

# Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

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## Letters

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The façade of the island church was decorated at Christmas time with two large and colorful murals depicting a nativity scene with Rapanui overtones.



One of the Chilean wine palms recently brought to the island. It's height can be estimated by comparison with the woman standing to the left of the tree. It is hoped that the palm will become part of a projected botanical garden on the island.

**THIEVES ABOUND.** A break-in at the Sebastian Englert Museum on Easter Island resulted in the theft of several ancient artifacts, including an eye from a statue that was found during excavations at Tongariki. The culprit was quickly arrested and most of the artifacts recovered.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*

### Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

*Rapa Nui Journal* (Vol.13:14-15) March 1999 contains an article by the hobby epigrapher Sergei V. Rjabchikov that purports to "translate" a *rongorongo* tablet from Easter Island.

In this article, the author never discloses the fact that the artifact under investigation, which he calls the "Chicago Fish Tablet", is in fact a tourist reproduction from 1925.

The artifact in question is the "Fuller *ika*" (RR 1), inventory number 273245 at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA. Showing three parallel lines of some 30 glyphs in a mixture of primitive *rongorongo*, *ta'u*, and *mama* figures, it was manufactured on Rapanui in 1925 at which time Captain Alfred Walter Francis Fuller (1882-1961) brought it to London. At no time has the Field Museum ever claimed that this artifact is of ancient provenance. Its value lies in its representation of the carving genre used on Rapa Nui in the 1920s. It is a typical product of this era. Several similar "*ika*'s" were adorning Tahitian collections in the 1920s.

Having been manufactured in 1925 and including a pseudo-"script", the *mama*, that was only elaborated in the 1920s, the "Fuller *ika*" does not hold a text but merely decoration, added to the artifact in order to command a greater selling price. Decoration does not need "translating".

It is most strange that Mr. Rjabchikov does not inform the readers of the *Rapa Nui Journal* of the recent manufacture of this artifact. The only explanation can be that he himself is not aware of it or that he simply chooses to ignore this fact in order to publicize an imaginative "translation". Mr. Rjabchikov's article is neither adequate scholarship nor passable journalism. It is deception.

Steven Roger Fischer, Ph.D. Director,  
Institute of Polynesian Languages and Literatures, NZ

### Reviews

José Miguel Ramírez A. Patrimonio Cultural y Comunidad en Rapa Nui (Cultural Heritage and the Community in Rapa Nui) In: *Patrimonio Arqueológico Indígena en Chile. Reflexiones y Propuestas de Gestión*. Ximena Navarro Harris and Leonor Adán Alfaro, Eds., Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de la Frontera and UNESCO, Santiago, Chile 1998, pp. 125-131, ISBN. 956-236-114-4

Review by A. Elena Charola, Ph.D.  
Consultant, World Monuments Fund, Easter Island Program

The book, devoted to the indigenous archeological heritage of Chile, is divided into three sections: Archaeological Heritage, Institutions and Legal Measures; Defense of the Heritage; and Proposals and Initiatives for Management. Within this