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CEREMONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN
EAST POLYNESIA: DEVELOPMENT
AND VARIABILITY

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND



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CEREMONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN EAST POLYNESIA: DEVELOPMENT AND VARIABILITY

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Cover image: Rauhuru Marae with carved ceremonial planks (*unu*), Maeva, Huahine, Society Islands. Photograph courtesy of Melinda S. Allen.

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NOTES AND NEWS

This special issue evolved from a symposium, “Ceremonial Architecture in Eastern Polynesia: Development and Variability”, organised by Guillaume Molle for the 80th *Society for American Archaeology* (SAA) meetings in San Francisco, California. A particularly important aspect of both the SAA symposium and this special issue is the bringing together of Anglophone and Francophone scholars with common interests in East Polynesia. As outlined in the SAA symposium abstract, while clear cultural-historical similarities are found in the region’s ceremonial architecture, both archaeological studies and ethnohistorical accounts also point to variation between and within archipelagoes. This variability has been attributed to a variety of internal and external processes, and the case studies assembled here, from central and marginal East Polynesia, explore both patterning and underlying causes.

Focusing in on the ‘Opunohu Valley of Mo‘orea, Society Islands, Jennifer Kahn offers a richly detailed account of the material expression and distribution of feasting on ritual and residential structures, and its use by community leaders to consolidate economic, socio-political and ideological power. In her analysis of the ceremonial architecture of four chiefdoms of the Society Islands, on Tahiti and Ra‘iatea, Tamara Maric draws on archaeological, ethnohistorical, and toponymical analyses to show how external influences, including both interaction and competition, led to changes in the geographic locations and forms of ceremonial complexes over time. Turning to the extensive Tuamotu Archipelago, Guillaume Molle investigates morphological variability in ritual architecture across this large geographic area, along with potential causes; his analyses highlight the roles of endogenous socio-political processes, ritual innovations and external influences. Examining ritual architecture in the Kaupō District of Maui, Hawaiian Islands, Alexander Baer’s landscape approach reveals that the agriculturally-rich core of this district is bounded by a network of monumental temple complexes, a pattern which strongly contrasts with the small, relatively simple ceremonial spaces of the interior. Finally, Flexner and McCoy take us into the post-contact period and use two case studies, also from the Hawaiian Islands, to argue that traditional religious structures and localities continued to play a role in the lives of Hawaiian communities of the 18th and 19th centuries, with some of contemporary importance as well.

Contributors to This Issue

Alexander Baer (PhD, University of California, Berkeley, 2015) is an archaeologist at Pacific Legacy, Inc. (Honolulu, Hawai‘i and Berkeley, California). His research examines social complexity and ecology from an interdisciplinary perspective, employing method and theory from anthropological archaeology alongside biology, phylogeography and geology. He has conducted field projects throughout the Caribbean, the American Southwest and Polynesia, where his current work in Hawai‘i, Easter Island and Mangareva is exploring dynamic human-environment interactions and long-term sustainability.

James L. Flexner is a Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and Heritage at the University of Sydney. He holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley and his thesis focussed on Hawaiian historical archaeology. James has been working extensively in southern Vanuatu since 2011, with a current project exploring 3000 years of settlement and interactions in the region, particularly the Polynesian Outliers of Futuna and Aniwa. His book, *An Archaeology of Early Christianity in Vanuatu*, will be published by ANU Press later in 2016.

Jennifer G. Kahn joined the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia in 2012 and currently is an Associate Professor in Anthropology. Over the last 23 years she has conducted archaeological field research in Polynesia and Melanesia, working in the Hawaiian Islands, Society Islands, Marquesas Islands, Gambier Islands and New Caledonia. She maintains an active museum research program, having analysed collections from the Bishop Museum, the Auckland War Memorial Museum (New Zealand) and the American Museum of Natural History (USA), as well as serving as a Research Associate at Bernice P. Bishop Museum and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (USA). She received the prestigious Rising Star Award from the Virginia State Council of Higher Education in 2016.

Tamara Maric is a French archaeologist working at the Service de la Culture et du Patrimoine in Papeete, the French Polynesian Government office which oversees archaeology in the region. She studied settlement patterns on the island of Tahiti for her thesis research at the Université de Paris-1. Since 2013, she has been part of the technical team conducting a World Heritage project at Taputapuātea Marae on Ra'iatea Island, under the direction of the French Polynesian Government.

Mark D. McCoy is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He is a landscape archaeologist whose research centres on the development of ancient political economies and human ecodynamics. He is an expert in the application of spatial technology in archaeology and directs research in East Polynesia and Micronesia.

Guillaume Molle is a Lecturer in Pacific Archaeology at the Australian National University in Canberra. He completed his PhD in 2011 at the University of French Polynesia with a dissertation focussing on the prehistory of Ua Huka in the Marquesas Islands. Since 2009, he has also conducted archaeological research in Tuamotu Islands, the Gambier Archipelago and Teti'aroa Atoll in the Society Islands, with French and American collaborators. His research interests include timing and process of human colonisation in East Polynesia and the development of ceremonial architecture.