JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 131 No.2 JUNE 2022

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

CELEBRATING ADRIENNE L. KAEPPLER (1935–2022)

Adrienne following her investiture as a Commander of the Royal Household Order of Tonga during the coronation celebration of King Tupou VI at Tonga's Royal Palace, June 2015. Photograph by Linny Folau. Courtesy of *Matangi Tonga*.

It is impossible to encompass Adrienne's multifaceted academic life and scholarly contributions, her attributes and her spirit in this short tribute. She researched and published on dance and music, social structure, history, artefactual objects and museology—all of which might be prefaced by ethno-. For above all, Adrienne was an anthropologist, employed from the early 1960s to 1984 at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum and thereafter at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., as curator of its Oceanic collections. My focus is on her research and writing about objects and her museum practice.[1.]

Huntsman, Judith, 2022. Celebrating Adrienne L. Kaeppler (1935–2022). *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 131 (2): 107–112. | https://doi.org/10.15286/jps.131.2.107-112

Adrienne was an active member of the Polynesian Society for nearly six decades (1963 to 2022). I count 12 contributions to the Society's publications (the earliest on Melanesian ceremonial masks (1963) and the last on carved *komari* 'vulva' stones from Rapa Nui (2020), with Jo Anne Van Tilberg). She was many times a cogent referee, a dependable reviewer and a ready advisor. When she launched the new edition of the catalogues of the Oldman Collection, Memoirs 14 and 15 (see Kaeppler 2004), she praised the enhanced editions, but could not miss the opportunity to criticise past collectors and museum curators for their neglect of objects in their care for their inadequate documentation of them (on this more below).

How to describe Adrienne for those who did not have the pleasure of her company? Physically she was small and agile; one might say "designed to dance"—mastering Hawaiian and Tongan dances and knowing traditional Korean and Japanese ones as well. Yet, within that delicate frame was a powerhouse: masterful scholar, resourceful and tenacious detective and outspoken critic of impeccable integrity. To illustrate these qualities, I draw on two of Adrienne's major publications: *"Artificial Curiosities": An Exposition of Native Manufactures Collected on the Three Pacific Voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N.* (1978) and *Holophusicon—The Leverian Museum: An Eighteenth-Century English Institution of Science, Curiosity, and Art* (2011, *JPS* review: Rankin 2011).[2]

The *"Artificial Curiosities"* volume accompanied a Bishop Museum exhibition marking the bicentennial of Cook's "discovery" of Hawai'i. Quickly Adrienne establishes what the volume really is: "[I]t is not an exhibition in honor of Captain Cook … but rather an exhibition that acknowledges and honors the achievements of Pacific peoples as they were before the impact of Cook and others of the Western world irrevocably changed their lives" (p. xiv). Indeed, I wonder if it was not really a Kaeppler initiative that allowed her to undertake six years of detective work, reconnoitring and scrutinising museum and private collections in 20 countries to locate items that might have been acquired during Cook's voyages—objects that were said to be but were not and objects that were not known to be but were. Objects with possible evidence of a Cook voyage connection that did not fully convince this sleuth were not dismissed; they were labelled "circumstantial" in hopes that further documentation might confirm or deny. The 234-page "exposition" consists for the most part (196 pp.) of textual documentation of the facts and, more striking, 493 figures—photos, drawings, plates from voyage publications and paintings in which objects are depicted. All the pertinent facts and images Adrienne had found are laid out; thus "an exposition".

I must backtrack now to why Adrienne was so persistently determined to create this handsome volume of what were then called "artificial curiosities". In 1969, following her 1964–1967 PhD research in Tonga, Adrienne visited

museums in Britain to study their collections of Cook voyage material culture items to analyse how material culture reflected the dramatic social changes from then until the now of her PhD study. In this endeavour she was utterly frustrated: "There was simply no corpus of material documented as of undoubted Cook provenance that I could use" (Kaeppler 1978: xiii). Attributions in museum registers "turned out to be half-truths" (p. xiii). Curators declared they had Cook material but could not identify it. Collectors imagined or intuited that certain of their treasures were of Cook vintage. Conclusion: asking curators and collectors was useless; she had to find and document objects herself to provide a baseline for change. So began six years of tracking and tracing, culminating in *"Artificial Curiosities"* and, what some might call, an obsession with documentation—time, place, materials, fabrication, dimensions, uses, images, etc.

In the course of those years of what Adrienne called "detective work", she identified extant collections and items, and collections that had been dispersed. The most promising of the latter was the Holophusicon, a museum created by Sir Ashton Lever at his Alkrington estate, near Manchester, that was transferred to London in 1774 to become known as the Leverian Museum. Among its 3,000 or so "cultural objects" on display was the largest intact collection of Cook voyage acquisitions. Alas, in 1806 all its contents were sold at auction in 733 lots to some 140 purchasers. They would come to be scattered around the world—gifted, inherited, traded, repurchased and disappeared. Fortunately, however, nearly 250 items, mainly from the second and third Cook voyages (1772–1779), were purchased on behalf of the Emperor of Austria. They had been kept as a single collection identified vaguely as "James Cook" or "Parkinson"[3] even as they were shifted from place to place in Vienna. In 1971, Adrienne visited the collection in the Museum für Völkerkunde, discovering that the curators knew not where the objects had come from, neither their original source nor immediate source, and the name Ashton Lever meant nothing to them. So she, armed with a volume reproducing three notebooks of detailed watercolour sketches by Sarah Stone of items in London's Leverian Museum (Force and Force 1968), set about sorting out and redocumenting the artefacts in the collection, which substantially enhanced their value and thus the reputation of the Museum. For Adrienne "detective work" was not just fun, it was essential to getting the story right and then disseminating it. Her output was prodigious, consisting not only of academic publications but also of many minor ones—museum notes, pithy articles and beautifully illustrated books directed at diverse readers.[4]

This experience led Adrienne to embark on further research, which she would pursue intermittently for 40 years, tracking down artefacts that had been sold at the 1806 auction. For each she intended to document its biography from its original acquisition to its present location. For most she sets out the convincing factual evidence, for others she judges the evidence

"circumstantial" and for still others gives the location as "unknown". Take the case of the Hawaiian cloak: she tracked down at least 12 transactions of its recorded transfer, presumed disappearance and reappearance from 1778–1779 to the 1940s, when it mysteriously disappeared again. Yet, there were three depictions of the cloak (Sarah Stone's and two others), and all are reproduced in hope that someday someone will recognise it. So it is for all the artefacts, through text, setting out all the known facts in a set format, and 780 figures; she opines: "[T]his book will be instrumental in locating and identifying more of the missing objects" (2011: 109; see also Kaeppler 1972). In short, *Holophusicon* is an exquisite example of Adrienne's practice, with its meticulous details of her sources and pinpointing what was "unknown" for others to find out or reveal. But it is not just a catalogue. The pages describing her "fieldwork" provide an intriguing ethnography of the world of "gentlemen" and their collections, of dealers and their customers. The pages on depictions of the objects includes an analysis of four paintings illustrating the "death of Captain Cook" as examples of western art's transition from heroic and to historic.

Adrienne readily took time to encourage others to make their contribution to knowledge. In this, she engaged and mentored fellow scholars young and old. But too, she was intolerant of faulty scholarship and speculative nonsense, and she pointed it out—whether to the young in gently admonishing their errors or colleagues in pointed speech or print. Few people can combine generous support and blunt frankness as well as she could.

Her own integrity could hardly be faulted. She readily corrected her own errors/misinterpretations and was very circumspect when she was not certain. *Holophusicon* is replete with the words "supposition"/"suspicion" and phrases "only speculation"/"I suggest". She always gave fulsome acknowledgement to her sources, not just publications and depictions but also anyone, scholar or not, who had contributed knowledge or ideas, assistance or support.

She was a self-proclaimed "detective"—diligent, thorough, measured and inventive. She wondered what might be inside a fragile cloth wrapping or sennit-entwined object that would be damaged (perhaps desecrated) by opening. Answer: have it scanned or X-rayed (see Kaeppler 2007). Problem: the official catalogue of the 1806 auction has utterly disappeared. Answer: search out the catalogues used by the various purchasers. Some turned out to have very useful marginalia and all were used to create a "master list".

Adrienne spoke and wrote again and again of researchers' and custodians' duty to show respect for and be accountable to the peoples and cultures that are of the original home of the museum objects by documenting, documenting, documenting the objects crafted by their forebears. She wrote of James

Parkinson, he who auctioned off the Holophusicon/Leverian collections: "he could not have imagined the importance that many of the ethnographic works of art would hold some two centuries later for museums, private collectors, and most importantly the descendants of their makers" (2011: 131).

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NOTES

1. See Diettrich (2022) for Adrienne's contributions to ethno-performance (music and dance). See Fonua (2022) for Adrienne's continuing studies and relationships in Tonga.
2. Holophusicon, "the whole of the natural world", is the name Sir Ashton Lever gave to his private collection, which, unlike other "cabinets of curiosities" of the era, was open to the public. When he moved it to London in 1775, it came to be known as the Leverian Museum.
3. James Parkinson had acquired the Leverian Museum via a lottery sale in 1786.
4. I must note that all bibliographies of Adrienne's publications are lengthy. The shorter ones only consider refereed academic works; the longer ones include notes in museum newsletters, reviews and, importantly, books designed for Tongan and Hawaiian audiences (see Fonua 2022).

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