

How Did They Move?

It's one of Easter Island's persistent mysteries: How were hundreds of giant statues transported across the island centuries ago, over distances as long as 11 miles, by people who lacked draft animals and wheels? The scene imagined here with a 21-foot-tall moai illustrates a new theory. It takes its cues from Rapanui oral tradition, which says the moai "walked."



At Rano Raraku, the main quarry, each moai was carved out of sloping bedrock until only a slender "keel" held it in place. The last step was to sever the keel and push the moai downhill with ropes into a trench to await transport.



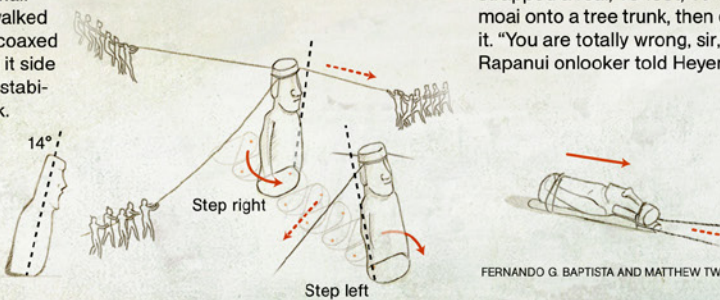
Dirt roads radiating from the quarry were constructed with gentle slopes to help moai reach their platforms in one piece.

STATUES THAT ROCK

Terry Hunt, Carl Lipo, 2011

Archaeologists Hunt and Lipo believe three small groups could have walked a moai: Two groups coaxed it forward by rocking it side to side, while a third stabilized it from the back.

A D-shaped, heavy bottom made a moai rockable. In a 2011 experiment, 18 people walked a 10-foot, 5-ton replica a few hundred yards.



EARLIER THEORIES

Thor Heyerdahl, 1955

The Norwegian and a team strapped a real, 13-foot, 10-ton moai onto a tree trunk, then dragged it. "You are totally wrong, sir," Rapanui onlooker told Heyerdahl.



quarry, each moai were s to help one piece.

iPad Exclusive
See the statues walk on our iPad edition.

William Mulloy, 1970
Using a desktop model, this U.S. archaeologist speculated that a moai might be swung forward in steps while hanging by the neck from an inverted wooden V.



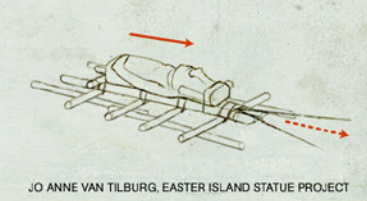
Pavel Pavel, 1986
Czech engineer Pavel, Heyerdahl, and 17 helpers walked a 13-foot, 9-ton moai—another real one—with a twisting rather than a rocking motion. They damaged the base.



Charles Love, 1987
U.S. archaeologist Love and his team of 25 stood a 13-foot, 9-ton replica on a wood sledge and hauled it over rollers. In two minutes, they moved it 148 feet.



Jo Anne Van Tilburg, 1998
Laying a 13-foot, 10-ton replica on a wood sledge, 40 volunteers pulled it 230 feet on a wood "ladder"—a Polynesian way of moving giant canoes.



"Simplicity is the key. It is essential that a graphic can be understood very quickly. If not, I consider the graphic a failure."

To illustrate the theory about how the indigenous people of Easter Island many centuries ago moved the gigantic moai statues 11 miles without the help of animal labor, Fernando G. Baptista went to Hawaii and participated in an experiment, the results of which are shown in this graphic.

an editing room that traditionally worked unhurriedly, with practically unlimited resources. "Now we want to be more agile, focus on new content areas and, above all, pay attention to the way things look on mobile phones. The print edition still rules, but I do not think that will last much longer," he ventures.

The genius from Bilbao has managed to create an opening in the digital ecosystem, one which has led

to several interesting multi-platform projects in recent months—one on the origins of London; another on the Vikings. Baptista and his team at *National Geographic* have managed to endow their animations with the same unmistakable quality as their print graphics. Just as in his childhood dreams, Baptista gets to weave together a cinematographic language and animated graphics in his work.