Book and Media Reviews
ence mythology in a way that is tangible, real, and relatable.

Clearly Amaru, Tetahiotupa, and Kainuku each contributed an expertise that was fundamental in showcasing this story in a way that celebrates ancient traditions in a contemporary context. It is important to note that these visionaries, each having a background involved in preserving culture and transmitting language practices, have come together to create a dance production that is not only visually stunning but also distinguished by historical, anthropological, and linguistic research that is meant to share the culture and promote reo mā’ohi.

The DVD/audio CD/booklet combo set features photographs from the Heiva performance, video of the premiere Heiva presentation, and multimedia documentation of the performance’s production at various stages. Also highlighted in the booklet is an explanation of how legends are used to support Tahitian society and culture. The disc set and accompanying booklet are offered in both French and Tahitian, honoring French Polynesia’s diverse history for the region’s complex audiences.

Amaru, Tetahiotupa, and Kainuku position the creative direction of Pipiri mā perfectly, providing a multimedia work of art that stretches across demographic and artistic categories within the region and beyond. It is opening the floodgates to a new wave in cultural offerings that allow expressive works of performing art that bridge connections and celebrate self-representations. Collaborations like this production are breathing new life into time-honored legends in a way that reflects and perhaps embraces the regional diversity and may be useful in classrooms across the region as well as in home communities in French Polynesia.

TERAVA KA’ANAPU CASEY
University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

Recently renovated, restored, and renamed, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s Pacific Hall offers visitors new ways to engage with its extensive collections. Using the latest technologies, the sounds and images of peoples from the Pacific fill the hall. Drawing on the latest research in archaeology, DNA testing, and linguistics, a new perspective on the story of Pacific migration and a revised timeline of settlement over a six-thousand-year period are presented. In special exhibits, visitors can view artifacts uncovered by museum researchers from important archaeological sites in Tahiti, the Marquesas, the Cook Islands, Sāmoa, Tonga, Fiji, China, and Taiwan.

Along with the changes above, the presentation of objects and information on the main floor of Pacific Hall represents a shift in the museum’s educational mission. The earlier Polynesian Hall was much more focused on the artifacts on display, while the new exhibits tell stories about and for the peoples of the Pacific. As a former cultural collections manager at Te Papa Tongarewa (the National Museum of New Zealand) and at Bishop Museum, I welcome this shift...
from an object-centered approach to a visitor-centered one.

When I first visited Pacific Hall, I was excited to hear Pacific music and the voices of Pacific Island scholars and to read quotations from Oceanic writers and leaders, especially delighting in their emphasis on how we are connected by a vast ocean. At the same time, intensely illuminating and significant truths can run the risk of casting other important perspectives into shadow. As a Pacific Islander who grew up in Tonga, migrated to New Zealand, and then moved to the United States, I am aware of the differences between growing up in the Islands and growing up overseas. Having worked on projects with Pacific Island communities in both areas, I know they do not always share the same views. Some Islanders may feel alienated by the museum’s views on migration if they believe they are descendants of Tangaloa in their own places and are not related to the peoples on neighboring islands. Others may be excited and inspired by the museum’s exhibits and new research.

Community members and visitors to the region alike may well wonder whose views are represented in Pacific Hall. Although the answer is surely complicated, I feel the current exhibits do not adequately represent the diversity and richness of the views of those who live in the Islands. I believe the museum should add their voices to the ones already in place. This could easily be achieved by recording interviews with a range of scholars, cultural practitioners, educators, and community leaders. The museum is already scheduled to augment its exhibits with an audio tour. I hope it can provide us with different views of Oceania through this additional program.

It is also worth noting that the change in names from Polynesian Hall to Pacific Hall created high expectations among some Pacific Island visitors. They hoped to see their cultures represented, but the exhibits did not always meet their expectations. For example, in the exhibit for ceremonial dress, the items displayed are only from Sāmoa, and there is nothing from Micronesian or Melanesian island groups. Presenting a variety of materials from different cultures under the same theme or topic can offer a more accurate and more compelling view of the similarities and differences among the material cultures of Oceanic peoples. More of an effort should have been given to working directly with people in Pacific Island communities—finding out who they would select to represent their interests, what they would like to see, and how the exhibition could better serve them as an educational resource. Of course, not every expectation can be addressed, but more voices and perspectives can be included. I look forward to hearing the new audio recordings and hopefully hearing Pacific Islanders speak with pride and authority about objects that originated in their island groups. In this way, we can avoid the problem of having Oceanic peoples see themselves and their cultures primarily through the museum’s view.

MAILE DRAKE
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On 21 September 2013, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum celebrated the opening of Pacific Hall, its newly renovated Victorian-era gallery space dedicated to the peoples and cultures of Oceania. Featuring forty-two cases, thirteen digital media displays, and five contemporary artworks, the three-year renovation project cost $8.7 million to complete. On entering the central atrium of the two-storied hall, visitors encounter a dynamic media “sensescape.” Video clips of panoramic landscapes and seascapes along with historic and contemporary images of Pacific Islanders appear on a thirty-six-foot-long screen hanging overhead. An audio track fills the hall with drumming, singing, and familiar sounds of the ocean. Two other impressive works occupy the atrium space: a floor map of the Pacific composed of wood inlays and a full-scale Fijian fishing canoe mounted off the second floor.

In an introductory video, Kau Moana: Peoples of the Ocean Deep, speakers describe the “blue continent” connecting the peoples of Oceania. This central theme is reiterated in quotations from Pacific scholars displayed on an adjacent wall and symbolized in an exhibit of eleven model canoes. Several feel away, an exhibit on “Wayfinding from the Ancestors” includes references to the master navigator Pius “Mau” Piailug from Satawal, Micronesia. Among the many objects featured are two navigation charts from the Marshall Islands constructed from bamboo sticks, a photograph of Piailug instructing students in non-instrumental navigation techniques, and another photograph of Piailug and his student, Hawaiian navigator Nainoa Thompson. A stuffed fairy tern hangs as if in flight, while on the surface of the glass case the words of a navigator from the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) explain that birds are essential for finding land. The relevance of the “Wayfinding” exhibit is undeniable for many local and regional visitors. While this review was in preparation, the doubled-hulled canoe Hōkūle’a and escort vessel Hiikianalia left Hilo, Hawai’i, on 31 May 2014, bound for Tahiti and guided by Thompson on a three-year worldwide voyage.

The exhibit cases on the first floor are organized thematically, rather than by island nation or culture. Some themes include “Chiefs and Leaders,” “Gathering Places,” and “Food from the Land.” Each exhibit is densely packed with objects, photographs, diagrams, and interpretative materials, and the complex arrangement of the objects is enabled by an ingenious metal armature system. Short quotations superimposed on the surface of the glass cases provide additional layers of interpretation, often by cultural practitioners. In an exhibit on “Unity Among Diversity,” an assemblage of artifacts and signage represents the Santa Cruz Islands’ trading network. Rolls of red feather currency, a dance belt, a nose pendant, and a plaited bag offer a glimpse of the material culture from some of the nine Melanesian and five Polynesian-language-speaking communities involved in the network. Another exhibit, “Tattoo, Tātau,” highlights the importance of tattoos for linking individuals to social rank, ancestors, families, places, and events. It includes historic photographs of the tattooing process in New Zealand
and Sāmoa, tattoo needles, and a small wooden leg from the Marquesas inscribed with tattoos. On the second floor, a display of similar objects emphasizes a different message; here, visitors learn that Polynesian tattoos and geometric motifs most likely developed from the Lapita peoples and their distinctive pottery designs in Near Oceania some 3,500 years ago.

The museum’s archaeological research on the settlement of Oceania dominates the second floor. A wall map of migration routes, object cases, computer stations, and an interactive display on how scientists gather and analyze data offer a variety of learning experiences. The cases are sparer and more aesthetically striking than those on the main floor. In some instances, the central text panel must be read through objects suspended in the foreground, making viewing and reading a compelling process. The dramatic use of lighting from below also enhances the details of pottery designs, adzes, fishhooks, and shell chisels.

As a non-Native museum scholar, I was impressed by the range of exhibits, including a large community mural and a section devoted to interactive games. However, the few Pacific Island museum administrators and graduate students I queried could not hide their disappointment on visiting the hall: “Where are we?” “I only found two objects from my culture.” “I didn’t see much.” Their reactions reveal the burden of expectation that Pacific Hall shoulders. Furthermore, when the museum’s newly restored Hawaiian Hall opened in 2009, it featured unprecedented exhibits on political upheaval in Hawai‘i. It is thus troubling to find no direct references to contentious histories or colonial politics in Pacific Hall. Nevertheless, there are suggestive references in an introductory wall text (“cataclysmic changes wrought by an outside world”) and a label for a contemporary painting (“the work is about nuclear fallout in the Pacific”). Addressing these issues somewhere in the galleries or online would prevent inadvertent idealizations of the region. Fortunately, the museum’s staff is eager to augment the exhibits. An audio tour will soon provide additional perspectives. And in response to feedback from a community collaborator, a section of the floor map will change, replacing outdated terms with contemporary names. An exhibition of this importance will undoubtedly involve ongoing conversations with Pacific Island stakeholders for years to come.

Karen K Kosasa
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Approaching Atua: Sacred Gods from Polynesia, one’s first encounter is with two semi-abstract totemic figures from a marae by Cook Islands artist Eruera Nia. Embedded in a low, square, grey plinth, these silver-weathered wooden arabesques are at once descriptive and abstract, hieratic and dynamic, leaping up into vision and consciousness in a manner comparable to that of the