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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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REVIEW

KAEPLER, Adrienne L., "Artificial Curiosities" being an exposition of the native manufactures collected on the three Pacific voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii SP 65 1978/293 pp. Price (US)\$27.50.

This volume is the catalogue of the Cook Bicentennial Exhibition displayed at the Bernice Pauahi Museum from January 18, 1978 to August 31, 1978. Let it be said at the outset that this is no stern compilation of objects with photographs such as "The Banks Collection" of Stig Ryden, but is indeed an enthralling and colourful art production in the best sense. Great care and thought has clearly been spent on the out-lay and the choice of colour illustrations, quite apart from the text.

Adrienne Kaeppler was forced upon the road of this particular research project in 1969 when she found her enquiry into changes in material culture after European contact were thwarted by the absence of precise separation in collections throughout the world. In order to establish a base for her study of change in Tongan society, it was necessary to spend eight years finding 'curiosities' and confirming their authenticity by document research. More than 2000 pieces were traced and 400 were assembled for the exhibition - though more are either illustrated or listed in the catalogue.

As stated in the preface, "this volume has three aims. First it accompanies and identifies the 'Artificial Curiosities' of the exhibition... Second, it enumerates the artifact types collected on the voyages as far as these can be ascertained today ... Third, there is an inventory of all the documented Cook voyage ethnographic objects that I have been able to find... It is not an exhibition in honor of Captain Cook the explorer - navigator, but rather, an exhibition that acknowledges and honours the achievements of Pacific peoples as they were before the impact of Cook and others of the Western world irrevocably changed their lives."

These objectives have been achieved admirably. The numerous summaries of accounts of Cook's travels add a great dimension to the volume that the preface suggests, and the comments on each exhibit complement this text in a satisfying way. Although doubtless there will be scholars who will miss their favourite "Cook piece", the publication has the mark of authenticity and of painstaking research, both mercifully free from the Tamil-bell type of ethnography. Recommended both to the student (if he can stand the beauty of the layout) and to the dilettante (who will).

A.G. Buist