

# The Forsters back in the spotlight: Unknown manuscript on Easter Island discovered in Poland

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*The present article deals with a previously unknown manuscript found in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow (Poland). Written in French, the document was composed by the Forsters, famous naturalists that traveled with Captain Cook. The manuscript is a complete essay on Easter Island, being at the same time a political, social and philosophical manifesto. For Rapa Nui, it includes descriptions and commentaries not present in other writings by both authors. Transcription and translation are offered in this paper, as well as the analysis of technical and meritorical aspects of the manuscript.*

*El presente artículo está dedicado a un manuscrito desconocido encontrado en la Librería Jaguelónica en Cracovia (Polonia). Escrito en francés, el documento fue redactado por los Forster, naturalistas famosos que viajaban con el Capitán Cook. El manuscrito es un ensayo completo acerca de Isla de Pascua, siendo a la vez un manifiesto político, social y filosófico. En cuanto a Rapa Nui, incluye descripciones y comentarios ausentes en otras obras de ambos autores. El artículo presenta su transcripción y traducción, así como el análisis técnico y meritorio del manuscrito.*

## Introduction

Poland is a country so distant from any affairs related to Rapa Nui that a historian – from the same university where I work – told me, somewhat amused, that if he did not believe me, he would tend to think a document on Easter Island found here must be a kind of Fata Morgana. However, I was much more astonished when I learned a couple of months ago that indeed there existed such a document, included in the so called ‘Berlin Collection’ of the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow, at one of the most renowned universities of our country. The first person to write about this manuscript was Marzena Chrobak (2010); I had no access to the original, but I possess a high-resolution scan that Chrobak provided on a CD.

The document bears the signature “Gall. Qu. 85”, although Chrobak maintains that it is a folio (2010:7). It consists of 26 folios, but the manuscript itself occupies 26 pages; the rest are protective sheets, blank pages (at the beginning and at the end of the document), the title page, maps and illustrations, as well as a linguistic table. The text is written in French; it is entitled *Mémoire sur Waihou, ou l’Isle de Pâques* and the author is referred to as Jean Renaud Forster. As to the aforementioned maps, the manuscript includes “A Chart of the Southern Hemisphere” by George Forster, engraved by William Whitchurch and published in 1777, as well as a map

of Easter Island, with no author indicated, but it bears the annotation “sculp<sup>d</sup>. 1776” and other data coincide with those of the first map. Moreover, the document contains well-known portraits of a man and a woman of Easter Island, drawn by William Hodges and engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi and James Caldwell, respectively, both published in February of 1777, and also “a watercolour painting protected by carbon paper” (Chrobak 2010:8), which is a genre scene depicting Easter Islanders, the characteristic statues – one of them fallen – and a canoe. The “Table harmonique des Langues de la mer du Sud”, (which I shall not discuss in the present paper), bears certain resemblance to “A Comparative Table of the Various Languages in the Isles of the South Sea” published by Johann Reinhold Forster in his *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World...* (Forster 1996[1778]:188-189). Chrobak indicates that the paper of the manuscript was produced in English paper mills (2010:10), but sometime after Cook’s second expedition, concluded that the Forsters left Great Britain and the document was not necessarily created there. We do not know for certain when and for whom it was composed, but I shall discuss these questions later on. It is worth mentioning, however, that in the year 1850, it was donated to the Royal Library in Berlin (Königliche

Bibliothek; today Berlin State Library). It must have found its way to Cracow after World War II. Let us now concentrate on the contents of the manuscript: a complete essay on Easter Island, being at the same time a pretext for the author to touch upon philosophical and political issues.

## Method of Work

To translate the original document from French into English, I used the scan of the manuscript as the working copy for translation into Polish (to be precise, a recorded oral interpretation) made by Agata Frankowska-Thuinet. I decided to use original proper names and anglicized toponyms or to offer contemporary ones – in the original document we can find, for example, Jean Renaud Forster, Charles Frédéric Behrens, and also Waihou, Guaham (for Guam), Tagales (for Tagalog) or Byajos (for Bajau), etc. Nevertheless, I preserved the misspelled form of the name of Roggewein (*sic*). The English rendition of alleged *moai* names are copied from the journals by J.R. Forster and Cook. The manuscript contains footnotes introduced by special marks; for obvious reasons they had to be changed in the present paper. For the sake of clarity I also use “and” instead of the original “&”. All of the underlines applied by Forster are preserved, as well as the form of his bibliographical notes and Latin scientific terms he provides. The translation includes my additions and commentaries in square brackets.

## Mémoire Sur Waihou, ou L'Isle de Pâques par Jean Renaud Forster

*Transcription from French:  
Agata Frankowska-Thuinet*

La decouverte des païs nouveaux et éloignés a beaucoup contribué à l'augmentation des Connaissances humaines, de même qu'à les distinguer, les fixer et en verifier les rapports. Ces idées nouvelles sont applicables ou au physique, et moral, ou à l'ordre social. Elles servent ou à confirmer des vérités connues, & à les rendre plus universelles; ou à detruire des préjugés qui souvent exercent un despotisme destructeur sur l'Espèce humaine. Elles servent également à developper de nouvelles Connaissances, qui enrichissant l'esprit de l'homme, deviennent à leur tour les matrices d'autres idées qui servent à perfectionner l'Effet des premières. C'est toujours un gain, d'ajouter aux vérités déjà connues, puisque ce ne sont qu'elles qui meritent de devenir l'objet de nos études & de nos recherches, et qui font ce précieux trésor, le seul digne d'être transmis à la posterité. Beaucoup de Voyageurs ont donné des Mémoires sur ce qu'ils ont vu et entendu dans le cours de leurs Voyages. Mais malheureusement presque tous ces mémoires n'ont été d'aucun secours aux philosophes, pour enrichir ou pour ennoblir leurs Connaissances, en les

rendant utiles à l'humanité. Parmiles Voyageurs qui ont écrit, la plupart trop ignorans pour faire un choix sage des idées, qui peuvent être plus utiles, offrent dans leurs écrits au lieu d'observations intéressantes, les remarques les plus frivoles et les plus superficielles, qui ajoutées à des opinions et des préjugés souvent puériles ne permettent pas à un philosophe de s'en rapporter à leur témoignage, il a besoin de tirer des Conclusions generales, qu'il ne peut fonder sur une autorité aussi suspecte. Accoutumé à porter un examen scrupuleux dans l'étude de la Nature, et aidé de l'Experience de mes premiers Voyages, je me suis efforcé autant qu'il m'a été possible d'éviter de tomber dans les défauts que je me permets de reprendre, ne m'étant attaché qu'à ce qui m'a paru essentiel, soit pour ajouter aux Connaissances philosophiques, soit pour perfectionner celles qui étaient déjà acquises. Les observations que j'ai recueillies dans ce mémoire méritent d'autant plus l'attention des curieux, qu'elles ont pour objet une isle, qui située au milieu des mers australes et séparée des autres pays par des espaces immenses, a été produite par l'explosion d'un feu Soutterain, et est peuplée d'une poignée d'hommes, qui n'ont conservé aucune trace de la manière dont ils ont été transplantés dans cette terre étrangère, leur langage étant le seul guide qui puisse nous découvrir qu'ils viennent des Indes Orientales, sans savoir comment ils ont été jettés sur cette ile ingrate, dont le sol stérile ne produit les alimens necessaires à ces infortunés qu'après le travail le plus pénible. Dépourvus de toute assistance de la nature, ils n'ont ni le bois nécessaire pour appreter leurs vivres, ni pour se mettre à l'abri de l'ardeur du Soleil, encore moins pour construire des Vaisseaux capables de les transporter dans des pays plus favorisés de la Nature. Nonobstant toutes ces difficultés nous y verrons les arts plus avancés que dans les isles les plus fertiles et les plus peuplées de la Mer du Sud.

Cette isle fut découverte l'an 1722, le jour de Pâques, par un Hollandais appelé Jaques Roggewein, cherchant dans ces mers inconnues à faire de nouvelles découvertes à la tête d'une petite escadre. On a prétendu qu'elle avait été vue l'an 1687 par le filibustier Jean Davis, mais après avoir bien examiné le recit que nous en a donné Dampier on peut s'assurer que la petite isle basse vue par Davis en 1687 n'était pas l'isle appellée isle de Pâques par Roggewein, par rapport au jour de sa découverte.<sup>1</sup> Les Espagnols ayant envoyé l'an 1770 sous la conduite de Don Philippe Gonzalez le Vaisseau San Lorenzo et la frégate Rosalie à la découverte de cette isle, decouvrirent celle de Pâques où ils restèrent pendant cinq jours.<sup>2</sup> Enfin nous la decouvrimmes en dernier lieu nous-mêmes le onze Mars 1774, & la trouvames située au degré 27°3' de latitude australe, at au 109° 46' de longitude à l'Ouest de Greenwich.<sup>3</sup>

Cette isle n'a que dix ou douze lieues de tour,<sup>4</sup> sa plus grande longueur peut avoir cinq lieues, mais sa plus grande largeur n'excède pas deux lieues ou deux lieues et demi au plus.

Depuis longtems nous subsissions avec du biscuit vermoulu et échauffé, et des salaisons gâtées. Nous sortions d'un Climat rigoureux, où nous étions continuellement enveloppés de brouillard, de frimats et de neiges, sans

avoir joui pendant de semaines entières de l'influence niefaisante de l'astre du Jour, allarmés à chaque moment par le danger des masses immenses de glace flottante qui nous environnaient; n'ayant vu pendant tant de tems d'autres etres vivans que les tristes oiseaux de mer, qui cherchent une subsistence précaire en planant avec une assiduité infatigable sur la surface couronnée de cet Ocean, et quelques baleines solitaires étonnées de la hardisse des êtres faibles et presomtueux qui allaient parcourir ces lugubres regions où avant nous personne n'avait osé penetrer, et où les monstres de l'Abysse semblent reigner paisiblement depuis le commencement des Siecles. Les Rhumatismes, le Scorbut & le Choléra morbus avaient gagné sur notre Equipage, et il ne restait que très peu de gens qui n'eussent pas été attaqués de l'un ou de l'autre de ces maux, quand le cri, terre, se fit entendre, et vint tirer nos ames de cet état de stupeur indolente que ces solitudes affreuses où nous trouvions, n'avait pu interrompre. Il n'est pas besoin d'images pour faire concevoir de quel plaisir nous fumes saisi, quelle joie se repandit sur nos phisionomies à la découverte de cette isle après avoir été cent & trois jours en pleine mer sans avoir eu connaissance de terre. La joie était peinte sur chaque visage, nous nous embrassions les uns les autres, nous félicitant du bonheur dont nous jouissions déjà à la vue d'une terre, qui nous promettait la fin de nos malheurs présens.

Nous venions de relire peu de jours avant l'atterage, le récit des Voyageurs qui avaient accompagné Roggewein & qui font la peinture la plus agréable de cette isle, des bois et des forêts qui la couvrent, de sa fertilité, et de l'abondance de fruits excellens et des volailles qui leurs avaient été offertes par les Habitans. Tout cela suffisait à relever nos espérances, et à aiguiser nos appetits, n'étant plus qu'à la distance d'environ douze lieues de cette isle; On peut donc imaginer quelle fut notre surprise lorsque nous ne pumes découvrir ces bois si vantés en l'approchant. La lunette à la main nous ne laissames pas d'examiner la Côte et les hauteurs de l'isle; mais plus nous y cherchions un endroit délicieux, plus elle avait la ressemblance d'un rocher aride et brulé, couvert d'une faible couche de terreau, ne nourrissant que quelque peu de racines. Mais malgré tous ces désavantages nous nous consolames d'avoir trouvé une terre habitable, et habitée par des individus de notre espèce que nous aperçûmes sur le rivage, après une longue absence de la terre, et après avoir été séparés du commerce des hommes pendant plus de trois mois.

Ayant à la fin pris terre, nous fumes reçus avec beaucoup de bonté par les habitans, dont nous trouvames environ 150 d'assemblés sur le rivage; La plupart nus ayant à peine un ceinturon de toile fabriquée de l'écorce d'un meurier<sup>5</sup> pour couvrir ce que, par un sentiment général de pudeur, les natures les plus sauvages tachent de dérober à la vue; ou portant une espèce de rets fait des filamens d'un gramen.<sup>6</sup> Ce qui nous frappa d'abord, fut le petit nombre de femmes, dont nous ne vimes pas audelà de douze dans cette grande foule d'hommes, chacune enveloppée de deux pieces de cette étoffe faite d'écorce de meurier, qui fait l'habillement

de presque tous les insulaires de la mer du Sud entre les Tropiques. Mais pour que cette étoffe put résister à la fatigue on en avait doublé plusieurs couches et on les avait jointes par des cordons faits du gramen ci-dessus mentionné, une pièce leur servant de la même manière dont les négresses se servent de leurs pagnes, et l'autre couvrant leurs épaules et leur allant jusqu'aux genoux, ce qui faisait un habit complet. Toute cette multitude etait empressée de nous voir, nous environnait & nous suivait partout dès que nous eumes mis piéd à tere. Tous ces insulaires humains, qui étaient sans armes, si j'en excepte deux ou trois, qui tenaient en main un baton d'environ six piéds de longueur, nous offraient à l'envi des cannes,<sup>7</sup> des bananes mures,<sup>8</sup> des batates douces,<sup>9</sup> et des courges,<sup>10</sup> avec quelques poules roties. Cette reception pleine de bonté & d'hospitalité, accompagnée d'une simplicité de mœurs aussi douce qu'intéressante, frappa les Anglais d'autant plus qu'ils ne connaissaient d'autre hospitalité chez eux, que celle d'être bien reçus, chacun à ses dépens, dans une Auberge. Cette qualité nous fit augurer bien de la bonne volonté et des dispositions sociales de cette Nation. Nous leurs donnames quelques quincaille en retour, et fumes étonnés de voir qu'ils n'estimoient que le fer, refusant nos présens en verroterie jusqu'à lancer les rassades avec un ris dédaigneux à plusieurs toises. Leur curiosité etait extrême pour nos toiles; et un haillon d'une vieille chemise ne manquait jamais d'être accepté avec empressements & de nous faire avoir en retour quelques batates. Les armes à feu leur étaient connues et le moindre mouvement accidentel de nos fusils alarma ces pauvres gens, et nous convainquit qu'ils en avaient essayé les funestes effets d'une manière à laisser de fortes impressions sur leurs esprits. Nos habits et surtout nos Chapeaux excitaient une telle passion dans quelques individus de cette nation (qui n'a absolument rien pour se garantir contre l'ardeur du soleil) qu'ils en enleverent deux ou trois au risque de se voir atteints par nos armes à feu. Nous découvrimes peu de tems après, qu'ils étaient très experts au metier de filouter et de tromper. Ils n'hésitaient point à aller chercher dans les champs de leurs voisins, les batates qu'ils venaient nous vendre, les propriétaires ayant toutes les peines du monde à garantir leurs champs contre les déprédations de leurs compatriotes : ajoutant à ces tours de mauvaise foi celui de nous vendre de petits sacs faits de natte, qui étaient remplis en apparence de batates, et ne renfermaient que des pierres au fond. Plusieurs d'entre eux eurent même l'adresse de nous voler ces sacs, et de nous les vendre une seconde fois. En nous éloignant du rivage nous découvrimes une de leurs habitations située sur une petite éminence. On avait rangé sur la terre des pierres équarries d'environ deux piéds de longueur sur un de largeur, avec un trou au milieu, de sorte qu'il formaient deux petits segmens d'un grand cercle, terminans en pointe des deux bouts. Des pieux d'environ six ou sept piéds de hauteur étaient fixés dans ces trous vis-à-vis l'un de l'autre, et on les avait courbé et attaché en haut, de sorte que les deux rangées de pieux formaient le squelette d'une hutte, faite en forme d'un canot à quille tranchante, renversé. Des batons attachés horizontalement aux pieux

servaient à donner de la consistance à cette hutte, le tout étant couvert jusqu'à terre de feuilles de cannes de sucre. Au milieu de cette chaumière tout près de la terre ou on avait menagé une avenue d'environ deux pieds de hauteur par laquelle on ne saurait entrer sans se traîner ventre à terre. Nous suivimes l'exemple de nos Conducteurs & entrames de la même manière, n'y trouvant qu'une cabane sombre de la longueur de 50 à 60 pieds sur six pieds de largeur, & environ six pieds de hauteur au milieu. Les habitans nous expliquèrent par des signes, que plusieurs d'entre eux y passaient la nuit, sans autre lit que la terre, sans un brin de paille ni la moindre chose pour leur servir de couverture. A quelques pas de cette habitation on voyait des plantations de bananiers & des cannes de sucre alignés très régulièrement; d'un autre côté tout était cultivé en batates & en ignames.<sup>11</sup> Dans l'alignement & la régularité des plantations on découvrait un esprit d'ordre et de raffinement inconcevable. En parcourant cette isle nous vîmes quelques poules et plusieurs rats de l'espèce commune à l'Europe; ce qui nous étonna le plus, fut, qu'un des natifs qui en avait tué plusieurs, ne s'en voulut point défaire, signifiant qu'ils lui serviraient à diner. Deux ou trois nigauds<sup>12</sup> avec quelques frégattes<sup>13</sup> quelques fous<sup>14</sup> et quelques pétrils<sup>15</sup> sont les uniques oiseaux qui fréquentent les mers voisines de cette isle.

A peine avions nous fait quelques pas pour retourner au rivage, que nous vîmes plusieurs hommes & femmes sortant d'un souterrain que l'on avait pratiqué en profitant de la pente d'une colline pour y ménager une habitation dont l'entrée étroite garnie de pierres énormes. Ces tanières avaient la mine bien triste, mais l'esprit de recherche nous aurait conduit à les examiner, si les habitans ne nous eussent pas paru fort mécontents de cet esprit de curiosité dans des hôtes qui furetaient partout & qui avaient osé se glisser dans leurs dortoirs.

Telle est la situation où nous trouvâmes les habitans de ce pays. Mais en examinant plus scrupuleusement son sol, et l'état de sa végétation nous fumes convaincus après les recherches faites dans nos excursions, dont un fut d'environ 25miles d'Angleterre (à peu près 5 miles d'Allemagne) que ses plantes n'excedaient pas le nombre de vingt ou vingt deux sortes,<sup>16</sup> y compris celles que les natifs cultivent avec le plus de soin, pour leur habillement et leur subsistance. Nos observations nous ont appris que le sol n'est rien moins qu'ingrat, et que l'industrie du laboureur se repayait par une récolte riche en batates, en ignames en cannes & en bananes. Mais ce terreau extrêmement fertile & riche quand il est cultivé, était extrêmement aride dans les endroits incultes. Dans toute l'isle nous ne trouvâmes qu'un arbuste dont la tige excédât la grosseur de la jambe, & dont la hauteur fut d'environ sept ou huit pieds. L'herbe & les gramens qui couvrent la terre étaient deséchés presque partout & n'offraient qu'un lugubre paysage à nos yeux entrecoupé par des laves entières ou décomposées qui sont les seules pierres que l'on trouve dans l'isle, à l'exception de pierres ponces; des tuffes & d'une espèce de vitrification noire connue aux minéralogistes sous les noms de Pierre obsidienne, de Pierre

de Gallinace ou d'Agate noire d'Islande. Le reste du terreau n'est formé que de Pouzzolance, c'est-à-dire de cendres brûlées, grises ou jaunâtres, tirant quelquefois sur le rouge, et parsemées de petites particules de Schörl. En un mot, toute l'isle telle qu'elle existe à présent, n'est qu'un amas de scories rejetées par un Volcan. C'est à ces différentes substances poreuses, arides & brûlées qu'il faut attribuer la grande sechresse et l'aridité de cette isle, la pluie y étant d'abord absorbée, et les plantes ne pouvant tirer assez d'humidité de ce terreau spongieux et deséché elles ne sauraient se repandre assez pour le couvrir & pour y conserver l'humidité qui est si nécessaire à la végétation. Cette sechresse influe non seulement sur le regne végétal, mais aussi sur les animaux et les hommes. Les poules sont d'une très petite espèce, et jusqu'aux rats tout semblait par sa petitesse se ressentir de l'aridité générale du sol. Si l'on considère les hommes habitans de cette isle, on peut aisément trouver l'influence de cette aridité dans leur physique, leur caractère, leurs mœurs & même jusques dans l'état social.

Tous les habitans de l'isle de Paques sont d'une moyenne grandeur & bien découplés. Leur Corps est musculeux mais beaucoup plus basané & plus sec que celui des Taïtiens ou des habitans des isles amicales. Ils sont couverts de figures et de lignes noires ou bleuâtres, faites en perçant la peau, d'un petit instrument dentelé, trempé dans une liqueur noire faite de charbon & d'eau. Ces figures n'ont aucun usage à présent, & ne sont plus une distinction parmi eux, quoiqu'il soit constant qu'autrefois on ne permettait qu'aux guerriers seuls qui avaient des preuves de leur Courage, ces marques honorables. Nos trouvâmes encore quelques restes de cette coutume parmi les habitans des îles de la Société. Les têtes de ces Insulaires sont chevelues, mais les barbes ne sont pas si bien fournies que celles des habitans de Taïti & des isles voisines, dont la cause doit également s'attribuer à l'aridité du sol & à la sechresse du climat de cette isle, parceque l'humidité accompagnée de la Chaleur, est ce qui contribue le plus à l'accroissement de la barbe selon les observations des meilleurs physiciens. Les femmes de cette peuplade sont en général, beaucoup plus délicates & plus petites que les hommes. Il paraît que jouissant de très bonne heure d'une liberté sans bornes sur les plaisirs de l'amour, cela ait nui à leur accroissement. Les traits des jeunes filles sont beaucoup plus gracieux et plus agréables que ceux des hommes, qui ont un aspect de douleur & de misère naturel à leur physionomie, comme l'air libidineux l'est aux femmes. Leurs oreilles sont percées de trous tellement élargis, qu'on peut y passer la main, et qu'elles touchent les épaules; plusieurs même les replient sur la partie supérieure cartilagineuse de l'oreille. On ne saurait découvrir les raisons qui ont porté ces gens à se défigurer d'une telle manière, si ce n'est par envie de plaire qu'ils se coupent l'oreille jusqu'au Cartilage, le désir de s'embellir étant une passion universelle, & les hommes ayant de tems en tems employé de si étranges et bizarres moyens pour plaire aux autres, se rendre aimables & se distinguer, que l'on ne viendra jamais à bout de faire l'énumération de toutes les singularités que ces malheureux au défaut des

rafinemens Européens ont imaginé pour y parvenir. Le moyen qu'ont imaginé les insulaires isolés du reste de la terre, dont je remarque les usages, pour se distinguer par de belles oreilles, a été de les fendre jusqu'au cartilage, remplissant l'intervalle progressivement avec des rouleaux de feuilles de cannes plus ou moins considérables, et finissant par avoir des oreilles qui leur pendent jusque sur les épaules, ce qui est la beauté d'opinion par excellence chez eux.

Charles Frédéric Behrens, Sergeant-major de l'Escadre de Roggewein & natif du Mecklenburgh, prétend que plusieurs milliers des habitans de l'isle de Paques s'assemblerent sur la rade & apportèrent aux Hollandais les différents fruits de leur pays. D'un autre Côté les voyageurs Espagnols disent avoir conté environ 3000 habitans des deux sexes, tandis que nous malgré que nous y ayons été quatre jours, & que nous ayons parcouru plus de 25 miles d'Angleterre & par consequent, vu une grande partie de l'isle n'avons pas pu estimer la population à plus de neufcent. Cela me fait conclure, ou que le nombre des habitans s'était réduit en cinquante années depuis plusieurs mille, à 800 ou 900 individus; ou que la population de cette isle n'a jamais été si nombreuse qu'on l'a prétendu. Mais les restes de cultivation de montagnes dont la pente était rude les monumens sépulcreaux dont nous parlerons dans la suite, leurs bateaux meme & quelques sculptures qui ne pouvaient pas être faits dans un tems où le nombre de la nation eut été aussi réduit, & où on ne trouvait la moindre intimation d'esprit ou de génie parmi eux, me convinquirent qu'autrefois l'état de cette isle avait été plus heureux, sa population plus considérable, l'esprit de la nation plus actif & leur génie plus créateur. Le caractère general de la Nation était sans contredit aussi aimable qu'on peut l'imaginer au sorti des mains de la simple nature. Des étrangers venoient d'aborder dans leur isle, ils ne pouvoient deviner, ni quelles étaient leurs intentions, ni ils n'avaient pas même l'idée qu'on pouvait commettre quelque violence; ils venaient en foule sans armes au rivage, & au lieu de s'opposer à notre abord, ils trouverent mieux de nous offrir tout ce que leur pauvre isle produisait de meilleur en fruit & et racines; partout ils exercerent l'hospitalité dans toute son étendue & dans cette pureté touchante qui nous arracha des larmes de joie. Accoutumés comme nous étions de voir dans nos sociétés d'hommes civilisés, triompher le sentiment sordide d'un attachement exclusif et honteux à leurs propres intérêts, & porter dans toutes leurs démarches une defiance indigne d'être qui se vantent de ne faire corps ensemble que pour le bonheur commun, nous fumes touchés de cette admirable simplicité de leurs mœurs, & mon cœur semblait se penetrer de l'excellence de leur nature, & de la superiorité de ce Etre qui dirige nos actions & nous attache l'un à l'autre par des actes d'humanité & de bienveillance; me jouissant d'avoir trouvé parmi des hommes que nous sommes accoutumés d'appeller des Sauvages ces vertus qui sont la base de toute société. Je ne puis ici me refuser le plaisir de dire à travers les choses que j'ai pu remarquer sur leurs mœurs, que le jour, que nous fimes le tour d'une

grande partie de l'isle, nous trouvames un homme sortant de sa cabane avec un grand sac, rempli de batates cuites sous terre à la manière du pays, qui se hatant pour arriver à la tête de notre file, y presenta à celui qui marchait le premier une grande patate, et en fit autant à chacun de nous. Non content de nous avoir régalé, & trouvant qu'il y avait encore des batates de reste, il courut pour se replacer une seconde fois à la tête de notre file & reïtera à chacun le présent d'une patate jusqu'à ce qu'il n'en eut plus; sa feme esperçant l'hospitalité d'une autre manière en présentant à chacun de l'eau à boire dans une calebasse enorme, et un autre homme qui l'assistait prenant garde qu'on n'en but pas trop afin que l'eau put suffire à tous. Kotahitai, le chef de l'isle s'approchant, dépecha à diverses reprises des gens qui portaient une grande quantité de cannes à sucre, & les distribuaient à mesure qu'ils nous passaient; & comme dans ce païs on suce les cannes pour étancher la soif, & se rafraichir, nous augurames bien du caractère de ce bon vieillard, qui tâchait de nous donner des preuves de son hospitalité & de la bonté de son cœur, même avant que de nous voir, ce qui lui gagna l'affection de toute notre troupe. J'observai à cette occasion avec une admiration mêlée de joye, que l'assabilité, des princes, qui ayant l'autorité en main s'en servent pour faire du Bien, inspire du respect aux hommes les plus grossiers. Quand nos matelôts auroient vu au lieu d'un Souverain denué de tout et sorti brut des mains de la nature, un prince en état de les combler de faveurs, ils n'auraient pas été plus sensibles à ses bienfaits qu'ils le parurent à l'attention de Kotahitai. Il me reste encore à rendre un trait touchant sur le bon naturel de ces insulaires qui m'arriva lorsque nous allames reconnaître l'isle. Plus de 50 habitans nous ayant accompagné dans cette excursion, ils nous quitterent en revenant. Etant arrivé à un endroit où je resolu de prendre le plus court chemin pour me rendre au vaisseau, l'officier & sa troupe s'opiniatrant à prendre un grand détour, je restais seul avec le Dr. Sparrman, & un matelot qui portait mes cahiers & mon bagage. Etant extrêmement fatigué d'une si longue marche, et à peine retabli d'une maladie qui m'avait allité pendant un mois, notre vaisseau ne fournissant point les rafraichissemens capables de redonner de la force à un pauvre convalessent, je me sentais très faible & presque incapable d'arriver avec le reste de la troupe au vaisseau. Un habitant qui m'avait pris en affection pendant cette Journée ne voulant point me quitter dans ces circonstances, & me presta genereusement son bras en me conduisant par le plus court chemin, avec son fils un jeune garçon d'environ dix ou douze ans, qui marcha toujours devant nous, en ramassant les pierres qui se trouvaient frequemment au sentier, afin que je ne me heurtasse pas les pieds. Après m'avoir delassé à diverses reprises j'arrivai avec le reste de la compagnie, au rivage où je n'oubliai pas de témoigner ma reconnaissance à cet homme et à son fils, en leur donnant une hache, plusieurs couteaux & plusieurs grands clous avec quelques pieces de toile, dont il me parut fort content, ces présents en ayant fait un des plus riches particuliers de cette isle.

Ces incidens suffisent pour donner une idée précise de la confiance affectueuse & de l'hospitalité de ces bons insulaires. Le gouvernement civil des habitans de cette isle n'est pas fort compliqué, ni fort gênant, leur Chef n'ayant d'autre marque de distinction qu'un habit plus complet que les autres, & une espece de Diademe fait des plumes pectorales des frégattes. Nous n'observons point qu'on lui portât beaucoup de respect, ni qu'on lui rendit un hommage humiliant, tel que celui qu'exigent les despotes des isles asiatiques. Il sembloit plutôt être le père d'une famille, que le maître absolu de cette peuplade; on regardait ses avis comme les conseils d'un père tendre, qui prend à cœur le véritable bonheur de ses enfans & pour cette raison on les exécutait avec une ponctualité qui ne nous permit pas de douter que ce attachement était mutuel entre les sujets et leur Chef.

L'union & la simplicité des mœurs, l'ignorance & l'absence des tentations, & le petit nombre de besoins donnent lieu de croire que cette petite peuplade n'a point d'occasion d'être embrouillée dans des querelles. S'il s'en eleve par hazard, les peres de famille par leur sagesse et leur autorité les suppriment aisément et rétablissent bientôt la paix entre leurs compatriotes. Chacun se trouvant dans la necessité dans cette isle aride de pouvoir à sa subsistence, il la doit absolument chercher à force des bras, et quoique le sol est pierreux & très peu abrité contre les chaleurs du Soleil il ne laisse cependant pas de devenir extremement fertile par la culture, et comme l'île n'est pas à présent très peuplée, il y a tant de terre en friche, qu'un jeune homme qui a envie de faire ménage à part n'a qu'à occuper un terrain, à le defricher avec un instrument de bois dur, de la figure d'un pieu pointu, dont on se sert au lieu de bêche, ses parens & ses amis ne lui refusent pas quelque racines de batates qu'on coupe à chaque bouture pour les multiplier; d'autres lui font présent de quelques scions de cannes de sucre ou des bananiers, & le voilà mis en état de devenir père de famille & de se nourrir avec sa femme & des enfans. Un trou menagé sous terre & supporté par des pierres lui sert de retraite pendant la chaleur, & de gîte pendant la nuit. Quelques tiges de meuriers cultivés, lui fournissent une écorce dont sa femme fabrique le peu d'habillement dont elle a besoin. Un gramin lui fournit des fibres pour en faire des ficelles ou des cordes. Avec la nacre de perle il fait ses hameçons dont il se sert pour attraper des poissons. Une couple de poules fournit sa gélinière, & comme il n'est pas dédaigneux dans son choix, il tache d'attraper les frégattes, les fous, les nigauds & les autres oiseaux de mer qui viennent nicher dans les roches à l'entour de l'isle, ne refusant pas même les rats, dont il se défait comme des ennemies de sa plantation, en même tems qu'il en satisfait sa friandise. L'eau de puits, dont il y a plusieurs dans l'isle, lui sert de boisson ordinaire, mais elle a presque toujours un goût saumâtre, ou melé de quelques autres solutions salines, se qui ne la rend cependant, ni désagréable ni malsaine aux habitans. Tout semble promettre l'union, la sécurité publique, la paix, & et bonheur à ces insulaires. Si nous

croions aux actions & aux démonstrations externes qui font les fidèles interprètes de sentimens incapables d'hypocrisie, ils étaient tous contents & nous parurent sans désir, malgré l'observation que j'ai faite sur le ton naturel de leur physionomies. Nous les vimes souvent rire & folâtrer, & plusieurs fois ils s'égayerent par le chant et la danse.

Comme nous avons visité les habitans de Taïti, des isles de la Société, des îles amicales & de la Nouvelle Zeelande, dans le cours de l'année 1773 avant que d'arriver à l'isle de Pâques, nous fumes convaincus par nos recherches sur les langues de ces insulaires, que quoiqu'ils soient extrêmement éloignés les uns des autres, ils parlent cependant tous le même langage, & que les différences que y observames ne forment que des dialectes. Cette découverte nous fit espérer que les habitans de Waïhou (ou Isle de Pâques) parleraient peut-être un dialecte approchant à la langue de Taïti, & nous verifiames notre conjecture dès l'abord. Les deux premiers habitans qui vinrent à nous dans un canot, donnaient à une corde, aux bananes, aux poissons qu'ils nous apportèrent les memes appellations, dont on se sert pour désigner ces articles à Taïti & aux autres isles sus-mentionnées; & après avoir conversé quelques jours avec ces insulaires, nous fumes convaincus de plus en plus que nous ne nous étions point trompés à cet égard, ce qui peut se verifier par la table qui représente l'harmonie de toutes ces dialectes. Cependant il nous parait, que c'est un point intéressant dans l'histoire de ces isles, dont les extrêmes sont à la distance de 1400 lieues. Car on voit que dans cet espace immense la meme langue est parlée, d'où il s'ensuit, que toutes ces isles sont occupées & ont été peuplées par la meme race d'hommes. Ayant encore poussé ces recherches plus loin, j'ai trouvé que la langue des Tagales & celle des Pampangos dans l'isle de Luçon, la principale des Philippines a beaucoup de rapport avec cette langue des isles de la mer du sud, que j'appellerai dorénavant celle de Taïti. En comparant les dictionnaires de ces langues avec celle des Malais, j'ai encore trouvé qu'elles ont un rapport décidé avec celle-ci, et qu'il parait presque indubitable que toutes ces Nations sont descendus des Malais de la presque isle de Malacca. Les habitans de Bornéo sont sans contredit issus des Malais, ce dont ils conviennent eux memes.<sup>17</sup> De là ils se répandirent jusqu'aux Philippines & aux Moluques. Dans les plus grandes de ces isles il y avait déjà des habitans aborigènes plus basanés que les Malais, & avec des cheveux crépus, qui se retirèrent dans l'interieur du païs, qu'ils occupent toujours, laissant les côtes aux peuples nouveau-venus. A Bornéo les hommes de cette première race sont appellés Byajos, à Luçon & et dans les Philippines on les appelle Zambales & Negrillos, & dans les Moluques ce sont les Alfouries. Les Malais des Philippines sont distingués par les noms des peuplades, arrivées, l'une après l'autre. Il y a telle qu'on appelle les Bissayas, d'autres ont le nom de Pampangos, et d'autres sont connus sous la dénomination de Tagales.<sup>18</sup> Nous avons des dictionnaires de leur langues qui prouvent qu'elles ont beaucoup de rapports avec celle des Malais. Les isles Ladrones sont peuplées d'une branche des

Tagales, parceque leur figure, leur physionomie, leur couleur, leur mœurs et sur- tout leur langue en donnent des preuves bien fortes.<sup>19</sup> Les nouvelles isles Carolines ont des habitans qui ont les memes mœurs, les memes coutumes & la meme physionomie avec les habitans des Philippines, de sorte qu'on ne saurait douter de la migration des habitans de Guaham & de Tinian aux Carolines & aux Pescadores, qui ne sont pas fort éloignées des isles amicales, premieres isles de la mer du Sud, où l'on parle la langue Taïtienne. Nous voyons donc à présent que depuis la presqu'île de Malacca il y a 1400 lieues jusqu'aux Ladrones; de là par les Carolines jusqu'à l'isle de l'Espérance (ou Hope Eylandt) la première des isles amicales il y a 1200 lieues; & de cette isle jusqu'à celles de Pâques 1400 lieues de plus. Et dans tout cet espace de 4000 miles on parle des dialectes qui on du rapport avec le Malais.

On parle le Russe à Riga comme au Kamtchatka; L'Anglais à Calcutta, à Sainte-Hélène, à Londres, à Philadelphie & à la Jamaïque; le François à Pondichéri, à Paris, au Canada & à St Domingue; l'Espagnol à Manille, à Madrid, au Mexique, au Perou, & à Buénos Ayres; le Hollandais à l'Amboine, au Cap de Bonne espérance, au Surinam & à Amsterdam, mais on conçoit d'abord que la conquête & le commerce ont transplanté la civilisation, les loix, les mœurs, les arts & les Sciences avec la Connaissance des langues, dans les parties reculées du monde; & qui continuent à les lier & à les unir à l'Europe. Mais on ne saurait dire la meme chose des peuplades des Malais, repandues depuis Malacca jusqu'à Waihou. Les habitans de cette isle n'ont aucune connoissance des Taïtiens; ceux-ci avant notre arrivée ignoraient qu'il y eut une isle nommée Tonga Tabbou (Amsterdam), dont les habitans n'ont pas une idée de la situation, ou des Nations de hogoleû, de Guaham, de Luçon, de Bornéo & de la presqu'île de Malacca, non-obstant qu'ils parlent la même langue, & qu'ils sont tous issus d'une meme tige. On n'aurait jamais pu tracer la migration de ces peuplades, sans avoir fait des observations sur leur langage, & des comparaisons sur l'harmonie de ces dialectes éloignés. C'est par ce seul moyen qu'on est venu à bout d'établir un nouveau fait historique, qui est en même tems un phénomène unique et frappant dans l'histoire de l'espèce humaine.

Parmi huit cens ou neufcens hommes, que nous croyons être toute la population de l'isle de Pâques, nous ne pumes jamais conter audelà de cinquante femmes, ce qui donnerait une femme pour 16 ou 17 hommes. Comme nous avons parcouru une grande partie de l'isle, il est presque impossible qu'en passant par plusieurs de leurs habitations, nous n'ayons vu toutes les femmes de ces hameaux, comme nous ne manquions pas d'entrer dans plusieurs de leurs Chaumières, mais nous trouvames partout la meme proportion de Femmes. C'est un problème très curieux & dont il m'est fort difficile de donner la solution, n'ayant pu converser assez bien avec ces insulaires sur les causes de la diminution du nombre de leurs femmes. Mais ayant observé qu'autrefois toutes les montagnes avaient été cultivées, ce dont nous reconnues les vestiges dans l'alignement des plantations, et qu'à présent les insulaires se contentent de defricher les plaines & les

vallées au milieu desquelles ils se trouve encore de grands espaces en friche; j'en conclus que les habitans avaient été autrefois en plus grand nombre. Mais comme la guerre n'a pu être la cause du petit nombre des femmes puisque ce sont les hommes qui y sont exposés au danger, je soupçonnais qu'un désastre universel & imprevû avait pu détruire la plus grande partie des femmes de ces insulaires ce qui est d'autant plus probable, que toute l'isle étant le produit d'un Voclan, je savais que le boucanier Davis l'an 1687 en allant des isles des Galapagos à celles de Juan Fernandez avait essuyé en pleine mer un coup très- violent de tremblement de terre qui avait désolé le Perou & ruiné Callao de fond-en-combe, avant qu'il decouvrit la terre qui porte son nom. D'ailleurs, comme j'étais persuadé par les recits des habitans de Taïti, que les isles de la mer du Sud sont très sujettes à ce fléau terrible, je ne doutai plus, qu'un tremblement de terre n'eut, non seulement dépeuplé cette isle, mais aussi qu'on ne dut attribuer à cette cause le petit nombre de femmes. Car, comme ces insulaires ont des souterrains pour demeure, & que leurs femmes occupées de leur domestique sont attachées à leurs habitations tandis que les hommes sont employés au dehors, il est très – vraisemblable qu'un de ces grands & terribles phénomènes de la Nature à subitement enseveli un grand nombre d'habitans, & sur tout une plus grande proportion de femmes. Cette cause probable du dépeuplement de l'isle, me parait l'avoir ravagée très peu de tems avant notre arrivée; puisqu'on distinguait encore partout les marques du defrichement des terres, qui en moins de dix ans se perdent entierement; & puisque les hommes n'étaient pas encore reduit au même nombre que nous trouvions les femmes, ce qui devraient arriver environ en trentre ans.

Mais rien n'annonçait si fortement un tems où l'état de l'isle avait été plus heureux, la population plus nombreuse, l'esprit de la nation plus actif et son génie plus créateur, que les grands monumens sépulcreaux que nous vimes debouts en plusieurs endroits de l'isle & renversés en d'autres. Les habitans de Taïti & des îles voisines ont la coutume d'exposer les corps de leurs morts dans un endroit consacré au rites de leur religion, jusqu'à ce qu'il n'en reste d'autre débris que les ossemens, lesquels sont déposés sur des tas de pierres sans le moindre respèt pour défunt. A Taïti pour perpetuer la mémoire des amis decédés on erige au même endroit des poutres de bois d'environ 20 ou 30 pieds de hauteur, qui représentent une file de figures humaines de deux sexes grossièrement executées et placées l'une sur l'autre chacun n'étant que d'un pied, ou de dix huit pouces. On appelle cela un Tihhi. A ce que j'ai pu juger par les récits des sages des Taïtiens, ce sont des symboles de cet être en nous, qui voit, qui entend, en un mot, qui forme des idées à l'aide de nos sens, & qui selon leur expression singulière conçoit les paroles du ventre, c'est-à-dire les pensées. Ces figures grossières perpétuent la mémoire des défunts, & sont les monumens de l'amour & de la reconnaissance des amis survivans. Les insulaires de Waihou, désirant de rendre le même tribut à la mémoire de leurs chefs & de personnes distinguées parmi eux, mais vivant dans un terrain sans bois, eurent recours aux pierres

& érigèrent sur des bases ou murs formées par des grandes pierres de taille, des espèces de thermes [?] qui représentent la figure humaines. On leur remarque une tête dure & mal exécutée, couverte d'un grand bonnet en forme de cylindre & des oreilles élargies à la mode du païs. Au reste ce n'est qu'un bloc de pierre sans figure déterminée, qui laisse distinguer confusément qu'on y a voulu former des bras. Ces monumens ont depuis quinze jusqu'à vingtsept pieds anglais de hauteur, sur 6 ou 8 largeur à la poitrine. Il y en avait qui étaient placés sur les bases ou murs sus-mentionnés au nombre de quatre ou cinq; d'autres étaient isolés & sortaient immédiatement de la terre. Si nous considérons ces masses immenses de pierre de 27 pieds de longueur, sur huit de largeur, qui vraisemblablement furent tirés des carrières que l'on ne trouve que dans les collines, au milieu de l'isle où nous observâmes dans notre excursion quelques bonnets & quelques statues commencées, & si nous réfléchissons quelle application non interrompue, quelle patience & quel travail l'exécution la moins finie de ces monumens grossiers doit avoir coûté à des hommes qui n'ayant pas la moindre connaissance du fer, ni d'aucun autre métal avant l'arrivée des Européens, n'avaient par conséquent que des pierres des coraux, & de grandes bivalves pour donner une forme tant soit peu ressemblante à la figure humaine; cela seul pourra nous donner une idée du dépeuplement actuel de cette colonie. Si nous ajoutons à ces réflexions les difficultés qui se présentent pour transporter ces pierres énormes à force de bras jusqu'à une petite distance de la mer, éloignée d'un lieu au moins de ces carrières, & les efforts requis pour ériger ces blocs sur des bases, nous conviendrons que la présente population de cette isle est bien éloignée de pouvoir entreprendre & exécuter ces ouvrages, dignes des efforts d'une nombreuse peuplade, en état de suppléer par les forces individuelles au défaut du mécanisme nécessaire pour mouvoir de pareils colosses.

Ne pouvant considérer ces Statues, sans admirer en même tems les causes qui doivent avoir inspiré à la Nation ces esprit de persévérance dans ce travail pénible, je crus d'abord rencontrer juste en supposant que les principes de religion, qui menent l'Esprit de l'homme toujours plus loin que toute autre considération, y pouvaient avoir contribué. Mais je ne saurais néanmoins me résoudre à présent d'attribuer ces travaux à la superstition, les insulaires s'étant efforcés de nous désabuser sur ce point en nous assurant que ce n'étaient pas des symboles de la divinité, mais de statues érigées à la mémoire de leurs Chefs, des héros & des grands hommes de la nation. Quelles forces doit avoir l'idée des bienfaits de ces grandshommes envers leur peuple? Il semble que ces bienfaits avaient été gravés avec des Caractères indélébiles dans leurs cœurs. Ces bienfaits toujours présens à leur mémoire leurs inspiroient une noble ardeur pour perpétuer la mémoire chérie de leur princes par des ouvrages qui surpassaient presque leurs forces; ce Sentiment les supportait dans l'exécution pénible & onéreux de leur plan, les animait dans la formation, le transport & l'exécution de la statue, qui porta toujours le nom favori du Chef ou du héros, qui avait été grand par ses bienfaits envers ses Compatriotes, et

leur en rétrace la mémoire. On nous repétait avec une espèce d'enthousiasme les noms d'Obina, de Morahina, d'Omariva, de Guiperéa, de Mouï & de Mangatôta, eu noms montrant en meme tems le monument dédié à leurs mémoires. Qu'il me soit permis ici de porter ma vue sur les monumens des nations civilisées, sur les motifs souvent ignobles de leurs plus grands travaux. Rome se déshonora par les Statues qui représentaient les Caligula les Claudes, les Nérons, mais ce qu'elle avait érigée de leur vivant par pure grimace, elle abatis à leur mort. Les insulaires de Waïhou n'honorent leurs grands hommes, qu'après leurs morts, quand leur Autorité ne peut plus influencer sur l'esprit de leurs contemporains. C'est après la mort, que l'on apprécie avec la plus grande équité le mérite des hommes.

En comparant ces grands & nobles monumens de Waïhou à ces poutres pesantes & mal sculptées que nous trouvâmes à Taiti, il me paraît que ce serait apposer l'ouvrage des hommes faits, aux faibles imitations des enfants. Outre ces grandes statues de pierre nous trouvâmes parmi ces bons insulaires de petites figures de bois représentant des hommes, d'autres des femmes, d'autres seulement des parties du corps humain, telles qu'une main, & ou même des figures grotesque imitées de la figure humaine & finissant par quelque ornément; mais ce qui est le plus étonnant, il y avait tant de vérité, de gout, & d'élégance dans ces bagatelles, que je fus étonné que les arts eussent fait de si grands progrès dans un païs si rude & si sterile, sans instrumens, sans métaux, dans une nation si peu cultivée & qui à peine pouvait se garantir contre les ardeurs d'un Soleil brûlant, & recueillir de quoi se nourrir après la culture la plus pénible & la plus laborieuse. Cette réflexion me conduisit à une autre, plus intéressante. Je repassai dans ma mémoire tous les païs où les beaux arts avoient été cultivés avec quelque succès depuis leur origine. La haute Egypte, l'Attique & l'Italie, le berceau des Arts, se présentèrent d'abord à mon esprit. Tous ces païs sont secs & montagneux mais situés sous un climat tempéré & heureux. La basse Egypte moins favorablement située, ne reçut les arts que très tard & à peine y trouve-t-on aujourd'hui des restes des monumens les plus modernes; tandis que ceux de la Thébaïde des tems les plus reculés, après avoir bravé les siècles, la fureur hostile des Empereurs romains & la barbarie des Saracins, s'y conservent et s'y voyent encore. La Béotie riche & fertile, sous un climat humide, & entourée de marécages & de lieux fangeux n'a jamais été fameuse par ses Artistes. Les tourberies & les marécages des la Hollande n'ont jamais nourri un grand Artiste, & les efforts du Génie des habitans n'ont pu les élever au-delà des jouissances des païsans, des noces de village, de leurs païssges, ou de portraits. Il semble que les climats secs et élevés sous un climat temperé communiquent au Corps humain un ton de musculature plus ardent et plus courageux, qui influe sur leur génie & les rend plus fiers; Comme au contraire les païs bas & marécageux, sous un climat humide & couvert de brouillards ne nourrissent que des corps mous, relâchés, dont l'influence sur l'esprit diminue l'attachement proportionné à l'invention, la disposition et l'exécution de grandes idées.



Qu'il me soit permis d'ajouter encore une réflexion sur ce sujet. En examinant attentivement ces Statues gigantesques, les grandes & majestueux monumens des Egyptiens se presenterent naturellement à mon imagination, et il me parut surprenant que parmi les restes des statues de l'ancienne Thébaïde il y en ait qui ressemblent par le gout à celles de Waihou. On reconnaît dans ces statues le stile & l'air Egyptien, ou les voit souvent comme celles d'Egypte, couvertes d'un grand bonnet, on n'y retrouve que les indications des bras; les parties inferieure se ressentent d'avantage encore de la simplicité & du peu d'avancement des arts. Mais il me semble que les hommes sont les mêmes partout dans les mêmes circonstances, la marche de l'esprit humain étant aussi presque égale ans tous les climats qui se ressemblent. D'un côté l'imitation est naturelle à l'homme, de l'autre, l'amour & la reconnaissance ont de tout tems inspiré le désir de perpétuer la mémoire des hommes respectés & des Bienfaiteurs de l'Espece humaine. Il était donc naturel de tacher d'exprimer quelque ressemblance de ces personnages chéris. Voilà la veritable origine de l'art, reduite à un principe universel & naturel, ennoblie jusque par les Sauvages, & rendu respectable & sacrée par leur grossières production. L'Europe plus civilisée, plus éclairée, mais aussi plus dégénérée par l'enromité des crimes qui s'y commettent, & la noirceur des forfaits de ses habitans, nourrit tous les arts & les a perfectionné dans plusieurs endroits. Mais qu'il est rare d'y voir les Grands s'occuper de l'amour des peuples par la justice, la tolérance & les bienfaits! Trop souvent ils s'assurent par force de ces recompenses, que le seul merite & la seule vertu arrachent au respèt & à la reconnaissance, ils s'elevent des temoignages factices d'une grandeur imaginaire, & tachent de s'immortaliser eux-mêmes par des monuments multipliés à l'infini, malgré les affections aliénées des sujets! Heureux, à travers les victimes d'Orgeuil, d'ostentation réelle, & de bienveillance pretendue, les mortels favorisés du ciel, qui voient la justice administrée parmi eux avec equité, les ministres de la Religion subordonnés à des loix sages, qui permettent à chaque individu d'adorer l'Eternel selon ses principes, & sans contrainte, en vivant paisiblement sous la conduite d'un Prince qui marque chaque jour de sa vie par de nouvelles largesses, des bienfaits continuels, envers l'Humanité & des émanations de la bonté céleste. Chaque citoyen de ce peuple heureux érige un monument impérissable à l'épreuve du tems & de ses injures, dans son propre cœur. C'est là, qu'on trouvera le Roi philosophe qui n'a fait des conquêtes que pour faire des heureux & devenir le père des peuples que la providence à confiés à ses soins. C'est là que d'age en age le père transmettra à son fils le souvenir des actions glorieuses qui ont honoré le Siècle dans lequel nous vivons. Je n'ai pas besoin de nommer ce peuple & ce pais fortuné par l'existence de son monarque. Les nations voisines, ainsi que les plus réculées reconnoîtront sans peine dans ce tableau le Royaume de Prusse, qui est signalé par son Zèle, son Courage, un attachement inviolable, & l'amour le plus respectueux et le plus tendre pour l'immortel monarque à qui toute la terre a onné le nom du Grand Frédéric!

Notes [these have been converted from footnotes to endnotes]

- 1 L'Isle de Pâques étant à plus de 707 lieues de Copiapo et par conséquent l'isle de Davis (qui n'est qu'à 500 lieues de cette place) étant du moins onze degrés plus à l'est que l'isle de Pâques, il est évident que Roggewein a vue celle-ci le premier, et des indices indisputables m'ont convaincu que les Espagnols y on été avant nous, quoiqu'ils ayent cru avoir touché à l'ile de Davis. L'islot sablonneux de Davis et certainement plus à l'Est et M. de Bougainville l'a laissé au Sud de sa route, comme le Capitaine Carteret l'a eu au Nord de la sienne.
- 2 M. Dalrymple, habile Navigateur & Géographe nous donne une courte rélation de cette expédition, dans une brochure intitulée "A letter from M Dalrymple to Hawkesworth", Londres, 4<sup>o</sup>. 1773.
- 3 Il parvit par l'histoire des Gouverneurs de Batavia que Roggewein plaçait l'ile de Pâques au degré 265°42' de Tenerife = 110°45' à l'ouest de Londres, de sorte que la différence n'est que de 59'. Les Espagnols la placent à 268°19' de Tenerife = 108°11' à l'Ouest de Londres. Les Hollandais affirment la latitude de 27°4' S à cette isle, et les Espagnols celle de 27°16' Lat. Australe.
- 4 Les Hollandais lui atribuent 16 lieus de tour et les Espagnols veulent que la longueur soit de six lieues. La première opinion est exagérée, cette isle n'ayant pas plus de cinq lieues de longueur.
- 5 Morus papyrifera, plante qui réussit même dans le climat de l'Agleterre, et qui pourrait, connu au Japon & à la Chine, servir à la manufacture de papier, qui devient de jour en jour plus cher, en consequence de sa grande consommation et du defaut des matériaux pour en faire d'avantage. Le haut prix que les Anglais & les Hollandais donnent pour ces haillons fins et blancs, a mis cet article entre les mains de ces deux nations commerçantes, et obligé l'Allemagne à se servir d'un papier inferieur. Mais on y pourrait remédier par des plantations de cet arbuste, dont le feuillage ferait en même tems l'ornément des Jardins.
- 6 Cyperus Squarrosus.
- 7 Saccharum officinarum.
- 8 Musa paradisiaca.
- 9 Convolvulus batatas.
- 10 Cucurbita pepo.
- 11 Dioscorea alata.
- 12 Sterna stolidia.
- 13 Pelecanus aquilus.
- 14 Pelecanus fiber, Bassanus, Piscator.
- 15 Procellaria.
- 16 Les plantes cultivées par ces Insulaires sont l'Arum esculentum, et macrorrhizon, la Musa paradisiaca, avec ses variétés, le Convolvulus batatas avec sa variété, la Dioscorea alata, la Cucubita Pepo, la Curcuma longa, le Saccharum officinaum, et le Morus papyrifera. Parmi celles qui sont spontanées nous observames les suivantes: Boerhaavia erecta, Avena filiformis, Cyper squarrosus, Paspalum undulatum, Solanum nigrum, Convolvulus brasiliensis, Apieum graveolens, Hibiscus populneus, Gossypium religiosum, une espece de Mimosa, un Arbrisseau à feuilles approchantes à celles du Frêne, & une nouvelle plante qui se trouve aussi à la Nouvelle Zélande & que nous appellames Sheffieldia repens, après M. Sheffield, botaniste très habile dans l'Université d'Oxford.
- 17 Beckman's Voyage to Borneo.

- 18 Hernanda los Rios Coronel, *Relacion de las islas Malucas*. Navarrete *Trattados historicos de la Monarchia de China*. Gemelli Carreri *Giro del mondo*. Fr. Diégo Bergaño *Bocabulario de Papango en Romance* Manila 1733 fol. P. Juan de Nocéda y el P. Pedro de San Lucar *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*. Manila 1754 fol.
- 19 P. Gobien *histoire des isles Marianes*. Paris. 1700. 12<sup>mo</sup>.

## Mémoire on Waihu or Easter Island by Johann Reinhold Forster

*Transcription from French, working translation into Polish: Agata Frankowska-Thuinet*

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The discovery of new, distant lands has contributed significantly to the increase of human knowledge [in various disciplines], as well as to the differentiation [between them], confirmation and verification of their interrelations. The new ideas can be applied to the physical or moral [sphere] and to the social order. They serve to confirm the known truths to render them more universal, or to destroy prejudices that often have a destructive, despotic effect on the human species. They also serve to develop new disciplines of knowledge that enrich the human spirit, then become matrices for other new ideas that contribute to enhance the effect of the previous ones. It is always beneficial to enrich known truths, as they are the only object worthy of our study and research, and the only valuable treasure that deserves to be passed on for posterity. Many of the voyagers left us memoirs on what they saw and heard during their voyages. Alas, almost none of those memoirs helps philosophers enrich or ennoble their knowledge and render it useful for the humanity. Among the voyagers who were authors, the majority were too ignorant to make a wise choice of most useful ideas, therefore in their writings they offer, instead of interesting observations, most frivolous and superficial commentaries which—added to often childish opinions and prejudices—do not permit a philosopher to make use of that testimony; he has to draw general conclusions and cannot rely on such a dubious authority.

Accustomed to carry out a scrupulous analysis in my studies on nature and aided by my experience gained during my first voyages, I made every possible effort to avoid falling into a trap of mistakes that I permit myself to point out here; thus I am attached only to what I deem essential either for adding [new ideas] to the philosophical knowledge or for enhancing what is already known. The observations I have collected in the present Memoir all the more deserve the attention of the curious in that they concern an island, situated in the middle of the South Sea and separated from other lands by enormous distances. It was created in an explosion of subterranean fire and is inhabited by a handful of people who do not preserve any memories of how they were transplanted onto this foreign land. Their language was a sole indication that let us discover that they came from the East Indies; we do not know how they were thrown onto

this forbidding land, where a barren soil does not produce enough food for those unfortunate without the hardest labor. [They are] deprived of trees necessary to prepare meals, or in whose shadow they could take shelter from the heat of the Sun, or from whose wood they could make boats capable of transporting them to lands more favored by the Nature. Despite all those difficulties we can observe there that the art is more advanced than in other islands of the South Sea, [even those] more fertile and more peopled.

The island was discovered in the year 1722, on Easter day, by a Dutch named Jacob Roggwein, searching these unknown waters for new discoveries as a commander of a small fleet. It was alleged that the island was seen in the year 1687 by a filibuster John Davis, but after a thorough analysis of the account left by Dampier we can be certain that the small, low island seen by Davis in 1687 is not the island named Easter Island by Roggwein, in relation to the day of its discovery.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish, who in the year 1770 sent [two vessels] under the command of Felipe Gonzalez: the ship San Lorenzo and the frigate Rosalie [*sic*], in order to discover that [other] island, discovered Easter, where they stayed for five days.<sup>2</sup> And finally we discovered it on the eleventh of March of 1774, and we found it located at 27°5' south latitude and at 109°46' of longitude west of Greenwich.<sup>3</sup>

The island has only ten to twelve leagues circumference.<sup>4</sup> Its greatest length may be of five leagues, but in its greatest width it does not exceed two leagues or two leagues and a half.

For a long time we subsisted on worm-eaten, sweaty biscuits and on salted pork. We left [a zone of] a severe climate, where we were constantly enshrouded in fog, frost and snow, for weeks deprived of the possibility to enjoy the beneficial influence of the day-star, every now and then alarmed by the danger of huge masses of floating ice that surrounded us. For such a long time we did not see any living creature except for sad sea birds that sought their precarious subsistence soaring over the raging surface of the Ocean, and a couple of solitary whales, astonished at the audacity of those feeble and presumptuous creatures that were roaming those dreary regions that no one before had dared to penetrate, and where monsters of the deep seem to reign peacefully since the beginning of the time. Rheumatism, scurvy and cholera defeated our crew and there were few people left who were not suffering from one or other illness, when the cry: "Land ho!" shook us out of that indolent stupor, impossible to end in our state of dreadful solitude. There is no need [to sketch] a picture to portray how deeply we were pleased and what joy could be seen on our faces, when we discovered that island after a hundred and three days at open sea, without any land in sight. The joy was painted on our countenances, we embraced each other and congratulated one another on the good luck we had with sighting the land that was a promise of the end of our present misfortune. A couple of days before we finished reading the memoirs by the voyagers that accompanied Roggwein that depicted the island in the most agreeable way, woods and forests that cover it, its fertility and abundance of excellent fruit and fowl that was offered

to them by the inhabitants. It was enough to raise our hopes and sharpen our appetite, while only about twelve leagues separated us from the island. One can imagine our surprise when we could not find those eulogized woods while we were approaching. Our glasses in hand, we were constantly observing the coast and the hills of the island, but the more we were searching for that magnificent place, the more the island resembled a dry, burnt rock covered by a thin layer of soil nourishing but few roots. Despite of all those disadvantages we consoled ourselves that we had found a habitable land, and inhabited by individuals of our own species, whom we noticed on the shore, after not having seen the land for a long time and not having been able to trade with people for over three months.

When we finally landed, we were very kindly received by about 150 inhabitants who gathered on the shore. The majority were naked, except for a loincloth made from mulberry bark,<sup>5</sup> covering those parts that, for the general sense of decency, even the most savage nature tries to hide from the sight. [They were also] wearing nets made of plant fiber.<sup>6</sup> What struck us from the beginning was a small number of women, as we saw no more than about a dozen of them among the crowd of men. Each [of the women] was wearing two pieces of the barkcloth that is used almost by all South Sea islanders between the Tropics. To make the cloth more durable, several layers are sewn together with the thread made of the aforementioned fiber. One part is worn in the same manner as Negresses use their loincloths, and the other covers the shoulders and reaches to the knees; that makes up a complete dress. All the multitude hurried to see us, surrounded us and followed us everywhere from the very moment we set our feet on the ground. All the island people, who were unarmed, except for two or three of them that held staffs about six feet long, were constantly offering us sugar cane,<sup>7</sup> ripe bananas,<sup>8</sup> sweet potatoes<sup>9</sup> and pumpkins,<sup>10</sup> as well as several roasted chicken. This kind and hospitable reception, together with as well sweet as interesting simplicity of mores, was very striking for the English, the more that they know no other hospitality as such that means a good reception, but in accordance with the expenses in a tavern. For us this quality augured well for a good will and social disposition of this nation. We presented them with some trinkets in return and were surprised to see that the only thing they appreciated was iron, they refused to accept glass beads and threw them away, laughing with disdain. They were extremely curious about our canvas; a rag of an old, torn shirt was always hastily accepted and they offered us some sweet potatoes in return. Firearms were known to them and the slightest accidental movement of our rifles alarmed those poor people and it convinced us that they have had experienced the deadly effect [of the weapon use] in such a way that it had left them deeply impressed. Our clothes, and especially our hats, excited such fascination among several members of this nation (that has absolutely nothing to protect themselves from the heat of the Sun) that they took away two or three [of our hats], at the risk of being wounded by our

firearms. We soon discovered that they were experts when it comes to filching and cheating. Without hesitation they went to fields of their neighbors to look for sweet potatoes which they later came to sell us; the owners of those fields were doing everything possible to protect them from the depredation done by their countrymen. Let us add the malice of those who came to sell us small woven sacks that seemed full of sweet potatoes, but at the bottom contained only stones. Many of them even had the audacity to steal those sacks from us and sell them for the second time. Having moved away from the shore we discovered one of their dwellings situated on a small eminence. On the ground there were hewn stones, about two feet long by one foot broad, with a hole in the middle; they were placed in such a way that they formed two small segments of a big circle, pointed at both ends. Stakes measuring about six or seven feet were fixed in the holes, one in front of another; they were bent and fastened at the top in such a way that two rows of the stakes formed a frame of a hut in shape of an upturned boat of a sharp keel. Two sticks fastened horizontally made the hut firmer, and all this was covered with sugar cane leaves [that reached] to the ground. In the middle of the hut, just above the ground, there was an entrance about two feet high, through which one could enter only by crawling. We followed the example of our guides and entered in the same manner, to find a dark shack 50 or 60 feet long, six feet broad, and about six feet high in the middle. The inhabitants explained by signs that many of them slept here by night, without any other bed than the ground, without a tiniest blade of straw nor any other thing to cover themselves. At several steps from the hut we saw a plantation of bananas and sugar cane, very regularly aligned; and on the other side all [the area] was planted with sweet potatoes and yams.<sup>11</sup> In this alignment and regularity we noticed an inconceivable sense of order and refinement. Wandering through the island we saw several chickens and some rats of the same species as in Europe. What surprised us most was that one of the natives, who killed several of them, did not want to part with them, giving us to understand that they were for dinner. Two or three brown noddies,<sup>12</sup> several frigates,<sup>13</sup> gannets,<sup>14</sup> and petrels<sup>15</sup> are the only birds present at the sea around the island.

We hardly took few steps to return to the shore when we saw some men and women coming out from an underground [place] constructed in the slope of a hill to provide a dwelling; its entrance was furnished with large stones. Those shelters had a very gloomy appearance, nevertheless the spirit of research would make us examine them, if it were not for a strong discontent of the inhabitants with the curiosity of the guests who ferreted about everywhere and even dared to get inside their dormitories.

Such was the situation of the inhabitants of this country. But, when we analyzed more scrupulously the soil and the state of the vegetation during our reconnaissance trips, one of which was about 25 English miles long (more or less 5 German miles), we convinced ourselves that the number of local plants did not exceed twenty or twenty two species,<sup>16</sup>

including those that the natives cultivate with greatest care, and which they need for dwellings or subsistence. We learned from our observations that the soil is not ungrateful and pays for the industry and labor with a rich crop of sweet potatoes, yams, sugar cane and bananas. However, this earth, extremely fertile and rich where cultivated, is extremely arid in the uncultivated places. On the whole island we found only one shrub whose stem was thicker than a human leg and was about seven or eight feet high. Grasses that covered the ground were almost everywhere dry and offered a dreary landscape to our eyes, strewn with lava rocks, whole or split up, that are the only stones we found on the island, except for pumice, tuff and a kind of vitrified black stone, among mineralogists known under the name of obsidian, stone of Gallinace or black Iceland agate. The rest of the ground is composed only from pozzolan, that is burnt ashes, gray or yellowish, sometimes verging on red, mixed with small particles of schorl. In short, the whole island, as we see it now, is but a heap of scoria ejected by a volcano. It is those different porous substances, dry and burnt, that make the island dry and arid, as the rain gets absorbed and the plants cannot draw water from the dry and spongy ground, so they are not able to spread sufficiently to cover [the soil] and retain humidity, so necessary for the vegetation. This dryness influences not only the vegetable kingdom, but also animals and people. The chickens are of a small species, and even the small size of rats seems to show the aridity of this island. Its influence can be easily seen in the physique, character, mores and even the social condition [of the indigenous inhabitants].

All the inhabitants of Easter Island are of an average height and well-proportioned. They are muscular, but more swarthy and slimmer than Tahitians or inhabitants of Friendly Islands. They are covered with figures and lines, black and bluish, realized by piercing the skin with a small indented instrument, dipped in a black liquid made of a mixture of carbon and water. Those figures today have no meaning and are not a sign of distinction anymore, although it is known that formerly only warriors that proved their courage were allowed to use those honorable marks. Nevertheless we found some remnants of this habit among the inhabitants of Society Islands. Heads of the islanders are very hairy, but their beards are not as thick as [the beards] of the inhabitants of Tahiti and neighboring islands, which may be attributed to the aridity of the soil and the dry climate of this island, since it is the humidity accompanied by heat that contributes to the beard growth, according to the observations of the best physicians. The women of this tribe are, in general, much more delicate and shorter than the men. It seems that they enjoy amorous pleasures from a very early age and without constraint, and this hampers their growth. Facial features of young girls are much more amiable and pleasant than those of men, whose physiognomy has a natural expression of pain and misery, and in case of women it is a lustful [expression that is natural]. Their ears are pierced and the hole is so large that one could put a hand through it and the ears touch their shoulders; some of them even turn [the lower part of the

ear] over the cartilaginous [upper] part. We cannot tell why these people have the tendency to disfigure themselves in this manner; one may suppose it is the wish to be attractive that urges them to cut their ears up to the cartilage, since the desire to beautify oneself is a universal passion, and, from time to time, people use such strange and bizarre ways to make themselves attractive, amiable and distinguishable that it is impossible to enumerate all the eccentricities that these poor people, lacking the European refinement, devised to achieve their goal. And I noticed that these islanders, isolated from the rest of the world, had the idea to distinguish themselves by beautiful ears, slitting them up to the cartilage and gradually inserting bigger or smaller rolled sugar cane leaves into the hole, and finally they had the ears hanging to the shoulders, what was considered among them as the utmost beauty.

Carl Friedrich Behrens, a sergeant major of Roggewein's fleet, from Mecklenburg, maintains that thousands of inhabitants of Easter Island gathered at the anchorage place and brought various fruits of their country for the Dutch. On the other hand, Spanish voyagers state that they counted about 3000 inhabitants of both sexes, whereas we, although we stayed there for four days and realized a reconnaissance tour of over 25 English miles, having seen, in consequence, a large part of the island, could not estimate the population to be more than nine hundred. Therefore I conclude that either the number of inhabitants decreased over fifty years from various thousands to 800 or 900 individuals, or the island's population never was so numerous as it was claimed. However, the remains of plantations on the mountains whose slopes were usually steep, funeral monuments which we will discuss later, their boats and some sculptures could not be created when the population was so small. But I could find no sign of spirit or genius among them; all this convinced me that formerly this island was happier, its population greater, the nation's spirit more active and their genius more creative. Without any doubt, the character of the nation was, in general, the most amiable as it could be, provided that it was originated by a simple nature. Seeing strangers arriving at [the coast of] their island, they neither could figure out what were our intentions, nor if we were not going to commit some violent act. And in spite of that, crowds of them were coming to the shore, unarmed, and—instead of opposing to our arrival—they found it better to offer us the best fruits and roots that their poor island yielded; all the time they were extremely hospitable and this purity of theirs was so touching that it made us shed tears of joy. [We were] accustomed to observe in our civilized societies the triumph of a sordid tendency to shameful looking only after one's own business, and all deeds marked by a contemptible mistrust of people who boast about acting together only for the benefit of others; [therefore] we were deeply touched to see this admirable simplicity of mores, and my heart seemed to overflow with the excellence of their nature and the superiority of the Being that is guiding our actions and unites us through acts of humanity and benevolence; I was also delighted of having

found among these people, whom we are accustomed to call savages, the fundamental virtues of every society. In the context of my observations of their mores I cannot deny myself the pleasure of telling that, on the day when we went to explore a great part of the island, we met a man coming out of his hut with a big sack full of sweet potatoes cooked under the earth, according to the custom of this country; he hurried to the head of our file and presented [a person] who marched first with a big potato and repeated it with everyone of us. Not satisfied with offering us that meal, he found out that there were some potatoes left [in his bag], he ran once more to the head of our file and again offered each of us a potato till he ran out of them; his wife showed her hospitality in a different manner and gave us a huge gourd of water, and another man, who was helping her, was careful that no one drank too much [so as to ensure] that there would be enough water for everybody. Ko-toheetai, the chief of the island, was dispatching his people who brought plenty of sugar cane and distributed it among us while we were passing; and, since in this country [there is a habit of] sucking the cane to quench the thirst and to refresh oneself, we could forebode a good character of this old man, who was trying to give us a proof of his hospitality and kindness of his heart, even before he saw us, which earned him affection of our whole group. By this occasion I observed, with admiration mixed with joy, that the affability of the princes that wield power and use it to do Good, evokes respect [even] in the grossest people. If our sailors, instead of a sovereign deprived of everything and roughly shaped by nature, saw a prince lavishing them with favors, they would not react with more sensibility to his deeds as they seemed to [react] in the presence of Ko-toheetai. I have to mention another feature related to the natural goodness of the islanders which I noticed as soon as we started our reconnaissance of the island. Over 50 inhabitants accompanied us during our tour and they left us on the return trip. When we reached the place where I decided to follow the shortest route to the ship, the officer and his group insisted on making a big detour; I was left alone with Dr. Sparrman and a sailor who was carrying my notebooks and equipment. As I was extremely fatigued after such a long march and barely recovered after an illness that made me stay in bed for a month, and our ship did not provide victuals appropriate for a poor convalescent to help him recover his strength, I was very weak and almost incapable of returning to the ship with the rest of the group. One of the inhabitants, who grew fond of me during that day and did not want to abandon me in these circumstances, kindly offered me his arm to lead me along the shortest way, with his son, a young boy of about ten or twelve years, who was walking ahead of us and picking up stones that often blocked the path, to prevent me from hurting my feet. After many breaks to rest, I arrived at the shore with the rest of the company and I did not forget to show my gratitude for this man and his son; I gave them an ax, several knives and several big nails, as well as some pieces of canvas, and he seemed very pleased; these gifts made him one of the richest inhabitants of this island.

These incidents are sufficient to provide a precise idea of the affectionate confidence and hospitality of these good islanders. The civil government of the inhabitants of this island is neither complicated nor troublesome, their Chief bears no other distinction than a more complete costume and a sort of diadem made of frigate pectoral feathers. We did not observe that he was held in a very high esteem or that he was paid a humiliating homage, as it is demanded by despots from Asiatic islands. He seemed rather a father of a family than an absolute ruler of this tribe; his commands were treated as advices of a tender father who cares about a true happiness of his children, and that is why they were executed immediately, which left us with no doubt that there existed a mutual attachment between the Chief and his subjects.

The close bonds and the simplicity of mores, the ignorance and the lack of temptations, together with few needs make us believe that this small tribe has no occasions to embroil themselves in any rows. If by any chance [a quarrel] breaks up, heads of families, with their wisdom and authority, can easily end them and soon restore the peace between their countrymen. On this arid island everyone is in need of seeking their subsistence and they must do it using only the strength of their own hands; and even if the soil is stony and very poorly protected against the heat of the Sun, it becomes extremely fertile due to farming, and—since the island is presently not very populated and there are so many fallow lands—if any young man wants to live on his own, he may simply occupy a [plot of] land and clear it out with a tool made of hard wood, in form of a pointed stake, which is used here instead of spade; his family and friends will not refuse him some sweet potatoes that he will divide into cuttings to multiply them; others will give him some shoots of sugar cane or banana tree, and there he is, ready to become head of a family and to feed himself, his wife and children. A hole dug in the ground and strengthened by stones serves as a shelter from the heat and at night. A couple of stems of cultivated mulberry supply him with the bark out of which his wife makes the scanty clothing he needs. A [sort of] grass supplies him with fiber to make strings or cords. He uses shells [*nacre de perle*] to make hooks that serve him to catch fish. His farm consists of a pair of chickens and, as he is not picky, he also tries to catch frigates, gannets, brown noddies and other seabirds that nest on the rocks off the shore, and also does not deny himself even rats; in this way he gets rid of them as enemies of his plantations and at the same time treats them as a delicacy. Water from several wells existing on the island is his usual drink; it is almost always brackish or has an admixture of other saline solutions, nevertheless that does not render it nasty or unhealthy for the inhabitants. Everything [here] seems to be a promise of unity, public safety, peace and wellbeing of the islanders. If we are to believe that the [islanders'] behavior and outward manifestations should be correctly interpreted as [symptoms of] intentions incapable of hypocrisy, they all were happy and seemed to be deprived of any desire, despite my observations on their natural face expression. We saw

them often laughing and playful, and several times even amusing themselves with singing and dancing.

In the year 1773, before arriving at Easter Island, we visited the inhabitants of Tahiti, Society Islands, Friendly Islands and New Zealand, and we were convinced, due to our research on their languages, that—although they live at a very long distance from each other, nevertheless they speak the same language and the differences that we observe result only from [various] dialects. This discovery made us expect that the inhabitants of Waihu (or Easter Island) could speak a dialect resembling the language of Tahiti and we verified this conjecture as soon as we arrived. The first two inhabitants that came to us in a boat called a line, bananas and fish that they brought us with the same name as in Tahiti and other aforementioned islands; and after several days of talking with the islanders we were more and more convinced that we were right in that matter, which can be verified [with the help of] the table that presents the harmony of all those dialects. Anyway, we think it is an interesting aspect of the history of those islands, the most distant of which lie 1400 leagues apart. As we see that all along that enormous space the same language is spoken, we may therefore conclude that all the islands were occupied and peopled by the same human race. Developing my research further I discovered that the Tagalog and Pampango languages of the Luzon Island, the principal of the Philippines, have much in common with the language of the South Sea islands which I will denominate Tahitian from now on. Comparing the vocabulary of these languages with the Malaysian I found also an unquestionable relation between them and there can be but little doubt that all those nations are descendants of the Malaysians from the Malacca peninsula. The inhabitants of Borneo are, undoubtedly, descendants of the Malaysians, what they admit themselves.<sup>17</sup> From there they spread as far as to the Philippines and the Moluccas. On the biggest of those islands there already resided aborigines more swarthy than Malaysians and with frizzy hair, who retreated to the interior of the country, where they are staying at present, leaving the coast for the newcomers. On Borneo the people of this first race are called Byajos [i.e. Bajau—ZJ], on Luzon and in the Philippines they are called Zambales and Negrillos and in the Moluccas, Alfoories. The Malaysian of the Philippines are distinguished by names of successively arriving tribes. There is one which is called Bissayas [i.e. Visayas—ZJ], another bears the name of Pampangos, and still another is known by the denomination of Tagalogs.<sup>18</sup> We have dictionaries of their languages which prove that they have much in common with the Malaysian. Islands of the Thieves are peopled by a branch of the Tagalog tribe; a solid proof of this is their figure, their physiognomy, the color of their skin, their mores, and, above all, their language.<sup>19</sup> The inhabitants of the New Caroline Islands have the same mores, customs and physiognomy as the inhabitants of the Philippines, so there can be no doubt of the migration from Guaham [i.e. Guam—ZJ] and Tinian to the Carolines and to the Pescadores [i.e. Penghu—ZJ], which lie not too far from Friendly Islands, the first South Sea

islands where Tahitian is spoken. We can see now that there are 1400 leagues from the Malacca peninsula to Islands of the Thieves, and from there, through the Carolines, to Island of Good Hope (or Hope Eylandt) [i.e. Niuafou'ou—ZJ], the first of Friendly Islands, there are 1200 leagues; and from that island there are another 1400 leagues to Easter Island. And throughout all this area [that covers] 4000 leagues people speak dialects that are related to the Malaysian language. Russian is spoken as well in Riga as in Kamchatka; English in Calcutta, Saint Helena, London, Philadelphia and Jamaica; French in Pondicherry, Paris, Canada and Saint-Domingue; Spanish in Manila, Madrid, Mexico, Peru and Buenos Aires; Dutch in Amboina, Cape of Good Hope, Suriname and Amsterdam; but we notice immediately that the conquest and the commerce have transplanted the civilization, laws, mores, art and science, together with the knowledge of the languages, to remote parts of the world, and they continue to link and unite these places with Europe. However, we cannot apply this to the tribes of Malaysians, spread from Malacca to Waihu. The inhabitants of this island do not have any knowledge of Tahitians; before our arrival they did not know that there existed an island called Tongataboo (Amsterdam), and there, in turn, [the islanders] do not have idea of the localization or inhabitants of Hogoleu [i.e. Chuuk—ZJ], Guaham, Luzon, Borneo and the peninsula of Malacca, although they speak the same language and come from the same racial group. We would not be able to trace the migrations of these tribes without examining their language and comparing the harmony of the distant dialects. Only in this manner we managed to establish a new historical fact, that is at the same time a unique and striking phenomenon in the history of the human species.

Among eight or nine hundred men, whom we believed to be the whole population of Easter Island, we could never count more than fifty women, what gives one woman in 16 or 17 men. Since we explored a great part of the island, it is almost impossible that we—passing along the majority of their huts—did not notice all the women of these hamlets, and, as we were entering into all the cottages, everywhere we found the same proportion of women. It is a very intriguing problem and it is difficult for me to find a solution, since I could not communicate well enough with the islanders as to the causes of the decrease in the number of women. However, having observed that formerly all the mountains were being cultivated, as we recognized the remains of the plantations alignment, and that at present the islanders are satisfied with clearing out plains and valleys, in the middle of which there are still many [plots of] fallow land, I came to the conclusion that formerly the population was greater. Since war cannot be a cause of the small number of women, as it is the men who expose themselves to danger, I supposed it was some kind of a universal and unexpected disaster that destroyed the majority of women of these islanders, what is all the more probable that the whole island was formed by a volcano; I knew that in 1687 the buccaneer Davis, on his way from Galapagos islands to Juan Fernandez, experienced a violent

episode of earthquake in the open sea, which devastated Peru and totally ruined Callao, [and this took place] before he discovered the land that bears his name. Moreover, as I was told by the inhabitants of Tahiti that the South Sea islands were at a high risk of that calamity, I had no more doubts that an earthquake not only depopulated the island but also contributed to the decrease of the number of women. Since the islanders live underground and their women are busy with housework and [thus] attached to their homes, while the men work outside, it is very likely that one of those big, terrible natural disasters suddenly buried a great number of inhabitants, and, above all, a proportionally greater number of women. This highly probable cause of depopulation, I think, devastated the island very shortly before our arrival, as we were observing everywhere traces of soil clearing that would disappear completely in less than ten years, and because the number of men did not decrease yet as that of women, what should have happened in about thirty years.

However, there was no stronger proof of a period when the island was happier, the population more numerous, the nation's spirit more active and its genius more creative than the funeral monuments that we saw standing in various places of the island and overturned in other. The inhabitants of Tahiti and neighboring islands have the habit of leaving the corpses of their deceased in places related to their religious rites until the moment when only bones are left which are then placed on a pile of stones, without the slightest respect for the dead. On Tahiti, to commemorate deceased friends, wooden beams 20 to 30 feet high are erected on the spot, that represent a row of human figures of both sexes, clumsily executed and placed one above another, every [figure] being no higher than one foot or eighteen inches. They are called Teèheè. As I could judge from the words of Tahitian sages, they are symbols of that being inside us that sees, hears, in short—that formulates ideas with the help of our senses and that—according to their peculiar expression—conceives the words of the stomach, that is thoughts. Those clumsy figures perpetuate the memory of the deceased and are monuments of devotion and recognition offered by their living friends. The islanders of Waihu, desiring to pay the same tribute to the memory of their chiefs and distinguished members of their community, but living in a land deprived of wood, resorted to stones and—on bases or walls of huge hewn stone blocks—erected a kind of [pillar] that represents a human figure. We observed a head, tough and awkwardly executed, topped with a cylindrical hat and with elongated ears, according to the fashion of this country. The rest is a shapeless stone block where we can discern roughly marked arms. These monuments are fifteen to twenty seven English feet high by 6 or 8 [feet] wide at the chest. Some of them were placed on the aforementioned bases or walls in the number of four or five, other were isolated and jutting out directly from the ground. If we consider the immense mass of stone, 27 feet high by eight [feet] wide, that probably was pulled out of quarries that we find only on the hills, in the middle of the island, where we saw during our [reconnaissance] trip

some hats and some unfinished statues; and if we imagine the ceaseless dedication, the patience, the effort to execute even the least refined of these clumsy monuments, realized by people who, before the arrival of the Europeans, had no knowledge of iron or any other metal and, in consequence, [could use] only coral stones and big shells to execute a shape roughly resembling a human figure, this is enough to give us the idea of the present depopulation of this colony. And if we add to these reflections the problems connected with the transport of these huge stones by strength of arm [to place them] next to the shore, at a distance at least of a league from the quarries, and the effort needed to erect these stone blocks on their bases, we must admit that the present population of this island is far from being capable of undertaking and executing such a task, appropriate for a numerous tribe, capable of supplying the force of individual [hands], in the lack of a mechanism necessary to move such giants.

Not able to think of the statues without admiring the reasons that must have had infused this nation with the spirit of perseverance in this hard work, at first I considered it right to suppose that religious principles, that lead the human spirit much further than any other circumstances, may have contributed [to this phenomenon]. However, now I could not convince myself to ascribe that work to superstitions, as the islanders struggled to disillusion us in this regard, assuring that [these monuments] were not symbols of divinity, but statues erected to commemorate their chiefs, heroes and distinguished members of their nation. What power must reside in the idea of good deeds that those great men performed for their people! It seems that those good deeds are permanently engraved in their hearts. Those good deeds, present today in their memory, infuse them with a noble ardor to perpetuate the cherished remembrance of their princes, through works that almost surpass their force; this feeling helped them execute a tough and costly plan, motivated them to carve, transport and erect a statue that always bore the favorite name of a chief or a hero, great by his good deeds performed for his countrymen and still alive in their memory. They were repeating enthusiastically the names: Obeènā, Moraheena, Oomareeva, Quiperea, Moui and Manga-toto, at the same time pointing at the monuments dedicated to their memory. Let me focus my attention on the monuments of civilized nations, on the motives, often vile, of their greatest works. Rome dishonored itself erecting monuments representing the Caligulas, the Claudiuses, the Neros, but what Rome erected in their lifetime on a pure whim, was destroyed after their death. The islanders from Waihu honor their great men only after their death, when their authority can no more influence the spirit of the contemporary. The merits of a man can be judged with the greatest equity only after his death.

The comparison between these great, noble monuments of Waihu and those cumbersome and awkwardly executed beams that we found on Tahiti is like bringing together works by mature men and flimsy imitations done by children. Apart from the huge stone statues we found among these good islanders small wooden figures representing men or women,

or only parts of human body, as a hand, and even grotesque imitations of a human figure finished with an ornament; what was however most astonishing was the fact that these trinkets were created with a great realism, taste and elegance; I was astonished to see that the art achieved such a high level in this tough and barren country, lacking of tools and metals, among so uncouth a nation that is hardly able to protect themselves against the scorching Sun and collect some food obtained only by dint of sheer hard work. This reflection led me to another, more interesting. I recalled in my memory all the countries that cultivated fine arts with some success from their early days. The Upper Egypt, Attica, Italy—the cradle of arts, came to my mind as first. All those countries are dry and mountainous, but lie in a temperate and favorable climate. The Lower Egypt, located less favorably, developed the arts much later, and at present we can hardly find the remains of the most recent monuments, whereas those of the Thebaid, much more ancient—having resisted the centuries, the hostile fury of Roman emperors and the barbarity of the Saracens—have survived [to our times] and still can be seen. Rich and fertile Boeotia, in a humid climate, surrounded by swamps and quagmires, was never famous for artists. Peatlands and swamps of Holland never gave birth to a great artist, and the efforts of the local genius never went beyond folk festivities, country weddings, landscapes and portraits. It seems that dry and raised climates [*sic*—countries] of a temperate climate provide the human body with a more ardent and courageous constitution, which influences also their spirit and makes it prouder; on the contrary, low and marshy countries, of a humid and foggy climate, give birth only to soft and limp bodies whose influence on the mind diminishes proportionately the attachment to invention, the tendency to [figure out] great ideas and [the ability] of realizing them.

Let me add another reflection on the subject. When I examined carefully the huge statues, the great and majestic Egyptian monuments came naturally to my mind, and I found it surprising that among the remains of statues of the ancient Thebaids there are some stylistically similar to these of Waihu. We recognize in these statues the style and appearance [typical] of Egypt and often see them—as the Egyptian ones—topped with a big hat; we only discern the indication of arms, and the lower parts are even more characterized by simplicity and [belong to] a less advanced art. But it seems to me that everywhere people are the same in the same conditions. The progress of the human spirit is also almost the same in all similar climates. On one hand, for human beings imitation is natural, on the other hand, love and recognition have always inspired the desire to perpetuate the memory of respected men and benefactors of the human species. It was thus natural to attempt to express some resemblance to the cherished persons. And here we have the real origin of the art, reduced to a universal and natural principle, ennobled even by savages, whose rough works render it respectable and sacred. Europe—more civilized, more enlightened, but also more degenerated due to the enormity of crimes that are committed there and the black infamy of its inhabitants—

nurtures all the arts and has perfected them in many places. But it is uncommon to see here the Great caring for the love of their peoples by tolerance, justice and good deeds! All too often they use force to guarantee themselves the rewards that only merits and virtue can snatch from the respect and recognition, they create false testimonies of their imaginary grandeur and try to immortalize themselves in an endless number of monuments, in spite of alienated affections of their subjects! Happy are those who—among the victims of pride, real ostentation, pretended benevolence—are mortals favored by Heaven who see the justice administered among them with equity and priests subordinate to wise laws that permit every individual to adore the Eternal according to one's own principles and without constraint, who live peacefully under command of a prince who marks every day of his life with new acts of largesse, abiding good deeds for the humanity and manifestations of heavenly goodness. Every citizen of this happy nation erects in his own heart a monument that will stand the test of time, unaffected by adversities. It is there that we will find the King philosopher who sets out to conquer only to bring happiness, and to become father of the peoples that the Providence entrusts to his care. It is there that, from century to century, a father will pass down to his sons the memory of glorious acts honoring the epoch we are living in. I do not have to mention by name this nation and this country, fortunate to have such a Monarch. As well neighboring, as the most distant nations will readily recognize in this depiction the Kingdom of Prussia, prominent for its zeal, courage, an inviolable attachment and the most respectful and affectionate love for the immortal monarch, to whom the whole world has given the name of Frederick the Great!

#### Notes [these have been converted from footnotes to endnotes]

1. Easter Island lies more than 707 leagues from Copiapo, and, consequently, Davis Island (that lies only 500 leagues from there) is situated at least at eleven degrees more to the east than Easter Island; thus it is evident that Roggewein was first to see it, and I was convinced by indisputable signs that the Spanish were here before us, although they believed that they had touched upon Davis Island. The sandy islet of Davis certainly lies more to the east, and Mr Bougainville left it to the south of his route, as Captain Carteret left it to the north of his.
2. Mr Dalrymple, a skillful navigator and geographer, left us a short narrative of that expedition in a brochure entitled "A letter from M. Dalrymple to D<sup>r</sup>. Hawkesworth, London, 4<sup>to</sup>. 1773[?]
3. From l'histoire des Gouverneurs de Batavia we know that Roggewein situated Easter Island at 265°42' from Tenerife = 110°45' west of London, so the difference is only of 59'. The Spanish placed it at 268°19' from Tenerife = 108°11' west of London. The Dutch affirm the latitude of the island at 27°4'S and the Spanish at 27°16' south latitude.
4. The Dutch maintain it has 16 leagues circumference and the Spanish say its length is of six leagues. The first opinion is exaggerated, this island is no more than five leagues long.



5. Morus papyrifera, a plant that grows well even in the English climate and which, known in Japan and China, could be used to produce paper that is becoming more and more expensive, because of its great consumption and the lack of materials to make more of it. The English and the Dutch—the two trade nations—pay high prices to get that fine, white tissue, and the Germans are obliged to use paper of inferior quality. But this problem could be solved by planting that shrub, whose ornamental foliage could moreover embellish our gardens.
6. Cyperus squarrosus.
7. Saccharum officinarum.
8. Musa paradisiaca.
9. Convolvulus batatas.
10. Cucurbita pepo [an obvious mistake, as pumpkins did not grow on Easter Island—ZJ].
11. Dioscorea alata.
12. Sterna stolidus [in the original *nigauds*, which suggests a type of gannet—ZJ].
13. Pelecanus aquilus.
14. Pelecanus fiber, Bassanus, Piscator.
15. Procellaria.
16. Plants cultivated by the islanders are Arum esculentum and macrorhizon, Musa paradisiaca with its varieties, Convolvulus batatas with its variety, Dioscorea alata, Cucurbita Pepo, Curcuma longa, Saccharum officinarum, and Morus papyrifera. Among those that grow in wild we observed the following: Boerhaavia erecta, Avena filiformis, Cyperus squarrosus, Paspalum undulatum, Solanum nigrum, Convolvulus brasiliensis, Apieum graveolens, Hibiscus populneus, Gossypium religiosum, one species of mimosa, a shrub of leaves similar to ash, and one new plant that grows also in New Zealand and which we called Sheffieldia repens, after M. Sheffield, a skilled botanist from the University of Oxford.
17. Beckman's Voyage to Borneo.
18. Hernanda los Rios Coronel, Relacion de las islas Malucas. Navarete Tratados historicos de la Monarquia de China. Gemelli Carreri Giro del mondo. Fr. Diégo Bergaño Bocabulario de Papango en Romance. Manila 1733 fol. P. Juan de Nocéda y el P. Pedro de San Lucar Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala. Manila 1754 fol.
19. P. Gobien histoire des isles Marianes. Paris. 1700. 12<sup>mo</sup>.

## Discussion

If anyone reading the above document started to have doubts as to its author, so did I. The more I contemplated the style of the essay – its cohesion, fluency, the wistfully poetic nature of the language – the more I convinced myself it could not be written by Johann Reinhold Forster. Such literary style was an unquestionable characteristic of his son, George. The older Forster would not write about sad sea birds, astonished whales and monsters of the deep; also the passage depicting the solitude and fatigue of Captain Cook's crew, maneuvering among icebergs and longing to see land and people, strongly resembles a corresponding fragment of *A Voyage Round the World*...: "The joy which this fortunate event [of finding Easter Island – ZJ] spread on every countenance is scarcely to be described. We had been an hundred and three days out of sight of land and the rigorous weather

to the south, the fatigues of continual attendance during storms, or amidst dangerous masses of ice, the sudden changes of climate, and the long continuance of a noxious diet, all together had emaciated and worn out our crew. The expectation of a speedy end to their sufferings, and the hope of finding the land flocked with abundance of fowls and planted with fruits, according to the accounts of the Dutch navigator, now filled them with uncommon alacrity and cheerfulness" (Forster 1777:552). Also, the philosophical reflections on 'adding new elements to known truths' at the beginning of the French manuscript are in a way similar to the deliberations that open the article by George Forster on Tahiti, offering German readers his translation of a Spanish travelogue (Forster 1780).

Moreover, the handwriting of the *Mémoire* certainly is not that of Johann Reinhold Forster (for a sample of his hand, see e.g. Forster 1982:62-63); but is it that of George? To settle this question, I resorted to graphological analysis; as a reference material I presented a copy of a page from the *Catalogue of Curiosities Sent to Oxford*, composed by the younger Forster (for a reproduction, see Coote et al. 2000:186). The result of the expertise confirmed the highest probability that *Mémoire* and *Catalogue of Curiosities* were written by the same person (Bartoszyński 2014:7).

However, various circumstances must be kept in mind. Everyone interested in Cook's voyages and resulting narratives is aware of the competition between authors of various travelogues that took place after the second circumnavigation. It is a known fact that Johann Reinhold Forster had the ambition to publish the only narrative on the expedition and its results. However, the authorities forbade him to do it. Researchers cite different reasons: it is maintained that, as a matter of fact, no one promised the older Forster that he would be permitted to issue his journal as the sole account of the journey, contrary to his own conviction. On the other hand, it is also said that a difficult character and controversial personality of the naturalist contributed to this ban, or that the quality of his writings was deemed not good enough. Forster himself was of the opinion that someone was conspiring behind his back (for the history of life of both Forsters and the vicissitudes of their writings, see e.g., Beaglehole in Cook 1961:xlii-xlix; Hoare in Forster 1982: Introduction [to Vol. I]; Smith 1992:200-202; von Saher 1999; Vorbrich 2009).

Another and a very credible interpretation of the situation is offered by Vorbrich: "It may therefore be that the various stages of the post-Voyage dispute over who was to publish the account had its roots in this complicated web of circumstances. First of all, Cook was seriously disappointed by what had happened to his narrative account of the First Expedition, as re-written by John Hawkesworth. He may have had doubts about the credibility of Johann as a sole writer of the account

of the Second Voyage. In addition, after the Second Voyage the status of Cook as a national hero, his rising fame as an excellent navigator and Commander, might have induced him to believe himself equally good as a potential author. Cook may have also been guided by greed in keeping the author's glory under his own control and the financial profit exclusively to himself" (Vorbrich 2009:140-141).

As a result, it was George Forster who wrote and published his famous *A Voyage round the World*, which gave rise to further discussions and accusations of plagiarism; in short, George was attacked for copying his father's journal and issuing it as his own book (For a written dispute, see: Wales 1778; Forster 1778). What is most logical, however, is that father and son were discussing their ideas, inspiring one another and then writing together; Vorbrich maintains that the Forsters adopted a "peculiar policy regarding the true identity of the author of their works", which consisted in a practice of not clarifying the true authorship (Vorbrich 2009:98).

This statement seems to apply well also to the French manuscript. To name a couple of examples: while poetic descriptions and grandiloquent passages on political philosophy remind us of George, linguistic deliberations and remarks about climatic determinism are more characteristic of Johann Reinhold, those motives being present also in many sections of his *Observations* (1996: *passim*), even if in general absent in the *Resolution Journal* (1982). That is why I consider George Forster a material author and an intellectual co-author of the *Mémoire*.

Let me now focus upon the issues of utmost interest for researchers specializing in Easter Island. Above all, a striking feature of the manuscript is the fact that it is very rich in detail; sometimes richer than respective passages in George's *Voyage* and his father's *Journal*. Some remarks and considerations do not appear in either of these publications; however, several of them can be found in *Observations*, published as early as in 1778. That makes me suppose the *Mémoire* may have been written relatively shortly after the expedition, at a moment when all the experience acquired by the Forsters during the journey was fresh and new, their discussions hot and alive, and memories still vivid, before the time blurred them and the successive publications shaped them into a 'fossilized' form. On the other hand, the *Mémoire* includes some comments and descriptions that are even contradictory when compared to the content of *Voyage* and *Journal*! But let me discuss the crucial examples.

One of the most astonishing differences between the French manuscript and other writings by the Forsters refers to the *moai*. It is a known fact that neither of the eighteenth century expeditions' members saw the quarries of Rano Raraku, although the British

reconnaissance group found the quarry of *pukao* in Puna Pau. George Forster even writes in his *Voyage*: "We neither met with any quarries, where they had recently dug the materials, nor with unfinished statues which we might have considered as the work of the present race" (Forster 1777:594). The *Journal* by the older Forster says nothing about it. Nicolas Cauwe, in his book explaining a new theory of the abandonment of the quarries and the taboo imposed on them, states that the islanders deliberately kept the strangers from that sacred place (Cauwe 2011:41-42). Meanwhile, in the *Mémoire*, we read that Cook's people not only saw the quarries in the interior of the island, but – apart from the 'hats' – noticed some unfinished statues, too. Can that be true? My first thought was that the Forsters considered all the statues as unrefined, which can be interpreted as "not completely finished", nonetheless they were good observers and certainly able to differentiate between, say, *moai* that were clumsy or tough in their eyes, and others that could have been 'unfinished'. To sum up, was that a slip of the tongue or a false memory? Or maybe the voyagers really found the quarries? We cannot tell.

Another puzzling fact concerns the natural disposition of the indigenous Rapanui. In his *Voyage*, George Forster states: "We are unacquainted with the amusements of the people of Easter Island, having never seen them engaged in any kind of diversion, nor taken notice of a single musical instrument among them" (Forster 1777:600). It is an important remark, because it appears in the context of the initial encounter of the British expedition members with a local who comes aboard and, supposedly, at first fears for his life and then, appeased, talks much about dancing. I find this scene and its interpretation doubtful and discuss it in my book and in another paper that is not yet published (Jakubowska 2013:352-354; 2014: in press). Also in this case *Journal* says nothing. In any case, in the French manuscript Forster says that Cook's people saw the islanders playful, laughing, and even singing and dancing. Again: is that true? Or is it meant as a kind of social/political propaganda – so typical of the text – showing happy people under the command of a benevolent 'prince'?

Additionally, the *Mémoire*, as well as the *Voyage* (Forster 1777:476) include a conviction that Easter Islanders are peaceful people who do not involve themselves in wars. In *Voyage*, the younger Forster attributes it to the small number and poverty of the local tribe, in the *Mémoire* – to a wise government of their chief. It is more interesting that Johann Reinhold Forster, in his *Journal*, cites war among possible factors that contributed to the population decrease (Forster 1982:476); it is also a generalized opinion of researchers that the ancient Rapanui used to fight among themselves over reduced natural resources. However,

in recent years some specialists argue there were no wars on Easter Island (see, e.g., Boersema 2011:226; Cauwe 2011:97-88; Hunt & Lipo 2011:93-107).

Then, what could be the cause behind the decrease of the population that had not exceeded 900 people? Both Forsters agree that one of the most probable factors could be a natural disaster, especially one that involved volcanic eruption and earthquake; nevertheless – contrary to *Voyage* and *Journal* – the *Mémoire* uses this scenario to explain also the astonishingly low number of women observed by the members of the crew. The same interpretation, depicting women busy with housework keeping them in their underground shelters, which exposes them to a danger of a sudden earthquake, can also be found in *Observations* (Forster 1996:111, 264-265).

With regard to the small proportion, as well as the small size of the women, both the *Mémoire* and *Observations* include interesting commentaries. The French manuscript states that it is unconstrained amorous activity enjoyed from an early age that hampers the growth of females; in *Observations* we find the following passage:

“These women... were most probably enjoyed by many husbands, nor were they afraid of encountering the embraces of a multitude from our ship, being accustomed to these rites on account of the reduced numbers of their sex, who were scarcely able to satisfy the desires of so many. If the above mentioned theory were admissible, and could be confirmed by facts and experience, the far greater proportion of boys, should be born in this isle: but the too numerous embraces of many might perhaps serve to frustrate the procreation of children, as is commonly the case with those unhappy females, who prostitute themselves to a multitude” (Forster 1996:265).

It would be easy to continue enumerating examples of differences and similarities, detailed nuances and striking comparisons between all the mentioned texts that are already known and the *Mémoire*; however, those discussed above are enough to prove that the French manuscript offers new insights and adds new intriguing motives to investigations about Easter Island history.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the *Mémoire* was written with a double purpose. Firstly, and overtly, it is a scientific report on the exploration of an exotic, not very well-known land and its geographical situation, people, customs, and resources. The deliberations are enriched by comparative studies that show the erudition of the author – as a matter of fact, of both Forsters. But one does

not need to read between the lines to notice the second function: that of a philosophical, social and political manifesto, and also an open eulogy to the Kingdom of Prussia and its monarch, Frederick the Great.

In her article on the manuscript, Chrobak wonders who the recipient of the essay was. She reasons:

“The contents and presence of charts and plates suggest an earnest recipient of scientific interests, perhaps an institutional one: the elegance of the edition (leather binding framed by embossed gold floral motifs, endpaper marbling, gold plated edges) and the attachment of an original aquarelle – a noble and earnest recipient. The anthropological treatise ends with ponderings about the art of Easter Island in a comparative view, and the final sentences include commendation of King Frederick II of Prussia, the philosopher-king, a patron of arts and benefactor of his people. The manuscript could have been meant for him, for the Berlin Academy or for another German scientific society Johann Forster was due gratitude to in the circle of Frederick II, because it was thanks to the financial help of Prussian freemasons that he was bailed from an English prison, where he was held for debts, and thanks to the intercession of Karl von Zedlitz, the minister of education and culture, he received the post of professor at the university in Halle” (Chrobak 2010:11).

In my opinion, although Chrobak evokes the person of Johann Reinhold Forster and not his son, all indicates that her first supposition is right. Frederick the Great was indeed known as a philosopher king; some of his acts and reforms may show him as a (controversial) “friend of humanity” and he professed the maxim that a sovereign has to be “the first servant of the state” (Rostworowski 2001:364, 467-469). This corresponds very well with the postulates and allusions included in the *Mémoire*. It is worth adding that the Kingdom of Prussia was at that time a religiously tolerant state and the monarch himself considered all religions as superstitious and absurd (Rostworowski 2001:468; the statement comes from the king’s political testament of 1752). In this particular context, I find almost amusing the assurance by the author of the French manuscript that he cannot convince himself to ascribe the carving of *moai* to superstitions, especially as the Easter Islanders themselves assert that the monuments are not symbols of deities (which they may, in fact, be).

Therefore, if the *Mémoire* was an essay composed by authors considered popularly as Germans, and – supposedly – addressed to a German king, why was it actually written in French? Both Forsters were not only cosmopolitans, but also polyglots; Johann Reinhold was said to dominate as much as seventeen languages. His son was also talented in this respect. In that epoch the

French was *lingua franca* of intellectual elites; Frederick the Great himself was also writing in French. He died in 1786, and therefore – if we adopt the proposed line of reasoning – this year may be considered as the latest date when the manuscript could have been written.

For us, however, the above presented *Mémoire* is – first of all – a valuable source that reveals unknown, important details and sheds new light on early exploration of Rapa Nui.

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