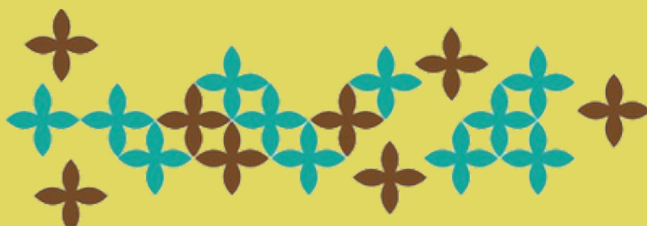




Natapoa tr'i



Australian
Association
for Pacific
Studies



Nimo notop



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

The Australian Association for Pacific Studies (AAPS) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Australia, paying deep respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present. We stand in solidarity with First Nations peoples in their ongoing journeys of sovereignty, justice, and cultural renewal. We also honour the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific, whose ancestral knowledges continue to guide and inform the work of scholars, researchers, and communities within our association.



The photographic collages – on this page and the front cover – feature two images: **Natapoa tri** (taken by Christian Licht and submitted by Sebastian Salay) and **Nimo norop** (taken and submitted by Anna Naupa). The back cover collage consists of two other images – **10 mile bush camp** and **Papa Kutjara** – submitted by Talei Mangioni. These Shutter stories are on pages 5 and 15.

inside this issue

Editors' Notes	2	Picture Frames and Counter-Frames	15 - 17
President and Vice President's Report	3	Events: British Art, Pacific Subjects	18 - 19
Shutter: Natapoa Tri and Nimo Norop	4 - 6	Congratulations!: PhD Graduations	20
Announcements: Oceania Lives	7	Member Publications	21
Events: Weaving New Pacific Futures	8		
Creative Texts: How to Write a Conf., Paper	9		
Backpack: Fieldwork in West Papua	10 - 11		
Announcements: Kai Jaina: A World Between	12 - 13		
Shutter: 10 Mile Bushcamp and Papa Kutjara	14 - 15		

EDITORS' NOTES

Welcome to this issue of the AAPS newsletter.

Founded in 2004 at the Australian National University, AAPS brings together scholars, educators, artists, and community leaders committed to the diverse and dynamic field of Pacific Studies. Our members span disciplines including anthropology, history, literature, health, education, politics, the arts, and more – reflecting the richness and complexity of the Pacific region.



[Click here for more of what we do.](#)

At the heart of AAPS is a shared commitment to collaboration – with and for Pacific communities. Together, we honour Indigenous knowledges, deepen connections, and amplify Pacific voices. Our offerings in this issue (and many more to come!), aim to reflect this shared commitment as we also prepare to come together at the University of Sydney for the *Pacific Discourses and Destinies* conference (June 3 - 6). May these stories, images, events, and announcements, together with the conversations that will flow at the conference, elevate our Pacific voices!

Editorial Team

PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bula vinaka, talofa, mālō e lelei, kia ora, kam na mauri, welkam!

As this issue of the AAPS newsletter goes to press we are just days away from the start of our biennial conference, being held this at the University of Sydney on the lands of the Gadigal people and the 29 clan groups that compose the Eora Nation. Redfern, where much of this conference is taking place, is a historic site of Black power, and the Redfern and La Perouse Aboriginal communities have been powerful forces in shaping Sydney as we know it today. This has always been, and remains, Aboriginal land, and AAPS commits itself to the ongoing work of solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and with all Indigenous people across our region.

AAPS conferences are special. They are spaces of community, creativity, kinship and rich intellectual inquiry where we seek to deepen and strengthen the work of interdisciplinary Pacific studies, and to embody the values and commitments that underpin it.

Organisation of the 2025 conference has been led by Prof Jioji Ravulo, and AAPS extends our gratitude to him and to Rachel Payne, who has been a powerhouse of organisational support. Thanks also to others who have actively contributed to the organisation of the conference, including our extraordinary AAPS Secretary Talei Mangioni, and our postgraduate representatives Romitesh Kant and Sarouche Razi, who have led the organisation of the ECR and postgraduate Masterclass with Rev. Dr Cliff Bird, who we are honoured to have deliver the Epeli Hau'ofa Annual Memorial Lecture. We also extend our deep gratitude to our outgoing treasurer, Glenn Finau, who has been a stalwart of recent years. And welcome to Laura Simpson Reeves as our incoming treasurer.

We also extend our deep thanks to the people and organisations whose donations made the 2025 conference possible – Melissa Malu and the team at the Australian Museum, and the Powerhouse Museum, both provided generous

conference sponsorship. Prof. Michael McDonnell (University of Sydney, History) and colleagues at the University of Notre Dame provided support for the opening keynote 'Stori and sovereignty: Marking the 50th Anniversary of Papua New Guinean Independence', and colleagues at the University of Sydney Law School supported the travel of Dame Meg Taylor.

Finally we extend gratitude and solidarity to Dr Melanie Bean, Dr Maile Arvin and other much-loved colleagues at the University of Utah, who provided generous sponsorship in support of our conference, but who were unable to attend themselves because of the risks attendant to border-crossing under the current Trump administration. It is a stark reminder of the global political reality in which we find ourselves, and of the disproportionate harms that are distributed along racialized lines, as well as along classed, gendered, and other lines of oppression. But it is also a reminder of the powerful bonds of kinship, culture and community that extend across the Pacific and the global Pacific diaspora. Relationality and reciprocity are powerful, and necessary resources for these times.

A/Prof Victoria Stead
President, AAPS
Prof Katerina Teaiwa
Vice-President, AAPS





NATAPOA TRI pg. 4



The tree we're looking at here is a natapoa tree. It has another name in Bislama - Natalie. A man told me, 'My great grandfather planted two to mark his place'. So, the tree is nearly 300 years old. He came and did kastom to live on the land. For us, this tree is our story, the history of how many years we have lived on this land. This is a very, very old tree. What he means is that his family has lived in this place for a long, long time.



Christian Licht

This photograph was taken by Christian Licht as part of a participatory photovoice project in July 2024. He was one of a group of migrants to urban Port Vila from elsewhere in Vanuatu. The project aimed to understand how migrants, known in Bislama as man kam, hold tightly to land in the city. As Port Vila expands, most migrants make agreements with local customary landowners to secure a place to build a home and garden. The number of migrants has increased rapidly since independence in 1980, but here, Christian speaks to long-time urban migrant residents who mark and remember their customary land agreement using two natapoa trees. This technique is especially important in Port Vila, which has seen a rise of mass evictions of migrant communities around the city. Christian's photograph was one of 23 images from the project exhibited at the National Museum of Vanuatu and the Melbourne Centre for Cities in November 2024.

This research was funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project: *Communities, Kava, Court Orders: The Ways of Possessing the Pacific City* (DP220101100) led by A/Prof Jennifer Day and by a Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning Research Outreach Grant.



Photovoice project link

Sebastian Salay
Research Fellow
Melbourne School of Design
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning
University of Melbourne

NIMO NOROP pg. 6

The image was exhibited during the ANU Immersia Cultural Fest (in September 2024). The exhibition showcased anthropology fieldwork images and was entitled *Unruly edges: Beyond the human, an anthropology photo exhibition*.

Nimo norop represent more than traditional cyclone shelters on Erromango island in southern Vanuatu; they embody an ancient system of relationality that maps customary governance across the island. Each norop, movoc and netan* denotes a human responsibility to safeguard peace across social, physical and metaphysical boundaries. The tangible invokes the intangible, reminding the human of socio-spiritual obligations in the maintenance of island harmony, between communities and with spirits and nature. These cultural concepts are foundational to my doctoral research on kastom roads - vernacular systems of relationality - as forms of indigenous diplomacy.

*beam, rafter, and purlin

Read more about the nimo norop in Anna Naupa's article below.



Article link

Full article reference:

Naupa, A. (2024). More than a cyclone shelter: The nimo norop of Erromango Island, Vanuatu. *Enhancing viability of community*. UNESCO-ICHCAP and WHIPIC Living Heritage Series VIII, Republic of Korea: 27-42.

Anna Naupa
PhD Candidate
College of Asia and the Pacific
School of Culture History and Language
Australian National University





ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL ISSUE: OCEANIA LIVES (OUT SOON!)



Issue link

'Oceania Lives' in the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* draws its thematic coherence from a sustained exploration of the different ways in which Pacific peoples – in this case, South Sea Islanders/Australian South Sea Islanders, Papua New Guineans, Tongans, Pitcairners, West Papuans, Solomon Islanders and Fijians – have and continue to encounter Australian coloniality in its various forms.

The issue is notable for its inclusion of two dialogues that set the scene for the entire special issue which aims to interrogate and explore the position of Pacific peoples on Indigenous lands and waterways which comprise contemporary Australia. Melinda Mann, Kim Kruger and Imelda Miller powerfully demonstrate how this can be done through their approaches to writing South Sea Islander biography while Lisa Hilli also reflects on her artistic and biographical method in conversation with Wendy Mocke about the FMI (or Daughters of Mary Immaculate) sisters of Vunapope, New Britain, who helped save hundreds of lives during the Second World War.

'Oceania Lives' also features four reflective pieces and three research articles. Using the Tongan narrative approach, talanoa-vā, Ruth (Lute) Faleolo and Emma 'Ilaiū Vehikite use the written records of Wesleyan missionary Walter Lawry to reimagine the early 19th century voyage of Futukava to Australia. In their research articles, Talei Luscia Mangioni and Camellia Webb-Gannon bring to life the stories of Melanesian activist women Amelia Rokotuivuna from Fiji and the Black Sistaz from West Papua. Finally, Nicholas Hoare and Theresa Meki ask, 'What ever happened to the Papua New Guinea Dictionary of Contemporary Biography?' Their answers point to the challenges and opportunities in writing about and working with Oceania lives in 2025.

AAPS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

AAPS members in this special issue! ...

Kim Kruger
Melinda Mann

Talei Luscia Mangioni
Nicholas Hoare
Katerina Teaiwa (editors)



NO. 9, 2025

AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF **BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

Imelda Miller
Lisa Hilli
Ruth (Lute) Faleolo

Pauline Reynolds
Camellia Webb-Gannon
Romitesh Kant

Talei Mangioni
PhD Candidate
Australian National University
College of Asia and the Pacific
School of Culture History and Language

EVENTS

WEAVING NEW PACIFIC FUTURES: PACIFIC PATHWAYS THROUGH ACADEMIA

Guest Seminar



Mon 23rd June, 11am



Griffith University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Work

G42_2.17 lecture theatre



Lefaoali'i A/Prof Dion Enari
(Unitec - Sch of Health Care
and Social Practice)



Seuta'afili Dr Patrick Thomsen
(University of Auckland -
Faculty of Medical Sciences)

*send all enquiries to
host ...*



Dr Levi Fox
Griffith University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Work
levi.fox@griffith.edu.au

To register:



*QR code links to a Google form.

*In-person
event only! ...*



Dion is an Auckland-born, Brisbane-raised Samoan who received his PhD on Samoan culture from Bond University. His research covers Indigenous, sport, diaspora, and Pacific issues. He has been interviewed extensively on several international and national media platforms including World News, ABC News, ABC Radio, The Guardian, Thomson Reuters Foundation, New Zealand Herald, Radio New Zealand, and Samoa Observer.



Patrick received his PhD from the Center of Korea Studies and Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, uniquely deploying Samoan ways of knowing and being in a Korean queer studies context. He is the Principal Investigator for the award-winning Manalagi Project, New Zealand's first Pacific Rainbow + Health and Wellbeing Project funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand.

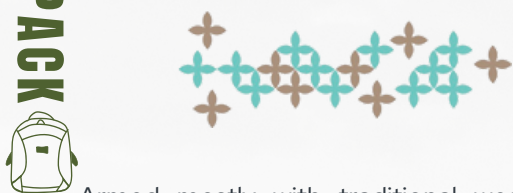
HOW TO WRITE A CONFERENCE PAPER



Writing a conference paper often feels like harvesting feijoas from a kawakawa tree. No amount of drafting is gonna squeeze that juice & I don't know what it is about this year that makes writing feel impossible. Maybe it's the year. Maybe it's me. Maybe if I graft vowels to Native trees & drink the sap of my ancestors, the words will finally flow. But a screen is not aute bark, not muka strands, not kōwhaiwhai patterns on wood. So instead, I stand where Waipaoa River meets Kiwa's Vast Ocean, carve symbols into silt & sand & watch Tangaroa reclaim my kupu.

Marama Salsano
Senior Research Fellow
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

BACKPACK FIELDWORK IN WEST PAPUA



Armed mostly with traditional weapons, West Papuans have been waging a relatively unreported and undocumented low-level guerrilla war in response to alleged genocide since the United Nations transferred the Territory to Indonesia in 1963. Off-limits to foreign journalists, academics, diplomats and the UN, undertaking research in West Papua is problematic and requires creative agency. Having now completed fieldwork, I write to share some highlights.

For my first visit I was invited to undertake ethnographic film and participant observation with the West Papuan liberation forces, OPM or Free Papua Movement, and document human rights violations. A cohort of around twenty guerrilla fighters escorted me for three weeks through their territory in the magnificent Star Mountains – the headwaters of the Sepik River.



Crossing the headwaters of the Sepik River. Star Mountains, West Papua

Initially we trekked for four days averaging fifteen hours a day before arriving at our location just a few kilometers from the Indonesian Kiwirok military base.



Sleeping. Star Mountains, West Papua

From here Indonesian helicopter gunships and military drones have been bombing and strafing local Papuan villages forcing hundreds to flee to live in the jungle or trek for days to seek refuge in Papua New Guinea.



Unexploded bombs dropped on villages in the Start Mountains, West Papua

I was fortunate to attend the annual independence celebrations held on 1 December 2022 where traditional dancing involving hundreds of participants continued for three days.

cont..



OPM independence celebrations. Star Mountains, West Papua



A second invitation in 2024 took me to the cities of Nabire and Jayapura to meet with West Papuan colleagues and further document human rights violations. Being the only orang bule, my colleagues kept me undercover in local villages and dark-glass cars as they navigated police and military check points.

While obviously fraught with risk and harrowing at times, this fieldwork provided a rare opportunity to document the lives of these young liberation fighters and the ongoing human rights violations. This research would not have been possible without the kind assistance, courage and dedication of my West Papuan colleagues.

As I pen this piece, aerial bombing continues across the highlands.

Julian McKinlay King
PhD Candidate
University of Wollongong

Photo Credits:
 Julian McKinlay King



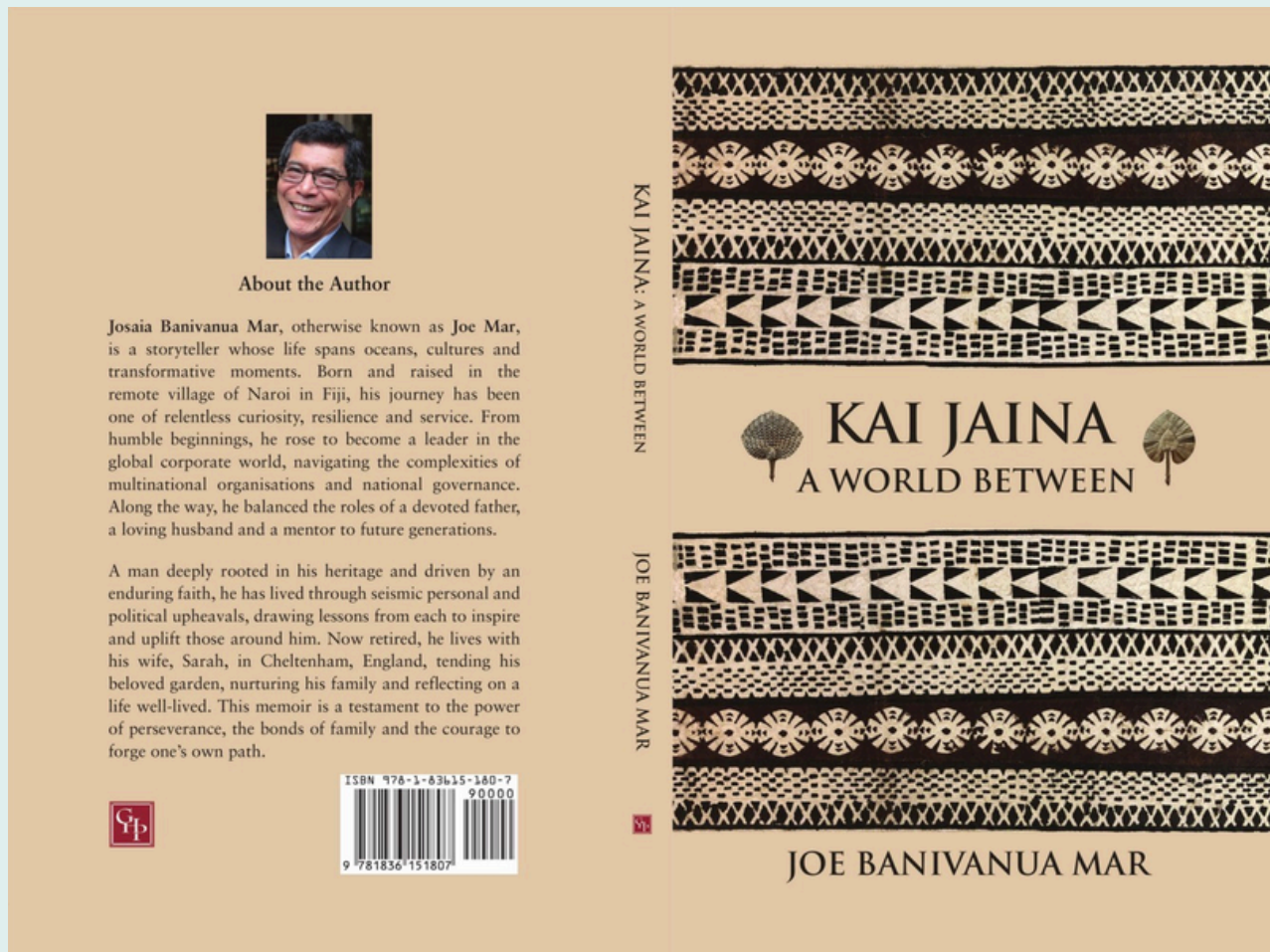
Regional Commander Yanwarious and some of his young troops who escorted me through the Star Mountains, West Papua



ANNOUNCEMENTS

KAI JAINA: A WORLD BETWEEN

(RECENTLY LAUNCHED!)



Born into a Fijian-Chinese heritage, Joe Banivanua Mar grew up in a world of tradition, identity struggles, and colonial legacies. *Kai Jaina: A World Between* is a deeply personal memoir that follows his extraordinary journey – from a small island village to leading corporate and government transformations in Fiji, Australia, and beyond.

Joe's life unfolds across political upheaval, cultural expectations, and personal resilience. From navigating boarding school challenges at Queen Victoria School (QVS) to breaking barriers in an international corporate career, he explores the tensions of leadership, migration, and belonging.

As Fiji faces military coups and economic transitions, Joe finds himself at the centre of reform, leadership, and the fight for ethical governance.

At its core, this is a story of homecoming – both literal and spiritual. As Joe reflects on the meaning of success, family, and identity, he must reconcile the world he left behind with the one he built. Can he truly belong in both? Rich with Pacific history, humour, and deeply moving reflections, *Kai Jaina: A World Between* is a compelling testament to the power of resilience, identity, and transformation.



Photo credit: Chameleoneye from Getty Images Pro

To order:

Kai Jaina: A World Between can be purchased at:



Amazon



Fishpond



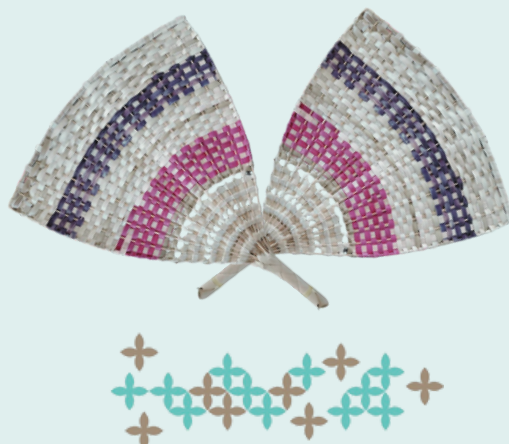
Booktopia



Readings

An e-book version will be released soon.

Josaia Bainivanua Mar
Author







10 MILE BUSH CAMP PAPA KUTJARA

These images were taken for the Indigenous Discovery ARC project "Reimagining the Humanities through Indigenous Creative Arts".

10 mile Bush Camp
Photo by Akil Ahamat

In this image, the project team are relaxing around the bushfire eating malu wipu (kangaroo tail) at 10 Mile Bush Camp after a hard day of work on "Purple Flowers", a Yankunytjatjara language nuclear justice song about the history of the Kupa Piti Kungka's successful opposition to a nuclear waste dump on their Country in the late 1990s-early 2000s.

L-R: Ellen Hodgson, Professor Simone Ulalka Tur, Talei Mangioni & baby Losalini, Dr Lou Bennett AM, Karina Lester, and Jack Martens-Tur.

Papa Kutjara
Photo by Talei Mangioni

Papa kutjara is a site of two dogs sitting down - a white one and yellow one - at Kanku-Breakaways Conservation Park on Yankunytjatjara Country.

Talei Mangioni
PhD Candidate
Australian National University
College of Asia and the Pacific
School of Culture History and Language



AAPS NEWSLETTER

PACIFIC FRAMES AND COUNTER-FRAMES: PASIFIKA REPRESENTATION AT THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

On a warm summer evening in February, a group gathered to share food. Artists, scholars, curators, elders, and cultural practitioners had come together at the invitation of the National Portrait Gallery around a shared question:



As the evening unfolded, existing relationships were deepened and new ones formed, creating a foundation—and a formal beginning—for an emerging partnership between the Australian Association for Pacific Studies (AAPS), the Oceania Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, and the NPG.

The following day, bellies full and hearts open, the group reconvened at the NPG to begin shaping the partnership. After time spent in introductions,



Intellectual powerhouses at the AAPS and Oceania Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography workshop held at the National Portrait Gallery.

the circle began to surface the systemic challenges that have long shaped Pacific representation in Australia. Australia's history is deeply entwined with the Pacific, and Pacific peoples represent one of the nation's fastest-growing communities, with rich cultural contributions across arts, sports, education, and community life. Yet despite this presence, influence, and historical significance, Pasifika perspectives and identities remain significantly underrepresented in Australia's major cultural institutions. Too often, Pasifika stories are either absent or shaped by external voices.

The gathering explored how colonial legacies continue to perpetuate institutional silences; how Pacific identities – especially those of mixed or hidden heritage – are frequently collapsed or erased; and how portraiture, as both an art form and institutional practice, has historically excluded Pacific peoples. Participants identified the ways in which Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders of Pacific heritage are often classified

under the broader category of "First Nations," obscuring their distinct Pacific connections. Brave conversations acknowledged painful truths about tokenism, under-resourcing, and the exhaustion of navigating systems not built by – or for – Pasifika communities.

Yet amid these challenges, the room was also full of joy and possibility. Faces lit up with smiles and laughter, hands animated stories in the air, and bodies leaned forward in deep engagement. Around tables scattered with vibrant materials, scribbled notes, and half-empty coffee cups, ideas bloomed. The space itself pulsed with creativity and collective purpose.

Drawing on insights from a pre-gathering survey, those present shaped a set of guiding principles focused on Pasifika leadership, cultural humility, and long-term transformative approaches. These became the bedrock for a new partnership – one centred on Pacific leadership in reshaping how the National Portrait Gallery engages with Pacific

communities. The group envisioned not just adding more Pacific faces to gallery walls, but fundamentally rethinking portraiture through Pacific worldviews: making it more relational, multi-vocal, and alive with story.

Discussions explored expanding the concept of portraiture beyond static visual display, embracing Pacific storytelling methodologies such as tok stori, kibung, and talanoa – approaches that are dynamic, participatory, and deeply culturally resonant. These methods recognise that a single, universally agreeable approach to representation may not exist—but that authenticity can be achieved through diverse storytelling practices that centre Pasifika narratives.

Powerful metaphors guided the conversations: the canoe, carrying people together in collective purpose; the woven mat, holding difference in tension and beauty; the kakala or lei, symbolising non-hierarchical, circular relationality. These metaphors offered not just poetry, but structural principles for the governance of the partnership itself.

Of deep significance was the group's exploration of the relationship between advancing Pasifika representation and honouring First Nations sovereignty. Participants articulated a powerful commitment: that Pasifika communities must walk alongside, not ahead of, First Nations peoples. The "First Nations First" principle emerged as both an ethical stance and a practical approach to partnership-building. Many underscored the acute awareness within Pasifika communities of not overshadowing Indigenous priorities.

Looking forward, the day's conversations identified several promising initiatives: the formation of a Pasifika-led steering committee to guide the partnership; the development of intergenerational programs connecting elders and youth; and the exploration of digital storytelling platforms. Concrete projects include virtual highlight tours and artist-led online public programs with intergenerational emphasis. Each initiative carries both challenge and promise—demanding sustained commitment, adequate resources, and genuine co-creation with communities.

This gathering wasn't an endpoint, but a beginning – a sowing of seeds, partnerships, and provocations that will require time, care, and continued tending. But the ground is fertile. And in gathering, in sharing kai, and in telling stories across institutional boundaries, the collective has already begun to shift the frame.

No one came away thinking this work would be easy. These issues are layered and complex, shaped by histories of erasure, uneven power, and cultural misunderstanding. There will be bumps along the way – missteps, moments of discomfort, and hard conversations. But there is also deep resolve – a shared willingness to hold these complexities with care, humility, and courage.

And the possibilities are worth it all. As one participant expressed: "We're not just representing ourselves – we're creating the conditions for future generations to belong." In a country where Pacific communities remain largely invisible in mainstream cultural narratives, reimagining portraiture becomes an act of reclamation – of voice, of story, of visibility.

The partnership will be showcased at the upcoming AAPS Conference in Sydney (June 3–6, 2025), where these vital conversations will continue through a dedicated panel discussion.

We invite you to join us.

Solstice Middleby
PhD Candidate
University of Adelaide



EVENTS

BRITISH ART, PACIFIC SUBJECTS, CONTEMPORARY VALUES: THE MODERN SAGA AND FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF REYNOLDS' MAI PORTRAIT

Workshop



17-18 Oct 2024



Australian National University

Convened by Kate Fullagar and held over two days, this workshop featured a public lecture by Assoc. Prof. Peter Brunt (Victoria University of Wellington) followed by a number of papers and reflections. One of these papers was Pauline Reynolds's 'Encountering Mai in the gallery: Replicating the fit' in which she explores Mai's portrait from an Indigenous and creative practice perspective, specifically Joshua Reynolds's encounter with Mai's portrait; Mai's life in Ra'iatea, Huahine and Tahiti; and her project studying Mai's clothing and the replication of the layers of tapa cloth depicted in Mai's portrait.

VAIEI TUPUNA

Exhibition



5 Oct - 15 Dec 2024



Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery at
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria
University of Wellington.

Vaiei Tupuna was spread over the large and multi-level spaces of the Te Pātaka Toi galleries and was composed of three separate yet intertwined exhibitions. It opened with the 1785 John Webber

portrait of *Poedua* [Poeatua] a Ra'iatean (Society Islands) chieftess. The three interlinked exhibitions were *'Ahu: Ngā wairua o Hina, Hala Kafa*, and *Hina Sings*...

- **'Ahu: Ngā wairua o Hina** featured works of 11 tapa makers from across the Pacific (Marquesas Islands, Tahiti, Norfolk Island, Hawai'i, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Sāmoa and Aotearoa) which were made in the gardens of Te Fare Iamanaha – Museum of Tahiti. The exhibition was supported by curators and a senior librarian from the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa. Curated by Isaac Te Awa, Rebecca Rice and Rosalie Koko, three artworks by each artist (commissioned by Te Papa) lined the walls of the Lower Chartwell Gallery.
- Curated by Sophie Thorn, **Hala Kafa** featured the work of Tongan artist 'Uhila Moe Langi Nai who created 6 vertical panels each measuring 4 metres long as a response to the practice of ngatu tāhina or ceremonial barkcloth making.
- **Hina Sings** ... was curated by Nālani Wilson Hokowhitu, and Norfolk Islanders Pauline Reynolds and Sue Pearson. The exhibition included four components: a replica of a historical Pitcairn tīputa (poncho) and hei (headdress - crown), a print called *Awatupuna* (our ancestors) and an HD video with audio projected onto barkcloth featuring the artists' artworks, poetry and song. See the following page for the image of a tīputa and hei.

Dr Pauline Reynolds
Norfolk Island

Photo Credits:
Dr Pauline Reynolds





a replica of a historical Pitcairn tīputa
(poncho) and hei (headdress - crown)



PHD GRADUATIONS

DR AGNIESZKA DZIAKOWSKA

Thesis Title: Gendered Violence in the Tropical Pacific: The Capacities and Limits of Narrative to Address Global Social Inequality

Institution: James Cook University

Supervisors: A/Prof Victoria Kuttainen, Dr Wayne Bradshaw, A/Prof Marie M'Balla-Ndi Oelgemöller, Senior Lecturer Claire Brennan

Summary: From the first voyages of exploration, European narratives have portrayed the tropical Pacific as an erotic and feminised space of conquest. These narratives can be considered a kind of violence, particularly against women. Postcolonial writers from the Pacific have actively attempted to overcome these kinds of narrative misrepresentations. Yet violence is not just discursive: gendered violence, especially against women, is a serious and pervasive problem throughout the Oceanic region. Focusing on gendered violence in poetry, prose, and some media in all three areas of the Pacific--Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, with an emphasis on Samoa, this thesis considers how narratives about gendered violence in the tropical Pacific seek to overcome both historical violence and contemporary silences to offer the possibility of empowerment. Inquiring into the capacities and limits of writing about gendered violence across this diverse region, this thesis highlights the significant role poetry has offered female writers in the tropical Pacific as a means to raise complex and often taboo subjects and bring them into the public sphere. It also reflects upon the more limited role played by prose narratives, particularly by women writers who have some relationship to the Pacific diaspora. Finally, the thesis draws attention to some other contemporary forms of narrative in the region, such as online activism, noting the way these kinds of narratives are circumscribed by cultural dynamics. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that literature, and in particular poetry, is a powerful form of speaking out against gendered violence in a region where being open about such matters is a complex undertaking.



Photo Credits:
Dr Agnieszka Dziakowskas

MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



Craney, A., Chamberlain, D., & Roche, C. (2025). Supporting 'Doing Development Differently' effectively: Analysing attributes, networks and impacts of donor-supported Pacific development coalitions. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 12(2), 1-12. e70013.

Fox, L., & Enari, D. (2025). As it is above, so it is below: Repositioning Indigenous knowledge systems within ecosocial work. *Social work*, 70(2), 139-146.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swaf008>

Goldman, J. (2024). Opaque visions of Polynesia: Word and image interactions in Marie-Hélène Villierme's *Visages de Polynésie, Faces of Polynesia*. In M. Royer, N. Ségeral, & L. Vuong (Eds.), *Francophone Oceania today: Literature, visual arts, music, and cinema* (pp. 161-179). Liverpool University Press.

Goldman, J. (2025, May 1). As Dutton champions nuclear power, Indigenous artists recall the profound loss of land and life that came from it. *The Conversation*.
https://theconversation.com/as-dutton-champions-nuclear-power-indigenous-artists-recall-the-profound-loss-of-land-and-life-that-came-from-it-249371?utm_medium=article_clipboard_share&utm_source=theconversation.com

Mitchell, E., Valley, L. M., Ase, S., Aeno, H., Ofi, P., Nake Trumb, R., ... Bell, S. (2025). Agency in young people's unsafe abortion trajectories in Papua New Guinea. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 1-15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2025.2456623>

Reynolds, P. (2024). Curatorium: Reflections on re/creating missing components of the 'ahu heva tūpāpā'u for the Perth Museum (Scotland). *Waka Kuaka The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 113(3), 325-336.

Salay, S., & Day, J. (2025). Overlapping land tenure stories: Ambiguity in Port Vila's urban precarity. *City & Society*, 37(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.70009>

Salsano, M. (2024). A letter to future iwi and Indigenous literary scholars. *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 39, 26-40.

malo!

fai'akse'ea

As always, malo! and faiakse'ea! for taking the time to write to us. If you are attending the conference in Sydney, we'd like to hear about it for our next issue. Capture images. Weave words. Send us your conference stories. We look forward to receiving them. Till the next callout and issue.

Editorial Team

EDITORS' NOTES



Australian
Association
for Pacific
Studies



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025