

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:17,099

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:17,099 --> 00:00:21,620

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

3

00:00:21,620 --> 00:00:35,584

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

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00:00:35,584 --> 00:00:41,905

On a remote island in the Pacific Ocean, a frightening and mysterious massacre took place.

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00:00:41,905 --> 00:00:48,147

A race of stone giants carved a thousand years ago guard the shore in silence, as if unable

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00:00:48,147 --> 00:00:51,828

to endure what they have witnessed.

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00:00:51,828 --> 00:00:56,109

The clues to the mystery remain locked behind mute lips.

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00:00:56,109 --> 00:01:02,031

There is no voice to tell who carved the giants and why hundreds of them were destroyed in

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00:01:02,031 --> 00:01:25,797

the Easter Island massacre.

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00:01:25,797 --> 00:01:31,999

In the beginning of time, legends tell us, land and sea were at war with each other.

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00:01:31,999 --> 00:01:38,241

Coast of the earth exploded in fury and sent molten lava boiling into the sea.

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00:01:38,241 --> 00:01:43,242

The lava cooled and hardened into black rock.

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00:01:43,242 --> 00:01:50,284

Eons ago, an island was born, forged in agony and cursed with a destiny that hangs over it

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00:01:50,284 --> 00:01:53,445

to this day.

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00:01:53,445 --> 00:01:59,367

It is Easter Island, a jagged speck of land on the endless seas halfway between the coast

16

00:01:59,367 --> 00:02:08,409

of South America and Tahiti.

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00:02:08,409 --> 00:02:14,631

Easter Island is perhaps the loneliest inhabited place on earth.

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00:02:14,631 --> 00:02:22,173

Its existence was unknown until it was discovered by a Dutch explorer in 1722.

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00:02:22,173 --> 00:02:26,294

The Dutch ship landed on a warm and balmy Easter Sunday.

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00:02:26,294 --> 00:02:31,775

It was welcomed by a band of natives who swam out to the boat carrying gifts.

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00:02:31,775 --> 00:02:35,576

At one time, the population exceeded 10,000.

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00:02:35,576 --> 00:02:42,178

But since that fateful Easter Sunday, slave raids, civil war, and a smallpox epidemic

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00:02:42,178 --> 00:02:45,539

nearly decimated an entire race.

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00:02:45,539 --> 00:02:51,581

Today, less than 1,000 people live in the only village, Hangeroa.

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00:02:51,581 --> 00:02:56,222

The island is owned by Chile and the official language is Spanish.

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00:02:56,222 --> 00:03:01,543

But the faces of the people hold no clue to the origin of the first islanders.

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00:03:01,543 --> 00:03:07,225

Over the years, the mix of Polynesian, South American, and European blood has blurred lines

28

00:03:07,225 --> 00:03:14,987

of ethnic purity.

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00:03:14,987 --> 00:03:20,188

It was on Easter Island that mankind had one of its most curious ideas.

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00:03:20,188 --> 00:03:23,629

No one knows who had it or why.

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00:03:23,629 --> 00:03:29,111

But the inhabitants of that lonely island undertook what is perhaps one of the most amazing engineering

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00:03:29,111 --> 00:03:31,712

projects of ancient time.

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00:03:31,712 --> 00:03:34,912

They did not build pyramids or tombs.

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00:03:34,912 --> 00:03:44,515

Instead, they carved colossal stone idols in the likeness of man.

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00:03:44,515 --> 00:03:51,037

The stone figures of Easter Island are so massive, their size is difficult to grasp.

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00:03:51,037 --> 00:03:55,758

Standing beside them, a person becomes as small as a fly spec.

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00:03:55,758 --> 00:04:00,759

Statues range between 30 to 80 tons of solid volcanic rock.

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00:04:00,759 --> 00:04:12,643

A small one is equal to the weight of 1,000 men and stands as tall as a two-story house.

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00:04:12,643 --> 00:04:15,003

They cover the entire island.

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00:04:15,003 --> 00:04:30,568

Each has a unique character, some morose and brooding, others almost comical.

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00:04:30,568 --> 00:04:35,209

The mysteries that surround the giants begin with the question of why the islanders created

42

00:04:35,209 --> 00:04:38,730

so many of these enormous idols.

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00:04:38,730 --> 00:04:44,251

It is as if their fear of life was so terrifying, they needed a multitude of gods to protect

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00:04:44,251 --> 00:04:47,052

them.

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00:04:47,052 --> 00:04:51,493

Even more mystifying is evidence that many statues appear to have been systematically

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00:04:51,493 --> 00:04:57,215

massacred, some savagely decapitated and mutilated.

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00:04:57,215 --> 00:05:00,456

A ritual murder seems to have taken place.

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00:05:00,456 --> 00:05:13,139

No one knows who did it or why.

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00:05:13,139 --> 00:05:20,061

The search for answers begins in the quarry, the crater of an extinct volcano, Rano Raraku,

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00:05:20,061 --> 00:05:26,263

a dark and forbidding womb.

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00:05:26,263 --> 00:05:30,824

There are enough questions here to intrigue an army of scientists and fill a bank of

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00:05:30,824 --> 00:05:36,385

computers, but only a handful of men have pursued the quest.

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00:05:36,385 --> 00:05:41,507

Foremost in the search is Dr. Edmundo Edwards, a Chilean archaeologist who has spent the

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00:05:41,507 --> 00:05:49,109

last ten years probing the riddle of the statues.

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00:05:49,109 --> 00:05:54,310

Five hundred years ago, the quarry rang with the blows of hammers and the rhythmic chanting

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00:05:54,310 --> 00:05:59,312

of workers' chipping stone.

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00:05:59,312 --> 00:06:13,716

Then, quite suddenly, work was abandoned.

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00:06:13,716 --> 00:06:18,957

Half-finished forms are embedded in the side of the volcano, ranging from embryos to fully

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00:06:18,957 --> 00:06:22,958

formed young gods.

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00:06:22,958 --> 00:06:35,682

Some are difficult to discern because their contours have merged with the crater.

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00:06:35,682 --> 00:06:41,083

Work was stopped so suddenly that the presence of the workers can still be felt.

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00:06:41,083 --> 00:06:45,804

Tools lie in their place, undisturbed for centuries.

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00:06:45,804 --> 00:06:52,366

Crude basalt chisels that were used to carve the expressive faces of the stone gods, where

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00:06:52,366 --> 00:07:01,649

once the sound of a thousand hammers filled the air, now there is not even an echo.

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00:07:01,649 --> 00:07:08,370

Once finished, all that remained was to sever the umbilical cord.

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00:07:08,370 --> 00:07:14,252

An elaborate pulley system lowered the statues from the mouth of the volcano down the slope.

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00:07:14,252 --> 00:07:21,494

Here the monoliths were free to begin their lumbering march to the sea.

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00:07:21,494 --> 00:07:27,456

One legend has it that the stone gods were endowed with a supernatural power called mana,

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00:07:27,456 --> 00:07:32,857

a power that enabled them to walk from the volcanic quarry to the sea.

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00:07:32,857 --> 00:07:38,579

There they stopped, each in its place, and turned their backs to the sea so they could

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00:07:38,579 --> 00:07:42,540

cast their mana over the land.

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00:07:42,540 --> 00:07:45,981

The mana emanated through the eyes.

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00:07:45,981 --> 00:07:55,463

The last ritual act of the carvers was to open the stone lids so the mana could escape.

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00:07:55,463 --> 00:07:59,824

At one time, open-air temples lined the coast.

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00:07:59,824 --> 00:08:14,708

Then all the statues with open eyes were smashed and desecrated.

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00:08:14,708 --> 00:08:19,390

The work of restoring the monoliths has only recently begun.

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00:08:19,390 --> 00:08:26,072

Mario Aravalo is a topographer and one of the prime movers in the restoration project.

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00:08:26,072 --> 00:08:31,953

According to the most recent count, there are over 500 battered giants on the island,

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00:08:31,953 --> 00:08:39,915

and many are in the final stages of degeneration.

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00:08:39,915 --> 00:08:45,637

Mario and archaeologist Edmundo Edwards waged a desperate battle to stave off the effects

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00:08:45,637 --> 00:08:47,677

of erosion.

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00:08:47,677 --> 00:08:52,279

The work involves the painstaking process of plotting the position and alignment of each

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00:08:52,279 --> 00:08:54,959

statue.

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00:08:54,959 --> 00:09:00,161

So far, only 12 have been restored because there isn't enough manpower or machinery

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00:09:00,161 --> 00:09:04,162

to save more.

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00:09:04,162 --> 00:09:09,803

Somehow the statues were transported across 20 miles of rough terrain to the sea.

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00:09:09,803 --> 00:09:15,485

No evidence remains of how the engineering feat was accomplished, but a primitive boat-rolling

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00:09:15,485 --> 00:09:22,007

method still used by local fishermen provides a glimmering of how it was done.

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00:09:22,007 --> 00:09:27,608

The theory holds that the statues were rolled over miles of wooden skids to the beach.

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00:09:27,608 --> 00:09:33,650

If true, this is one of the earliest uses of rollers known to man.

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00:09:33,650 --> 00:09:38,251

Not even the more technologically advanced Egyptians knew of this method when they moved

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00:09:38,251 --> 00:09:41,332

the giant blocks for their pyramids.

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00:09:41,332 --> 00:09:46,933

How did a people, isolated by thousands of miles of endless sea, develop an advanced

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00:09:46,933 --> 00:10:02,938

engineering skill?

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00:10:02,938 --> 00:10:07,739

The riddle of how the statues were moved has challenged many men to come up with a concrete

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00:10:08,099 --> 00:10:09,900

solution.

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00:10:09,900 --> 00:10:13,741

Diagrams illustrate what the ancient method might have been.

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00:10:13,741 --> 00:10:19,662

For Roberto Forster, a local engineer, the theory of the giant rollers is not enough.

99

00:10:19,662 --> 00:10:23,383

He swears he can demonstrate a more practical method.

100

00:10:23,383 --> 00:10:32,386

He calls his invention the fulcrumista.

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00:10:32,386 --> 00:10:37,507

As in the seesaw, the principle of the fulcrum is to exert the greatest possible leverage

102

00:10:37,507 --> 00:10:47,670

in the lifting of an object.

103

00:10:47,670 --> 00:10:53,952

In an experiment executed on a small scale, Roberto intends to move a five-ton stone to

104

00:10:53,952 --> 00:11:00,033

prove how a 50-ton giant might once have been transported.

105

00:11:00,033 --> 00:11:04,715

Roberto prevails on the mayor to gather a workforce for his project.

106

00:11:04,715 --> 00:11:08,636

He vows he will solve the ancient riddle once and for all.

107

00:11:08,636 --> 00:11:14,557

The mayor has doubts, but agrees.

108

00:11:14,557 --> 00:11:30,322

The experiment is scheduled for tomorrow morning.

109

00:11:30,322 --> 00:11:33,802

The experiment will be carried out on a small scale.

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00:11:33,802 --> 00:11:41,805

A five-ton stone replacing the 50 odd tons of a monolith.

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00:11:41,805 --> 00:11:47,046

On the appointed morning, a workforce gathers for the momentous test.

112

00:11:47,046 --> 00:11:53,008

Roberto's fulcrumista will either stand or fall.

113

00:11:53,008 --> 00:11:59,249

Edmundo, Mario, and even the mayor himself have joined in the effort to put to rest once

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00:11:59,249 --> 00:12:28,057

and for all the question of how the statues were moved.

115

00:12:28,057 --> 00:12:46,222

A fiasco.

116

00:12:46,222 --> 00:12:50,783

Indeed if the attempts of modern man to solve these incredible engineering feats meet with

117

00:12:50,783 --> 00:12:55,705

failure, think of the ingenuity of the ancient carvers.

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00:12:55,705 --> 00:13:00,266

One may well wonder if the peoples of those early times did not have gifts that have been

119

00:13:00,266 --> 00:13:02,467

lost to us.

120

00:13:02,467 --> 00:13:06,748

The secret remains locked behind stone faces.

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00:13:06,748 --> 00:13:11,949

Faces that remind archaeologists of another face staring out over its mountain kingdom.

122

00:13:11,949 --> 00:13:17,471

The place is Tiawanaco, Bolivia, an ancient civilization built on oblique plateau in the

123

00:13:17,471 --> 00:13:19,991

Andes.

124

00:13:19,991 --> 00:13:26,713

Between gods separated by 4,000 miles and a span of at least as many years.

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00:13:26,713 --> 00:13:31,114

There is no evidence that there was any contact between the two cultures.

126

00:13:31,114 --> 00:13:35,916

And yet, the features bear an uncanny resemblance.

127

00:13:35,916 --> 00:14:03,563

What common spirit might they have been invested?

128

00:14:03,563 --> 00:14:08,925

Perhaps one of the seven written tablets found on the island contain the answer.

129

00:14:08,925 --> 00:14:13,366

The pictographs are like those of no language known on earth.

130

00:14:13,366 --> 00:14:22,248

They have not been decoded, but anthropologists believe they tell a dark and bloody tale.

131

00:14:22,248 --> 00:14:40,453

There is evidence that long ago the island was torn by terrible civil strife with brother

132

00:14:40,453 --> 00:14:43,134

pitted against brother.

133

00:14:43,134 --> 00:14:47,855

The bones of hundreds of islanders have been found in caves that stretch from miles under

134

00:14:47,855 --> 00:14:50,296

the lava crust.

135

00:14:50,336 --> 00:14:52,776

What were the natives hiding from?

136

00:14:52,776 --> 00:14:55,257

Why were they slain?

137

00:14:55,257 --> 00:14:59,378

Edmundo ascribes it to overpopulation and starvation.

138

00:14:59,378 --> 00:15:05,420

He speculates that in mass frenzy, the strongest killed the weakest and survived by eating human

139

00:15:05,420 --> 00:15:06,420

flesh.

140

00:15:06,420 --> 00:15:32,587

The survivors set up the worship of a new god, the bird man, who dove on his prey from the

141

00:15:32,587 --> 00:15:34,948

sky.

142

00:15:34,948 --> 00:15:39,589

Folklore has it that on the first day of spring, the strongest men would swim through

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00:15:39,589 --> 00:15:48,031

shark endangered waters to the tiny island that lies offshore.

144

00:15:48,031 --> 00:15:53,633

They would search the crags for the Manotara egg and swim back, carrying the prize in their

145

00:15:53,633 --> 00:15:55,233

mouths.

146

00:15:55,233 --> 00:16:07,197

The first man back was proclaimed king for one year.

147

00:16:07,197 --> 00:16:13,038

Perhaps the petroglyphs tell the story of the days that preceded the bird man cult.

148

00:16:13,038 --> 00:16:17,720

Archaeologists have labored since the glyphs were first discovered in 1922 to decipher

149

00:16:17,720 --> 00:16:33,564

the meaning of the bizarre symbols.

150

00:16:33,564 --> 00:16:42,926

The chalk paint accentuates the designs but cannot unlock the meaning of the curious etchings.

151

00:16:42,926 --> 00:16:55,610

Only a tragic face remains as an emblem of past events.

152

00:16:55,610 --> 00:17:00,531

The strongest clues seem to lie in the myths and legends handed down by word of mouth over

153

00:17:00,531 --> 00:17:02,772

the centuries.

154

00:17:02,772 --> 00:17:14,495

Granita Guerra is a noted linguist who understands many tongues.

155

00:17:14,495 --> 00:17:19,536

The old woman begins to chant a tale about a war between the long years and the short

156

00:17:19,536 --> 00:17:33,980

years.

157

00:17:33,980 --> 00:17:39,262

Her story bears the epic ring of heroic battles and great conquests.

158

00:17:39,262 --> 00:17:42,383

It sounds like a tale out of ancient Greece.

159

00:17:42,383 --> 00:17:48,024

A great saga in which the short ears rose from enslavement and in a battle that rumbled

160

00:17:48,024 --> 00:18:07,709

like the quaking of the earth slew every man, woman and child who had long ears.

161

00:18:07,709 --> 00:18:21,033

The story is a tale about a man who was a man who was a man who was a man who was a man

162

00:18:21,033 --> 00:18:33,997

who was a man who

163

00:18:33,997 --> 00:19:01,284

was a man who was

164

00:19:01,284 --> 00:19:28,571

a man who was a man

165

00:19:29,092 --> 00:19:37,614

mythology with its strange symbols plays tricks on the imagination but it springs from real

166

00:19:37,614 --> 00:19:42,895

events that once occurred and there is little doubt that the events on Easter Island have

167

00:19:42,895 --> 00:19:46,756

been bloody and tragic.

168

00:19:46,756 --> 00:19:51,698

The tragedy was matched by the fate of the Islanders and provides a final clue to the

169

00:19:51,698 --> 00:19:55,459

Easter Island mystery.

170

00:19:55,459 --> 00:20:00,500

records that thousands of natives died under the guns of their conquerors and from the dread

171

00:20:00,500 --> 00:20:09,142

diseases brought with them.

172

00:20:09,142 --> 00:20:12,623

The endless waves of course have seen it all.

173

00:20:12,623 --> 00:20:18,745

They saw brave people put their hope and faith in mighty gods carved from stone, and they

174

00:20:18,745 --> 00:20:21,826

saw the failure of those gods to protect them.

175

00:20:22,506 --> 00:20:29,028

It was that failure that may have led to the massacre of the stone giants.

176

00:20:29,028 --> 00:20:35,069

On a remote speck of land in the South Seas, a great civilization flourished and died.

177

00:20:35,069 --> 00:20:39,871

The wide-scale destruction of the giants of Easter Island is symbolic of the tragic destiny

178

00:20:39,871 --> 00:20:40,871

of a people.

179

00:20:40,871 --> 00:20:44,832

It is also testament to the power of faith.

180

00:20:44,832 --> 00:20:50,194

A faith that motivated thousands of men to toil relentlessly on stone monoliths, and

181

00:20:50,194 --> 00:20:55,155

a faith so strong that when it was lost, it may have driven them to turn against their

182

00:20:55,155 --> 00:20:57,876

own gods with a terrible vengeance.

183

00:21:20,202 --> 00:21:44,208

Coming up next, in search of continues with an investigation into the disappearance of

184

00:21:44,208 --> 00:21:47,369

pioneers in the lost colony of Roano.

185

00:21:47,369 --> 00:21:51,930

In the late 20th century, with Mike Wallace reports on the impact of DNA fingerprinting

186

00:21:51,930 --> 00:21:57,132

and brings you an exclusive interview with O.J. Simpson trial attorney Peter Neufeld.

187

00:21:57,132 --> 00:22:01,733

And later tonight, Vanishing Act Week begins on History's Mysteries with an investigation

188

00:22:01,733 --> 00:22:05,414

into the disappearance of Teamster Kingpin Jimmy Hoffa.

189

00:22:05,414 --> 00:22:08,455

Date here on the History Channel, where the past comes alive.