

# Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

---

Volume 8

Issue 4 *Rapa Nui Journal* 8#4, December 1994

Article 4

---

1994

## Ship's Surgeon R. Guthrie's Account of a Calling at Rapanui aboard H.M.S. Seringapatam on 6 March 1830

Steven R. Fischer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj>

 Part of the [History of the Pacific Islands Commons](#), and the [Pacific Islands Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Fischer, Steven R. (1994) "Ship's Surgeon R. Guthrie's Account of a Calling at Rapanui aboard H.M.S. Seringapatam on 6 March 1830," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol8/iss4/4>

This Research Report is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Hawai'i Press at Kahualike. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation* by an authorized editor of Kahualike. For more information, please contact [sheila.yeh@hawaii.edu](mailto:sheila.yeh@hawaii.edu).

**CORRECTION**

[Editor's note: The following passage was inadvertently truncated from RNJ 8(3):65, immediately following the paragraph ending: "... We got on board at Sunset, hoisted the boats, weighed the Anchor, and made Sail." The footnotes to the truncated text are in RNJ 8(3):66.]

## Ship's Surgeon R. Guthrie's Account of a Calling at Rapanui aboard H.M.S. *Seringapatam* on 6 March 1830

Steven Roger Fisher, Ph. D.  
Auckland, New Zealand  
(Continuation)

"The Houses appear externally like large graves covered with straw and having a hole in the side.<sup>39</sup> Cook described them as being a frame of small branches of wicker work covered with a sort of reed or straw + the floor covered with grass. They eat both Potatoes and Banana's without cooking.<sup>40</sup> To relieve the women in swimming they lie on a long bundle of straw which the men push forward.<sup>41</sup> This was used only coming off, as most had to make the best of their way back without assistance.

"Some ate biscuit and plum pudding greedily, but none would touch soft bread, wine or Spirits or Tobacco.<sup>42</sup> We gave one a piece of fowl which he devoured and put the bones in his bag; from this circumstance and from Captain Cook having seen some, we may suppose fowls still exist though we saw none.<sup>43</sup> I am convinced they have no other domestic animals, as the sight of a Pig or a Sheep frightened them. A looking glass they could making [sic] nothing of and the only other thing that excited the least Attention was the fire in the galley range. They make a very neat rope or Cord of human hair and also of a sort of flax. It is laid up as well as done by our machines for making rope.

"Could the difference of Color in most of the women and in a few of the men be owing to their being of a Superior rank, or from intercourse with Europeans, or what other cause. I am unable to answer; there seemed however to be no distinction of rank, and the state of Civilization will warrant the Conclusion that they have had little intercourse with civilized nations. If we except the visit of Captain Cook in 177[4] and of Captain Beechey in 182[5], at least that we know of. They expressed great Surprise at the whiteness of our Skins, and were at a loss to Account for the covered parts of the body being whiter than the hands and face. My whiskers, which are at present large, seemed to give them an idea that I was of greater consequence than the others, which gave me no a little trouble.<sup>44</sup>

"All were much surprised at the size of the Ship,<sup>45</sup> and a number of them followed each other in first counting the planks of tile upper deck, then measuring the breadth and

length of her by lying Down and extending the arms; this they did with great quickness. They next counted the crew; first the Officers, then the men who were on deck; the number excited great surprise.

"Five Canoes, about ten feet long and built of small narrow planks, were all that we saw, they were necessarily very leaky. They have an outrigger consisting of three pieces of wood, about 2 inches diameter and 7 feet long; two proceed from each extremity of the Canoe on the Same side and the third is made fast to the outer end of these. The paddles are About 4 feet long, the handle occupying 3 feet, the 4th is the loom, made in the Shape of a Long Cross thus. Solid.



"Both Sexes were very fond of the very young gentlemen, particularly the females, Kissing and fondling with them.<sup>46</sup> And a man was detected in the act of leaping overboard with a boy about 7 years old, Son of the Sailmaker.<sup>47</sup> Such is the state of the natives of this Island."



**EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION**  
**FUNDACIÓN RAPA NUI**

It is with great pleasure we announce that conservation scientist and director of the World Monuments Fund's collaborative activities with the Centro de Restauración in Santiago and the Chilean Park Service, Dr. A. Elena Charola of New York and Buenos Aires has been designated as the official liaison person between the World Monuments Fund and the Easter Island Foundation. Dr. Charola has devoted her career to the analysis and treatment of stone deterioration. She has worked with the WMF since the mid-1980s and served as the scientific advisor at ICCROM in Rome.

Charola's new book, currently in production by the World Monuments Fund, is titled *Easter Island: A Future for Its Past. The Heritage and its Conservation*. It will be released in both English and Spanish in early 1995. As soon as this full-color book is available, we will be announcing it in *RNJ*. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile, in Viña del Mar, Librarian Ana Betty Haoa Rapahango reports a sharp increase in the use of the William Mulloy Library, due largely to the increased awareness of the facility.

The lack of space still hampers the operation of the library, and the possibility of moving to larger quarters is still being investigated. Since the Viña del Mar section of the Library will, in the future, play the important archival role of storing irreplaceable items such as original field notes, maps and photographic negatives, security, fire-proof and earthquake-resistant construction are paramount considerations.