



lively and fascinating account of Hunt and Lipo's definitive solution to the mystery of what really happened on the island, they introduce the striking series of archaeological discoveries they made, and the path-breaking findings of others, which led them to compelling new answers to the most perplexing questions about the history of the island. Far from irresponsible environmental destroyers, they show, the Easter Islanders were remarkably inventive environmental stewards, devising ingenious methods to enhance the island's agricultural capacity. They did not devastate the palm forest, and the culture did not descend into brutal violence. Perhaps most surprising of all, the making and moving of their enormous statues did not require a bloated population or tax their precious resources; their statue building was actually integral to their ability to achieve a delicate balance of sustainability. The Easter Islanders, it turns out, offer us an impressive record of masterful environmental management rich with lessons for confronting the daunting environmental challenges of our own time. Shattering the conventional wisdom, Hunt and Lipo's ironclad case for a radically different understanding of the story of this most mysterious place is scientific discovery at its very best.