

Parkinson's original drawing before placing reliance on this clue in isolation.

What seems to be much the fullest—and because it was written about the time of Rutherford's visit there, what ought to be the most relevant—account of Tahitian tattooing is provided by Ellis. Though he tried to suppress tattooing itself he did so, he says, because of the 'immoral practices' invariably associated with the process. Unlike his fellow missionaries in New Zealand he nevertheless permitted himself to admire those Polynesian examples of the tattooing art which he regarded as simple, tasteful and elegant. Tahitian, he considered, fulfilled these criteria. 'Though some of the figures are arbitrary, such as stars, lozenges, &c.; the patterns are usually taken from nature, and are often some of the most graceful. A cocoa-nut tree is a favourite object; and I have often admired the taste displayed in the marking of a chiefs' legs, when I have seen a cocoa-nut tree correctly and distinctly drawn, its root spreading at the heel, its elastic stalk pencilled as it were along the tendon, and its waving plume gracefully spread out on the broad part of the calf.'

Ellis also described tattooing on the feet which gave the appearance of an 'elegant Eastern sandal' and lines up the side of the legs which appeared like the seams of pantaloons. 'From the lower part of the back, a number of straight, waved, or zigzag lines, rise in the direction of the spine, and branch off regularly towards the shoulders. But, of the upper part of the body, the chest is the most tataued. Every variety of figure is to be seen here. Cocoa-nut and bread-fruit trees, with convolvulus wreaths hanging round them, boys gathering the fruit, men engaged in battle, in the manual exercise, triumphing over a fallen foe; or, as I have frequently seen it, they are represented as carrying a human sacrifice to the temple. Every kind of animal—goats, dogs, fowls, and fish—may at times be seen on this part of the body; muskets, swords, pistols, clubs, spears, and other weapons of war, are also stamped upon their arms or chest.

'They are not all crowded upon the same person, but each one makes a selection according to his fancy; and I have frequently thought the tatauing on a man's person might serve as an index to his disposition and his character.' And finally, while confessing that despite the chiefly edict against tattooing, young men still sometimes had it done, Ellis claimed that the commonest offenders at this time of writing (apparently about 1821) were foreign seamen 'who often evinced as great a desire to have some figure tataued on their arms or hands, as the natives themselves'.<sup>43</sup>

That side-swipe against his own countrymen apart, could any verbal picture—so typical of many romantic accounts of Tahiti and the Tahitians—present an image more different from Rutherford's actual patterns? Certainly Ellis mentioned 'stars, lozenges, &c.' and 'straight, waved or zigzag lines', both emphasised by Cook and Banks, who wrote of indented