

arches 'drawn one over another as high as the short ribs'⁴⁴—which might indeed be taken as descriptive of the designs on Rutherford's chest and belly. But without even a hint of those blackened buttocks or the coconut tree on legs and back, could one with any certainty ascribe a Tahitian origin to his tattooing?

Before at this point giving up any hope of identifying it there seemed to be only one last straw to clutch at. In the bibliography Sparks included with his thesis he listed an article on 'Tatu in the Society Islands' by H. Ling Roth, published in the *Royal Anthropological Institute Journal* of 1905. Prospects of its usefulness were slight. Though a diligent researcher Roth would have seen no Tahitian tattooing himself. Nor indeed did the article itself do more than report on already familiar source material. It also however included illustrations, and along with those from Cook's voyage, already mentioned, Roth presented the Craik portrait of Rutherford. But this, lacking any authority for its inclusion, merely begged the question. Then followed another page of illustrations, brilliantly exemplifying Roth's flair for locating unlikely clues. In the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London he had found preserved portions of tattooed skin taken from the body of a Tahitian who died in England in 1816.⁴⁵ At once the verbal descriptions offered by Cook, Banks and Ellis sprang to life. The patterns are by no means so precise, nor do they exactly correspond with the shapes and designs in Craik's engraving. But taken along with that other engraving of the Tahitian portrait by Parkinson all those separate elements—the hatching on Rutherford's arm, the arches on his belly and, most surprising but also most conspicuously, the elaborate circular designs on his chest—could at last find similarities in authentic Tahitian counterparts.

Rutherford's tattooing having been identified it remains only to speculate on the fictional aspects of his story. In part it was probably invented out of a desire for sensationalism: to have his ship sacked and most of the crew eaten would be more newsworthy than merely to confess that he had deserted from it; to claim forcible tattooing in New Zealand more dramatic than to admit that he had voluntarily undergone the operation in New Zealand and Tahiti. But mere desertion from a ship—common enough in the Bay of Islands even by 1820—hardly justifies the elaborate attempt to cover up his tracks. Some shocking offence while here which he expected to gain more notoriety than it actually did seems indicated. None would be more horrifying to his countrymen, no less to the disreputable among them than the respectable, than participation in a cannibal feast. The battle of Te Ika-a-Ranganui would have been his opportunity. His sense of shame afterwards, particularly if word got round the Bay of Islands that the runaway seaman who accompanied Hongi's forces had so degraded himself, could induce him to flee the country at the first opportunity, and afterwards to pretend