

**Anderson and Pappo: Or Breadfruits Arrival;  
A tale of when Atlantic and Pacific Worlds Collide**

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Heaven in a Wild Flower; The World joined in a Plant

In 1793 there appeared a notice in the Jamaican Royal Gazette concerning the 'Death of Pappo', a native Tahitian who had died in Jamaica in April after being inoculated for smallpox. The memorial, written by Pappo's friend the British botanist James Wiles, told a tale of a man who was willing to travel, a capable and deadly hand in battle, and a skilled gardener. Pappo had fought alongside the mutinous crew of the *HMS Bounty* (Of Mutiny on the *Bounty* fame) in their settlement conflict with the Polynesians of the island of Tubuai.<sup>1</sup> Pappo was a leader in one of the tribal armies of Tahiti in internal wars sparked by the presence of British muskets. He parlayed his knowledge of Tahitian botany to achieve passage from his own Pacific Ocean World, to an Atlantic World. Pappo stowed away in 1791 on the *Providence*, Britain's second attempt under the command of William Bligh after the infamous *Bounty*, to transport breadfruit to the Caribbean. His actions show, how in the realm of the Pacific, alliances and relationships among and between the Polynesians and British were not necessarily forged across national or cultural boundaries.

At the breadfruits' destination- the royal botanical gardens on St. Vincent and Jamaica-, Pappo was in the same place at the same time as a denizen of that Atlantic World, the Scottish botanist Alexander Anderson. In a world beset by Revolution, Anderson had been forced to look up from his plants and seeds and leave the woods of Manhattan when war swept the colonies in 1776. He endured capture at sea and ransom by an American privateer, and survived the violent warfare between his fellow British subjects and the native St. Vincent Black Caribs allied with secret agents of Revolutionary France, all the while botanizing and observing the workings and intersection of the natural and human tropical world in which he had come to live. Between 1785 until his death in 1811, Anderson was the very capable director of the St. Vincent Botanic Garden, an important nodal relay point in a British world-wide network of botanical gardens and plant exchange. Though his efforts at botanizing benefited the British Empire, an early environmental awareness and commitment to the scientific gaze often placed Anderson in conflict with British planters and his own patrons. His own path through the late- eighteenth century woods was decidedly his own, constantly pushed by his love and interest of the natural world.

In the life story of Pappo and Anderson, both Atlantic and Pacific Worlds connected, moving these two frameworks of history into the global. The link between the two men was Enlightenment Botany, specifically, in this tale's telling, in the form of the infamous breadfruit of Bligh, and its transport from Tahiti to St. Vincent and Jamaica. Since Captain Cook's expedition through the Pacific, breadfruit had existed in the British imagination as a cheap means of fueling Caribbean slaves, who labored under brutal

conditions to feed European demand for sugar. Science and botany were harnessed to the yoke of slavery and cash crop profits, offering, for those who had botanical knowledge, opportunities of travel and advancement.

By transporting and receiving plant specimens from the Pacific for growth in the Caribbean, Anderson and Pappo both injected themselves into an ecological imperialistic and economic project to reshape different environments in the service of Empire. Their histories of movement are composed of islands, plants, Scientific Empire, cross-cultural interactions, slavery, and above all, that of individuals making their own way in the world. This Social Biography will illuminate the tracings of these two upon the late 18th century globe. While their life stories represent broad historical themes, both led their own unique lives-, lives that often crisscrossed not just territory and seas, but unexpected and counterintuitive borders.

Pappo the Otaheitian:

Pappo, as described in James Wiles' memorial, had previous experience interacting with the British before traveling aboard the *Providence* in 1791. He had traded with the crew of the *HMS Bounty* in 1789, acquiring a favorite blue sailor's coat and the nickname 'Jackets'. Pappo's willingness to engage with the British, as well as his knowledge of breadfruit and other Tahitian plants, secured for him passage on Captain Bligh's *Providence* two years later. Pappo's choice to go with Bligh to the Caribbean, however, reflected his own decision, despite cultural and linguistic differences.

Britain's focus on breadfruit was facilitated by a network of knowledge centered in London, and was served by an empire-wide network of botanical stations, and the political and economic influence to push expeditions of plant exchange. The *Bounty*, as with the later *Providence* expedition, was given shape by the powerful, and influential British naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, the longtime President of the Royal Society. With his substantial financial interests in the West Indies, Banks was looking to procure a cheap source of nutrition for the slave populations, whose diet consisted mainly of North American imports. The American Revolution had underlined the necessity of making the Caribbean islands more self-sufficient.

While not particularly flavorful, breadfruit was nutritious and grew abundantly in tropical latitudes with little tending, and was therefore determined to be a perfect food for slaves. Drawn from the Pacific, breadfruit was to be propagated in the British botanical gardens of the Caribbean on St. Vincent and Jamaica, under the scientific and skilled care of botanists such as Alexander Anderson or James Wiles, men who achieved their positions through Banks own intercession.

Following the overthrow of Bligh on the *Bounty*, mutineer Fletcher Christian attempted to settle on the island of Tubuai, 350 miles south of Tahiti, along with Pappo and a number of other Tahitian men and women, most likely as allies. However, Christian upset island politics by communing with three different chiefs, creating great tension both among the tribes and among the mutineers themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Pappo unquestionably sided with the European men: "Pappo distinguished himself as a warrior, by not only firing a musket among them several times (which is more than many of his countrymen dare do) but he killed a man with a club in single combat." Wiles comment indicates that while some native Tahitians assembled with the

British had little desire to battle against other Polynesian natives, not all shared this reluctance, including Pappo, and serves as a good example of alliances and relationships not always developing along similar cultural identities. Christian, in fact, nearly faced a mutiny of his own, but discovered the plot in time to avoid a revolt. Here is a clear indication that the Europeans were divided and torn within their own ranks, and not just against the authority and severity of what they perceived as a despotic captain. After returning back to Tahiti, Christian left secretly during the night, leaving behind both Pappo and a number of mutineers.

When Bligh, having survived his abandonment at sea, and in receipt of subsequent instructions to try for another shipment of Tahitian breadfruit, landed at Matavai Bay in the *Providence*, he found local clans at war, unsurprisingly utilizing firearms procured from earlier stops by the British ships *Discovery* (Cook) and *Matilda*, and *Pandora*. Wiles stated that Pappo was a leader in the royal army and “performed wonders, himself killing three men.” According to Wiles, peace among the factions was established by the mediation of Bligh, demonstrating the willingness of some of the Polynesian tribes to solicit the aid of Europeans in domestic disputes.

Pappo meanwhile, continually wore the marine jacket originally given to him years earlier, even in its tattered condition, signifying that the jacket likely held some sort of symbolic power for the Tahitian. Further indicating Pappo’s connection with and goodwill toward the British, Wiles stated that he was remarkably active in bringing breadfruit plants to the tent of the *Providence's* botanists, Wiles himself and David Smith. At the next juncture of Wiles’ narrative, the actions of the Tahitian became even more intriguing, as Pappo had made the decision to abandon his island home and remain with the Europeans. Wiles stated, “So strong was (Pappo) attached to us that on the ship’s leaving the Island he secreted himself below, and next morning, when she was a good distance off shore, made his appearance on deck.” This “attachment” not only demonstrates the Europeans acceptance of the Tahitian, but even further, points toward a concerted willingness by members of the crew to break ship’s rules by hiding a stowaway, an act which would not be tolerated under normal circumstances, especially by the exceedingly strict Bligh. Bligh’s account further confirms that in no way was Pappo taken on board by force and had clearly chosen to do so by his own free will. In addition, Bligh’s comments, corroborated by the other accounts, show that Pappo was a very capable botanist, and this, combined with his stature as a skilled warrior and his dogged determination to seek unknown risks, point toward the character of a quite remarkable individual.

After stops in Timor and St. Helena, where Pappo and another Tahitian stowaway, Mididda, were vetted by a military parade and play, the *Providence* arrived at St. Vincent in January 1793 with a cargo of 1300 Tahitian plants. Wiles reported that both Pappo and Mididda, were inoculated against the smallpox, but Pappo became “dangerously sick a long time” soon after his arrival and later died on Jamaica. At the concluding point of his memorial, Wiles unwittingly acknowledged his obvious close personal relationship with the Tahitian by stating, “Pappo in his former sickness would take no medicine from anyone but myself...” Although, later, as his health worsened, Pappo refused all care. Clearly, though, a certain amount of trust existed between the two men or Pappo would probably have initially declined any treatment. Yet in his final words on Pappo, Wiles reverted to true eurocentric form: “He was an exceeding good

natured harmless creature, had no ambition, learnt very little English, and appeared to be about 30 years of age." It is remarkable that a native warrior Tahitian, who Wiles personally witnessed committing numerous murderous and violent acts, who abandoned the relative security of his island home to sail around the world can be depicted in such a manner.

Ambition too, is most evident in Pappo's life. The successful transplantation of breadfruit to St. Vincent demonstrate his efforts to care for the plants on their long voyage, efforts acknowledged by Wiles and Bligh, and, of course, by Pappo even as disease drained his life away. Bligh records that as Pappo was carried about Jamaica in a kitterreen, the Otaheatian proclaimed; "I am sorry to part from you, (he said), but as I agreed, I will remain here with Wiles to take care of the Plants." Bligh was confident that "he [Pappo] will be the means of the Breadfruit being brought early into use, & on that account his life is valuable to Jamaica." Both Man and Plant thus both went into Caribbean soil.

### Anderson's World: Botanical Enlightenment in a Revolutionary Age

Once ashore on the island of St. Vincent, the breadfruit so carefully tended by Pappo and Wiles was then capably transplanted by the Scottish botanist Alexander Anderson. A Pacific World plant was now growing in an Atlantic World, transported by a Pacific Islander and propagated by a Scotsman living on a Caribbean Island. The breadfruit project itself floundered, as slaves rejected the fruit as a food source and planters continued to import provisions. Yet the transplantation itself was a success, for to the present day breadfruit trees in the St. Vincent Botanical Garden continue to grow from some of the original suckers of 1793. Breadfruit has also become a staple in the West Indian diet.

To arrive at his position, Anderson rode the wave of Europe's 18th Century concern with economic botany facilitated by an increasing body of botanical knowledge made accessible via a European 'Republic of Letters', and by Linnaeus's system of classification and the heavy legwork of its practitioners. Anderson journeyed from Scotland and London to New York before the Revolutionary War spit him out at the right place at the right time, his skills and visible botanical aptitude helping him secure the position of superintendent of the St. Vincent Botanical Garden. From what was to be his home base on St. Vincent, Anderson explored other Caribbean islands, as well as the coast of northern South America. Like Pappo, Anderson's words and actions demonstrated a commitment to the natural world and a desire to see and know as much of it's expanse as he could, a desire that at times set him against members of his own general cultural group.

Alexander Anderson was born in 1748 in Aberdeen, Scotland and educated at the University of Edinburgh. He also briefly worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden (founded 1673) of the Society of Apothecaries in London, before sailing across the Atlantic for America in 1774, where he sought employment as a gardener while living with his older brother John. Settling in New York, he immediately took to botanizing in the fields and forests of Manhattan. Despite the laughter of those who saw him saw 'lugging' his plants about, Anderson managed to collect specimens and information on plant usage from

locals and Indians, showing how, as with Wiles and Pappo, British botanists often relied on native knowledge. The American Revolution in 1776 disrupted his plans.

After a brief stint volunteering with the British Army in Philadelphia in 1778, Anderson then sailed for Suriname, only to be captured by American Privateers. Ransomed from the French on Martinique to St. Lucia, Anderson worked as a hospital mate while continuing to botanize. An astute study of St. Lucia cinchona, a possible native island source of quinine thought to help treat what later would be known as malaria, soon brought him to the attention of Sir Joseph Banks, who installed him as Director of the St. Vincent Botanical Garden.

From this vantage point, Anderson botanized, collected, and exchanged seeds throughout the Atlantic World. He made trips to other islands in the Caribbean, and sent numerous specimens to London. Anderson's growing knowledge of the natural world was enhanced, as in New York, by local as well as native Carib and slave botanical knowledge. Such connections cut across various boundaries, and with a lively exchange between Europe, the Caribbean, and New York and Philadelphia, Anderson's correspondence and communication embodied a multi-faceted Atlantic World. Such connections, however, were also easily severed by this world's tensions. War with France, or with the Caribs, often cut off new supplies and specimens for his garden. Anderson deplored this conflict, writing that fighting between Britain, France, and the St. Vincent Black Caribs had "cut off" his biota and informational "resources" from the French colonies and "other quarters". This absence from exchange, Anderson noted, "retarded the progress" of his garden.<sup>3</sup>

The many Caribbean islands had long been contested. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 had ceded much French territory to England, and had produced a history that, when combined with brief French success in the 1770s, resulted in a number of mixed populations. Empires, colonization, slavery, and sugar in a world-economy had worked to create a varied population living on a finite space. On St Vincent, by 1795, British planters co-inhabited with some large French planters, groups of petit blanc settlers, a few merchants, a small free-colored and free-black population (speaking French or Creole), many slaves, black maroons, and an indigenous Black Carib population, itself of mixed African and Island Carib ancestry (as well as French speaking). Conflicts arising among these groups in the post- French Revolution era, as detailed in the perceptive environmental gaze of Anderson, would revolve around access to, and use of, the island's land.

### Instruction from the Clouds

As has been detailed by the late environmental historian Richard Groves in his pivotal work *Green Imperialism*, even though he cultivated crops potentially useful to empire, the knowledge gained by Alexander Anderson as he did his best to follow the "footsteps of nature" (as he observed the slaves and Caribs did with their own gardens), a developing environmentalism, made visible empire's own agricultural fifth column. Anderson's writings reveal an awareness of the slavish devotion to sugar and cotton cultivation of the English planters. Anderson's observations of clouds and forests from his constant exploration of St. Vincent, as well as from his ascent of the volcano La Soufriere led him to understand the interconnectedness of the planter's removal of forest

cover with soil erosion, and rain fall. Able to observe cause and effect, Mr. Anderson assisted in the formulation of the Kings Hill Forest Act of 1791 which “reserved and protected for the purpose of attracting clouds and rain” a portion of the wooded Kings Hill. Though the act was approved, some planters felt that portions of their lands might be set aside for reserves instead of cultivation. Mr. Anderson, as director of the botanical garden, was heavily engaged in the search for plant material useful to the economic desires of empire. As an environmentalist, however, he became aware of the dangers of the agricultural practices employed in the advance of empire’s agricultural commodities. The mono-crop cultivation of sugar could in effect be harmful to that very sugar.

Additional concerns of maintaining wooded regions on the island were based in the conflict with St. Vincent's mixed native Carib peoples. It was felt that the Caribs, having a long history of effective resistance, would employ the forest reserves as cover for future attacks on the British. These planter’s fears were realized during the Anglo-Carib, or Brigands War of 1795-1796, as the Black Caribs responded to the English large-scale sugar production process and its destruction of the island’s forests. Assisted by French *agents provocateurs* with their dangerous anti-slavery stance of French Revolutionary ideals, the Caribs attacked the English until their defeat in 1796. In Anderson’s history of the event, rational and observant, he places himself outside the class of English planters. Again, his balanced gaze turned to the very land in which he grew his plants, revealing a connection to agricultural cultivation and violent, social repercussions. Anderson writes of the English planters that they possessed:

“a fertile soil which amply repaid their labour and expense, they dreamed of no accident or danger, the only object who should have the most land in canes and send the greatest number of hogsheads of sugar to market, forgetting they were surrounded by mortal enemies [the Black Caribs] who viewed their prosperity with chagrin and jealousy, from their long possession, regarding every foot of land the planter cleared as intrusion on their property, only waiting and anxiously wishing the favorable moment to be ended by their allies for extermination of the English name.”

Different environmental approaches produced violence. Removed from St. Vincent in 1796, almost half of the 5, 200 Caribs died away from their home lands and forests. Anderson also noted that the same obsession with sugar prevented planters from cultivating breadfruit, unwilling to commit their land to anything but sugar cane. Anderson himself died on St. Vincent in 1811. His time as director of the Botanic Garden and his familiarity with the island itself had helped him form a new environmental sensibility and understand nature’s influence on and affect by human interactions. As an Atlantic World nodal point in an empire-wide network of botanical gardens he was instrumental in shifting and changing those environments touched by Empire, as well as coming to understand its limits. From his ascent of St. Vincent’s volcano Morne Garou, Anderson in 1784 wrote the following:

“From the situation of these islands to one another, and to the continent of South America, I imagine there are sub-marine communications between the burning mountains, or volcanoes in each of them, and from them to the volcanoes on the high mountains of America.”

The "communication" instead was ocean-going, transported worldwide by British naval power, and assisted by native people such as the warrior, traveler, and gardener Pappo. Initiated with pen in hand and inscribed in letters from fellow scientist to fellow scientist, or by tending to the young shoots and seeds of plants on long ocean voyages, the communication of the 'burning mountains' of new scientific discoveries illuminated the intricate workings between environment and empire, between land and people.

By bringing the breadfruit from Tahiti to the Caribbean, Anderson and Pappo worked together to join, in the biology of the fruit itself, the Atlantic and the Pacific. Employing the historical lens of Sydney Mintz's 'Sweetness and Power', his famous study of sugar's history, shows how the two men sketched, albeit only in British hopes, a breadfruit 'food chain' that tied trade and strife in the Pacific, to botany and slavery in the Caribbean, and eventually, in tea or cakes, to the textiles mills of Manchester.

From their own individual interests, Anderson and Pappo joined their respective regions, and created new environments, and new awareness. As Pappo was most probably missed by his friend Wiles, so to was Anderson to be missed by friends who followed in his garden's footsteps.

There where their arms those clust'ring bread-fruits spread,  
And spicy Palms their graceful columns rear,  
E'en now methinks before I see him tread,  
Or mid the shrubs his voice instructive hear.

Or where yon Mango canopies so wide,  
With boughs impervious to the mid-day heat,  
There on that bank, the brawling brook beside,  
In letter'd ease, he took his noontide seat

But now he's gone- life's fitful dream is o'er-  
O! frail and light illusion, swiftly fled!-  
Mourn then ye shades – ye rocks his fate deplores,  
Weep Nature, weep – for Anderson is dead!

(William Lohead, of Antigua, on his friend and predecessor at the St. Vincent Botanic Garden)

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<sup>1</sup>Christian took possession of Bligh's nautical charts before releasing the captain, which were actually compiled by Cook during his earlier voyages. Christian decided on Tubuai after studying these charts, and would later opt for Pitcairn's Island after discovering that Cook had improperly mapped its position.

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Anderson, “An Account of the Topographic and Geographical Situation of His Majesty’s Botanical Garden of St. Vincent, with an account of the history of its foundation.” (1807) MS 605, The Linnean Society of London.