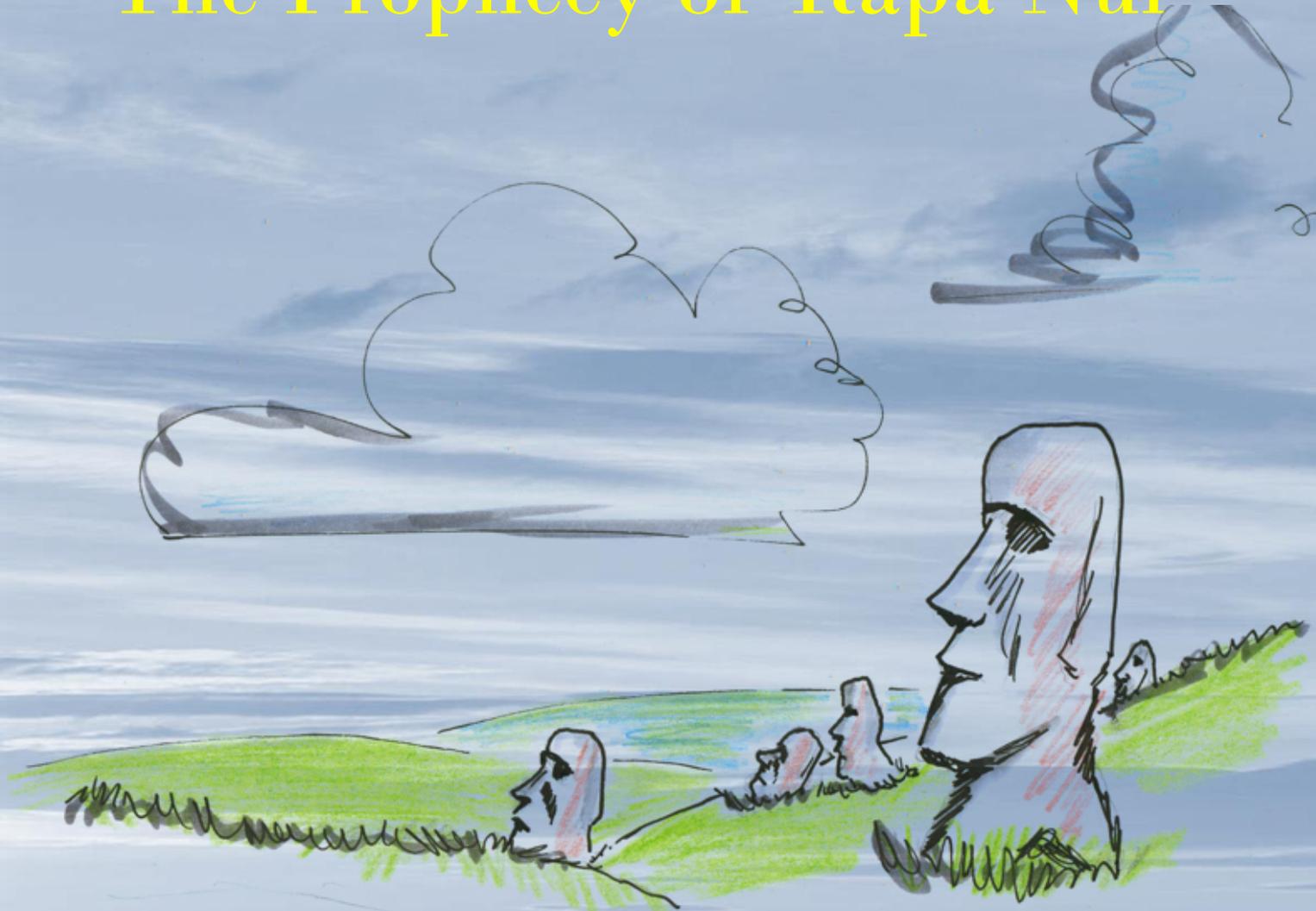


The Prophecy of Rapa Nui





Hi, guys, I'm
David
Attenborough

I am here today to
tell you a story, a
true story of a
distant Island in the
Pacific Ocean...

...EASTER ISLAND

David Attenborough



Very distant, indeed.....



The first Polynesian settlers arrived in **Easter Island** with their large canoes more than a thousand years ago



They found a
luxuriant, heaven like
land covered with
palm trees

The island was volcanic,
both temperatures and
humidity were high
and the only fresh water
available was from the
lakes inside the extinct
volcanoes





Only a few species of plants and animals inhabited the land: there were no mammals, only few insects and two types of small lizards.

The waters that surrounded the island weren't very fishy

To cut a long story short, the island was less hospitable than it seemed!!



The first inhabitants
had to learn to live
basically mainly on
sweet potatoes and
chickens.

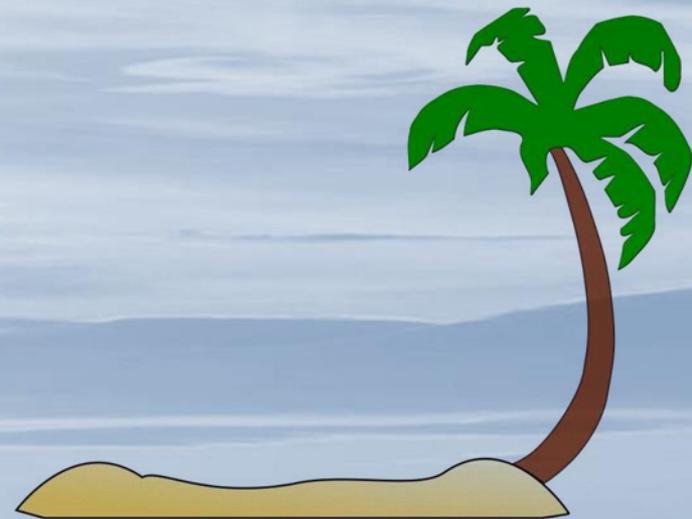


Raw Materials Available

- Giant palms:
 1. Shelters
 2. Canoes
- Toronimo trees and basswood:
 1. Fuel
 2. Fibers for ropes or fishing nets

BUT

- The forests were slowly cleared:
 1. To improve farming
 2. To grow sweet potatoes



More food was available, so there was a rapid increase in **population**



But, as the island was very small, its natural resources **declined** rapidly.



They did not think
about taking
measures of life
sustainability,

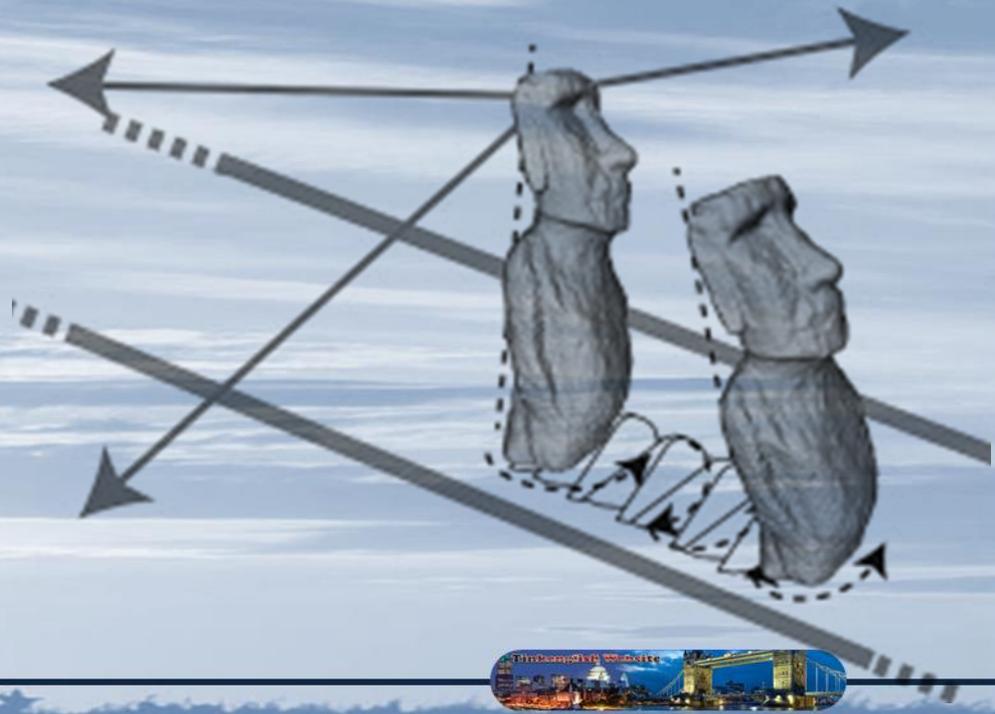


But rather, they started to
build large stone
platforms, known as **Ahu**,
on which they placed huge
monolithic stone statues
called **Moai**



So, they dragged the statues across the island using tree trunks as wheels

They had no draught animals





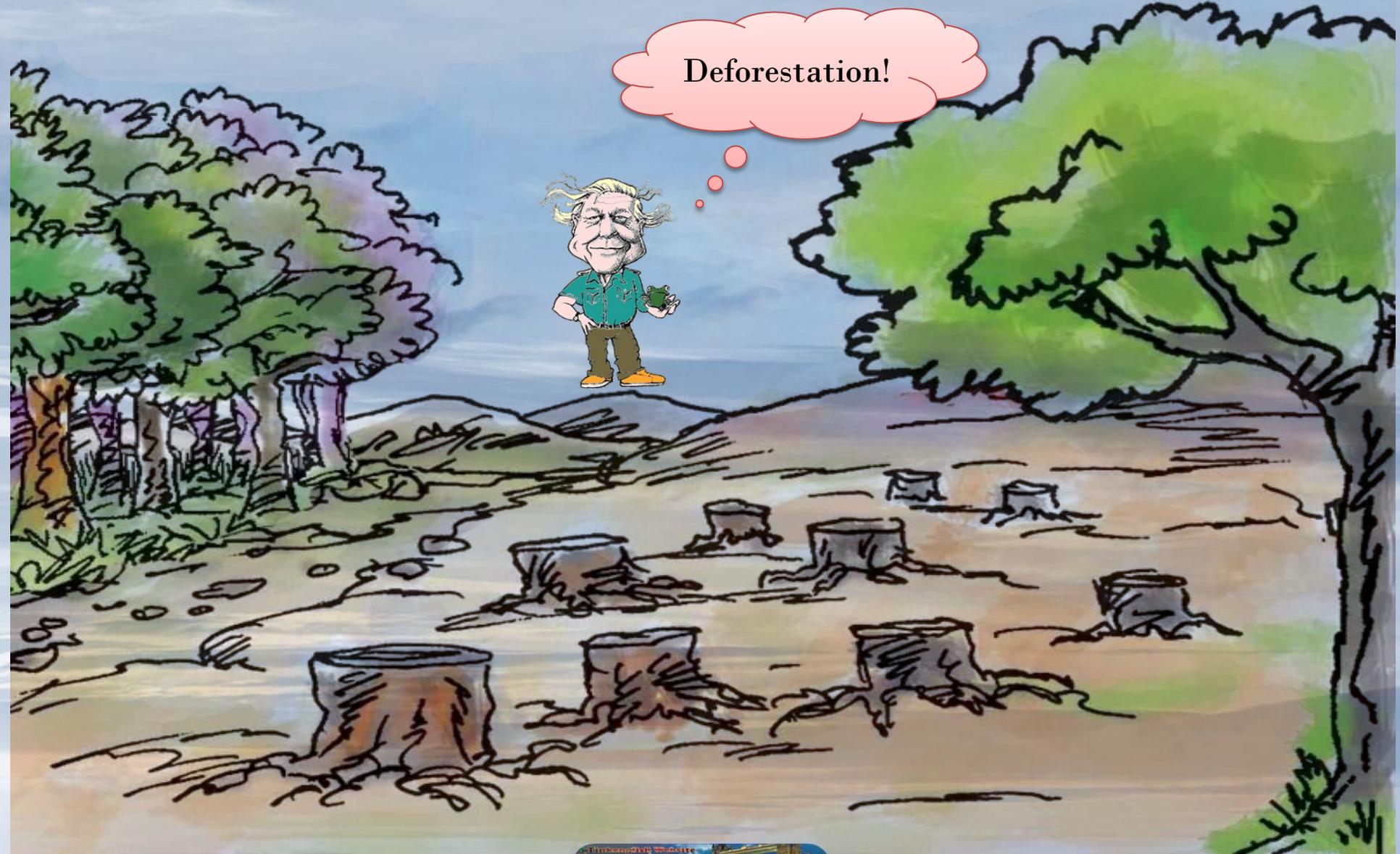
The heads of the Moai were huge and it seems they represented their deified ancestors.

In time they were made bigger and bigger as symbol of the power of the clans.

Can you guess at what price?



Deforestation!





By 1600 as the island was almost completely deforested

The statue erection had to be stopped. But, when did they exactly stop?

When it was too late!!!



OUTCOMES

- Because of the shortage of trees:
 1. people stopped building houses from timber and found shelter in caves
 2. Canoes couldn't be built

HENCE

It was now impossible to go fishing or even abandon the island

3. Nets for fishing couldn't be made
4. Early deforestation had brought the island to a rapid desertification



Chickens became precious and primary object of theft.

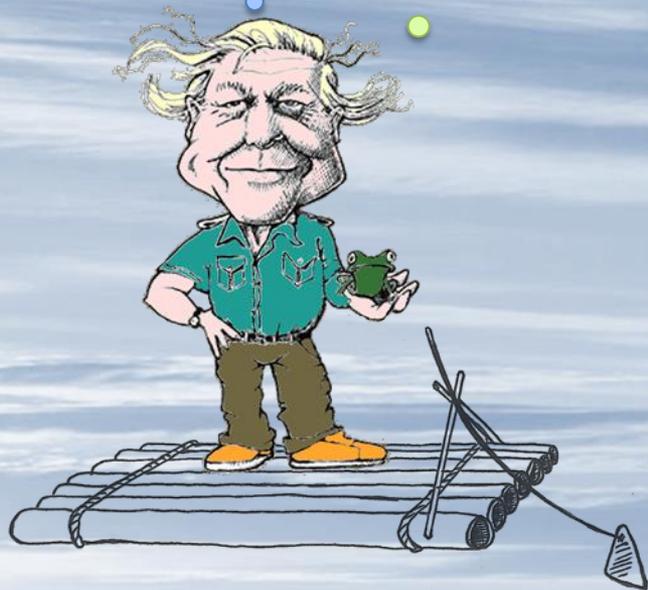
No arable land = no food

Eventually, they became cannibals



The drop of the resources resulted in a state of almost permanent **warfare**

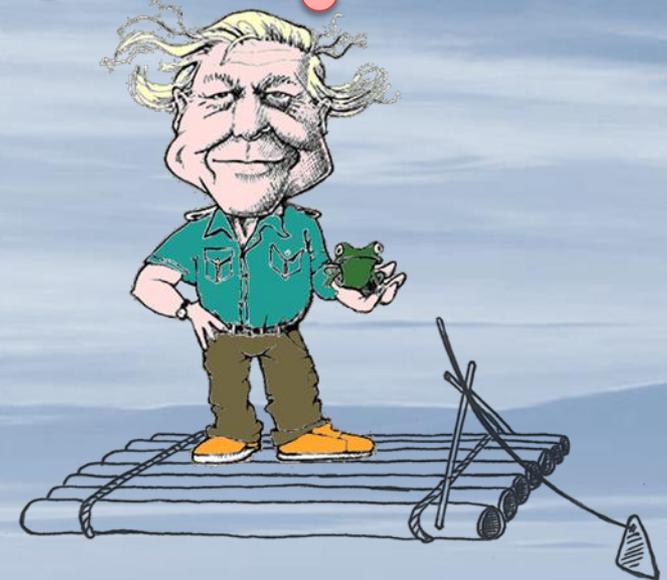
This led to a fall in the belief of the Moai's power and numerous statues were pulled down



When the Dutch Admiral Roggeveen visited Rapa Nui on Easter Sunday 1722, the island had now become a barren wasteland

3,000 inhabitants lived in a primitive state in squalid reed huts or caves

They had resorted to cannibalism to escape famine



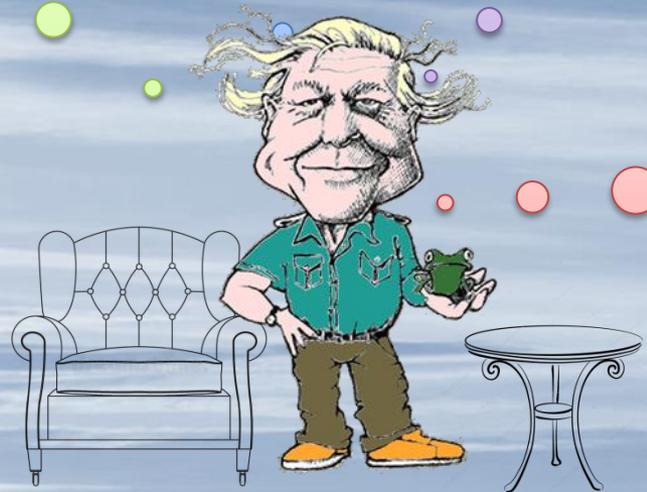


Now, I have some questions for you:

Didn't they realize what they were doing to their environment?

Why didn't they stop in time?

Will we be able to stop in time?





Thanks for your attention

Stefania Gioffrè

