

*Te Paepae o Te Rātū: He whāinga takahanga waewae nō tuawhakarere.
The threshold of Te Rātū: a pursuit of footprints from the distant past: The Collision
Narrative*

Na Tanith Wirihana Te Waitohioterangi

A Commentary

By Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond

It is a privilege to be asked to provide a commentary on Te Waitohioterangi's account of the collisions between James Cook and his crew and tāngata whenua during the *Endeavour's* arrival in New Zealand, at Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa in October 1769.

As he states, 'This internship project does not aim to retell the story of Lt. James Cook from the deck of the *Endeavour*, but from the people of the land.' The narrative is powerful, and compelling.

As a descendant of those involved in the collisions with the *Endeavour* party in Tūranga-nui, Te Waitohioterangi draws upon an unrivalled wealth of ancestral accounts, taken from a wide range of sources – oral narratives passed down in whānau and hapū, Native Land Court records, Māori and local newspapers.

As a result, he has identified many local participants in those early exchanges and illuminated their relationships one with another, alliances and conflicts alike, in far greater depth and detail than any previous accounts of these meetings (including my own).

Evidence from the *Endeavour* logs and journals and secondary sources is also closely examined. Like Rongowhakaata's video in their exhibition at Te Papa Tongarewa, the narrative closely echoes the details in the primary sources. It is a fine example of the insights to be gained when different scholarly trajectories intersect, and are skilfully interwoven.

Another innovation is the use of local maramataka (moon cycles) to locate these encounters in ancestral space and time, alongside Western chronology. As Te Waitohioterangi notes, given local variations in the maramataka used to guide fishing, planting, harvesting wild foods and many other activities, this is a challenging task, handled here with exemplary care.

There is also a richly documented section on the provenance of a series of painted hoe (paddles) that came on board the *Endeavour* during exchanges at sea towards the end of the encounters in Tūranga-nui, raising questions that only experts in whakairo and kowhaiwhai can tackle.

Te Waitohioterangi's vantage point is from the people of the land, and in a few places, this is reflected in the bitter anger that arises from killings that happened during those early

meetings. As in ancestral times, utu (equal return) is required, and ignominy is heaped on the leader of those responsible.

In a few places, this fury is obvious. While Te Waitohioterangi states, for example, 'By most accounts, including crew members of his voyages, Cook was punitive, tyrannical and violent, and the personification of the worst excesses of colonisation,' this was not the case for the *Endeavour* voyage.

Cook's leadership during his first two voyages around the world was admired by his contemporaries in Europe, compared with the treatment meted out to sailors and indigenous peoples alike by most other Western explorers in the Pacific. It is a fair assessment, however, of Cook's conduct during his last voyage, which finally led to his death in Hawai'i.

From a vantage point on the deck of the ship, the *Endeavour* voyage was extremely challenging. Initiated by the Royal Society of London to observe the Transit of Venus in Tahiti, this was a scientific voyage of discovery, with a Royal Society party of scientists on board led by the wealthy young botanist Joseph Banks, and a set of 'Hints' from the Earl of Morton, the President of the Society.

Those 'Hints' were 'enlightened,' upholding the right of indigenous peoples to rule their own lands, and urging Cook 'To exercise the utmost patience and forbearance with the Natives of the several Lands where the Ship may touch, To check the petulance of the Sailors and restrain the wanton use of Fire arms.'

At the same time, the *Endeavour* had been commissioned by the Admiralty. After promoting James Cook to lieutenant, they gave him the command of a former collier, a party of marines and a secret set of orders to head south into the Pacific, find and claim the 'Unknown Southern Continent,' and sail around the world back to Britain.

Contrary to the Earl of Morton's 'Hints,' these orders were based on the 'doctrine of discovery', that assumed the first European nation to find an 'unknown, heathen' land had the right to claim it for its monarch.

If he discovered Terra Australis, Cook was ordered to 'endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance [with its inhabitants], Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprized by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accidents.'

In his account of the *Endeavour's* arrival, Te Waitohioterangi quotes the Earl of Morton's 'Hints' at length, and concludes that Cook ignored them in practice.

As Lieutenant Gore records, however, before the landing at Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa, Cook gave his men 'Orders not to fire upon Any of the Natives shou'd any appear unless they Offer'd Violence.' The records of the *Endeavour* voyage also show that Cook condemned violence against local people by his men on a number of occasions, and that they resented these strictures.

At the same time, such niceties would have been lost on local people, both in New Zealand and around the Pacific. All they could see was the killings that happened when landings were resisted, and the *Endeavour's* crew felt threatened.

On other occasions, too, when encounters spiralled out of control, there were shootings that Cook himself could not justify, for instance the killing of unarmed fishermen out in the bay at Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa when he was present and in command, which Te Waitohioterangi discusses in some detail.

As is evident from this account, the bitter anger caused by the killings of tangata whenua during the *Endeavour* voyage has only been aggravated by repeated celebrations of Cook's 'discovery' of Aotearoa. Tuia 250 was an attempt to rebalance that legacy by treating the anniversary of the *Endeavour's* arrival as a 'commemoration,' celebrating the feats of the Pacific star navigators and telling as many 'stories from the land' as possible.

Te Waitohioterangi's narrative casts new light on the early encounters in Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa, eloquently conveying the hurt and harm that was inflicted, then and since, and showing how expertise in wānanga can illuminate the past, and create new narratives that in many respects are more insightful than their predecessors.

This is a gift that deserves warm recognition. As they say, ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi - set the old net aside, let the new net go fishing. New benchmarks are being set for cross-cultural scholarship, and that is a brilliant achievement.