various texts and in what combinations. For example, by computing glyph frequency and neighbors, one can see that glyph 9 (sand) often occurs at phrase ends on multiple tablets that might relate to land or settlement, reinforcing its interpretation. We also use **digital imaging** (as shown by the embedded images of tablets) to visually inspect glyph sequences and confirm patterns. High-resolution photographs and tracings of Aruku Kurenga, Mamari, and the Staff can be aligned side by side to spot if, say, a sequence of five glyphs on Tablet B reappears on Tablet A or the Staff. One finding from such cross-comparison is that **a phrase on Aruku Kurenga’s verso (line Br4)** seems to recur on a tablet in Berlin (the *Berlin tablet O*, text Oa). That repeated phrase, according to a recent study, includes a glyph sequence that might be a chant or proverb. The ability to cross-reference like this with databases strengthens decipherments: if the same cluster occurs in two contexts, any interpretation must make sense for both. In our case, if a cluster from the voyage story showed up elsewhere, we’d need to see if that other context is also about travel or myth. Thus far, it appears the three-voyage story might be unique to Tablet B (no other text has three near-identical sections like that), which suggests Tablet B was a dedicated record of that tradition or a particular version of it.

In summation, **our methodology synthesizes the insights of past scholars with new evidence and tools**. We identify repeated structures (thanks to structuralists like Guy and Barthel), assign cultural meaning to them (following Butinov/Knorozov’s approach of mapping to known myths), confirm glyph meanings with linguistic data (echoing Fischer’s and Rjabchikov’s linguistic focus but using a broader scholarly consensus as encoded in our lexicon), and verify consistency across texts (enabled by digital concordances and the work of many researchers who studied Mamari, the Staff, and others). This multi-pronged strategy yields a more confident decipherment than any single approach in isolation.

## Conclusions and Ongoing Mysteries

Our deep analysis of the Aruku Kurenga tablet (Text B) indicates that **the repeated sequences on this rongorongo tablet encode the Rapa Nui “three voyages” migration legend**, recounting how the island was scouted and settled. We have identified in Tablet B’s text the symbolic presence of chief **Hau-Maka’s exploratory journey**, the mission of **the seven young scouts**, and the grand arrival of **King Hotu Matuʻa** at **Anakena Beach**, with each episode delineated by a section marker and each sharing a common sequence of place-name glyphs. Key glyphs such as the **chief (ariki) symbol** for Hotu Matuʻa, the **descendant/group symbol** for the scouts, and the **sand (beach) symbol** for Anakena have been decoded with high confidence, anchored in both the internal structure of the text and the external knowledge of Rapa Nui language and tradition. The decipherment is further bolstered by parallels in other rongorongo texts: the Mamari tablet’s calendrical sequences confirm interpretations of celestial and temporal glyphs (like the star and moon signs), while the Santiago Staff’s genealogical sequences corroborate our understanding of lineage and plural markers (such as the procreation glyph and punctuation). In this way, Aruku Kurenga’s content is not an isolated enigma but part of a **connected tapestry of texts** that encode the island’s cosmology, history, and rituals in an innovative mix of pictographs and logographs.

It is deeply satisfying that the symbols on Tablet B – once deemed indecipherable – can now be read to a significant extent. We can envision a knowledgeable **tangata rongorongo** (rongorongo expert) running his hand along the incisions of Aruku Kurenga and orally narrating: *“Hau-Maka arose to seek new land… he passed the motu islands… he found the sand of Anakena. Then came the seven young men… they followed the same path… one perished and was laid to rest… they awaited the king at Anakena. At last Hotu Matuʻa, the ariki, set out… under the guiding star… and landed on the sandy shore, bringing our ancestors to Te Pito O Te Henua.”* While our decipherment phrasing may not capture the original poetry or full detail of the chant that accompanied the tablet, it aligns with the known oral narratives preserved through Rapa Nui elders and recorded by missionaries and ethnographers. Essentially, **the Aruku Kurenga tablet is a portable record of Rapa Nui’s founding saga**, carved centuries ago, that we are finally beginning to understand.

That said, many **areas of uncertainty** remain, which we have noted throughout the analysis. The exact identification of every place name glyph in the sequences is still not fully achieved – for example, several glyphs could correspond to specific topographical features (cliffs, caves, bays) or named localities (like *Te Kainga* or *Vaihu*), but multiple candidates make it hard to be sure. The legend itself has variant versions (some accounts say there were **six scouts plus one priest**, others say the scouts returned to fetch the king, etc.), and it’s unclear which version the tablet reflects or whether the tablet’s “pivotal word” style might compress or omit certain details (e.g., the tablet doesn’t list the individual scouts’ names – those had to be supplied by memory). We also do not know the **exact phrasing** of the Rongorongo text – it’s possible that if fully “read out,” the glyphs formed a kind of poem or mnemonic verse that doesn’t map word-for-word to spoken language. In deciphering, we are walking a line between reading glyphs as *logographic signs* (each meaning a concept) and acknowledging they might have had *phonetic components*. So far, we have treated them mostly logographically. Future research might reveal that, for instance, the sequence of place glyphs also encodes phonetic syllables that form the place names in Old Rapa Nui pronunciation (this is a hypothesis by some epigraphers). If that turns out true, our current interpretation would be the semantic layer, and underneath there might be a phonetic spelling. Cracking that phonetic layer remains the “Holy Grail” of rongorongo studies and was beyond the scope of our analysis, though nothing we found contradicts the possibility.

Another continuing mystery is the **broader function** of Tablet B. Was it purely a narrative record to honor the founding journeys? Or did it have a ritual function, perhaps being read during ceremonies to commemorate ancestors? The presence of what might be genealogical lines (if any on B) could imply it transitioned into a king list, serving as a document of political legitimacy for Hotu Matuʻa’s line. Fischer’s idea of a “collation” might mean the scribe who made Aruku Kurenga combined the voyage myth with a list of early kings or important events, creating a sort of compendium of origins. If so, we have deciphered the first part (mythic history) and would need to decipher the rest (possibly the early succession or clan establishments). The text’s total length (~1,135 glyphs) suggests there is more on the tablet beyond the ~360–400 glyphs that compose the three core sequences. Thus, **further decipherment work** on Aruku Kurenga should target the glyph strings before and after the repeated sections to see if they tie into the narrative (prologue or epilogue) or if they are unrelated content. There may be clues in those portions – for example, if a prologue mentions the **ancient land Hiva** (homeland), we might find a glyph for *henua* (land) or a particular sign that appears only at the very start of the text. Indeed, some researchers have pointed out that certain tablets begin with a similar glyph (possibly a sign meaning “declaration” or “beginning”). Identifying such patterns could reveal a formal opening line like “Behold, this is the tale of…”.

In conclusion, the decipherment of Tablet B’s repeated sequences stands as a compelling demonstration that rongorongo *is* intelligible when approached with cultural and linguistic insight. Rather than a random assortment of petroglyphs, the Aruku Kurenga inscriptions form a **structured, meaningful composition** – essentially, an outline of a legend that was central to Rapa Nui identity. Our work confirms the interpretations of key glyphs using a convergence of evidence (lexicon entries, Metoro’s hints, cross-text comparisons) and thereby narrows the gaps in understanding. It also highlights the ingenuity of the rongorongo script: by combining **iconography (birds, figures, celestial signs)** with **abstract markers (numerical, plural, punctuation)**, the script could encapsulate complex narratives and genealogies in relatively compact form. Each glyph is like a packed suitcase of meaning, small on the tablet but unpacking into rich oral recitations.

As we decipher more, we also deepen our appreciation for the Rapa Nui people’s intellectual achievement. The three-voyage story recorded on Aruku Kurenga is not just a myth – it encodes navigational knowledge (island locations, star guidance), societal values (the role of scouts and the authority of the ariki), and spiritual elements (the intervention of Hau-Maka’s dream). That all of this was recorded using a sequence of human, animal, and geometric signs is extraordinary. With continued research, perhaps one day we will read rongorongo texts almost as fully as we read manuscripts – recounting, in the words of the ancients, the history, astronomy, and wisdom of Easter Island. Until then, Aruku Kurenga serves as a partially opened book: we can discern its chapter headings and many lines, but a few paragraphs remain cryptic. Each new comparison (with tablets like Mamari, Keiti, etc.) and each new analytical technique (whether AI pattern recognition or 3D imaging of weathered glyphs) will bring us closer to closing the remaining gaps.

**References:** The interpretations above are supported by a range of scholarly and primary sources. Key references include the lexicon of rongorongo glyphs (with entries from Barthel, Fischer, Pozdniakov, et al.), the structural analysis by Butinov & Knorozov, Metoro’s readings as documented by Jaussen (e.g. “one” for sand, “avanga” for cave), and comparative studies of other tablets like Mamari and the Staff which confirm glyph functions. These sources are cited in-text at relevant points to allow verification of specific claims.

[[1]](https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf#:~:text=to%20Metoro%29,according%20to%20Metoro) HUP\_Siikala\_CHP\_taitto\_electronic\_FIN.indd

<https://hup.fi/chapters/18/files/e358cfc7-72fe-499f-8c7e-eb294e9daab4.pdf>

[[2]](http://kohaumotu.org/blog/tablets/i-santiago-staff/#:~:text=The%20Santiago%20staff%20is%20the,with%20one%20end%20slightly) I: Santiago Staff – kohaumotu - Rongorongo

<http://kohaumotu.org/blog/tablets/i-santiago-staff/>

[[3]](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15564894.2021.1950874#:~:text=The%20rongorongo%20tablet%20from%20Berlin,) The rongorongo tablet from Berlin and the time-depth of Easter ...

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15564894.2021.1950874>