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Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories

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The Pacific artefacts and works of art collected during the three voyages of Captain James Cook are of foundational importance for the study of art and culture in Oceania. These collections are representative not only of technologies or belief systems but of indigenous cultures at the formative stages of their modern histories, and exemplify Islanders' institutions, cosmologies and social relationships.

Recently, scholars from the Pacific and further afield, working with Pacific artefacts at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) at University of Cambridge, set out to challenge and rethink some longstanding assumptions on their significance. The Cook voyage collection at the MAA is among the four or five most important in the world, containing over 200 of the 2,000-odd objects with Cook voyage provenance that are dispersed throughout the world. The collection includes some 100 artefacts dating from Cook's first voyage. This stunning book catalogues this collection, and its cutting-edge scholarship sheds new light on the significance of many artefacts of encounter.

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