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A Voyage Towards The South Pole, And Round The World

Performed In His Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Adventure, In the
Years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775 ; In Two Volumes

**Cook, James
Furneaux, ...**

London, 1777

Chap. VIII. A Description of the Island, its Produce, Situation, and
Inhabitants; their Manners and Customs; Conjectures concerning their
Government, Religion, and other Subjects; with a more ...

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C H A P VIII.

A Description of the Island, its Produce, Situation, and Inhabitants; their Manners and Customs; Conjectures concerning their Government, Religion, and other Subjects; with a more particular Account of the gigantic Statues.

I SHALL now give some farther account of this island, which is undoubtedly the same that admiral Roggewin touched at in April 1722; although the description given of it by the authors of that voyage does by no means agree with it now. It may also be the same that was seen by Captain Davis in 1686; for, when seen from the East, it answers very well to Wafer's description, as I have before observed. In short, if this is not the land, his discovery cannot lie far from the coast of America, as this latitude has been well explored from the meridian of 80° to 110°. Captain Cartret carried it much farther; but his track seems to have been a little too far South. Had I found fresh water, I intended spending some days in looking for the low sandy isle Davis fell in with, which would have determined the point: But as I did not find water, and had a long run to make before I was assured of getting any; and being in want of refreshments, I declined the search; as a small delay might have been attended with bad consequences to the crew, many of them beginning to be more or less affected with the scurvy.

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March.

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No nation need contend for the honour of the discovery of this island; as there can be few places which afford less convenience for shipping than it does. Here is no safe anchorage; no wood for fuel; nor any fresh water worth taking on board. Nature has been exceedingly sparing of her favours to this spot. As every thing must be raised by dint of labour, it cannot be supposed the inhabitants plant much more than is sufficient for themselves; and as they are but few in number, they cannot have much to spare to supply the wants of visitant strangers. The produce is sweet potatoes, yams, tarooreddy root, plantains, and sugar-canes, all pretty good, the potatoes especially, which are the best of the kind I ever tasted. Gourds they have also; but so very few, that a cocoa-nut shell was the most valuable thing we could give them. They have a few tame fowls such as cocks and hens, small but well tasted. They have also rats, which, it seems, they eat; for I saw a man with some dead ones in his hand; and he seemed unwilling to part with them, giving me to understand they were for food. Land birds there were hardly any; and sea birds but few; these were, men of war, tropic, and egg birds, nodies, tern, &c. The coast seemed not to abound with fish; at least we could catch none with hook and line, and it was but very little we saw amongst the natives.

Such is the produce of Easter Island, or Davis's Land, which is situated in the latitude of $27^{\circ} 5' 30''$ S., longitude $109^{\circ} 46' 20''$ West. It is about ten or twelve leagues in circuit, hath a hilly and stony surface, and an iron bound shore. The hills are of such an height as to be seen fifteen or sixteen leagues: off the South end, are two rocky islets, lying near the shore: the North and East points of the island
rise



rise directly from the sea to a considerable height; between them, on the S. E. side, the shore forms an open bay, in which I believe the Dutch anchored. We anchored, as hath been already mentioned, on the West side of the island, three miles to the North of the South point, with the sandy beach bearing E. S. E. This is a very good road with easterly winds, but a dangerous one with westerly, as the other on the S. E. side must be with easterly winds.

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For this, and other bad accommodations already mentioned, nothing but necessity will induce any one to touch at this isle, unless it can be done without going much out of the way; in which case touching here may be advantageous, as the people willingly and readily part with such refreshments as they have, and at an easy rate. We certainly received great benefit from the little we got; but few ships can come here without being in want of water, and this want cannot be here supplied. The little we took on board, could not be made use of; it being only salt water which had filtrated through a stony beach, into a stone well. This the natives had made for the purpose, a little to the southward of the sandy beach so often mentioned; and the water ebbed and flowed into it with the tide.

The inhabitants of this island do not seem to exceed six or seven hundred souls, and above two-thirds of those we saw were males. They either have but few females among them, or else many were restrained from making their appearance, during our stay; for though we saw nothing to induce us to believe the men were of a jealous disposition, or the women afraid to appear in public, something of this kind was probably the case.



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In colour, features, and language, they bear such affinity to the people of the more western isles, that no one will doubt that they have had the same origin. It is extraordinary that the same nation should have spread themselves over all the isles in this vast ocean, from New Zealand to this island, which is almost one-fourth part of the circumference of the globe. Many of them have now no other knowledge of each other, than what is preserved by antiquated tradition; and they have, by length of time, become, as it were, different nations, each having adopted some peculiar custom, or habit, &c. Nevertheless, a careful observer will soon see the affinity each has to the other.

In general the people of this isle are a slender race. I did not see a man that would measure six feet; so far are they from being giants, as one of the authors of Roggewin's voyage asserts. They are brisk and active, have good features, and not disagreeable countenances, are friendly and hospitable to strangers, but as much addicted to pilfering as any of their neighbours.

Tatowing, or puncturing the skin, is much used here. The men are marked from head to foot, with figures all nearly alike; only some give them one direction, and some another, as fancy leads. The women are but little punctured; red and white paint is an ornament with *them*, as also with the men; the former is made of tamarick, but what composes the latter, I know not.

Their cloathing is a piece or two of quilted cloth about six feet by four, or a mat. One piece wrapped round their loins, and another over their shoulders, make a complete dress. But the men, for the most part, are in a manner naked,







Drawn from Nature by W. Hodges.

Engraved by F. Bartolozzi
N^o. XLVI.

MAN OF EASTER ISLAND.

Published Feb. 1st 1777 by W^m. Strahan in New Street Shoe Lane & Tho^s. Cadell in the Strand London.



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Drawn from Nature by W.Hodges.

Engraved by J. Caldwell
N^o XXV

WOMAN OF EASTER ISLAND .

Published Feb^r 1st 1777 by W^m Strahan in New Street Shoe Lane & Tho^s Cadell in the Strand London.

wearing nothing but a slip of cloth betwixt their legs, each end of which is fastened to a cord or belt they wear round the waist. Their cloth is made of the same materials as at Otaheite, viz. of the bark of the cloth-plant; but, as they have but little of it, our Otaheitean cloth, or indeed any sort of it, came here to a good market.

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March.

Their hair, in general, is black; the women wear it long, and sometimes tied up on the crown of the head; but the men wear it, and their beards, cropped short. Their head-dress is a round fillet adorned with feathers, and a straw bonnet something like a Scotch one; the former, I believe, being chiefly worn by the men, and the latter by the women. Both men and women have very large holes, or rather slits, in their ears, extended to near three inches in length. They sometimes turn this slit over the upper part, and then the ear looks as if the flap was cut off. The chief ear ornaments are the white down of feathers, and rings, which they wear in the inside of the hole, made of some elastic substance, rolled up like a watch-spring. I judged this was to keep the hole at its utmost extension. I do not remember seeing them wear any other ornaments, excepting amulets made of bone or shells.

As harmless and friendly as these people seem to be, they are not without offensive weapons, such as short wooden clubs, and spears; which latter are crooked sticks about six feet long, armed at one end with pieces of flint. They have also a weapon, made of wood, like the *Patoo patoo* of New Zealand.

Their houses are low miserable huts, constructed by setting sticks upright in the ground, at six or eight feet distance, then bending them towards each other, and tying them to-



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gether at the top, forming thereby a kind of Gothic arch. The longest sticks are placed in the middle, and shorter ones each way, and at less distance asunder; by which means the building is highest and broadest in the middle, and lower and narrower towards each end. To these are tied others horizontally, and the whole is thatched over with leaves of sugar-cane. The door-way is in the middle of one side, formed like a porch, and so low and narrow, as just to admit a man to enter upon all fours. The largest house I saw was about sixty feet long, eight or nine feet high in the middle, and three or four at each end; its breadth at these parts, was nearly equal to its height. Some have a kind of vaulted houses built with stone, and partly under ground; but I never was in one of these.

I saw no household utensils amongst them except gourds, and of these but very few. They were extravagantly fond of coconut shells; more so than of any thing we could give them. They dress their victuals in the same manner as at Otaheite; that is, with hot stones, in an oven or hole in the ground. The straw or tops of sugar-cane, plantain heads, &c. serve them for fuel to heat the stones. Plantains, which require but little dressing, they roast under fires of straw, dried grass, &c.; and whole races of them are ripened or roasted in this manner. We frequently saw ten, or a dozen, or more, such fires in one place, and most commonly in the mornings and evenings.

Not more than three or four canoes were seen on the whole island; and these very mean, and built of many pieces sewed together with small line. They are about eighteen or 20 feet long, head and stern carved or raised a little, are very narrow, and fitted with out-riggers. They do



do not seem capable of carrying above four persons, and are, by no means, fit for any distant navigation. As small and as mean as these canoes were, it was a matter of wonder to us, where they got the wood to build them with. For in one of them was a board six or eight feet long, fourteen inches broad at one end, and eight at the other; whereas we did not see a stick on the island which would have made a board half this size; nor indeed was there another piece in the whole canoe half so big.

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There are two ways by which it is possible they may have got this large wood: it might have been left here by the Spaniards; or it might have been driven on the shore of the island from some distant land. It is even possible that there may be some land in the neighbourhood, from whence they might have got it. We, however, saw no signs of any; nor could we get the least information on this head from the natives, although we tried every method we could think of, to obtain it. We were almost as unfortunate in our inquiries for the proper or native name of the island. For, on comparing notes, I found we had got three different names for it, viz. Tamareki, Whyhu, and Teapÿ. Without pretending to say which, or whether any of them, is right, I shall only observe, that the last was obtained by Oedidee, who understood their language much better than any of us, though even he understood it but very imperfectly.

It appears by the account of Roggewin's voyage, that these people had no better vessels than when he first visited them. The want of materials, and not of genius, seems to be the reason why they have made no improvement in this art. Some pieces of carving were found amongst them, both well designed and executed. Their plantations are prettily



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prettily laid out by line, but not inclosed by any fence; indeed, they have nothing for this purpose but stones.

I have no doubt that all these plantations are private property, and that there are here, as at Otaheite, chiefs (which they call *Areekes*) to whom these plantations belong. But of the power or authority of these chiefs, or of the government of these people, I confess myself quite ignorant.

Nor are we better acquainted with their religion. The gigantic statues, so often mentioned, are not, in my opinion, looked upon as idols by the present inhabitants, whatever they might have been in the days of the Dutch; at least, I saw nothing that could induce me to think so. On the contrary, I rather suppose that they are burying-places for certain tribes or families. I, as well as some others, saw a human skeleton lying in one of the platforms, just covered with stones. Some of these platforms of masonry are thirty or forty feet long, twelve or sixteen broad, and from three to twelve in height; which last in some measure depends on the nature of the ground. For they are generally at the brink of the bank facing the sea, so that this face may be ten or twelve feet or more high, and the other may not be above three or four. They are built, or rather faced, with hewn stones of a very large size; and the workmanship is not inferior to the best plain piece of masonry we have in England. They use no sort of cement; yet the joints are exceedingly close, and the stones morticed and tenanted one into another, in a very artful manner. The side walls are not perpendicular, but inclining a little inwards, in the same manner that breast-works, &c. are built in Europe: yet had not all this care, pains, and sagacity, been able to preserve these



Drawn from Nature by W. Hood

Engraved by W. Woollett
N° XLIX.

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Drawn from Nature by W. Hodges.

Engraved by W. Woollett
N^o. XLIX.

MONUMENTS IN EASTER ISLAND

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these curious structures from the ravages of all-devouring Time.

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The statues, or at least many of them, are erected on these platforms, which serve as foundations. They are, as near as we could judge, about half length, ending in a sort of stump at the bottom, on which they stand. The workmanship is rude, but not bad; nor are the features of the face ill formed, the nose and chin in particular; but the ears are long beyond proportion; and, as to the bodies, there is hardly any thing like a human figure about them.

I had an opportunity of examining only two or three of these statues, which are near the landing-place; and they were of a grey stone, seemingly of the same sort as that with which the platforms were built. But some of the gentlemen, who travelled over the island, and examined many of them, were of opinion that the stone of which they were made, was different from any other they saw on the island, and had much the appearance of being factitious. We could hardly conceive how these islanders, wholly unacquainted with any mechanical power, could raise such stupendous figures, and afterwards place the large cylindric stones, before mentioned, upon their heads. The only method I can conceive, is by raising the upper end by little and little, supporting it by stones as it is raised, and building about it till they got it erect; thus a sort of mount, or scaffolding, would be made; upon which they might roll the cylinder, and place it upon the head of the statue; and then the stones might be removed from about it. But if the stones are factitious, the statues might have been put together on the place, in their present position, and the cylinder put on by building a mount round them as above mentioned. But,
let



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let them have been made and set up, by this or any other method, they must have been a work of immense time, and sufficiently shew the ingenuity and perseverance of the islanders in the age in which they were built; for the present inhabitants have most certainly, had no hand in them, as they do not even repair the foundations of those which are going to decay. They give different names to them, such as Gotomoara, Marapate, Kanaro, Goway-too-goo, Matta Matta, &c. &c.; to which they sometimes prefix the word Moi, and sometimes annex Areekee. The latter signifies Chief; and the former, Burying, or Sleeping-place, as well as we could understand.

Besides the monuments of antiquity, which were pretty numerous, and no where but on or near the sea-coast, there were many little heaps of stones, piled up in different places, along the coast. Two or three of the uppermost stones in each pile were generally white; perhaps always so, when the pile is complete. It will hardly be doubted that these piles of stone had a meaning. Probably they might mark the place where people had been buried, and serve instead of the large statues.

The working-tools of these people are but very mean, and like those of all the other islanders we have visited in this ocean, made of stone, bone, shells, &c. They set but little value on iron or iron tools; which is the more extraordinary as they know their use; but the reason may be, their having but little occasion for them.

C H A P.