

# The Complete Journal of Captain Cornelis Bouman, Master of the ship *Theinhoven*, Forming Part of the Fleet of Jacob Roggeveen, from 31 March to 13 April 1722 During Their Stay Around Easter Island

*Translation by Herbert von Saher*

## Introduction

It was only at the Rapa Nui Rendezvous held at Laramie, Wyoming in August 1993 that I found out that--up to now--the journal of Captain Bouman's stay around Easter Island had never been completely translated into English. After having written "Some Details of the Journal of Jacob Roggeveen on the Discovery of Easter Island" for *RNJ* Vol.4(3), the editors wanted more, so I wrote "Some Details from the Journal of Captain Bouman on the Discovery of Easter Island" (*RNJ* Vol.4 (4)). I thought that, for the serious student of Bouman, a complete translation would be available in some library but, as far as I know, this is not the case. Because Roggeveen's journal disappeared for over a century and Bouman's for nearly two centuries and during that time only apocryphal sources were available, a tremendous confusion arose about their journey. I tried to evaluate all the different narratives in my article "Roggeveen and Bouman, an Inventory of all the Narratives" in *RNJ*, Vol.7(4).

In order to avoid repetition, I refer readers to those articles for the history and discovery of the different narratives. In this paper I only recapitulate that the journal of Captain Cornelis Bouman was finally found in 1910 and first published in Dutch by F.E. Baron Mulert in the 1911 *Annual Report* of the "Zeeuwach Genootschap der Wetenschappen" (Zealand Scientific Society). It is this edition upon which my translation is based.

We know little about Cornelis Bouman, neither his birthdate nor his background. It was reported that he had, for some years, been on a fishing ship in the Baltic Sea and that he had sailed to the Caribbean, but had not previously crossed the equator. But his dedication to his tasks and his seamanship were highly praised by those who reconstructed his voyage and compared it with his reckoning. He was certainly a professional seaman and, in this respect, superior to Jacob Roggeveen who had studied law. For each day in the Journal, Bouman begins with a nautical and meteorological summary indicating course followed, estimate of distance covered, and estimates of latitude and longitude, with possible corrections; wind directions are given as are the highlights of the day. After that he includes additional comments.

Translating eighteenth century Dutch into present-day English is not an easy task. Over the centuries some words have changed in meaning. The construction of sentences has certainly changed a great deal, and Bouman has a habit of making very long sentences that connect unrelated subjects. So I have often taken liberties with punctuation and with the text by adding words to clarify meanings which, in my opinion, were unclear. I must admit that the description of the

maneuvering with anchors on 11 and 12 April is not clear to me, and I fear the anger of ethnobotanists if I have wrongly translated the names of tubers offered to Bouman and expressed in words that no longer exist in the Dutch language. Fortunately on the other hand, Bouman's description of *umu*, *hare paenga* and of cloth made from beaten tree bark (which completely mystifies him) are quite clear. In cases where I have provided explanations, these are placed in brackets.

Although Roggeveen's fleet left the island of Texel on 1 August 1721, the part of Bouman's journal that was found only starts on 31 October. Two incidents must be mentioned from his Journal, before we begin on 31 March, 1722. The captains of the three ships, Jan Koster of the *Arend* (probably named for Roggeveen's father Arend Roggeveen (*arend* also means eagle); Cornelis Bouman of the *Theinhoven*, and Roelof Rosendaal of the *Afrikaansche Galeij* regularly came together in "ships' council" under the chairmanship of the commander, Jacob Roggeveen, in order to discuss events and make communal decisions. Bouman reports such a meeting on 2 November 1721, when the fleet is near the island of Trinidad after crossing the Atlantic. The other captains want to take over the sailors and stores from the *Thienhoven* and send Bouman to the nearby Dutch island of Curaçao because his ship is much slower than the others and he is hampering their progress. The meeting does not reach a conclusion because of a pending storm and the captains have to hurry back to their own ships. All three continue the journey but it is obvious that Bouman is furious about the suggestion made to him. However, the *Thienhoven* was always in the rear of the convey. A much more serious event occurred on 17 December 1721 off the Brazilian coast when *Thienhoven* was lost by the fleet in a mist, and not relocated. The two remaining ships progressed along the eastern coast of the Falklands, and around Cape Horn to the Juan Fernandez Islands in the Pacific where they arrived in February 1722. There, to their great joy, they found the *Thienhoven* waiting for them at this rendezvous, which had been prearranged in case they should become separated from each other. They then continue together, and we begin our translation on 31 March 1722.

## The Journal of Captain Cornelis Bouman

### 31 March

*Course: W. by S. distance: 31 (nautical miles), Est. Lat. 26°48' S. Est. long. 261°41' (1) Corrected lat. 26°50' S. Winds: E. by S. ESE, S.E. Saw many birds.*

Tuesday pleasant weather with a nice strong breeze. Saw many birds, such as boobies, white grey gulls and other sorts,

from which we concluded that we were nearing land. Towards the afternoon the breeze diminished, during the night, lovely weather.

#### 1 April

Course: W. Distance 18, Est. lat. 26°50', Est. long. 260°20', Corrected lat. 26°52' S. Winds: ESE, SSE, S, W, W. by N.

Wednesday quiet in the morning with high seas coming from Southeast, very warm. Saw no more birds. Calm in the morning, towards evening a little wind. Turned South. During the night a fresh breeze.

#### 2 April

Course: SSW, distance 10, Est. Lat. 27°28' S., Lat. 260°3', corrected 262°20', Winds: W. by NW., SW.

Thursday morning stiff breeze. Held ship's council with the commander, deciding how far we would sail on a Westerly course along 27°20' latitude. We compared our reckonings and found a difference of 4 degrees longitude, of which we took the average. In the afternoon light rain, we turned North with increasing wind. A sailor fell from the big yard and was badly wounded, his name is Joseph Jacques from Marseilles. During the night unstable weather.

#### 3 April

Course: WNW, Distance 17, Est. lat. 27°2' S. Long. 261°10'.<sup>1</sup> Corrected Lat. 27°4' S. Winds: W. by N., SSW, S., S. by E., S.

Friday morning unstable strong winds. Towards midday diminishing wind, we take the reefs from the sails, sunshine, high seas. In the afternoon light air, during the night quiet.

#### 4 April

Course: West, Distance 7, Est. Lat. 27°4' S., Long. 260°39', corrected lat. 27°6', Winds: NNE, NE, NW, W. by N.

Saturday morning very quiet, very high waves from the South. In the afternoon a little wind with windgusts and showers.

#### 5 April

Course: West, Distance 7, Est. Lat. 27°6' S. Est. lat. 260°8' Winds: WNW, NW, N. by E., S. by W., SSE, SE by E. Discovered land to W. by S.

Sunday morning quiet with light rain, diminishing swell. At 7 o'clock we tack with little wind and rain. Towards the evening Rosendaal (Captain of the *African Galey*) gave sign of land, upon which the *Arend* let drift in order to see what had been discovered. We heard at about 8 or 9 hours from Capt. Koster that he saw a low island S. by W., he intended to stay there. During the night we let drift towards South, having a nice sky with clear moonlight.

#### 6 April

Course: W. by N., distance 13, est. lat. 26°55', long. 259°10', Winds: ESE, SE, E. by S., NNE.

We approach the unknown land. Ship's council decides to visit it, we see fires on it. During the night we had drifted towards the Southwest, at sunrise on Monday morning we made sail again, having the land, about which Rosendaal

gave sign yesterday, W. to N. of us, it being a low, unpatterned, mountainous land. The Southern part first looked like a separate island, but when we came near, we found out that this was not so. In the afternoon we had its corner at W. to N. at a distance of 3 to 4 miles, then we changed our course NW in order to visit the Northcoast (#2).<sup>2</sup> In the afternoon quiet with variable winds. Towards evening the commander called a ship's council. In it we decided to send two sloops with 19 armed men at first opportunity to the coast in order to visit the island and establish if it were inhabited, of which we had no doubt as we had seen fires burning in several places during darkness. We would fathom the water in order to seek a suitable anchorage. During the night unstable weather with rain, we laid by with the small sail.

#### 7 April

Course: W. by N. Dist. 4, Est. lat. 26°52', long. 258°57', later: Course S.W. by S. Dist. 2, Est. Lat. 27°, long. 258°52j'. Winds: N., NNW, NW, W by N., S. SSW, S., S. by E., SW.

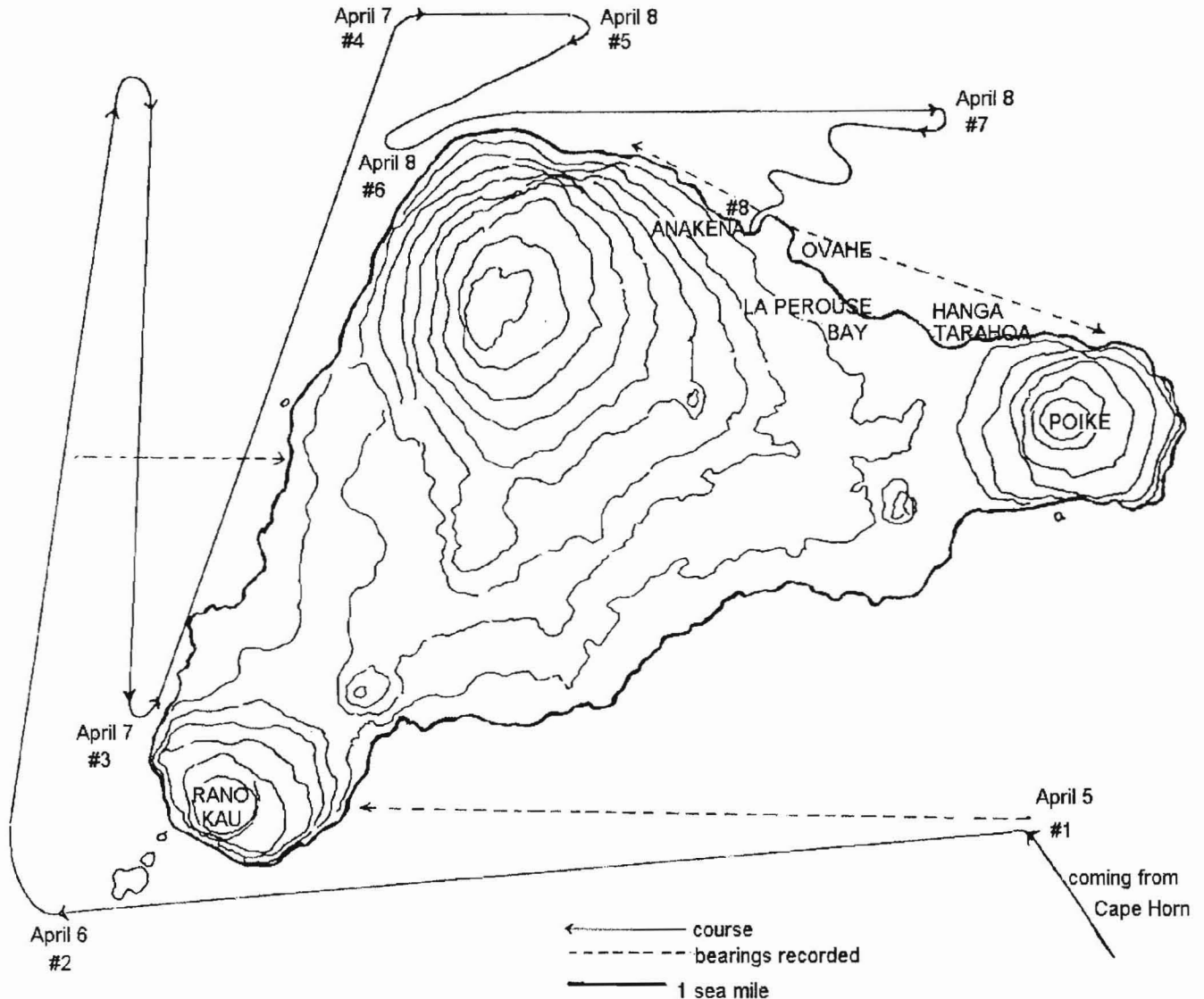
At this last position we found an island on van Ceulen's map. We had an islander on board. Tuesday during the night variable winds with hard gusts, thunder and lightning. We held off but after daylight we approached the coast but we advanced little as a result of the variable weather. From 8 hours on we had a steady wind that allowed us to get nearer.

Meanwhile we noticed a small boat nearby in which an old naked man was sitting, who yelled loudly. I went to him in my sloop and brought him, notwithstanding much resistance, to the *Arend*. He was a man, far in his fifties, with a brown skin and a goatee in the Turkish manner, of very strong build. He was greatly surprised by the construction of our ship and all its tackle, as we could understand from his gestures. As we could not understand him at all, we could only interpret his gestures and indications. We gave him a little mirror, in which he looked, which frightened him awfully, just as the sounding of our bell did. We gave him a glass of gin, which he poured over his face and when he felt its force, he began rubbing his eyes clean; then we gave him a second glass with a biscuit, but he did not eat it. He must have been ashamed of his nakedness because he saw that we were all dressed. Therefore he put his arms and head on the table, he seemed to be addressing his god, which we could clearly see from his movements when he raised his head and hands many times towards the sky, using many words in a loud voice. In this way he was busy for half an hour and when he stopped, he started jumping and singing. He showed himself very gay and joyful. We bound a small piece of sailcloth over his loins which pleased him wonderfully. He had by nature a happy countenance. He danced together with the sailors when we let them play the violin for him. He was greatly surprised by the music and the construction of the instrument.

His canoe had been made of small planks that were held together by some sort of rope; it had two blocks of wood on the inside. It was so light that one man alone could easily carry it. For us it was surprising that one man alone had the courage to venture out so far in the ocean with nothing else at his disposal but one paddle, because when he approached us, we

were about three miles from the coast. In the afternoon we had the middle of the island SW by S at two miles. The wind was variable with rain, which compelled us to turn away from the coast. Therefore we had to take leave of our company to which he felt very little inclined. So in order to get rid of him, we had him brought to his canoe, but he remained with our ships until

corner of the island. Therefore we turned East (#6). We saw several heathen statues on land as well as a great number of people. We started tacking towards the coast (#7) and at 11 we were so near to the shore in the middle of the island, that we dropped anchor there in 23 fathoms (#8). The soil consisted of greyish white coral-like sand. We have the Northern corner



he noticed that we were sailing away from the coast, only then did he return to the shore. The sea was already hollow so that I was afraid whether he would return all right. In the afternoon quiet with rain. Toward evening a nice little wind. At 8 we turned Eastward (#4), during the night a stiff breeze.

8 April

We anchor off the unknown island. The natives come on board, bringing fried and boiled bananas, that were eaten by some of us, and they liked it well. The Arend arrives on the roads. Winds: SSW, SW, W., WSW, SW.

Wednesday after midnight strong breeze, at 02 hours changed course to SW (#5), that day we came near to the Northwest

[Bouman means Poike here] in the East and the Northwestern corner WNW and a big erected statue, that is near the shore, SW by West. These two corners enclose a small bay, where a great mass of inhabitants was standing. The Arend had not yet arrived in the bay, but she sent her sloop with some officers to me, with the instruction to send mine to the shore also, in order to investigate the land and the people. In compliance with this instruction, we sent some armed men to the shore, but when they approached the beach there was such a multitude of natives that they did not dare to come any nearer or go ashore. They informed that the natives had not hesitated to go into the water and to try to steal the oars of our sloop. So they returned without having effected their purpose and they

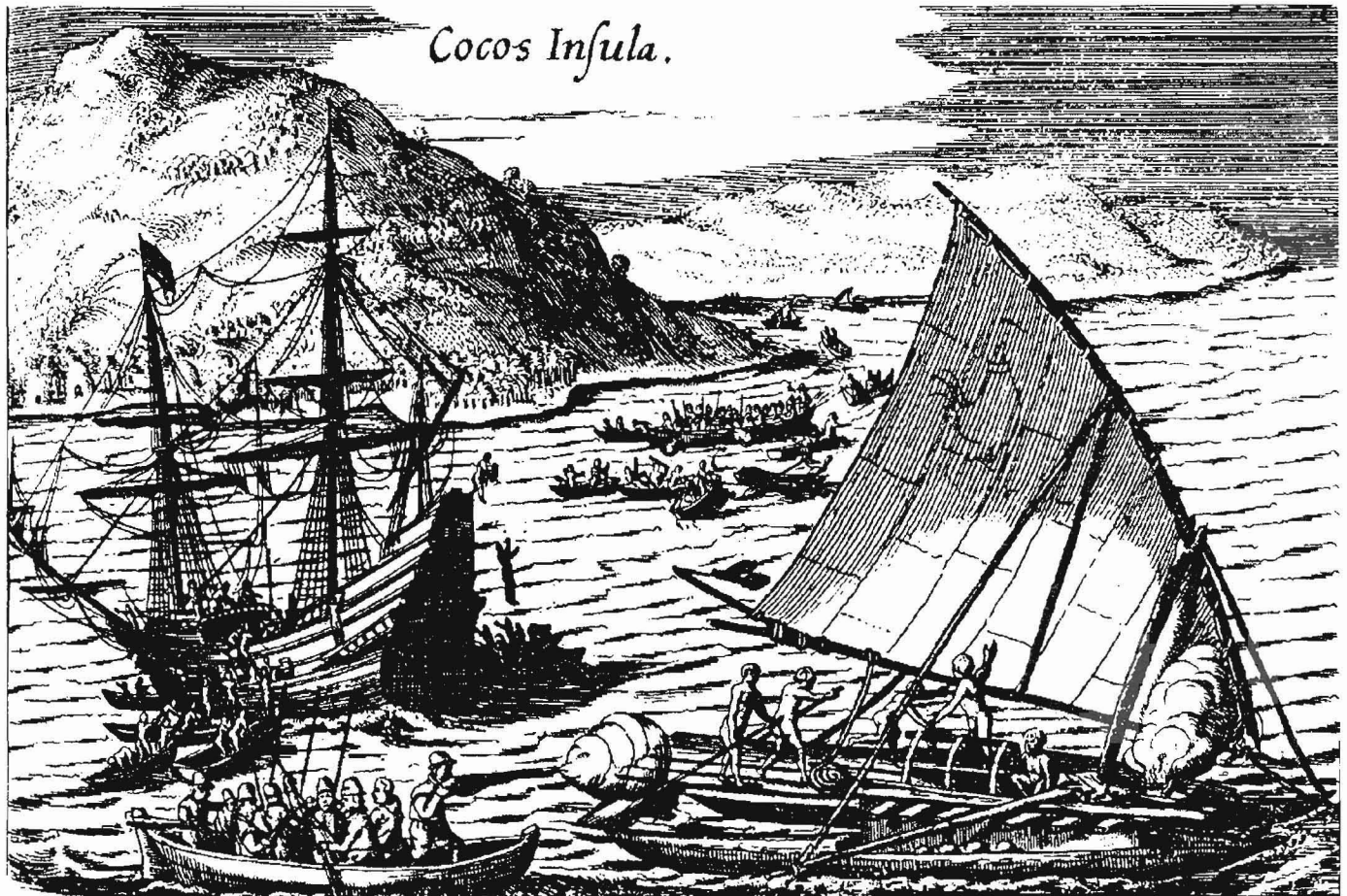
informed us that the natives wore yellow and white dresses. I had seen that already from the ship, when tacking in. They were not afraid of us, because they came in little boats and many swimming on bunches of reed and they came on board without any arms at all. Our sailors, who had been in our sloop near the beach, also reported that they had seen no one with any weapon. Those who came in canoes as well as those who came swimming on reeds brought living and fried chickens and bananas, for which they asked nothing. They looked with great astonishment at our ship and its rigging, but

from land.

9 April.

Wind: SSW, SW by S., SW.

Thursday. Beautiful weather with a nice breeze. We careened our ship in order to scrape the bottom. We got a lot of natives around our ship, swimming as well as in canoes, who brought chickens, yams as well as bananas, but we only allowed a few to come on board. I rowed over to the commander, where we resolved to land with part of the crew



Engraving from the Journal of Jacob le Maire dated 14 May, 1616. Although more than 100 years before Roggeveen and illustrating Cocos Island, not Easter Island, it gives a good idea of how Roggeveen's landing on Rapa Nui might have looked. Note the fire on the outrigger —Dutch engravers were evidently impressed that it was possible to maintain a cooking fire on such a small canoe. They all show it.

they were great thieves who desired everything they saw, because many of them took worn-out brooms, small pieces of wood, spokes, firewood and such stuff with them, jumped overboard and swam to the shore with them, which, in my opinion, they did more out of curiosity than to get an advantage from this, as these objects had absolutely no value at all. Towards evening we made them swim to the shore, or paddle as far as they had canoes, because we had enough of their company. In the meantime, the Commander also arrived on the roads. Rosendaal and I went on board with him; he told us that next day we would decide to go ashore and visit the island with a big group of people. During the night a soft wind

of each ship, evenly divided. We prepared everything for the landing. I arranged for every three men an officer who would be under my command, in total 23 persons including the surgeon; moreover the ensign, the corporal and 18 of the soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, 8 sailors who would also be armed in order to protect our ship and sloop during our stay on land. During the night a sweet little wind from land.

10 April

Winds: N., N. by W.

Friday morning, quite agreeable weather; at 7 we went with five sloops to the shore in order to land. Our crew consisted of

52 men, sailors as well as soldiers, 58 of the *Arend* and 17 of the *Africaansche Galeij*, a total of 134 men [this addition does not tally] for the landing party from the three ships. We came to shore without any resistance, except for those of us who had been instructed to stay in the sloops in order to guard them. The inhabitants had absolutely no weapons at all, they approached us in multitudes with their bare hands in order to welcome us, hopping and jumping for joy. Notwithstanding this, 9 or 10 of them were shot dead and several wounded, which was the responsibility of my under-coxswain, Cornelis Mens, who had fired without instruction. Others had concluded that such an order had been given and also fired. This caused great offense. He tried to excuse himself by presenting some invalid arguments such as the inhabitants had tried to fetch the barrel of his gun and had also threatened to throw stones, which was not believed by Master Roggeveen, Coster, Rosendaal, the lieutenant, the ensign and me, neither by the other officers and many sailors, because we first came on land and had all passed through a great crowd of inhabitants who made room for us with every possible sign of great friendship. Although the coxswain maintained that he had been threatened by the inhabitants, all the officers supposed that he had behaved in this way because he was a great coward. He had already comported himself badly when he landed, because he had not followed me as the second of my company but had remained as the last man in the sloop and then he chose another route towards the shore, where he saw less people; it was from there that he started firing.

After the shooting the inhabitants started fleeing inland in a great hurry, upon which we marched after them in formation up to their houses, in which we found nothing at all. These houses were built from a sort of straw and they looked like beehives; others as if a Greenland sloop had been turned over. The entrances of these are so narrow and low that one has to crawl in and out on hands and knees. These houses have their openings directed towards Northeast so that, when the inhabitants leave their dwellings in the morning, they can honor their god in the same direction, because all openings correspond with the statues. We stayed there with our party. We saw the inhabitants going further inland over the mountains but we had no intention of following them because we saw nothing on this island of any value. When we were preparing to march back to the beach, one inhabitant approached us with soft steps. He wore a headdress of white feathers on his head, a white dress around his body and a white shell on his breast. Already from a distance he curtsied by bowing and other movements of his body; he carried a chicken and a bunch of bananas that he put down on the ground at about 30 paces from us, and then ran away like Pegasus. But he returned when he saw it was agreeable to us, along with some other inhabitants again bringing chickens, yams, bananas, young plants and sugar cane; we also made him put this down and only took the chicken and bananas with us. This Indian with the feathers was their chief as we could judge from the one event. When he ordered someone to do something which was not done, he took a stone and threatened to throw it to the unwilling person, who then

immediately threw himself on his knees, begging for mercy, which was then granted.

After that the other swiftly rose and executed what he had been ordered to do. This chief ordered to bring us more chickens and bananas, but they were not well provided with either sort for we could clearly infer from their timorousness that if they would have had more, they would have brought them. Seeing how poor they were in every respect, we honored them in recompense with half a piece of Haarlemmer cloth of 5 to 6 pence per ell, which they accepted with great gratitude. We were accompanied by a great crowd up to the beach, where we stayed until everyone was embarked again. So we parted as good friends. Our ship's share in what had been acquired during this excursion on land amounted to 18 chickens--big as well as small, and 13 small unripe bunches of *pisang* [which is Indonesian for bananas]. The *Arent* and the *Africaansche Galeij* got their share according to proportion. In the meanwhile a strong Northerly wind had started. We would have sailed away immediately after our return on board, but with this Northerly wind it was impossible to sail in either direction above the corners of the bay so we were forced to remain there. During the night heavy wind, we lowered the yards and set out a sheet-anchor.

The island has low regular mountains, as if one sees England; the inhabitants have their fields square, and well divided by dry ditches, which they have planted with yams and other tubers that I do not know, as well as sugar cane that is thick, long and with long joints, yes, much heavier than I have seen in Surinam, Curacao, the coast of Venezuela, Martinique, Brazil or anywhere else. It's juice was quite sweet. Of yams, bananas, and small coconut palms we saw little and no other trees or crops at all, so that the inhabitants just grow those crops and raise a small number of chickens, because other fowl or cattle we have not seen. They succeeded very well in preparing these chickens in pits, in which they have thrown stones that are first heated by burning grass until they are glowing hot, then the chickens, after being wound in leaves, are put on the hot stones and the pit is covered again with dry grass. In a very short time they were ready and were eaten by some of us who declared that they tasted very well and were well done.

Their dresses consisted of white or yellow cloth, sewn together without any order, and rubbed with some red earth from the land. It was not wool, nor cotton, not grass, not hemp, nor flax; it was not woven nor spun, but it seemed that it had been worked together with hot water. The joining together was always strange in our eyes. According to my idea, the material for this cloth must have been the wool or hairiness that one finds in the heart of the banana stem that they succeed in preparing in some way or another. Near their statues we saw from a distance some white material like cotton or wool, lying there to bleach.

We found no furniture or pots, except calabashes in which they kept water which I tasted and found to be quite brackish. They had no knowledge of iron, steel or other metals, nor of weapons or any of the objects that we showed them, such as sissors, needles, beads, mirrors and other things. They did not

even know what one can do with a knife until we showed them. They cut bananas with a sharp small black stone around the stem and then turn it off. So I must conclude from the characteristics of these people that they have never seen any other nation, except the one that lives on their land. We gave this island the name of Easter Island, because it had been discovered on first Easter Day.

11 April

*Our anchor rope snapped; we are in great danger of losing our ship. Winds: N., N. by W.*

Saturday, stiff breeze and high seas. Our ship starts heaving strongly. We let out a lot more anchor rope. Towards the evening the wind further increased and the sea became very rough, with the result that our ship started heaving so dangerously that we feared that our foremast might topple backwards. In this way at 9 o'clock our daily rope snapped; we brought out the bower-anchor and gave as much rope as possible but then we were so near to the cliffs that we were just free of them and if another rope had snapped, we would certainly have been shipwrecked. The *Africaansche Galej* would have suffered the same fate as us because its rope had also broken and it was just as near to the cliffs as we were. In the meantime we managed to take in the broken rope; it was chafed through about halfway and the rest was badly damaged. We repaired it and connected it to the bow anchor, which was then brought out. During the night diminishing variable wind and continuous rain.

12 April

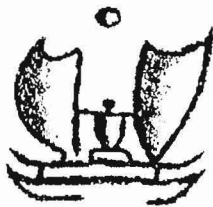
*We are in great danger of being shipwrecked but by God's grace we fortunately escape from this peril. Winds: N., NW, W., SW, SSW.*

Sunday in the morning unstable weather with variable winds and rain. We prepared the sails on the yards and with the squalls coming in, we would have left had it not been for the *Africaansche Galej* who was in our way; these winds from a favorable direction lasted too short to be able to take advantage of them. If we had tried we would probably have lost our ships, but God did not wish this as he let the wind turn West in a heavy shower coming in from the Northwest. We then, with much effort and difficulty, immediately took in the bower-anchor, set the sails and so, thank God, we escaped from this peril. In the afternoon unstable weather with rain and a hollow sea. At 6 in the evening we had Easter Island SW by W. at 6½ miles. At 8 o'clock we changed course to SW. During the night feeble wind with rain.

<sup>1</sup> All indications of longitude are calculated on the old Dutch system: in degrees East of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, which is situated 16°38' West of Greenwich.

<sup>2</sup> The sign # with a number indicates the positions as given on the map of Easter Island.

<sup>3</sup> The fleet had a number of soldiers on board to "conquer Southland", under the command of lieutenant Nicolaes Thonnar. Carl Friedrich Behrens was one of them.



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