

THE LOST CIVILIZATION



The distant and mysterious Rapa Nui is one of the most enigmatic places in the world. It is believed that the first inhabitants, around 300 people, arrived around the 7th century from the distant island of Hiva, about 3400 km away. The feat of those early navigators was colossal, as they arrived in canoes, harnessing the winds and currents.

Once established on the island, the inhabitants began to develop a prosperous and rich culture. Among their most famous landmarks are the Moais, gigantic stone statues

weighing between 5 and 80 tons. There are hundreds of them scattered throughout the island, but the real question is, how were they transported? These stone monstrosities were carved in the crater of the Rano Raraku volcano and then somehow distributed across the island.

One theory holds that the inhabitants of Rapa Nui used tree trunks to make the heads roll from one place to another, but this theory did not hold up for long. Later, they came up with a new possibility, which is that the Moais "walked." Using ropes, it was possible for three large groups of people to make the Moais move by "walking" through a rocking technique.

As you can see, the society of Rapa Nui achieved great feats despite the scarcity of resources and the small territory they had. They managed to establish a civilization that thrived for some years. However, there were also problems. Prosperity led to overpopulation, and it is estimated that more than ten thousand people inhabited that small place. With the population explosion came the need for natural resources. This led to extensive deforestation, causing a severe shortage of wood. The islanders couldn't even build canoes to go fishing. If you look at the island's landscape, there are hardly any trees anywhere. Hunger and scarcity led to conflict and war.

After this dark period, society gradually flourished again until the arrival of European explorers, whose diseases decimated the population and turned the locals into slaves.

We can draw many lessons from the history of Rapa Nui, but undoubtedly, its greatest lesson is how the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources caused a prosperous and growing society to collapse almost to the point of disappearance.



COMPREHENSION

QUESTIONS



1. Where did the first inhabitants of the island come from?

2. How did they manage to move the statues?

3. What lesson can you draw from this story?

4. What did the Rapa Nui people use the wood for?

