

Some Historical Materials that Relate  
to the Pre-Captain Cook Pacific  
in Continental European Institutions

by

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The libraries and museums of continental Europe contain surprisingly large amounts of historical materials dealing with Pacific explorations. Future researchers who wish to understand the indigenous Pacific peoples as well as the routes of pre-Captain Cook explorers should not overlook the institutions of such diverse countries as the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Because the early navigators were often from Spain or England and because those countries spoke languages easily understood by researchers from Hawaii, there may be a tendency to neglect the materials collected in other countries. During the summer of 1977 I visited Europe and was intrigued by such collections as sixteenth century globes in Polish palaces, beautiful south Pacific sailing canoe models in a Prague, Czechoslovakia museum, and the extensive map collections and journals in Dutch libraries.

Specific institutions which may prove worthwhile visiting:

A) The BETLEMSKÉ NÁMAĚSTEI NAPRSTKOVO Museum in central Prague, Czechoslovakia. It contained a very extensive collection of model ships from the whole Pacific basin. Most of the models were from the islands of Micronesia and Polynesia and many were over a hundred years old. The collection curator was DR. JOSEPH KANDERT.

B) The libraries and geography departments of various Dutch universities (especially those in Utrecht and in Leiden). The Dutch not only did their own exploring in the Pacific but also had good access to the information brought back by Iberian navigators. The maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Dutch cartographers are available and made easily accessible by the catalogs (in book form) of Prof. C. Koemans who still teaches at the University of Utrecht (a most modern and beautiful facility).

C) The public records offices in the Hague, the Netherlands. The logs of ships and many maps are reportedly deposited here, but I was unable to visit them.

D) The Maritime Museum in Amsterdam. This museum was being completely renovated and was closed during 1977. Based on previous visits, the museum has a wonderful collection of materials dealing with the whole history of navigation and exploration.

My own studies last summer were too brief to arrive at any conclusions as to the overall importance of the European materials in changing our understandings of early Pacific history. However, the quality of the materials, the thoroughness with which they are catalogued, and the friendliness of the archivists and museum curators (most of whom speak excellent English and German) permit me to recommend that others consider getting off the well-worn tourist path and doing some exploring of their own.