

Cook's Journal entry for January 19 – 21, 1778

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Monday 19. On the 19th, at sunrise, the island first seen, bore East, several leagues distant. This being directly windward, which prevented our getting near it, I stood for the other, which we could reach; and, not long after discovered a third island in the direction of West North West, as far distant as land could be seen. We had now a fine breeze at East by North; and I steered for the east end of the second island; which at noon, extended from North, half East, to West North West, a quarter West, the nearest part being about two leagues distant. At this time, we were in some doubt whether or no the land before us was inhabited; but this doubt was soon cleared up, by seeing some canoes coming off from the shore, toward the ships. I immediately brought to, to give them time to join us. They had from three to six men each; and, on their approach, we were agreeably surprised to find, that they spoke the language of Otaheite, and of the other islands we had lately visited. It required but very little address, to get them to come along-side; but no intreaties could prevail upon any of them to come on board. I tied some brass medals to a rope, and gave them to those in one of the canoes, who, in return, tied some small mackerel to the rope, as an equivalent. This was repeated; and some small nails, or bits of iron, which they valued more than any other article, were given them. For these, they exchanged more fish, and a sweet potatoe; a sure sign that they had some notion of bartering; or at least, of returning one present for another. They has nothing else in their canoes, except some large gourd shells, and a kind of fishing-net; but one of them offered for sale the piece of stuff that he wore round his waist, after the manner of the other islands. These people were of a brown color; and, though of the common size, were stoutly made. There was little difference in the casts of their color, but a considerable variation in their features; some if their visages not being unlike those of Europeans. The hair of most of them was cropped pretty short; others had it flowing loose; and, with a few, it was tied in a bunch on the crown of the head. In all, it seemed to be naturally black; but most of them had stained it, as is the practice of the Friendly Islanders, with some stuff which gave it a brown or burnt colour. In general, they wore their beards. They had no ornaments about their persons, nor did we observe that their ears were perforated; but some were punctured on the hands, or near the groin, though in a small degree; and the bits of cloth, which they wore, were curiously stained with red, black, and white colours. They seemed very mild; and had no arms of any kind, if we except some small stones, which they had evidently brought for their own defense; and these they threw overboard when they found that they were not wanted.

Seeing no signs of an anchoring place at this Eastern extreme of the island, I bore away to leeward, and ranged along the South East side, at the distance of half a league from the shore. As soon as we made sail, the canoes left us; but others came off, as we proceeded along the coast, bringing with them roasting-pigs, and some

very fine potatoes, which they exchanged, as the others had done, for whatever was offered to them. Several small pigs were purchased for a sixpenny nail; so that we again found ourselves in a land of plenty; at just at the time that the turtles, which we had so fortunately procured at Christmas Island, were nearly expended. We passed several villages; some seated near the sea, and others farther up the country. The inhabitants of all of them crowded to the shore, and collected themselves on elevated places to view the ships. The land on this side of the islands rises, in a gentle slope, from the sea to the foot of the mountains, which occupy the centre of the country, except at one place near the East end, where they rise directly from the sea, and seemed to be formed of nothing but stone, or rocks lying in horizontal *strata*. We saw no wood, but what was up in the interior part of the island, except a few trees about the villages; near which, also we could observe several plantations of plantains and sugar-canes, and spots that seemed cultivated for roots.

We continued to sound, without striking ground with a line of fifty fathoms, till we came abreast of a low point, which is about the middle of this side of the island, or rather nearer the North West end. Here we met with twelve and fourteen fathoms, over a rocky bottom. Being past this point, from which the coast extended more Northerly, we had twenty, then sixteen, twelve, and, at last, five fathoms over a sandy bottom. The last soundings were about a mile from the shore. Night now put a stop to any further researches; and we spent it standing off and on. The next morning, we stood in for the land, and were met with several canoes filled with people; some of whom took courage, and ventured on board.

Tuesday 20. In the course of my several voyages, I never before met with the natives of any place so much astonished, as these people were, upon entering a ship. Their eyes were continually flying from object to object; the wildness of their looks and gestures fully expressing their entire ignorance about everything they saw, and strongly marking to us that, until now, they had never been visited by Europeans, nor been acquainted with any of our commodities, except iron, which had been brought to them at some distant period. They seemed only to understand that it was a substance, much better adapted to the purposes of cutting, or of boring holes, than any thing their own country produced. They asked for it by the name of *hamaite*, probably referring to some instrument, in the making of which iron could be usefully employed; for they applied that name to the blade of a knife, though we could not be certain that they had no idea of that particular instrument; nor could they, at all, handle it properly. For the same reason, they frequently called iron by the name of *toe*, which, in their language, signifies a hatchet, or rather a kind of adze. On asking them what iron was, they immediately answered, "We do not know; you know what it is, and we understand it only as *toe*, or *hamaite*." When we showed them some beads, they asked first, "What they were; and then, whether they should eat them." But on their being told, that they were to be hung in their ears, they returned them as useless. They were equally indifferent as to a looking-glass, which was offered them, and returned it, for the same reason; but sufficiently expressed their desire for *hamaite* or *toe*, which they wished might be very large. Plates of earthen-ware, china-cups, and other such things, were new to them, that they asked if they were made of wood; but wished to have some that they might carry them to be looked at on shore. They were, in some respects, naturally well bred; or at least, fearful of giving offence, asking, whether they should sit down, whether they might spit upon the deck, and the like. Some of them repeated a long prayer before they came on board; and others, afterward, sung and made motions

with their hands, such as we had been accustomed to see in the dances of the islands we had lately visited. There was another circumstance, in which they also perfectly resembled those other islanders. At first, on their entering the ship, they endeavoured to steal everything they came near; or rather to take it openly, as what we either should not resent, or not hinder. We soon convinced them of their mistake; and if they, after some time, became less active in appropriating to themselves whatever they took a fancy to, it was because they found that we kept a watchful eye over them.

At nine o'clock, being pretty near the shore, I sent three armed boats, under the command of Lieutenant Williamson, to look for a landing-place, and for fresh water. I ordered him, that if he should find it necessary to land in search of the latter, not to suffer more than one man to go with him out of the boats. Just as they were putting off from the ship, one of the natives having stolen the butcher's cleaver, leaped overboard, got in his canoe, and hastened to the shore, the boats pursuing him in vain.

The order not to permit the crews of the boats to go on shore was issued, that I might do every thing in my power to prevent the importation of a fatal disease into this island, which I knew some of our men now laboured under, and which unfortunately, had already been communicated by us to other islands in these seas. With the same view, I ordered all female visitors to be excluded from the ships. Many of them had come off in the canoes. Their size, colour, and features did not differ much from those of the men; and though their countenances were remarkably open and agreeable, there were few traces of delicacy to be seen, either in their faces or other proportions. Their only difference in their dress, was their having a piece of cloth about the body, reaching from near the middle, to half-way down the thighs, instead of the *maro* worn by the other sex. They would have readily favoured us with their company on board as the men; but I wished to prevent all connection, which might, too probably, convey an irreparable injury to themselves, and through their means, to the whole nation. Another necessary precaution was taken, by strictly enjoining that no person, known to be capable of propagating the infection, should be sent upon duty out of the ships.

Whether these regulations, dictated by humanity, had the desired effect or no, time can only discover. I had been equally attentive to the same object, when I first visited the Friendly Islands; yet I afterward found, with real concern, that I had not succeeded. And I am much afraid, that this will always be the case, in voyages such as ours, whenever it is necessary to have a numbers of people on shore. The opportunities and inducements to an intercourse between the sexes are then too numerous to be guarded against; and however confident we may be of the health of our men, we are often undeceived too late. It is even a matter of doubt with me, if it be always in the power of the most skilful of the faculty to pronounce, with any certainty, whether a person who has been under their care, in certain stages of this malady, is so effectively cured, as to leave no possibility of his being capable of communication the taint. I think I could mention some instances which justify my presuming to hazard this option. It is, likewise, that amongst a number of men, there are, generally, to be found some so bashful as to endeavour to conceal their labouring under any symptoms of this disorder. And there are others, again, so profligate, as not to care to whom they communicate it. Of this last, we had an instance at Tongataboo, in the gunner of the *Discovery*, who had been stationed on shore to manage the trade for that ship. After he knew that he had contracted this

disease, he continued to have connections with different women, who were supposed not to have already contracted it. His companions expostulated with him without effect, till Captain Clerke, hearing of this dangerous irregularity of conduct, ordered him on board.

While the boats were occupied in examining the coast, we flood on and off with the ships, waiting for their return. About noon, Mr. Williamson came back, and reported, that he had seen a large pond behind a beach near one of the villages, which the natives told him contained fresh water; and that there was anchoring-ground before it. He also reported, that he had attempted to land in another place, but was prevented by the natives, who, coming down to the boats in great numbers, attempted to, take away the oars, musquets, and, in short, every thing that they could lay hold of; and pressed so thick upon him, that he was obliged to fire, by which one man was killed. But this unhappy circumstance I did not know till after we had left the island; so that all my measures were directed as if nothing of the kind had happened. Mr. Williamson told me, that after the man fell, his countrymen took him up, carried him off, and then retired from the boat; but still they made signals for our people to land, which he declined. It did not appear to Mr. Williamson that the natives had any design to kill, or even to hurt, any of his party; but they seemed excited by mere curiosity, to get from them what they had, being, at the same time, ready to give, in return, any thing of their own.

After the boats were on board, I dispatched one of them to lie in the best anchoring-ground; and as soon as she had got to this station, I bore down with the ships, and anchored in twenty-five fathoms of water; the bottom a fine grey sand. The East point of the road, which was the low point aforementioned, bore South 51° East; the West point, North 65° West; and the village, behind which the water was said to be, North East by East, distant one mile. But, little more than a quarter of a mile from us, there were breakers, which I did not see until after the Resolution was placed. The Discovery anchored to the Eastward of us, and farther from the land. The ships being thus stationed, between three and four o'clock, I went ashore with three armed boats, and twelve marines, to examine the water, and to try the disposition of the inhabitants, several hundred of whom were assembled on a sandy beach before the village; behind it was a narrow valley, the bottom of which was occupied by the piece of water.

The very instant I leaped on shore, the collected body of the natives all fell flat upon their faces, and remained in that very humble posture, till, by expressive signs, I prevailed upon them to rise. They then brought a great many small pigs, which they presented to me, with plantain-trees, using much the same ceremonies that we has seen practiced, on such occasions, at the Society and other islands; and a long prayer being spoken by a single person, in others of the assembly sometimes joined. I expressed my acceptance of their proffered friendship, by giving them, in return, such presents as I had brought with me from the ship for that purpose. When this introductory business was finished; I rationed a guard upon the beach, and got some of the natives to conduce me to the water, which proved to be very good, and in a proper situation for our purpose. It was so considerable, that it may be called a lake; and it extended-farther up the country than we could see. Having satisfied myself about this very essential point, and about the peaceable disposition of the natives, I returned on board; and then gave orders that every thing should be in readiness for landing and filling our water-casks in, the morning; when I went ashore with the people employed in that service; having a party of marines with us

for a guard, who were stationed on the beach.

Wednes. 21.

As soon as we landed, a trade was set on foot for hogs and potatoes, which the people of the island gave us in exchange for nails and pieces of iron, formed into something like chissels. We met with no obstruction in watering; on the contrary, the natives assisted our men in rolling the casks to and from the pool; and readily performed whatever we required: Every thing thus going on to my satisfaction and considering my presence on the spot as unnecessary left the command, to Mr. Williamson, who had landed with me, and made an excursion into the country; up the valley, accompanied by Mr. Anderson and Mr. Webber; the former of whom was as well qualified to describe with the pen, as the latter was to represent with his pencil, every thing we might meet with worthy of observation. A numerous train of natives followed us; and one of them, whom I had distinguished for his activity in keeping the rest in order, I made choice of as out guide: **This man, from time to time, proclaimed our approach; and every one, whom we met, fell prostrate upon the grounds and remained in that position till we had passed. This, as I afterward understood, is the mode of paying their respect to their own great Chiefs. As we ranged down the coast from the East, in the ships, we had observed at every village one or more elevated white objects, like pyramids or rather obelisks; and one of these, which I guessed to be at least fifty feet high, was very conspicuous from the ship's anchoring station, and seemed to be at no great distance up this valley. To have a nearer inspection of it, was the principal object of my walk. Our guide perfectly understood that we wished to be conducted to it. But it happened to be so placed, that we could not get at it, being separated from us by the pool of water. However, there being another of the same kind within our reach, about half a mile off, upon our side of the valley, we set out to visit that. The moment we got to it, we saw that it stood in a burying-ground or *morai*; the resemblance of which, in many respects, to those we were so well acquainted with at other islands in this ocean, and particularly Otaheite, could not but strike us; and we also soon found, that the several parts that compose it, were called by the same names. It was an oblong space, of considerable extent, surrounded by a wall of stone, about four feet high. The space enclosed was loosely paved with smaller stones; and at one end of it, stood what I call the pyramid, but in the language of the island is named *henananoo*; which appeared evidently to be an exact model of the larger one, observed by us from the ships. It was about four feet square at the base, and about twenty feet high. The four sides were composed of small poles interwoven with twigs and branches, thus forming an indifferent wicker-work, hollow or open within, from bottom to top. It seemed to be rather in a ruinous state; but there were sufficient remaining marks, to show, that it had originally been covered with a thin, light, grey cloth; which these people, it should seem, consecrate to religious purposes; as we could see a good deal of it hanging in different parts of the *morai*; and some of it had been forced upon me when I landed. On each side of the pyramid were long pieces of wicker-work, called *hereanne*, in the same ruinous condition; with two slender poles, inclining to each other, at one corner, where some plantains were laid upon a board, fixed at the height of five or six feet. This they called *heraiemy*; and informed us, that the fruit was an offering to their God, which makes it agree exactly with the *whatta* of Otaheite. Before the *henananoo* were a few pieces of wood, carved into something like human figures, which, with a stone near two feet high, covered with pieces of cloth, called *hoho*, and consecrated to *Tongaroota*, who is the God of these people, still more and more

reminded us of what we used to meet with in the *morais* of the islands we had lately left. Adjoining to these, on the outside of the *morai*, was a small shed, no bigger than a dog kennel, which they called *hareepahoo*; and before it was a grave, where, as we were told, the remains of a woman lay.

On the farther side of the area of the *morai*, stood a house or shed, about forty feet long, ten broad in the middle, each end being narrower, and about ten feet high. This, which, though much longer, was lower than their common dwelling-places, we were informed, was called *hemanaa*. The entrance to it was at the middle of the side, which was in the *morai*. On the farther side of this house, opposite the entrance, stood two wooden images, cut out of one piece, with pedestals, in all about three feet high; neither very indifferently designed nor executed. These were said to be *Eatooa no Veheina*, or representations of goddesses. On the head of one of them was a carved helmet, not unlike those worn by the ancient warriors; and on that of the other, a cylindrical cap, resembling the head-dress at Otaheite, called *tomou*; and both of them had pieces of cloth, ties about the loins, and hanging a considerable way down. At the side of each, was also a piece of carved wood, with bits of the cloth hung on them, in the same manner: and between, or before, the pedestals, lay a quantity of fern, in a heap. It was obvious, that this had been deposited there, piece by piece, and at different times; for there was of it, in all states, from what was quite decayed, to what was still fresh and green.

In the middle of the house, and before the two images, was an oblong space, inclosed by a low edging of stone, and covered with shreds of the cloth so often mentioned. This, on inquiry, we found, was the grave of seven Chiefs, whose names were enumerated, and the place was called *Heneene*. We had met already with so many striking instances of resemblance, between the burying-place we were now visiting, and those of the islands we had lately come from in the South Pacific, that we had little doubt in our minds, that the resemblance existed also, in the ceremonies practised here, and particularly in the horrid one of offering human sacrifices. Our suspicions were too soon confirmed, by direct evidence. For, on coming out of the house, just on one side of the entrance, we saw a small square place, and another still less, near it; and on asking, what these were? Our guide immediately informed us, that in the one was buried a man who had been sacrificed; a *Taata* (*Tanata* or *Tangata*, in this country) taboo (*Tasoo*, as here pronounced); and in the other, a hog, which had also been made an offering to the divinity. At a little distance from there, near the middle of the *morai*, there were three more so these square, inclosed places, with two pieces of carved wood at each, and upon them a heap of fern. These, we were told, were the graves of three Chiefs; and before them, was an oblong, inclosed space, to which our conductor also gave the name of *Tangata-taboo*; telling us so explicitly, that we could not escape his meaning, that three human sacrifices had been buried there; that is, one at the funeral of each chief. It was with most sincere concern, that I could trace, on such undoubted evidence, the prevalence of these bloody rites, throughout this immense ocean, amongst people disjoined by such a distance, and even ignorant of each other's existence, though so strongly marked as originally of the same nation. It was no small addition to this concern, to reflect, that every appearance led us to believe, that the barbarous practice was very general here. The island seemed to abound with such places of sacrifice as this which we were now visiting, and which appeared to be one of the most inconsiderable of them; being far less conspicuous

than several others which we had seen, as we sailed along the coast, and particularly than that on the opposite side of the water, in the valley, the white *henananoo*, or pyramid, of which, we were now almost sure, derived its colour only from pieces of the consecrated cloth laid over it. In several parts, within the enclosure of this burying-ground, were planted trees of the *cordia sebestina*; some of the *morinda citrifolia*; and several plants of the *ette*, or *jeejee*, of Tongataboo, with the leaves of which the *hemanna* was thatched; and, as I observed, that this plant was not made use of in thatching their dwelling-houses, probably it is reserved entirely for religious purposes.

Our road to and from the *morai*, which I have described, lay through the plantations. The greatest part of the ground was quite flat, with ditches full of water intersecting different parts, and roads that seemed artificially raised to some height. The interspaces were, in general, planted with taro, which grows here with great strength, as the fields are sunk below the common level, so as to contain the water necessary to nourish the roots. This water probably comes from the same source, which supplies the large pool from which we filled our casks. On the drier spaces were several spots, where cloth-mulberry was planted, in regular rows; also growing vigorously, and kept very clean. The cocoa-trees were not in so thriving a state, and were all low; but the plantain-trees made a better appearance; though they were not large. In general, the trees round this village, and which were seen at many of those which we passed before we anchored, are the *cordia sebestina*; but of a more diminutive size than the product of the Southern isles. The greatest part of the village stands near the beach, and consists of above fifty houses there; but, perhaps, about forty more stand scattered about, farther up in the country, toward the burying-place.

After we had examined, very carefully, every thing that was to be seen around the *morai*, and Mr. Webber had taken drawings of it, and the adjoining country, we returned by a different route. I found a great crowd assembled at the beach; and a brisk trade for pigs, fowls, and roots, going on there, with the greatest good order; though I did not observe any particular person, who took the lead amongst the rest of his countrymen. At noon, I went on board to dinner, and then sent Mr. King, to command the party ashore. He was to have gone upon that service in the morning, but was then detained to the ship, to make lunar observations. In the afternoon, I landed again, accompanied by Captain Clarke, with a view to make another excursion up the country. But, before this could be put into execution, the day was too far spent; so that I laid aside my intention for the present; and it so happened, that I had not another opportunity. At sun-set, I brought everybody on board; having procured, in the course of the day, nine tons of water; and, by exchanges, chiefly for nails and pieces of iron, about seventy or eighty pigs, a few fowls, a quantity of potatoes, and a few plantains, and *taro* roots. These people merited our best commendations, in this commercial intercourse, never once attempting to cheat us, either ashore, or along-side the ships. Some of them, indeed, as already mentioned, at first betrayed a thievish disposition; or rather they thought, that they had right to every thing they could lay their hands upon; but they soon laid aside a conduct, which, we convinced them, they could not persevere in with impunity.

Amongst the articles which they brought to barter, this day, we could not help taking notice of a particular sort of cloak and cap, which, even in countries where dress is more particularly attended to, might be reckoned elegant. The first, are nearly of the size and shape of the short cloaks worn by the women of England, and by the men in Spain, reaching to the middle of the back, and tied loosely before. The ground of them is a net-work, upon which the most beautiful red and yellow feathers are so closely fixed, that the surface might be compared to the thickest and richest velvet, which they resemble, both as to the feel, and the glossy appearance. The manner of varying the mixture is very different; some having triangular spaces of red and yellow, alternately; others, a kind of crescent; and some that were entirely red, had a broad yellow border, which made them appear, at some distance, exactly like a scarlet cloak edged with gold lace. The brilliant colours of the feathers, in those that happened to be new, added not a little to their fine appearance; and we found, that they were in high estimation with their owners; for they would not, at first, part with one of them, for any thing that we offered, asking no less a price than a musquet. However, some were afterward purchased for very large nails. Such of them as were of the best sort, were scarce; and it should seem, that they are only used on the occasion of some particular ceremony, or diversion; for the people who had them, always made some gesticulations, which we have seen before by those who sung.

The cap is made almost exactly like a helmet, with the middle part, or crest, sometimes of a hand's breadth; and it fits very close upon the head, having notches to admit the ears. It is a frame of twigs and osiers, covered with a net-work, into which are wrought feathers, in the same manner as upon the cloaks, though rather closer, and less diversified; the greater part being red, with some black, yellow, or green stripes, on the sides, following the curve direction of the crest. These, probably, complete the dress, with the cloaks; for the natives, sometimes, appeared in both together.

We were at a loss to guess from whence they could get such a quantity of these beautiful feathers; but were soon informed, as to one sort; for they afterward brought great numbers of skins of small red birds for sale, which were often tied up in bunches of twenty or more, or had a small wooden skewer run through their nostrils. At the first, those that were brought, consisted only of the skin from behind the wings forward; but we, afterward, got many with the hind part, including the tail and feet. The first, however, struck us, at once, with the origin of the fable formerly adopted, of the birds of paradise wanting legs; and sufficiently explained that circumstance. Probably the people of the islands East of the Moluccas, from whence the skins of the birds of paradise are brought, cut off their feet, for the very reason assigned by the people of Atooi, for the like practice; which was, that they can preserve them with greater ease, without losing any part which they reckon valuable. The red-bird of our island, was judged by Mr. Anderson to be a species of *merops*, about the size of a sparrow; of a beautiful scarlet colour, with a black tail and wings; and an arched bill, twice the length of the head, which, with the feet, was also of a reddish colour. The contents of the heads were taken out, as in the birds of paradise; but it did not appear, that they used any other method to preserve them, than by simply drying; for the skins, though moist, had neither a taste nor smell that could give room to suspect the use of antiputrescent substances.