



The Making of Tupaia's Map: A Story of the Extent and Mastery of Polynesian Navigation, Competing Systems of Wayfinding on James Cook's *Endeavour*, and the Invention of an Ingenious Cartographic System

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ABSTRACT

Tupaia's Map is one of the most famous and enigmatic artefacts to emerge from the early encounters between Europeans and Pacific Islanders. It was drawn by Tupaia, an *aroi* priest, chiefly advisor and master navigator from Ra'iātea in the Leeward Society Islands in collaboration with various members of the crew of James Cook's *Endeavour*, in two distinct moments of mapmaking and three draft stages between August 1769 and February 1770. To this day, the identity of many islands on the chart, and the logic of their arrangement have posed a riddle to researchers. Drawing in part on archival material hitherto overlooked, in this long essay we propose a new understanding of the chart's cartographic logic, offer a detailed reconstruction of its genesis, and thus for the first time present a comprehensive reading of Tupaia's Map. The chart not only underscores the extent and mastery of Polynesian navigation, it is also a remarkable feat of translation between two very different wayfinding systems and their respective representational models.

Key words: Cartography, first contact, wayfinding, star navigation, sea of islands, translation, Indigenous knowledges and ontologies, Tupaia

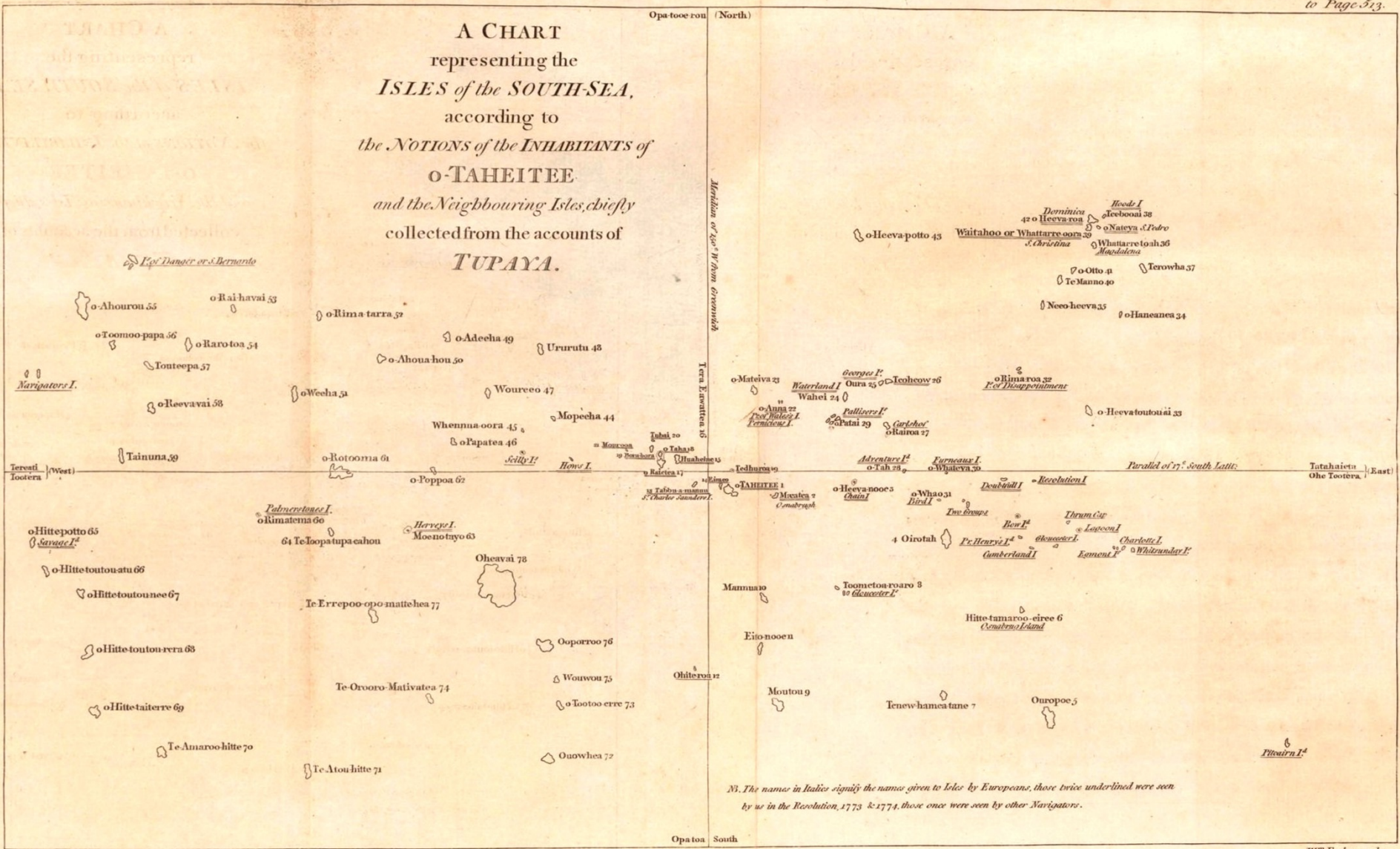
INTRODUCTION

Tupaia's Map is among the most important artefacts to have come from late 18th-century European–Indigenous encounters in the South Pacific region. Depicting, in Epeli Hau'ofa's terms,¹ a 'sea of islands' extending for more than 7,000 km from Rapa Nui in the east to

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¹ Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, ed. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau'ofa (Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1993), 2–16.

A CHART
 representing the
 ISLES of the SOUTH-SEA,
 according to
 the NOTIONS of the INHABITANTS of
 o-TAHEITEE
 and the Neighbouring Isles, chiefly
 collected from the accounts of
 TUPAYA.



N. The names in Italics signify the names given to Isles by Europeans, those twice underlined were seen by us in the Revolution, 1773 & 1774, those once were seen by other Navigators.

THE MAKING OF TUPAYA'S MAP

FIGURE 2: 'A Chart ... of Tupaya' by Johann Reinhold Forster, engraving by William Fadden, 1778 (T1/T3/JRF).

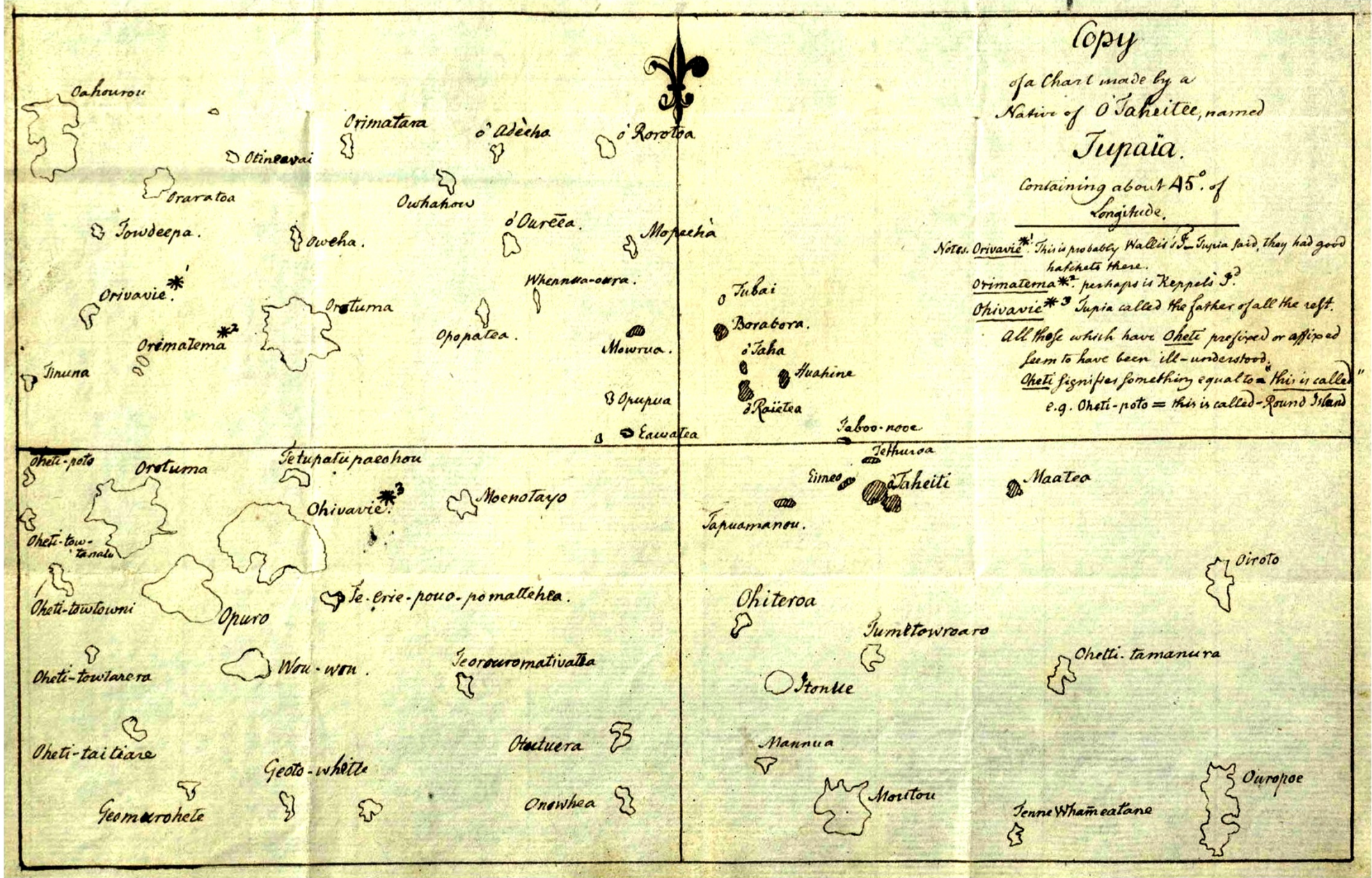


FIGURE 3: 'Copy of a Chart made by ... Tupaia' by Georg Forster, 1776, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig, H III 16-87 (T1/GF).

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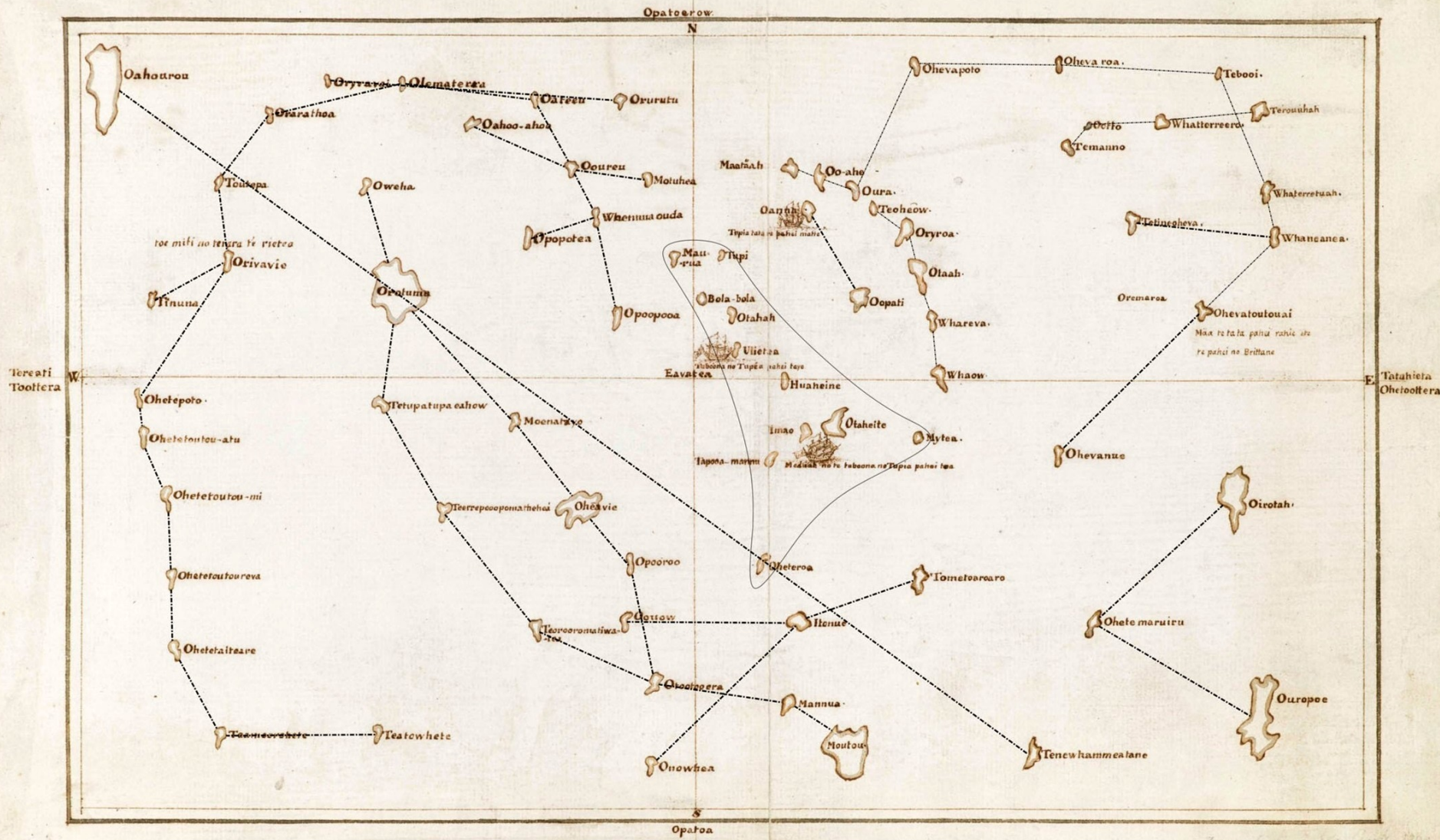


FIGURE 19: Voyaging paths on Tupaia's Map, as shown on T3/B.