THE REVIEWER, XIMENA CERDÁ of El Mercurio de Valparaiso, describes this book as being "somewhere between a book and a booklet...whose objective is the presentation of cultural and natural patrimony.... It covers the culture, the history, the Rapanui terrain and flora with abundant photographs and has a nice description of medicinal herbs, flowering bushes, fish, birds and marine shells...."


The Moai Murders

by Lyn Hamilton, 2005.
Berkley Crime Time, New York.

Review by Georgia Lee

THE MOAI MURDERS WOULD BE a good book to take along on the flight home from a visit to Rapa Nui; reading time is just about the same as the flight time. The story can help you remember the sites you visited, and maybe you might learn a bit more about the island’s history. But the book mainly is aimed at those who love mysteries, and it just happens to be set on our favorite island.

The story line is complicated; it involves a missing rongorongo board and the archaeological conference from hell, one being conducted on the island specifically at the Hotel Iorana. While those who attend archaeological conferences are aware of the often bitter infighting that can occur between researchers with different points of view and different agendas, I must say that the particular meeting described in the book, while often a bit close to the bone, does go beyond the norm. I have not yet been to an archaeological conference where many of the participants are murdered, although such happenings might improve the discipline of archaeology.

My main complaint about the book is that, with very few exceptions, the Rapanui people themselves are invisible. Only a few islanders are thrown into the story line, and these are mainly for background color.

MOAI SIGHTINGS

A BAR IN THE NUGGET HOTEL in Reno, Nevada, advertises “Island Drinks” and amongst the usual suspects (Zombie, Pina Colada, Blue Hawaiian, etc.) they offer an “Aku-Aku” which is described as a ginger brandy base decorated with a flaming sugar cube; and “Easter Island Grog”, a mixture of Cuban and Jamaican rums served in a communal bowl. Neither have any relation to Easter Island’s signature drink, the Chilean firewater called pisco, which usually is mixed with lime juice and sugar for a dynamite drink.

Our thanks to Rapanuiphile, Kathy Cleghorn, who spotted this list of so-called Polynesian drinks.

On their way to a wedding, Gadi Reinhorn (right) and John Campbell stopped to help some grad students at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) raise a paper maché moai. When they asked why the moai was made, the students replied, “We’re in grad school, what else are we supposed to do?” Photo by Danielle Gillis.