

Māori fishhooks at the Pitt Rivers Museum: comments and corrections

Jeremy Coote

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PP, United Kingdom
(jeremy.coote@prm.ox.ac.uk)

ABSTRACT: Chris D. Paulin's account in the pages of this journal (*Tuhinga* 21; <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/Tuhinga21>) of the Māori fishhooks at the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum provides an inaccurate picture of the collection and its history. In particular, he misattributes to Hawai'i an important Māori fishhook acquired on Cook's first voyage (1768–71). An accurate account of the museum's collection is provided here, some of the errors in Paulin's report are corrected, and the evidence for the Māori provenance of the first-voyage hook is presented.

KEYWORDS: Māori fishhooks, Cook-voyage collections, collections history, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Introduction

In an earlier issue of this journal, Chris D. Paulin published a report on Māori fishhooks in European museums (Paulin 2010), based on research he had carried out in 2009 while the holder of a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship (Paulin [2009]). Unfortunately, the section devoted to the fishhooks in the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) provides a confusing account of the collection and its history.¹ Moreover, Paulin misattributes to Hawai'i an important Māori fishhook collected on James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific on the *Endeavour* in 1768–71. I am not an expert on fishhooks, Māori or otherwise. I am, however, able to present a brief account of the history of the PRM collection, to comment on some of the errors in Paulin's report, and to provide an authoritative account of the provenance of the first-voyage Māori fishhook.

The PRM collection

The PRM is the University of Oxford's museum of anthropology and world archaeology (see O'Hanlon 2014). It was founded by the university in 1884 to house a collection of more than 26,000 objects given to it by Augustus

Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers. Of the 26,000 objects in the founding collection, some 1750 are provenanced to the Pacific (including Australia), of which 32 are fishhooks, 9 of them recorded as Māori. The founding collection was quickly added to. The 'ethnographic' collections already in the Ashmolean Museum (founded in 1683) and University Museum (founded in 1860; later 'of Natural History') were transferred to the newly arrived Pitt Rivers Collection in 1886–87; these transfers included seven Māori fishhooks, four from the Ashmolean and three from the University Museum.

The transfer from the Ashmolean included the well-known collection of objects acquired by Johann Reinhold Forster and his son George on HMS *Resolution* on Cook's second famous voyage to the Pacific (1772–75) and given by them to the university in 1776, along with a manuscript, 'Catalogue of curiosities sent to Oxford' (Forster & Forster 1776).² Thanks to the survival of this manuscript catalogue we know that the Forsters included in their donation an unspecified number of 'Fishhooks of Mother of pearl' from 'OTaheitee and the Society Isles' and 'a parcel of Fishhooks of various Sizes' from 'The Friendly Isles' (entries 34 and 64, respectively), but none from New Zealand; that is, there is

no evidence that the Forsters included a Māori fishhook in the collection they sent to Oxford.

As was discovered in 2002, the transfer from the University Museum in 1886-87 included the larger part of a collection that had been given by January 1773 to Christ Church, his old Oxford college, by Joseph Banks after sailing on HMS *Endeavour* with Cook on his first Pacific voyage in 1768–71 (Coote 2004a,b; see also Coote 2015, 2016). In 1860 these objects had been transferred on loan from Christ Church to the University Museum, though the fact that they had been given to Christ Church by Banks after Cook's first voyage had been forgotten. Among these objects is the Māori fishhook claimed by Paulin to be Hawaiian, discussed in detail below. (The other part of the collection Banks had given to Christ Church was transferred directly from the college to the PRM at around the same time.)

The PRM's collections have been added to ever since, of course. Today, they number more than 315,000 objects, plus extensive holdings of photographs, along with sound recordings, films and manuscripts. The Pacific collections number some 22,000 objects, of which some 4800 are provenanced to Polynesia, including 1700 to New Zealand. There are some 760 Pacific fishhooks in the collection, of which 350 are provenanced to Polynesia, including 225 to New Zealand (not '450', as Paulin states (2010: 27)).

The PRM's records for all its collections are available in the online version of the museum's fully searchable, partially illustrated and regularly updated working database.³ Moreover, everything in the collection is available for examination by bona fide researchers by appointment, including those on display; *pace* Paulin (2010: 28) – indeed, some of the 129 objects that were made available for Paulin to examine during his three-day visit were removed from display for that purpose. Although the PRM does not yet have photographs of all the items in its collections, those it does have are made available online, and researchers are welcome to order photographs of any item through the museum's photographic services.

Quotations and corrections

Paulin opens the section of his article devoted to the PRM as follows: 'The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) collection at Oxford is regarded by specialists as the most important of the Forster collections and one of the most important of all the collections made on any of Cook's three voyages, with a total of 186 objects identified as being from those voyages' (Paulin 2010: 27).

Here Paulin takes some words from a paper by Peter Gathercole, Nicolette Meister and myself, published in 2000 (though giving only me as author), topping and tailing them in such a way as to vitiate their meaning. The original text (Coote *et al.* 2000: 180) reads: 'The collection at Oxford is regarded by specialists as the most important of the Forster collections and as one of the most important of all the collections made of any of Cook's three voyages'. By changing the original '[Forster] collection at Oxford' to 'the Pitt Rivers Museum collection at Oxford', Paulin has altered the sense. And by adding 'with a total of 186 objects identified as being from those voyages', he implies that the Forster collection includes objects from all three of Cook's voyages, when it is well known to be an exclusively second-voyage collection (given to Oxford in January 1776, long before the third voyage returned).

Paulin begins the second paragraph with 'the Oxford collection has not yet been satisfactorily published, although some individual items have been widely illustrated, and other non-fishhook items have been studied in great detail' (Paulin 2010: 27). Although ostensibly referring to the PRM collection as a whole, Paulin is in fact again quoting (without acknowledgement) Coote, Gathercole and Meister (2000: 180), who write of the Forster collection: 'The Oxford collection has not yet been satisfactorily published. Individual items have been widely illustrated and some have been studied in great detail.' The failure to distinguish between the PRM collection as a whole and the Forster collection in particular is again misleading.

Paulin continues: 'This collection includes approximately 450 Māori fishhooks collected during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Of these, less than a dozen were collected prior to the mid-1800s, but many of the hooks do not appear to be of Māori origin' (Paulin 2010: 27). There are not 450 Māori fishhooks in the PRM's collection. There are some 225, along with another 125 provenanced to elsewhere in Polynesia (and other 410 provenanced to elsewhere in Oceania). Paulin is probably accurate in his estimation that 'less than a dozen were collected prior to the mid-1800s', but it is unclear what he means by 'many of the hooks do not appear to be of Māori origin'. If he means many of the imaginary 450, then he is certainly right, as there are only 225 provenanced to New Zealand. If he means many of the dozen collected before 1850, then it would have been helpful for him to have specified which ones.

Paulin continues: 'There is circumstantial evidence (PRM catalogue notes) that Māori and Polynesian fishhooks were

included among anthropological objects transferred from the Ashmolean Museum, Christ Church College, Oxford University, to the PRM in 1886' (Paulin 2010: 27). The Ashmolean Museum is not part of Christ Church; they are completely separate institutions. As explained above, two years after the PRM was founded by the university in 1884, the 'ethnographic' collections at the university's Ashmolean Museum were transferred to it. This transferred collection amounted to some 2351 objects, of which some 450 are provenanced to Polynesia, including 80 to New Zealand. Of the Polynesian objects, some 32 are fishhooks, of which 4 are provenanced to New Zealand. This is not 'circumstantial evidence' – there was a transfer and there were Māori and other Polynesian fishhooks included in it.

Paulin continues:

Furthermore, they probably originated either from Captain Cook on the second voyage and were donated by Reinhold or Georg Forster, or from two other collections obtained by Captain Frederick William Beechey in 1825–28 and Charles A. Pope in 1868–71. Beechey had presented a significant group of material to the Ashmolean Museum (PRM catalogue notes), collected in 1825–28 when he commanded the *Blossom* during a northern Pacific surveying voyage (Beechey 1831). The Pope collection (mostly originating in North America), from St Louis, Missouri, was probably donated by John O'Fallon Pope (son of Charles A. Pope), who was at Christ Church from 1868 to 1871 (PRM catalogue notes; Coote 2004[b]). (Paulin 2010: 27)

It is not clear what Paulin means by 'originated from Captain Cook', but I can state categorically that there is no evidence that any object in the PRM's collections is traceable to Cook's personal ownership. Nor are any Māori fishhooks traceable to the Forsters; as explained above, they included none in the collection they sent to Oxford in January 1776.

Beechey certainly donated a collection – acquired on his 1825–28 voyage on HMS *Blossom* – to the Ashmolean Museum some time before 1836, and this included some Polynesian material. Unfortunately, no list has ever been found. As a result, as well as being known to be the source of a number of specific objects, Beechey is also one of a number of possible sources of otherwise undocumented Pacific objects in the collections (see Coote 2014: 413).

As I have shown elsewhere (Coote 2004a,b), references to 'the Pope collection' in discussions of the Pacific collection at the PRM are irrelevant. Charles A. Pope gave a collection of North American material to Christ Church (not the Ashmolean), which later came to the PRM. Before the

collection was transferred to the PRM, some of the Tahitian and Māori objects given by Joseph Banks to Christ Church after Cook's first voyage had been thought, mistakenly, to be part of the Pope collection. These were all 'textiles' – that is, Māori belts and cloaks and Tahitian barkcloth. There has never been a suggestion (except by Paulin) that any fishhook is traceable to the Pope collection. (The dates Paulin gives for Pope acquiring his collection, 1868–71, are – as he notes later – the dates his son, John O'Fallon, was at Christ Church, not the dates of his collecting activities.)

Paulin continues:

Catalogue notes (attributed to Peter Gathercole, Department of Anthropology, Otago University, 26 February 1997) state that there is not enough distinctive stylistic evidence or concrete documentation to determine whether any of the fishhooks included in the Cook's catalogue were collected by the Forsters, or if they could even be associated with Cook's voyages. (Paulin 2010: 27)

There is indeed a note in 24 entries in the PRM's database that reads 'there is not enough distinctive stylistic evidence or concrete documentation to determine whether any of the fish hooks included in the Cook catalogue were collected by the Forsters or if they could even be associated with Cook voyages'. This is not 'attributed' to Gathercole, but recorded as a statement made by him on 26 February 1997 on a visit to the PRM to assist with the recataloguing of the Forster collection. (Moreover, Gathercole left Otago in 1968, so it is unclear why Paulin gives this as his affiliation in 1997.) By 'the Cook catalogue' (not 'the Cook's catalogue'), Gathercole was referring to the set of index cards first compiled by PRM staff member Beatrice Blackwood in 1955–56 in an attempt to provide a working list of the objects in the PRM's collections that might be traceable to Cook's voyages (see Coote 2014: 411). Gathercole had drawn on this card index when researching the Forster collection for the special exhibition *'From the Islands of the South Seas 1773–4': An exhibition of a collection made on Capn. Cook's second voyage of discovery by J.R. Forster*, held at the PRM in 1970–71 (see Gathercole [1970]; see also Coote 2005). In carrying out his research, Gathercole added to and amended the card index, as other members of the PRM's staff continued to do until 1997–99, when all the information it contained was incorporated into the PRM's computerised working database (Coote *et al.* 1999: 56–62).

Gathercole included two Tahitian and five Tongan hooks in the 1970 exhibition (Gathercole [1970]), and his attribution of these seven hooks to the Forster collection was

followed by Adrienne Kaeppler in her ‘Artificial curiosities’ catalogue (Kaeppler 1978: 157, 235). In 1997, Gathercole was less sanguine about the certainty of these attributions, hence the note added to the relevant entries in the database. Eighteen years later, the situation is little clearer. It seems reasonable to assume that at least some of the otherwise undocumented Tahitian and Tongan fishhooks in the collection transferred from the Ashmolean in 1886 might be identified as the Tahitian and Tongan fishhooks given to the university by the Forsters in 1776, but it has not yet been possible to establish with any certainty which they may be.⁴

Interesting as all this is, it is of course irrelevant to a discussion of Māori fishhooks as the Forsters did not include any in their donation to Oxford. Knowing this, Gathercole did not search for examples to include in the Forster exhibition, nor did Kaeppler list any in ‘Artificial curiosities’. Paulin’s discussion of these matters is thus not only confused, it is irrelevant to the subject of his research.

Paulin continues:

A number of fishhooks have been assigned Forster numbers (1282, 1292, and 1301–1305) but these attributions are tenuous. Catalogue notes (attributed to Assistant Keeper Evans of the Ashmolean Museum, 1884–1908) state that ‘it is very plain that all these fish-hooks (No. 1281 to 1305) belong to more than one collection and that at some previous time they had been carelessly mixed together. There is not one of Captain Cook’s original number labels on any of them, and therefore none may belong to his collection but probably that will never be known now’. (Paulin 2010: 27)

The first sentence here (an unacknowledged quotation, from the same 24 entries in the PRM database) refers to the fact that Gathercole included seven fishhooks (from Tahiti and Tonga) in his 1970–71 exhibition (see above), with the PRM accession numbers 1886.1.1282, 1886.1.1292, 1886.1.1301–1886.1.1305. The second sentence quotes an assertion by Edward Evans (assistant keeper at the Ashmolean from 1879) in the manuscript catalogue of the Ashmolean’s anthropological collection prepared before its transfer to join the newly arrived Pitt Rivers Collection (Evans 1884–86).⁵ Charged by his employers with drawing up a catalogue, Evans set about doing so by building on the work of his predecessor, George Rowell, trawling the available literature, and paying close attention to the objects themselves. His work was exemplary for its time and circumstances, but so far as the Cook-voyage/Forster collection was concerned, his efforts were hampered by the fact that he did not have access to the

Forsters’ manuscript catalogue. He made a good job of identifying which fishhooks should be provenanced to Polynesia, but was not able to go further as they were not labelled and, as he tells us, none bore one of the numbered labels that Evans had realised identified objects belonging to the Forster (‘Captain Cook’) collection (though he did not know that the numbered labels referred to a manuscript catalogue). Again, this is all very interesting, but as the Forsters did not include any Māori fishhooks in their donation, it is beside the point.

A first-voyage Māori hook

The errors and misunderstandings discussed above are compounded by Paulin in relation to one particular hook (Fig. 1). Given its importance, I quote Paulin at length:

One composite wooden hook with a bone point (1887.1.379) was figured and described by Coote (2004[b]: fig. 26) as a Māori fishhook from New Zealand. The hook was probably part of the collection transferred to the PRM from Christ Church College, via the University Museum, in 1886. This collection comprised artefacts originally thought to be from North America, but some of which were later recognised as early Polynesian, and were incorrectly assumed to be from the Charles A. Pope collection (Coote 2004[b]). It is unclear how Pope acquired the early Polynesian artefacts mixed among his North American material. Coote (2004[b]) provided tenuous and circumstantial evidence to show that rather than being from the Pope collection, the wooden hook was acquired by Joseph Banks during the first Cook’s voyage, and was part of a ‘forgotten collection’ of Banks material held in the PRM that had been among the objects donated in 1773.

However, the hook is not from New Zealand – the point lashing is typically Polynesian, not Māori, it is lashed with sennit, not New Zealand flax, and it has old ink writing directly on the wooden shank (partially obscured by the registration number): ‘Sandwich Ids, Dr. Lee’S Trustees. Ch.Ch., Transf. fm. Unty. Mus.’. This hook could not have been included in the collection donated to Christ Church College by Banks in or prior to 1773 (Coote 2004[b]), as the ‘Sandwich’ Islands (= Hawaiian Islands) were not visited by Europeans until Cook’s third voyage in 1778. Hence, it remains a puzzle how Banks could have acquired a hook that could only have been collected on or after the third voyage. It is more likely that this hook is not part of the Banks collection, but rather came from the Beechey collection, which was transferred to the PRM at the same time as the Pope collection, and was acquired in Hawai’i during the period between 1825 and 1828. (Paulin 2010: 27–28)



Fig. 1 Māori fishhook, by March 1770, wood, harakeke, kiekie, bone, 180 mm long (excluding cord). Maker unknown. Acquired on the first of James Cook's famous voyages to the Pacific, in HMS *Endeavour* (1768–71); given by Joseph Banks to Christ Church, Oxford, by 16 January 1773; transferred on loan from Christ Church to the University Museum, Oxford, in 1860; 'incorporated' into the Pitt Rivers Collection in 1887 (Christ Church collection, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: 1887.1.379) (photo: taken for the museum by Malcolm Osman, image no. PRM000012479; courtesy and copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford).

This fishhook has nothing to do with the Pope collection, of which Paulin provides a contradictory and confusing account. The collection transferred from Christ Church had two components, only one of which was once, falsely, associated with Pope (see Coote 2004a,b), and the fishhook in question is not of that component. Nor does the hook have anything to do with Frederick William Beechey of HMS *Blossom*, who donated material to the Ashmolean

by 1836 (Coote 2014: 413), but did not give anything to Christ Church. As for what Paulin refers to as the 'tenuous and circumstantial evidence' showing that the collection – including the hook – was acquired during Cook's first voyage, I have set this out in detail elsewhere (Coote 2004a,b; see also Coote 2015, 2016) and there is little point in setting it out again here. While Paulin is entitled to his view, it may be worth pointing out here that my arguments

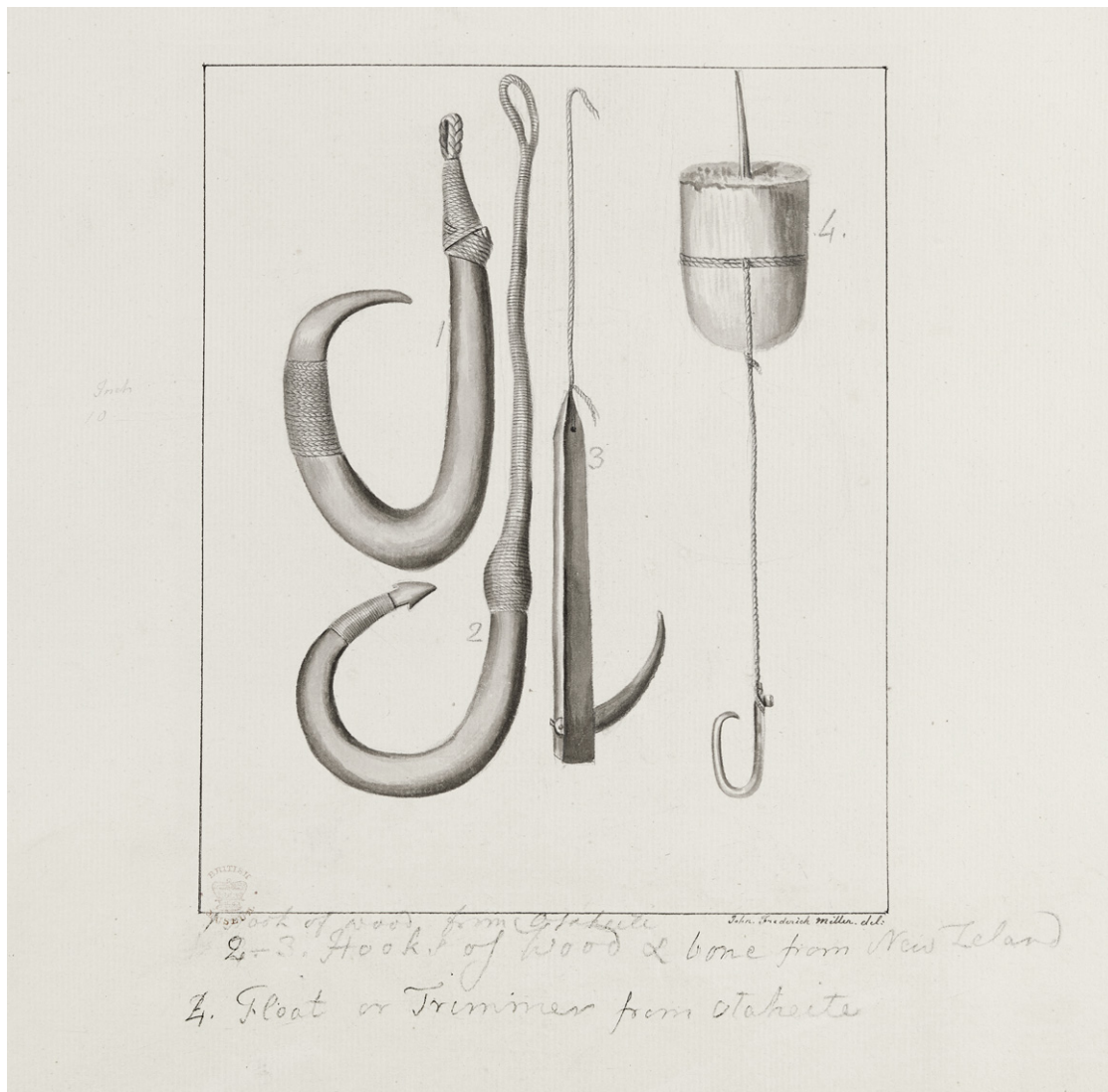


Fig. 2 Untitled ['Fishing Tackle from Tahiti and New Zealand'], by John Frederick Miller, probably 1772, pen and wash on watermarked paper, mounted sideways on folio paper; 203 × 165 mm. The pencil inscription below the drawing is in Banks's hand and serves as a key to the four objects depicted, from left: '1. Hook of wood from Otaheite; 2-3. Hooks of wood & bone from New Zealand [*sic*]; 4. Float or Trimmer from Otaheite' (collections of the British Library, London: Add. MS 15508, f. 27 (no. 29); photo courtesy and copyright British Library, London).

have been accepted by other scholars working in the field (see, for example, Henare 2005: 46, n. 4; Tamarapa 2007: 98; Wallace 2007: 18; Kaepler 2009: 56; Tapsell 2009).

Paulin is not, however, entitled to his opinion that the hook in question is not Māori but Hawaiian. I am not an expert on Pacific fishhooks so do not attempt to provide here a technical refutation of Paulin's claim about the lashing, instead limiting myself to a discussion of the materials. My initial provenancing of the hook to New Zealand was based on my inexpert observation that the snood was made of harakeke (New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*). This was

confirmed by a number of scholars on general stylistic grounds (that is, they agreed that the hook *looked* Māori), but also by the marked similarity between the present hook and another illustrated for Banks by John Frederick Miller in or around 1772 (see number 2 in Fig. 2). This is annotated by Banks in pencil as one of two 'Hooks of Wood & bone from New Zealand [*sic*]' (see also Joppien & Smith 1985: 218, no. 1.168). The two hooks do not appear to be identical – that is, I am not arguing that the hook illustrated by Miller is the hook now at the PRM – but the similarities are marked.

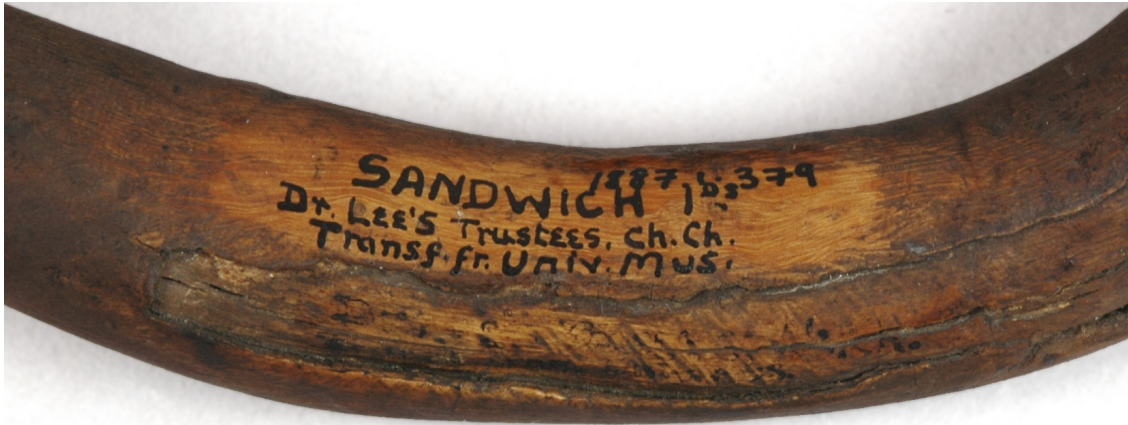


Fig. 3 Detailed view of the inscription, added by the Pitt Rivers Museum's first curator, Henry Balfour, in 1887 at the earliest, on the Māori fishhook illustrated in Fig. 1 (Christ Church collection, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: 1887.1.379) (photo: taken for the museum by Malcolm Osman, image no. PRM000012478; courtesy and copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford).

What is now indisputable is the fact that the bone point is not lashed to the hook with 'sennit' (that is, coconut-husk fibre), but with kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*), which is, of course, native to New Zealand and not to Hawai'i. This has been established by microscopic analysis by my PRM colleague Jeremy Uden (deputy head of conservation) and confirmed by electronic microscopic analysis by Caroline Cartwright of the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research at the British Museum.⁶ Moreover, Uden and Cartwright confirm that the snood is made of muka, the fibre prepared from harakeke, which is also, of course, native to New Zealand and not to Hawai'i.⁷ As it is difficult to make definitive identifications of worked plant fibre, it is thus of some importance that it has been possible to carry out microscopic analyses of the plant fibres used in the manufacture of the fishhook, and thus prove the Māori origin of this important object from Cook's first voyage.

As for 'the old ink writing' Paulin refers to, I have discussed briefly elsewhere (Coote 2012: 12–13) both Paulin's error and the power of inscriptions to mislead even the most careful of researchers. Suffice it to say here that it behoves museum curators and researchers in general to treat with care, if not downright suspicion, every inscription, label and document – indeed, every written text. Certainly, the 'evidence' provided by an inscription should never be given precedence over careful material, technical and historiographical analysis.

To be precise, the inscription – which is not (*pace* Paulin 2010: 28) 'partially obscured' – in fact reads 'SANDWICH

1887 | Dr Lee's Trustees, Ch. Ch. | Transf. fr. Univ. Mus.' (Fig. 3). It was added to the hook in 1887 at the earliest by Henry Balfour, the PRM's first curator, to record the fact that the hook had been transferred to the PRM from the University Museum, and that it was part of the collection loaned to the University Museum in 1860 by the dean and chapter ('Dr Lee's Trustees') of Christ Church (see Coote 2004a,b). By this time, the fact that Banks had given a collection to Christ Church had been forgotten and there was no extant list. Balfour was at the very beginning of his career and would not have had the skills then to identify the presence of kiekie and muka, or the knowledge of the significance of this to provenancing the hook. I expect that his (mis)provenancing of the hook to Hawai'i may have been influenced by the fact that there was no similar Māori hook in the collections at the time, and that what appeared to be a broadly similar hook in the Andrew Bloxam collection – from the voyage of HMS *Blonde* (1824–26), transferred to the PRM from the Ashmolean in 1886 – certainly is from Hawai'i (Fig. 5). A comparison of the inscriptions on the two hooks (Figs 3 and 4) shows that Balfour catalogued them both, the example from the *Blonde* voyage probably a year or so before the example from the *Endeavour* voyage. It is certainly not at all surprising that, without the information we have now about its history and the materials from which it is made, Balfour came to the conclusion that the Māori hook we now know was given by Banks to Christ Church after Cook's first voyage was Hawaiian.



Fig. 4 Detailed view of the inscription, added by the Pitt Rivers Museum's first curator, Henry Balfour, in February 1886 at the earliest, on the Hawaiian fishhook illustrated in Fig. 5 (Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: 1886.1.1311) (photo: taken for the museum by Malcolm Osman, image no. PRM0001509835165; courtesy and copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford).



Fig. 5 Hawaiian fishhook, by 1825, wood, coconut-husk fibre, bone, 250 mm long. Maker unknown. Acquired on the voyage of HMS *Blonde* to Hawai'i in 1825; given by Andrew Bloxam to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in 1826; transferred to the Pitt Rivers Collection on 13 February 1886 (Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: 1886.1.1311) (photo: taken for the museum by Malcolm Osman, image no. PRM000011966; courtesy and copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford).

Conclusion

Given Paulin's awareness that 'In order to determine traditional fishhook design used by Māori, it was necessary to examine hooks with known provenance, and particularly those that were collected by eighteenth-century explorers prior to the cultural changes that followed colonisation of New Zealand' (Paulin 2010: 14), it is ironic that he misattributes to Hawai'i one of the very few Māori hooks that can be traced to Cook's first voyage.

I regret that I was not able to spend more time with Paulin when he visited the PRM in 2009 and that I did not make my concerns known to him when I received the copy of his unpublished report (Paulin [2009]) that he kindly supplied to the PRM, on which his 2010 article is based. Moreover, it is with some reluctance that I have prepared this critical response. Scholarly understanding of Māori material culture in general and fishing technology in particular, however, depends upon careful and painstaking technical analysis of objects in the context of the historical collections of which they are parts. Such work requires both technical expertise and historiographical skills. Having added a Māori fishhook to the small corpus that can be traced to Cook's voyages, and the even smaller corpus that can be traced to the first voyage, I was disappointed to find it dismissed by Paulin on the basis of inaccurate information and analysis.

I was also disappointed that an inaccurate account of the PRM's collection had been published. My hope is that the information I have been able to provide here will be useful to other researchers; to those interested in the history of early-voyage collections; and to those interested in the technical history of Māori fishing technology.

Acknowledgements

My work on the Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum has been made possible by a series of grants from: the Hulme University Fund (1995), the South Eastern Museums Service (1996), the Jerwood/MGC Cataloguing Grants Scheme 1997–98 (supported by the Museums and Galleries Commission, the Jerwood Foundation, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport), and the Innovation Awards Scheme of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (2001; award number B/IA/AN4817/APN13726). I have drawn here on this work, as well as on the help and advice I have received over the years from numerous colleagues both in and beyond the museum. I acknowledge in particular the work carried out by my colleague Jeremy Uden (deputy head of conservation at the Pitt Rivers Museum) during his Clothworkers Foundation Conservation Fellowship (2012–13).

Notes

- 1 Paulin discusses the collections of some dozen European museums. For obvious reasons, my comments are limited to what Paulin has to say about the PRM and its collections. It may, however, be useful to take this opportunity to note that Paulin is also in error in referring (2010: 14, 20, 34) to the drawings reproduced as plate XXVI in the published version of Sydney Parkinson's journal (Parkinson 1784) as being by Parkinson himself. As is well known, Parkinson died at sea in 1771 on the *Endeavour's* voyage home. His journal was published posthumously, and while most of the plates are based on Parkinson's drawings and paintings, plate XXVI comprises a set of drawings by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733–94) of Tahitian and Māori objects that *may* have been in Parkinson's collection, though some or all of them may have been provided for the purpose by his shipmates (for a useful, recent account, see Heringman 2013: 49–55; for more on Grimm, see Hauptman 2014).
- 2 For transcriptions of, and further information about, the Forsters' 'Catalogue of curiosities sent to Oxford', see Coote *et al.* 2000 and MacGregor 2000: 249–52; see also Coote 2015.
- 3 www.prm.ox.ac.uk/databases.html.

- 4 For the most up-to-date information about the Tahitian and Tongan hooks that are currently, tentatively, identified as among those donated by the Forsters, see the relevant entries in the PRM's database (<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/databases.html>). See also the relevant pages on the *Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* website at <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages>.
- 5 For a transcription of Evans' 1884–86 catalogue, see MacGregor 2000: 255–413. For the most recent discussion of Evans and his work, see Coote 2014: 399–408; see also Coote 2015.
- 6 For microscope and electron-microscope images of fibres from both the cord and the binding, see the page devoted to the fishhook on the *Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* website at <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/the-objects/102-objects/new-zealand/335-1887-1-379.html>. See also Caroline Cartwright's report ([2013]).
- 7 Paulin also claims that at least two of the Māori 'composite wooden hooks with bone points' in the PRM's collection appear to be fakes. One of these is the hook with the number 1884.11.47 that he illustrates in his fig. 12, and from his list of 'hooks examined' (Paulin 2010: 29) it is clear that the other hook he thinks may be a fake is that with the accession number 1919.52.2. It appears that Paulin's grounds for suggesting that 1884.11.47 and 1919.52.2 are fakes is that they have 'ornately carved bone points'. However, he also claims that 1884.11.47 has 'a plaited snood of sennit rather than New Zealand flax' (Paulin 2010: 28). For the record, the plaited snood on 1884.11.47 is not made of coconut-husk fibre (i.e. sennit) but of muka.

References

- Beechey, F.W. (1831). *Narrative of a voyage to the Pacific and Beering's Strait to co-operate with the polar expeditions: performed in His Majesty's Ship Blossom, under the command of Captain F.W. Beechey... in the Years 1825, 26, 27, 28. Vols 1 and 2*. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley. 742 pp.
- Cartwright, C. [2013]. Scanning electron microscope identification of fibres and hairs from the Cook voyage collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum. In: *Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* [website]. Available online at <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/the-objects/102-objects/new-zealand/335-1887-1-379.html>.
- Coote, J. (2004a). An interim report on a previously unknown collection from Cook's first voyage: the Christ Church collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 16: 111–121.
- Coote, J. (2004b). *Curiosities from the Endeavour: a forgotten collection – Pacific artefacts given by Joseph Banks to Christ Church, Oxford after the first voyage*. Whitby: Captain Cook Memorial Museum. 28 pp.

- Coote, J. (2005). 'From the islands of the South Seas, 1773–4': Peter Gathercole's special exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum. *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 17: 8–31.
- Coote, J. (2012). Objects and words: writing on, around, and about things – an introduction. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 5: 3–18.
- Coote, J. (2014). A Tongan *tapua* in the Pitt Rivers Museum: historiographical notes and curatorial reflections. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 123(4): 399–420.
- Coote, J. (2015). The Cook-voyage collections at Oxford, 1772–2015. Pp. 74–122. In: Coote, J. (ed.). *Cook-voyage collections of 'artificial curiosities' in Britain and Ireland, 1771–2015. MEG Occasional Paper 5*. Oxford: Museum Ethnographers Group. 300 pp.
- Coote, J. (2016). Dressing up, taking over, and passing on: Joseph Banks and artificial curiosities from the *Endeavour* voyage. Pp. 80–85. In: Chambers, N. (ed.) *Endeavouring Banks: exploring the collections from the Endeavour voyage, 1768–1771*. London: Paul Holberton. 304 pp.
- Coote, J., Gathercole, P. and Meister, N. (2000). 'Curiosities sent to Oxford': the original documentation of the Forster collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum. *Journal of the History of Collections* 12(2): 177–192.
- Coote, J., Knowles, C., Meister, N. and Petch, A. (1999). Computerizing the Forster ('Cook'), Arawe, and founding collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum. *Pacific Arts* 19/20: 48–80.
- Gathercole, P. [1970]. *From the Islands of the South Seas, 1773–4: an exhibition of a collection made on Capn. Cook's second voyage of discovery by J.R. Forster – a short guide*. Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum. 24 pp.
- Hauptman, W. (2014). *Samuel Hieronymous Grimm (1733–1794): a very English Swiss*. Milan: 5 Continents Editions. 224 pp.
- Henare, A.J.M. (2005). *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 323 pp.
- Heringman, N. (2013). *Sciences of antiquity: romantic antiquarianism, natural history, and knowledge work*. Classical Presences Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 345 pp.
- Joppien, R. and Smith, B. (1985). *The art of Captain Cook's voyages. Vol. 1: The voyage of the Endeavour, 1768–1771, with a descriptive catalogue of all the known original drawings of peoples, places, artefacts and events and the original engravings associated with them*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press (for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities). 247 pp.
- Kaeppler, A.L. (1978). 'Artificial curiosities': being an exposition of native manufactures collected on the three Pacific voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N. at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, January 18, 1978–August 31, 1978 on the occasion of the bicentennial of the European discovery of the Hawaiian Islands by Captain Cook – January 18, 1778. *Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publication* 65. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press. 293 pp.
- Kaeppler, A.L. (2009). Enlightened ethnographic collections. Pp. 55–60. In: Kaeppler, A.L. et al. (eds). *James Cook and the exploration of the Pacific*. London: Thames & Hudson. 276 pp.
- MacGregor, A. (2000). Manuscript catalogues of the early museum collections, 1683–1886. Part I. *British Archaeological Reports, International Series* 907. Oxford: Archaeopress, in association with the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. 451 pp.
- O'Hanlon, M. (2014). *The Pitt Rivers Museum: a world within*. London: Scala Arts & Heritage. 168 pp.
- Parkinson, S. (1784 [1773]). *A journal of a voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty's Ship the Endeavour: faithfully transcribed from the papers of the late Sydney Parkinson, draughtsman to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. in his expedition with Dr. Solander round the world; and embellished with twenty-nine views and designs, engraved by capital artists*. London. 212 pp.
- Paulin, C.D. (2010). Māori fishhooks in European museums. *Tuhinga: Records of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* 21: 13–41.
- Tamarapa, A. (2007). Weaving a journey: the story of a unique cloak. Pp. 94–111. In: Labrum, B., McKergow, F. and Gibson, S. (eds). *Looking flash: clothing in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press. 279 pp.
- Tapsell, P. (2009). Footprints in the sand: Banks's Maori collection, Cook's first voyage, 1768–71. Pp. 92–111. In: Hetherington, M. and Morphy, H. (eds). *Discovering Cook's collections*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia. 130 pp.
- Wallace, P. (2007). He whatu ariki, he kura, ke waero: chiefly threads, red and white. Pp. 12–27. In: Labrum, B., McKergow, F. and Gibson, S. (eds). *Looking flash: clothing in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press. 279 pp.

Unpublished sources

- Evans, E. (comp.) (1884–86). List of anthropological objects transferred from the Ashmolean to the Pitt Rivers' Museum. Vols 1 and 2. Unpublished catalogue. Catalogues, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
- Forster, J.R. and Forster, J.G. (1776). Catalogue of curiosities sent to Oxford. Unpublished manuscript. Box 3/1, Pitt Rivers Museum Papers, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. 16 pp.
- Paulin, C.D. [2009]. Research report: Māori fishhooks in European museums – Winston Churchill Fellowship 2009. Unpublished typescript. Copy held at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (Related Document Files / Researchers / Paulin). 36 pp.

Response to ‘Māori fishhooks at the Pitt Rivers Museum: comments and corrections’

Chris D. Paulin

5 Rosetta Road, Raumati South, Paraparaumu, New Zealand

I would like to thank the *Tuhinga* Editorial Board for the opportunity to comment on the paper by Jeremy Coote in this issue on the Māori fishhooks in the University of Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum.

Coote provides an interesting and informative paper on the origins and documentation of various objects now in the Pitt Rivers collection that originated from several expeditions to the Pacific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, there is no evidence, documentary or otherwise, that links the composite wooden hook with a bone point in question (1887.1.379) to the Banks collection and therefore New Zealand.

Coote claims that this hook was part of an unknown collection donated by Joseph Banks to Christ Church College, and subsequently transferred to the Pitt Rivers collection in 1887. However, as Coote himself comments, ‘By this time, the fact that Banks had given a collection to Christ Church had been forgotten and there was no extant list.’

Coote states that his initial provenancing of the hook to New Zealand was based on his inexpert observation that the snood was made of harakeke (New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*). This was confirmed by a number of scholars on general stylistic grounds (that is, they agreed that the hook *looked* Māori), but also by the marked similarity between the present hook and another illustrated for Banks by John Frederick Miller in or around 1772. Having examined a large number of hooks made of traditional materials from both New Zealand and the wider Pacific, I am of the opinion that it is often virtually impossible to distinguish prepared New Zealand flax fibre (muka) from prepared hibiscus or mulberry fibre (fau) visually.

Furthermore, Coote states that the bone point of the hook has been lashed with kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*) and is therefore from New Zealand. It is simply not credible that anybody, no matter how experienced, can visually distinguish dried prepared fibres of New Zealand kiekie from similar fibres from the congeneric *Freycinetia arborea*, a

native Hawaiian species known as ‘ie ‘ie that was also used in traditional lashings.

It is ironic that Coote refers to the power of inscriptions to mislead even the most careful of researchers as a reason to question the label ‘Sandwich Ids’ as evidence for the hook’s origin, then to claim that an annotation, reputedly in Banks’s handwriting, on an illustration of a hook that may be from New Zealand or Tahiti is proof that the style of hook is Māori.

Despite Coote’s statement to the contrary, I believe I am entitled to my opinion that the hook in question is not Māori but Hawaiian, and furthermore, that it has no connection with the Banks collection or with James Cook’s first voyage.

Ultimately, the debate on the origins of this hook will probably only be resolved through DNA analysis of the fibres and wood used in making the hook.