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Agency, affect, and local knowledge in the exploration of Oceania

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Since the early 1990s, a rich series of critical studies by historians of science, cultural geographers and cartographic historians has acknowledged the significance of indigenous agency, knowledge and spatialities in records of encounters with Euro-American travellers and colonisers.¹ In the process, imperial science, geography and cartography have been reconfigured as dialogic, if usually unequal processes of knowledge co-production by global and local, metropolitan and colonial, colonising and colonised agents.²

My own heuristic strategy parallels these approaches but is applied to contexts that are in no sense colonial, set in the first phase of fleeting coastal or seaborne encounters between indigenous people and European scientific voyagers in Oceania (Island Southeast Asia, Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands). In exploiting travellers' written and visual representations, including maps, as ethnohistorical texts, I position local people as shadowy but often potent agents in

1 For example, Bravo 1996b; Burnett 2002: 27–34; Safier 2008: 254–255. I gratefully acknowledge research support from the Australian Research Council (project numbers DP0665356 and DP1094562) and the National Library of Australia which awarded me a Harold White Fellowship in 2010 and gave generous permission for the reproduction of images and maps.

2 For example, Bravo 1996a, 1999; Driver and Jones 2009; Raj 2010 [2007]: 60–94, 223–234; Safier 2010; Schaffer et al. 2009; Short 2009; Wagoner 2003.

the formulation of such knowledge. Going beyond the now common inference that there must have been local agency in encounters, I identify its textual residues as overt signs or inadvertent countersigns in the content, language and iconography of outsiders' representations. Filtered through the prejudices, perceptions and emotions of foreign observers, signs and countersigns of indigenous behaviour, appearance and lifestyle are intrusive elements in written and graphic texts. They are variously manifest in word usages, names and motifs; in tense, mood and voice; in tone and style; and in presence, absence, emphasis, ambiguity and contradiction.³

Most indigenous signs and countersigns were triggered by obscure, unnamed persons, collectivised and stereotyped as 'natives', 'Indians', or 'savages'. But some indigenous individuals feature more prominently in voyage writings, art and maritime surveys. Most obvious are persons identified as local leaders, so-called 'kings' or 'chiefs' whom naval commanders had to flatter, mollify, bribe or intimidate, and who themselves tried to control or exploit the presence of potent, dangerous, needy strangers. However, other Islanders greatly influenced voyagers' knowledge and representations by joining their vessels, whether coerced or voluntarily, and acting as guides, interpreters, assistants and informants. They were forerunners of thousands of mostly anonymous Oceanians who, from the early sixteenth century, sailed and worked on European vessels, visited foreign places as far away as the Americas and Europe, and arguably initiated the modern Pacific diaspora. Usually sidelined in marginalia and footnotes or patronised as exotica, their actions and textual impact demand greater scholarly attention. So, too, do the contributions of another category of subaltern – ordinary sailors and castaways of varied nationalities whose enigmatic traces also litter archives and master narratives. With reference to the concepts of agency and affect or emotion, this chapter examines the crucial assistance given to the work of scientific travellers by indigenous auxiliaries, often mediated by seamen or itinerant foreigners. Detailed examples are taken from the copious textual legacy of Jules Dumont d'Urville's voyage to Oceania on the *Astrolabe* in 1826–29.

Traces of indigenous intermediaries populate voyage texts from the onset of European entry into Oceania after the capture of Malacca (Melaka, Malaysia) in 1511. The Spanish routinely abducted Islanders to serve as pilots, interpreters, informants, hostages and potential converts. Dependence on indigenous cooperation and expertise is a subtext in their writings and cartography. Local interlocutors are a ghostly presence behind the vocabularies collected in 1519–21 in Brazil, Patagonia, the Philippines and the Moluccas (Maluku, eastern Indonesia) by Antonio Pigafetta, the Italian chronicler of Ferdinand Magellan's expedition.⁴ In the Philippines, Magellan relied on the communication skills of his Malaccan slave-interpreter Enrique, while the continuation of the remnants of the expedition after the commander's death depended for navigation and local knowledge on

3 For full exposition and application of my theory of countersigns, see Douglas 2013, 2014a, 2014b.

4 For his vocabularies, see Pigafetta 1906 [1525?], I: 44, 74–78, 182–192; II: 116–144.

pilots kidnapped or recruited in Mindanao and the Moluccas.⁵ Pigafetta's narrative interleaves a wonderful set of maps that order the physical world traversed according to universalist Renaissance principles.⁶ Yet the regional geography of Island Southeast Asia and many of the places depicted were unknown to the Spanish pilots or to Pigafetta, whose cartography indirectly rehearses indigenous geographic knowledge. A legend adorns the island of Gafi (North Maluku), alluding to local stories: 'In this island pygmies live.'⁷ Pigafetta's narrative relates this terse dictum to a European performance genre: 'in this island of Caphi live small men like the agreeable dwarfs who are pygmies.'⁸ Legend, remark, and the maps in general are countersigns of dialogue with indigenous agents.

In 1606, Pedro Fernández de Quirós led a Spanish expedition from Peru to 'discover the unknown Southern part' of the globe. He exalted abduction as an avenue for saving souls and gained ecclesiastical sanction to do it. But he also admitted pragmatically that the 'manifest risk' to ships and people made kidnapping a 'necessity' to obtain vital supplies of water and wood – the admission is another indigenous countersign.⁹ Quirós's second-in-command Luis Váez de Torres 'caught' 20 persons 'of different nations' along the south coast of New Guinea in order to make a 'better report' to the king and noted that they provided 'much news on other peoples'.¹⁰ Such information, conflated as personal observation, is an undercurrent in Spanish writings. In Taumako (eastern Solomon Islands), the 'chief' Tumai used signs to give Quirós sailing directions for 'more than sixty islands, and a large land' whose inhabitants and products he described. On departure, Quirós ordered Torres to seize four men. Three leapt overboard but the fourth, who was originally from another island and had been 'serving' Tumai 'like a captive', stayed cheerfully on board; he was later baptised Pedro, learned some Spanish and eventually died in Mexico. Pedro confirmed and extended the geographical knowledge Quirós had gleaned in Taumako.¹¹ Not all the place names learned by Quirós are identifiable but they conceivably stretch from the main Solomons chain to Tuvalu and Fiji, a maximum span of more than 2,000 kilometres and a potent countersign of the range and skills of Austronesian voyagers.¹²

Since about 1990, as the idea of local agency in encounters has become steadily more thinkable, some Polynesian and Micronesian travellers figure in voyage historiography.¹³ They include two men who joined James Cook's expeditions.

5 For example, Pigafetta 1906 [1525?], II: 54, 62, 110, 154, 158, 168.

6 For Pigafetta's maps, see Pigafetta [c. 1525].

7 Pigafetta [c. 1525]: folio 87, brbl-media.library.yale.edu/images/1069116_quarter.jpg, accessed 8 February 2014.

8 Pigafetta 1906 [1525?], II: 144.

9 Quirós 1973a: 23; 2000: 225; Quirós and Valera 1963. For examples of such kidnappings in Rakahanga (Cook Islands) and Espiritu Santo (Vanuatu), see Quirós 2000: 223–229, 276–278.

10 Torres 1878: 21.

11 Munilla 1963: 77; Quirós 1973b; 2000: 241–243, 305; Torres 1878: 18.

12 Lewis 1994 [1972]: 37–38; Parsonson 1966.

13 Chappell 1997; Newell 2005.

The high-ranking Ra'iatean priest-navigator Tupaia left Tahiti with the naturalist Joseph Banks in 1769 and died in Batavia 18 months later en route to England. Cook called him 'a Shrewd Sensible, Ingenious Man', with great 'understanding' but 'proud and obstinate'. His exceptional contributions as navigator, cartographer, interpreter, mediator and ethnographic artist have inspired a welter of historical appreciations.¹⁴ The middle-ranking but politically ambitious Ra'iatean Ma'i reached England in 1774, was lionised in 'genteel company', and was the subject of numerous portraits. Exoticised in Joshua Reynolds's celebrated oil (Figure 6.1) and in James Caldwell's engraving of a drawing by William Hodges, who had travelled with Cook, Ma'i was also painted by Hodges in more naturalistic mode.¹⁵ Ma'i did not impress Cook, despite his value as an interpreter.¹⁶

Two other prominent indigenous auxiliaries and knowledge brokers on European voyages have also attracted greater historical notice. The high-ranking Tahitian Ahutoru accompanied Bougainville in 1767, spent a year in France, and much influenced Bougainville, notwithstanding ethnocentric doubts expressed about the Islander's intellect and capacity to communicate.¹⁷ Signs of his contributions are patent in Bougainville's Tahitian wordlist.¹⁸ Countersigns of conversations with Ahutoru on which Bougainville based his mature account of Tahitian polity are implicit in comparing his shipboard journal with his published narrative.¹⁹ The Caroline Islander Kadu spent eight months with Otto von Kotzebue's Russian expedition in 1817. The aristocratic French-German naturalist Adelbert von Chamisso acknowledged him as 'our friend and companion' and – after each had learned enough of the other's language – as his prime source of ethnographic information on what is now Micronesia. The German-Russian artist Louis Choris, who based his ethnographic commentary partly on 'Kadou's stories', remarked on the Islander's ability 'to make himself loved by the officers and esteemed by the sailors'. Kotzebue, an aristocratic Baltic German from a literary family, affirmed that he had 'grown very fond' of Kadu.²⁰ Choris's naturalistic lithograph of his friend (Figure 6.2) contrasts sharply with an engraved appropriation of Choris's portrait in the English edition of Kotzebue's narrative (Figure 6.3). The engraving civilises Kadu with European dress and embellishes him racially with Roman nose and thin lips, befitting one so admired by urbane gentlemen.

14 For contemporary signs of Tupaia, see Banks 1962, I: 312, 323, 401; Cook 1955–67, I: 138, 156–157, 169, 442; 1955–67, II: 275, 356; Forster 1778: 511–525. For a selection of modern histories of his significance, see Carter 1998; Salmond 2003: 38–162; 2008; Smith 2010: 189–198; Thomas 1997: 1–5; Turnbull 1998; Williams 2003.

15 Caldwell 1777; Hodges [c. 1775].

16 For contemporary signs of Ma'i, see Solander in Cook 1955–67, II: 949–950, cf. Cook 1955–67, II: 428, note 2; 1955–67, III: 62, 79, 105–106, 136–8, 241; Forster 1777, I: xiv–xvii, 388–389, 444; II: 77, 83, 92, 457. For modern evaluations, see Guest 2004; Hetherington 2001; Rensch 2000: 52–55; Smith 2010: 199–212.

17 Bougainville 1771: 224–226; Hervé 1914; Pereire 1771. See also Smith 2010: 182–189.

18 Bougainville 1771: 389–402.

19 Bougainville 1771: 207–232; cf. 1977: 310–331. For modern appreciations of Ahutoru, see Liebersohn 2006: 142–149; Rensch 2000: 15–17, 46–51; Staum 1996: 161–162.

20 Chamisso 1821: 86–142; Choris 1822: 'Iles Radak', 14–22; Kotzebue 1821, II: 84–122. See also the modern evaluation of Kadu by Liebersohn (2006: 157–162).



Figure 6.1 Joshua Reynolds, 'Omai', 1776, oil.

Source: Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joshua_Reynolds_-_Portrait_of_Omai.jpg, accessed 9 February 2014.

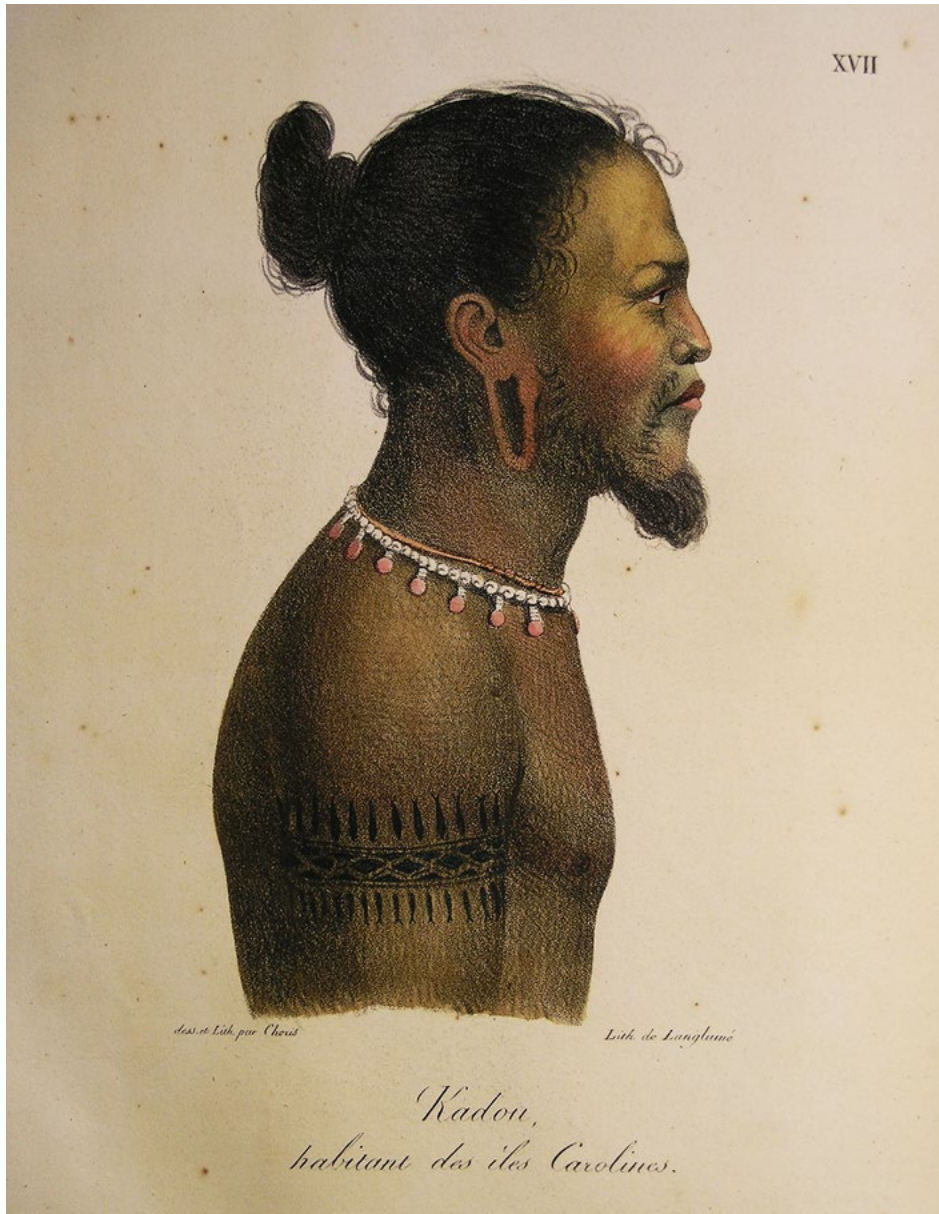


Figure 6.2 Louis Choris, 'Kadou, habitant des îles Carolines', 1822.

Lithograph, in *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde, avec des portraits de sauvages d'Amérique, d'Asie, d'Afrique, et des îles du Grand Océan ...*, J.B.B. Eyriès (tr.), Firmin Didot, Paris: 'Îles Sandwich': plate 17. Source: Service historique de la Défense, département Marine, Vincennes, France. Photograph: B. Douglas.

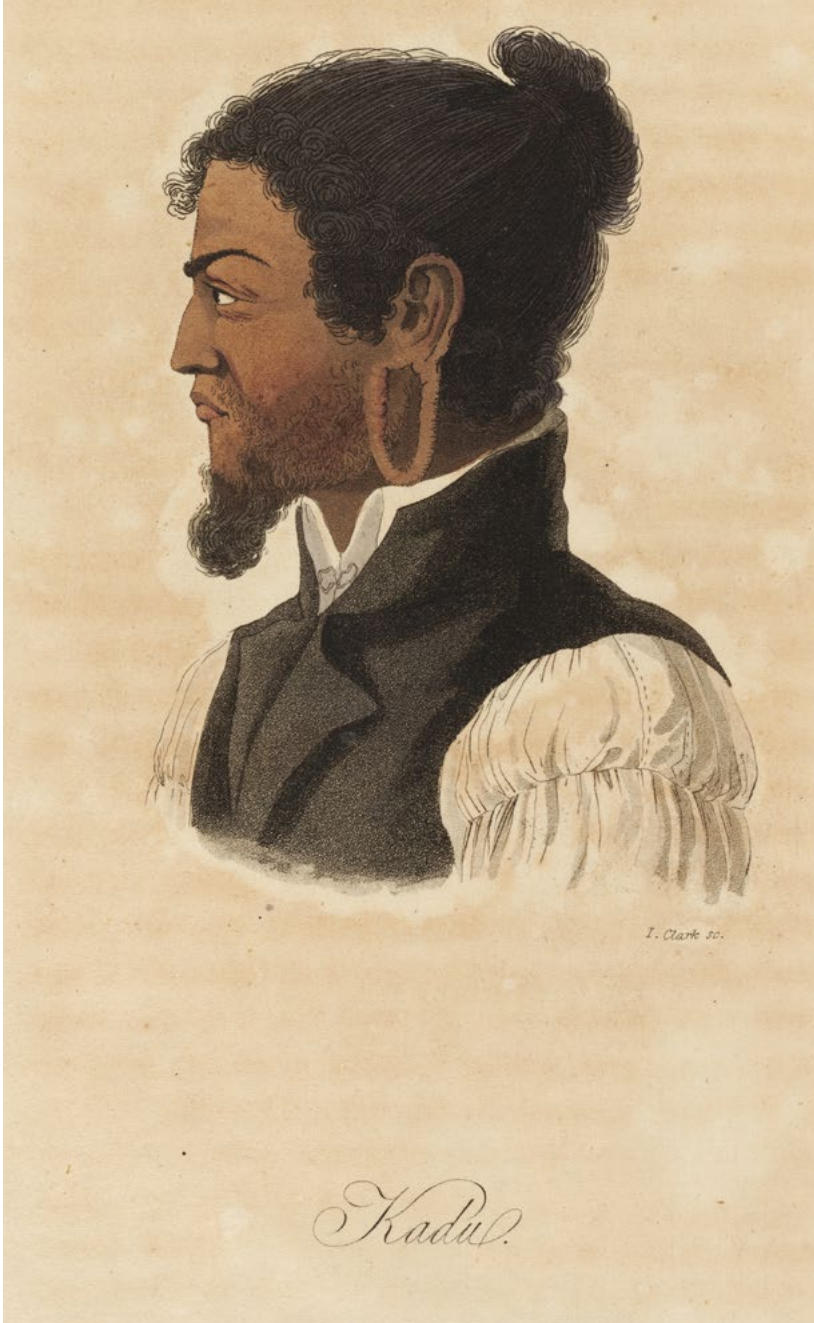


Figure 6.3 I. Clark after Louis Choris, 'Kadu', 1821.

Engraving, in Otto von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery, into the South Sea and Beering's Straits, for the Purpose of Exploring a North-east Passage, Undertaken in the Years 1815–1818 ... in the Ship Rurick ...*, Hannibal Evans Lloyd (tr.), Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, London, vol. 3, frontispiece.

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: NK 921.

Far less prominent historically than these more or less iconic figures was a multinational array of intermediaries who left scattered but telling traces in the texts of Dumont d'Urville's voyage of 1826–29. Anticipating the event, his official instructions hoped that the perils of surveying the little-known Fiji archipelago might be avoided by obtaining 'information on the position of neighbouring islands' and the 'main shoals or reefs' from the inhabitants – notwithstanding their reputation for 'ferocity' amongst both nearby Tongans and the handful of navigators who had so far ventured into Fijian waters. Whatever its 'imperfections', this local knowledge would complement the admittedly 'very incomplete' map of the 'Viti Islands' included in Adam Johann von Krusenstern's recent *Atlas de l'Océan Pacifique* – the first such work devoted to the great ocean (Figure 6.4).²¹ In the event, the French passage through the archipelago was successively directed by a Tongan and a Fijian, interpreted by Spanish-speaking castaways who knew the vernacular languages. In the process, the French acquired a rich body of linguistic, ethnographic, demographic and geographic knowledge, the latter epitomised in a 'Map of the Archipelago of the Fiji Islands' drafted by the *enseigne* (sub-lieutenant) Victor-Amédée Gressien (Figure 6.5).



Figure 6.4 Adam Johann von Krusenstern, 'Carte de l'archipel des îles Fidji', 1824.

Engraving, in *Atlas de l'Océan pacifique*, par ordre de Sa Majesté impériale, Saint-Petersbourg, vol. 1: plate 14.

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: MAP Ra 100 Plate 14.

21 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, I: lxxv; Krusenstern 1824a; 1824b: 231–235.



Figure 6.5 Ambroise Tardieu after Victor-Amédée Gressien, ‘Carte de l’Archipel des Iles Viti, reconnues par le capitaine de frégate Dumont d’Urville ... expédition de la corvette de S.M. l’Astrolabe, mai et juin 1827’, 1833.

Engraving, in Jules Dumont d’Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l’Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas [hydrographique]*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 23.

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra. Annotation. Photograph: B. Douglas.

On 25 May 1827, as the *Astrolabe* sailed through the southern islands of the Lau group in eastern Fiji, five men boarded the corvette from a canoe. Four were Tongans, including the ‘chief, named Mouki’, and his son. Proud owner of 10 firearms, Mouki had visited Port Jackson, New Zealand and Tahiti on an English vessel. He now lived and traded at Lakeba ‘under the protection of the chief Touï-Neao [Tui Nayau]’ who had only six guns. The surgeon-naturalist Joseph-Paul Gaimard was amazed to discover that the fifth visitor was ‘one of our former acquaintances from Guam’, a young Islander named José Mediola whom Gaimard had met during his earlier circumnavigation of the globe under Louis de Freycinet. On 26 May 1819, then aged 14 years, Mediola was among 76 ‘Metis, descendants of Filipinos, and Chamorros, or natives of the Marianas Islands’, whose strength Gaimard tested on a dynamometer. His performance was above average for his age and Gaimard described him as ‘a well built young man’. Several years later, Mediola had either deserted or been abandoned by a Manila-based Spanish trading ship and ‘attached himself’ to Mouki’s

service. He begged to be allowed to join the *Astrolabe* and Dumont d'Urville admitted him on grounds of 'humanity' and his likely utility as an interpreter. The next day, three young Spanish survivors of the trading vessel's subsequent shipwreck came on board and also pleaded successfully to be added to the crew. One of them, Guttierrez, reputedly spoke Fijian 'fluently' and became the key link in an interpretive chain with Gaimard who spoke Spanish.²² Gaimard was the expedition's main ethnographer due to his great enthusiasm for working ashore, his linguistic interests, and – said Dumont d'Urville – the 'good opinion he usually enjoyed amongst savage nations'.²³

Mouki, who claimed some 'authority' in Lakeba, initially made himself 'very useful' to the French. During two days on board, he helped pilot the vessel to Lakeba, impressing Dumont d'Urville with his knowledge of the position of reefs, islands, and their 'true names'.²⁴ Keeping the other three Tongans 'as hostages', Dumont d'Urville sent Mouki to Lakeba in the longboat, with Mediola as interpreter, to negotiate the acquisition of an anchor reportedly abandoned there, though none of the boat's crew knew much Spanish. Once on shore, Mouki's inability to exercise 'any influence' over a 'turbulent', 'noisy' crowd of armed Fijians led the prudent *enseigne* Victor-Charles Lottin to retreat without landing. It was, Lottin decided, 'evident that he had no rights over the anchor, and probable that he enjoyed no authority in the island'. Mouki was seemingly so overcome by 'fright' at the height of the affair that he hid, flat on his stomach, in the bottom of the boat. Yet a 'brother' of the Tui Nayau known to the French as Toki (Figure 6.9), who had also come aboard the *Astrolabe*, insisted that the Fijians meant no harm and wanted only to trade. Mediola, the Spaniards, and Mouki maintained that they were extremely curious rather than hostile and Lottin himself later agreed, blaming the debacle on 'the pilot' Mouki who afterwards left the *Astrolabe* and did not return.²⁵

From 27 May, persistent storms drove the corvette away from Lakeba. Marooned on board were the three remaining Tongans, a half-Tongan 'cousin' of the Tui Nayau, and two Fijian 'chiefs' – Toki of Lakeba and a man the French knew as Tomboua-Nakoro (Tubuanakoro). When Dumont d'Urville, per Guttierrez, explained the situation, the Fijians were unworried but the Tongans were 'profoundly distressed' because, they said, all Fijians bar the Lakebans 'were their enemies and would eat them'. For a week Dumont d'Urville struggled north-west through the Lau group, hoping in vain to land his passengers in

22 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 400–401, 404, 412–413; Gaimard 1817–19: 429–435; 1832: 719–722.

23 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, V: 158.

24 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 400; Gaimard 1832: 720.

25 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 401, 404–407; Gaimard 1832: 707–708, 721; Lottin 1832: 691–695.



Figure 6.7 Emmanuel-Adolphe Midy after Louis-Auguste Sainson, 'Archipel des Viti: Portrait en pied de Tounbouanokoro', 1833.

Lithograph, in Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas historique*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 98 (3).

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: nla.pic-an8264642.

All the French were extravagantly impressed by the ‘remarkable intelligence and dignity’ of Tubuanakoro whose portrayals by the artist Louis-Auguste de Sainson are lithographed in the *Atlas* of Dumont d’Urville’s voyage (Figures 6.7, 6.10).²⁷ Ratu Loaloadravu Tubuanakoro was a son of Ratu Tanoa Visawaqa who, on the death of his powerful older brother Ratu Naulivou Ramatenikutu in 1829, became the fifth Vunivalu (warlord, political leader) of the island polity of Bau. Tubuanakoro, killed in an internecine conflict at Bau in 1832, was the older half-brother of Ratu Epenisa Seru Cakobau, who became the sixth Vunivalu in 1852 and was Tui Viti (‘King of Fiji’) in 1871–74.²⁸ The French voyagers in 1827 heard that Tubuanakoro was a ‘nephew’ (brother’s son) of Naulivou whom Dumont d’Urville understood to be ‘sovereign of Embao [Bau] leading chief of the large island Viti-levou [Viti Levu] and who claims a kind of sovereignty over most of the small islands to the E. of his residence’.²⁹ Tubuanakoro served Naulivou as ‘agent’ collecting tribute in the Lau Islands and elsewhere. In consequence, as he and Toki acknowledged, he was ‘accustomed to travel’ and unusually well informed. Since ‘everything he said’ seemed trustworthy, Gaimard saw him as a ‘mine’ of information to be ‘carefully exploited’ through Gutteriez. In Sainson’s whimsical phrase, Gaimard conducted ‘long sessions’ of ‘severe assaults on the imperturbable amiability of the Fijian taxation officer’. In the process, he learned Fijian and Tongan names and population estimates for 109 islands or islets and ‘a wealth of ideas on the manners, customs, and usages of the peoples of Fiji’. Dumont d’Urville invited Tubuanakoro to his cabin where he obtained ‘the nomenclature of every island we saw’ and ‘discovered the existence of several others unmarked on the maps’. Both Frenchmen admired Tubuanakoro’s precise reading of the ‘position’, ‘direction’ and ‘names’ of all the islands marked on Krusenstern’s vestigial map of Fiji (Figure 6.4).³⁰ Gaimard also amassed a Fijian vocabulary of nearly 300 words, which Dumont d’Urville published and the modern linguist Albert Schütz deemed ‘surprisingly accurate’, given its circuitous acquisition from Tubuanakoro via the tacit agency of the interpreters.³¹

27 Sainson 1832: 726.

28 Routledge 1985: 42–96, 126–129, 208–210. See also World of Royalty 2001–14 for a genealogy of the Vunivalu of Bau.

29 Dumont d’Urville 1827 (original emphasis).

30 Dumont d’Urville 1827; 1830–33, IV: 413, 415, 423, 426–427; Gaimard 1832: 698, 700–701, 708–713, 717, 722; Sainson 1832: 727.

31 Dumont d’Urville 1834: 137–142; Schütz 1974: 450.

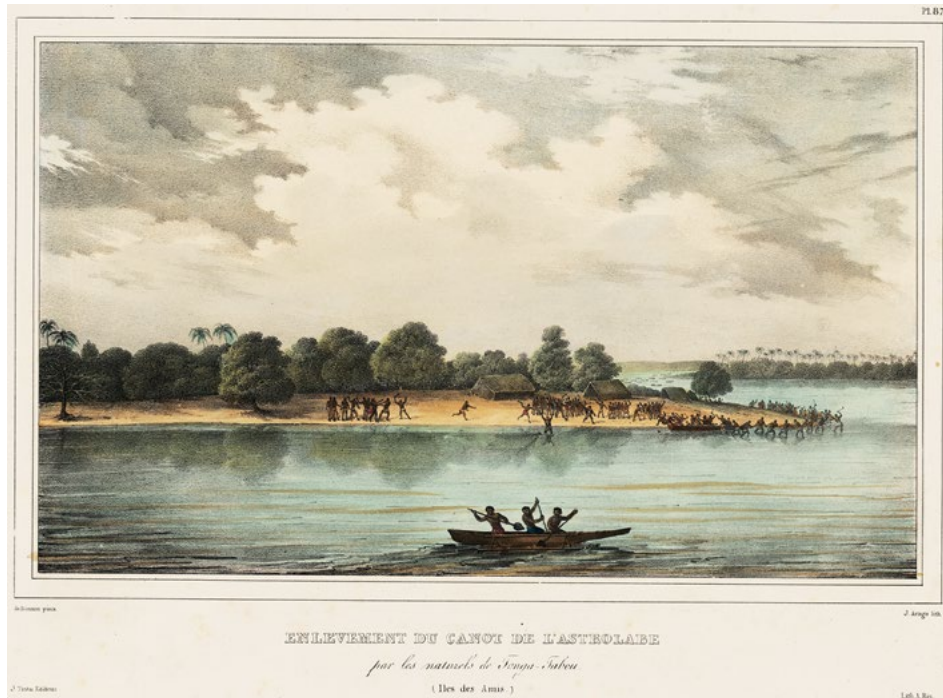


Figure 6.8 Jacques Arago after Louis-Auguste de Sainson, 'Enlèvement du canot de l'Astrolabe par les naturels de Tonga-Tabou (Iles des Amis)', 1833.

Lithograph, in Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas historique*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 87.

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: PIC Volume 577 #U1796 NK3340.

The French texts apply an extraordinary stream of positive epithets to Tubuanakoro: 'of very remarkable sagacity, intelligence, and kindness'; 'courage', 'sang-froid'; 'a very remarkable man, superior in his country'; 'the most knowledgeable of them'; a 'noble, mild, happy physiognomy'; 'courtesy', 'steadfastness'; 'noble affability'; and the encomium taken from widely travelled Dumont d'Urville's published narrative – 'a man of mild manners, attractive physique, and obliging character, he showed himself to be much superior, in my eyes, to all the savages I had seen thus far'.³² All these words are overt signs of personal indigenous agency as processed in European perceptions. But the euphoria of French 'good opinion' of Tubuanakoro and its partial projection on to Fijians generally are also countersigns of these voyagers' relief at approved indigenous conduct, given the perennial insecurity of Oceanic voyaging under sail and the vulnerability of sailors to unpredictable local behaviour. Such relief typically generated positive depictions or softened negative ones, even in the

32 Dumont d'Urville 1827; 1830–33, IV: 424, 426–427; Gaimard 1832: 698, 709, 718; Sainson 1832: 726–728.

face of prejudiced aversion to physical appearance. The reverse was also the case. Less than a fortnight before the expedition reached Fijian waters, one of the *Astrolabe's* boats had suddenly been attacked in Tongatapu and its crew seized by 'a compact mass of savages' more than 500 strong. Sainson depicted the scene (Figure 6.8). Dumont d'Urville was initially charmed by Tongans, their 'agreeable' physiognomies, 'comparable' to those seen in Europe, and their 'generous, obliging, hospitable' character. He ranked them 'above' other segments of 'the Polynesian race' for the quality of their agriculture and – despite proximity to Fiji – for showing fewer traces of physical 'mixing' with the 'black race' ('height stunted, nose flat, hair frizzy or curly, and very dark brown skin'). However, their unexpected, violent conduct provoked an about-face and led him to denounce them as 'barbarians' – 'perfidious', 'versatile', 'treacherous', 'covetous, audacious, and above all profoundly hypocritical'.³³ These words are indigenous countersigns.

In practice, Fijian appearance, 'conduct' and polity defied the emergent racial dichotomy of the (admired) 'copper-coloured or Polynesian race' and the (despised) 'black Oceanian or Melanesian race'. The French observers concurred a priori that 'the Fijians' did not belong to 'the *yellow race*' but were 'evidently part of the *black race*'.³⁴ They classed Toki of Lakeba behind only Tubuanakoro in intelligence and demeanour. Yet at first sight, referring to Sainson's portrait (Figure 6.9), Dumont d'Urville had 'instantly' seen in 'his colour, features, attitude and manners ... the true type of the black Oceanian race' that he had previously observed in New Ireland, New Guinea and New Holland. In most respects, the excellent Tubuanakoro struck them otherwise: his 'aquiline nose', 'the cut and the feature of his face, his simply suntanned complexion, his appearance and his figure' brought to mind 'the Arab type', though they noted that his 'ample, curly hairdo' was close to 'that of the Papuans and the Melanesians generally' (Figure 6.10).³⁵

33 Dumont d'Urville 1827; 1830–33, IV: 80, 129–133, 166, 221, 228–229, 231.

34 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 414, 427, 447, 453; Gaimard 1832: 718, original emphasis; Quoy 1830–32, IV: 696.

35 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 408, 427; Gaimard 1832: 714, 718; Sainson 1832: 728.



Figure 6.9 Emmanuel-Adolphe Midy after Louis-Auguste Sainson, 'Archipel des Viti: Toki frère du chef de Lakemba', 1833.

Lithograph, in Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas historique*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 98 (2).

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: nla.pic-an8264642.



Figure 6.10 Emmanuel-Adolphe Midy after Louis-Auguste Sainson, 'Archipel des Viti: Tounbouanokoro', 1833.

Lithograph, in Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas historique*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 98 (5).

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: nla.pic-an8264642.

In the relatively immediate genres of journal and narrative, racial typology was stymied by twin existential paradoxes: that a 'black race' combining such hair with 'black skin verging on chocolate', 'flattened face, squashed nose' and 'thick lips' should also be generally 'very handsome men', 'remarkable in stature and strength', with 'fine' physiques; and that they should practise pottery-making,

unknown in Polynesia.³⁶ In his abstract racial taxonomy of Oceania, Dumont d'Urville resolved the conundrum by reconstituting 'the blacks of Fiji' as the 'first rank' of the Melanesian race. He attributed their 'advantages' of 'laws', 'arts', government, and 'a dose of intelligence and judgement very remarkable for savages' not to their own agency but to their proximity to the Tongans and 'frequent communications' with 'the Polynesian race'.³⁷ He historicised and further racialised this judgement in a passage in his narrative:

these Islanders, forming the last link of the black Oceanian race in the east, would undoubtedly have opposed the progress of the yellow or Polynesian race towards the west. After a long era of warfare, they forged friendly relations; the Tongans are admitted as traders and even colonists to several Fijian islands; frequent alliances occur between the two races, and from their mixing results an intermediary race which, in a century or two, will perhaps constitute the main population of this archipelago.³⁸

Echoes of this enduring racial ranking are encrusted in the heavily Polynesian bias of the historiography of Oceanic voyaging and – until recently – in its omission or elision of indigenous agency apart from that of a handful of Polynesians. So, in a generally meticulous overview of Dumont d'Urville's passage through the Fiji Islands, Helen Rosenman alluded to Tubuanakoro only in passing as 'one of *Astrolabe's* ex-passengers'. John Dunmore, decorated historian of French Pacific exploration, mentioned him not at all. Yet both devoted some detail to the Tongan Mouki, despite his lesser contribution to the expedition and its textual legacy.³⁹

Two dominant strands in positive French evaluations of their Fijian experience are utility and affect or emotion. The inestimable practical value of the navigational aid provided by Mouki and Tubuanakoro, implicitly mediated by the interpreters, is patent. But it evoked little more overt appreciation than Dumont d'Urville's reiterated phrase 'very useful' – an appropriate expression for a terse, male, military discourse.⁴⁰ Yet the crux of Tubuanakoro's appeal to the French was emotion – or its apparent absence. Affect has recently become an acceptable, even required theme in historical scholarship, undermining the relentless rationalism of conventional positivist historiography. Cases in point with respect to Oceanic voyaging are Vanessa Smith's *Intimate Strangers* and my own recent work.⁴¹ Writing about indigenous intermediaries, Harry Liebersohn

36 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 445–446; Gaimard 1832: 718–719; Quoy 1830–32, IV: 696–697; Sainson 1832: 727.

37 Dumont d'Urville 1832: 12–13.

38 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 450–451.

39 Dunmore 1969: 202–206; Rosenman 1987, I: 127–133. See also Douglas 2014a: 26–33 for a critique of Oceanic voyage historiography.

40 Dumont d'Urville 1827; 1830–33, IV: 400.

41 Douglas 2014a; Smith 2010.

characterised their relationships with and representations by voyagers as an ambivalent 'mixture of interest and feeling'.⁴² Every French observer I have cited applauded the 'perfectly calm' 'courage' and 'noble tranquillity' with which Tubuanakoro confronted the prospect of exile from his homeland while deploring the bitter wailing of the Tongans and eventually Toki.⁴³ In a passage saturated by affective countersigns of indigenous agency, Dumont d'Urville summed up the emotional value placed by naval officers on the virtues of stoicism and restraint:

His conduct always presented a happy union of gravity, courtesy, reserve and stability of spirit; never did he abandon himself, as did his companions, to uncontrolled transports of joy or grief, rage or satisfaction, according to the influence of circumstances.⁴⁴

I conclude by briefly discussing a different, far more elusive nexus of interest, utility, feeling and agency implied in stories about two indigenous women. The first is a Tahitian who evidently taught her English lover, the illiterate marine private Samuel Gibson, to speak Tahitian during Cook's first visit to the island in 1769. Gibson tried to desert, was forcibly retaken to the ship and flogged, but returned to Tahiti in 1773 as a corporal on the *Resolution*. On this occasion, he served as Cook's regular interpreter because he 'spoke the language tolerable well'.⁴⁵ The second woman is a young Tasmanian, one of two female transcontinental travellers encountered by Dumont d'Urville's expedition in 1826 at King George's Sound in south-western Australia where they were living and working with a party of sealers.⁴⁶ Unnamed by the French, they were later identified as Mooney and Dinah.⁴⁷ Sainson depicted them sympathetically (Figure 6.11) but in their shipboard zoological journal, Gaimard and his colleague Jean-René Constant Quoy animalised these women's 'thick, protuberant lips, lengthening into a kind of snout [*museau*]'.⁴⁸ In their formal *Zoologie*, they used Sainson's portraits as evidence to render this exaggerated personal facial feature, seen on *two* women and depicted by Sainson on only one, as the defining characteristic of a 'distinct race' in Van Diemen's Land.⁴⁹ This generic sequence from contemporary journal to scientific treatise epitomises the counterfeit logical trajectory on which the science of race depended – a priori typification with intellectual slippage from particular to type.

42 Liebersohn 2006: 140.

43 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 415, 423–424; Gaimard 1832: 699, 722; Sainson 1832: 727.

44 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 427.

45 Cook 1955–67, I: 114–115, 140; II: 233.

46 The lithograph caption assigns the women to Kangaroo Island where Tasmanian women had reportedly lived with sealers from the 1810s (Taylor 2002).

47 Amery 1998: 52–53; Clarke 1998: 31, 33.

48 The term *museau* ('muzzle', 'snout') referred specifically to 'the dog and some other animals' and was sometimes 'popularly' extended to people, 'but only with contempt or in jest' (Institut de France 1835, II: 247).

49 Quoy and Gaimard 1830a: 198–199; 1830b: 45–46.



Figure 6.11 Hippolyte-Louis Garnier after Louis-Auguste de Sainson, 'N^{lle}. Hollande: Ile des Kanguroos: femmes de l'île', 1833.

Lithographs, composite, in Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe exécuté pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Atlas historique*, J. Tastu, Paris: plate 12 (1), (2), (3), (5).

Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra: nla.pic-an8133372.

Yet here, too, signs and countersigns of indigenous agency perturb racial system. Quoy and Gaimard reported the sealers' open acknowledgement that they depended on their indigenous wives for food and 'that without them they would probably have died of misery'. Quoy also recognised the naturalists' own debt to the 'skill and industry' of these women in procuring natural history specimens – oysters, other shells and large lizards.⁵⁰ Much later, in an 'erotic biography' of his colleague, Quoy recalled sardonically that Gaimard – gregarious and lascivious – quickly made friends with the sealers and 'especially with their wives'.⁵¹ Dumont d'Urville equivocally acknowledged one of the Tasmanian women as having a 'kind of intelligence' despite corresponding 'in the highest degree to her racial type'. She gave Gaimard a list of about 100 words of the language of Port Dalrymple (Launceston) which Dumont d'Urville published, hoping it was 'exact' since her English lover had served as interpreter.⁵² The word list is at once a rare public sign of female agency in an encounter with Europeans and a countersign of the tangled skein of agency in such transactions. The list includes the terms arse, breast, penis, testicle and vulva – likely countersigns of the woman's sexual liaisons with her lover and perhaps with Gaimard. Like the Tahitian, Mooney and Dinah represent the almost invisible multitude of indigenous women who tutored their foreign sexual partners in local language and manners or otherwise purveyed knowledge and assistance to strangers.

In conversation with Tubuanakoro, Gaimard gathered that the Fijians divided humanity into 'three races of men or three different peoples': *Kai-Viti* (themselves); *Kai Tonga* (the Tongans); and *Kai Papalan-hi* [*papalagi*]

50 Quoy 1830–32, I: 206; Quoy and Gaimard 1830a: 198; 1830b: 44–45.

51 Quoy n.d.: 12–13.

52 Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, I: 105–106; 1834: 9–10.

(foreigners).⁵³ Condescending, he saw this tripartite classification as a token of their limited geographical knowledge. From another perspective, however, it is a sharp reminder of the Fijians' rapidly expanding world view and the kaleidoscopic multinational activity already under way in a part of the world still almost unknown to European science and cartography. To a greater or lesser extent, Enrique, the Malay pilots, Tumai, Pedro, Ahutoru, the Tahitian woman, Tupaia, Ma'i, Mahine, Kadu, Mouki, Tubuanakoro, Toki, Samuel Gibson, José Mediola, Guttierrez and his companions, the sealers, Dinah, and Mooney were participants in a mobile global undertow which arrogant naval voyagers elided, despised, but were often forced to enlist and depend on.

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53 Gaimard 1832: 699; see also Dumont d'Urville 1830–33, IV: 426.

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