

The Two Worlds of  
**OMAI**



Education Service  
Auckland City Art Gallery





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Auckland City Art Gallery 1977

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## Foreword

'The Museum is gathering together works of successive or various civilisations at a time when styles are no longer considered interpretations of nature, but rather meanings of the world.' André Malraux<sup>1</sup>

The decade beginning in 1969 is studded with Cook bicentenaries. Opening with the celebration of his achievements during the first epic voyage, it will close on the two-hundredth anniversary of his death which took place at Hawaii early in the year 1779.

In organising the present exhibition, the Auckland City Art Gallery has chosen to commemorate what may seem a minor event in the navigator's crowded career, his departure from Huahine on 2 November 1777. He had visited the island three times before but this was a special occasion. Under instruction from the Lords of the Admiralty, Captain Cook had left behind on the island of his choice the young man known to history as Omai, the first Polynesian to visit Britain.

The exhibition, although not a definitive one, sets out to present the contrasting backgrounds of Omai's early experiences and later travels. But it goes beyond a single individual and attempts to illustrate the two modes of life that met when English, French and Spanish navigators entered the Pacific in the late eighteenth century. As far as they can be presented in visual terms, the exhibition seeks to show the forces — political, economic, scientific, philosophical — that propelled Cook and his forerunners into southern waters. Subject to the same limitations, it tries to give a conspectus of that island culture which evolved throughout the course of centuries into the many variants included under the word Polynesian.

Auckland, where the world's largest Polynesian population is now concentrated, forms the appropriate setting for such an exhibition. Perhaps for the first time works by artists of the Pacific are displayed in the same gallery as those by their English contemporaries and near contemporaries. Two traditions are juxtaposed — one expressing itself at its finest in the art of carving, the other in the classical portrait and landscape painting; one tending towards the abstract or symbolic, the other figurative and representational; one shaped by a legion of nameless practitioners, the other by well-known portraitists led by Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Academy and High Priest of British neo-classical painting.

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## Introduction

### The Two Worlds of Omai

'I, who had ambition not only to go farther than any one had been before, but as far as it was possible for man to go...'

Captain James Cook<sup>2</sup>

When European explorers entered the Pacific in the second half of the eighteenth century, they were responding to complex forces. International rivalries, already expressed in the Seven Years War, now found a peaceful outlet. Partly through the impetus of the same conflict, moreover, Cook and his fellow mariners had learned to apply major developments in the science of navigation. Latitudes and the shape of the earth had long been known, but in the recent past there had been notable improvements in such fields as hydrography, astronomy, chart-making and record-keeping. The movement of water in relation to land masses was better understood, while advances had been made in the application of sextants. Cook himself pioneered the effective use of the chronometer, a precise time-keeping device which revolutionised maritime travel by permitting an accurate determination of longitude.

Paradoxically, the achievements of science were exploited in the pursuit of a myth. For centuries the idea of a great southern continent, Terra Australis, supposedly needed to balance the land masses of the Northern Hemisphere and a source of fabulous riches, had haunted the minds of philosophers and geographers, finding eighteenth-century exponents in the Frenchman Charles de Brosses and the Scottish born Alexander Dalrymple. According to such theorists, New Zealand, first observed by Abel Tasman in 1642, was thought to be a part of Terra Australis. It was in search of this fabled region that successive expeditions set out from Europe when in 1763 the Seven Years War ended with the Peace of Paris.

First in the field were the British who despatched two expeditions to the south seas in the early years of peace. The Hon John Byron's voyage in H.M.S. *Dolphin* between 1764 and 1766 added little to either geography or history. But the next explorer, Samuel Wallis, in command of the same ship, lighted on the island of Tahiti in 1767 and, against determined opposition from its people, opened up a new realm of the senses and the imagination. Soon the French followed with the expedition of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville which reached Tahiti in 1768 with two vessels, the *Boudeuse* and the *Étoile*. Bougainville stayed only ten days at New Cythera, as he termed the island, but carried to Europe an idyllic impression of the place and its inhabitants. Furthermore, he brought back the first Polynesian visitor, a Tahitian named Ahutoru.

Then came Cook who opened a new era in the exploration of the Pacific. In 1768 it was decided that systematic observation of the transit of Venus from various positions round the world would be of great advantage in determining the distance from the earth to the sun. For this purpose Lieutenant James Cook, accompanied by Mr Joseph Banks and Dr Daniel Carl Solander of the Royal Society, embarked on the *Endeavour* for Tahiti whence Wallis had lately returned. In so doing they set a precedent, for never before had such an accumulation of scientific equipment and expertise been assembled for a nautical expedition. Its first mission completed, the floating laboratory set out to fulfil the second of Cook's secret instructions, to continue



the search for the great southern continent. Before doing so, however, at the behest of Banks, he took on board a priest and chief, Tupaia by name, and his young servant with the intention of taking them to England. Next he explored the adjacent islands, circumnavigated and charted New Zealand, and visited various places on the Australian coast.

Cook failed to discover Terra Australis and was technically unsuccessful in his first mission owing to the refractive effects of Venus's atmosphere. Nevertheless, such excitement was generated by the expedition that a second one was organized. This time Captain Cook was to attempt a complete circumnavigation of high Antarctic latitudes, again in search of Terra Australis, and was to locate Cape Circumcision, first observed by the Frenchman Bouvet in 1739 and thought to be a promontory of the elusive continent. With these aims he set out on the *Resolution* in 1772 with her consort, the *Adventure*, commanded by Captain Tobias Furneaux. Banks and Solander were again to join the expedition, but because of a quarrel between Banks and his friend the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, they withdrew at the last moment. During this voyage Cook finally disproved the existence of a southern continent in navigable waters and when he returned in 1775 found that Furneaux, with whom he had lost touch in the Pacific, had brought back to England an islander usually called Omai by his companions on the *Adventure*.

Had it not been for the presence of this exotic visitor, there might have been no third expedition. Omai had voluntarily come to England and must, at the dictates of humanity, be carried back to his home in the South Seas. Accordingly, Cook was again, with some reluctance, persuaded to sail on the *Resolution*, accompanied by the *Discovery* in charge of Captain Charles Clerke. But, having returned Omai to the island of his choice, Cook was then instructed to voyage on in quest of that other visionary goal of European exploration, a direct passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic. He sailed from England in July 1776, left Omai on the island of Huahine at the beginning of November 1777, and made for the north. In February 1779, after an unsuccessful attempt on the Arctic barrier, he was killed at Hawaii, the northernmost limit of Polynesian settlement which he had uncovered during the voyage from Huahine.

'Savages have been often brought to *Paris*, to *London*, and to other Places; and no Pains omitted to fill them with high Ideas of our Luxury, our Riches, and all our most useful and curious Arts . . .'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>3</sup>

Among the achievements of Cook, his predecessors, and successors was, it has been said, 'a more comprehensive view of mankind'.<sup>4</sup> Trained in the discipline of naval record-keeping, the navigators and their assistants kept elaborate journals where they noted the appearance and customs of the native peoples they encountered. These observations usually reached the printed page, sometimes through garbled versions in the popular press, sometimes in such lavish and carefully edited official publications as those of Cook's three voyages. Graphic records illustrated the written and printed word, either the work of gifted amateurs like Wallis or the drawings and paintings of professional artists employed by the Admiralty and Banks. Occasionally, too, as a supplement to the verbal account and the visual impression, a human specimen was transported, voluntarily or involuntarily, across the world.



from Africa, the East, and the Americas long before the exploration of the South Seas disclosed a new division of mankind. It was a Frenchman, de Brosse, who conferred on these people the term 'Polynesian' to indicate their habitat in the 'many-islanded' Pacific. Hence it was fitting that another Frenchman, Bougainville, should have been the first to introduce a living member of the new species to Europe. Ahutoru spent ten months in Paris, but, alas, succumbed to smallpox during the voyage back to Tahiti. The fate of Banks's two prizes, Tupaia and his young servant, was even sadder. They died of sickness in the Dutch East Indies and never saw England. Omai alone survived to return to his native sphere. Who, then, was this exceptionally sturdy — or exceptionally fortunate — voyager?

The early life of Omai — or Mai, as he was known to his own people — is somewhat obscure and even his original name is uncertain. In the manner of his countrymen he might have changed it more than once and could have decided to call himself Mai because that was the designation of a chiefly family. Through a misunderstanding the English prefixed the article *o* to many personal and geographical nouns, so that Tahiti became known as Otaheite and Mai as Omai. Born on the island of Raiatea about 1753 of the 'middling' class or *raatira*, at the age of ten or so he was overtaken by disaster. His native island was invaded by warriors from neighbouring Borabora and he lost his father in battle. Following this incident, he and other refugees, among them Tupaia, fled to Tahiti, one hundred miles to the south-east. With other relatives he settled on the northern coast of the island.

Thus Omai was there in 1767 when Samuel Wallis reached Tahiti. He was only about fourteen years of age, probably too young to join the warriors in their efforts to repel these unwelcome visitors; but he was wounded by gun-fire in Wallis's final and successful assault. Apparently he bore the British no resentment, for he was one of the admiring throng which, a couple of years later, greeted Cook, Banks, Solander, and other members of the *Endeavour* expedition. He himself was too young and too lowly to figure in their journals or remain in their memories; and when they departed it was not he they took but his distinguished countryman, Tupaia. Some time later he seems to have made his way back to Raiatea to join in an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the Boraboran usurpers. He narrowly escaped death and sought refuge on the nearby island of Huahine.

Omai was still at Huahine in 1773 during a brief visit of the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* in the course of Cook's second voyage. He made friends with some of the *Adventure's* crew and with the consent of Captain Furneaux embarked as a supernumerary, at first under the name Tetuby Homy. Cook was not impressed by the volunteer, describing him in his journal as 'dark, ugly and a downright blackguard'.<sup>5</sup> At the island of Tongatapu he was further disappointed when neither Omai nor his own recruit, Hitihihi, could understand the local language, though it was clearly related to their own tongue. However, he gave grudging approval to Furneaux's action, doubtless in the belief that both men would be restored to their homes on his return to this part of the Pacific later in the voyage. As it happened, the *Adventure* failed to return. The two ships parted in a violent storm off the New Zealand coast and by the time the *Adventure* limped into the agreed rendezvous at Queen Charlotte Sound the *Resolution* had already left. On the eve of his own departure Furneaux sent some of his men to gather supplies of anti-scorbutic 'greens'. When they failed to reappear, a search party went out, only to discover the mangled remains of their companions and on a neighbouring hill natives in the midst of a cannibal feast. Furneaux gave up all thought of

rejoining Cook and immediately made for home. After calling at the Cape of Good Hope, he reached Spithead in July 1774 and set out for London with his living trophy from the Southern Hemisphere.

So it came about that an average Polynesian, with no special superiority of rank or appearance — indeed, lacking any distinction whatsoever, according to Cook — had been picked up and, more or less by accident, transferred across the world. Omai (or Omiah, as the English sometimes termed him) on his first morning in London met Lord Sandwich who immediately summoned those two South Seas authorities, Banks and Solander, to his aid. Banks was only too delighted to heal the unfortunate breach with his old friend and took charge of this heaven-sent replacement for the lamented Tupaia. He lodged him in his town house, a few days later presented him to George III, and did everything possible to launch him into society.

Circumstances could scarcely have been more favourable for Omai's reception. The educated public were familiar with Rousseau's views that man in his 'natural' state was superior to 'civilised' man, that the ills of modern society were due to the denial and suppression of primitive simplicity. In the recent past, moreover, they had been both instructed and entertained by varied accounts of the Pacific. These ranged from Bougainville's lyrical descriptions of New Cythera to a sensational narrative of the *Endeavour* expedition and verse satires on Banks's supposed amours with the 'Queen' of Tahiti. Above all, readers in their thousands had perused and pondered over John Hawkesworth's *Voyages*, from the *Dolphin's* to the *Endeavour's* — a prose epic of British enterprise in the South Seas. In Omai they saw not merely a denizen of this remote region, the representative of a new race, but the embodiment of that Rousseauist abstraction, 'natural' man.

Appearing under the highest auspices, Omai captivated the world of rank and fashion. He was entertained not only by their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester but by His Majesty the King who accepted full responsibility for his maintenance and advised his inoculation against smallpox. That operation safely performed by the eminent Baron Dimsdale, he resumed his triumphant career, guided by his patrons, Sandwich, Banks and Solander. For the remainder of his stay he was fêted by the nobility, entertained by the scientists of the Royal Society, and introduced to such talented celebrities as Dr Johnson, Mrs Thrale, and Dr Burney. The journalists of the day followed his every move, while poetasters introduced him into their squibs and satires. Among artists who drew or painted him were Hodges, Dance, Parry, and, most notably, Reynolds. Wherever he went he was admired for his elegance and social poise. 'Indeed,' wrote Dr Burney's daughter, Fanny, '... his manners are so extremely graceful, & he is so polite, attentive, & easy, that you would have thought he came from some foreign Court.'<sup>6</sup>

How are these and similar tributes to be explained? Simply by the fact that Omai was born a Polynesian. So far from being an unsophisticated 'savage', an untaught man of 'nature', he was the product of a settled and relatively complex manner of life. Ritual was as elaborate in the Pacific as it was in eighteenth-century London, and he had been brought up to respect codes of conduct not wholly dissimilar from those that governed the lives of his aristocratic hosts. As one of his biographers has expressed it: 'The secret of Omai's great success lies in the fact that he caught in their ceremonies the true religion of the eighteenth century English ... The real gods of these lords and ladies, the native quickly observed, were gods of Wealth, Vanity, and Convention ... A man was respected by his fellows in proportion to the



fineness of his dress and manner.<sup>7</sup> What refinements Omai lacked were made up for by his good nature, his even temperament, his appreciation of hospitality, his concern for others, and his desire to please. Confronted by this alien society, he drew on precepts he had absorbed or learned in his own island community ever since childhood.

When the *Resolution* returned to England in the summer of 1775, Omai had recently been on a lengthy yachting excursion with Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, and had just set off with Banks and his friend Captain Phipps to visit Mulgrave Castle in Yorkshire. Cook's immediate response to the situation is not on record but he was doubtless surprised to discover that the ill-favoured, undistinguished islander he had met briefly in the South Seas had become the lion of high society. And, touching him even more closely, he must have learned with mixed feelings that this low-born native was now a favourite of his own patron, Lord Sandwich, and the friend of his former colleague and travelling companion, Mr Banks. There was no option but to accept the facts, and in February 1776, after some hesitation, he agreed to carry Omai back to the Pacific and restore him to his people. They embarked together on the *Resolution* in the following July but Cook first made handsome amends for his earlier reference to Omai as 'dark, ugly and a downright blackguard'. In preparing the journal of his previous voyage for publication, he heavily deleted those words and wrote more mildly that he had rather wondered that Captain Furneaux should have picked up this man who had no advantage in birth or rank and no distinction of shape, figure, or complexion. But since his arrival in England he candidly confessed, he had been convinced of his error and now doubted whether any other native would have given greater satisfaction. He went on to enumerate Omai's virtues — his 'very good understanding', his 'honest principles', the 'natural good behaviour, which rendered him acceptable to the best company', and the 'proper degree of pride, which taught him to avoid the society of persons of inferior rank'.<sup>7</sup>

'In short, every method had been employed, both during his abode in England, and at his departure, to make him [Omai] the instrument of conveying to the inhabitants of the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the most exalted opinion of the greatness and generosity of the British nation.'

Cook<sup>8</sup>

Omai's enhanced status after two years in Britain was borne out by the circumstances of his departure. No longer an unknown native consigned to the lower deck with members of the crew, he was an honoured charge of the captain, provided with a cabin of his own. Upon his repatriation, it was hoped he would share with his fellow islanders his newly acquired knowledge of English material culture and social customs. So he was supplied with a varied cargo of merchandise — clothing for himself and his relatives, kitchen utensils, articles of furniture, beads, hatchets, musical instruments, ornaments, flags, banners, pennants, wine. For his future protection he carried back a veritable armoury — muskets, pistols, gunpowder, cutlasses, with a suit of armour, a helmet and a coat of mail. To divert him and his neighbours he had a musical box, an electrical machine, a box of toys and a collection of fireworks. Besides all these the *Resolution* carried animals and birds for Cook to distribute in the Pacific and stock Omai's estate — an assortment of poultry, a peacock and peahen, pigs and cattle, a small flock of

sheep presented by His Majesty, several horses taken on board at the Cape of Good Hope.

During the voyage Omai was treated with due deference, acting as the captain's aide-de-camp and go-between on ceremonial occasions. Even more surprisingly he who had hitherto shown no aptitude for unfamiliar tongues was with higher social standing appointed interpreter and diplomat in successive encounters with the people of New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and the Tongan Archipelago. Cook hoped that he would settle at Tahiti but he finally chose to stay at Huahine where he had embarked for Britain more than four years earlier. A small area of land was purchased for his use, an English-style house built by the ship's carpenters, and the animals and merchandise unloaded from the *Resolution*. On 2 November 1777 Cook bade farewell to the tearful Omai and sailed on to search for the North-West Passage to Europe. Early in 1779 he lost his life in a clash with the Hawaiian Islanders, another branch of the Polynesians whom he had unexpectedly lighted on after leaving Huahine.

It would seem that Omai himself did not long outlive the martyred navigator. When, after an interval of more than a decade, British ships again visited Tahiti and the neighbouring islands, they inquired about the famous Polynesian who had created so much interest in Britain. As far as they could gather from often contradictory accounts, he had succumbed to a mysterious fever about thirty months after the *Resolution's* departure. Nor was this all. His possessions were scattered or had been stolen by marauding neighbours, his house had been destroyed, and his livestock had died. The first systematic attempt to establish an outpost of British civilization in the Pacific had completely failed.

Omai was no more, but he lived on in European literature, attracting fresh attention with the appearance of each account of Cook's later expeditions. The captain's own *Voyage towards the South Pole*, published in 1777 while he and Omai were still in the Pacific, gave renewed impetus to writers who had already found in the exotic visitor a subject for topical comment. He figured in a number of satires, usually in verse, and passed briefly through the pages of *Hildebrand Bowman*, an anonymous novel whose point of departure was the killing of Captain Furneaux's men at Queen Charlotte Sound. Even more varied was the crop of literary works which followed Cook's posthumous *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, published in 1784. Omai was in turn the 'gentle savage' of Cowper's well known lines, a minor character in *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels*, and again the occasion for satire on contemporary fashions and follies. It was as a figure on the fullest heroic scale, however, that he finally came into his own. In December 1785 the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, staged a pantomime, *Omai*, produced on the most lavish scale with scenery by the continental born Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg who also designed the costumes based on the work of Cook's artists. Five years later the Polynesian voyager received his supreme literary tribute in the monumental *Narrations d'Omai*, a work in four volumes by the French priest, Guillaume-André Baston. In this fantasy Omai is the saviour of his people, a leader who on returning from England purges his society of all its evils while he introduces only the benefits of European civilization.

How different was the reality! Such humane thinkers as Denis Diderot considered the Polynesians should be left free of Western society's interference. Even Cook, who did more than any other man to expose them to the influence of the outside world, reflected sadly: '... it would have been far better for these poor people never to have known [us] ...'<sup>29</sup> As he himself



realised, the processes he and his fellow navigators had set in motion could never be reversed. When William Bligh, who had served under Cook on the *Resolution* in 1777, returned a decade later in the *Bounty*, he observed that iron tools were replacing the old implements of stone and wrote that the Tahitians were fond of decking themselves out with incongruous articles of European dress. On a further visit five years afterwards he found even more drastic changes. As the result of an influx of whalers, traders and naval vessels, these once comely people had deteriorated in almost every respect. Formerly noted for their cleanliness, they were now grubby; they were discarding their own elegant garments in favour of the dirty shirts and waistcoats given them by the sailors; few of them bothered to make their own implements or cloth when these things could be obtained from passing ships; and in conversing with their visitors they larded their speech with an ugly jargon of English words.

Such were among the least of the evils introduced through the 'fatal impact' of Europeans. From the days of Wallis the prostitution of island women had been a commonly accepted feature of Pacific voyaging. Venereal disease had soon made its appearance and with tuberculosis, dysentery and smallpox passed from district to district, from generation to generation. These once abstemious people were not slow to acquire the white man's taste for rum and tobacco and they soon realised the superiority of his muskets over their own relatively innocuous weapons. The advent of missionaries occasionally did something to curb the excesses of the islanders and their exploiters. On the other hand, the introduction of Christianity destroyed valuable institutions and sowed further discord among already divided communities who, as their condition worsened, lost the will to live. Less than a century after the arrival of Wallis the Tahitian population had been reduced to about a fifth of their former numbers. The demoralised remnant lived on in surroundings that were a travesty of Bougainville's New Cythera. Expecting to enter a primeval paradise in Papeete, Paul Gauguin found 'the Europe which I had thought to shake off — and that under the aggravating circumstances of colonial snobbism, and the imitation, grotesque even to the point of caricature, of our customs, fashions, vices, and absurdities of civilisation.'<sup>10</sup>

Since Gauguin reached Tahiti in the early eighteen-nineties further changes have occurred there and elsewhere in Polynesia — not always for the worse. The isolated, self-contained societies of pre-European times have gone for ever and so have many of the customs recorded by the navigators. Yet the people as a whole have managed to retain some elements of their cultural heritage and to re-animate others. They are as hospitable as ever, they continue to maintain such institutions as the extended family, and they are increasingly aware of the wealth of their artistic past and their legacy of fine craftsmanship. The bicentenary of Omai's return to Huahine provides the opportunity to examine this tradition along with the one which too often in the past has seemed to have supplanted it. We have the opportunity to explore two cultures, two ways of life, two worlds. Perhaps our future — and not only our artistic future — will lie in the capacity to reconcile these two complementary worlds which Omai was the first denizen of the Pacific successfully to encompass.

John Tarlton  
E.H. McCormick

## Cook's Voyages and their Effects

Captain Cook's voyages to the Pacific would probably have differed little from their predecessors had it not been for the wealth, enthusiasm, and ambition of one man, Joseph Banks. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he not only paid his own expenses on the *Endeavour* but also those of his fellow scientist Daniel Carl Solander and a retinue which included a secretary, two artists and four servants. For perhaps the first time professional artists and draughtsmen were employed on a voyage of discovery. Their work was scientific in recording plants and animals, practical in representing harbour entrances and other geographical features for the benefit of future navigators. At the same time they were expected to depict the inhabitants of new lands, their clothes, weapons, houses and ceremonies. This, however, was secondary to their scientific and practical duties.

The two men selected as recorders were Sydney Parkinson and Alexander Buchan. In 1767 Parkinson had been commissioned by Banks to draw rare plants in Kew Gardens and was to carry out similar work on the voyage, while Buchan was to paint people and places. Unfortunately, he died soon after the expedition reached Tahiti and his responsibilities were taken over by Parkinson, who also died on the homeward voyage.

So intense was the interest created by this expedition and by the artefacts, botanical specimens, drawings and paintings it brought back from the Pacific that a second was quickly organized. Banks was again to accompany Cook, this time with an even larger entourage for whose accommodation additional deck cabins were fitted on the *Resolution*. As a result, the ship became top-heavy and the superstructure was removed, much to the indignation of Banks who quitted the expedition and withdrew his staff. But his enlightened example was again followed. As a replacement for Banks and Solander, the Admiralty employed Johann Reinhold Forster, a German naturalist domiciled in Britain, who was familiar with the Pacific through having translated Bougainville's narrative of his expedition. Forster's assistant was his son George and a third naturalist, Anders Sparrman, was taken on at the Cape of Good Hope.

Banks had included in his staff the fashionable painter John Zoffany, well known for his portraits and figure compositions. How he would have adapted himself to the professional demands of an exploratory and scientific expedition (to say nothing of its rigours) must remain a matter for speculation. He was withdrawn with the rest of Bank's followers and replaced at the last moment by William Hodges. A Londoner by birth and trained as a landscape painter, he was to prove his versatility during the voyage and, unlike his predecessors, lived to return home and continue his career.

In the course of the voyage, probably somewhere between Huahine and Tonga, Hodges was the first artist to depict Omai in a sketch that survives only in reproduction. On his arrival in England the Islander was treated as an honoured guest and found a patron in Banks who introduced him to fashionable society and escorted him on visits to aristocratic houses. There is little doubt that it was Banks who arranged for further likenesses to be made of the exotic visitor. Two artists, Nathaniel Dance in a pencil drawing and William Parry in an oil portrait which also included Banks and Solander, showed him in native dress. In the most impressive of the series, however, the great full-length portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Omai was displayed in the



pose and costume of an Eastern potentate. Here was no cringing, fearful native but a man sure of himself, conscious not only of his own dignity but expressing the pride and *mana* of his people.

After two triumphant years in England, Omai had to be carried back to the Pacific. Hence, in part, the third voyage. This expedition was less liberally equipped with scientists than its forerunners but carried the now indispensable artist, John Webber. The son of a Swiss sculptor established in London, Webber had been trained in Berne and Paris. The most prolific of all Cook's artists, he too survived the perils of a lengthy voyage, living on to become a respected member of the Royal Academy.

With Cook's death in Hawaii and the expedition's return to England, a distinct phase of Pacific exploration ended. Interest in the first voyage had been largely confined to the scientific and social circles of Banks, but after the second and third voyages it extended to a far wider public. This fact may be illustrated by reference to the artefacts acquired in return for the trade goods — red cloth, nails, hatchets, fish hooks, etc — with which the ships were stocked. Most of the trophies brought back by the *Endeavour* remained in official or semi-official hands except for a few owned by the crew or given by Cook and his officers to their friends. Banks presented some curiosities to Solander's patron, the Swedish Baron Alstromer, who established a private museum to exhibit them. On the second voyage, however, the situation was somewhat different. Before his withdrawal Banks loaded the *Resolution* with a varied cargo which included brass and iron *patu* clubs for exchange in New Zealand. (Lacking the delicate balance of the genuine stone weapons, they would have been of little use to the Maoris but might have been as greatly prized as was the broken crockery they adapted for ear pendants.) Knowing the ready market in England for Pacific mementoes, the crews of both ships were also well supplied and eager for trade, to such an extent in fact that Cook had to regulate and sometimes forbid their dealings with the natives in order to get sufficient food for the ships. The third voyage gave the sailors even greater trading opportunities, for most of the people they visited were now eager to obtain European goods. Many rare articles from the Pacific reached Britain and some found their way into the museum of Sir Ashton Lever where a portrait of Cook was proudly and appropriately displayed.

Objects in public museums and private collections thus disclosed to Europe tangible evidence of the varied Pacific cultures. But knowledge of the region was more easily and more widely spread through published narratives of the voyages. The official accounts more especially, illustrated by engravings after the work of the expeditions' artists or exquisite representations of natural history specimens and artefacts, were widely read and frequently reprinted. In 1771 the Admiralty commissioned John Hawkesworth to edit the journals of successive expeditions from Byron's in the *Dolphin* to Cook's on the *Endeavour*. The work appeared two years later in three massive volumes of which the last two were devoted to the epic exploits of Cook, Banks, and their companions. With Bougainville's *Voyage*, first published in 1771, and Sydney Parkinson's *Journal*, which also appeared in 1773, Hawkesworth's compilation conveyed a complex and sometimes contradictory picture to the contemporary public. The Pacific in general and Tahiti in particular appeared to some authors a 'sublunary paradise',<sup>11</sup> the 'garden of Eden', the 'Elysian Fields', its inhabitants 'Greek gods' or alternatively denizens of the 'Golden Age'.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, other observers drew attention to the darker side of island life disclosed in such practices as infanticide, human sacrifice, and ritual prostitution. The volumes provoked intense speculation, geographical,

philosophical, theological. They also inspired some indifferent poetry and a quality of semi-salacious satire.

The artistic work of Parkinson and Buchan, often exaggerated or idealised by the engravers, had some part in creating eighteenth-century notions of the Pacific. But the paintings of William Hodges, either exhibited in the London galleries or reproduced in Cook's *Voyage towards the South Pole* (1777), exerted an even profounder influence. In his prentice years Hodges had picked up from his teacher, Richard Wilson, that artist's Romantic ideas on landscape and had obeyed the dictum of Wilson's own teacher, Claude-Joseph Vernet, that an artist should paint directly from nature. Through his unexpected appointment to the second expedition he was able to apply these theories to the Pacific and, on his return, increase popular interest in that distant part of the globe. Even more important, he emphasised particular types of landscape as the appropriate settings for the varied peoples he met with in his travels, from the 'hard primitives' of the bleak south to the 'soft primitives' of the lush tropics. In so doing he was, consciously or unconsciously, following the views of the elder Forster and others on the place of climate and geographical position in determining culture and modes of life. Through his example 'evolutionary' conceptions of society were fostered and the scope of landscape greatly extended.

Cook's posthumous account of the last expedition, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, completed by his colleague Captain James King and edited by Canon John Douglas, appeared in 1784. The three volumes, lavishly illustrated by plates engraved from Webber's drawings, ranged even more widely than those of Hodges through the countries and peoples of the Pacific. Many divisions of the Polynesians were represented, as were the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land and the Indians of Nootka Sound on the north-west coast of America. Landscapes and backgrounds included every conceivable variety from the forbidding coast of Kerguelen Island to the Arctic icefields, from the friendly islands of the Tongan Archipelago to the fatal bay where Cook met his death. In all probability it was the illustrations rather than the text of the three volumes that in 1785 persuaded the proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, to base their Christmas pantomime on the work which had achieved immediate popularity. Commissioned to prepare the libretto, the playwright John O'Keeffe centred it on Cook's protégé and called the entertainment *Omai: or a Trip round the World*. Omai, however, was merely the pretext for an elaborate spectacle depicting the scenes and people encountered by the captain on his voyages and closing with his apotheosis. Philip de Louthembourg, the artist responsible, went to infinite pains to authenticate settings, costumes, and properties, not only drawing on the plates of this and earlier publications but consulting in person such authorities as Webber.

The accounts of Cook's voyages, official and unofficial, were soon translated and within a few years of his death could be read in all the main European languages. They were especially popular in France since they supplied evidence both to support and to refute the views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the nature of human society and the character of primitive man. Indeed, Rousseau himself, on hearing of Marion du Fresne's death in the Bay of Islands at the hands of his Maori hosts, is on record (perhaps apocryphally) as having said: 'Is it possible that the good Children of Nature can really be so wicked?'<sup>13</sup> The debate between the champions of Rousseau's theories and their opponents was continued in various literary forms. In 1788 the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, Paris, put on *La Mort du Capitaine Cook* by M. Arnould.



This was another pantomime, following the pattern of *Omai*, and a year later was staged in an English version at Drury Lane and several provincial theatres. A semi-fictional work in four volumes, *Narrations d'Omai*, by G.A.R. Baston, Canon of Rouen, was published in 1790 and a decade afterwards another mammoth compilation of a similar kind, *Voyages chez les Peuples Sauvages*, by Francois Babié. Both drew heavily on French editions of narratives by Cook and other Pacific voyagers.

Interest in the varied people described by the navigators, the pattern of scientific observation established by Cook's voyages, the appreciation of curiosities brought back from the newly discovered regions — all these led to the examination of primitive societies, more especially the ancestors of the British and other Europeans. Contemplation of their own past rather than the glories of classical times marked the Romantic Period in art and literature. Added to this, the pioneering comparative work of J.R. Forster and the sheer weight of information now available resulted inevitably in the development of the study of mankind as a whole. The science of anthropology gradually emerged.

The effects of Pacific exploration were not confined to science. Though the artefacts in museums and private collections made little direct impact on art at the time (except in the theatre), their influence increased during the Romantic Period, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was decisive. Derain, Vlaminck, Picasso, Matisse and Epstein, are all known to have possessed objects of Pacific origin, while it was those as well as the appeal of the so-called primitive that drew Gauguin to Tahiti and the Marquesas.

The influence of Polynesia on Europe is, however, more subtle than the mere copying of art forms. It pervades the realms of metaphysics and philosophy, of man, nature and society. Polynesia helped to open European eyes to their own condition. One possible conclusion drawn from the comparative study of mankind is that all men, however outwardly different, are brothers. Not only the movement for the abolition of slavery but the American War of Independence and the French Revolution occurred during the great period of Pacific discovery.

Omai had no large part in the convulsions of history; nor can he be claimed as a direct agent of destiny. But his life links the two worlds of Europe and Polynesia that met with lasting effects in the late eighteenth century. Are we richer or poorer for the meeting? The question is of course unanswerable.

D.R. Simmons

## Footnotes and References

1. A. Malraux, *Picasso's Mask* (London, 1976), pp. 222-3.
2. J. Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole* (2 vols., London, 1777), i. p. 268.
3. Quoted in E.H. McCormick, *Omai, Pacific Envoy* (Auckland, 1977), p. 7.
4. R.A. Skelton, *Captain James Cook — after Two Hundred Years* (London, 1969), p. 18.
5. J.C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Journals of Captain James Cook* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1955-67), ii. p. 428, n. 2.
6. Quoted in McCormick, pp. 125-7.
7. T.B. Clark, *Omai* (Hawaii, 1969), p. 113.
8. J. Cook and J. King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (3 vols., London, 1784), i. p. 7.
9. Quoted in A. Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact* (London, 1966), p. 70.
10. P. Gauguin, *Noa Noa* (New York, 1920), p. 7.

11. J.C. Beaglehole, *The Exploration of the Pacific* (3rd ed., London, 1975), p. 205.
12. Quoted in B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 25, 26.
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**Additional Works Recommended for Reading**

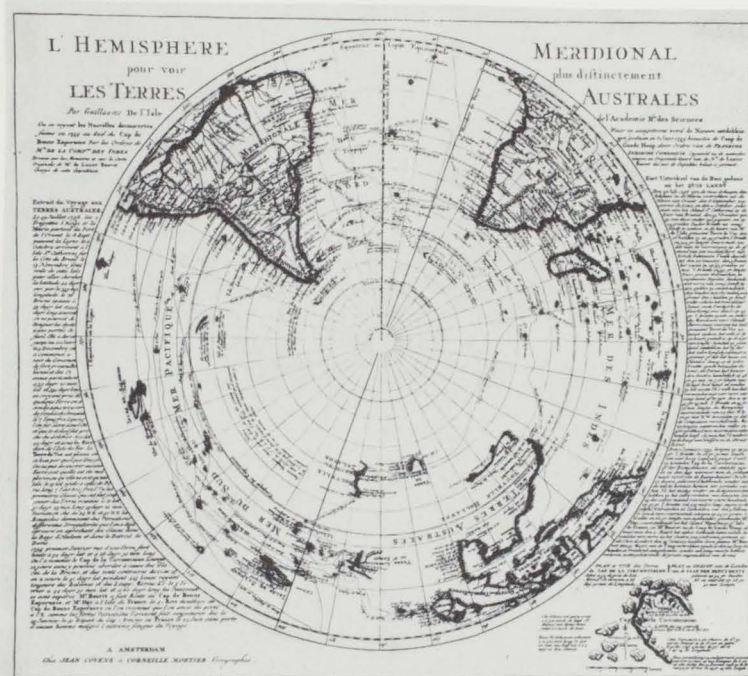
- J.C. Beaglehole, ed., *The 'Endeavour' Journal of Joseph Banks* (2 vols., Sydney, 1962).  
P. Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet* (London, 1976).  
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R. Langdon, *Island of Love* (London, 1959).  
N. McArthur, *Island Populations of the Pacific* (Canberra, 1967).  
D.L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society* (3 vols., Honolulu, 1974).  
P.A. Tomory, *The Foundations of European Art* (London, 1969).  
T. Vaughan, *Captain Cook, R.N. The Resolute Mariner* (Portland, 1974).

# CATALOGUE

## Lenders to the Exhibition and abbreviations

ACAG	Auckland City Art Gallery
AIM	Auckland Institute and Museum
APL	Auckland Public Libraries
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
BSG	Bishop Suter Gallery, Nelson
CM	Canterbury Museum, Christchurch
CPA	Public Archives Canada, Ottawa
DG	Dixson Galleries, Sydney, N.S.W.
DL	Dixson Library, Sydney, N.S.W.
DPAG	Dunedin Public Art Gallery
GH	Government House, Wellington
HBM	Hawkes Bay Museum, Napier
HOWARD	George Anthony Howard, Castle Howard, Yorkshire
JSB	John S. Bowering, London
MADRID	National Museum of Ethnology, Madrid
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney, N.S.W.
NAG	National Art Gallery, Wellington
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
NMW	National Museum, Wellington
OM	Otago Museum, Dunedin
PGM	Peter G. Markham, Tauranga
YALE	Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.

## Knowledge of the Pacific before Cook



1. *Map of the Southern Hemisphere in 1740*  
by Guillaume de L'isle (Delisle) (1675-1726)  
Engraving, hand coloured 500 x 535mm  
ATL

'The map of the great world of the Pacific was shaped over several centuries by navigators of various nations. They searched for spices, for trade routes, for gold, for peoples to conquer, to colonise or convert; they searched for a Great South Island, Terra Australis Incognita, dreamed of since antiquity, immense and rich in gold, silver, and precious stone . . .' — *The Opening Up of the Pacific* (catalogue from the Mitchell & Dixson Galleries, 6 April - 5 September 1970).

Crossing the Isthmus of Panama in 1513, the Spaniard Balboa was the first European to see the Pacific. Soon came other explorers — Ferdinand Magellan looking for a shorter trade route to the Spice Islands, Pedro Fernandez de Quieros and Luis Vaez de Torres, who discovered the New Hebrides and the Torres Strait, and the Dutch explorers Willem Jansz and Abel Tasman. English interest in the Pacific began with Francis Drake's circumnavigation in 1577-80 and continued a century later with William Dampier. In the eighteenth century other English explorers preceded Cook — Anson, Byron, Carteret and Samuel Wallis who discovered Tahiti in 1767. Only a few months after Wallis's discovery the Frenchman Louis-Antoine de Bougainville landed at Tahiti. The Spanish too were active in the area as we see in the next item.





2

2. *Sacred Bowl of Marae Taputapuatea*  
 Black dolerite  
 MADRID

This unique bowl is the relic of a little known incident in Tahitian history. When he reached the island in August 1773 during the course of his second expedition, Cook heard rumours of mysterious strangers who had come and gone since he was there in the *Endeavour* four years before. On his final visit in August 1777 he was able to clear up the mystery with the help of Omai who acted as his interpreter. The strangers, he learned, were Spaniards from Peru and they had made two further visits in the intervening years. In November 1774 a ship had come with two Franciscan friars, their servant, and a translator to establish a mission. They brought with them a portable house which was still standing at Vaitepiha Bay in 1777, but the mission itself had been abandoned at the end of a year and the four men had returned to Peru.

The missionaries made no converts but they carried away with them a highly prized stone bowl. How it came into their possession is explained in the diary of the interpreter, Maximo Rodriguez by name. On 14 June 1775 he mentioned having heard of a bowl of black stone made on the island of Maurua and given to the chief of Raiatea who had in turn presented it to Tu, one of the high chiefs of Tahiti. During a visit to that dignitary in the following month Maximo persuaded him to hand over the bowl and in his entry for 12 July told how it had been carried by four men from a small hut on the Marae Taputapuatea and placed in his canoe. He took it to the mission at Vaitepiha Bay whence it was shipped to Peru when the mission was closed in November 1775.

The bowl reached Peru safely but for more than a decade lay in neglect. In March 1788 the Viceroy sent it to Spain with a despatch in which he recounted how it had been acquired and its subsequent history. The Tahitian Chief, he wrote, parted with it only after many entreaties on Maximo's part



and 'subject to the stipulation and condition that it should be destined for the hands of our Catholic Monarch'. Instead, it had passed into the keeping of an official and been used in his kitchen for washing dishes. Rescued from this fate through Maximo's efforts, it was shipped to Cadiz and then transported to Madrid where it was ultimately housed in the ethnological section of the Museo Arqueologico Nacional. All knowledge of its history and country of origin was lost until in 1912 it was traced and identified by Bolton Glanville Corney who gave a full account of the bowl and a photograph of it in the third volume (1919) of his work *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti by Emissaries of Spain* published by the Hakluyt Society.

Nothing further is known about the bowl until the decision was made to display it, if possible, in the exhibition, 'The Two Worlds of Omai'. During a visit to Madrid in November 1976, Mr O.P. Gabites, formerly New Zealand Ambassador to France, traced it to the Museo Etnologías e Antropológico. At the same time he opened negotiations for its loan which were continued by his successor, Mr J.G. McArthur, who was fortunately able to introduce the subject when presenting his credentials to King Juan Carlos.

From a comprehensive description given by Corney the following details have been drawn. The bowl is sculptured from a block of hard, fine-grained black dolerite found only on the island of Maurua. The same rock was used for making axe-heads and, being compact and even in texture, it does not easily chip and was so hard that it took a good polish. Unless European implements were used (an unlikely possibility at that time), it would have been carved with stone tools. Presumably it was fashioned on Maurua and then given to Puni of Borabora, the most powerful chief in the neighbourhood. Either he or his vassal, the high chief of Raiatea, presented it to Tu who at the time of Cook's second and third voyages was generally acknowledged to be the dominant chief in northern Tahiti (and later became known as Pomare I). Its dimensions are:

Length	1168mm
Greatest breadth	565mm
Height, including legs	279mm
Greatest depth of the concavity	101mm
Greatest thickness of floor	76mm
Height of four legs	114mm

The bowl is oval in form and, except for the legs, a copy of the calabash or bottle gourd commonly used in Polynesia as a food container or *umete*. Similar bowls, often larger than the calabash, are made of wood.

There are various theories as to the original function or functions of this specimen. It may have been simply a receptacle for food or, being made of stone, was perhaps used to make warm infusions by the immersion of hot pebbles. According to another theory, it held the intoxicant *ava* on ceremonial occasions, while it has also been suggested that it could have been used to hold the entrails of sacrificial victims. Whatever its original purpose, the bowl was venerated in Tahiti where, as Maximo stated, it was housed in a small shed on the *Marae* Taputapuātea. It is this fact which justifies the description sacred, though scarcely the adjective mystic used by Corney.

Sources:

B.G. Corney, *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti by Emissaries of Spain* (3 vols., London 1913-19), iii. XXV-XXVI, XXXIV-XLI, 156, 169-70, 212-14, 216.

E.H. McCormick, *Omai, Pacific Envoy* (Auckland, 1977), pp. 48, 50-51, 224-5, 226-7.

O.P. Gabites to E.H. McCormick, 27 November 1976.

J.G. McArthur to E.H. McCormick, 20 January 1977.

3-7 *Drawings by Captain Samuel Wallis (1728-1795)*

Pen and wash each 290 x 405mm

ATL

*Samuel Wallis*, captain of the *Dolphin*, was the first European in recorded history to reach Tahiti, which he sighted on 18 June 1767. Wallis's purser, Harrison, was able to fix the position of the island precisely both by latitude and by longitude. This made Tahiti the obvious destination for Cook's first scientific voyage.

3 *King George III Island 1767*

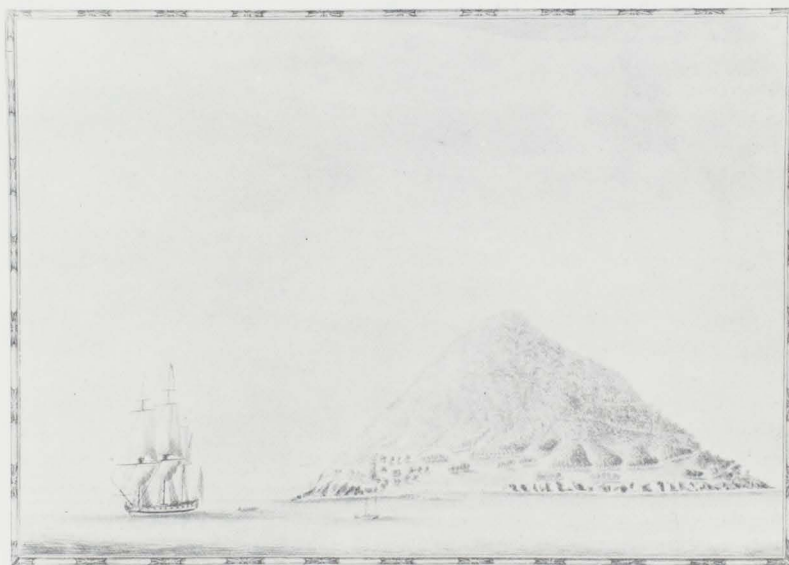
(Tahiti named by Wallis after the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom.)

4 *Duke of York Island 1767*

(The island of Moorea named by Wallis after the second son of George III)

5 *Lord Howe's Island 1769*

(The island of Mopelia named by Wallis after Richard Howe, the first Lord of the Admiralty)



6 *Osnabrug Island 1767*

(The island of Mehetia)

6

- 7 *A Representation of the Attack on Captain Wallis in the Dolphin by the Natives of Otaheite*  
by Sparrow  
Engraving 218 x 341mm

At the time of this affray Omai was standing on One Tree Hill (at extreme right) and was wounded by the British.

## Eighteenth Century England



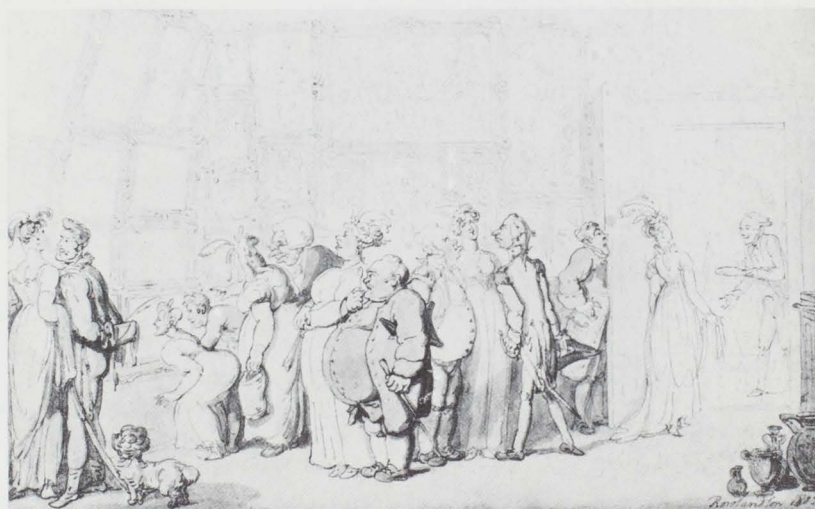
- 8 *Portrait of King George III*  
School of Allan Ramsay (1713-1784)  
Oil on canvas 1245 x 991mm  
ACAG



George III (1738-1820) had been on the throne fourteen years when Omai reached England on 14 July 1774. Three days later, accompanied by Mr Banks, Dr Solander, and perhaps Lord Sandwich, he was presented to the King and Queen Charlotte at Kew Palace. His conduct was much praised by the newspapers and, according to one account, he greeted His Majesty with the words, '*How do ye do?*' An authentic eye-witness account, written the next day by the King's second son, has recently turned up in New Zealand. Addressing his former tutor, Bishop Markham, Prince Frederick described the visitor: he was 'about five foot ten inches high, of a very swarthy complexion, the nose flat, and his upper lip turned up, and quite purple'; he was 'tattooed upon the arms and other parts'; he wore native dress 'like the ancient toga'. The document, displayed in the present exhibition, is in the possession of Mr Peter G. Markham of Tauranga, a descendant of Bishop (later Archbishop) Markham.

9-11 *Drawings by Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827)*  
ACAG

Thomas Rowlandson was a superb draughtsman, perhaps the leading English master of pen drawing and certainly the foremost commentator on the contemporary late eighteenth century scene. Scenes of life at all levels of society poured from his pen. His approach is generally satirical and little sympathy is shown for the foibles of his subjects, but Rowlandson, unlike Gillray, was indifferent to politics and had no special axe to grind. Omai would have become familiar with such scenes as these: his acquaintance with the artistic community is evident in this exhibition; he attended the Leicester races with Joseph Banks; and throngs of people such as these outside a city gate would have been seen by anyone 'doing' the sights of London.



9 *Portrait Painter's Shew Room*  
Pen and water colour 151 x 239mm

10 *A Country Race Meeting*  
Pen and water colour 118 x 179mm

11 *Refugees outside a City Gate*  
Pen and water colour 120 x 218mm

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## Captain Cook



12

12 *Portrait of Captain James Cook*  
by John Webber  
Oil on canvas  
NAG

John Webber, R.A. (1750/2-1793) was the son of a Swiss sculptor and trained in art from the age of six. In 1776 he exhibited at the Royal Academy; the picture attracted the notice of Solander, who recommended that Webber be appointed artist on the third voyage. Most of his works were landscapes, usually in water colour.



13

13 Wedgwood plaque bearing portrait of Cook  
by John Flaxman (1755-1826) after  
William Hodges R.A. (1744-1797)  
Porcelain 330 x 270mm  
ATL



14

14 Tableau des Decouvertes du Capne Cook & de la Perouse  
by Antoine Phelippeaux (1767-after 1830) after  
T.G. St Saiveur 1799  
Engraving, hand coloured 435 x 520mm  
ATL



- 15 *Arrivo del Navigatore Inglese Cook al' Isole du Tahiti*  
by Antonio Zatta and Figli Venezia G.Z. after Novelli  
Engraving, hand coloured 435 x 520mm  
ATL

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First Voyage (August 1768-July 1771) *Endeavour*

- 16 *Portrait of Joseph Banks*  
by Francis Cotes (1726-1770)  
Oil on canvas 914 x 698mm  
JSB

Since Banks did not return to England until 1771, the year after Cotes's death, this portrait must have been painted before the *Endeavour* expedition.



- 17 *Joseph Banks*  
by J.R. Smith (1752-1812) after Benjamin West (1738-1820)  
Mezzotint, 1st state 1773  
616 x 318mm  
ACAG

Sir Joseph Banks, K.B., P.R.S. (1743-1820) was a young and wealthy member of the landed gentry of England when he sailed with Cook on *Endeavour*. His life-long interest was natural history, and he had made his first voyage in 1766, when he went to Newfoundland and Labrador. Watercolour drawings of the specimens of birds which he brought back were painted by Sydney Parkinson whom Banks chose as one of the team of naturalists and artists for the *Endeavour* voyage. After the first voyage Banks planned to accompany the second but arrangements broke down and he went instead to Iceland, taking the suite he had gathered for the Pacific expedition. Upon Omai's arrival in England, Banks became his chief patron.



*The great South Sea Caterpillar, transformed into a Bath Butterfly.*  
*The caterpillar of the Bath Butterfly, taken from the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The first part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The second part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The third part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The fourth part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The fifth part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The sixth part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The seventh part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. The eighth part of the caterpillar, which was taken from the Bath Butterfly, is now in the Bath Butterfly, 1795. 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18

18 *The Great South Sea Caterpillar*  
 by James Gillray (1757-1815)  
 Engraving, handcoloured 1795  
 419 x 301mm  
 ACAG

James Gillray, the first professional English caricaturist, was heir to a tradition of political satire going back to the beginnings of the seventeenth century. Earlier work by masters such as Hogarth, Sandby or Benjamin Wilson, was done in the midst of other artistic activities and on material which was suggested to them or came from other sources. Gillray transformed this tradition by his single-minded devotion to caricature and by expressing his own political ideas. His etchings are a blend of savagery, with humour and his ideas are anti-Pope, anti-French and anti-Whig. This print is a caricature of

Joseph Banks, who had already suffered ridicule at the hands of Matthew Darly. In Darly's print, *The Fly-Catching Macaroni* (*Macaroni* being an ultra fashionable young man in the cant of the 1770s), Banks is depicted catching a butterfly, striding from the 'Arctick Circle' to the 'Antarctick Circle' (on the first voyage with Cook). In Gillray's print Banks himself is the butterfly, the social dandy who has just received the Order of the Bath from the King, with its crimson sash and golden medallion.

19 *Capt. Cook's Florilegium*

A selection of the engravings of the drawings of plants collected by . . . Banks and . . . Solander on Capt. Cook's first voyage . . .

[drawings by S. Parkinson], London, 1793

AIM

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## Second Voyage (July 1772-July 1775)

### *Resolution and Adventure*

Banks intended taking Zoffany on the second voyage: through Lord Palmerston's interest, Hodges was appointed landscape and figure painter. He is perhaps the most gifted and interesting of Cook's artists. In 1776, Cook wrote in an affectionate letter (now in Princeton University Library): '... your friends . . . much admire your drawings indeed I should wonder if they did not'. Hodges excelled in his Antarctic and tropical works escaping from classicism to express himself in new ways. Interested in the painting of light effects, he wrote a book on the subject. He was employed at the Admiralty, 1775-1777, finishing his drawings for engraving and working up his wash and crayon sketches.



20 *View of Dusky Bay*

by William Hodges R.A. (1744-1797)

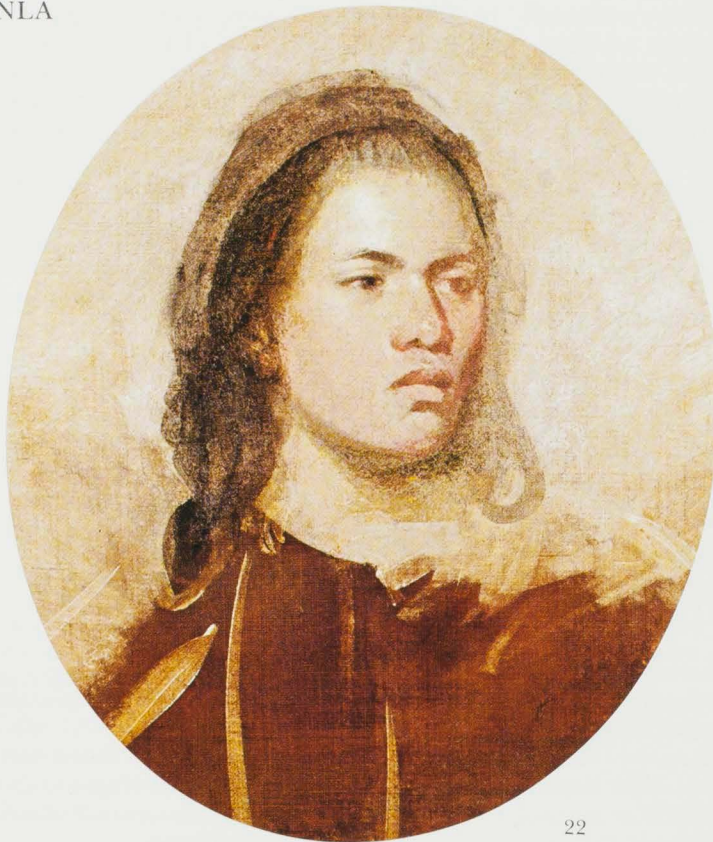
Oil on panel diameter 647mm

ACAG



## OMAI

- 21 *Omai of the Friendly Isles*  
by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)  
Pencil 265 x 200mm  
NLA



- 22 *Sketch of Omai*  
by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)  
Oil on canvas 603x200mm  
YALE

Reynolds, founder member and President of the Royal Academy and foremost portraitist of his day, probably painted Omai late in 1775. The pencil drawing in Canberra and the oil sketch in Yale were done in preparation for the full length portrait in Castle Howard. This latter portrait was not apparently done on commission, since it remained in his studio until his death. Reynolds exhibited it at the Royal Academy in 1776 and when he died it was bought by the dealer Bryan from whom it soon passed into the possession of the Earl of Carlisle. It is now held at Castle Howard in Yorkshire.

The pencil sketch is the best portrait, it would appear, rendering well, as E.H. McCormick puts it (*Omai, Pacific Envoy*, p.174) 'the long, straight, black hair, the broad forehead, the alert dark eyes, the flat, fleshy nose, the full lips, the slightly receding jaw . . . recognisably the representative of a new race, a Polynesian.' The oil sketch 'falls far short of the drawing. Though pose and features are similar, the sharp clarity of the pencil study has gone and Omai is shown as a brooding, enigmatic presence, handsome half-brother of Caliban.' The full portrait is 'remote from the literal truth of the model's appearance as it was rendered by Nathaniel Dance or Reynolds himself in his preliminary drawing. Robed and turbanned, [Omai] is flanked on his right by a tropical palm while to the left a romantic landscape recedes into the distance. In this exotic setting he stands like an African princeling, one tattooed hand out-stretched as if in declamation, his handsome, now somewhat negroid features composed in an expression of benign authority. The painting depicts not only an idealised Omai but one of the several conceptions he embodied in the eyes of European observers — the nobility and dignity of natural man.' (McCormick, *ibid.*)

23 *Portrait of Omai*

by Sir Joshua Reynolds

Oil on canvas 2360 x 1460mm

HOWARD *Frontispiece*

24 *Omai*

by Nathaniel Dance Holland (1734-1811)

Black and red chalk with charcoal 496x343mm

CPA

Sir Nathaniel Dance Holland, Bart., M.P., R.A., was a portrait painter and later Member of Parliament and artist of the most popular Cook portrait. As Nathaniel Dance he studied art in London and Italy, and in 1761, was elected to the Incorporated Society of Artists. He became a foundation member of the Royal Academy, exhibiting portraits of the King and Queen. In 1790 Dance married a widow, taking the additional name of Holland. He then entered Parliament and was an M.P. for many years.

25 *Portrait of Maria, Countess Waldegrave, Duchess of Gloucester*

by Sir Joshua Reynolds

Oil on canvas 915 x 710mm

DPAG

This portrait recalls one of Omai's earliest social triumphs. Escorted by Mr Banks and Dr Solander, he visited the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester on 21 July 1774, only a week after his arrival in England. He behaved with the greatest politeness and, as he prepared to leave, the Duchess rewarded him with a handkerchief embellished with her coronet. Thereupon Omai kissed the handkerchief, smiled, and made a deep bow to Her Royal Highness. The Duke (1743-1805) was a younger brother of George III, while his wife (1739-1807), widow of the Earl of Waldegrave, was a natural daughter of Sir

Edward Walpole and reputedly the handsomest woman in England. Reynolds is said to have painted her seven times.

26 *Autograph letter from Prince Frederick to Bishop Markham*  
PGM

Gives an eye-witness description of Omai.

27 *Autograph letter from Sir William Watson to Edward Wortley Montagu*  
19 Sept 1775  
DL

William Watson (1715-87), the writer of this letter, was a physician, a naturalist, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Edward Wortley Montagu (1713-76), to whom the letter was addressed, was an eccentric aristocrat and spent much of his life abroad. As a child in Constantinople, he was inoculated for smallpox, reputedly the first Englishman to undergo the operation.

28 *Autograph letter from Daniel Carl Solander to Banks(?)*  
14 August 1774  
DL

The Swedish born Daniel Carl Solander (1736-82) was a pupil of Linnaeus and came to England in 1760. He established his reputation as a naturalist and with Banks travelled to the Pacific on the *Endeavour*, commanded by Lieutenant James Cook.

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## The Omai Pantomime

A year after the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, the official account of Cook's last expedition, the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, staged *Omai: or A Trip Round the World*. This pantomime, first performed on 20 December 1785, was a great success and held the stage until 1788. The plot, devised by the playwright John O'Keeffe, was negligible, a mere pretext for the costumes and settings designed by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg and the music composed by William Shield.

29 *Playbill for the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden 8 May 1786*  
ML



At the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden,

This present MONDAY, May 8, 1786,

# The D U E N N A.

Isaac by Mr. QUICK,

Carlos by Mr. JOHNSTONE,

Ferdinand, Mr. PALMER, Antonio, Mr. DAVIES,  
Father Paul, Mr. BOOTH, Lopez, Mr. WEWITZER,

And Jerome by Mr. EDWIN,

The Duenna by Mrs. WEBB,

Louisa by Mrs. MARTYR,

And Clara by Mrs. BILLINGTON.

In the First Act, she will introduce an Obligato SONG, for the ORCE,  
accompanied by Mr. W. PARKE, and composed by Mr. SHIELD;

and in the Third Act, a favourite SONG, composed by SARTI.

To which will be added (for the 47th Time) a NEW PANTOMIME called

# O M A I:

Or, A Trip Round the World.

TOWHA, the Guardian Genius of OMAI's Ancesters, by Mr. HELME.

OTOO, Father of OMAI, by Mr. DARLEY, OMAI by Mr. BLURTON,

HARLEQUIN, Servant to OMAI, by Mr. KENNEDY,

OEDIDDEE, Pretender to the Throne, by Mrs. KENNEDY,

OBEEA, an Enchantress, by Mrs. MARTYR,

Don STRUTTOLANDO, Rival to OMAI, by Mr. PALMER.

CLOWN, his Servant, by Mr. STEVENS, BRITANNIA by Mrs. INCHBALD,

LONDINA, the Confort destined to OMAI, by Miss CRANFIELD,

COLOMBINE, Maid to LONDINA, by Miss ROWSON,

And An English Sailor (with a SONG) by Mr. EDWIN.

## With a PROCESSION

Exactly representing the Dresses, Weapons, and Manners, of the Inhabitants of Otaheite,  
New Zealand, Tanna, Marquesas, the Friendly, Sandwich, and Easter Islands; Tschutski,  
Siberia, Kamtschatka, Nootka Sound, Onalashka, Prince William's Sound, and the other  
Countries visited by Captain COOK.

The Pantomime, and the Whole of the Scenery, Machinery, Dresses, &c. Designed and  
Invented by Mr. LOUTHERBOURG.

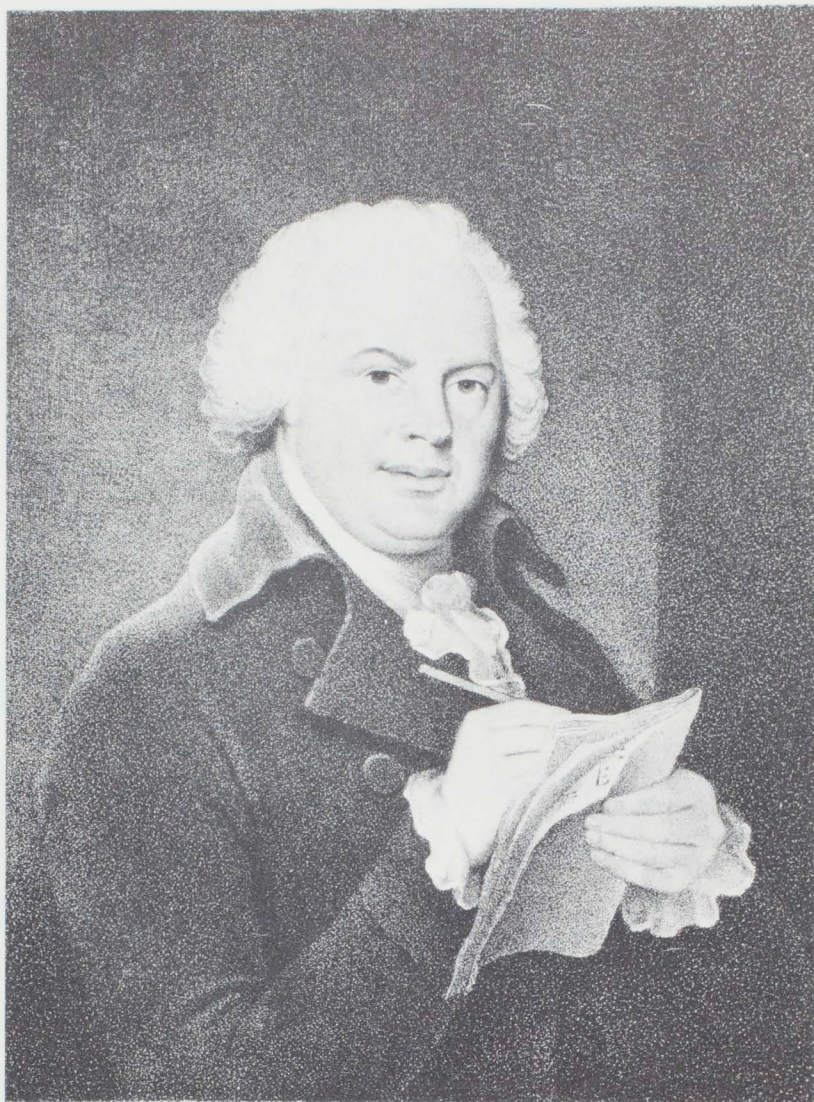
Nothing under FULL PRICE will be taken.

To-morrow, will be presented a Comedy (Never Performed Here) called

The FASHIONABLE LOVER.

To which will be added The COUNTRY MADCAP; Or, MISS LUCY in TOWN.

For the Benefit of Mrs. MARTYR.



- 30 *Omai*  
by J. O'Keeffe (1747-1833)  
Published in London, 1785  
ATL

A description of the pantomime by the librettist, O'Keeffe.

- 31 *Mr Wm Shield*  
by Thomas Hardy (active 1778-1801)  
Engraving 267 x 205mm

William Shield (1748-1829) was an English musician who produced primarily comic operas and dramatic works.

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## Omai in Literature

- 32 *Narrations d'Omai*  
by G.A.R. Baston (1741-1825)  
Published in Rouen and Paris, 1790  
ATL

A fictionalised account of the life of Omai, allegedly translated from Tahitian.

- 33 *The Task*  
by William Cowper  
Published in London, 1785  
ATL

The poet William Cowper (1731-1800) was an absorbed reader of the official narrative of Cook's last voyage when it appeared in 1784. At the time he was working on a reflective poem, *The Task*, published in the following year. Not surprisingly, there is a lengthy passage on the South Sea islander who had figured so prominently in Cook's account of his return to the Pacific. Omai is not mentioned by name but is addressed as the 'gentle savage' and shown on a mountain top.

- 34 *Seventeen Hundred and Seventy-seven*  
by W. Preston (1753-1807)  
Published in London, 1777  
ATL



## Third Voyage (July 1776-October 1780)

### *Resolution and Discovery*

35-43 *Drawings by William Ellis (d. 1785)*

ATL

William Ellis was surgeon's mate on *Discovery* and acted also as natural history draughtsman. He went to *Resolution* when Clerke took command. Ellis published his own unofficial account of the voyage. He died in 1785 while on his way to Germany, engaged by the Emperor.

35 *View of Middleburgh, Friendly Islands*

Ink and wash 170 x 495mm

ATL



*South View of Mangia-nooe, distant two Miles. See Ellis's Voyage, Vol. 1, p. 99, and the Chart on Vol. 1.*

36

36 *South view of Mangia-nooe*

Ink and wash 235 x 370mm

ATL

37 *Canoes of the Friendly Islands*

Sepia ink and wash 295 x 190mm

ATL

38 *Canoe, Friendly Islands*

Ink and pencil 165 x 195mm

ATL

39 *Tahitian Canoe*

Pencil and grey wash 185 x 310mm

ATL

40 *Trading Place at Anamooka, Friendly Islands*

Pencil 195 x 310mm

ATL



41

41 *Tahitian Girl in Frilled Skirt*

Pencil 230 x 155mm

ATL

42 *Tahitian Girl bringing presents*

Pencil 250 x 180mm

ATL

43 *Priest in Mourning Dress, Tahiti*

Pencil 317 x 190mm

ATL

44-47 *Paintings by John Webber (1750/2-1793)*

44 *View in Oheitepeha Bay, Tahiti*

Watercolour 409x600mm

DG

45 *View of Tahiti*

Oil on canvas 546x813mm

JSB



46

46 *Chief lying in state, Matavia, Otaheite*

Watercolour 423x581mm

DG

47 *Ships Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound*

Oil on canvas 584x762mm

BSG

48 *View of Anamooka*

by William Byrne (1743-1805) after John Webber

Engraving, hand coloured 260 x 530mm

ATL

49 *An Offering before Capt. Cook in One of the Sandwich Islands*

by J.G. Wooding after John Webber

Engraving 403x568mm

ACAG





47



48

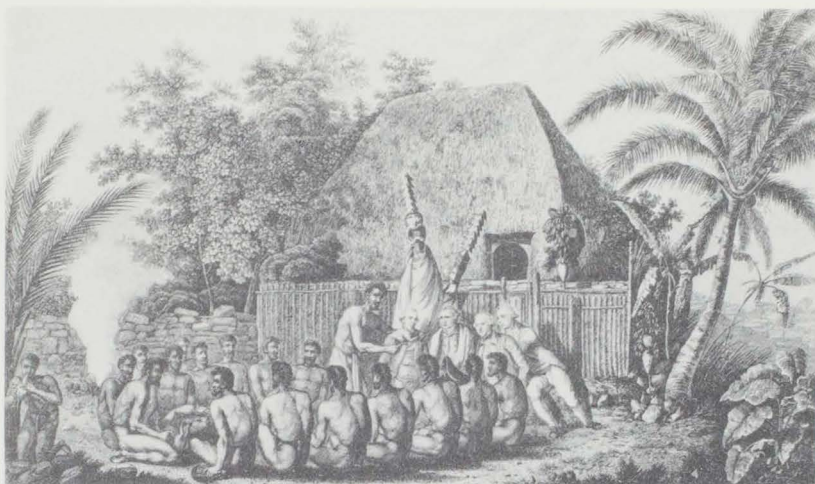


51



*View in the Island of HUAHEINE, with Representations of the Ewharra no Eatua, or House of God, —  
of a small Altar with its offerings, & a Tree called Owharra, with which the Houses are Thatched.*

52



50

- 50 *An Offering before Cook in the Sandwich Islands*  
 by James Heath (1757-1834) after John Webber  
 Engraving 133x174mm  
 ACAG

- 51 *A View of Huahine*  
 by William Byrne (1743-1805) after John Webber  
 Engraving 403x568mm  
 ACAG

- 52 *View of Huahine with Representations of the Ewharrano Eatua, or House of God etc*  
 by Carey after John Webber  
 Engraving 222x327mm  
 ACAG

- 53 *View of Matavia Bay in Otaheite*  
 by Carey after John Webber  
 Engraving 228x324mm  
 ACAG

- 54 *Otaheite*  
 by William Collins (1788-1847) after Ralph Willet  
 Engraving 410 x 545mm  
 ATL



55 *Portrait of Captain Clerke*

by Nathaniel Dance Holland (1734-1811)

Oil on canvas

GH

Captain John Clerke (1743-79) sailed with Cook on all three voyages and took command of the *Resolution* after the death of Cook.

56-59 *Aquatints by F. Jukes of drawings by John Cleveley after James Cleveley*

APL

James Cleveley (active 1776-80) was carpenter on the *Resolution* on the third voyage. His drawings were worked up as watercolours by his brother John Cleveley (1747-86), Marine Painter to the Prince Regent and a pupil of Paul Sandby. John accompanied Banks to Iceland, was employed making finished drawings from sketches made during the first voyage and would have gone on the second voyage with Banks if the latter had not withdrawn. The watercolours were worked up as aquatints by Francis Jukes (1747-1812).



56 *View of Charlotte Sound in New Zealand*

435x603mm

The work is mistitled and probably depicts Matavia Bay, Tahiti.

57 *View of Huahine, one of the Society Islands*

435x600mm

The ships' carpenters may be seen at left building Omai's house.

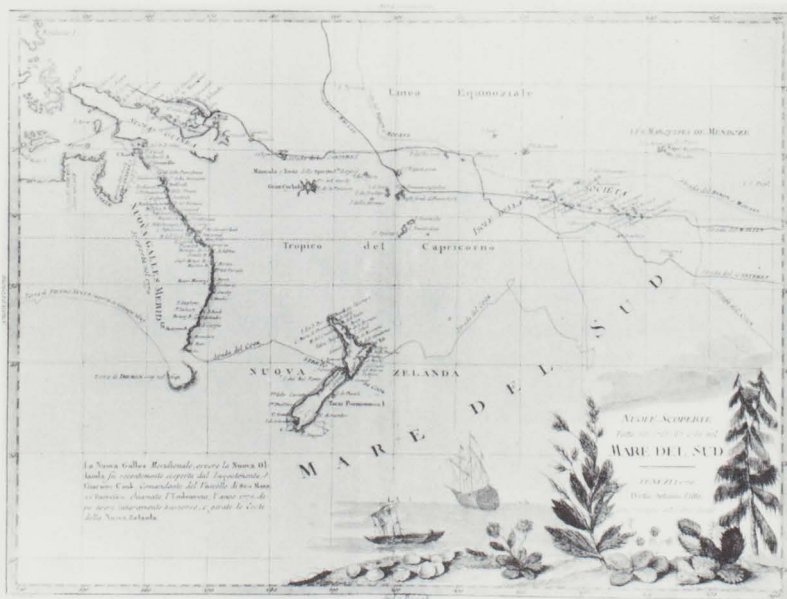
- 58 *View of Morea, one of the Friendly Islands*  
441x609mm

The last part of the title is erroneous; Moorea is not in the Friendly or Tongan Islands but about ten miles from Tahiti.

- 59 *View of Owhyhee, one of the Sandwich Islands*  
438x603mm

## The Official Narratives of Cook's Voyages

- 60 John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages . . . in the Southern Hemisphere* (3 vols., London, 1773)  
APL
- 61 James Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole* (2 vols., London, 1777)  
APL
- 62 James Cook and James Kind, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (3 vols., London 1784)  
APL



- 63 *Map of the South Pacific in 1776*  
by Antonio Zatta (active 1737-1797)  
Engraving, hand coloured 315 x 415mm  
ATL

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## Omai's World: The Art of Polynesia

This exhibition is not an ethnographic exhibition. The works are catalogued below by their place of origin but only for convenience. No attempt will be made to discuss the history or relationships of the various island groups. The objects are usually utensils or weapons designed for actual use and beyond a brief note on what these uses may be, the objects will be allowed to speak for themselves as works of art.

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### Tahiti

64, 65, 66, 67 *Four tikis of basalt from maraes*  
AIM



66

A tiki is an anthropomorphic image representing an ancestral spirit or minor god.





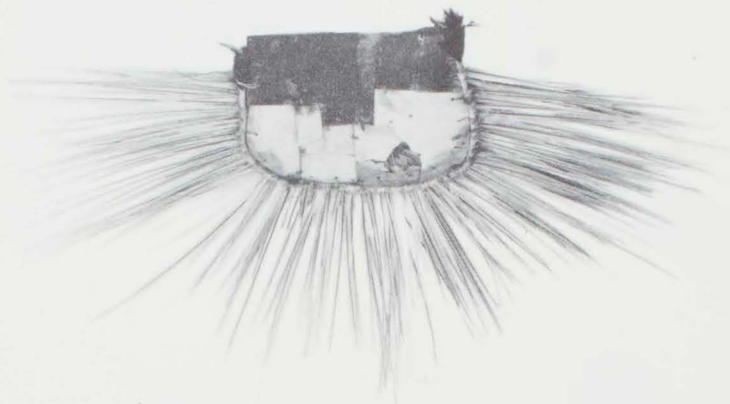
68

68 *Figure from the godhouse of a marae*  
OM

- 69 *Figure of coral*  
AIM

- 70 *Sinnet shape originally covered with rea feathers*  
AIM

Symbol of Oro, the god of war, to whom human sacrifice was made as recorded by Captain Cook.



- 71 *Pearl and feather headdress for ceremonial occasions*  
NMW

- 72 *Headrest*  
NMW

- 73 *Bamboo flute*  
AIM

- 74, 74A *Hafted adzes*  
AIM

- 75 *Adze blade*  
AIM

- 76 *Pounder for mashing breadfruit and taro*  
AIM

71



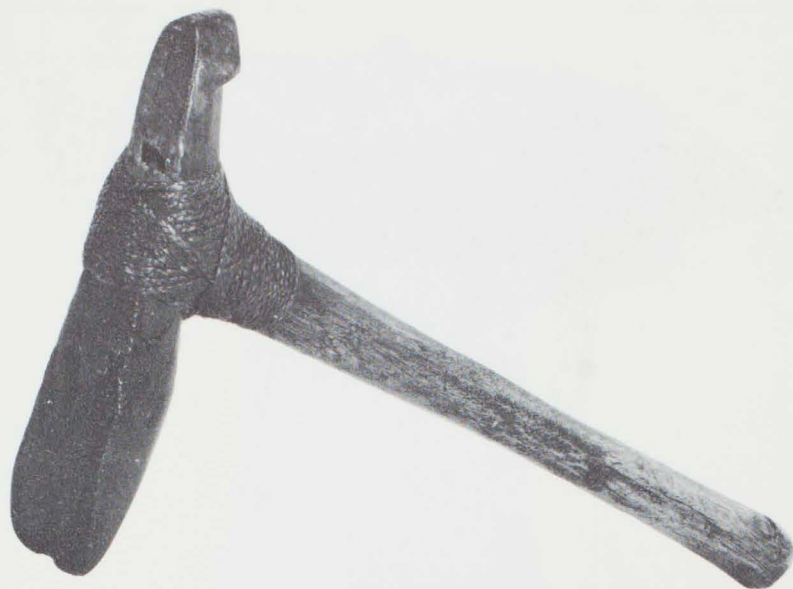
72



50

73





74



5053  
For  
Security

75

51



76

77 *Wooden bowl for serving 'awa*  
AIM

78, 79, 80, 81, 82 *Fish hooks of pearl shell with attached lines of sinnet*  
AIM

83 *Fish hook of turtle shell with attached line of sinnet*  
AIM

84 *Long spear of wood for use in canoes*  
AIM

Marquesas



85 *Figure placed on the prow of a canoe*  
NMW





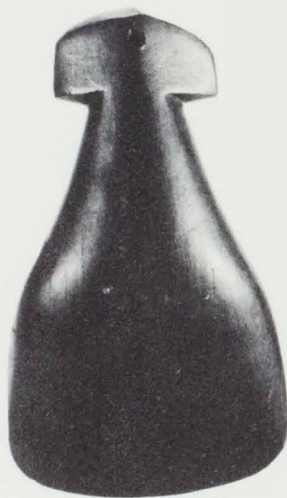
86



87 *Body ornament of human hair*  
AIM

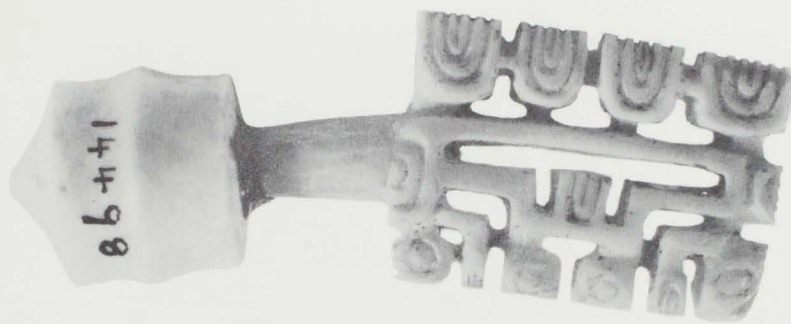
87

88 *Carved wooden food bowl*  
AIM



86

89 *Breadfruit splitter of wood*  
AIM



90



91

90, 91 *Ivory plugs worn in ear lobes*  
AIM





92



94

57

92, 93, 94 *Pounders for preparing food*  
AIM



95 96

95, 96 *Chiefs' clubs*  
AIM

97, 98 *Long clubs*  
AIM

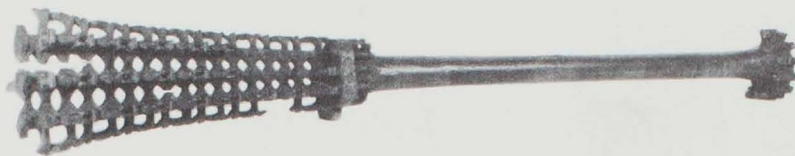
99 *Paddle*  
AIM

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## Cook Islands

100 *Symbol of a god in the form of a staff*  
Aitutaki  
AIM

101 *Symbol of a god in the form of a staff*  
Mangaia  
OM



102 *Symbol of the god Rongo*  
Aitutaki  
OM

102



103 *Top of a large staff*  
Rarotonga  
OM

103

Symbol of Tangaroa, the creator god.



104

104 *Large gong formed from two human figures*  
Mangaia  
HBM



105 *Rimaroa*  
Cook Islands  
OM



106 *Ceremonial adze*  
Mangaia  
OM

107 *Ceremonial adze*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

108 *Handle of a ceremonial adze*  
Mangaia  
OM

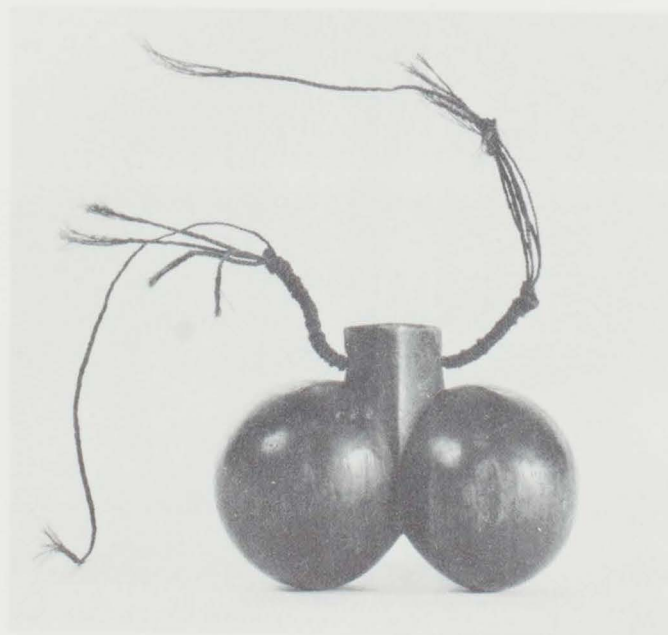
109 *Adze head*  
Rarotonga  
AIM

106



110 *Seat of a chief*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

110



111 *Pendant worn by warriors*  
Atiu  
AIM

111

- 112 *Pole spear*  
Cook Islands  
AIM



- 113 *Food bowl*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

- 114 *Bowl*  
Manihiki  
NMW

- 115, 116, 117, 118 *Stone food pounders*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

- 119 *Food pounder of coral*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

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## Hawaiï

- 120 *Feather helmet*  
CM

A locally developed form of helmet worn by warriors. The manufacture was restricted to men and involved the collection of thousands of yellow and red

114

feathers from small species of honey-eating birds, each then tied separately on to the netted base of the helmet.



120



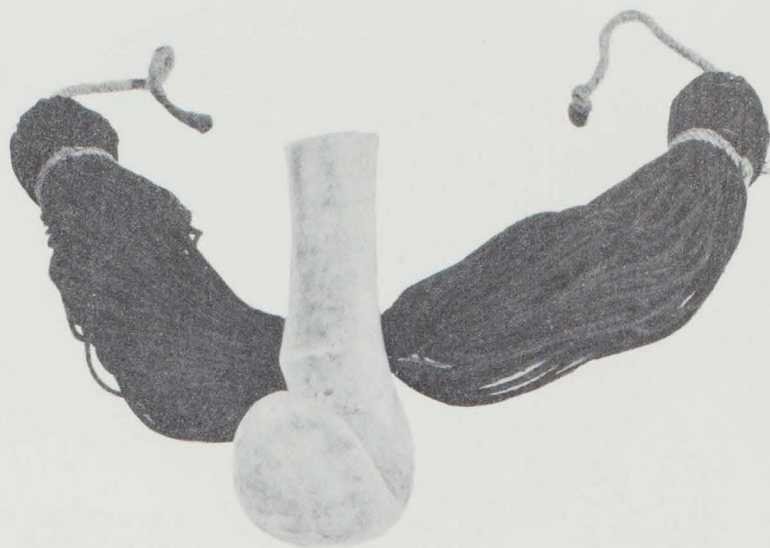
121

121 *Feather cape of Liliuokolani*  
OM

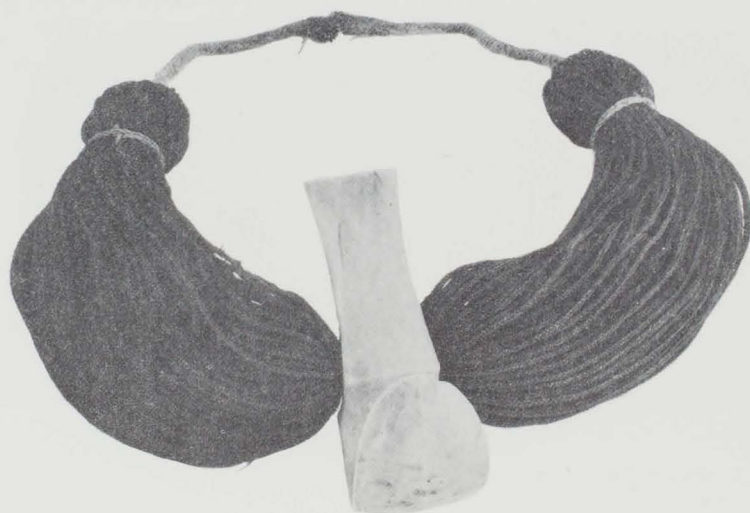
Liliuokolani was the last of the ruling princesses of Hawaii.

122, 123 *Breast ornaments of whale ivory and human hair worn by chiefs*  
AIM





122



123



126



139

124 *Stone lamp*  
AIM

125 *Bowl used for poi*  
AIM

Pre-European and made with stone tools.

126 *Bowl used for food*  
AIM

127 *Bowl to serve food to chiefs with central ridge to wipe fingers.*  
AIM

128 *Bowl*  
AIM

129 *Coconut cup*  
AIM

130 *Stone food pounder*  
AIM

131, 132, 133 *Ring shaped pounders of stone*  
Kauai  
AIM

134 *Stone adze*  
AIM

135, 136, 137, 138 *Bowling balls*  
AIM

139 *Bowl for the deposit of fingernails etc*  
AIM

To preserve fingernails and other personal clippings so that they do not fall into the hands of sorcerers for use against the person.

## Austral Islands

140 *A god symbol in the form of a staff*

Rurutu

AIM



141

141 *A chief's staff*

Raevavae

AIM

142 *Fly whisk handle*

Austral Islands

AIM

Fly whisks, carved wooden handles with whisks of coconut sinnet fibre, were symbols of chieftainship. They were conventionally decorated with two stylised human figures placed back to back and were originally used for keeping flies off corpses laid out in state.

143 *Bowl for serving food to a chief*

Raivavae

AIM

144 *Food scoop*

Raevavae

AIM



145 *Food scoop*  
Tubuai  
AIM

146 *Carrying pole*  
Rurutu  
AIM



148, 148 *Detail*

147, 148 *Ceremonial paddles*  
Tubuai  
AIM

149, 150 *Ceremonial paddles*  
Raivavae  
AIM

151 *Ceremonial paddle*  
Rurutu  
AIM

152 *Paddle spear*  
Tubuai  
AIM

153 *Paddle spear*  
Raivavae  
AIM

154 *Pole spear*  
Raivavae  
AIM

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## Mangareva

155, 156 *Food pounders*  
AIM

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## Easter Island



157

157 *Ancestor figure (Moai Kavakava)*  
CM

Disagreement exists among scholars whether the extreme degree of emaciation depicted in these male human figures is evidence of periodic starvation or deficiency diseases in Easter Island, or shows the images to be

of half-decayed corpses. Easter Island was a hard environment for the Polynesian and famine perhaps more prevalent than in all except the smaller atolls.



158

158 *Dance paddle*  
CM

159 *Two handled club*  
AIM

160 *Club*  
NMW

## Tonga



161

- 161 *A 'goddess' probably representing a senior female of a lineage*  
Lifuka, Haapai Group  
AIM

- 162 *A percussion instrument seen in use by Captain Cook*  
AIM

This has lost the strip which formed the clapper.

- 163, 164, 165 *Combs*  
AIM

- 166 *Whale tooth pendants in the shape of dart heads*  
AIM

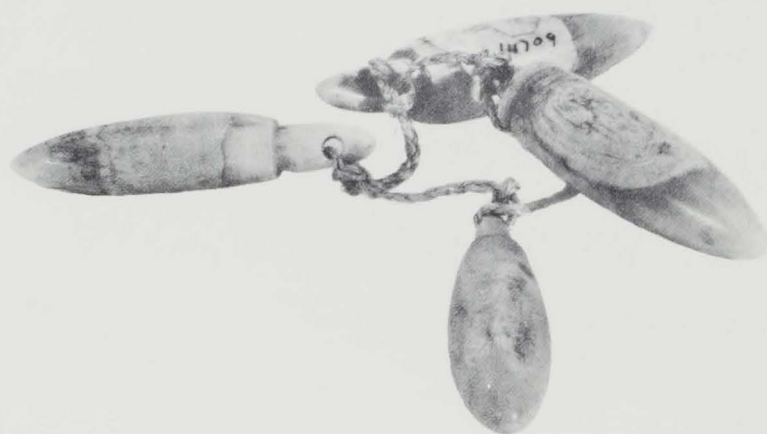
- 167 *Whaletooth pendant*  
AIM

- 168 *Copy in stone of whaletooth*  
AIM





163



166

- 169 *Fine coiled basket*  
AIM



170

- 170 *Blade of club collected by Captain Cook*  
AIM

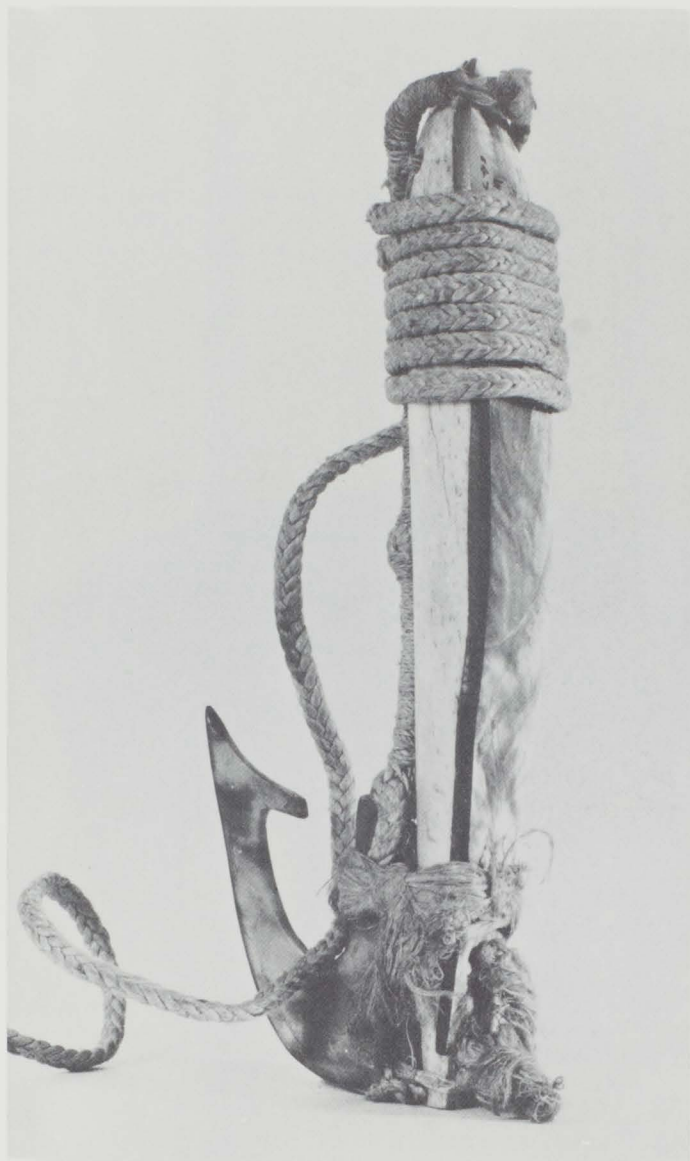
- 171 *Throwing club of Fijian style*  
Vava'u  
AIM

- 172A, B, C, D *Clubs*  
AIM

- 173, 174, 175 *Headrests*  
AIM

- 176 *Large fish hook of turtle shell and bone*  
AIM

- 177 *Weight for a cuttlefish bait*  
AIM



176

## Samoa

178, 179, 180, 181 *Set of tattooing chisels*  
AIM

Tattoo (tatau) is the Polynesian word for body decoration by means of pigments inserted under the skin with small combs or chisels of bone or shell. The tattoo was a mark of social standing in both men and women and was applied at maturity.

181A *Tattooing chisel*  
AIM

182 *Coiled basket*  
AIM



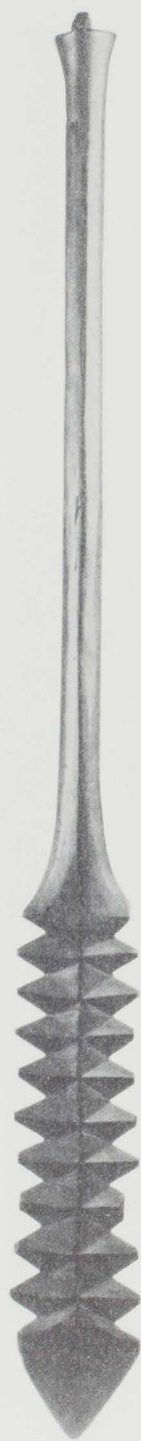
183, 184 184A *Bowls used for kava ceremony*  
AIM

184

Kava is the traditional drink obtained by cold infusion of fibres of the dried root of the pepper plant. Originally chewed, but now generally pounded with stone, then mixed with water. The preparation and serving of kava are governed by great ceremony and etiquette.

185, 186, 187, 188 *Clubs*  
AIM

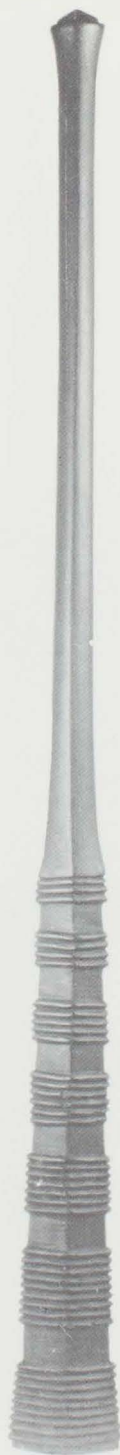




185 186



77



## Niue

189 *Nose flute*  
AIM

190 *Stalactite necklace*  
AIM

191 *Necklet of plaited human hair*  
AIM

192 *Comb*  
AIM



193 *Coiled basket*  
AIM

193



194 *Hafted adze*  
AIM

194

195 *Hafted adze of shell*  
AIM

196, 197, 198, 199 *Sling Stones*  
AIM



200, 201 *Wooden darts used in games*  
AIM

201



## Maori



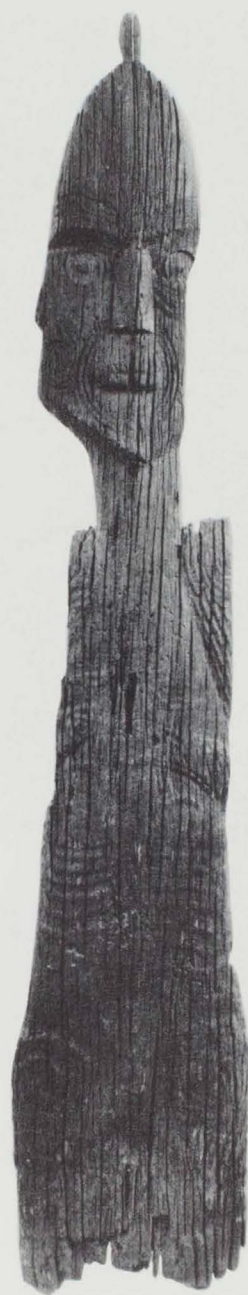
202

202 *Portion of a lintel*  
East Coast style  
NMW

Another portion of this lintel is in the Philadelphia Museum in the United States. It was carved with metal tools in the period 1820-1840.



204



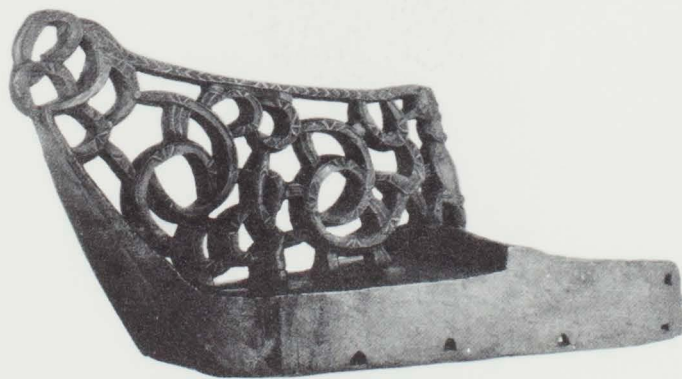
- 203 *The centre doorway of a storehouse*  
East Cape style  
NMW

The storehouse from which this comes stood originally at Miranda on the Gulf of Thames and the carvings were given to Sarah Bernhardt.

- 204 *Ancestor figure from a chief's house*  
NMW

Probably represents a tribal chief and was originally attached to the central pillar of a tribal meeting house. Made during the early European contact phase before 1820.

- 205 *Memorial figure*  
Waikato  
AIM



- 206 *Canoe prow*  
Mokau, Taranaki  
AIM

206



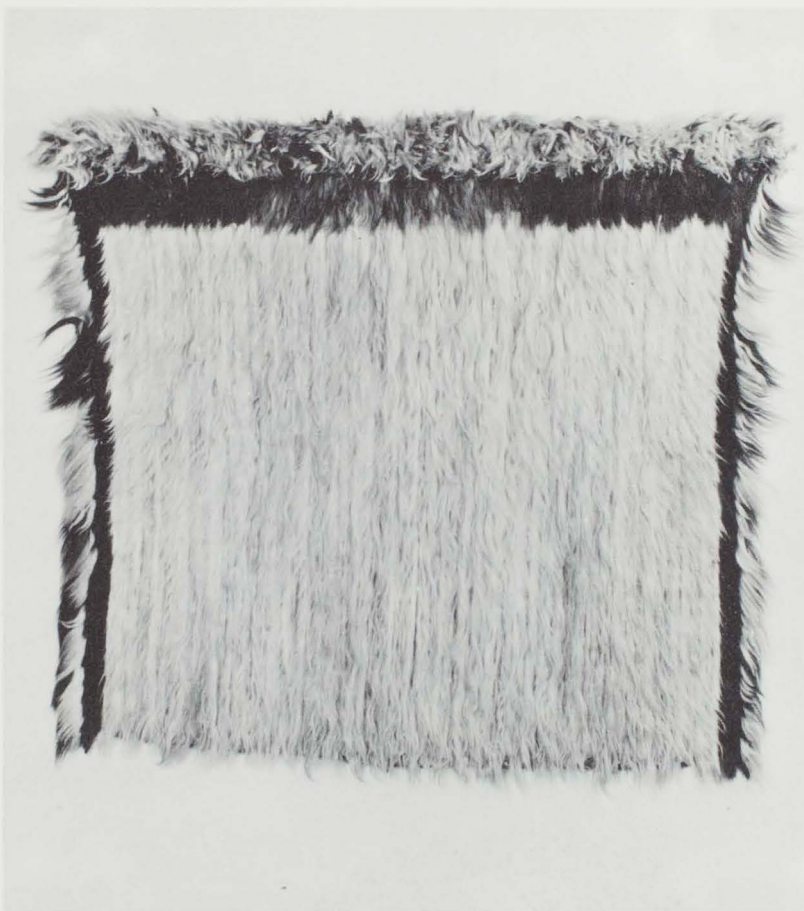


207

207 *Tattooed head from a canoe prow*  
(?) Waikato  
AIM

208 *Wakahuia (feather box)*  
Wanganui style  
AIM

209 *Wakahuia (feather box)*  
Northland  
AIM



210

210 *Dogskin cloak of a chief*  
Bay of Plenty  
AIM

211 *Comb of whalebone*  
New Zealand  
AIM

212 *Composite comb*  
New Zealand  
AIM

213 *Ear pendant of greenstone*  
Urewera  
AIM

214 *Pendant in the form of a fishhook*  
Bay of Plenty  
AIM

215 *Food bowl*  
Uhura, Taranaki  
AIM

216 *Pounder for softening flax fibre for weaving*  
New Zealand  
AIM



217 *Wahaika (wooden club)*  
New Zealand  
NMW

217

- 218 *Patu onewa (hand club) of basalt*  
Wellington  
AIM
- 219 *Patu paraoa (hand club) of whalebone*  
Waiomio, Northland  
AIM
- 219A *Patu*  
AIM
- 220 *Mere of greenstone*  
New Zealand  
AIM

Greenstone is nephrite, a form of jade. It was valued for its rarity, its beauty and for the fact that it takes a keen edge. Its source in New Zealand was Poutini or west coast of the South Island from whence it passed by war or through barter throughout the tribes of both islands. This mere, or thrusting club, was taken to England in the 19th century.

## Chatham Islands



221 *God figure*  
AIM



221

*Detail 221*

Made by the now extinct Moriori culture of the Chatham Islands and unique.

## Tapa

Tapa, in Hawaii called Kapa, is a fabric made of the fibres of the inner bark of the papermulberry tree, the breadfruit tree or the wild fig. Preparation is entirely in the hands of women, and men in some cases are not even permitted to watch. The trunks of young trees, selected for their straightness, are cut down and the bark removed. The coarse outer bark is then stripped off and the inner bark (*liber* or *bast*) is rolled into bundles. These are then moistened and beaten on an anvil of hard wood using a beater of wood which has a round handle and is round or square in cross-section at the mallet end with the faces grooved or cross-grooved. The beating spreads the bark to about double its original width and felts the texture. The strips are then laid side by side and glued together with the flesh of over-ripe breadfruit, starch from arrowroot or the sap of certain lianas. Sheets so formed can be laminated together with the strips at right angles and joined together in the same manner to produce the size necessary for use.

The tapa can then be decorated with natural pigments dissolved in water or vegetable sap. These pigments are yellow and red ochre, charcoal, quicklime and various green, blue or black powdered minerals. Tapa can also be dyed with vegetable dyes and different coloured strips interwoven to form geometric patterns, or dyed with a 'reserve technique' similar to *batik* in which the dye is prevented from reaching certain area of the tapa by mechanical means. The decoration can be applied freehand with a brush or stamped on using wooden stamps incised with the design or using natural objects such as leaves which have patterns of raised ribs. Cords dipped in the paint, held against the tapa and then plucked, produced straight lines.

The designs in use are generally geometric but in some islands natural forms such as leaves are incorporated. The decoration of modern tapa also includes symbols such as crowns, birds, stars and writing.

Tapa is used for clothing, bedclothes, table use, curtains, ornaments and other such uses. The technique of manufacture of tapa is, or was known throughout the Pacific Island cultures of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia and is one of the cultural features which the ancestral groups carried with them from their original homeland in South Asia.

222 *Tapa with seaweed and leaf patterns*

Tahiti

AIM

223, 224, 225, 226, 227 *Tapa*

Niue

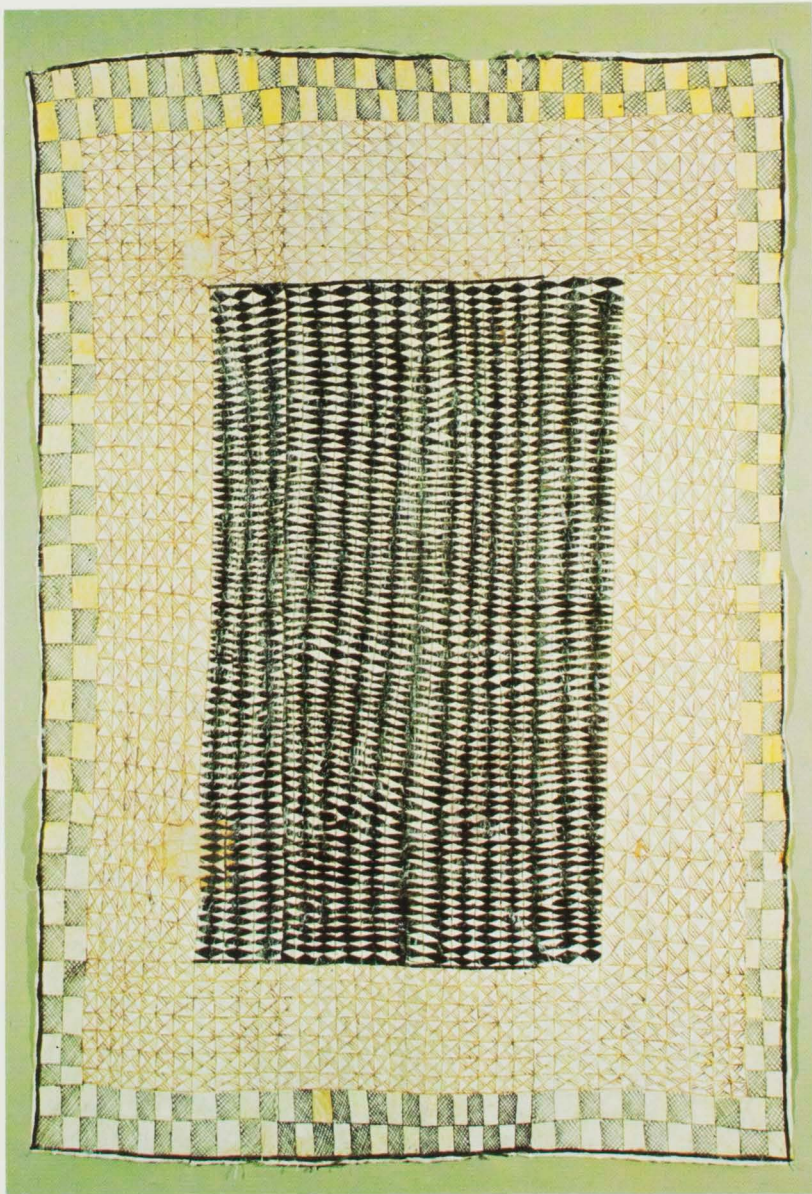
AIM

228 *Tapa beater*

Niue

AIM





225

229, 230 *Tapa*  
Cook Islands  
AIM

231, 232 *Ponchos of tapa*  
Cook Islands  
AIM



233 *Mask of tapa*  
Mangaia, Cook Islands  
AIM

233

234 *Tapa beater*  
Atiu, Cook Islands  
AIM

235, 236 *Kapa*  
Hawaii  
AIM

237, *Kapa*  
Hawaii  
NMW



239

238, 239 *Kapa* beaters  
Hawaii  
AIM

240 , 241, 242 *Tapa*  
Tonga  
AIM

243 , 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251 *Tapa*  
Samoa  
AIM

252 , 253 *Tapa*  
Futuna (Hoorn Island)  
AIM

Tapa perhaps comes nearest to the use of pure design for its own sake and without symbolic connotations in the Polynesian world and it is in tapa, therefore, that the artistic spirit of the Polynesian approaches closest to that of the contemporary 'Western' world. So much is this the case that there are examples of tapa in this exhibition which, if the design were transposed to canvas, would be indistinguishable from the paintings of certain New Zealand and other artists of the present day. The two worlds of Omai, which seemed so distant the one from the other in the eighteenth century, have come finally together in the present. In western cities, such as Auckland, the Polynesian mingles with the European, and artists within the western tradition have come finally, two or more centuries later, to an understanding and appreciation of principles of abstract design that were common currency among so-called 'primitive' Polynesian societies.



