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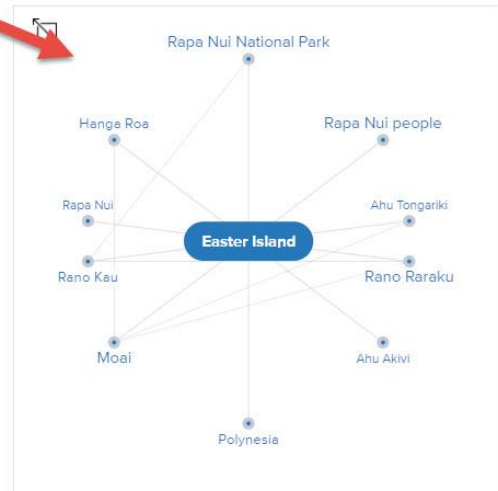
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Occupied by people from POLYNESIA at the extreme edge of their range in the early centuries A.D., Easter Island was named by a Dutch navigator by the name of Roggeveen during a visit to the island over Easter in 1722. It seems likely that this was one of the few contacts with the outside world that was made over the entire period of occupation of the island. Detailed archaeological research on Easter Island was begun by the Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl in 1955, although the large statues (*moai*), the platforms (*Ahu*), the quarries, and the Rongorongo script had attracted attention earlier. An air of mystery (and some sadness) pervades Easter Island studies, but archaeologists now have a clear understanding of the means by which the famous statues were created and erected, the source of the island's original inhabitants, and the (devastating) environmental history of the island.



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