

CHAPTER 1

History – Contexts, Voyage, People, Collections

BRONWEN DOUGLAS

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In 1791, *contre-amiral*, rear admiral, Joseph Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux (Figure 1.1) was despatched by the French monarch Louis XVI—under direction from the Assemblée nationale constituante (National Constituent Assembly)—to search for the lost vessels of Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse. Departing Brest in August 1785, La Pérouse and his men were last seen by Europeans at Botany Bay (New South Wales) in March 1788.¹ Bruni d'Entrecasteaux sailed from Brest on 29 September 1791 in command of around 220 persons aboard the *Recherche* and the *Espérance*, sturdy three-masted *gabares*, transports, reclassified (flatteringly) as 6-gun frigates but ideally suited for the rigours of a voyage of exploration. However, from the outset the voyage was afflicted by the marked speed deficit of the *Espérance* relative to the flagship. The disparity affected the trajectory of the voyage, lengthened its sea stages, and thereby contributed to the extreme hardship suffered in the final phase, as stores dwindled and decayed and scurvy struck.²

Contexts

The expedition was conceived and its commander charged with a 'double mission', both patriotic and scientific. The 'principal object' was to search for La Pérouse's ships. The second was to further 'the increase of human knowledge and useful discoveries'. This voyage thus embodied the utilitarian idealism of the late Enlightenment, which underpinned the upsurge in scientific voyaging by France, Britain, and Spain in the second half of the 18th century and animated the early Revolutionary years in France. To this end, the expedition embarked a dozen 'Savants, Naturalists & Artists', mostly civilian. Their duty was to undertake research 'useful & advantageous to navigation, geography, commerce, the arts & the sciences', avoid 'overlapping employment', and subsume personal agendas in the joint interests of 'the glory of the nation' and 'human knowledge'.³ They included five naturalists and a gardener, two artists, two astronomers, and two *ingénieurs géographes*, geographic engineers, responsible for cartography.⁴

The political backdrop to Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage was revolution in France since 1789 and the resultant wars engulfing Europe and its furthest colonies, particularly the Dutch East Indies. The intellectual setting included the unstable



Figure 1.1. Antoine Maurin's lithographed portrait of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux held in the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. 'D'Entrecasteaux', [1837] (DL PXX 84/DL Pf 140).

scientific discourses or artistic conventions which programmed European modes of seeing or representing unfamiliar people and sparked or stifled 'curiosity' about their productions. Violent political ferment at the end of the 18th century paralleled dramatic flux in anthropological ideas and vocabularies. Ideological and semantic volatility registered an analogous series of discursive shifts which in some, but not all respects were prefigured or embodied in the visual, written, and material legacies of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage. In art, empirical naturalism supplanted neoclassicism. In literature, a harder edged Romanticism displaced neoclassical Enlightenment values, including idealization of the primitive. In the natural history of man, holistic humanism gave way to the rigid physical differentiations of the science of race.⁵

A concurrent intellectual shift was reshaping the logic and praxis of collecting. From the 16th century, universalist notions of scientific knowledge had authorized wealthy individuals to manifest their sophistication and power by displaying eclectic assemblages of exotic objects in cabinets of curiosities. During the 18th century, the development of taxonomic thinking and its problematic extension to human beings saw such cabinets encompassed or supplanted by specialist museums in which the institutional separation of 'natural' products from 'artificial' human creations was envisaged, though not consistently implemented then or later.⁶ From 1770, Oceanic artefacts attracted such widespread metropolitan interest that even humble seamen became ardent collectors, in anticipation of profit. However, as Nicholas Thomas

noted, public enthusiasm for such objects lacked both ‘content and specificity’, with little concern for methodical classification or comparison.⁷ This implicit disjunction between theoretical system and random acquisitiveness is symptomatic of the chasms of neglect, indifference, and mismanagement into which the ethnographic collections of the Bruni d’Entrecasteaux expedition would largely vanish.

Voyage

After a relatively uneventful passage from Brest, the vessels restocked for a month at the Cape of Good Hope. Here, latent rifts surfaced between mariners and savants, a disruptive astronomer was ordered to leave, and one of the naturalists and an artist also abandoned the expedition. Bruni d’Entrecasteaux glossed the departures as due to ill-health.⁸

An inventive scriptwriter could hardly imagine a more gripping storyline than the periplus which followed. Conceived in the tragic romance of La Pérouse, Bruni d’Entrecasteaux’s initial itinerary involved successive human encounters during which rich bodies of material and information were collected in ambiguous exchanges with Indigenous people—from so-called ‘natural’ man in Buka, the Admiralty Islands (both Papua New Guinea), and Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania); from the unpredictable, partly ‘civilized’ inhabitants of New Zealand (Aotearoa) and Tongatapu (Tonga); and from supposedly cannibal ‘savages’ in New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, and islands southeast of New Guinea. Henceforth, during the long haul westward to Java, the voyagers endured agonies of scurvy, starvation, dysentery, and death, including that of the commander, at sea in waters north of New Guinea on 20 July 1793.

The unexpected loss of Bruni d’Entrecasteaux produced ‘general consternation’ and foreshadowed the literal dissolution of the expedition.⁹ A seaman confided to his journal: ‘I shall tell you with anguish that we have had the misfortune to lose our General’. Another wrote: ‘he was lamented by everyone’.¹⁰ The *aide pilot*, assistant pilot, Pierre-Guillaume Gicquel Destouches grieved: ‘The crew much regretted him we all loved him. He acted towards us more like a father than a captain’. An *aspirant*, midshipman, much later recalled the ‘general stupor’ and grief induced by the admiral’s death.¹¹ The republican naturalist Jacques Julien Houtou de La Billardière concurred, though politically opposed to the commander’s aristocrat heritage and frustrated by the limited opportunities he permitted for the savants to work ashore: ‘we were very far from thinking ourselves threatened by such a great loss’. His royalist colleague Louis-Auguste Deschamps allowed that this ‘death was mourned like that of a father, he merited it’, but also painted Bruni d’Entrecasteaux as ‘weak’, a ‘victim of his own philanthropy’ for refusing to use force to seize much needed supplies from the ‘savages’.¹² For officers and men alike, this ‘deplorable event’ became a watershed, presaging ‘a tissue of misfortunes’ to follow. The then *aspirant* attributed the ‘disharmony’ which afterwards beset the expedition to the loss of this most ‘honourable, kindly, humane chief’, who united the ‘very disparate elements’ of officers and savants under his ‘firm and respected hand’ with ‘wise and conciliatory’ leadership.¹³

Having limped to Java, the expedition shattered under multiple pressures of war with the Dutch, the bitter national schism of royalists and republicans, and worsening disease—the ultimate death toll subsuming around half the personnel who had embarked at Brest.¹⁴ In a drawn-out aftermath, the remnant royalist leadership

seized the expedition's papers and collections and imprisoned the leading republicans. Protracted sagas ensued: the staggered departure of most of the human and material survivors; the capture at sea of many by the British; and the dispersal or loss of much of the ethnographic collections following repatriation to France. That final process was most harrowing in Le Havre, where the Musée-Bibliothèque (Museum and Library) probably purchased some artefacts gathered during the voyage, but lost them to official neglect and indifference and finally to the horror of Allied bombardment in 1944, when many citizens died and much of the city was razed, including the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle (Natural History Museum) where the objects might have been stored.

Book

This book is a collective study of 'collecting' undertaken by members of this expedition in southwest Oceania during 1792 and 1793. Places visited, the ships' route, and the coastlines surveyed are marked on a map drawn after the campaign by the brilliant young *ingénieur hydrographe* Charles-François Beautemps-Beaupré (Figure 1.2). The core of the book investigates and catalogues around 170 ethnographic objects collected during the voyage, subsequently dispersed, and re-identified since the late 1970s, by serious inquiry or good luck, in museums in France, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the US.¹⁵ These extant artefacts are set in double relation: first, to a broad notion of collecting as variously materialized in written accounts, transcribed wordlists, and visual representations (drawings, engravings, charts, and maps), as well as the standard mediums of natural history and ethnographic specimens; and second, to the parallel trading and political networks—Indigenous western Oceanic,¹⁶ colonial-European, and transnational—which fleetingly adjoined in the context of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage or its aftermath and launched the objects on unexpected journeys. We aim to tell the intertwined human stories and wider histories embodied in these things, words, pictures, or papers.

To a greater or lesser extent, artefacts, information, and representations were obtained or created in contexts of encounter and exchange with Indigenous people.¹⁷ This study is thus at once historical and ethnographic. On the one hand, we trace the contexts, antecedents, occurrences, and reverberations of the voyage, probe the range of motives and interests that inspired collecting by scientists and mariners, and track the serendipitous histories of assembled matter. On the other hand, we are alert to dynamic local or regional settings, relationships, practices, and values; to Indigenous uses and meanings of objects both domestic and imported; to the reciprocal, dialogic nature of collecting, animated by mutual curiosity and desire to possess; and to Indigenous agency in exchanges. Three chapters excavate patent and latent traces in the French written and visual texts to investigate key elements of Tongan linguistic transformation, sociopolitical process, and material innovation within a vibrant regional system.¹⁸ Our concerns are current as well as past. We put these diverse collections in dual present perspective: Indigenous exegesis of objects or representations; and re-presentation of the voyage, its collections, or its artwork by modern artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.¹⁹

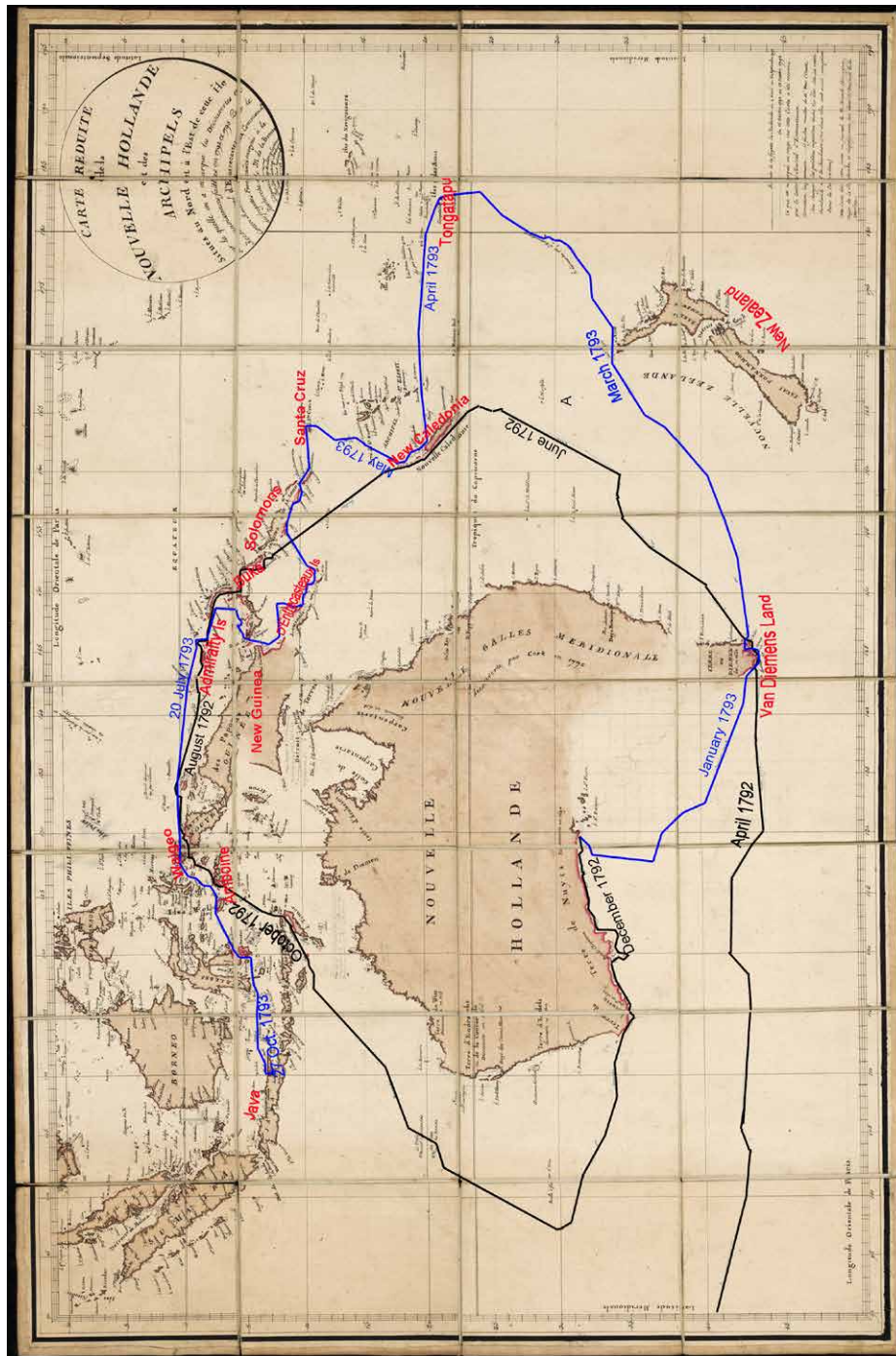


Figure 1.2. Beautemps-Beaupré's map of the route taken by Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's ships and the coastlines surveyed by the expedition, held in the National Library of Australia, Canberra. 'Carte réduite de la Nouvelle Hollande et des archipels situés au nord et à l'est de cette île sur la quelle on a marqué les découvertes et reconnoissances faites par le contre-amiral d'Entrecasteaux ...', 1796, manuscript (MAP RM 3852).

People and collections

In 1791, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux was a very senior 53-year-old naval officer, renowned for navigational expertise and inspirational leadership.²⁰ Considerable maritime experience in the Indian Ocean further qualified him to undertake the voyage in search of La Pérouse. In the tense political conditions of the early Revolution, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux was given full responsibility to appoint the members of the ships' *états-majors*, ward-rooms, and select the seamen, a sensitive task due to festering lower rank hostility towards aristocratic officers such as himself. Having recently been embroiled in a mutiny at Brest,²¹ he insisted that all crew members be volunteers. To command the *Espérance*, he chose his able, respected friend, *capitaine de vaisseau*, captain, Jean-Michel Huon de Kermadec. If most of the officers were royalists, some fervently so, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's evenhanded pragmatism saw him base his selections on suitability for an onerous campaign, rather than politics, and the *états-majors* also included at least two republicans and several non-aristocrats. The seamen were mainly Breton and therefore likely to be royalist inclined. However, they evidently did not participate actively in the expedition's cleavage into hostile royalist and republican factions on arrival in Surabaya, east Java, on 27 October 1793, when its members first learned of the abolition of the monarchy more than a year previously and the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793.²²

Most of the voyagers collected natural or human products, driven by a range of scientific, pecuniary, or other personal motives. An artist on a later French South Sea voyage remarked the 'scientific fury' of seamen who were convinced that the collections assembled with 'tireless zeal' by the naturalists had more than 'a purely relative value'.²³ One sailor known as an enthusiastic collector was the *seconde pilote* Ange-Marie-Aimé Raoul, who retained a small assortment of ethnographic objects through the vicissitudes of his eventual return to France via England and the Netherlands. These items were subsequently donated to the museum in Dunkerque and some have been identified in that city's Musée des Beaux-Arts – LAAC.²⁴ The naturalists, however, were specifically assigned the task of systematically gathering and classifying 'terrestrial and marine natural curiosities in the three realms [of nature]', as well as the 'clothing, weapons, ornaments, furniture, tools, musical instruments and all the effects' of the populations encountered. The artists were instructed to draw all these things as well as 'coastal views', 'remarkable sites', and 'portraits of the natives of the different countries', their activities, buildings, and canoes.²⁵ Key protagonists were the already renowned botanist La Billardière (Figure 1.3), the zoologist Deschamps, and the nearly anonymous artist Piron, who was probably christened Jean and worked closely with La Billardière.²⁶ Chosen by Bruni d'Entrecasteaux with advice from the Société d'Histoire naturelle (Natural History Society), they received an eclectic series of instructions drafted by members of the Société and a copy of a 'Mémoire' originally prepared by the Académie des Sciences (Academy of Sciences) in 1785 for La Pérouse.²⁷

Two mariners contributed significantly to other collecting genres resulting from the voyage. The *aide pilot* Gicquel Destouches joined the expedition as *volontaire*, volunteer, and was confirmed as *enseigne*, sub-lieutenant, in early 1793. He was the most prolific transcriber of Indigenous words and phrases amongst these travellers. Bruni d'Entrecasteaux recognized that successful investigation of whether La Pérouse's vessels had passed through places he was now visiting demanded effective linguistic



Figure 1.3. Boilly's lithographed portrait of the naturalist La Billardière, held in the Wellcome Library, London. 'La Billardière (Jacques Julien)', 1821 (5091i).

communication. He therefore encouraged his men to compile wordlists and described French practice thus:

We made them repeat the same word several times, and when they repeated it, they always indicated the object in question. We put the same questions to several of them; and we used the same means to ensure that we had fully grasped their pronunciation: we never noticed the slightest contradiction in their answers. After all these precautions, we think we can count on the accuracy of the various vocabularies collected by several of us, which differ very little.²⁸

Consolidated wordlists were eventually published with Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's narrative as vocabularies of the languages of Van Diemen's Land, Tongatapu, New Caledonia, and Waigeo (Raja Ampat Islands, northwest of New Guinea, West Papua Province, Indonesia).²⁹ La Billardière's *Relation* includes a parallel collection.³⁰ At least a dozen manuscript wordlists are held in the French Archives nationales, amongst which those of Gicquel Destouches are notable.³¹ He explained that he compiled his lists at every shore stopover, not from duty but for his own 'amusement' and 'satisfaction', never thinking that he would be compelled to surrender them, along with his 'papers', to the new leader of the expedition when it ended in Java.

The *ingénieur hydrographe* Beautemps-Beaupré—a serving naval officer, but classed among the savants—was ultimately a decorated survivor of the expedition. His exposition of the groundbreaking hydrographic ‘method’ by which he ensured the accuracy of his charts and maps was published as an appendix to Bruni d’Entrecasteaux’s narrative. ‘He found’, explained the editor, ‘new means of combining astronomical with compass bearings; and by very ingenious methods corrected the calculation of routes, with the greatest success’; he also developed ‘several efficient methods to take soundings of a coastline and mark them on the maps’.³² Using this system, officers of both vessels undertook detailed coastal surveys under Beautemps-Beaupré’s direction, particularly in Van Diemen’s Land. With the aid of his obscure colleague Miroir-Jouvençy, *ingénieur géographe* on the *Espérance*,³³ Beautemps-Beaupré worked these charts into a superb series of manuscript maps now held in the Archives nationales (Figure 1.4; see also Figure 2.2).³⁴ These field materials underpinned the maps in Beautemps-Beaupré’s published *Atlas* of the voyage, several of which illustrate Chapter 2.³⁵ His subsequent career saw him appointed chief hydrographer of the French Marine (Navy) and undertake an acclaimed hydrographic survey of the French coasts.

The actions of two senior officers profoundly influenced the trajectories of these vast and varied collections. The authoritarian, ultraroyalist first officer of the *Recherche* Alexandre d’Hesmivy d’Auribeau was promoted *capitaine de vaisseau* in 1792, took command of the *Espérance* on the death of Huon de Kermadec in New Caledonia

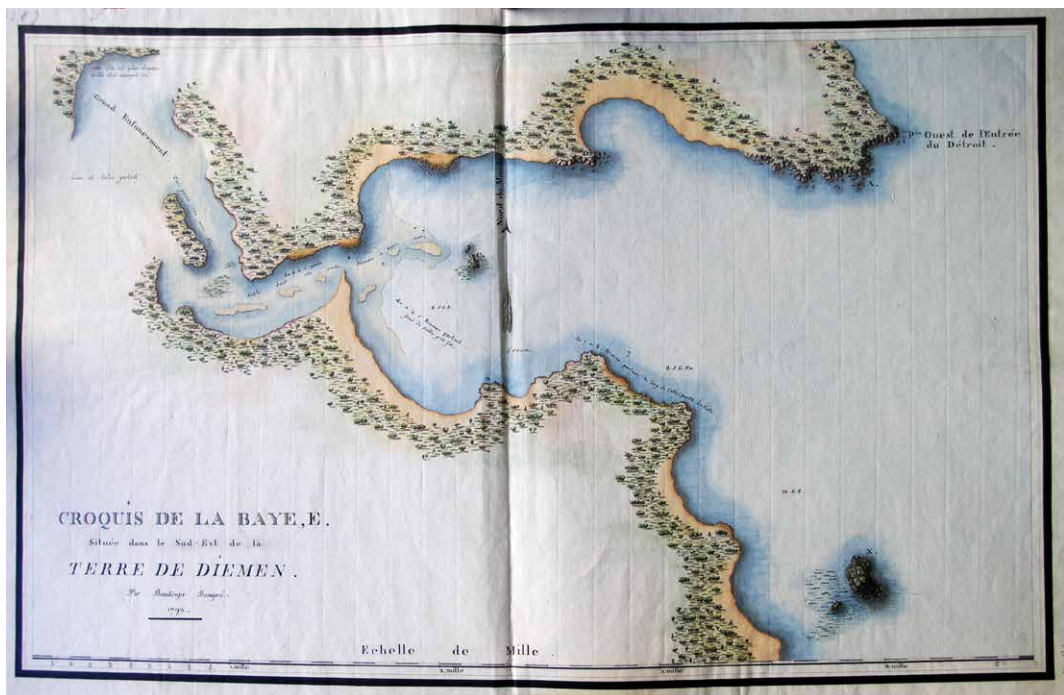


Figure 1.4. Beautemps-Beaupré’s map of Southport, southeast Tasmania, held in the Archives nationales de France, Paris. ‘Croquis de la Baye, E, située dans le sud-est de la Terre de Dièmen’, 1793, manuscript (MAR 6 JJ 3A Pièce 7B).

in May 1793, and formally commanded the disintegrating expedition after Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's death in July 1793 until his own a year later. On reaching Java and finding that Holland and France were at war, the ailing Hesmivy d'Auribeau ordered every member of the expedition to surrender their papers and collections to him, as the Dutch authorities demanded. Technically, he was following the royal instruction that, at the campaign's end, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux should collect all the 'drawings', 'natural curiosities', 'descriptions', 'astronomical observations', and 'journals' produced during the voyage.³⁶ However, Hesmivy d'Auribeau's directive was particularly directed at the despised republicans, who included La Billardière and Piron. La Billardière was forced to surrender all his collections but managed to keep a copy of his journal while Piron's artwork was seized but he evidently retained at least some copies. Hesmivy d'Auribeau praised La Billardière's performance of his professional duties as naturalist but maligned him as 'wicked in character, hypocritical on principle', and lacking 'obedience and respect' for Bruni d'Entrecasteaux.³⁷ He accused the naturalist of keeping or even selling ethnographic objects he had obtained in exchanges with Indigenous people using the expedition's resources. In February 1794, Hesmivy d'Auribeau formally denounced the Revolution and flew the royalist flag. Now allied with the Dutch, he organized the imprisonment of 39 real or imagined republicans, including La Billardière, Piron, and Gicquel Destouches. Even Beauteemps-Beaupré—no revolutionary—was briefly imprisoned, apparently because as a non-aristocrat he was suspect.³⁸

Shortly before his death on 22 August 1794, Hesmivy d'Auribeau arranged for the cession of the two frigates to the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company, henceforth VOC). The transfer was implemented a month later by his successor, formally ending the expedition and paving the way for the slow repatriation of its surviving members and materials. Twenty-four of the persons proscribed, including Gicquel, had already been despatched to Ile de France (Mauritius) in early July and most of them reached Brest in February 1795. The previous December, a majority of the expedition's outstanding personnel, along with its documents, maps, and collections, had left for Europe on a VOC fleet. However, La Billardière and the remaining republicans stayed in Batavia, the Dutch colonial headquarters, until finally allowed to depart for France in March 1795. Piron was evidently too ill to accompany them but entrusted La Billardière with duplicate copies of drawings he had made during the voyage.³⁹

The main repatriation on Dutch merchant vessels was overseen by Elisabeth-Paul-Edouard de Rossel, royalist *lieutenant de vaisseau*, on the *Recherche*, who commanded the *Espérance* after Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's death and the remnant expedition in Java after that of Hesmivy d'Auribeau. However, in June 1795—with a French puppet régime now installed in the Netherlands—the Dutch fleet, its French passengers, and the expedition's papers and collections were captured by the British near Saint Helena.⁴⁰ According to La Billardière, these 'fruits of the voyage' filled 52 cases. Apart from copious botanical and zoological specimens, they included 'many objects used by the inhabitants of the South Sea' and 'many drawings in different genres' made by Piron.⁴¹ In November, Rossel arrived in London where he remained as a royalist in exile, allowed to work on the archives of the voyage. He returned to France in 1802, during the brief lull in more than two decades of war, in and beyond Europe, enabled by the Treaty of Amiens. With him went the expedition's nautical documents and other

papers. They included Beautemps-Beaupré's 'original plans' which had been 'copied' by the British Admiralty. However, the hydrographer Alexander Dalrymple insisted that to publish, or even use them before the French had done so would be 'a disgraceful and flagrant breach of Publick Faith'.⁴² Officially appointed to edit and complete Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's narrative, Rossel published it in 1808, along with Beautemps-Beaupré's appendix and a second volume synthesizing the astronomical observations undertaken during the voyage, on which Rossel had begun work in London.⁴³

It is perhaps the ultimate irony of a voyage history replete with ironies that Rossel's republican adversary La Billardière was able to preempt his stewardship of the natural history collections, which included unspecified ethnographic materials and the duplicates of Piron's drawings. The naturalist had barely regained Paris when he tapped diplomatic and transnational scientific channels to recover these collections.⁴⁴ Though technically they belonged to the successor of the French state which had authorized the expedition, La Billardière reasoned with supreme self-interest that England would only restore them to France if 'they should consider them as personal', rather than 'national property'. Before departing for the South Sea, La Billardière had sought the counsel of Joseph Banks, naturalist on Cook's first voyage and president of the Royal Society since 1778. La Billardière now appealed to Banks, as a fellow 'naturalist on a long voyage as arduous as it was dangerous', to facilitate the return of 'his' 'harvests in natural history'. Banks readily agreed to do so in testimony to 'a complete armistice to science'. He avowed that 'of course' he had not succumbed to his own desire to examine La Billardière's herbarium: 'all will be returned to him. I shall not retain a leaf, a flower, or a Botanical idea of his Collection'.⁴⁵

These collections reached Paris before the end of 1796.⁴⁶ They underwrote the engravings in the *Atlas* of plates published in 1800 with La Billardière's *Relation*, as well as his later specialist botanical publications *Novæ Hollandiæ: plantarum specimen* and *Sertum Austro-Caledonicum*.⁴⁷ Following La Billardière's death in 1834, the bulk of his Pacific collections were bought by the English botanist Philip Barker Webb, who bequeathed his herbarium to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. These materials are still held in the Museo di Storia Naturale (Museum of Natural History) in Florence. However, Piron's drawings, which formed part of Webb's purchase, were later transferred to the Musée d'Ethnographie (Museum of Ethnography) du Trocadéro in Paris and are now in the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.⁴⁸

Dispersal and recuperation

Clearly by no means all—or perhaps even most—of the ethnographic objects repatriated to France after Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage followed these tortuous official channels, while few that did are now extant. Part II of this book disentangles the convoluted movements of items we think were collected during the expedition and eventually deposited in the institutions where they have recently been identified.⁴⁹ Most must have been sold, confiscated, lost, or left behind by the French in Java and eventually wended their way to Europe or the US as curiosities in the baggage of a single US trader, Nathaniel Bowditch, or of Dutch or Norwegian colonial officials in the East Indies or India—Arnold Adriaan Buyskes, Sebastiaan Cornelis Nederburgh, Cornelis van Citters, and Peter Anker.⁵⁰ The historical ground for these inquiries is the interlocking transnational or

intercolonial networks already operating in south and southeast Asia, together with the shifting international conflicts and alliances at play during a decade-long war—arguably the first to stretch its tentacles across much of the globe.

In France, the systematic separation of naturalia from artificialia envisaged by the new museology was briefly attempted in the mid-1790s in their distribution between the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (National Museum of Natural History) and the ephemeral Muséum des Antiques (Museum of Antiquities).⁵¹ However, any equivalence in the value attributed to natural and human productions was illusory. Over a century and a half, ongoing ambivalence about the worth of ethnographic materials, in contexts of recurrent political instability, was manifested in the institutional shuffling, camouflage, and accidents of their deposition and curation.⁵² In France itself, the only items we can attribute with fair certainty to a particular participant in Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage are seven to nine objects convincingly linked to the Raoul donation in the Musée des Beaux-Arts – LAAC in Dunkerque.⁵³ A handful of artefacts held in the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris, some via the cabinet of curiosities of the celebrated collector Dominique-Vivant Denon, can be tentatively linked to the expedition's official collections.⁵⁴ Somewhat further afield, the Musée cantonal d'Archéologie et d'Histoire (Cantonal Museum of Archaeology and History) in Lausanne, Switzerland, holds 11 objects donated to the museum's precursor in 1824 by Jules Paul Benjamin Delessert, a renowned botanical collector who might have obtained them in conjunction with his purchase of parts of La Billardière's herbariums.⁵⁵ It is a tantalizing possibility that these items and those held in Paris were among the things repatriated to La Billardière via Banks's good offices and that some served as actual models for the engravings in five plates of Tongan and New Caledonian 'Effets' (effects) published in his *Atlas* (see feature).

Texts

The contributions to this book draw on a wide range of texts in varied mediums, both published and unpublished at the time or subsequently published. La Billardière's widely read *Relation du voyage* was issued in 1800 in France and in two separate English translations, with a German edition in 1801–2. Rossel's edition of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's *Voyage* was belatedly published in 1808. Deschamps's inconsequential narrative remained unpublished until 1970. The memoirs of the *aspirant* Pierre-Roch Jurien de la Gravière—later a vice-admiral and peer of France—were edited by his son in the late 1850s and reprinted several times.⁵⁶ Shipboard journals, wordlists, maps, and other contemporary documentation are conserved in the Archives nationales de France, the Service historique de la Défense, and the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle.⁵⁷ Some fragments have been published by Hélène Richard, Isabel Ollivier, Brian Plomley, and Bertrand Daugeron.⁵⁸ Samples of Piron's original field sketches and preparatory plate drawings are held in the Archives nationales and the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.⁵⁹ Forty-six plates engraved by Jacques-Louis Copia, along with natural history plates by various artists and engravers, were published in La Billardière's *Atlas*, which was reissued in 1817.⁶⁰ National and museum archives in the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the US provided clues to track the obscure itineraries followed from Java to their current locations by ethnographic objects collected during Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's voyage and dispersed there.

All historians rest on the shoulders of their predecessors. Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's expedition has inspired exemplary historical scholarship, most notably by Hélène Richard and Frank Horner, but also Edward Duyker.⁶¹ The tortured history of the collections of this voyage was plumbed long ago by Ernest-Théodore Hamy, who located some of Piron's drawings, and more recently by Hélène Richard, Sylviane Jacquemin, Roger Boulay, Bertrand Daugeron, Knut Rio, and David van Duuren and Tristan Mostert.⁶²

Conclusion

Before, during, and since, the voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux is haunted by multiple palimpsests. The imagined traces of the vanished vessels of La Pérouse and his companions were not clarified until 1826, though Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's ships passed agonizingly close to Vanikoro (eastern Solomon Islands), where La Pérouse was wrecked and two survivors were probably still living. The ethnographic matter collected in Tasmania survived only in Piron's drawings and Copia's engravings (see cover). The objects which might have been held in the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle du Havre were incinerated in 1944. If the expedition's primary goal of the quest for La Pérouse was unrealized, it nonetheless made a major scientific contribution, especially to geography, cartography, and marine astronomy.⁶³ Its unsuspected potential to elucidate the ethnohistory and material culture of western Oceania has never been fully recognized. Redressing that absence is a major aim of this book.

Notes

- 1 Anon., 'Memoire du Roi pour servir d'instruction particulière au S^r. d'Entrecasteaux ...', 16 September 1791, SHD (MAR BB⁴ 992).
- 2 Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage ...* (Paris, 1808), I:xlvi, 109, 149, 444; Jurien de La Gravière, *Souvenirs d'un amiral ...* (Paris, 1872), I:213; Richard, *Une grande expédition scientifique ...* (Paris, 1986):41–4, 89–90.
- 3 Anon., 'Mémoire du Roi'; France, Assemblée nationale, 'Décret sur l'expédition à faire pour la recherche de M. de la Pérouse', 9 February 1791, in *Collection générale des décrets rendus par l'Assemblée nationale ... Mois de Février 1791* (Paris, 1791):164; Thevenard [Ministre de la Marine] to Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, 16 September 1791, in SHD, 'Expédition du contre-amiral d'Entrecasteaux ...', 1785–1810 (MAR BB⁴ 992).
- 4 For a muster roll and personal career details of the officers, crew, and supernumeraries aboard the two vessels, see Richard, *Une grande expédition*: Appendix III, 247–95.
- 5 Blanckaert, 'Les conditions d'émergence de la science des races au début du XIX^e siècle', in *L'idée de 'race' dans les sciences humaines et la littérature (XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles)* (Paris, 2003):133–49; Douglas, 'Climate to Crania: Science and the Racialization of Human Difference', in *Foreign Bodies ...* (Canberra, 2008):33–61; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific ...* (Oxford, 1969).
- 6 Daugeron, *Collections naturalistes entre science et empires 1763–1804* (Paris, 2009):503–600; Jacquemin, 'Objets des

- mers du sud ...' (Paris, 1991); Schulz, 'Notes on the History of Collecting and of Museums in the Light of Selected Literature of the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Collections* 2:2 (1990):214–17.
- 7 Thomas, *In Oceania* ... (Durham, 1997):100.
- 8 Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, I:33; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:87–8.
- 9 Rossel in Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, I:444–8. See also Duyker, *Citizen Labillardière* ... (Carlton, 2003):186–7; Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse* ... (Carlton South, 1996):189–93; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:173.
- 10 Anon., 'Evenements des fregates la Recherche et l'Esperance pour aller à la recherche de M^e De la perouse au tour du monde ...', 1791–4, MNHN (MS 1041):19v; Ladroux, [Journal], 20 July 1793, ANF (MAR 3 JJ 397¹).
- 11 Gicquel Destouches, 'Nottes', 20 July 1793, ANF (MAR 5 JJ 14¹); Jurien de La Gravière, *Souvenirs*, I:214–15.
- 12 Deschamps, 'Journal de mon voyage sur "la Recherche"', in *Louis-Auguste Deschamps 1765–1842: sa vie—son œuvre* (Saint-Omer, 1970):46–7; La Billardière, *Relation du voyage* ... (Paris, 1800), II:286. For the complaints of the naturalists, see Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, I:208–10; Deschamps, 'Journal':19; La Billardière, *Relation*, II:87–8.
- 13 Anon., 'Evenements des fregates':19; Jurien de la Gravière, *Souvenirs*, I:82, 215–16.
- 14 Ibid.:194–5; La Billardière, *Relation*, I:xv–xvi.
- 15 Chapters 3–12.
- 16 Chapter 16.
- 17 Chapters 2, 13, 15, 18.
- 18 Chapters 14, 16, 17.
- 19 Chapters 4, 6, 8, 13, 18, features; Chapters 15, 18.
- 20 This section draws particularly on Richard, *Une grande expédition*:51–82, 247–95.
- 21 Cormack, *Revolution & Political Conflict in the French Navy 1789–1794* (Cambridge, 1995):91–2.
- 22 Richard, *Une grande expédition*:175–9.
- 23 Louis-Auguste de Sainson, 'Journal', in Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe ... pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Histoire du voyage* (Paris, 1830–3), IV:351–2.
- 24 Chapter 5.
- 25 Anon., 'Mémoire du Roi'.
- 26 Duyker, *Citizen Labillardière*; 'Uncovering Jean Piron: In Search of d'Entrecasteaux's Artist', *French Australian Review* 39:2 (2005):37–45; Hocquette, ed., *Louis-Auguste Deschamps 1765–1842: sa vie—son œuvre* (Saint-Omer, 1970).
- 27 Académie des Sciences, 'Mémoire [les observations ... à faire dans le voyage qui va être entrepris pour aller à la recherche des batiments commandés par M. de la Perouse et pour le progrès des sciences]', n.d., copy, in SHD, 'Expédition' (MAR BB⁴ 992); Richard, *Une grande expédition*:61–5.
- 28 Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, I:244.
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- 31 Gicquel Destouches, [Vocabulaires], 1792–4, ANF (MAR 5 JJ 1⁴). See Chapter 14.
- 32 Beautemps-Beaupré, 'Exposé des méthodes employées pour lever et construire les cartes et plans qui compose l'atlas du Voyage du contre-amiral Bruny-Dentrecasteaux', in Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*, I:593–685; Rossel, 'Préface', in Ibid.:xiv–xv.
- 33 Richard, *Une grande expédition*:67, 115, 277.
- 34 ANF, [Marine, Service hydrographique], 1792–3 (MAR 6 JJ 2–3).

- 35 Beautemps-Beaupré, *Atlas du voyage de Bruny-Dentrecasteaux ... en 1791, 1792 et 1793 ...* (Paris, 1807).
- 36 Anon., 'Mémoire du Roi'; Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*:209.
- 37 Hesmivy d'Auribeau, [Rapport sur les personnes renvoyées de l'expédition], 1 May 1794, in SHD, 'Expédition' (MAR BB⁴ 993).
- 38 Hesmivy d'Auribeau, 'Etat Nominatif des Personnes renvoyées de l'Expédition', 19 February 1794, in SHD, 'Expédition' (MAR BB⁴ 993); Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*:211–17; Jurien de La Gravière, *Souvenirs*, I:239–40; La Billardière, *Relation*, II:319–20; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:184–8.
- 39 La Billardière, *Relation*, I:x; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:188–200.
- 40 Ibid.:200–6.
- 41 La Billardière, 'Notice de mes collections d'objets d'histoire naturelle, qui m'ont été enlevées par Rossel ...', 13 germinal an IV (2 April 1796), MNHN (MS 46).
- 42 Joseph Banks to William Price, 31 March 1796, in Beer, 'The Relations Between Fellows of the Royal Society and French Men of Science when France and Britain Were at War', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 9:2 (1952):252; Dalrymple to Secretary, 14 May 1808, PRO, Adm. 1/3523, cited in Fry, 'Alexander Dalrymple and New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History* 4 (1969):102–3; Charles-Pierre de Claret de Fleurieu to Ministre de la Marine, 22 September 1802, in SHD, 'Expédition' (MAR BB⁴ 993); Louis-Guillaume Otto to Ministre de la Marine, 30 prairial an X (18 June 1802), in Ibid. See also Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*:235–9, 254; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:212–13.
- 43 Rossel, 'Préface':xii–xvi.
- 44 Richard, *Une grande expédition*:209–11, 221.
- 45 Banks to Price, 4 August 1796, in Beer 'The Relations':255–6; Banks to Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, 10 August 1796; in Ibid.:257; Banks to Duc d'Harcourt, 1 August 1796, in Bonnet, 'Les collections de l'expédition envoyée à la recherche de La Pérouse d'après des documents inédits', *Association française pour l'Avancement des Sciences*, 20 (1891):490; La Billardière to Banks, 25 germinal an IV (14 April 1796), in Ibid.:491. See also Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*:240–3.
- 46 La Billardière to Banks, 19 frimaire an V (9 December 1796), in Bonnet, 'Les collections de l'expédition':491.
- 47 La Billardière, *Atlas ...* (Paris, 1800); *Novæ Hollandiæ: plantarum specimen* (Paris, 1804–6), 2 vols; *Sertum Austro-Caledonicum* (Paris, 1824).
- 48 Hamy, 'Notice sur une collection de dessins provenant de l'expédition de d'Entrecasteaux', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris* 7^e série, 17 (1896):131–2; Richard, *Une grande expédition*:225.
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- 50 Chapters 6–11.
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- 53 Chapter 5.
- 54 Chapter 4.
- 55 Chapter 12.
- 56 Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage*; Deschamps, 'Journal'; Jurien de la Gravière, *Souvenirs*; La Billardière, *Relation*; An *Account of a Voyage in Search of La Perouse*

- ... *Performed in the Years 1791, 1792, and 1793* ... (London, 1800); *Voyage in Search of La Pérouse ... during the Years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794* ... (London, 1800); *Reise nach dem Südmeer zur Aufsuchung des La Perouse ... in den Jahren 1791 bis 1794* (Hamburg, 1801–2). See also Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, *Voyage to Australia and the Pacific 1791–1793* (Carlton, 2001).
- 57 ANF, [Marine, Service hydrographique], 1791–4 (MAR 5 JJ 1–23, 6 JJ 2–3); Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MS 46, 1041); SHD, 'Expédition' (MAR BB⁴ 992–4).
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- 59 Piron, [Dessins], [1792–5], MQB – JC (ICONO); [Esquisses], [1792–5], ANF (MAR 5 JJ 4, 5²).
- 60 La Billardière, *Atlas*.
- 61 Duyker, *Citizen Labillardière*; Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*; Richard, *Une grande expédition*.
- 62 Boulay, 'L'invention: la découverte'; 'L'herminette-genou'; 'Statuettes et statues à planter anthropomorphes'; 'Les massues et les casse-têtes', in Kanak: *l'art est une parole* (Arles, 2013):67–75, 76–7, 119–21, 251–7; Daugeron, *Collections naturalistes*; Hamy, 'Notice sur une collection de dessins'; Jacquemin, 'Objets'; Rio, *Oceania Gjenoppdaget i Bergen* ... (Bergen, 1999); Van Duuren and Mostert, *Curiosities from the Pacific Ocean* ... (Amsterdam and Leiden, 2007).
- 63 Horner, *Looking for La Pérouse*, 251–8.

The 'Effets' (effects) plates

Bronwen Douglas

The *Atlas* published in conjunction with La Billardière's *Relation du voyage* is a portentous resource for this book, as it would have been for contemporary readers of the *Relation*. For us, it enhances meaning by mediating visually between the physical materiality of extant objects, identified in modern museums, and the varied verbal and other pictorial traces of encounters during Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's expedition, in which such objects were seen or acquired. The conceptual linchpin is five engraved plates (Figures 1.6–1.10), each representing a jumbled miscellany of disembodied implements, weapons, dress, and ornaments, aligned on a vacant sepia ground. As Nicholas Thomas has observed, such 18th-century engravings are typically evacuated of content, proportion, utility, and human presence.¹

Three of these plates are labelled 'Effets des habitants des îles des Amis' (Effects of the inhabitants of the Friendly Islands [Tonga]); the others are called 'Effets/Huttes des sauvages de la Nouvelle Calédonie' (Effects/huts of the savages of New Caledonia). A spear from the Admiralty Islands and a flute and a necklace attributed to the Louisiades, but specifically acquired in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands (all Papua New Guinea), figure in the second New Caledonian plate. Two further objects collected in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands are engraved in another plate (Figure 1.5), incongruously bracketing a 'spider that the Caledonians eat'. Other plates in the *Atlas* depict canoes seen in use in Buka (Papua New Guinea), the Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia, together with diagrammatic representations of a canoe captured in Santa Cruz (eastern Solomon Islands) and a *catimarron*—a Spanish term meaning 'small boat of the Indians'²—seen on a beach in Van

Diemen's Land.³ Some plates partly humanize objects, albeit as ethnographic exemplars, by depicting them in use or being worn.

The terminological differentiation of Tongan 'inhabitants' from Kanak 'savages' in the captions of the 'Effets' plates and the heavy emphasis on Kanak weaponry and cannibalism, compared with Tongan sociality, in the constitution of these object assemblages are discussed in Chapter 13. It is argued that the content and tone of the plates owed more to Indigenous self-presentation and agency in exchanges than to the author's or the publisher's anticipation of the 19th-century racialization of human differences.

The 'Effets' plates are key signifiers for this book because the objects depicted were probably drawn or engraved in France from actual models, following the restitution of the 'official' natural history and ethnographic collections to La Billardière after his return to Paris.⁴ These plates are thus a useful index to the ethnographic materials amassed under orders by the naturalists, particularly La Billardière himself, which we believe are sparsely represented in the collections discussed in this book. We are fairly certain that at least four of the objects engraved in 'Effets' plates are still extant: a Kanak *mweeng* or *tidi*, hat, and a Tongan *sisi fale*, coconut fibre waist garment, both held in the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac; and a Kanak *bwar* (*hache-ostensoir*), ceremonial axe, and a Tongan *fue kafa*, fly whisk, held in the Musée cantonal d'Archéologie et d'Histoire in Lausanne, Switzerland.⁵ All or some Bruni d'Entrecasteaux-associated objects held in these two collections can be plausibly, if not definitively associated with the official assemblages repatriated to France in 1796, via sequester in England after the capture of returning French personnel and collections on a Dutch merchant fleet.

Most of the other collections discussed in this book were assembled adventitiously across colonial networks, in the wake of the expedition's disintegration in Java. Yet where only resemblance, rather than identity, can be inferred between object and engraving, ocular correlation can nonetheless be vital in attributing provenance.

- 1 Thomas, *In Oceania ...* (Durham, 1997):93–132.
- 2 Dominguez, *Compendio del Dictionario nacional de la Lengua Española* (Madrid, 1852), I:491.
- 3 La Billardière, *Atlas ...* (Paris, 1800): plates 28, 43, 44.
- 4 See Chapter 1.
- 5 See Chapters 4, 12, and Chapter 4, feature.

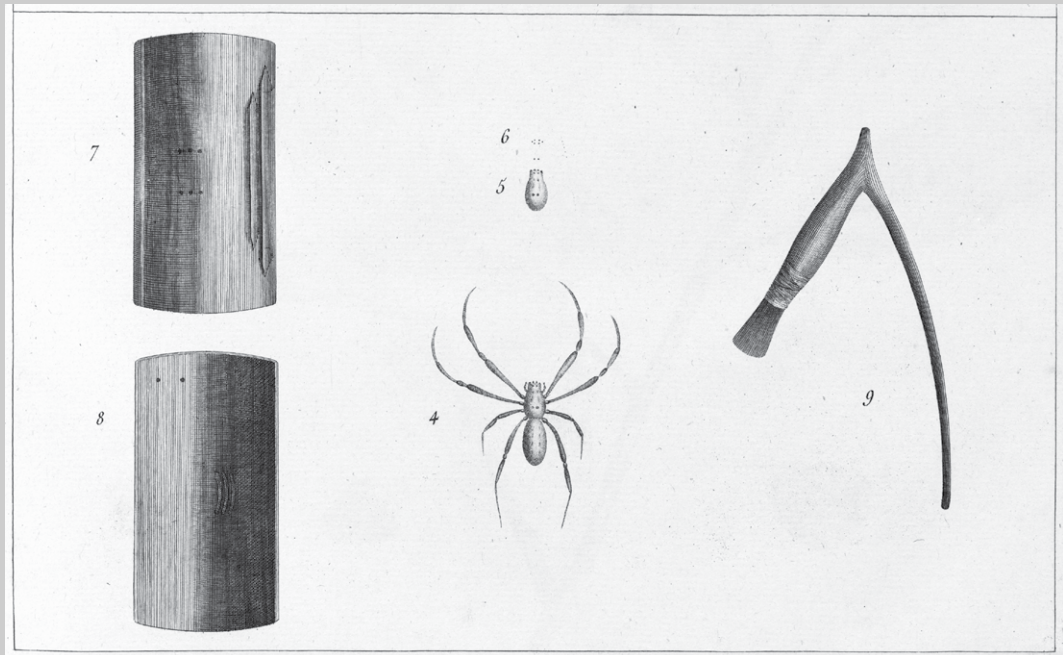


Figure 1.5. Figs 7, 8, and 9 of plate 12 of La Billardière's *Atlas* showing a shield and an axe collected in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands during Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's expedition. Anon., 'Bouclier des naturels de la Louisiade'; 'Hache des naturels de la Louisiade', 1800, engravings.



Figure 1.6. Plate 31 of La Billardière's Atlas depicting 'effects' of the Tongans. Péree, 'Effets des habitans des îles des Amis', 1800, engravings.



Figure 1.7. Plate 32 of La Billardière's Atlas depicting 'effects' of the Tongans. Péré, 'Effets des habitans des îles des Amis', 1800, engravings.

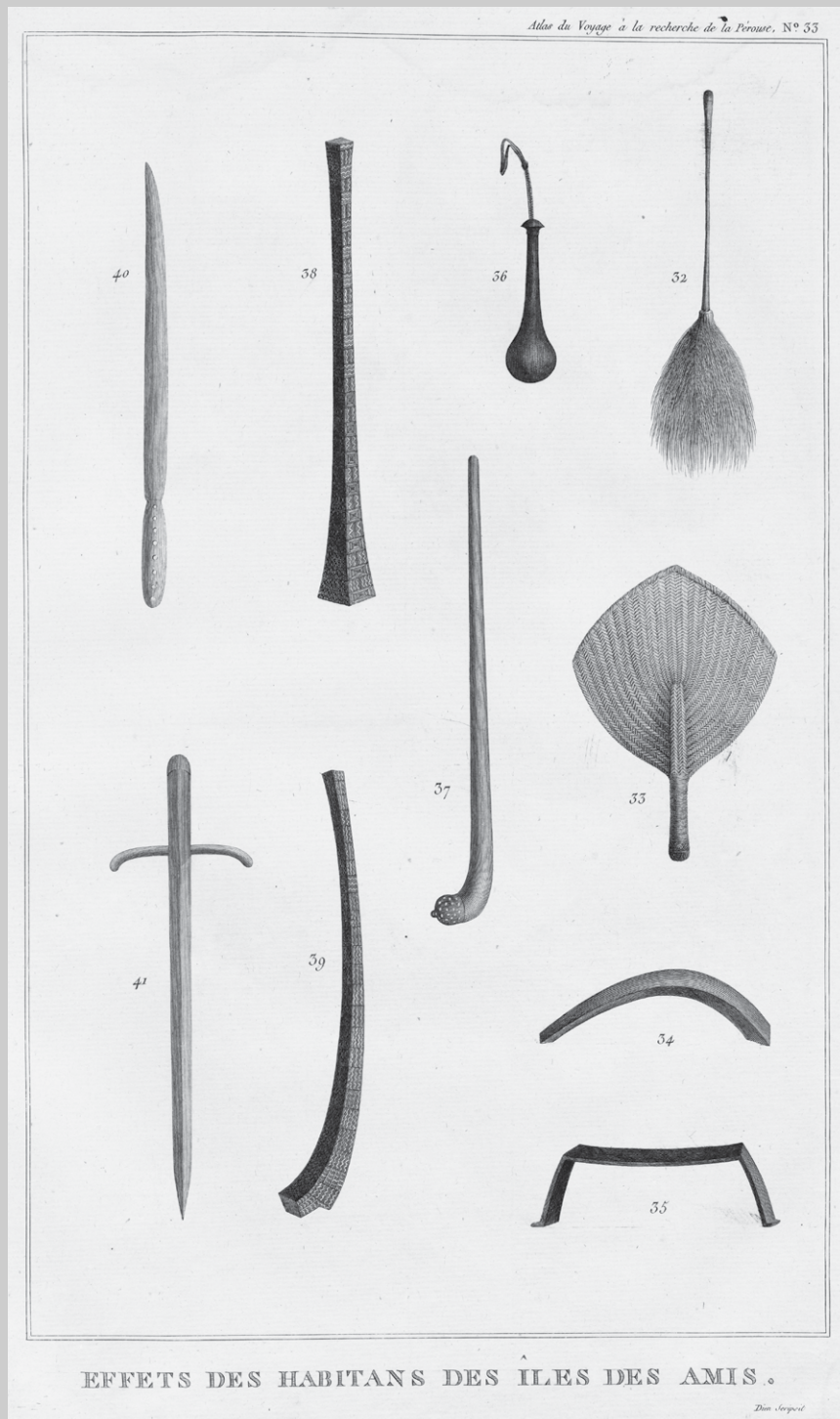


Figure 1.8. Plate 33 of La Billardière's Atlas depicting 'effects' of the Tongans. Anon., 'Effets des habitans des îles des Amis', 1800, engravings.

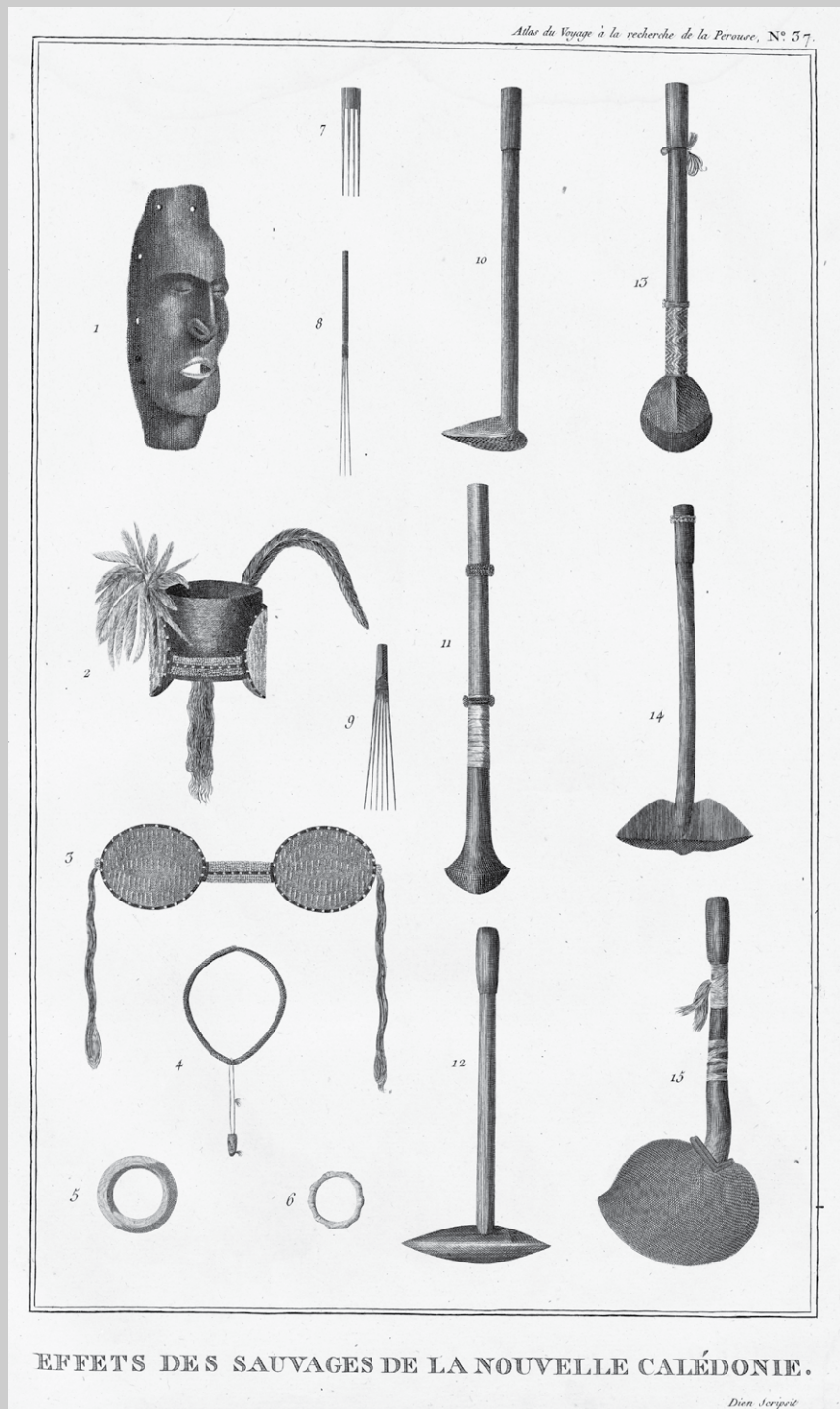


Figure 1.9. Plate 37 of La Billardière's Atlas depicting 'effects' of the Kanak of New Caledonia. Anon., 'Effets des sauvages de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 1800, engravings.

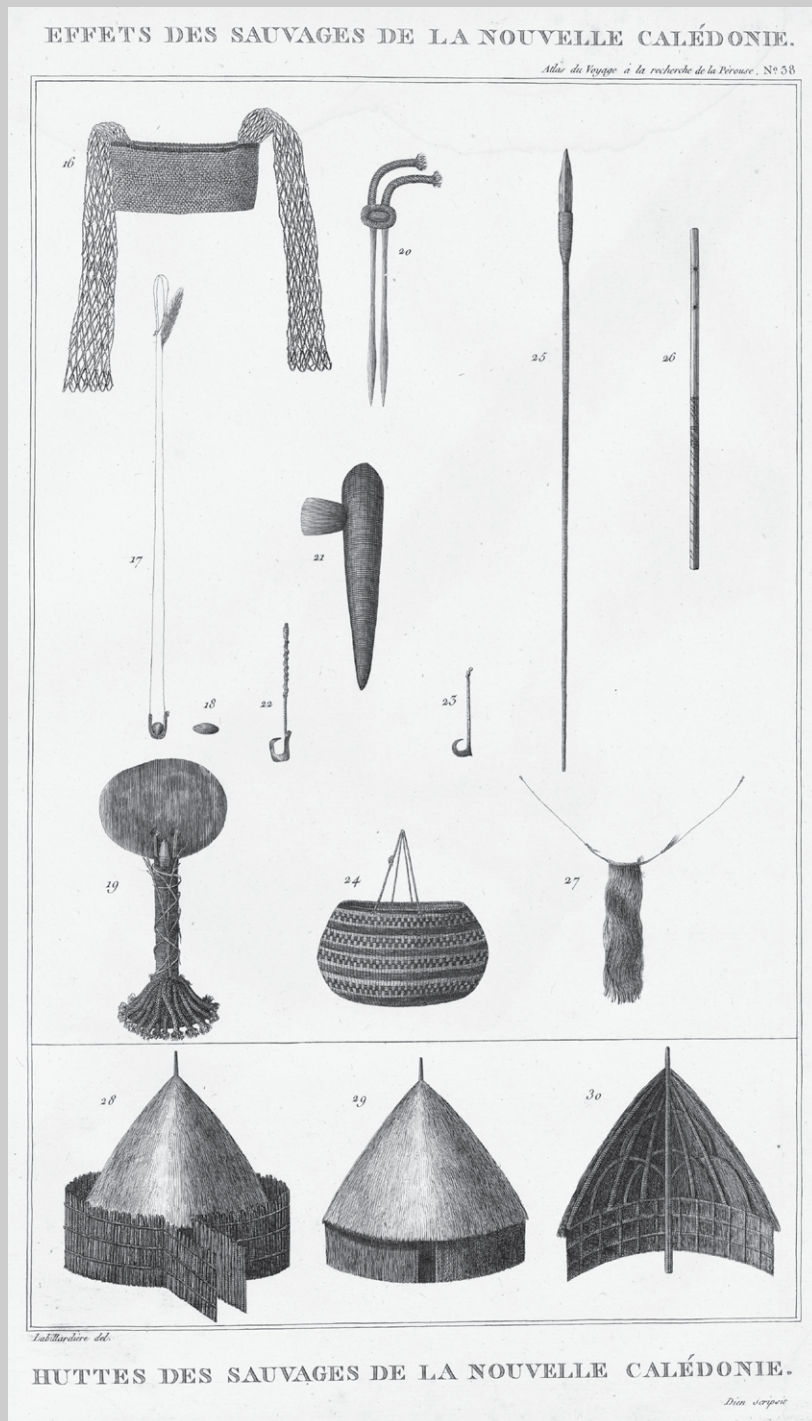


Figure 1.10. Plate 38 of La Billardière's Atlas depicting 'effects' and 'huts' of the Kanak of New Caledonia. La Billardière, 'Effets/Huttes des sauvages de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 1800, engravings.