

# JPS

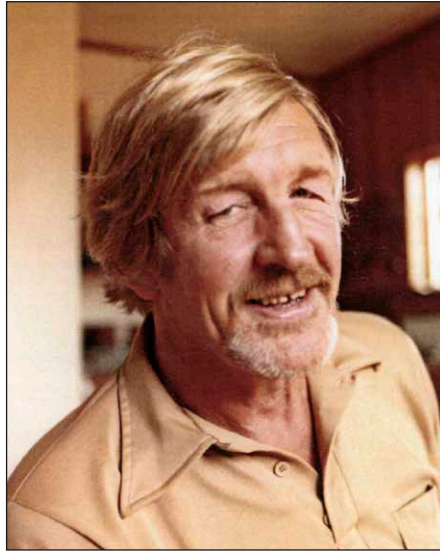
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ANTONY BRAMSTON HOOPER (1932–2016)



Photograph by Marti Friedlander, 1983.

Antony (Tony) Hooper was member of the Polynesian Society for at least 60 years (first as a student of Anthropology at the University of Auckland in the 1950s) and a constant contributor to the *JPS*. His first publication, in the early 1960s, was a two-part article based on his MA research among Cook Islanders in Auckland; his last, in 2010, was a text on Tokelau fishing with English translation and commentary. In between he authored or co-authored at least a dozen articles and reviews. As well, Tony was Honorary Co-editor of the *JPS* from his return to Auckland in 1967 to 1971 and he co-edited Polynesian Society Memoir 45, *Transformations of Polynesian Culture* (with the author).

Tony was born just outside Suva, Fiji. His father was also born in Fiji; his mother was from New Plymouth. He was sent to New Zealand, aged 10, to attend boarding school at New Plymouth Boys High and be educated as his father had been. He grew up to be a golden haired formidable figure, who played rugby in the National First XV Championship (the Premier Rugby Union competition for Secondary Schools and Colleges in New Zealand) for three years; he also excelled in discus and shot put.

In 1950 Tony entered the University of Auckland. A new world opened up to him: new friends—many lifelong—in the literary and art worlds, sparking his love of literature and particularly poetry. Among them was Robin McFarland, whom he

married in 1955. It took him some time to decide on his vocation, but Anthropology finally won. He received an MA in 1958 for a thesis on the Auckland Cook Island community, for which one of his primary sources was Albert Henry (founder of the Cook Islands Party and first Prime Minister), back then working in the shipping section of Farmers, a department store chain.

A scholarship for doctoral studies at Harvard University followed; Tony and Robin arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1958. This again was a new world and again another bunch of lifelong friends, but it was also a very intense and serious time, despite the sometimes offhand character of his supervisor, Douglas Oliver, who was heard to refer to Tony as his “blond Fijian”. For his PhD research he joined Oliver’s Society Islands project team. Oliver had wisely selected Tony to undertake comparative ethnography on Taha’a and Maupiti, remote Leeward Islands of the Society Group. For Tony and Robin the field was a pleasant change from the intensity of Cambridge, and here they learned Tahitian and spent 18 months in 1960–61.

1964 was a big year: Tony and Robin moved to Providence, Rhode Island where Tony took up a lecturing position at Brown University and their son Matthew was born. Also in that year, I began a friendship with them, which propelled me in directions I had not anticipated.

After two years at Brown, Tony was appointed to a Senior Lecturer position at Auckland University. Tony, Robin and Matthew set out for Auckland, returning briefly to Maupiti along the way. Their second son, Julian, was born three months after their arrival in Auckland.

Before the Hooper family left for New Zealand, Tony and I hatched a plot for collaborative Polynesian research. I was about to launch into further postgraduate studies, which would prepare me for field research after a year. Tony wanted to establish another field site in Polynesia. So the plan was for him to choose the site and the two of us to start research there in 1967. As the story goes, Bruce Biggs counselled Tony to choose someplace in which New Zealand had interests and Tony discovered that an Epidemiological Research Group would be visiting Tokelau in 1968 to survey the peoples’ health status. Furthermore, he had connections with relevant NZ Government officials from his earlier research with Cook Islanders. So it came to pass that when I arrived at Auckland Airport in July 1967, Tony greeted me with the question: “How would you like to go to Tokelau?” I quickly said: “Yes”.

So began our long, fruitful and diverse research in Tokelau’s three atolls. Tony insisted that he would go to Fakaofu (something about the name attracted him); I did my PhD research in Nukunonu and then got further funding to do comparative research in Atafu. The situation was perfect, we each had our separate research places; later I too was lecturing in the Anthropology Department at Auckland.

After a preliminary visit in late 1967 to early 1968, Tony, this time with the whole family, had returned to Fakaofu in mid-1969. I was back in Tokelau in late 1969. Quite suddenly, we were summoned back to NZ by the late Ian Prior, head of the nascent Wellington Epidemiology Unit, for a World Health Organization (WHO) Conference. WHO had taken an interest in the Unit’s Tokelau epidemiology research

in both the atolls and NZ, and Ian had organised the Conference. Suddenly we were involved in a whole new enterprise with quite generous funding that would allow us to continue our own research among Tokelauans while we contributed our part to the health research project. The Tokelau Island Migrant Study, as it was called, continued for 20 years, culminating in an Oxford University Press publication, *Migration and Health in a Small Society: Tokelau Case Study*, of some 450 pages with five authors.

The periodic returns to the atolls, and the extension of our research to Tokelau migrants to NZ, expanded our research in new and interesting directions, as did our accumulation of published and unpublished materials on Tokelau's past and our regular monitoring of later changes. Tony, after considerable lobbying, persuaded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (by then responsible for Tokelau) to provide support for a Tokelau dictionary to be compiled by a former Tokelau teacher—that took ten years. Then we advised, edited and arranged the publication and translation of a Tokelau-authored book, *Matagi Tokelau: History and Traditions* (1991)—that too took ten years. From 1978 we were writing a book, drawing upon our extensive ethnographic and historical research, which was published in 1996 as *Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography*. Then too, we each pursued our own interests; Tony's was fishing. He wrote several articles on aspects of Tokelau fishing, but his major contribution was in facilitating the publication of *Papa o Tautai* (2008), a Tokelau-language account of fishing knowledge and practices written by Atafu elders. The enhanced publication and English translation of that account, funded and distributed by UNESCO, was entitled *Echoes at Fishermen's Rock: Traditional Tokelau Fishing* (Hooper and Tinielu 2012).

From the time he embarked on his MA until his death, Tony promoted and supported Pacific study and research, and Pacific students' and scholars' pursuit of them. In the 1960s he had joined with others at the University of Auckland advocating for more attention to and support for research in the Pacific, though without much success. He taught about Polynesian societies and cultures, and supervised numerous postgraduate students. By the 1980s more and more of these students were NZ-born of Pacific heritage, many struggling with their studies. Tony became leader of a group of scholars and students who successfully called for the establishment of the Centre for Pacific Studies to provide courses and promote scholarship. To highlight this development, Tony and a number of colleagues conceived, organised and convened a four-day Conference on Pacific Studies subtitled "Issues and Directions" in August 1985, "intended to give impetus and direction to the diverse range of Pacific interests in both the University and wider community". Prominent scholars from the Pacific attended to present papers; workshops provided venues for further presentations and discussions on the themes of political economy, and the arts and cultural identity. At least 400 people attended and Pacific Studies at Auckland was on the map (see a fuller account of the conference in *JPS* vol. 94 [4]: 302-03). In the years that followed, first, two courses—addressing the two themes of the conference—were available annually at the Centre. Then housing was found, a Centre Director was appointed, and the courses offerings expanded, and finally Pacific Studies became an academic

subject at Auckland. Tony had given up his Professorship at Auckland to take up a research position at the East-West Center's Pacific Island Development Programme in Honolulu, before the Pacific Studies dramatic *Fale* and office/teaching building were constructed in the early years of the new century—both adornments to the University. His role in their coming into being was pivotal.

In many ways the trajectory of Tony's life—from Fiji to New Zealand to Harvard to Tahiti, to Harvard again and then Brown, back to Auckland, to Tokelau and so on—was a continuous path of his personal humanistic commitment to the peoples and cultures of the Pacific, much in line with the aims of the Polynesian Society of which he was an engaged life-member.

Judith Huntsman