

51
 Copia della lettera p. Andrea Corsali mandata al Serenissimo
 Principe Duca Giuliano de Medici venuta dell'India del mese di
 Ottobre nel MDXXV.



Illustrissimo Signore Vnico S. mio Sal. et Racomandatione, &c.

Per osservare quanto ad V. S. ad mia partita promessi di fare dare
 a quella notizia de' loci aquali in questo viaggio mi occorressi perue-
 nire: Anchora che poco tempo e sono in la India non faranno come e mio
 desiderio pigliando V. S. la buona voluntà mia si contenterà de' spà co-
 me lascia.

Dapoi nostra partita di elisbona sempre con prospero uento uscendo da
 scirocco et libeccio passòdo la linea equinoctiale siamo in altura di xxxvii
 gradi in l'altro hemisphero atraverso di capo di bona speranza. Clima uentoso
 et freddo che in quel tempo andaua el sole ne segni septentrionali et troua

'a marveyulous order of starres'

FIRST REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

In 1515 a young Italian adventurer named Andrea Corsali (b. 1487) accompanied a Portuguese voyage down the African coast, around the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Southern and Indian oceans. After rounding the Cape, Corsali observed the constellation of stars now known as the Southern Cross. At Cochin in southern India he wrote to his patron, Giuliano de Medici, in Florence. His *Lettera*, first published in 1516, was translated into English by Richard Eden in 1555. A fine manuscript copy of the letter, written on vellum by Andrea Gritti, a Venetian scribe, is owned in Australia by the Bruce and Joy Reid Foundation and is on loan to the State Library of New South Wales.

Corsali was not the first person to have sighted what he called 'a marveyulous order of starres', but he was the first to describe its distinctive form of a cross and to depict it in a drawing.

In its identification of the Southern Cross, Corsali's description is a document of high importance to Australia, where the constellation has assumed the status of a national symbol. A key marker for navigators, the distinctive pattern of the stars later appealed to the new settlers in Australia. By adoption, the Southern Cross became one of the foundations of Australian nationalism, a symbol of both unity and resistance: it appears on the Australian flag and it was adopted as a symbol of protest and defiance by the Eureka rebels at Ballarat in 1854. In his pioneering history

The Eureka Stockade (1854), Raffaello Carboni described the rebel flag as 'silk, blue ground, with a large silver cross, similar to the one in our southern firmament; no device of arms, but all exceedingly chaste and natural'.



ABOVE Late fifteenth century portrait of Giuliano de Medici by Sandro Botticelli.

OPPOSITE *Lettera* of Andrea Corsali, sent to his patron Giuliano de Medici in 1516.

After that we departed from Lisbona, wee sayled ever with prosperous wynde, not passynge owt of the Southeast and Southwest. And passyng beyonde the Equinoctial line, we were in the heyght of 37 degrees of the other halfe circle of the earth. And traversynge the cape of Bona Speranza a coulede and wyndy clime bycause at that tyme the soonne was in the north signes, we founde the nyght of xiii houres. Here we sawe a marveylous order of starres, so that in the parte of heaven contrary to owre northe pole, to knowe in what place and degree the south pole was, we tooke the day with the soonne, and observed the nyght with the Astrolabie, and saw manifestly twoo clowdes of reasonable bygnesse movynge abowt the place of the pole continually nowe rysynge and nowe faulynge, so keepynge theyr continuall course in circular movynge, with a starre ever in the myddest which is turned abowt with them abowte xi degrees frome the pole. Above these appeareth a marveylous crosse in the myddest of fyve notable starres which compasse it abowt (as doth charles wayne the northe pole) with other starres whiche move with them abowt xxx degrees distant from the pole, and make their course in xxiii houres. This crosse is so fayre and bewtiful, that none other hevenly signe may be compared to it as may appear by this fygure.

Search for the great south land

THE SECRET INSTRUCTIONS FOR JAMES COOK

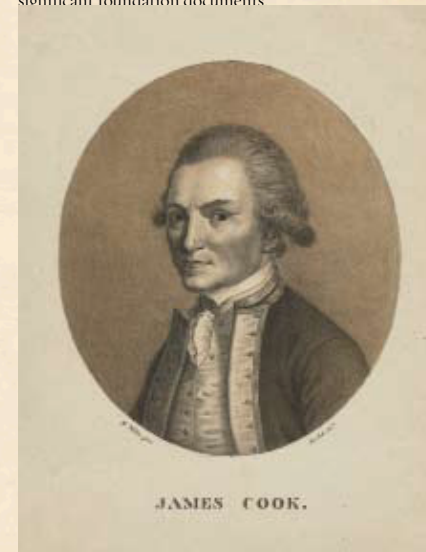
When James Cook sailed from Plymouth on the afternoon of 26 July 1768, he carried two sets of instructions. His first and public purpose, on behalf of the Royal Society, was to travel south to King Georges Island, modern-day Tahiti, to 'observe the Passage of the Planet Venus over the Disk of the Sun on 3rd June 1769'. The observations were needed to help establish the distance of the sun from the earth. But Cook was also secretly charged with a larger commission to search for *Terra Australis Incognita*, the great southern continent, thought to lie between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan. Dreams of that discovery had long inspired European interest in the Pacific. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain had set its sights firmly on the quest to unravel the mysteries of antipodean geography and with, of course, the aim of gaining control of new territory for both trade and strategic use.

Cook arrived in Tahiti on 13 April 1769, seven weeks before the transit was due. Despite some difficulty owing to poor weather, the observations were accurately made.

Cook then turned to his second set of instructions, making his way first to New Zealand, where he mapped the entire coast of the two islands, thus establishing that its northern tip was not in fact 'a part of the imaginary southern continent'. Having failed to locate the supposed great southern landmass, Cook then made what would prove to be the momentous decision to sail home along the unknown eastern coast of New Holland, the name

which had been given to the Australian continent by the

Dutch explorers in the seventeenth century. He charted the coast and named many landmarks. He made several landings, including at Botany Bay, and he had the first English encounters with the Indigenous inhabitants. The botanical discoveries made by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander increased the tally of the world's known plant species by 10 per cent. On 22 August 1770, Cook claimed the East Coast of New Holland in the name of King George III and gave it the name New South Wales (see page 13). With Cook's *Endeavour Journal, 1768–1771*, the Additional Instructions is one of Australia's most significant foundation documents.



ABOVE James Cook depicted in a lithograph by Josef Selb from the 1820s.

Secret

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain &c.

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Whereas the making Discoverys of Countries hitherto unknown, and the Attaining a Knowledge of distant Parts which though formerly discover'd have yet been but imperfectly explored, will redound greatly to the Honour of this Nation as a Maritime Power, as well as to the Dignity of the Crown of Great Britain, and may tend greatly to the advancement of the Trade and Navigation thereof; and Whereas there is reason to imagine that a Continent or Land of great extent, may be found to the Southward of the Tract lately made by Capt^t Wallis in His Majesty's Ship the Dolphin (of which you will herewith receive a Copy) or of the Tract of any former Navigators in Pursuits of the like kind; You are therefore in Pursuance of His Majesty's Pleasure hereby requir'd and directed to put to Sea with the Bark you Command so soon as the Observation of the Transit of the Planet Venus shall be finished and observe the following Instructions.

You are to proceed to the southward in order to make discovery of the Continent above-mentioned until you arrive in the Latitude 40 degrees, unless you sooner fall in with it. But not having discover'd it or any Evident signs of it in that Run, you are to proceed in search of it to the Westward between the Latitude before mentioned and the Latitude of 35 degrees until you discover it, or fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd by Tasman and now called New Zeland.

If you discover the Continent above-mentioned either in your Run to the Southward or to the Westward as above directed, You are to employ yourself diligently in exploring as great an Extent of the Coast as you can; carefully observing the true situation thereof both in Latitude and Longitude, the Variation of the Needle, bearings of Head Lands, Height, direction and Course of the Tides and Currents, Depths and Soundings of the Sea, Shoals, Rocks &c and also surveying and making Charts, and taking Views of such Bays, Harbours and Parts of the Coast as may be useful to Navigation.

You are also carefully to observe the Nature of the Soil, and the Products thereof; the Beasts and Fowls that inhabit or frequent it, the fishes that are to be found in the Rivers or upon the Coast and in what Plenty; and in case you find any Mines, Minerals or valuable stones you are to bring home Specimens of each, as also such Specimens of the Seeds of the Trees, Fruits and Grains as you may be able to collect, and Transmit them to our Secretary that We may cause proper Examination and Experiments to be made of them.

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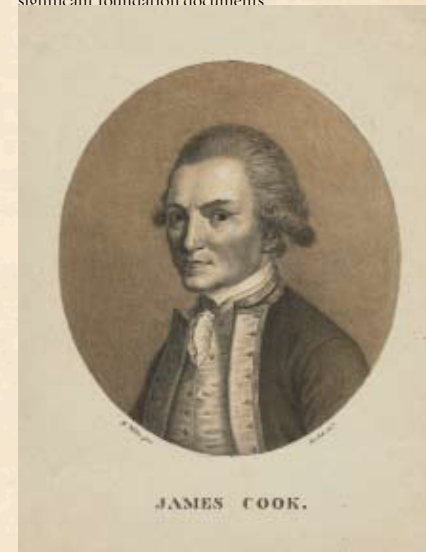
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