easiest book to find, it presents important ideas and provides a welcome alternative to the current crop of popular pseudo-scientific writers who fantasize lost maritime races bringing high culture to the world, and accuse scientists, especially archaeologists, of ignoring diffusionist arguments. Sadly, sweet potatoes don’t earn shelf space at the local Barnes & Noble, which is why commercial writers ignore the true smoking gun for prehistoric trans-Pacific contact. The ancient Polynesians, as skilled in agriculture as in navigation, found their gold not in Inca treasuries but in the farms and gardens of Ecuador. They returned with a crop that revolutionized the social structure on many islands and may have lead directly to the great era of moai construction on Rapa Nui. The research in this excellent volume proves that though sweet potatoes may not be as romantic and fashionable as imaginary sea kings, they are better “to think with.”

PUBLICATIONS


Tahiti-Pacifique Magazine, No. 183 for July 2006. This issue contains an article on the inauguration of the new Musée du Quai Branly in France and its exhibit of Polynesian artifacts; an article on the Polynesian fruit, ‘noni’ which now appears to be an aphrodisiac for Orientals (!); an article by Jean-Louis Canadelot about the idea of ancient Chinese explorers in Polynesia; and the story of Captain Benson’s shipwreck on Easter Island, translated into French.

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The most astonishing moai sighting in years comes from the Outdoor Education Garden, a new feature at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Romsey, England. The twenty-foot moai – constructed of woven hazel branches – stands at the top of the outdoor garden (see below). While a tad out of proportion, there is no mistaking it’s inspiration. The wicker moai has inlaid eyes of woven willow hazel with silver birch bark for the whites, providing a somewhat sinister effect. Along with the story of Easter Island, students learn about the importance of respecting the environment. Our thanks to David Maddock for providing news of this apparition, illustrated in Hampshire Now, #19, 2006.