Chapter 4
Cook's Pacific
Exploration and Encounter

John McAleer

The official impetus for Cook's voyages was, to a large extent, the acquisition of scientific knowledge. But one of their most significant results was the new knowledge and information they gathered about the people of the Pacific. The accounts of contemporary travellers and the collections of Western museums are full of incidents and objects that demonstrate the enduring European fascination with this oceanic world, its people and its environment. Or, rather, its peoples and environments, because the Pacific was – and is – a geographically vast and varied place, encompassing many societies and cultures within a huge expanse of ocean. To take one example: the prints derived from Cook's third voyage demonstrate this extraordinary range, as well as the new vistas on the Pacific that the expedition presented to European viewers. Cook had travelled extensively in the South Pacific (the 'South Seas') before, of course, with Tahiti, Tasmania and New Zealand known principally through the work of William Hodges on, and after, the second voyage. The third voyage expanded that oceanic world to include views by John Webber of places such as the little-known Friendly Islands (today's Tonga), 14 prints of coastal Siberia, ten of Alaska, 13 of the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i), where Cook died, and six from Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island.[1] Simply leafing through the official voyage account brought readers into contact with people and places across an entire oceanic hemisphere and from pole to pole. Through such images – as well as artefacts and even Pacific people themselves – Cook's voyages brought back more information than any voyages before them about an ocean that was little known. We will later explore the ways in which this affected European, and particularly British, society, but this chapter attempts to give a sense of some of the ways in which Cook and his crew encountered, engaged with and presented the Pacific world.

Fig. 66
The War-Boats of the Island of Otaheite and the Society Isles, with a View of Part of the Harbour of Ohaneneno, in the Island of Ulietea, one of the Society Islands (detail), William Hodges, 1776
National Maritime Museum (BHC2374)

THE PACIFIC WORLD

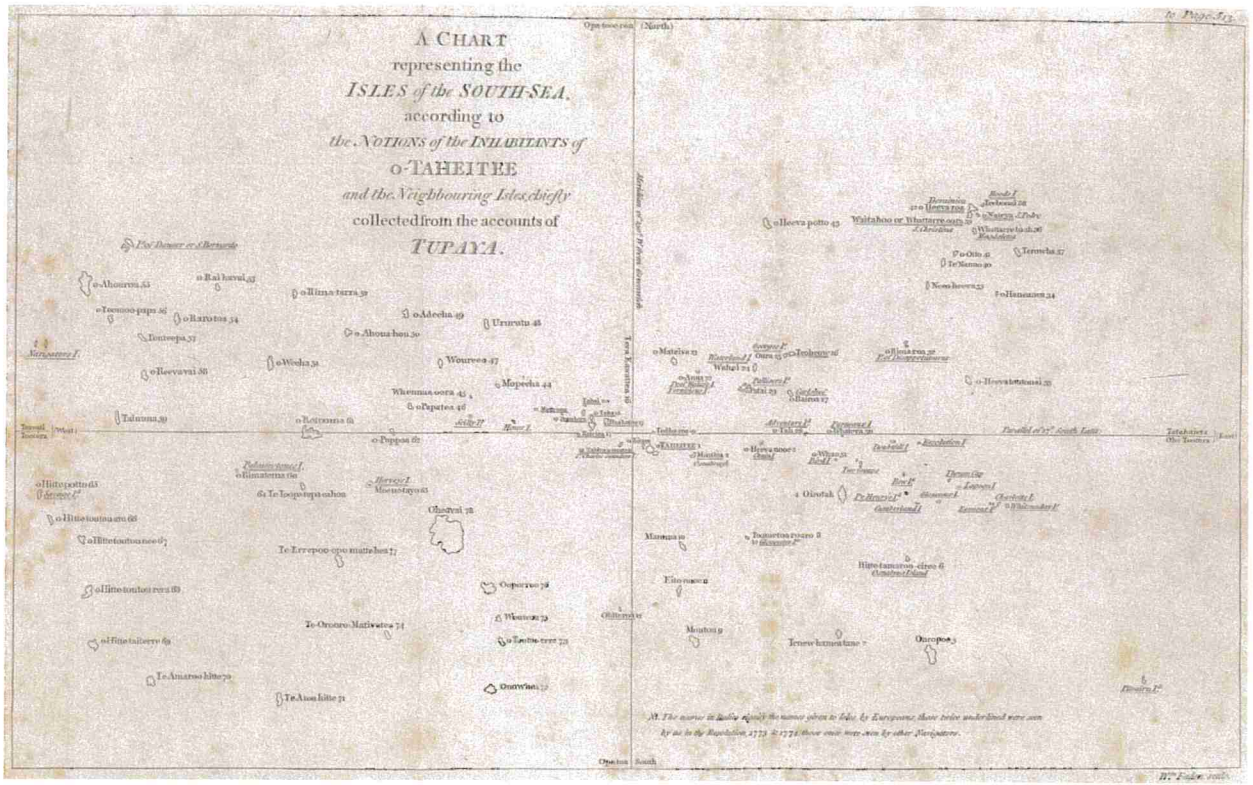
The Pacific Ocean is so vast and variegated that no single voyage, or even group of voyages (let alone the resultant publications), could possibly hope to capture or experience it in all its forms. Within its bounds are Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, which make up Oceania – European designations that the people of the region have themselves adopted.[2] More languages are spoken in the Pacific (over 1000) than in the Americas or Europe, and nowhere have people made themselves more at home in the sea than in the Pacific Islands.[3] It is worth pausing briefly to consider the scale, complexity and variety of this ocean.

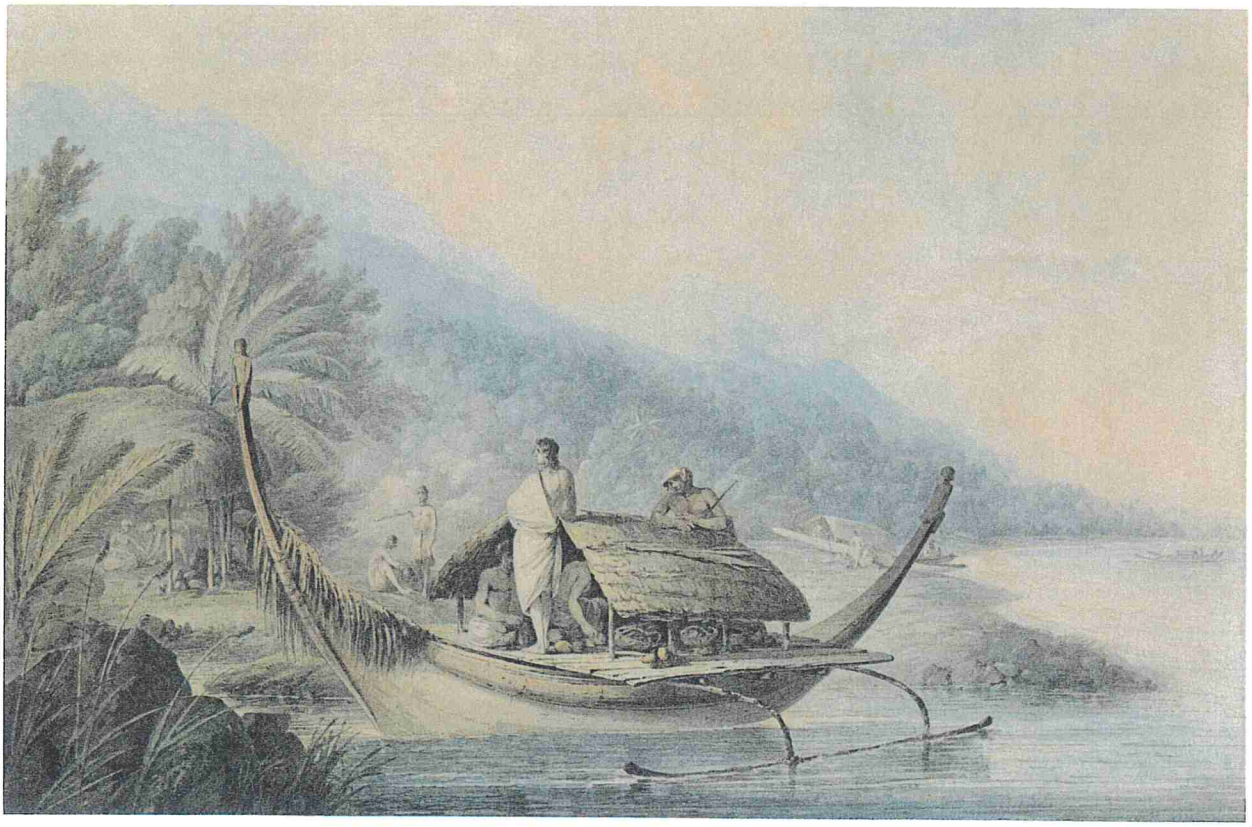
Although earlier European travellers called it the 'South Sea' – *mar del sur* – the Pacific reaches from the Arctic to the Antarctic. It is fringed by long continental shorelines and encompasses some 25,000 islands.[4] Unlike the Europeans who first came into their midst, Pacific navigators regarded the sea as connecting its islands rather than separating them, and the boundaries between sea and shore were as fluid as the ocean itself.[5] In the words of Epeli Hau'ofa, a Tongan writer, this was a 'sea of islands' whose inhabitants comprised an ocean-based community of seafarers.[6] They all relied on the ocean for food and raw materials. They travelled, migrated and fought on its waters, creating their own distinctive maritime spaces – what Damon Salesa calls 'native seas' – that often ranged over millions of square miles.[7] These people saw in the Pacific a vital, life-affirming spiritual force. Little wonder, then, that islanders across its huge, watery expanse considered themselves to be *kakai mei tahi* or 'people from the sea'.[8]

Furthermore, the Pacific has always been characterized by the movement of people. Pre-modern trade circuits can be found across Melanesia, western Polynesia and coastal South-East Asia.[9] Two-thousand-year-old bronze objects from Asia have been found in the Manus archipelago in Papua New Guinea, long inhabited by a highly mobile maritime people.[10] Other archaeological evidence confirms the long history of

The of
the ac
signifi
they g
of cor
museu
the en
people
ments
and va
within
prints
ordina
exped
extens
course
cipally
secon
to inc
known
Siberia
where
Island
broug
entire
image
selves
any vo
We wi
and p
give a
encou

Fig. 66
The W
Otahei
with a
of Oha





econc
discov
Island
for m
far aw
South
tified.
conte
quent
those
their
excep
Cook'
nesian
His ac
Tupai
of Rai
Cook
more
their
itants
Cook
tion's
the m
(fig. 6
brief
recog
identi
Banks
colou
just a
mour
L
time
made
and fi
of in
exam
and t
vesse
more
sever
ing to
these
vesse
trans
A
move
cultu
fine v

economic and social interactions across vast distances: the discovery of basalt adzes in Samoa and the southern Cook Islands suggests that contact has existed between these places for millennia.[11] Samoan mats and Fijian canoes were in use as far away as Tonga, and Polynesian migrants found their way to South America, where bones of their chickens have been identified.[12] In this sense, the expeditions of Cook and his European contemporaries came rather late and were relatively inconsequential affairs. The greatest navigations of the Pacific were those of the Polynesians, not the Europeans who bumbled their way through the ocean, missing almost all of its islands except Guam until the last third of the eighteenth century. In Cook's approving words, the maritime prowess of the Polynesians made them 'the most extensive nation upon earth'.[13] His admiration was further demonstrated in his estimation of Tupaia, the navigator and *arioi* (priest) originally from the island of Raiatea in the Society Islands, of which Tahiti is the largest. Cook found him to be 'a very intelligent person and to know more of the Geography of the islands situated in these seas, their produce and religious laws and customs of their inhabitants then [*sic*] any one we had met'.[14] Tupaia travelled with Cook to both New Zealand and Australia, acting as the expedition's interpreter, and the latter's faith in him was borne out in the map that resulted from their encounter and collaboration (fig. 67). The even greater significance of Tupaia as an all-too-brief 'voyage artist' in the Western mode has also finally been recognized. For it is now known that his was the hand, long identified only as 'The Artist of the Chief Mourner', to whom Banks – or perhaps Sydney Parkinson – made available watercolours, paper and probably guidance, from which he produced just a few images, his drawing of the figure of a Tahitian 'chief mourner' in full ceremonial dress being the most striking.

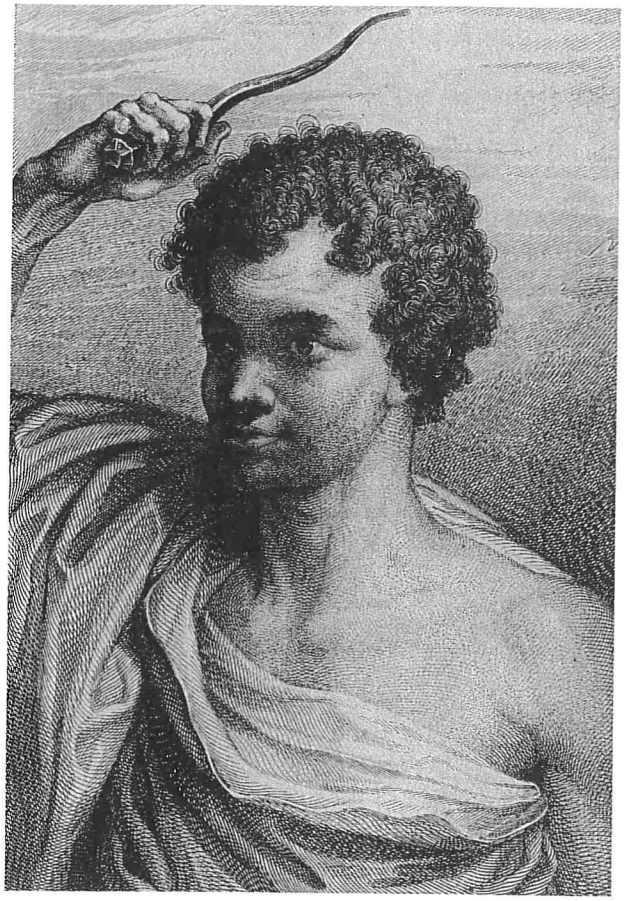
Long before European incursions, advanced local maritime technologies, particularly of vessel design and navigation, made it possible to traverse the world's most expansive ocean and find small and difficult island targets.[15] The major 'canoes' of indigenous design and construction were indeed striking examples of their technology. The *drua* in Fiji, the *kalia* in Tonga and the *'alia* in Samoa were large, asymmetric double-hulled vessels up to 100 feet in length, capable of safely carrying more than 250 people on shorter voyages, and 100 people with several tons of goods, over 1000 miles of ocean. Built by stitching together large planks of wood, without any need for iron, these were hardly canoes at all, but large and powerful sailing vessels. Fleets of upwards of 100 were reported to be capable of transporting thousands of people.[16]

As it became clear that Pacific Islanders had migrated and moved across the ocean for millennia, interest in their maritime culture increased among travelling Europeans. John Webber's fine watercolour *A View in Ulietea* [Raiatea] (fig. 68), exhibited at

Fig. 67 (opposite, above)
'A Chart representing the isles of the South Sea, according to the notions of the inhabitants of O'Taheitee and the neighbouring isles, chiefly collected from the accounts of Tupaya', in Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations made during a Voyage round the World* (1778)
National Maritime Museum (PBH6670)

Fig. 68 (opposite, below)
A View in Ulietea [Raiatea]
John Webber, 1787
National Maritime Museum. Presented by Captain A.W.F. Fuller through The Art Fund (PAJ2966)

Fig. 69 (above)
A Native of Otaheite, in the Dress of his Country, plate III from Sydney Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas*
Sydney Parkinson, *c.*1773
National Maritime Museum (PBC4680)



the Royal Academy in 1787, further demonstrates the developing European interest in the kinds of vessels and systems of navigation that enabled islanders to undertake such extensive voyages in and around the islands. The *pahi*, fitted with outriggers and capable of travelling considerable distances under difficult conditions, incorporated a thatched hut for the protection of people and provisions on long journeys. It was further safeguarded by votive figures carved on the heads of its stem and sternpost.[17] The combination of the practical and the spiritual, captured in the drawing, was a focal point for European fascination with the new maritime world that was opening to their view. To explore these cultural encounters, it is first worth looking at the personal interactions between Pacific Islanders and their European visitors, including how the former were represented by the voyage artists. From there, one can widen the scope to examples of the ways in which the cultural practices, material culture and maritime technology of the Pacific world were represented by European travellers in their accounts and images of the voyages, as well as in the objects they collected and brought back to Europe.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

On one level, European encounters with the Pacific and its peoples were deeply personal: European sailors came into direct and close contact with Pacific Islanders, on an individual basis. Many of these meetings were recorded as simple, matter-of-fact interactions. In some instances, however, they led to wider musings on peoples and to detailed descriptions of their appearance and cultural practices. In turn, these were often closely linked to judgements about the islanders' perceived 'state of civilization'. One such incident was recorded in both words and image by Sydney Parkinson, when a group of 'locals' visited the *Endeavour* as it anchored at Tahiti on the first voyage: 'There were some people of distinction in double canoes; their cloaths [*sic*], carriage, and behaviour evinced their superiority. I never beheld statelier men, having a pleasant countenance, large black eyes, black hair, and white teeth.'[18] Parkinson's visual record of their appearance conforms to European 'ethnographic conventions' by concentrating on the dress, adornments and gestures of the islanders, to the exclusion of the wider pictorial context or landscape settings (fig. 69).

Another such meeting, which resulted in more extended philosophizing about the nature and condition of the islanders, took place on the second voyage and was recounted by George Forster. On Tuesday 5 October 1773, 'the captain's friend Attahha or Attagha [often called 'Otago'] came on board in one of the first canoes, and breakfasted with us'.[19] Forster not only recorded the friendly interaction but, like Parkinson, gave an insight into the details of Attahha's clothes: 'He was drest in mats, one of which, on account of the coolness of the morning, he has drawn over his shoulders.'[20] But a keen eye for observation, as well as his intellectual and academic predilections, then encouraged him to go beyond the merely empirical and make broader judgements about the ship's visitor: 'He resembled all other uncivilised people in the circumstance that his attention could not be fixed to one object for any space of time, and it was difficult to prevail on him to sit still, whilst Mr Hodges drew his portrait' (fig. 70).[21] In this incident, Forster alluded to the central role played by visual culture in making and taking such records back to Europe. The work of Hodges and his colleagues was one of the principal means by which information about the Pacific and its inhabitants was fixed, and subsequently disseminated (in the prints derived from their work):

> *An excellent print, executed by Mr Sherwin, has been made from his drawing, which expresses the countenance of the chief, and the mild character of the whole nation, better than any description . . . [It] represents Attahha in the action of thanksgiving, laying a nail on his head, which he had received as a present.*[22]

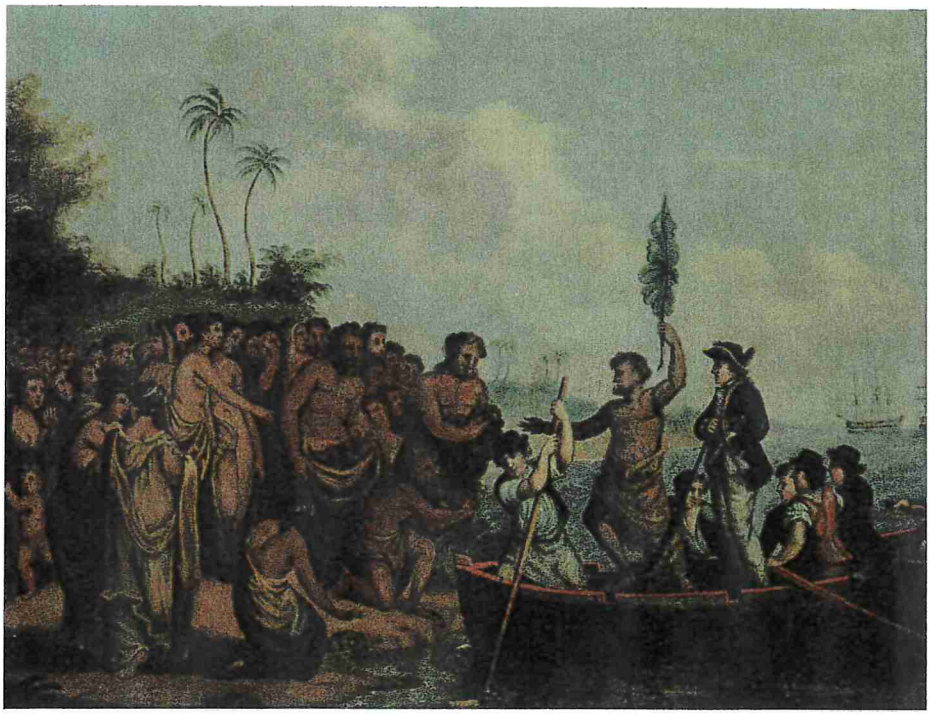


Fig. 70 (opposite))
Otago (native from the Pacific)
John Keyse Sherwin, after William Hodges, 16 July 1776
National Maritime Museum (PAI2076)

The figure here was more properly called Attahha.

Fig. 71 (right)
Landing of Captain Cook at Middleburg, Friendly Islands
After William Hodges, after 1774
National Maritime Museum. Presented by Captain A.W.F. Fuller through The Art Fund (BHC1802)

Fig. 72 (below)
Medal commemorating Captain James Cook's second voyage
W. Barnett, 1772
National Maritime Museum (MEC1385)

Forster described the same Tongan thanksgiving gesture elsewhere in his journal, explaining how the recipient would hold the item momentarily over his head while pronouncing the word *fagafetai*. The image also draws attention to Attahha's missing little finger. In a journal entry for 7 October 1773, Cook remarked: 'Most of the people of these isles wanted either one or both of their little fingers . . . We could not learn the cause of this mutilation with any degree of certainty but judged it to be on account of the death of their parents.'[23] Subsequent research has revealed that this was not a sign of mourning, as Forster assumed, but represented a sacrifice to a god for the recovery of a sick relation who was superior in rank.[24] The potential confusion caused by this misunderstanding underscores the complex cultural encounters experienced by European sailors travelling with Cook.

While Hodges presents a somewhat decontextualized image of a single islander in the portrait of Attahha ('Otago'), his work often went beyond the representation of individuals, to give a richer view of the encounters between Europeans and Pacific societies. His painting of the *Landing of Captain Cook at Middleburg, Friendly Islands* (fig. 71), for example, captures something of the possibilities and uncertainties surrounding the initial contact between people of different cultures. Cook is represented going ashore, apparently led by one of the islanders, who holds a branch aloft to symbolize peaceful intent. Both the European travellers and Pacific Islanders are depicted as inquisitive and welcoming. Just as with the individual portraits, this work is indicative of the complex and multifaceted nature of encounter and exchange during the voyages, although with the caveat that no such painting is a 'photographic record', but represents the incident at a further conceptual remove, in this case through the lens of Hodges's thorough training in European classicism.

Of course, locals often had different views of these strange people arriving in their midst. In 1769, for example, a young boy named Horeta Te Taniwha watched Cook's *Endeavour* sail into a harbour in New Zealand: 'We lived at Whitianga and a vessel came there, and when our old men saw the ship they said it was an auta, a god, and the people on board were tupua, strange beings or "goblins".'[25] Elsewhere, Maori people referred to European travellers as 'shallow-rooted shellfish', moving with the tide and lacking a sense of place. Some terms for outsiders used by Pacific Islanders evoked the varying degrees of alarm sparked by the foreigners' alien appearance and sudden arrival. Samoans and Tongans called newcomers *papālagi* or 'sky-bursters', to account for the ships that appeared on the horizon as if they had broken through the sky.[26] When the ships of the third expedition touched on the Siberian coast in August 1778, the British sailors found the initial hostility of the people was due to the fact that they were mistaken for Russians – a reminder of the numerous Pacific–European encounters in the period.[27]

One of the most commonplace and prosaic ways in which Europeans and Pacific Islanders met and learnt about each other was through the bartering that went on between them. Many of the Pacific items surviving in Western museums today were acquired through this process. Some even explicitly refer to it or were created to facilitate it, such as the medal of which the National Maritime Museum holds an example.

Beyond this, gift-giving was an important part of many Pacific cultures and became a central feature of Cook's encounter and engagement with islanders. The barter system and the complex rituals of gift-giving and receiving should not be seen as implying that islanders were unaware of the riches that surrounded them. They frequently drove hard bargains and were both active and tenacious in negotiating the terms of exchange with European interlopers. When Cook tried to acquire basic supplies on the north-west coast of America, for instance, he was exasperated to discover that the locals 'had such high notions of everything the country produced'. They regarded basic natural supplies as 'being their exclusive property . . . the very wood and water we took on board they first wanted us to pay for'.[28]

Barter exchanges demonstrate the possibilities and opportunities of cross-cultural encounters in the Pacific, but many such interactions were undoubtedly imbalanced in terms of power relations. Cook, for example, was prone to taking hostages, such as Poedua (fig. 82), in order to enhance his bargaining position.[29] The sexual exploits of European sailors were notorious, even in their own day, and more extreme forms of power imbalance are recorded in the voyage accounts. For instance, the image of 'Otegoongoon, Son of a New Zealand Chief' by Parkinson, with his face 'curiously tataow'd' (fig. 78), undoubtedly gives us an insight into the cultural practices of Pacific people, but the text accompanying the image records the violence that often attended interactions: 'Otegoowgoow, son to one of their chiefs, was wounded in the thigh' during one of his encounters with Cook's men.[30]

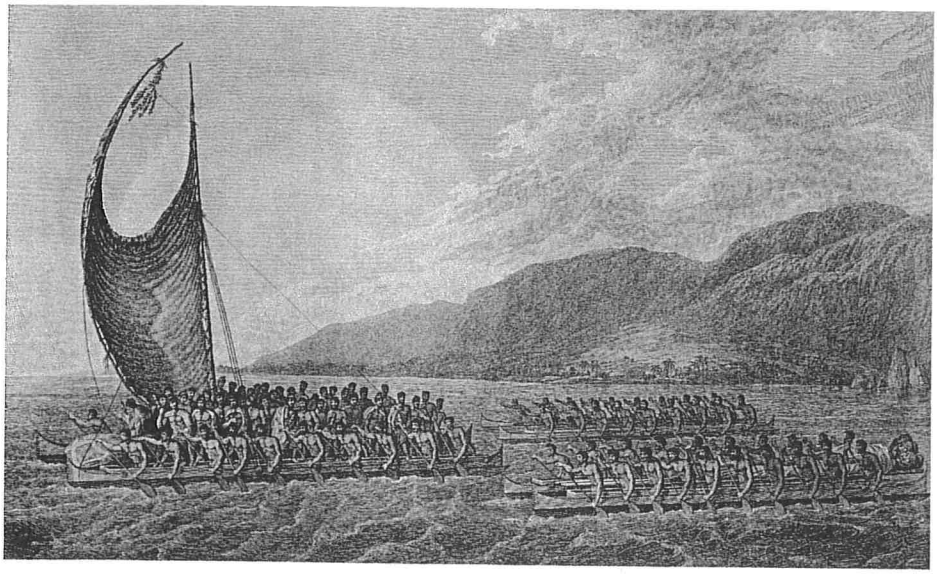
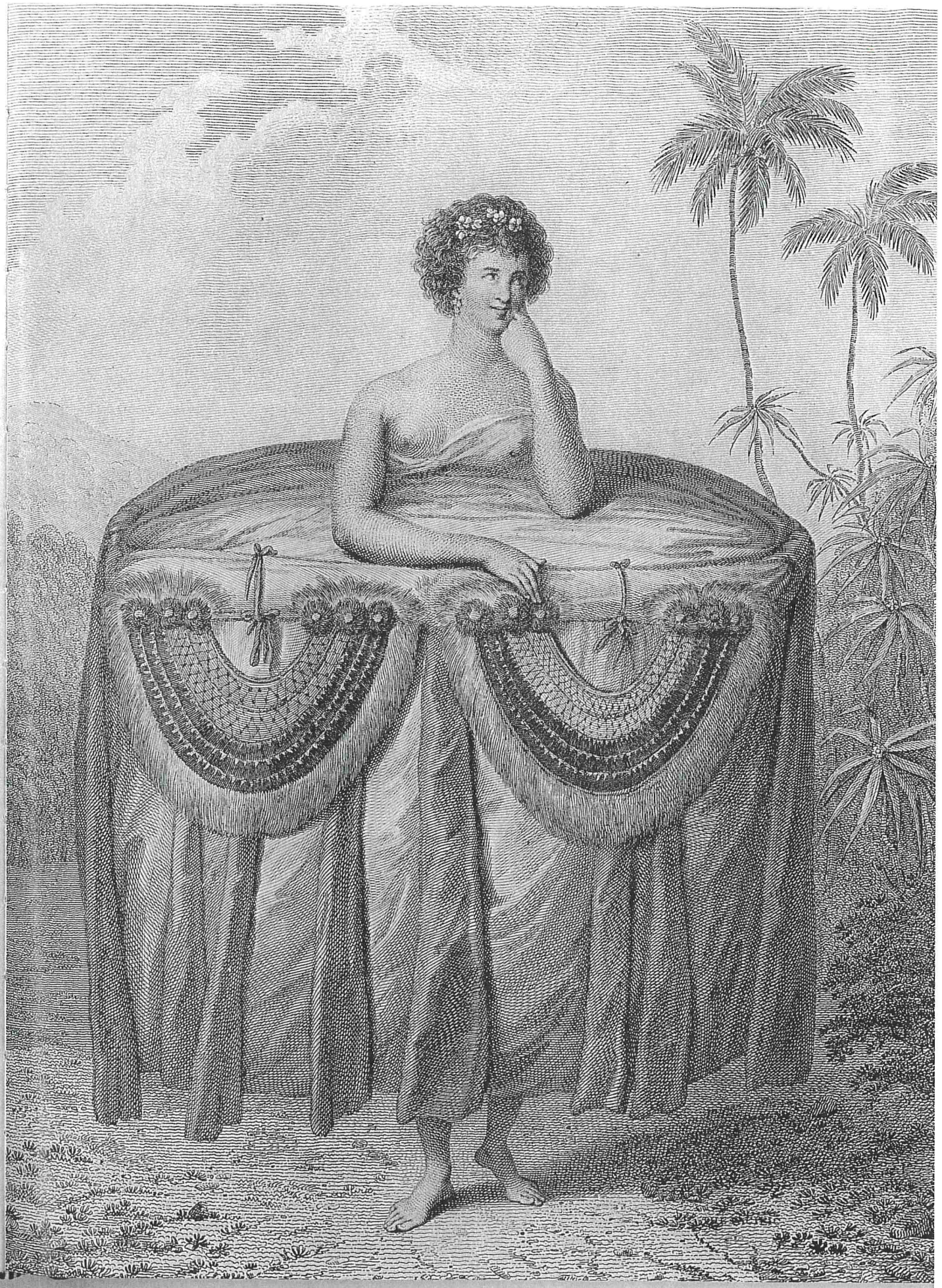


Fig. 73 (left)
Tereoboo, King of Owyhee, bringing Presents to Captain Cook
Benjamin Thomas Pouncy (engraver), after John Webber, *c.*1788
National Maritime Museum (PAJ1499)

Fig. 74 (opposite)
A young woman of Otaheite, bringing a present
Francesco Bartolozzi (engraver), after John Webber, *c.*1785
National Maritime Museum (PAF6440)



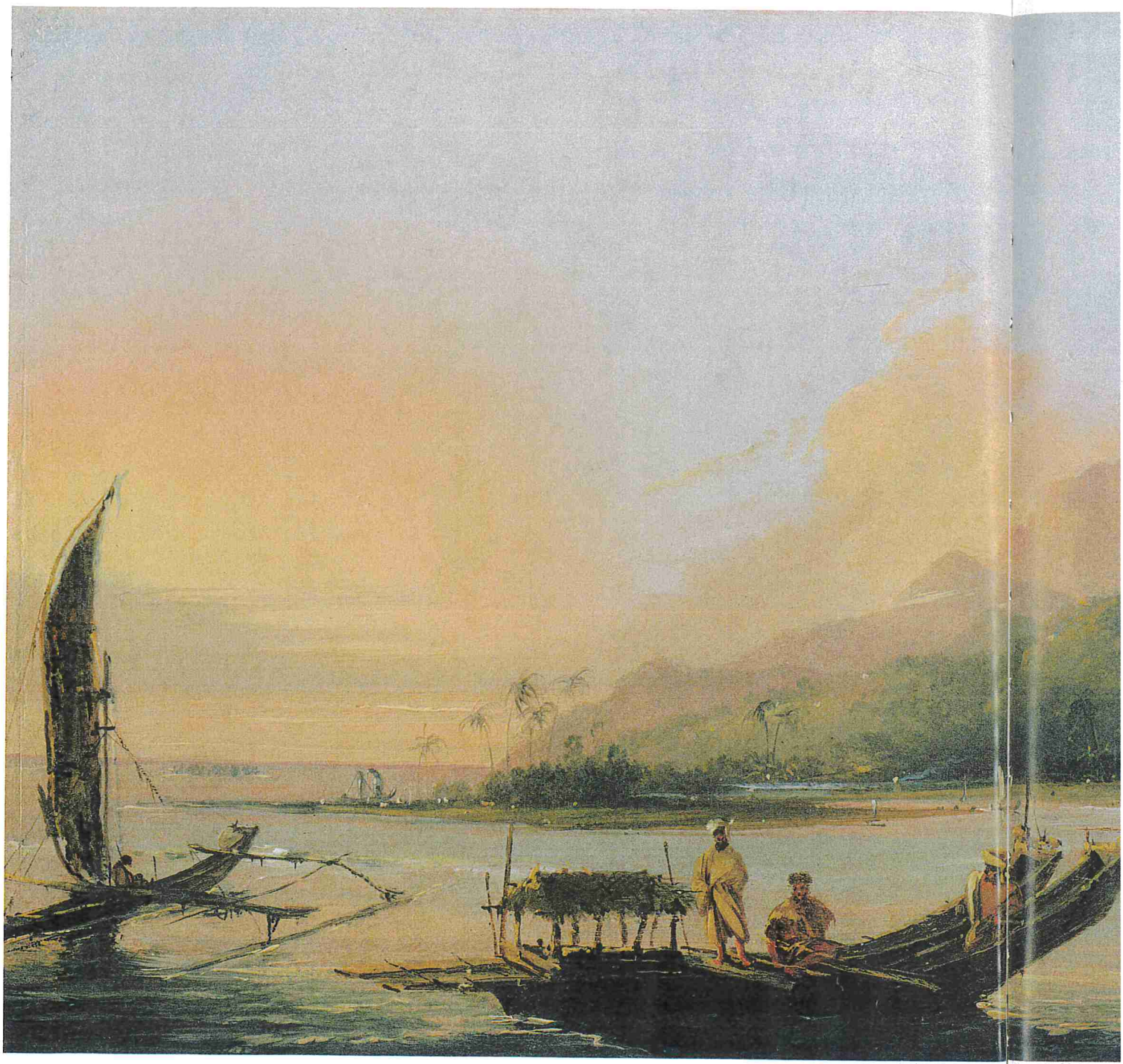
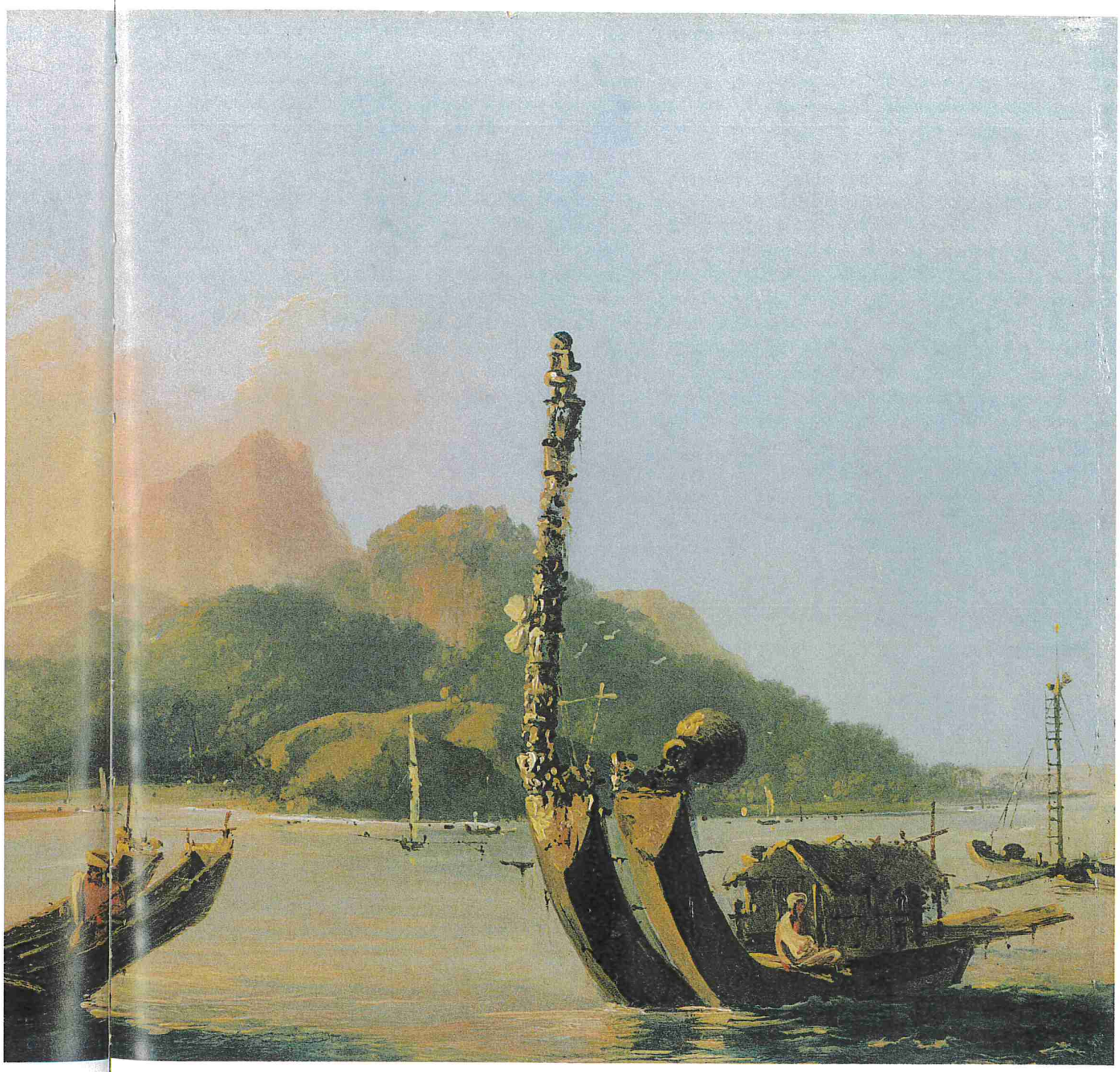


Fig. 75
Tahiti, Bearing South-East
William Hodges, 1775
National Maritime Museum
(BHC1935)



It is also important to recognize that European voyages of exploration produced not only European–Pacific encounters. Among their other effects, Cook's voyages also brought islanders from very different Pacific regions into close contact with each other. For men like Omai or Mahine who joined the *Resolution* during its cruise of 1774, these were also voyages of exploration, as they took the opportunity to observe and engage with many islands, places and peoples well beyond the usual range of their voyaging. Omai visited places as diverse as Rapa Nui, the Marquesas, New Caledonia and New Zealand. Undoubtedly people from those places garnered – through conversation with him, for example – some knowledge of Tahiti. More broadly, social and cultural affinities were discovered or rediscovered, comparisons made and knowledge reshaped. As Nicholas Thomas points out, the kind of knowledge acquired through this process was similar in scope to the comparative understanding of manners and customs acquired by people like Joseph Banks, the Forsters and even Cook himself.[31] In this way, the voyages encouraged and facilitated cultural encounter on a vast scale, often leading on all sides to broader reflections on, and reassessments of, the place of particular Pacific Island communities in the 'grand chain' of civilization.

VISUAL ENCOUNTERS

One of the most important ways in which such encounters were mediated for travellers and the wider British public alike was through the various portraits of Pacific Islanders produced by the voyage artists. If we are to judge from the official account of the second voyage, in which there are 18 full-page prints of them, these portraits were seen as a crucial element in the record.[32] We will consider the voyage artists' representation of land- and seascapes in chapter 5, but their images of people do several significant and related things. As well as providing a sequential record of inter-cultural encounter as it occurred on individual voyages, they give us an insight into the kind of philosophical and cultural assumptions that Europeans invested in them, both in their creation and in the way the European audience subsequently conceived Pacific society through them. In other words, they tell us as much about the European travellers, their hopes and fears for what they expected to find in the Pacific, and their own views about human societies, as they do about the reality of what they discovered there.[33] Here it is important to remember that such images could be portraits of named individuals, but could also be produced according to a kind of 'ethnographic convention' whereby the artist (and engraver) concentrated on the dress, accoutrements, facial expressions and gestures of the people being depicted rather than placing them in any broader spatial context.[34] In this sense, then, these types of images are less portraiture and more ethnographic depiction. In other words, they do not convey a sense of the unique, individual personality, but rather attempt to capture generic information about the physical 'type' being depicted, its characteristic dress, appearance and personal accoutrements.

Sydney Parkinson produced one of the most famous and enduring images of the entire *Endeavour* voyage when he drew the head of a chief from New Zealand, with his 'face curiously tataowd, or mark'd, according to their Manner' (fig. 77).[35] Parkinson's written account is meticulous in its attention to detail, and finds visual expression in the related print that circulated widely in Europe when the voyage returned, providing a powerful and lasting visual archetype for the Maori. One afternoon, when *Endeavour* was becalmed, six Maori canoes 'filled with people' approached it. Some of the Maori in them were 'armed with bludgeons made of wood, and of the bone of a large animal'. European interest in the maritime and martial technology of the Pacific was, as we will see, a strong theme, but in this account Parkinson soon concentrated on the people who approached the vessel:

> *They were a spare thin people, and had garments wrapt about them made of a silky flax, wove in the same manner as the cotton hammocks of Brazil, each corner being ornamented with a piece of dog-skin. Most of them had their hair tied upon the crown of their heads in a knot, and by the knot stuck a comb of wood or bone. In and about their ears some of them had white feathers, with pieces of birds skins, whose feathers were soft as down; but others had the teeth of their parents, or a bit of green stone worked very smooth. These stone ornaments were of various shapes. They also wore a kind of shoulder-knot, made of the skin of the neck of a large sea-fowl, with the feathers on, split in two length-ways. Their faces were tataowed, or marked either all over, or on one side, in a very curious manner; some of them in fine spiral directions like a volute, being indented in the skin very different from the rest.*[36]

The practice of tattooing, detailed so powerfully both in Parkinson's forensic description and in his famous related print, was one that would have a deep impact on European culture in subsequent centuries. In terms of displaying their own encounter with the Pacific, it offered European sailors one of the most distinctive and permanent ways to advertise their travels. The notorious mutiny on the *Bounty* has, among its many other legacies, left us one of the most complete records of Polynesian tattooing among eighteenth-century British seafarers. William

Bligh made a careful record of the appearance of the mutineers who expelled him from his ship in April 1789. Most were tattooed: Fletcher Christian, the master's mate and leader of the mutiny, had marks on his chest and buttocks; midshipman Peter Heywood was heavily tattooed with, among other things, the three-legged crest and Latin motto of the Isle of Man; the able-bodied seaman John Millward had a feathered Tahitian gorget on his chest; and the ship's youngest crew member, 15-year-old Thomas Ellison, bore on his right arm his name and the date he first saw Tahiti, 25 October 1788. It was only at the end of the century that tattooing lost its exotic associations and became a widespread emblem of the ordinary seafarer's trade.[37]

On Cook's second voyage, William Hodges paid equally close attention to human and personal details – unfamiliar clothing or adornment and weapons in particular – when he portrayed a *Family in Dusky Bay, New Zealand* (fig. 76), and something similar occurs in his depictions of a man and woman from Easter Island and New Caledonia, respectively (figs 80, 81). The red-chalk drawings (now in the National Library of Australia, Canberra) on which the prints of a man and woman were based were executed during a nine-day stay in September 1774. In some ways these are generic images, aimed at recording a representative type of islander, yet they are also deeply sympathetic depictions. The image of the woman, with her pierced, elongated earlobe and three parallel tattooed strips running below her lower lip, demonstrates Hodges's skill in capturing and conveying the individuality of these unnamed sitters.[38]

John Webber, the Anglo-Swiss artist on the third voyage, graphically documented the expedition's progress, recording the landscapes, inhabitants, costumes and dwellings encountered.

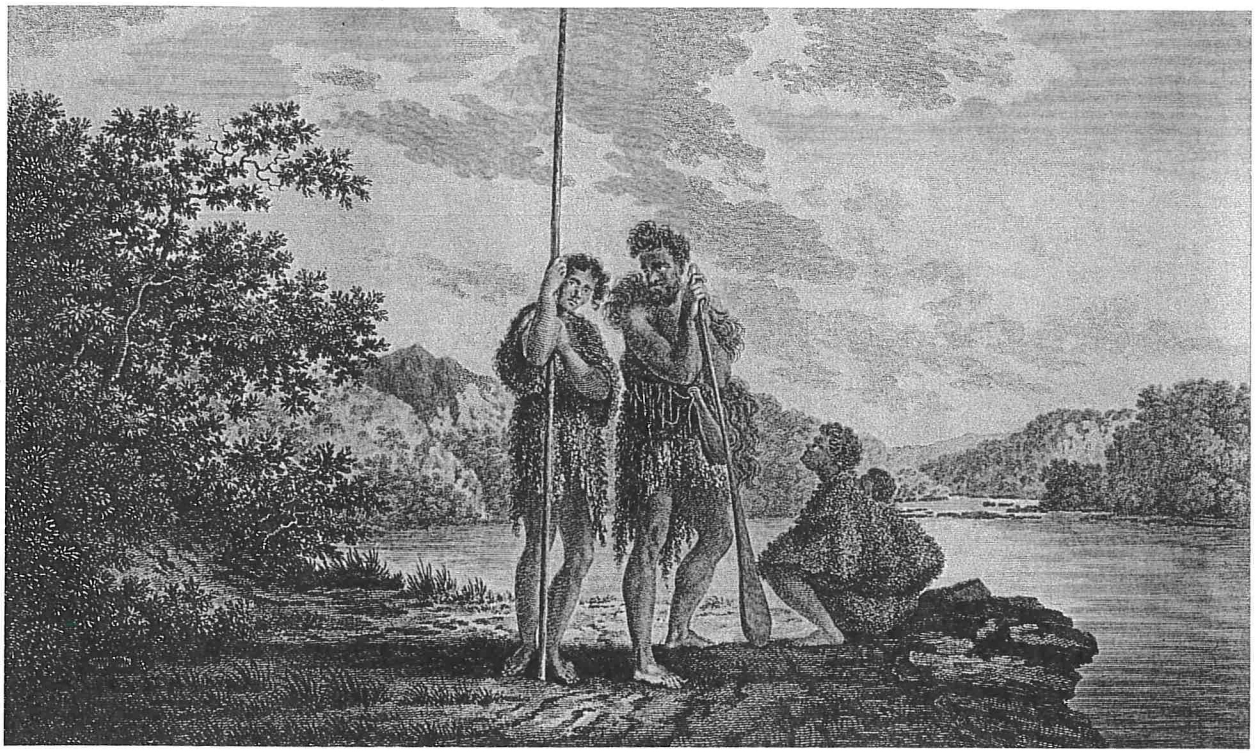
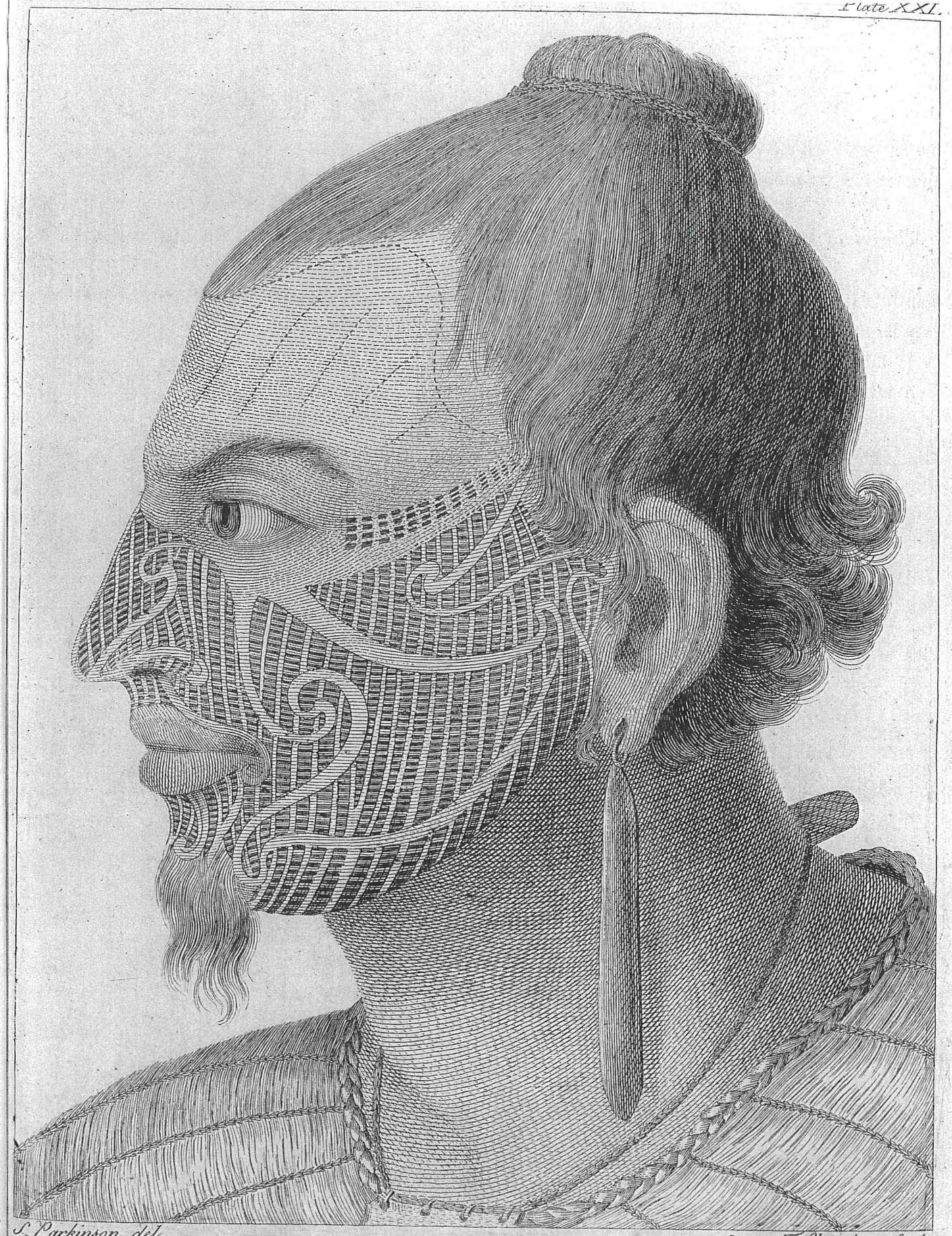


Fig. 76 (above)
Family in Dusky Bay, New Zealand
Lerperniere (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAH3197)

Figs 77 and 78 (overleaf)
Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas*
Sydney Parkinson, *c.*1773
National Maritime Museum (PBC4680)

Plate XVI, *The Head of a Chief of New-Zealand, the face curiously tataowd, or mark'd, according to their Manner*, and plate XXI, *Head of Otegoongoon, Son of a New Zealand Chief, the face curiously tataow'd*


Plate XVI
S. Parkinson del.
T. Chambers Sc.
The Head of a Chief of New Zealand, the face curiously tataow'd, or mark'd, according to their Manner.



S. Parkinson del.

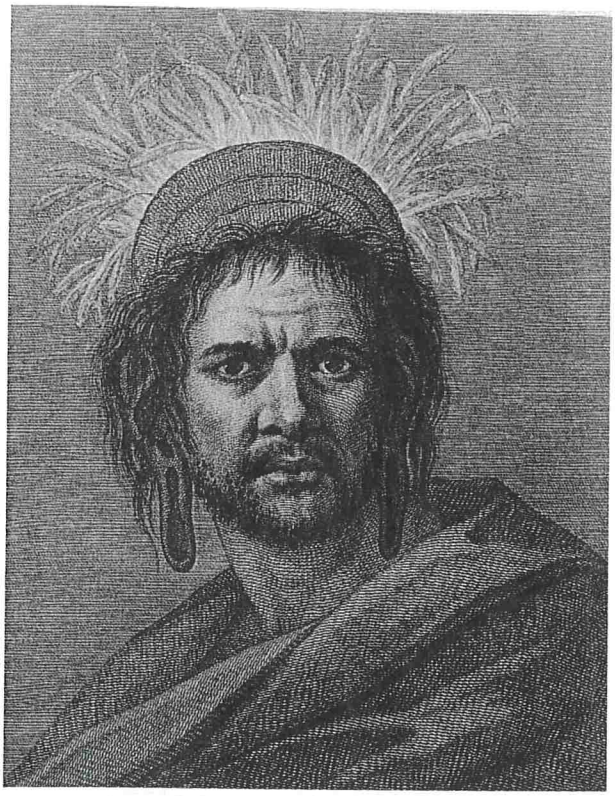
T. Chambers Sculp.

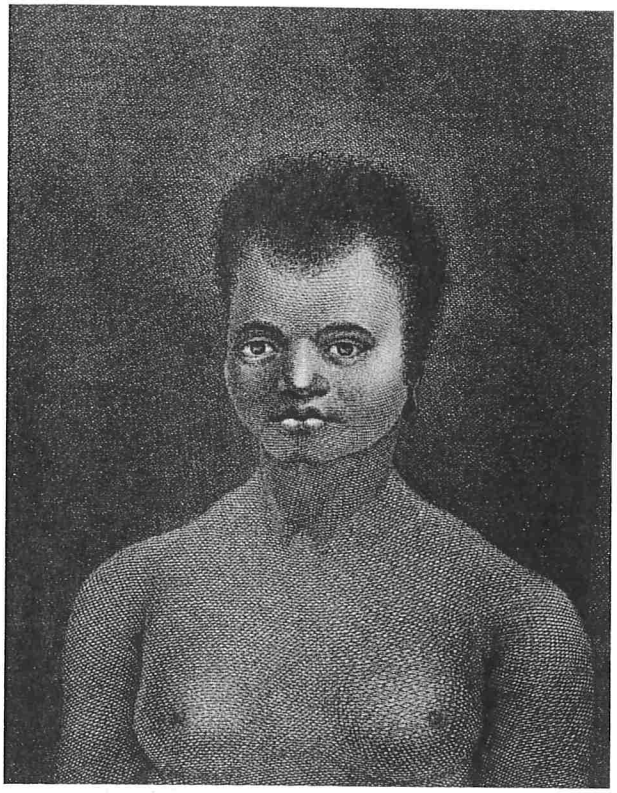
Head of Otegoongoon, Son of a New Zealand Chief, the face curiously tataowid.

J. Webber del.

J.K. Sherwin sc.

A MAN of the SANDWICH ISLANDS, with his HELMET.





His portrait of Poedua, the 19-year-old daughter of Orio, chief of the Haamanino district of Raiatea (Ulietea) in the Society Islands, is a complex work that incorporates classical references but is also very reflective of the kinds of encounters that took place on the voyages (fig. 82). The 'princess' is shown with her head slightly inclined, looking out of the picture to meet the gaze of the viewer. She wears a white drape of *tapa* cloth beneath her bare breasts and her long black hair cascades over her shoulders. Cape-jasmine blossom is positioned in her hair above her ears. Her right arm falls by her side and she holds a fly-whisk in her right hand; her left arm rests across her hips. Her arms and hands are covered with small tattoos. She is shown against an imaginary tropical background of sky and distant mountains, with a plantain tree positioned on the left.

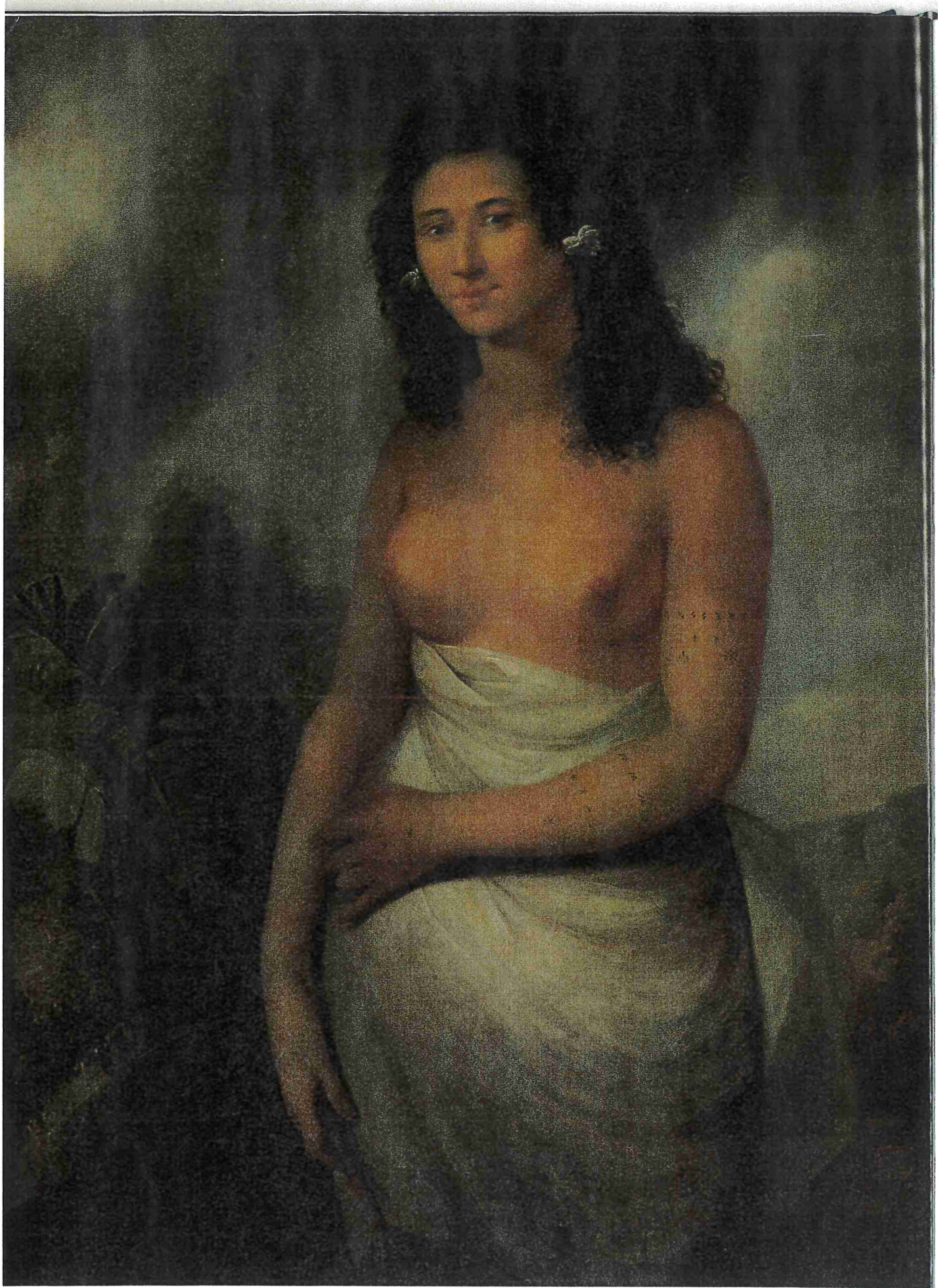
The portrait was made possible by an incident that occurred after Cook moored his ships at Raiatea on 3 November 1777. On 24 November, two sailors deserted from the *Discovery*. To bring about their return, Cook enticed on board Orio's son and daughter, Ta-eura and Poedua, and the latter's husband, Moetua, all of whom he planned to hold hostage in Captain Clerke's great cabin until the two deserters were returned. This was a tactic he had used before with relative success, but was also indicative of the tensions and travails that beset the voyages, as well as the increasingly irascible and erratic state of Cook's mind during the third voyage. Nevertheless, the incident gave the voyage artist, John Webber, an opportunity to make a study – now lost – of the young noblewoman, renowned for her beauty and grace as a dancer, and in fact in the early stages of pregnancy at the time.

The portrait of Poedua, one of the earliest images of a Polynesian woman produced by a European painter for a Western audience, reflects the conventional demands of the Royal Academy, where the prime version was exhibited in 1785 –

Fig. 79 (opposite)
A man of the Sandwich Islands with his helmet
John Keyse Sherwin (engraver), after John Webber, *c.*1784
National Maritime Museum (PAF6446)

Fig. 80 (above, left)
Man of Easter Island
Francesco Bartolozzi (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2083)

Fig. 81 (above, right)
Woman of New Caledonia
John Hall (engraver), after William Hodges, 1776
National Maritime Museum (PAI2115)



with
Lonc
the
have
play
cont
also
this,
of cl
port
had
voya
port
anot
print
visit
as a
in th

PA

Encc
diffe
and
publ
encc
expe
whic
the a
and
tive,
deta
the
(fig.
altar
ing t
desc
evid
who
takir
acco

with two other versions known, all painted after the voyage in London. Webber adapted the pose from a classical sculpture, the so-called 'Venus Pudica' (or 'modest Venus'), which would have been well known to viewers in Britain. The enigmatic smile playing on Poedua's face and the lush vegetation and sultry sky contribute to the painting's mood of sensuous eroticism. They also serve to create an idealized version of beauty. In doing this, of course, Webber implies that the Pacific itself is a kind of classical idyll, and his image was undoubtedly influenced by portraits of another Pacific Islander, Omai (see fig. 153), who had returned to Britain in the *Adventure* from Cook's second voyage. Sir Joshua Reynolds exhibited his famous full-length portrait of Omai at the Royal Academy in May 1776, while another by Nathaniel Dance found widespread circulation in print form (fig. 83). Depicted wearing loose robes, the exotic visitor is marked out by the swags of classically inspired drapery as a Rousseau-esque 'noble savage', a concept that developed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[39]

PACIFIC PRACTICES

Encountering Pacific people meant encountering their very different habits and ways of life. The recording of new customs and cultural practices was, as we have seen, a key part of the published voyage accounts. In the same way that personal encounters and visual images provide insights into European expectations, prejudices and preoccupations, so the way in which cultural practices were described and depicted reveals the attitudes prevalent during this period of intense interaction and learning. Often the accounts are extensive, even exhaustive, and they frequently cover events and scenes in great detail. For example, Sydney Parkinson described a *morai* on the Society Island of 'Yoolee-Etea' (or 'Ulietea', now Raiatea) (fig. 84). Inside this burial place, the party found 'a whatee, or altar, with a roasted hog, and fish upon it, designed as an offering to the Ethooa, or god'; Parkinson goes on to give a detailed description of the scene before him.[40] The human element was evident again, as he provided an image of the *heiva* or priest who attended the ceremonies in the *morai*, and further, painstakingly detailed information on his appearance (fig. 85). This account described him as:

> *cloathed* [sic] *in a feather garment, ornamented with round pieces of mother-of-pearl, and a very high cap on his head, made of cane, or bamboo, the front of which is feather-work; the edges beset with quills stripped of the plumage. He has also a sort of breast-plate, of a semicircular shape, made of a kind of wicker-work, on which they weave their plaited twine*

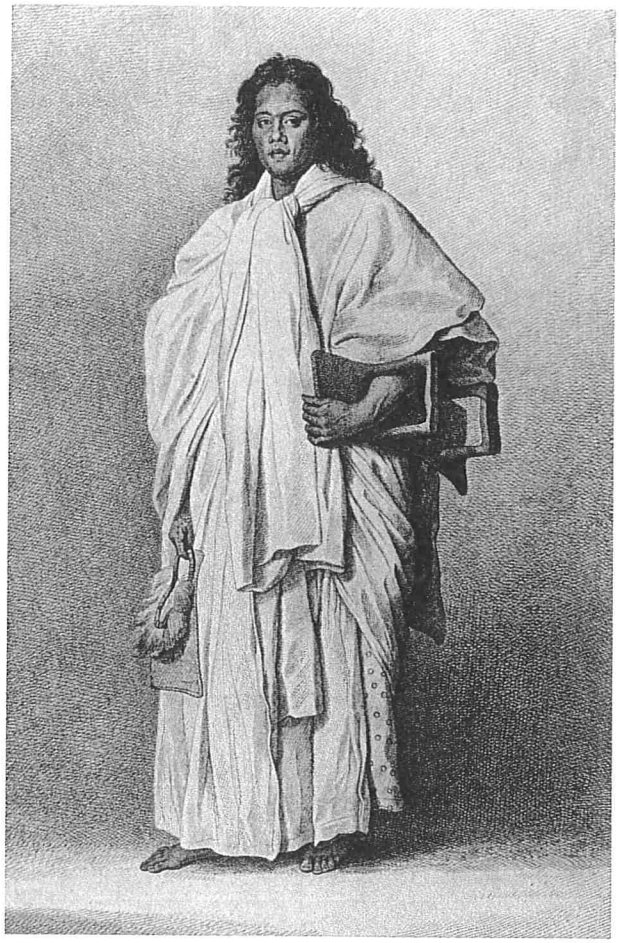
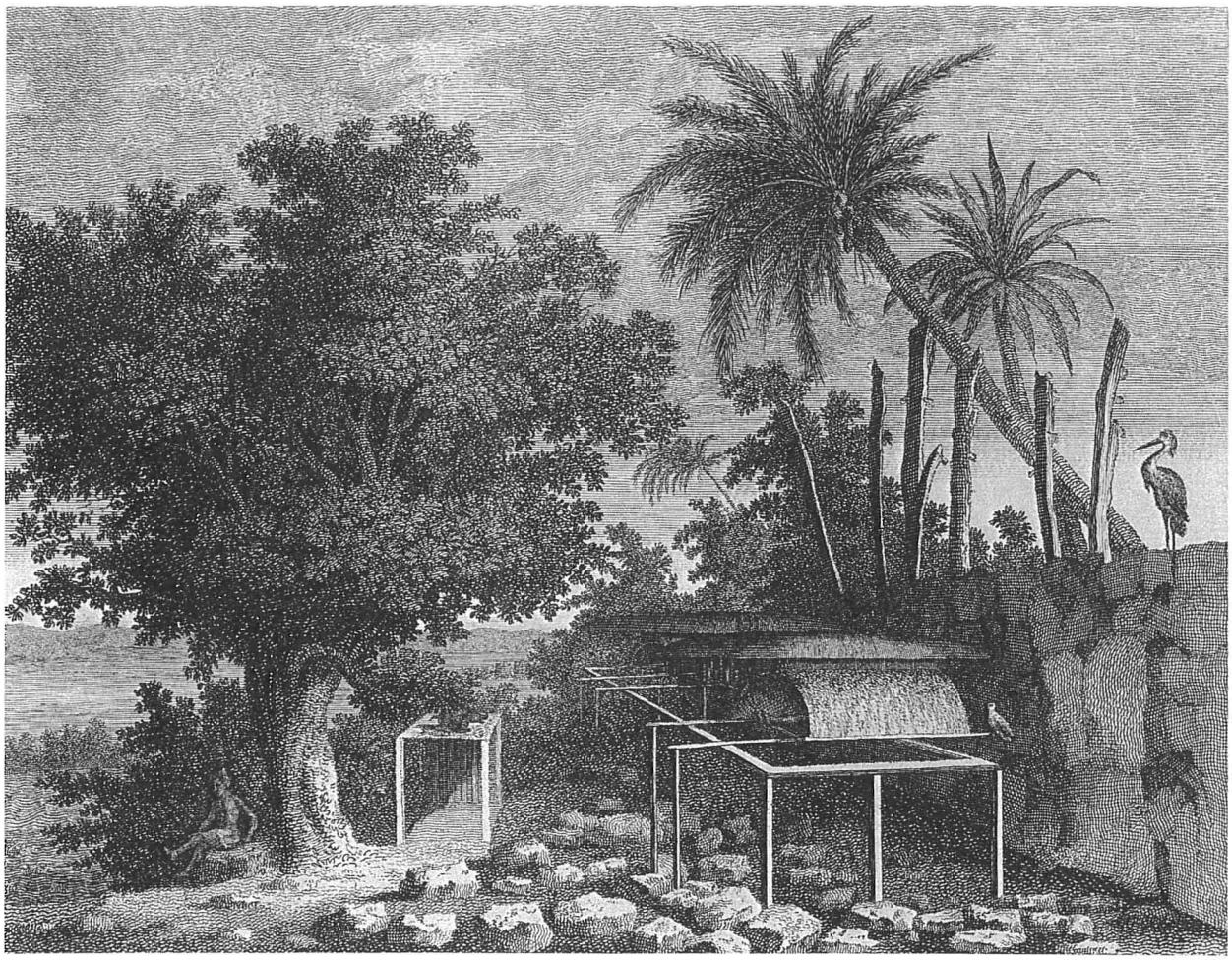


Fig. 82 (opposite)
Poedua, the Daughter of Orio
(b. *c.*1758–d. before 1788)
John Webber, *c.*1784
National Maritime Museum
(BHC2957)

Fig. 83 (above)
Full-length portrait of
a native, possibly Omai
Francesco Bartolozzi
(engraver), after
Sir Nathaniel Dance, 1774
National Maritime Museum
(PAI2071)



in a variety of figures: over this they put feathers of a green pigeon in rows; and between the rows is a semicircular row of Shark's teeth. The edge of the breast-plate is fringed with fine white dog's hair.[41]

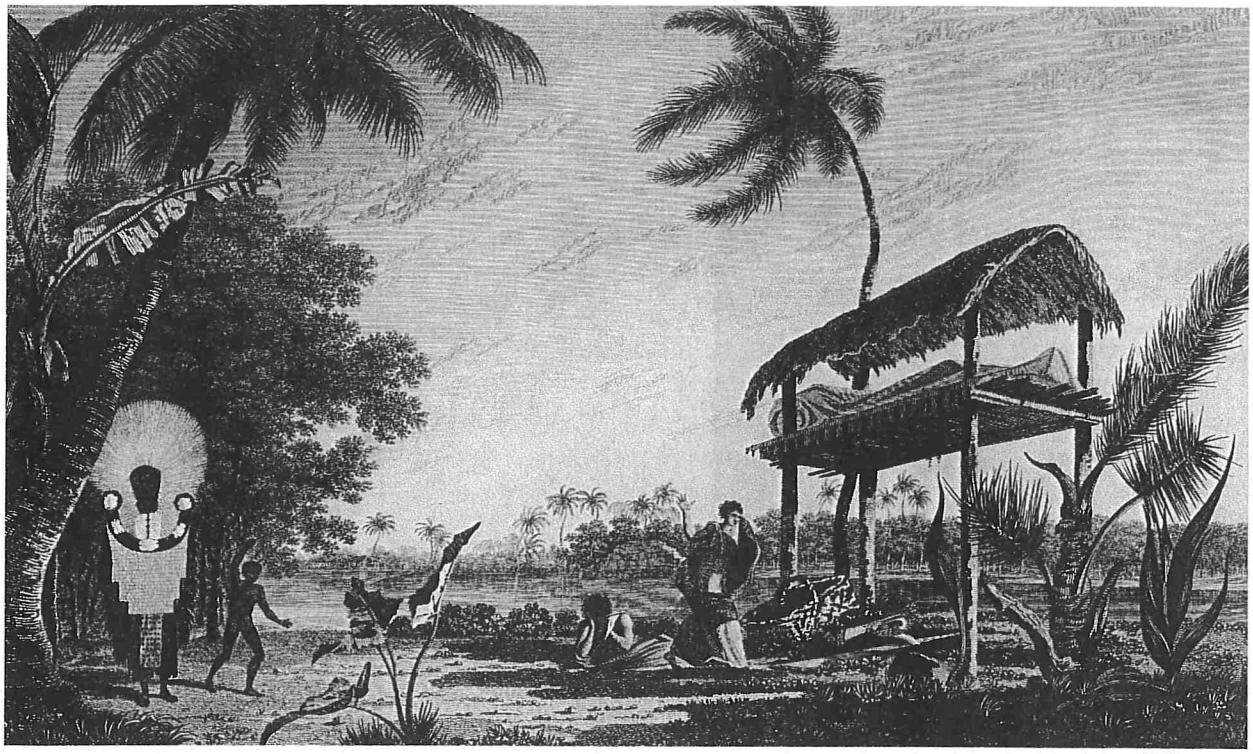
A similar interest in the religious customs and beliefs of the people encountered on the second voyage is manifest in some of the prints made after William Hodges's original sketches. In one, a priest-like figure wearing striking regalia is shown with a foreground of luxuriant vegetation and a lagoon (fig. 86). Despite the exotic nature of these ceremonies, artists like Hodges often included more commonplace detail to anchor the depictions in reality for their viewers. In the image of 'Afia-too-ca, a Burying Place in the Isle of Amsterdam' (today's Tongatapu), he incorporates a man carrying a pole laden with bananas and coconuts, in an attempt to normalize or even domesticate the scene (fig. 87).[42]

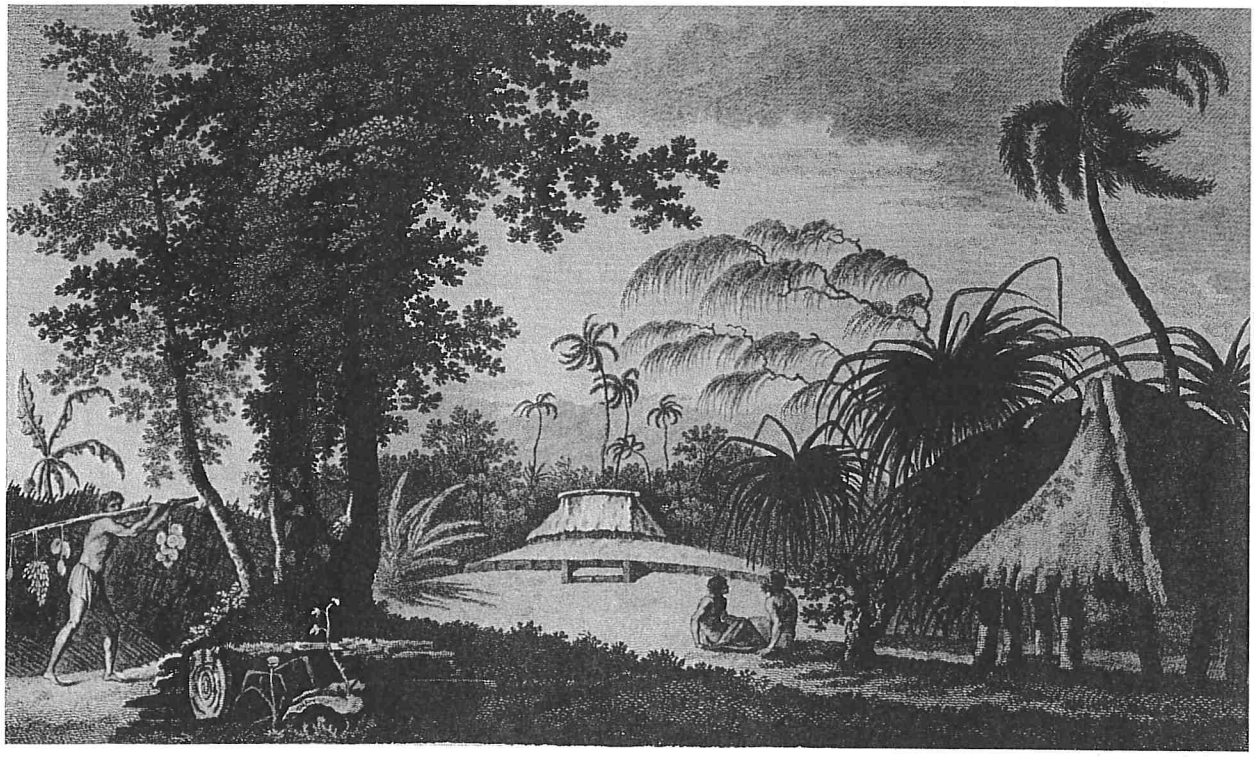
As well as manifesting a strong interest in the objects and artefacts used by Pacific Islanders, John Webber was also interested in depicting indigenous architecture. He showed the structures of the buildings he encountered, their methods of construction and the materials with which they were made (fig. 88).[43] Even descriptions of the bleakness of the Siberian landscape, which contained 'neither tree nor shrub', still included details of skin tents and clothing (fig. 89).[44] In this image, Webber employed one of the most common strategies

Fig. 84 (above)
A Morai, or Burial Place, in the Island of Yoolee-Etea, plate X from Sydney Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, c.*1773
National Maritime Museum (PBC4680)

Fig. 85 (opposite)
An Heiva, or kind of Priest of Yoolee-Etea, & the Neighbouring Islands, plate XI from Sydney Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, c.*1773
National Maritime Museum (PBC4680)


S. Parkinson del.
T. Chambers Sculp





used
and
Euro
of th
prac
for e
ble e
Thei
bility
also
towa
level

inter
obse
cam
obje
facts
artis
the
mad
a se
hanc
A br
colle

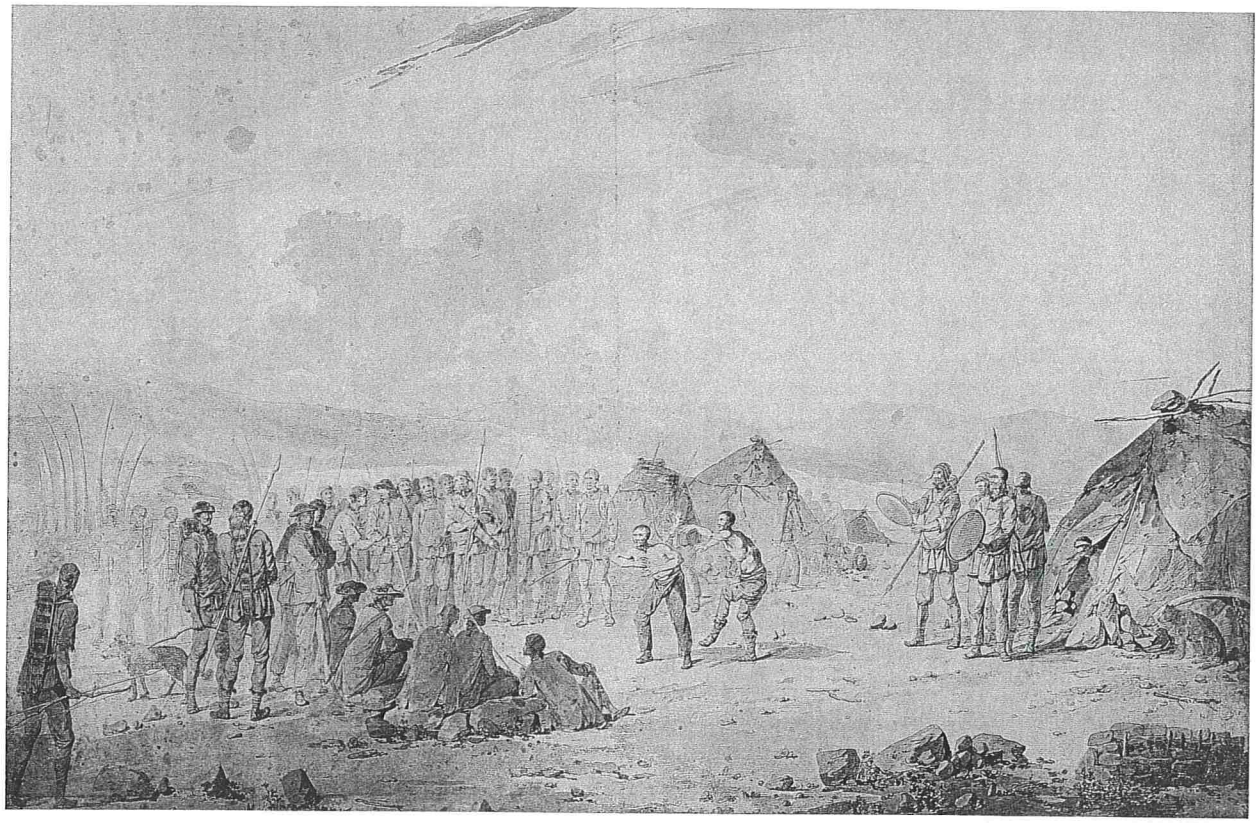
used by artists to reassure European viewers of the accuracy and authenticity of the scene before them: the inclusion of Europeans. These figures serve to guarantee the truthfulness of the image, particularly helpful when depicting an unusual practice or event. Webber's image of a human sacrifice in Tahiti, for example, includes the choric figure of Cook, with identifiable expedition companions, including Webber himself (fig. 90). Their presence in this case serves to verify not only the reliability of representation of such an apparently barbaric act, but also – in their poses – their diplomatically restrained revulsion towards it, as scientific observers acting on behalf of a 'higher' level of civilization.[45]

Details of domestic affairs and rituals were of particular interest. Johann Reinhold Forster, for example, was keen to observe and record as much as he could about the people he came across. This interest in the everyday life and ordinary objects of Pacific Islanders lent itself to the collecting of artefacts of material culture, as well as their depiction by the voyage artists. This trend is evident in some of the items collected by the crews and now in the collection of the NMM. A fly-whisk made from a spear point, with the wooden handle carved into a series of seven notches and coconut fibres bound to the handle, was probably collected from Tonga in 1777 (fig. 91). A breadfruit-pounder with a crossbar handle (fig. 92) was collected on the third voyage and provides evidence for the

Fig. 86 (opposite, above)
A Toupapow with a Corpse on it, Attended by the Chief Mourner in his Habit of Ceremony
William Woollett (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2073)

Fig. 87 (opposite, below)
Afia-too-ca, a Burying Place in the Isle of Amsterdam
William Byrne (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2078)

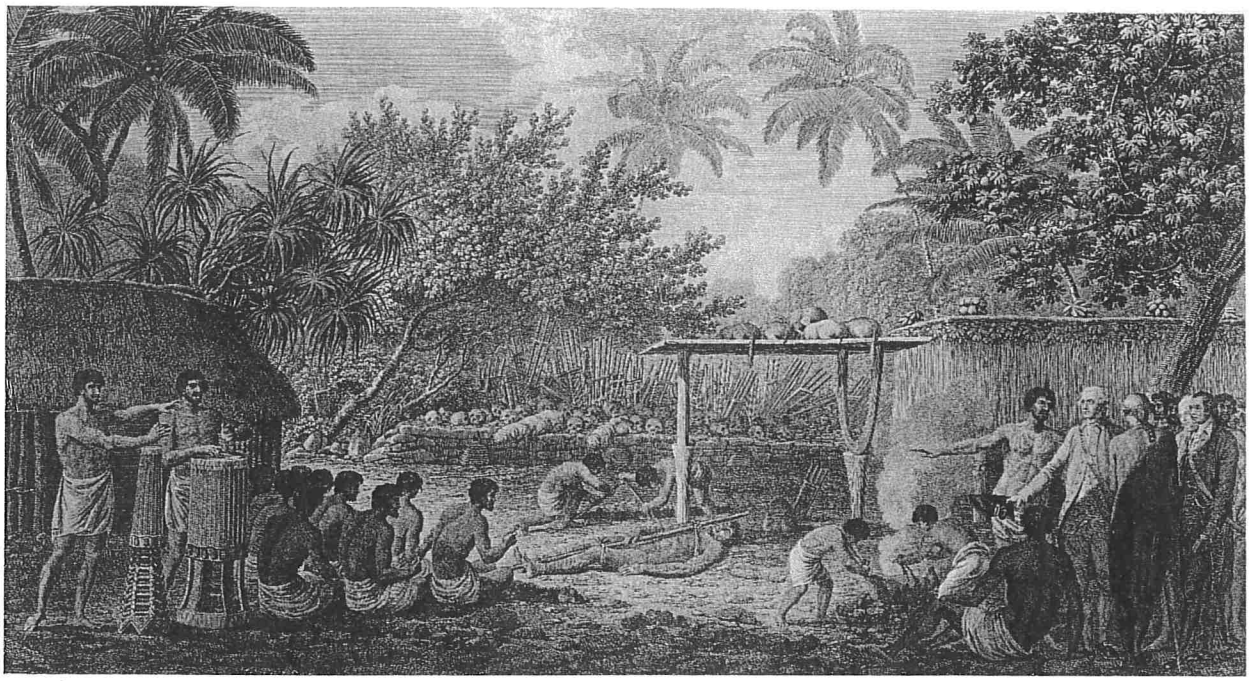
Fig. 88 (above)
The Inside of a Winter Habitation, in Kamtschatka
William Sharp (engraver), after John Webber, 1779
National Maritime Museum (PAI4210)



preparation of this food: 'They make two or three dishes by beating it with a stone pestil till it makes a paste, mixing water or cocoa nut liquor or both with it and adding ripe plaintains [and] sour paste'.[46] Meanwhile, a wooden feast bowl collected at Nootka Sound, also on the third voyage, is both a work of art and a useful accoutrement (fig. 93). It has a seal's head at one end and its back flipper at the other, and is inlaid, around the rim of the shallow central dish, with shell spots. The bowl probably also fulfilled a practical function, being used to distribute dishes to guests during feast celebrations, and the choice of motif here reflects the importance of the sea in the local diet of a region in which harvesting protein and laying down summer fat against winter cold, and using blubber as a source of oil for other purposes, were all critical. Seals, when they could be killed, were a rich bounty in this way.

Many of the objects brought back from the Pacific were not part of any 'official' collection, but rather the result of individual sailors' specific interests. William Griffin, cooper on the *Resolution* for the third voyage, collected a wooden neck-rest with three legs (fig. 94), as well as a war club and a wooden spear with the point carved into five wooden notches or barbs (fig. 95). Griffin's collection highlights a common interest in the martial aspects of the cultures they encountered, since weapons were by far the most numerous objects among the curiosities and local artefacts acquired by the crew.[47] Sydney Parkinson's account of the first voyage is exhaustive in its detailed description of the kinds of weapons with which Tahitians equipped themselves:

> *Their weapons are a kind of club, and long wooden lances. They have also bows and arrows. The former are made of a strong elastic wood. The arrows are a small species of reed, or bamboes, pointed with hard wood, or with the sting of the ray-fish, which is a sharp-bearded bone. They also make use of slings, made of the fibres of the bark of some tree, of which, in general, they make their cordage too: some of them, as well as their slings, are neatly plaited. Their hatchets, or rather adzes, which they call towa, are made by tying a hard black stone, of the kind of which they make their paste-beaters, to the end of a wooden handle; and they look very much like a small garden hoe: and the stone part is ground or worn to an edge.*[48]



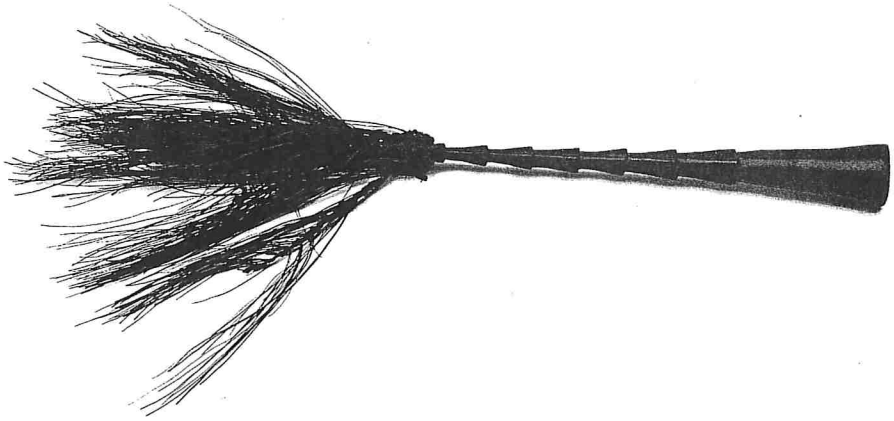


Fig. 89 (opposite)
Captain Cook's Meeting with the Chukchi, 1778
Pen, ink and watercolour, by John Webber, *c.*1778
National Maritime Museum (PAJ2965)

Cook's brief encounter with the inhabitants, shown dancing for his welcome, of the Kamchatka peninsula of Siberia.

Fig. 90 (above)
A human sacrifice, in a morai, in Otaheite
William Woollett (engraver), after John Webber, *c.*1784
National Maritime Museum (PAF6439)

Fig. 91 (left)
Tongan *fue* (fly-whisk) made from reusing an altered spear point
Before 1777
National Maritime Museum (AAA2833)

The NMM's collections include a host of paddle-shaped war clubs collected on the second voyage (fig. 100). A hand club, or *kotiate* (fig. 96), was also collected on the second: a loop of rope (now missing), passed through the hole in the straight handle, secured the club to the owner's wrist, and the carving of the grotesque head terminating the handle may have first attracted the attention of European sailors. The war club collected in October 1773 on Cook's second voyage gives an insight into the effects of such exchanges on local societies (fig. 98; see also fig. 99).

Fig. 92 (left)
Tahitian breadfruit-pounder, collected on Captain Cook's third voyage
Before 1777
National Maritime Museum (AAA2832)

Fig. 93 (left, below)
Seal-shaped feast bowl, believed to have been collected on Cook's third voyage at Nootka Sound
Before 1778
National Maritime Museum (AAA2836)

Fig. 94 (below)
Tongan wooden neck-rest with three legs, collected by William Griffin, cooper on the *Resolution*
Before 1777
National Maritime Museum (AAA2851)

Figs 95–100 (opposite; clockwise from left)
Tongan wooden spear and war clubs
Before 1773
National Maritime Museum (AAA2850 [95]; AAA2834 [96]; AAA2830 [97]; AAA2840 [98]; AAA2841 [99]; and AAA2838 [100])

Its cylindrical handle and four-sided head were made of toa wood and shaped using iron tools. However, the iron tools traded to Tongans during this expedition encouraged the development of their wood-carving: items collected on the third voyage are more elaborately and intricately decorated (fig. 97), indicating the speed and facility with which Pacific Islanders adapted to new tools and techniques.

MARITIME TECHNOLOGY

William Hodges's pen, ink and wash sketch of the *Resolution* in the Marquesas Islands (see fig. 33) is a testament to the interest in the maritime cultures of the Pacific people that was manifest in many of the European travellers who came to the region. A brief four-day respite there allowed Hodges to sketch the coastline and to juxtapose the European vessel with a Marquesan canoe in the background.[49] As with the general interest in Pacific material culture, the focus on ships and their variety symbolized European travellers' awareness of the complexity and sophistication of the societies they were encountering on their voyage (figs 101–4). There is evidence that Polynesians themselves recognized the value of the kinds of visual records that Hodges was able to provide. As the Tahitian fleet prepared to attack Moorea, Tarevatoo, brother of the war leader Tu, suggested to Cook that Hodges draw the scene.[50]

Hodges's *The War-Boats of the Island of Otaheite*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1777, is a comment on the status of local indigenous political and military powers (figs 66, 105). The painting suggests that the sea craft of the Pacific Islanders

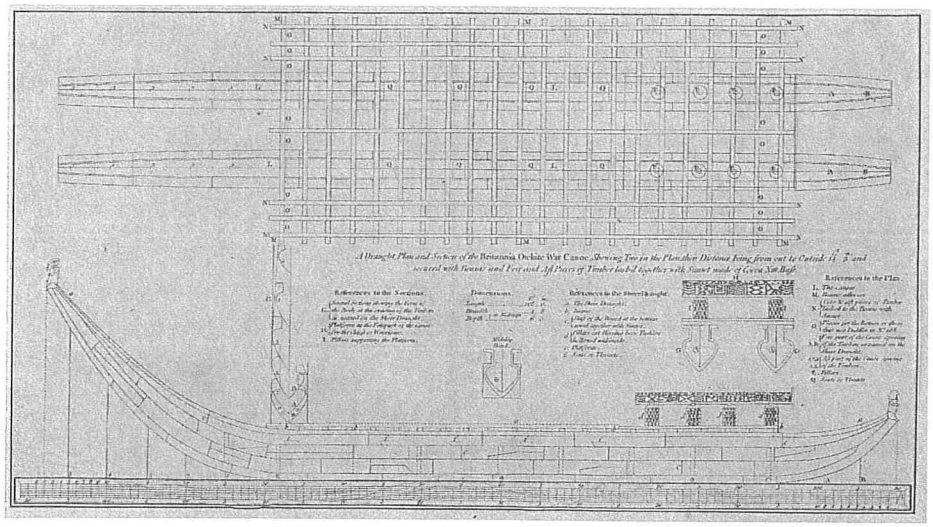


Fig. 101 (left)
A Draught, Plan and Section of the Britannia Otahite War Canoe
W. Palmer (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2095)

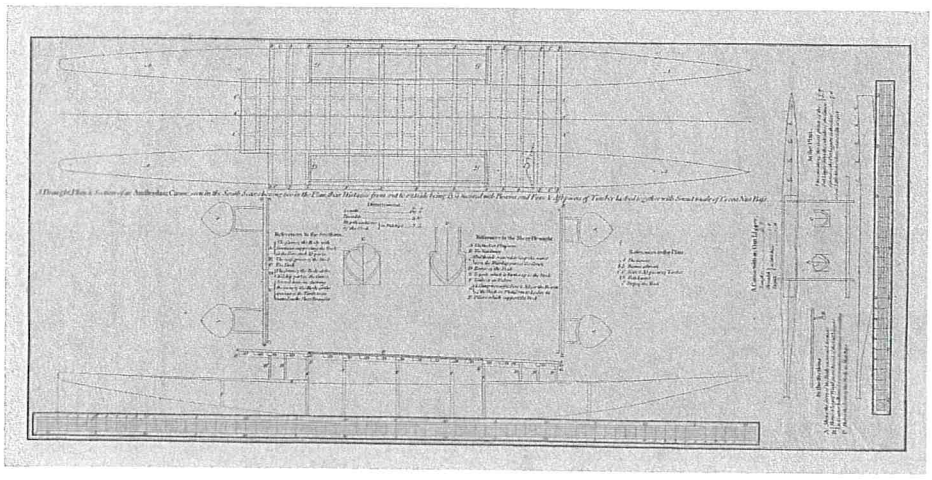
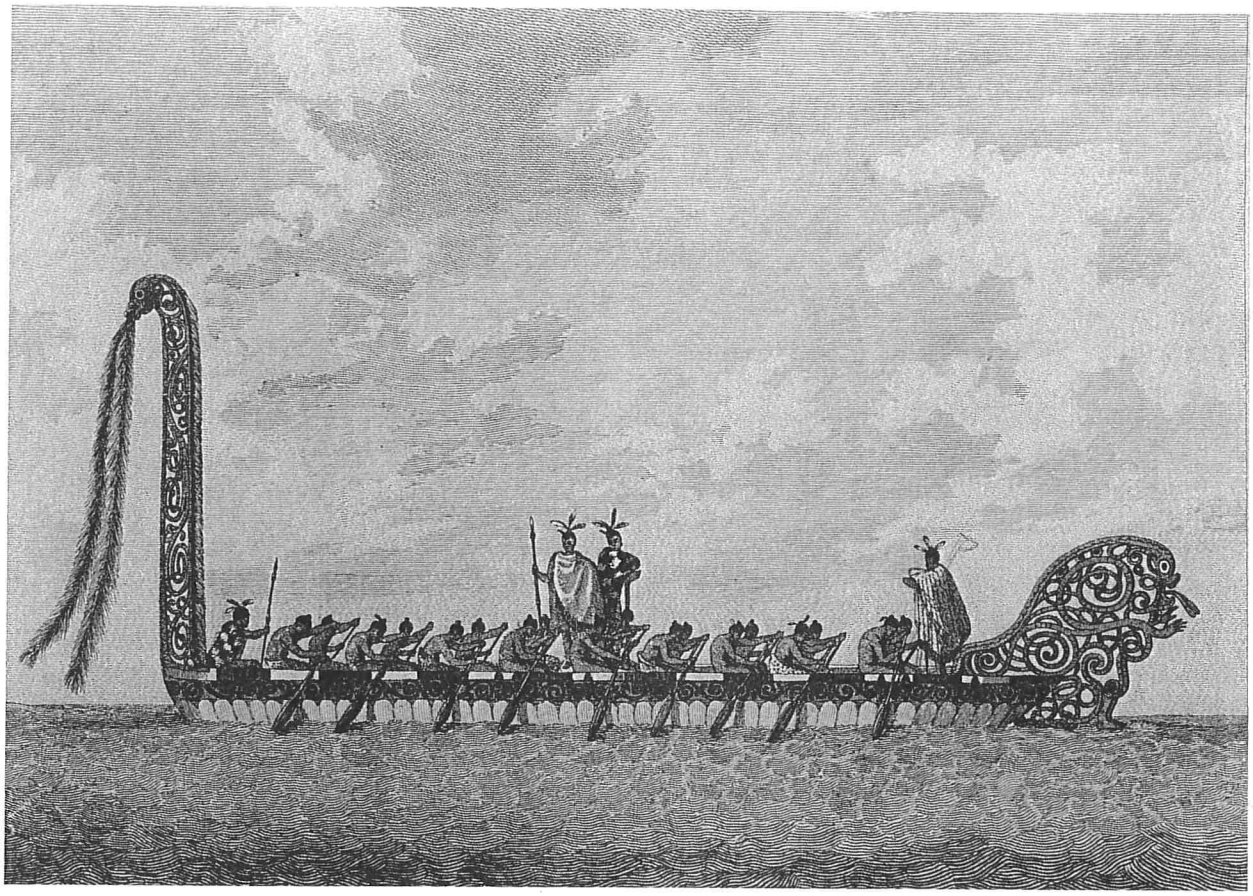
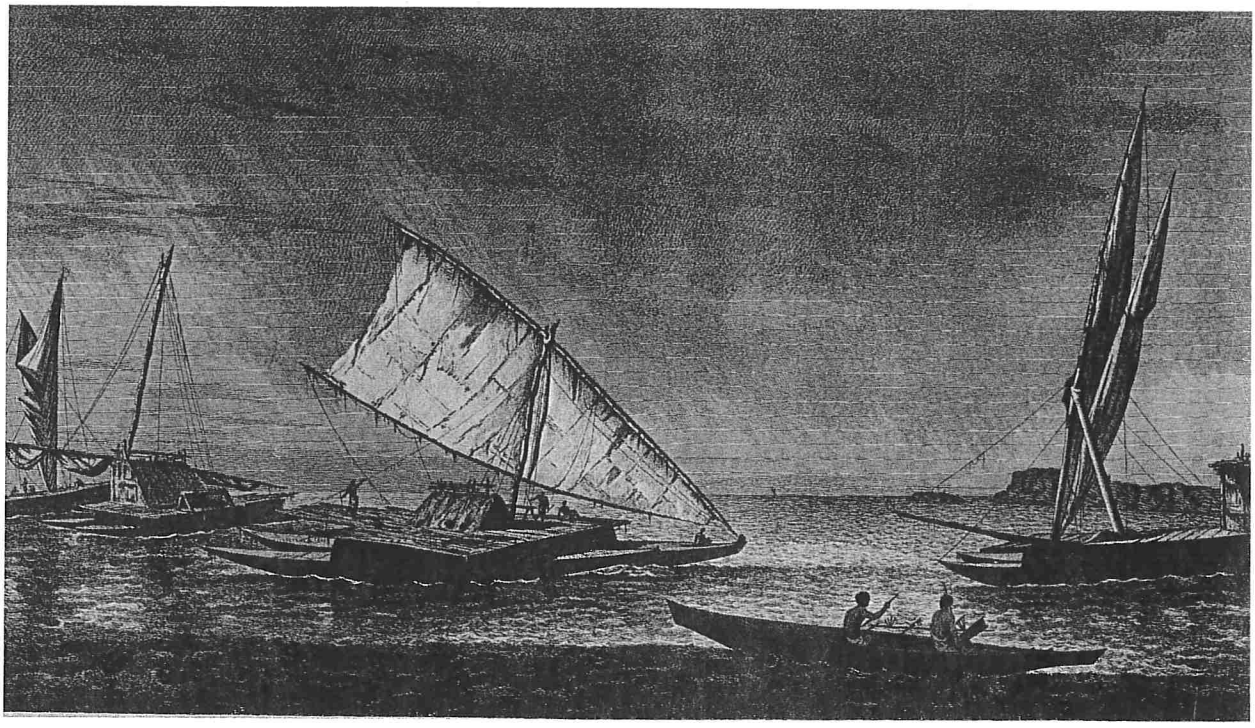


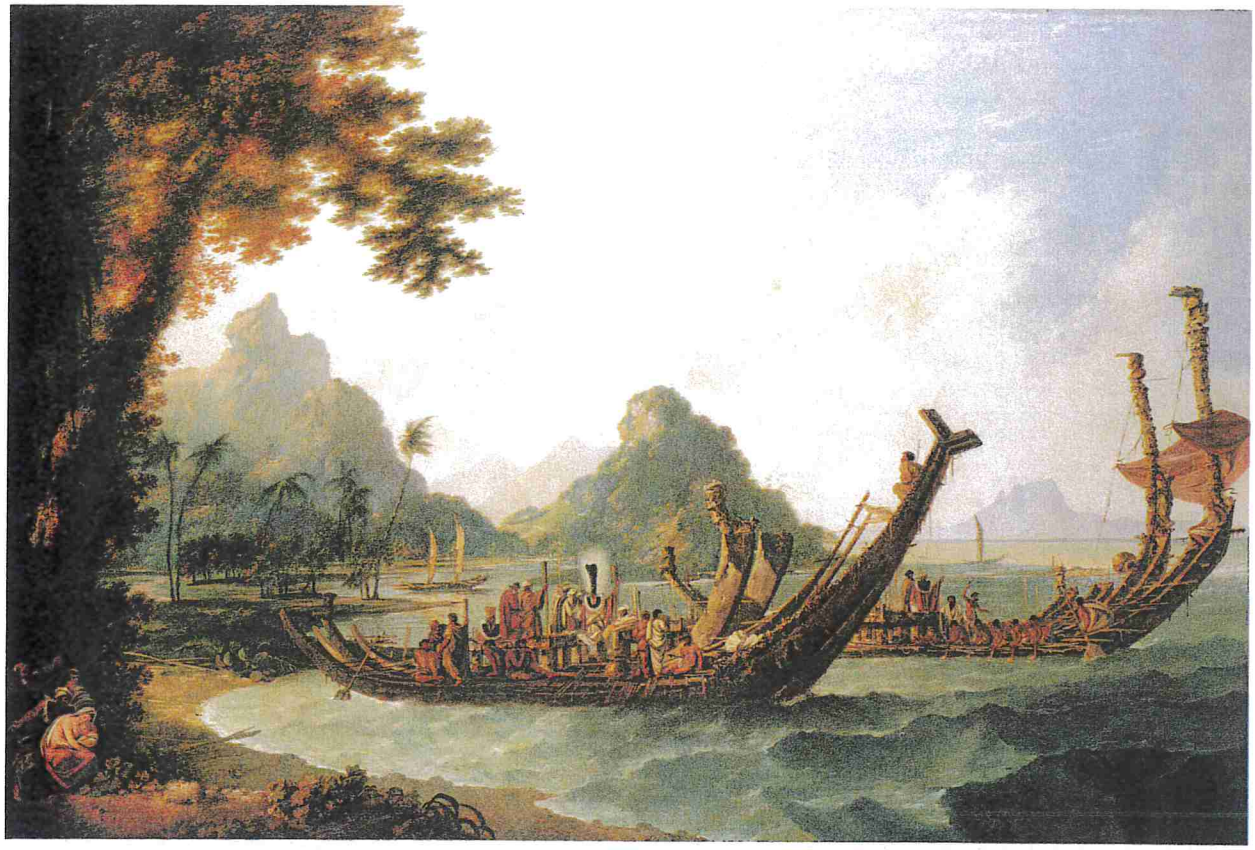
Fig. 102 (left, below)
A Draught Plan & Section of an Amsterdam Canoe, seen in the South Seas
William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2079)

Fig. 103 (opposite, above)
A war canoe of New Zealand
Sydney Parkinson, 1770
National Maritime Museum (PAJ2165)

Fig. 104 (opposite, below)
Boats of the Friendly Isles
William Watts (engraver), after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2102)







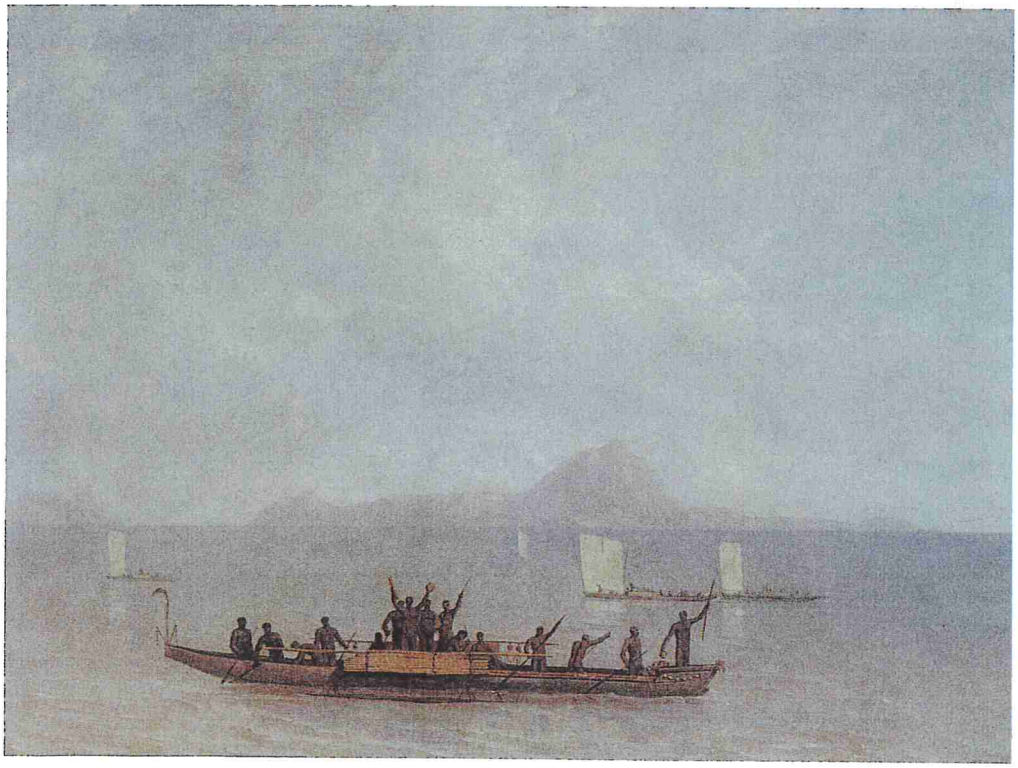


Fig. 1C
The V
Otahe
with c
of Oh
Uliete
Willi
Natio
(BHC

can b
cal d
in thi
cano
total
of m
our f
so gr
perfe

the s
it (fig
make
proba
(now
visit t
of Ma
Orof
Hill.[5
the l
the f
the c
the v
was k
enco
atter
appr
sailin
from
as we
the s

MA

In ad
critic
ing a
three
and c

can be used to compare societies and their relative technological development. Specifically, in relation to the scene depicted in this image, Cook calculated that there were 160 large double canoes and 170 smaller double canoes, carrying 7760 men in total. George Forster candidly noted the effect of this display of maritime prowess on the visiting European witnesses: 'All our former ideas of power and affluence of this island were so greatly surpassed by this magnificent scene, that we were perfectly left in admiration.'[51]

Tahiti, Bearing South-East offers a similar meditation on the state of maritime technology and the society that produced it (fig. 75). The painting may have been envisaged as a printmaker's 'model' for the published voyage account, and was probably completed from the large coastal profile drawing (now in the British Library) made on the spot during a second visit to Tahiti between 22 April and 14 May 1774. It shows a view of Matavai Bay and the island from the north-west, with Mount Orofena in the distance, together with Point Venus and One-Tree Hill.[52] The scene is diffused with the light from the rising sun on the left of the painting. Various Tahitian boats can be seen in the foreground: a small outrigger sailing canoe on the far left, the coastal craft in the centre with two figures on board, and the war canoe on the far right with its dominant stern. Hodges was known to 'make drawings of every thing curious', which was encouraged by his own and Cook's orders.[53] The related painting attempts to compare the boat-types, with the island used as an appropriate backdrop. Specifics of construction, decoration and sailing method, as well as types of local dress, can all be gleaned from his image. It offers separate studies of the individual craft, as well as depicting the atmospheric effects over the island on the same canvas.

MATERIAL CULTURE

In addition to accounts and images, people in Europe gained critical insights into Pacific Island culture through the collecting and display of objects. As we will see, examples of tangible, three-dimensional artefacts were highly sought-after in Europe and caused quite a stir when they were exhibited. They offered evidence of the exotic, as well as of expanding boundaries, both politically and intellectually. In Britain, objects and material culture also played a crucial role in educating, and illustrating encounters for, the public. Many of these items were reproduced in prints to accompany the voyage accounts. There was often a desire to illustrate individual Polynesian artefacts that lacked European equivalents, such as fly-whisks, stone adzes, taro-mashers and *tapa* (cloth)-beaters. These were usually presented without a local visual context, in the tradition of European natural history illustration.[54] They offered an ethnographic, almost scientific manual of items as diverse as spears, bows and arrows, head-dresses and necklaces and specimens of cloth (figs 107–09).

A room of such 'curiosities' was described in John Feltham's *Picture of London for 1806*. This proto-guidebook to the capital focused on the variety of objects that could be seen there, and his account of the Sandwich Room in the British Museum – whose name commemorated the patron of Cook's voyages – is indicative. Visitors would find themselves in a space:

> *ornamented on the sides with flaxen mantles from Nootka, or King George's Sound, and New Zealand, made by the people to whom the use of a loom is totally unknown; above which are the war-clubs, adzes, and paddles, of New Caledonia, Otaheite and the Friendly Islands . . . Here also are several beautiful specimens of matting from the Sandwich Islands, which, in strength, firmness, and beauty, excel the similar productions of the world; daggers, in shape like to that which afterwards put a period to Captain Cook's existence; cava bowls; feathered and other necklaces; cordage; adzes; chissels* [sic]; *hand-weapons; fishing-hooks and lines; helmets, with wicker linings; feathered cloaks; drums; models of canoes; idols; and innumerable other rarities.*[55]

The very fact of the presence in London of such specimens, which 'excel the similar productions of the world', and their public display in so prestigious a context, was highlighted as crucial in conveying a sense of the people and places represented, and by implication the wider importance of their 'discovery' over simply their novelty. For Feltham, as for many others, the material culture gave 'a clearer conception of the people who make and use them, than can ever be obtained from descriptions'.[56] Before returning to consider the ways in which such objects and displays influenced European perceptions of the Pacific, we will turn to the sea- and landscapes of the region and explore the ways in which European artists represented these for audiences at home.

Fig. 105 (opposite, above)
The War-Boats of the Island of Otaheite and the Society Isles, with a View of Part of the Harbour of Ohaneneno, in the Island of Ulietea, one of the Society Islands
William Hodges, 1776
National Maritime Museum (BHC2374)

Fig. 106 (opposite, below)
View of Murray's Islands with the natives offering to barter, October 1802
William Westall, *c.*1805
National Maritime Museum (ZBA7942)

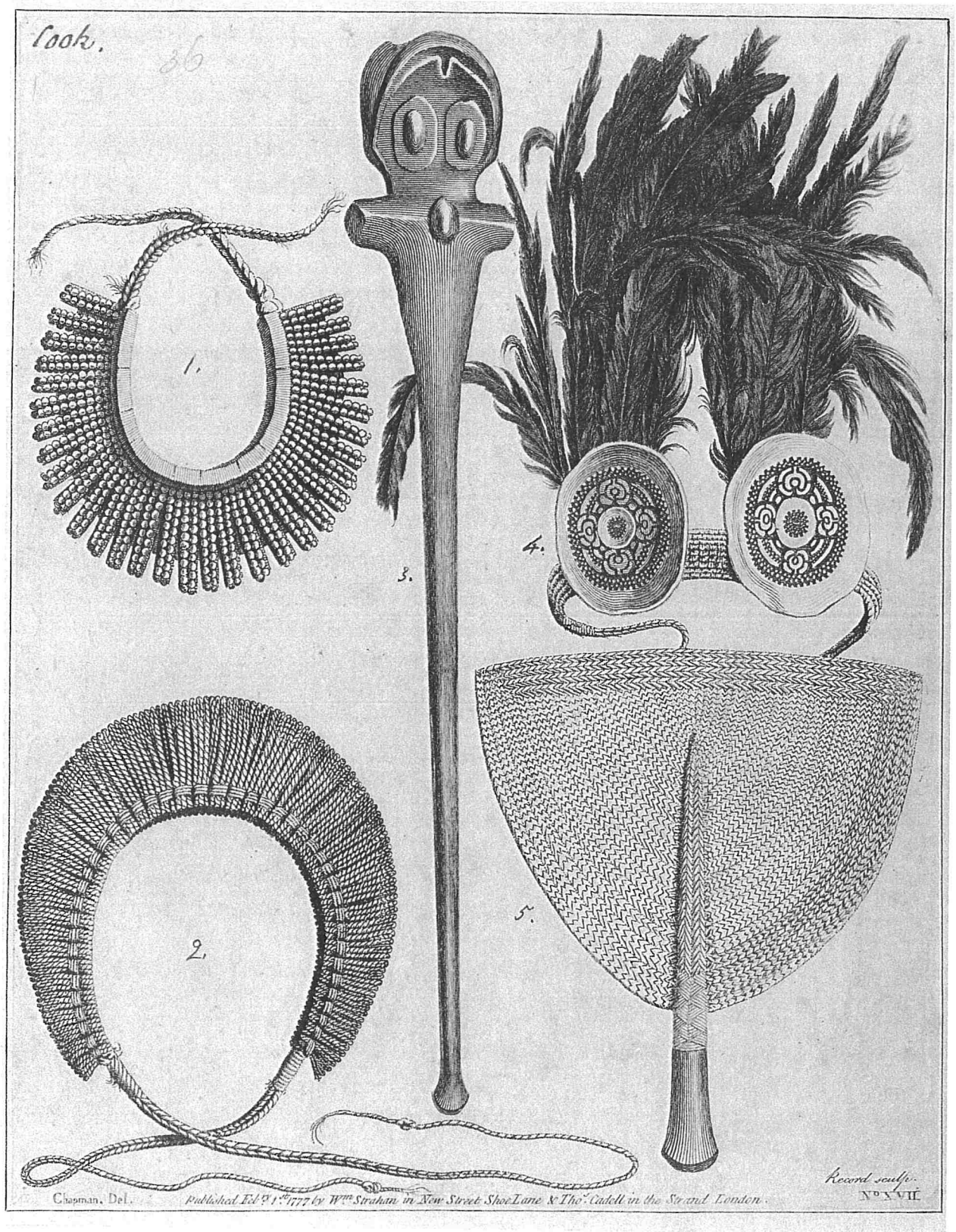


Fig. 1
Nati
neck
John
after
Natic
(PAI

Fig. 1
Vari
Sout
spea
John
Will
Natic
(PAI

Fig. 1
Spec
from
1834
Natic
(ZBA

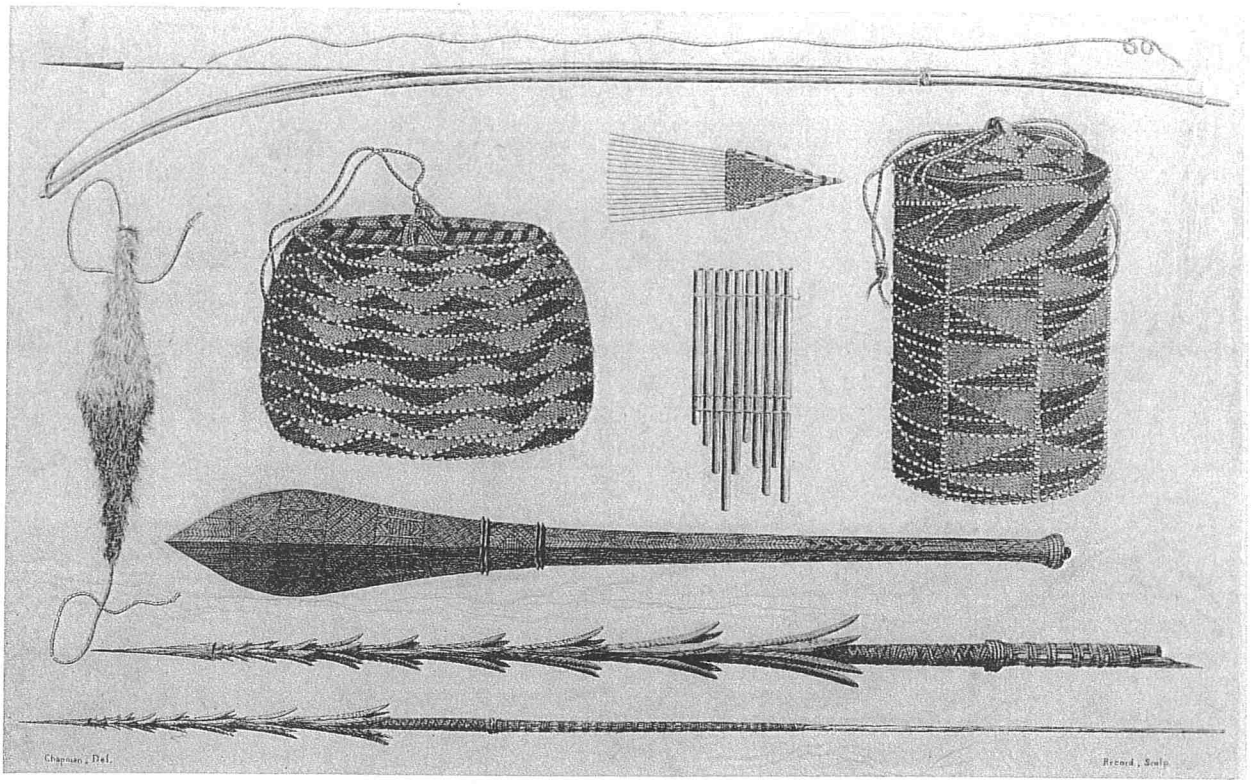


Fig. 107 (opposite)
Native head-dress, necklace and other items
John Chapman, after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2092)

Fig. 108 (above)
Various articles belonging to South Pacific natives, including spears and bow and arrow
John Chapman, after William Hodges, 1777
National Maritime Museum (PAI2080)

Fig. 109 (right)
Specimen of tapa *or bark cloth from Polynesia*
1834
National Maritime Museum (ZBA5494)