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Book Review: Manu Moriori. Human and Bird Carvings on Live Kōpi Trees on the Chatham Islands

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of the wonderful resourcefulness of the Easter Islanders, for they have weathered a storm of human and environmental disasters and have not only survived but repeatedly re-invented themselves in order to endure. "Invention" here is the glory of the Easter Islanders. If there is any "invention" it is not an imposition from without but a profound evolution from within.

In the end, beyond the factual information, the bias cannot be ignored but this does not make the book flawed, nor do I discourage anyone from buying or reading it. But make no mistake: If you place yourself in the camp that bleeds for the Easter Islanders, ancient or modern, this book preaches to the choir. If you place yourself in the camp that wants to differentiate between the past and the present and believe that there is a difference in how these are not only interpreted but manifested today (after all, the Rapanui, as Haun says, have a "right to define their past as well as their future on their own terms"), what you may get out of this book becomes a matter of being forced to question whether the same bias the author complains about is inherent because of the interpretation she brings to the discussion or because of objective effects in the real world potentially open to our inspection and thinking. Regardless of which camp the politics of this book inspires one to adhere to, it can justly be said that it continues to support an important dialogue that may eventually produce a better understanding (or perhaps a better *invention*) of Easter Island.

(Note: *Inventing 'Easter Island'* is available directly from the Easter Island Foundation for \$25 plus shipping; all proceeds benefit the EIF Scholarship Program).



Manu Moriori. Human and Bird Carvings on Live Kopi Trees on the Chatham Islands

by Rhys Richards

Lavishly illustrated with drawings, black/white photographs and many color photos, soft cover, 96 pages.

Paremata Press, Wellington, NZ, 2007

ISBN 0-9582013-7-4; NZ\$45

Review by Georgia Lee

THE CHATHAM ISLANDS, 800km due east of Christchurch, NZ, are really off the beaten-track. Only two of its ten islands are occupied—with some 750 inhabitants. Noted for their unique bird and plant species, the islands are also the home of an unusual art form: dendroglyphs, designs carved on tree trunks.

In 1956, The Polynesian Society published *Dendroglyphs of the Chatham Islands, Moriori Designs on Karaka Trees*, by Christina Jefferson (reprinted from the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* Vol. 64). Jefferson was the first to pull together all of the then-known material about Moriori bark carvings, with most references dating to the 1800s and early 1900s. She spent years slogging around the Chathams on foot and horseback, recording the dendroglyphs and

cataloging the styles and types she encountered. A gifted artist, she drew them, measured them, and compiled statistics concerning their occurrence and attributes, etc. Her book has long been out of print. Now Richards has picked up the baton, so to speak, and his book "...written "from Moriori, for Moriori" invites contemporary Moriori and sympathetic others to contemplate the carvings as a meaningful part of the Moriori cultural renaissance. Many of the evocative carvings shown in *Manu Moriori* are those drawn earlier by Christina Jefferson, supplemented by recent photographs.

Manu Moriori is divided into sections: "The Moriori Context"; "Past Research and Study Prospects"; "Re-assessing 'Traditional' Sources and Information"; "The Knowledge of Mrs Ngaria Martin"; "Mini Rakete & George Hough"; "Birds, They Were Birds" and 'Talking to Birds'; "Polynesian Beliefs"; "Squatters, Talkers and Listeners"; "Tree Carvings on Rekohu and Stone Statues, Mo'ai, on Rapanui"; "Language Comparisons" and "Comparative Studies, Time Markers and Conclusions". Part Two: "Living Trees" is a beautifully photographed color section showing the trees in their natural settings; Part Three: "Dead Trees" discusses those that were cut down and removed to museums.

The bottom line: Moriori spoke to their dead through their tree carvings (p.58), and are compared to the "living faces" of Easter Island, the *moai*, as a way of communicating with dead ancestors (p. 52). Anyone interested in the arts of Polynesia will find much here to ponder, and enjoy.

Note: This book is available from the EIF at a reduced price, with benefits going to the Scholarship Fund.



Moon Fiji, 8th edition

by David Stanley

Moon Handbooks, Avalon Travel Publishing, Emeryville, CA 94608; 2007. Soft cover, 389 pages

ISBN 1-56691-982-7 US\$19.95

Moon Tahiti, 6th edition

by David Stanley

Moon Handbooks, Avalon Travel Publishing, Emeryville, CA. 94608; 2007. Soft cover, 330 pages

ISBN 1-56691-804-9. US\$19.95

Reviews by Georgia Lee

THIS REVIEW IS A DOUBLE-HEADER, for two of David Stanley's Moon's Travel books have been published within months of each other. As a long-time *aficiando* of travel guides, I enjoy them whether or not I am planning a trip because I learn so much from them, and often use them as reference books about far-away places. But would I take them on a trip to Fiji or Tahiti? You bet!

David Stanley's first trip across the Pacific was in