

drums and canoe paddles that the Austral Islands are noted for. It also showcases carved objects of ivory, feather headdresses, the well-known A'a carved wooden figure, and samples of patterned *tapa* cloth.

Part three is a collection of art history essays. The section begins with chapters on carved wooden paddles, *tapa* cloth and carved wooden drums. Over 500 paddles were personally examined by the author, and some nice examples are presented here along with illustrations of the various motifs found on these intricately carved objects. The islanders' prolific production of very fine, colored *tapa* cloth was noted by many early visitors, though today only a few specimens remain. Each of the *tapa* cloths (sometimes only small fragments) available for study are described and illustrated. There is also a brief chapter on the tall wooden drums of the Australs. Many of these ornately carved objects are pictured throughout the volume, and they have been classified and described here with the assistance of a specialist. The renowned figure A'a, a carving profusely decorated with other tiny figures, is also given a chapter in which Hooper's (2006) work and historical accounts of the object's removal from Rurutu are summarized. Finally, this section includes brief chapters on the similarities between some Austral and Cook Island artifacts, a comparison of the Kaitaia lintel and the Austral Island-style canoe sterns, and a passage about the large stone adzes that have been found in archaic sites in East Polynesia and New Zealand.

This self-published work brings together some original research and a number of papers that the author has previously published or presented. Photographs and illustrations are used liberally throughout the book, and they are well-indexed. A minor criticism is that some of the artifact inventories could have been relegated to an appendix rather than occurring as lengthy tables within the chapters. Also, some of the journal passages that are quoted – while interesting reading – are at times very lengthy and should have been summarized. A larger criticism is that while this is an impressive collection of facts and photographs, discussions are uneven. Also, the last few chapters are not well developed and seem somewhat out of place, and the book lacks a concluding chapter or synthesis. Finally, the reader should note that some of the artifacts pictured in this volume are only tentatively attributed to the Australs.

Overall, this is one of very few works to focus solely on the traditional arts of the Austral Islands. The book should have broad appeal due to its many vivid illustrations, and it is a useful introduction to the history of one of the lesser-known Polynesian archipelagos. The author hopes it will enable Austral Islanders to understand more about their own pre-colonial heritage, and this book shows us that their artistic traditions are certainly something to be proud of.

References

- Hooper, S. 2006. *Pacific Encounters Art & Divinity in Polynesia, 1760-1860*. Wellington: Te Papa Press.
 Morrison, J. 1935. *The journal of James Morrison, boatswain's mate of the Bounty*. London: The Golden Cockerel Press.

Grant Peterkin, James. *A Companion to Easter Island: A Concise Guide to the History, Culture and Individual Archaeological Sites of Rapa Nui*.



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Review by Susie Stephen,
Cameras for Culture

Apparent from the opening pages of this book is the inherent Rapa Nui knowledge that the author possesses. There cannot be many people in this world who have spent as much time on the island, studied linguistics, and worked as a guide to the same degree as Grant Peterkin, which makes for reassuring reading.

By giving a brief history and chronology of the island's formation at the start of the book, the reader is immediately introduced to the complexity of Polynesia. Within the first paragraph of the introduction, Grant Peterkin refreshingly talks about the Rapanui story as one ultimately of survival. It brings to mind Isabel Allende's 'The House of Spirits', in which survival is seen as a miracle.

The author is careful to bring to the reader's attention the natural bias of some of the early European accounts about the island, and is also clear to state that the early accounts may not have seen all there was to see on the island, stating on p. 18 that "... The moai that they saw were apparently still standing." On p. 20, an interesting point is made about the toppling of the statues, and by comparing the action to a contemporary reference (i.e., the Iraq War), a modern day scenario provides a graspable parallel.

First mention of the birdman competition does not arrive until p. 21, a topic which I personally think could have been mentioned earlier in the book. Including the birdman era in the timeline could help visitors to place it within the context of the island's history, but to different readers this may not be important.

Grant Peterkin sensitively takes on the subject of 'The Cutting Down of the Trees'. In just two short

pages, the author cleverly tackles the theory that ‘Rapa Nui is a microcosm of the world at large’ and poses questions for the reader to ponder.

There is a great description of Hangaroa and the big, clear, double-page spread map of the village is very useful. Following the suggested itineraries, full or half day circuit options ensure that all Rapa Nui ancient, historic and modern sites are visited, and there are also excellent descriptions of the numerous caves and walks on Rapa Nui. The author repeatedly states not to disturb archaeological sites, and reiterates that having respect for all sites, and all people on the island is of utmost importance. A great photo on p. 45 blatantly shows visitors what *not* to do (i.e., drag your kayak over an *ahu*).

Dotted throughout the book are information boxes that contain interesting facts about the island and personal anecdotes are also occasionally present, which adds a refreshing layer of detail.

Towards the end of the book are a couple of interesting sections: ‘Easter Island & Chile’, and ‘Easter Island in the World’, which carefully look at topics that put Rapa Nui in the news. I’m sure this guidebook will provide an excellent resource for people with lots of questions!

At the beginning of the guide, the author stated that he hoped the book would act as a bridge between detailed academic references to Rapa Nui and the more general guides to Chile or the South Pacific, and I can happily report that it does just that. It is interesting to see the design and layout of a self-published book, which has given James Grant Peterkin the freedom to create a guide that is obviously based on the personal experience of ‘what works’. *A Companion to Easter Island* is a guidebook I will carry in my backpack, and am recommending to friends.