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British–Tahitian collaborative drawing strategies on Cook’s *Endeavour* voyage

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This chapter comes out of an enquiry into the intellectual atmosphere and social dynamics of first contact in the Pacific on Captain Cook’s *Endeavour* voyage. The common impression of the *Endeavour* is of a highly segregated community in which sailors and civilians were separated by class, rank, and in their first encounters with the people of the Pacific, by early concepts of race. In the *Art of Captain Cook’s Voyages*, Bernard Smith and Rüdiger Joppien represent Cook and Joseph Banks as embarked upon a ‘civilising mission’.¹ The ‘myth model’ formulated by Gananath Obeyesekere in the *Apotheosis of Captain Cook* of ‘the redoubtable person coming from Europe to a savage land’ influences much of the commentary on the relationship between Cook and Tupaia as discussed in this chapter.² But the *Endeavour* drawings, I argue, tell a different story in which Pacific people were working in creative collaboration with the British on this physical and intellectual voyage of exploration. By reconstructing the *Endeavour* drawing sessions – who was present, how many took part, where

1 Smith and Joppien 1985: 56.

2 Obeyesekere 1992: 11.

they took place and the drawing conventions in use – I propose to build a social picture of this ship and, in particular, of the British relationship with Tupaia who joined the *Endeavour* in Tahiti and became one of its artists.

The approach I have taken to art history treats creative production as a problem-solving strategy rather than hard evidence of an artist's particular attitudes or beliefs. Many of the questions raised require further investigation, particularly in relation to Polynesian history and culture, but in this first phase of my doctoral research I have been deliberately Anglo-centric because my broader argument is that a failure to appreciate the wider context of Georgian civilian and naval culture in relation to the *Endeavour*, particularly in these radical years preceding the American Revolution, has produced an unnecessarily constrained account of the capacity of both Britain and Polynesia for creative engagement in the pre-colonial Pacific.

Cultural perception and cultural practice

In *European Vision and the South Pacific*, Bernard Smith attributed to British artists in the Pacific an empirical 'objectivity', which he argued was itself a cultural artefact of the European Enlightenment. One of most important innovations of the *Endeavour* voyage was the introduction of visual documentation into scientific exploration. Smith and Joppien, in the catalogues of the *Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* and the *Charts and Coastal Views*, see both the *Endeavour's* 'art' and 'charts and coastal views' as scientific modes of drawing. The *Endeavour's* artists and cartographers worked across both genres, and so any analysis of the *Endeavour's* art necessarily also entails consideration of its charts and coastal views. In this context, the distinction between amateur and professional artists also becomes ambiguous. However, Smith and Joppien's division of the *Endeavour* archive into two volumes, distinguishing the art of Cook's voyages from the naval drawings, inadvertently reinforces the impression of a segregated shipboard community. These works are most productive when regarded, not as the definitive observations of 'professional' eyes, but the trial-and-error experiments in representation of draughtsmen of all kinds. As such, this chapter approaches these late eighteenth-century images in a manner more usual to contemporary art: as the products of a visual culture examined through its drawing processes. In this context, the development of Tupaia's artistic practice becomes the instrument through which the British perception of the Pacific is mediated.

A reorientation of the *Endeavour's* art history from cultural perception to cultural practice provides the prerequisites for an 'intellectual history', a history which, to paraphrase Quentin Skinner, aspires to a plausible account of what these artists, in drawing at the time they did, for the audience they addressed, could in practice have been intending to communicate.³



Figure 8.1 'Chart of the Society Islands', attributed to Joseph Banks.

Source: British Library, BL Add Ms. 15508 f.16, © British Library Board.

The sketch, 'Society Isles discovered by Lieut. J. Cook in 1769', held in the British Library (Figure 8.1), is a rough sketch in pencil, ink and wash. Its most striking feature is the level of detail contained in the words crowded around the island coastlines in Joseph Banks's handwriting. Smith and Joppien noted these were most likely 'derived from Tupaia and it is therefore probable that Banks drew this chart to preserve these names'.⁴ Their use of the word 'preserve' implies Banks, in making this chart, was anticipating the loss of Polynesian culture; certainly, as already noted, Smith and Joppien considered Cook and Banks to be embarked upon a 'civilising mission'.⁵

In terms of the drawing process, this construction of British perception as inherently colonial is notable, not so much for what is included as for what is excluded from its consideration. Smith and Joppien recognised the relationship between the artist and the sitter (or in this case, the artist and his informant) *in situ* as distinct from the ultimate effects of European contact, but as Smith explains in *Imagining the Pacific*, his purpose as an historian was not to observe the inconsistencies between the artist's immediate experience and history but their continuity.⁶ Within such a framework, the erratic exchanges of trial and error that comprise the creative process – and the meaning a drawing was actually made to communicate at the time – can be subsumed in the awareness

3 Skinner 1969: 49.

4 Smith and Joppien 1988: xlii.

5 Smith and Joppien 1985: 56.

6 Smith 1992: ix.

of subsequent colonisation. But if the sketch is approached as a working drawing, these 'redundant' negotiations of first contact may be retrieved from the *Endeavour's* visual notes.

Tupaia's Chart

Tupaia is best known for the chart of 74 islands he made with Captain Cook, commonly called 'Tupaia's Chart', which survives as a copy in Cook's hand. Attempts have been made to decipher it since it was first published as an engraving by Johann Forster, a member of Cook's second voyage, in 1778. Cook left no account of Polynesian navigation in his journals and this has become pivotal negative evidence in the European interpretation of British–Polynesian relations. The silence is often taken for an absence of conversation. David Turnbull, for example, writes 'Cook appears never to have asked any of his informants how they navigated. What is especially interesting is that he did not ask Tupaia, or at least made no reference to asking him in any of his writings'.⁷ Paul Adam goes further when he writes, 'Tupaia's chart and what it meant to Cook illustrates perfectly the incomprehension of the Europeans when faced with the nautical culture of the Polynesians';⁸ while European resistance to Polynesian knowledge is also implicit in Anne di Piazza and Erik Pearthree's proposition that Tupaia 'succeeded in convincing Cook of his geographical knowledge', that Cook 'had occasions to convince himself' of Tupaia's expertise, and by their use of the subheading: 'Tupaia, Novice Cartographer'.⁹

Yet the chart itself demonstrably required a considerable investment of Cook's time, both in the process of its development and in the making of the fair copy. The integration of European and Polynesian concepts of space, distance and orientation testifies to a complex conversation; and indeed the notes marked by small ships are transcriptions of Tupaia's comments in Cook's pidgin Tahitian: 'In the time of the ancestors of Tupaia a friendly ship [arrived]' and so forth (Figure 8.3).¹⁰ If we consider for a moment Skinner's criterion of what these artists, in drawing at the time they did for the audience they intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate, the choice of language dictates this chart was not designed for use at the home of the Admiralty's English-speaking officials but rather in the Pacific by its unique cohort of Tahitian-speaking Britons and their Polynesian counterparts.

7 Turnbull 2000: 59.

8 Adam cited in Turnbull 2000: 68.

9 Di Piazza and Pearthree 2007: 322.

10 Langdon 1980: 227.

Nicholas Thomas singles out Tupaia's Chart as a rare example of concepts merging between the European and Oceanic imaginations, but he sees its cross-cultural fusion as compromised by what he calls in passing the 'moralising cartography of the Enlightenment'.¹¹ The association between Cook's cartography and a closed mind would seem to scuttle the possibility of cross-cultural collaboration, but it is difficult to conceive how the imaginative integration of European and Polynesian concepts Thomas observes could have been achieved without the free exchange of ideas.

Such a prescriptive approach to empirical observation seems more in tune with early nineteenth-century concepts of positivism than the eclectic iconoclasm that characterises the late eighteenth century in which the *Endeavour* voyage took place. In *European Vision*, Bernard Smith argued that the Linnaean taxonomy used by Banks represented a pivotal moment in the transition from neoclassical to empirical modes of scientific thought. The versatility it allowed for the classification of plants as well as clouds, animals and minerals caused multiple fields of natural history to suddenly merge into a single hierarchy. 'Landscape' was transformed from an expression of mood into a 'scientific' vision of 'typical' ecologies.¹²

Carl von Linné's system was indeed essential to Banks's research on Cook's first Pacific voyage, but it was only on the second that Johann Forster started applying the classificatory system to people when he defined the 'varieties' of the human species.¹³ In *Imagining the Pacific*, Smith describes Banks's systematic expansion of knowledge in natural history as 'analogous' to Cook's systematic approach to navigation and cartography.¹⁴ Thomas stops short of attributing Forster's experiments in classification on the second voyage to the artists on the first, but, in agreement with Smith, he seems to regard Forster's ethnography as nevertheless having imposed a dogmatic or moralistic framework on Cook and Tupaia's creative relationship.

Irrespective of the separate traditions to which cartography and natural history belong, the mode of perception von Linné's *Species Plantarum* engendered on the *Endeavour*, only 15 years after its first publication, has to be regarded as excitingly new not, as Thomas would seem to suggest, pervasive or habitual. Cook and Tupaia's cartography, by contrast, drew upon much older traditions.

11 Thomas 1997: 4.

12 Smith 1960: 6.

13 See Forster 1996.

14 Smith 1992: 42.

Thomas argues that natural history constrained the Polynesian voice by imposing 'Linnaean universals over indigenous classificatory schemes'.¹⁵ However, such constraints, if they were already active on the first voyage, cannot be extrapolated from the silence in the journals. Equating silence in the writing with silence in speech treats the written word as impartial, but the *Endeavour* journals are not indiscriminate or necessarily candid records of the thoughts and conversations that took place on the voyage. If silence in the *Endeavour* journals is to be interpreted as a cultural phenomenon, it must be according to Georgian conventions of the written word, not the concepts it may be hiding.

Georgian silence

Little mention is made of Tupaia in the *Endeavour* journals, but many members of the expedition received similar treatment. Banks's friend and colleague Daniel Solander and his secretary Herman Spöring are rarely mentioned, while the artist Charles Praval would be unknown but for the muster list.

These journals were not necessarily the open-hearted records of their authors' innermost thoughts the modern reader might imagine. On his voyage around Newfoundland in 1766, Banks kept his notes on pieces of paper so that his journal would not be open to 'Every Petty officer who chose to peruse it'.¹⁶ The *Endeavour* has a reputation as a remarkably happy ship and this must be attributed on a voyage of three years in no small part to the capacity of its members for discretion.

But the stakes were much higher than personal sensitivities. Greg Denning argues that on these ships, where the crowded conditions made physical solitude almost impossible, it was language, not architecture, that separated public from private life:

Distance in naval command is something acted out, sometimes in so small a thing as a term of address, an invitation to dinner. Distance could be blurred by countervailing signs of relationships other than military. Ominously, there were many signs of spaces and relationships other than military on the *Bounty*.¹⁷

These 'other relationships' were the lines of patronage that governed naval hierarchy. Discipline is considered the keystone of modern naval command but, as N.A.M. Rodger writes in the *Wooden World*, Britain's Georgian Navy lacked even a single word for this concept in the modern sense:

¹⁵ Thomas 1997: 4.

¹⁶ O'Brian 1997: 49.

¹⁷ Denning 1992: 20.

This observation is of more than linguistic significance, for when men lack a word for something it is safe to assume they do not often think and talk about it. If eighteenth century sea officers had worried about discipline in their service, they would certainly have developed at least one word or phrase to express it.¹⁸

It was obligation and the pursuit of personal advantage that underpinned a system legendary for its stability and efficiency, not arbitrary power. In this context, suppression of independent thought was seen as undermining. Admiral George B. Rodney wrote, in the margin of a plan to instill strict obedience in a naval charity school, 'Those who are put over us if they act their part right, we ought to reverence. If they do not I say *no*. None of your passive obedience and non resistance, especially among seamen.'¹⁹ Rodger argues the generation to which the *Endeavour's* crew belonged was the last for whom the class structure was also the 'natural' order of things. Complaint and resistance to the details of authority were tolerated, even admirable in the eyes of Rodney, because they carried no implications for the basic stability of the social hierarchy as a whole.

Authority in the Navy operated on two principles: the intelligent cooperation demanded by the ship as a machine on which all lives depended, and the influence of personal 'interest'. Promotion was gained not through impartial measures of merit but the influence of patronage, frequently exerted by family members higher up. The perception of personal influence as sycophantic, as Rodger points out, is characteristically Victorian.

Interest was a normal feature of late eighteenth-century civil society, almost regarded as a form of currency that could be exchanged to mutual benefit. In the Navy, power accrued through liability. Promotion bound a man to his benefactor as a 'follower', and his sphere of influence continued to expand as his protégé in turn accrued further obligations through the use of his influence to promote others. The more successful or even famous a follower became, the more power accrued to his benefactor within a network of mutual obligation.

Whereas in civilian government a letter of reference openly acknowledging that the applicant's 'natural constitutional indolence governed him with irresistible sway' was no obstacle to promotion, in the Navy competence was a matter of survival.²⁰ Civilian political influence was strenuously resisted because it was recognised that the effect of any form of civilian advancement upon the power of officers to choose and promote their followers would be systemic. Any officer seen to bow to interests other than naval quickly lost influence, and without the

18 Rodger 1986: 205.

19 Rodger 1986: 210.

20 Rodger 1986: 332.

power to promote he lost the power of command over his followers because they lost their incentive to obey. It was on these vertical ties of mutual dependence and obligation that captains relied for their authority in the Georgian Navy.

Within the *Endeavour's* wooden world, this paramount consideration placed Cook on an equal footing with the aristocratic Banks; and it was in this context that the Machiavellian figure of Tupaia, at the centre of a Tahitian political crisis, nurtured his own convivial relations with the British through their drawing sessions.

Tupaia's chart of the Society Islands

Tupaia's reasons for joining the *Endeavour* are not recorded but in 1769 he was in an uncomfortable position, both in Tahiti and his home island of Raiatea. He had lost his lands some 20 years before in an invasion of Raiatea by the neighbouring Boraborans, and now in Tahiti found himself on the wrong side of a war in which he had been a key political adviser.²¹ Joining the British on their expedition provided an opportunity for a strategic withdrawal and, it could be speculated, to return later from a position of strength as their intermediary in the Pacific.

Smith and Joppien interpret the words Banks recorded on the chart he made with Tupaia as 'coastal features', which Anne Salmond describes more narrowly as the 'place names of islets, passages and settlements'.²² However, John Olstad identifies them as the estates of the landholders.²³

Anita Smith explains in 'The Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands' that the landholding system typical of Polynesian high islands distributes environmental resources by dividing the island like a cake from the central volcanic peak to the ocean. In the case of the chart of the Society Islands each 'coastal feature' would represent the seaside boundary of one of these segments. Cook's map of Tahiti shows a similar segmentation of the island into its regions of governance.

This reading has important implications for the nature of Banks's interest in this chart because, as Anita Smith explains:

The Pacific Island land tenure systems are intimately tied to traditional systems of governance and social structures which in turn are reflected in the ways in which people organize themselves in the landscape ... From a cultural heritage

²¹ See Salmond 2004, 2009.

²² Salmond 2009: 205.

²³ I am indebted to John Olstad, PhD candidate in Linguistics at Newcastle University, for interpreting this map.

perspective, they are an inseparable component of many Pacific Island cultures and their traditional knowledge, customs and language. For example, as is common in the region, the Cook Island word *vaka* means both a social and a territorial unit ...²⁴

Banks's investment of time in this extensive list of landholdings suggests dispossession was not on his mind when he was making this chart. He was Tupaia's *taio*, or ceremonial friend, and Salmond argues it was this relationship which made it possible for Tupaia, a 'high-priest navigator', to share sacred navigational information with him and his people.²⁵ Banks was not a sailor and these landholdings have little navigational value to European cartography, but within the context of Banks's Georgian culture, the chart might be interpreted politically as a diagram of Polynesian 'interests' in the region and, as such, Tupaia and his British collaborators might be regarded as each inducting the other into the knowledge systems of his culture through these cartographic drawing sessions.

This mode of creative learning was not foreign to Cook, who began his education in cartography under similar circumstances, through a chance meeting on a beach in Canada. Major Samuel Holland was a military engineer who was making a survey where Cook's ship the *Pembroke* was anchored when, Holland writes, Cook became 'particularly attentive to my operations; and as he expressed an ardent Desire to be instructed in the use of the Plane Table; (the Instrument I was then using) I appointed the next Day in order to make him acquainted with the whole process'.²⁶ Holland met with Cook and 'two Young Gentlemen' (officers from Cook's ship) to teach them the skill of hydrography and drawing then continued in the Great Cabin which, 'Dedicated to scientific purposes and mostly taken up with a Drawing Table, furnished no room for Idlers'. Cook and Holland used this time to compile the materials for a newly accurate chart of the Gulf and River St Lawrence, Newfoundland.

Dening describes the Great Cabin as the main social space: a place where Cook 'could work at his drawings, write his journals, be the "experimental gentleman", and make a table for his quarterdeck'.²⁷ This description paints a picture of quiet retreat from the commotion of shipboard life, but the workspace suggested by Holland's letter is a more active place shared by cartographers working cooperatively in the manner of Cook and Holland and, on the *Endeavour*, with Banks and his party of scientists. The drawing table normally in constant use by the officers on the *Endeavour* was also in demand by the scientists for the preservation and classification of specimens as well as for writing journals,

24 Smith 2007: 41–43.

25 Salmond 2009: 203, 204.

26 Smith and Joppien 1988: 64.

27 Dening 1992: 20.

for painting and drawing and, of course, for meals. The Banks–Tupaia chart contains a variety of drawing styles and their identification gives an indication of the number of people who may have been present in this drawing session, as participants or observers.

Smith and Joppien identified the sketch as a drawing by Banks but di Piazza and Pearthree argue the chart was drawn by Tupaia with the variation in style demonstrating his apprenticeship in European cartography. Salmond includes Cook in the creative group who produced this chart, but like di Piazza and Pearthree attributes the drawing as a whole, which is 'drawn without perspective (like his sketches of *marae*)', to a single draughtsman, Tupaia.²⁸ However Holland's description of the making of the Newfoundland chart shows Cook working as part of a group and this points to an unexplored alternative: that the different styles are not imitations but the original contributions of other draughtsmen.

Di Piazza and Pearthree observe that the 'inked outlines of [some islands] are ragged, and that of Ulieatea (Raiatea) is highlighted in various styles as if it were a practice exercise. The rough pen hatching imitates Cook's style, and the ink washes the style of [the master's mate, Richard] Pickersgill or [the master, Robert] Molyneux.'²⁹

The 'rough pen hatching' is typical of Cook's surveys. For example, four charts held in the British Library (a sketch of part of the Bay of Rio de Janeiro, two surveys of parts of New Zealand, and a chart of the north-east coast of New Zealand from Table Cape to Cape Runaway) show this cross-hatching.³⁰ However, while these points of similarity argue strongly in favour of Cook's participation in this drawing session, they are not definitive. Smith and Joppien attributed all the Cook charts, except his original surveys, jointly to him and Isaac Smith, an Able Seaman who, as Cook wrote in a letter, 'was of great use to me in assisting to make surveys, Plans, Drawings &c^a in which he is very expert'.³¹ Smith and Joppien noted that the only drawing that could be securely attributed to Isaac Smith was a drawing of an iceberg in the log he kept on Cook's second voyage, held in the Public Records Office, London.³² Isaac Smith was a cousin of Cook's wife, and had first joined Cook on the *Grenville* at the age of 13 on his Newfoundland voyage. A draft for a chart of the Harbour of Croque held in the State Library of New South Wales, and which has been attributed to Cook,

28 Salmond 2009: 205.

29 di Piazza and Pearthree 2007: 322.

30 British Library, BL 31360 f.28, BL 31360 f.52 and BL 31360 f.54, and BL 31360 f.53; see Smith and Joppien 1988, I: plates 11, 207, 232, 180.

31 Smith and Joppien 1985: 55.

32 Smith and Joppien 1985: 55; Admiralty records, PRO Adm 55/105 f.66v, Public Records Office, London; see Smith and Joppien 1988, II: plate 12.

clearly shows the writing of a child in the heading – the ‘N’ in ‘Plan’ and at the end of ‘Newfoundland’ are backwards – while Cook’s adult hand is identifiable in the faintly legible ‘Scale of one mile’.³³ This chart provides a genuine example of an apprenticeship in cartography. While elements such as the cross-hatching may be described as typical of Cook, they are not necessarily evidence of his ‘hand’. They are also part of Smith’s style and represent what might be termed a ‘micro-school’ of draughtsmanship in which Cook’s influence is apparent.

The combination of wash and cross-hatching, which can be seen on the top left coast of ‘Ulicateah’ (Raiaatea), can also be seen in Robert Molyneux’s chart of New Zealand.³⁴ Richard Pickersgill’s use of ink wash shows no distinctive characteristics which would argue either for or against his participation in this drawing session, but given that Johann Forster acquired his copy of Tupaia’s Chart from him, which he then amalgamated with a copy owned by Banks to make his engraving, Pickersgill had strong reason to take an interest.³⁵ Pickersgill’s chart has been lost, but the differences between Forster’s engraving and the surviving chart made by Cook indicate significant variation arguing that Pickersgill engaged in a similar collaboration with Tupaia. The relationship with Tupaia is further supported by the notes on his chart of ‘Ohetiruah’ (Hiti-roa or Rurutu),³⁶ which refer to Tupaia by name: ‘Tobiea a Native of Otihiite Describes 9 Others lying to the westward not far distant some of which are very large and all of them beginning their Names with oheti as this does.’³⁷ Smith and Joppien also compare the most striking feature of this chart, the peaks of ‘Bolabola’ (Borabora), with Sydney Parkinson’s drawing.

Learning to draw by copying was a standard mode of teaching in the eighteenth century, and while it is difficult to positively identify the participation of any particular draughtsman by direct examination of the chart alone, a strong case for Cook’s active contribution to this drawing session can be made, based on the working methods he employed in other charts.

33 Cook, James, A plan for the Harbour at Croque in Newfoundland, SAFE/PXD11 a156008, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

34 New Zealand: North Island and South Island, including Stewart Island and Cooks Streight (Cook Strait), 1770, ADM 352/386 [formerly 458 shelf 69], The National Archives, Kew.

35 Suarez 2004: 148.

36 Richard Pickersgill (?), French Polynesia: Austral Islands: Ohetiruah (Rurutu or Oheteroah), 1769, ADM 352/469 [formerly 497/4 shelf Hf], The National Archives, Kew; see Smith and Joppien 1988, I: plate 160.

37 Smith and Joppien 1988:155.

8. BRITISH-TAHITIAN COLLABORATIVE DRAWING STRATEGIES ON COOK'S ENDEAVOUR VOYAGE

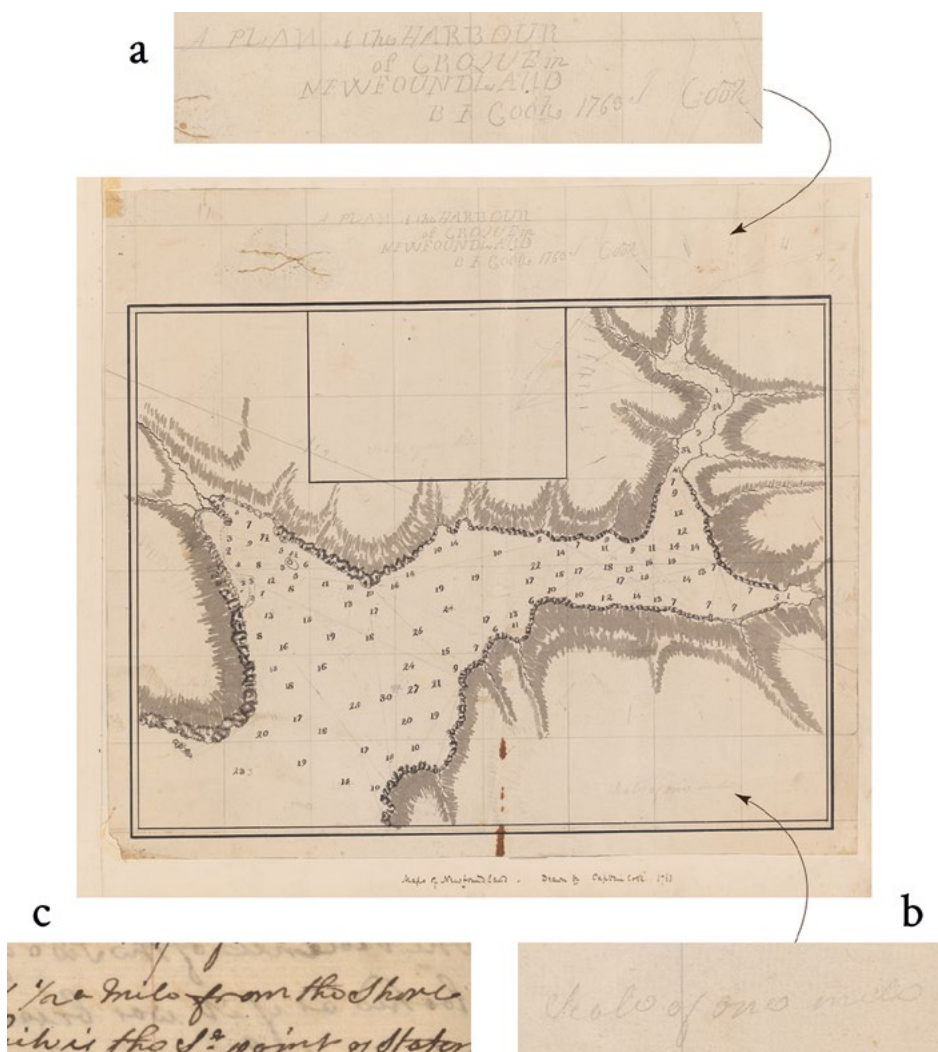


Figure 8.4a 'A Plan of the Harbour of Croque in Newfoundland by J Cook, 1763'. The 'n' in 'Plan' and at the end of 'Newfoundland' are written backwards.

Source: Collection of Admiral Isaac Smith, SAFE/PXD11 a156008, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

Figure 8.4b 'A Plan of the Harbour of Croque in Newfoundland by J Cook, 1763' (detail). In the body of the chart, 'Scale of one mile' has been written in a more sophisticated hand.

Source: Collection of Admiral Isaac Smith, SAFE/PXD11 a156008, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

Figure 8.4c Sample of James Cook's handwriting.

Source: Journal of HMS *Endeavour*, 1768–1771, holograph, National Library of Australia, nla.gov.au/nla.ms-ms1-s27v-e-cd.

Cook is noted for the accuracy of his cartography and where he was able to make his own survey, comparison with the modern map shows this is also true of his chart of the Society Islands. But Richard Pickersgill's chart of Raiatea shows large parts of the island were not surveyed and from the ship's track it is clear both Bola Bola (Borabora) and Maurua (Maupiti) were only seen from a distance.³⁸ Nevertheless, they are complete on Cook's chart, suggesting the missing parts were extrapolated from Tupaia's sketch and verbal descriptions.

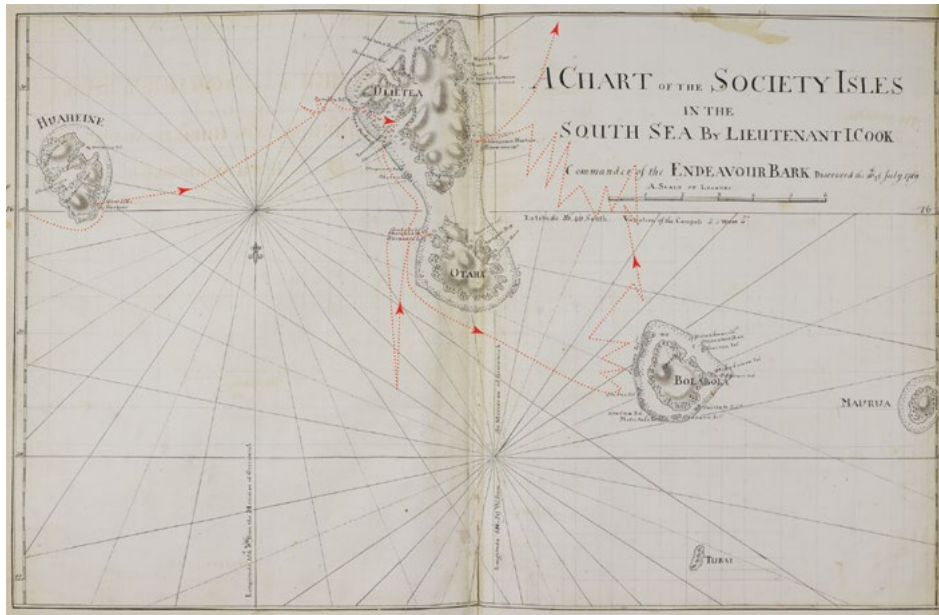


Figure 8.5 James Cook, 'A Chart of the Society Isles in the South Sea' with the ship's track superimposed. Although the *Endeavour* did not make a complete survey of the islands of Raiatea (Ulietea), Bola Bola (Borabora) and Maupiti (Maurua), they are complete on his chart.

Source: British Library, BL Add Ms 7085 f.11, © British Library Board.

This practice of working from information, by eye and experience, or 'Lead, Lookout and Local Knowledge' as David Turnbull puts it, was not alien to Cook.³⁹ Coastal sailing requires the skills of a pilot rather than a navigator and it is on this level that Tupaia's chart of the Society Islands operates.

38 Richard Pickersgill, A Plan of the Islands Uliateah [Raiatea] and Ottahau [Tahaa] discover'd July the 16th 1769 in His Majesty's Ship Endeavour Lieutenant James Cook, Commander, 1769, ADM 352/471 [formerly 497/7 shelf Hf], The National Archives, Kew; see Smith and Joppien 1988, I: plate 145.

39 Turnbull 2000: 60.

Cook spent the early years of his military career from 1763 to 1767 surveying the Newfoundland coastline, and his chart of part of the south coast, which he published with a commentary, can be used to illustrate how the information contained in this chart of the Society Islands is qualitatively different from the more famous 'Tupaia's Chart'.

Andrew David describes in his introduction to the *Charts and Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages* the use of the 'running survey', made from a moving ship, and the more accurate method of triangulation, made from fixed points of observation.⁴⁰ In Newfoundland, Cook learned how to base small parts of his chart on triangulated calculations while improvising the remainder from a running survey. His book, *DIRECTIONS For Navigating on Part of the South Coast of Newfoundland ...*, provides a valuable insight into his working process. Implicit within its repetitive structure are questions and answers that take a captain on an imaginative tour through the approach to each of these bays: What is the depth? What is the bottom? Are there rocks? Is it sheltered? What are the landmarks? Is there wood? Is there water?

One League and a half to the Northward of St. John's Head is the Great Bay de Leau, wherein is good Anchorage in various depths of Water, sheltered from all Winds. The best Passage in is on the East-side of the Island laying in the Mouth of it; nothing can enter in on the West-side but small Vessels and Shallops.

To the Westward of Bay de Leau, 3 Miles NNW. from St. John's Head is Little Bay Barrysward, on the West-side of which is good Anchorage for large Ships in 7, 8, or 10 Fathom Water; here is good Fishing Conveniencies, with plenty of Wood and Water.⁴¹

These 'questions and answers' are very similar to what Salmond describes as the 'basic information taught to star navigators' which were learned as lists of recitations:

These lists included a brief description of each island – its name; size; whether it was low or high; whether or not it had a reef; the location of good harbours; the main foodstuffs produced there; whether or not it was inhabited; whether or not the people were friendly and the name of its *ari'i* or high chief.⁴²

Johann Forster described the same process in his account of the making of Tupaia's Chart:

Tupaya ... when on board the Endeavour, gave an account of his navigations and mentioned the names of more than eighty isles which he knew, together with their size and situation, the greater part of which he had visited, and ... gave

40 David 1988: xxv.

41 Cook 1766: 12.

42 Salmond 2009: 203–204.

directions for making one according to his account, and always pointed to that part of the heavens, where each isle was situated, mentioning at the same time that it was either larger or smaller than Taheitee, and likewise whether it was high or low, whether it was peopled or not, adding now and then some curious accounts relative to some of them.⁴³

There are a number of similarities between Cook's chart of Newfoundland and Tupaia's chart of the Society Islands. The symbol for an anchorage in the key to Newfoundland appears in the harbours of Opoa and Fa'aroa. The depth in fathoms indicated by an encircled figure in the Newfoundland chart is represented in Tupaia's Society Islands chart in shades of ink wash. Cook describes Opoa in his *Journal* on the upper side of 'Ulieatea' as 'good anchorage between or just within the 2 Islands in 28 fathom, soft ground'. He wrote 'There are more harbours at the south end of this Island as I am inform'd but these were not examin'd by us'.⁴⁴ These harbours, which appear out of proportion but in detail on his own chart, correspond to the wash around the right side of 'Ulieatea' in Tupaia's version. In addition, Salmond remarks, 'Sometimes the navigators also sketched the sailing courses between islands in the sand on a beach, along with the coastlines, reefs, passages and harbours of these places'. On Tupaia's chart of the Society Islands, a faint pencil line shows the outline of the reef with its openings into the harbour. Even though the islands are not in the relationship conventionally used in European charts, a dotted line corresponds to the *Endeavour's* route from Huahine to Raiatea, sailing into the harbour at Opoa [Oopoa], marked by a small anchor, and then north-west, within the reef, to exit via the channel at Fa'aroa [Wharoa], also marked by an anchor as a harbour.

This chart does for Cook what he was doing in his book for the captains of Newfoundland: it tells the way through unknown waters. It describes the complex discussion that Cook and Tupaia were able to carry out with limited vocabulary because they shared the common language of pilots. Much emphasis is placed upon Cook's skill in mathematical calculations, but in this chart we see him using a narrative tradition in which British and Polynesian concepts of space, distance and orientation converge.

43 Forster 1996: 310.

44 Cook 1768–1771: 40.



Figure 8.6 James Cook, 'A Chart of the Society Isles in the South Sea' (detail). The chart shows the openings in the reef to the harbours of Opua (Oopoa) and Fa'aroa (Wharoa) marked by small anchors and the line marking the *Endeavour*'s route from Huahine to Raiatea.

Source: British Library, BL Add Ms. 15508 f.16, © British Library Board.

Transmission and translation

Smith and Joppien say only that the words in Banks's handwriting on the chart of the Society Islands were 'derived' from Tupaia, but this summation gives no hint of the complexity of the process of cultural assimilation it required to arrive at the point of transcription. Cook struggled to reconcile the navigational references that were recited to him as lists in an oral tradition, with the coordinates of longitude and latitude he needed to make a chart. He wrote as the *Endeavour* was preparing for its departure from Tahiti: 'I have before hinted that these people have an extensive knowledge of the Islands situated in these seas – Tupia as well as several others hath given us an account of upwards of seventy'.⁴⁵ The passage shows Cook thinking as he writes. It begins as the sketch of a plan for a chart made from local knowledge but it has been revised mid-sentence:

45 Cook 1768–1771: 35.

their names are as follows of them Tupia says he himself hath been at and thosr mark'd with an obelist — but as the account they have given of their situation is so vague and uncertain I shall reſar giving a list of them untill I have learnt from Tupia the situation of each Island with a little more certainty — ⁴⁶

Cook gives some idea of the challenges he was facing when he writes 'the Accounts taken by and from different people differ ... sencibly one from a nother both in names and Number'.⁴⁷ Salmond's analysis of the lists transcribed by Cook and Molyneux shows they contain only 39 islands in common, 'indicating that during his conversations with these two men, the high priest-navigator shared different fragments of his navigational knowledge'.⁴⁸ But she also notes that a number of the islands are mythological: 'for instance Tumu-papa, a name that refers to the creator Tumu (Ta'aroa's phallus) and Papa, the Earth; and those names beginning with Hiti-, evidently drawn from the story of the ancestral voyager Rata (Hiti-teare, Hiti-tautaureva, Hiti-tautauamai, Hiti-poto, Hiti-te-tamaruire etc.).'⁴⁹ The British also had difficulty assimilating Tahitian place names for 'want of rightly knowing how to pronounce the names of the Islands after them' and this created spelling variations making it difficult to compare notes.⁵⁰

Transcription represents only one facet of the complex problem-solving this drawing session demanded. The second component, essential to cartography, is a common unit of measurement. John Olstad agrees with di Piazza and Pearthree on the Polynesian character of the geography of the Society Islands chart. In addition to the islands' segmentation, he identifies a number of features, particularly the shape of the islands. Just as, as Salmond notes, the distance between islands was measured by sailing time from a known point of departure,⁵¹ the distance on land, Olstad suggests, has been measured by time of travel, causing mountainous areas to appear wider on the page while level areas appear narrower.

Although Banks's landholdings may engage different concepts of space, direction and orientation from the islands Cook was attempting to chart, the Society Islands chart makes the first successful attempt to transform a list transcribed from a chanted recitation into a recognisable, European-style chart.

46 Cook 1768–1771: 35.

47 Cook 1768–1771: 74.

48 Salmond 2009: 204.

49 Salmond 2009: 204.

50 Cook 1768–1771: 77.

51 Salmond 2009: 204.

Conclusion

The British voyagers' impression of Tupaia is largely unrecorded in the *Endeavour* journals. The nature of their conversations, the impact upon British perception of the concepts he introduced, and the scope of their plans for the future have survived only in fragments. Recourse to speculation is unavoidable in the reconstruction of history, but whether the British were critical or simply critically engaged with Polynesian culture is an open question. Silence in writing does not necessarily correspond to indifference in the course of a process of problem-solving. Problems are often puzzled out in drawing before they are committed to writing, and the problems Tupaia and the British were facing were multifarious, simultaneously engaging language, concept and the diplomatic relations of first contact. Reconstructing these conversations relies upon the nature of the active culture. Increasingly, the culture and political atmosphere of late eighteenth-century Tahiti is coming to light, but the intellectual atmosphere on the *Endeavour* belongs to a particularly tumultuous period in British history. Cook's own voyages were contributing to radical transformations in scientific and philosophical thought so that attitudes that may have become prevalent by the second and third voyages were not necessarily influences on the first. First contact in the Pacific was undeniably violent but critical or disparaging comments, or equally expressions of admiration, while obviously important when recorded in writing are not necessarily reliable gauges of the intellectual atmosphere of the voyage as a whole. The *Endeavour's* visual archive offers an opportunity to test how these attitudes played out in practice. By examining who was working with whom in these drawing sessions, surprising alliances emerge and a wide variety of imaginative strategies for communicating and reconciling divergent concepts illuminate the discrete silences of the journals.

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This text is taken from *Indigenous Intermediaries: New Perspectives on Exploration Archives*, edited by Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam, published 2015 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.