

RITUAL

On Processions, Bodies, and Tupaia's Funeral Outside Greenwich's Royal Museums

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The setting is ironically familiar. Landing amid a strange, solemn or simply unfamiliar ritual, an outsider suddenly has no choice but to play along. It could be a stranger at a family reunion, a visitor attending a full-fledged ceremony, or a passer-by ensnared in a parade. In these settings, an unknown context gives platform to a person's improvisation skills, physical humor or acumen, and usually, ultimately, to their deepened glimpse into another mindset or culture. In films, where similar scenes often serve as a comic device comparable to the mistaken-identity trope, the plot might feature a character pulled into the dance of a foreign folk ceremony, clumsily pretending with their body that they belong, while also showing that they are lost. In this way, happened-upon rituals are made into metonymies for entire cultures or belief systems perceived as 'other'. The short-lived dance, for example, suddenly appears capable of standing in for a whole other world: trying to join it is like briefly trying out another way of life. It is no coincidence that many ethnographic monographs depict rites as condensed versions of a civilization and its cosmogony, identifying shrunken social structures within ritual forms. Time-bound practices construed as compact indexes of social life at large consequently become trusted as magnifying glasses: by looking at a ritual closely enough, truths about human society will come to light. But beyond these acts of cultural observation, real engagement in unknown social practice is messy; it disorients and brings new matters into play. It can provide a form of understanding (if not always communion) that is hard to achieve in any other way – an embodied understanding which results from one's very disorientation, and which is often difficult to convey in words.

What I wish to discuss here – the performance and funerary procession for the Polynesian priest Tupaia, in which I participated on 22 September 2018 outside the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich – may seem to sit uncomfortably with the narrative evoked above and its looming sentimental tone. Indeed the Hollywood or otherwise streamlined versions of this narrative seek to tell stories of eye opening obtained through taster-size, swift participation. Their synopsis might read something like: after attending a Thanksgiving meal hosted by a complicated family, a person's vision of the human nature expands, or, a religious minority's rite of passage is witnessed by an outsider and at the end of the day, all their previous prejudices fade. Yet, facile cultural relativism aside, there is more to this trope than that. Or perhaps, what I would like to suggest is that this trope speaks to ways of not-knowing and knowing that are unique to ritual.

To participate in an unfamiliar rite is to rush conflicting forces against each other: any sense of disconnection is offset by physical engagement, any sense of awkwardness by the embodied commitment to a set of attitudes and gestures. These do not cancel each other out but rather exist, acutely, side-by-side. One should remember here that anthropology's primary fascination with ritual accompanied the discipline's origins as the scientific scouting of newly colonized people, whose rituals seemed a key into unknown cultures, indeed a metaphor for foreign ways. Rituals were thus construed as *etic*, namely as a category of activities that, from an uninitiated outsider's perspective, would by definition appear non-contiguous and irrational. From the start, Europeans had associated ritual with the startled eyes of its beholders. But full bodies startle in even more complicated ways.

Tupaia's procession took us from one of the Royal Museums' wings known as the Queen's House to the river Thames and back. It rained without end. Instead of an umbrella, I held two cut-out plastic bottles – a percussion instrument handed to me in haste. I didn't know what I was doing, nor, it seemed, did most of the other participants: dozens of guests, audience members of this composite performance, and a handful of passers-by, all turned into ritual

actors. At the same time, not quite knowing appeared integral to the event. The procession's head celebrants were there to lead the way. They guided a long line of participants regarding both sound and space, each in command of a different formal component: a musician all in black playing a vibrant makeshift wind instrument (composer Johanes Mo'ong Santoso Pribadi), a dancer all in white, proud and ghostlike, whose wrists moved fast as he plied, fluttered and kneeled (choreographer Kiril Burlov), a chalk-holder dressed in black and white, marking and preparing the floor with lines, icons and words (artist Nikolaus Gansterer), several other musicians (including Māori weaver and co-initiator of the procession Keren Ruki), and multiple carriers of two cloaks, the focal liturgical objects of the rite (among whom artist, art historian and procession initiator Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll).

The procession for Tupaia on the banks of the rivers Thames and, a week later, Tamar in Plymouth, were part of the project *Cook's New Clothes*, an intervention in the 250th anniversary of James Cook's departure on his first voyage of discovery aboard the Endeavour. Inviting Pacific practitioners to England, the project sought to honor agency in the Pacific Islands, calling for collective reimagining of a problematic, selectively retentive commemoration. A symbolic site for these histories on many accounts, the National Maritime Museum was launching, that same September week, a multimillion-pound four-gallery expansion including the 'Pacific Encounters' Sackler Gallery, heavily focused on the figure of Cook. As for Plymouth, it was the Endeavour's last port of call in 1768, before heading to Tahiti by crossing the Atlantic and rounding Cape Horn. Among the many sailors, scientists, artists and servants who made up the ship's company, Tupaia played a particularly crucial role. An Arioi priest (a Society Islands religious order that venerated the war god Oro) from Raiatea, Tupaia had fled to Tahiti in 1763 from where, six years later, he would join the British expedition during its stopover on the island. Hired primarily for his exceptional navigation and mapmaking skills, he travelled with the Endeavour to Polynesian islands, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and Australia, before dying from a fever in Batavia (today's Jakarta) in 1770.

While the Endeavour crew had, in some measure, understood Tupaia's importance (though the Māori people they encountered were seemingly those who truly took it into account, thereby angering Cook), they left his body behind in the East Indies. Other than the reported sadness of Māori people upon the ship's return to New Zealand without Tupaia, the only information regarding his mourning, described by a naturalist who took part in Cook's second voyage, suggests that a spontaneous funeral chant was once sung in memory of the priest. And despite recent scholarly attention to the priest-navigator's singular legacy, to say that memorial commitment to Tupaia has been meager would be an understatement. In other words, he was a high-ranking priest, acted for years as an instrumental political advisor in Tahiti, mastered Polynesian navigation, took on the role of cultural mediator in lands where no transcontinental encounters had occurred before, made a pioneering map which reimagined systems of wayfinding and would later become a cornerstone of Oceania's Renaissance, yet he never received a funeral or a memorial. This procession organized in 2018, which was produced through an agreement with Greenwich's Royal Museums – while repeatedly meeting the latter's resistance – set out to redress that situation.

The event was conceived as a shrouding and remembrance rite rather than an outwardly turned parade, a historically minded march rather than a reenactment, and an act unto itself rather than an art performance. Mo'ong researched Indonesia's sonic past to compose music that could have accompanied a funeral in Tupaia's time. And the sound of this dirge was loud and layered, enveloping marchers throughout our cortege, even though the instruments, like my bottle-batons, were slight, made from recycled plastic found in the Pacific. Similarly striking, the dominant color was a rich fluorescent yellow worn as ornament and carried in the form of fringed banners on mast-like sticks. One of the two cloaks at the heart of the event was placed on the dancer's shoulders: a tribute received by a ghost. The garment had been woven from

white plastic and festooned with yellow until it was fluffy and regal. Though inexplicitly, the shrouded dancer acted as a Cook stand-in, whereas Tupaia's body remained absent throughout the rite, indicating that his abandonment after death (both historical and physical) is not something that can be remedied. While the procession opened a live space for a long-due memorial and re-telling of facts, it refrained from re-writing the past – reminding us to mourn an absence not by filling it, but by processing it through collective enactment.

Yet the procession sought to redress other absences, such as that of a cloak in Cook's collection, which, as the project initiators suggest, would have been the respectable and likely offering in the Pacific for a man of his stature. Its 21st-century plastic version, made mostly from the 'refugee bags' that cover the ocean's shores, belongs to the kind of reality re-shaping gesture that a ritual can typically procure. Indeed, *Cook's New Clothes* opens a parallel time-space where Cook's body is ruled by Pacific traditions and the glorification of Tupaia, while offering the provocation that, until now, Cook had been naked and his figure incomplete. The possibility of re-shaping this history in the present thus opens up not as it usually does through new writings or protests against established narrative, but through craftsmanship and physical engagements, in particular the layered acts of gifting and cloaking. Tellingly, though, the second cloak featured in the procession – ostensibly Tupaia's – was not destined to clothe. Made out of dingo skin before being vacuum-sealed, this one was carried down to the water where a rowing crew of twelve, some hailing from Tahiti for the occasion, received it in a liminal trade between bank and river. Promptly after the exchange, the receivers rowed away with the dogskin, taking it far from the sites of British royal collections. Following this moment of ritual culmination, we returned to the museum's entrance from where we had departed. There, fruit was served and consumed to mark the transition back into secular time.

I was told that, when the ritual was carried out a second time in Plymouth, some of the participants spontaneously howled like dingoes; that, because dogskin was of less concern to the institutions framing the project there, Ruki decided to remove the dingo cloak from its plastic sleeve and use it to cover the shoulders of the lead composer, making the cloaking ceremony dual. I heard that some of the Tahitian rowers had flown to London with special coconut oil, the kind that had been used to anoint corpses for funerals in Polynesia. And it became increasingly clear to me that being skilled in a ritual and gradually (re)inventing it are often one and the same. From the start, Ruki and the rowers had been directly involved in the process; they had prepared for it to be meaningful to them. Their bodies were ready to lead and their ideas to translate into physical gestures. During the procession, however, I sometimes wondered how the rest of us, more or less ad hoc participants, were able to move smoothly through space, to occupy it (relatively) adroitly, stopping when we should, maintaining tempo and going quiet when silence felt required.

But then, I noticed Carroll orchestrating small aspects of our actions. She handed out objects to those without instruments, nodded from afar to celebrants expressing the slightest hesitation and, at the crosswalk, motioned for banner-holders to create a pathway holding back traffic and ensuring the seamless flow of walkers. Comparisons with all-commanding figures such as a director or conductor fail, and while choreography comes to mind, it is more simply the dance teacher that becomes an apt analogy when staging skills are perfected without being aimed at an audience. Or rather, like the students of a dance class, an audience that is first and foremost participant does not so much need to externally see as to collectively feel the act unfolding. This distinction marks further the differences between a spectacular parade and the more inwardly enacted procession which we had been invited to join. That is how, all at once, we became a group, a snaking procession experienced as more than the sum of its parts, comfortable enough to stop traffic and brandish bright yellow emblems, briefly embodying meaning which we hadn't necessarily grasped beforehand. As if real understanding of the event's meaning could only be accessed through doing it. All of this, not following a slow,

socially organic process of churning age-old traditions (which usually guarantees their gravitas), but instantly, on the impetus of an activity decided by a handful of artists.

The meaning, and indeed the very possibility, of inventing a ritual – whether the author is an artist or any other social actor – can feel unfathomable and may well reach beyond the remit of this essay. To address the issue would involve situating this gesture against a dense aesthetic-political past, dating back to 19th-century booms of invented traditions on behalf of modern nationhood (think Scotland's Highland myth and clan tartans), while grating against the ethical and art-historical debates about social practice in contemporary art at the turn of the millennium. Yet, returning to the earlier comment on metonymic power – the capacity of certain localized practices to conjure vast social structures – is a reminder that rituals are also frameworks for spawning small social worlds. If creating rituals from scratch approximates the shaping of time-bound, inventive forms of sociality, then surely many of the performance-based and participatory happenings of modern art since the historical avant-gardes can be read as kindred to ritual inventions. This both broadens the issue at stake and highlights the specificities of this particular procession. Indeed *Cook's New Clothes*, which makes no explicit claims to the categories of either art or ritual, is a hybrid initiative in the context of a massive commemoration period dawning in the South Pacific. Its contemporary context has seen the politics of memorialization re-enter the public debate, mainly concerning physical monuments since the 2015 protests of Rhodes Must Fall, which became a global movement as it successfully campaigned for the removal of Cecil Rhodes's statue at the University of Cape Town. The procession for Tupaia is similarly inscribed in an actively de-colonial practice of history. However, as a ritual initiative, it concerns itself less with material traces and more with *doing*, and with the latter's particular modes of re-making past and present.

In the United Kingdom, these two phenomena – colonial memory and late ritual practice – have a complicated and often neglected close relationship. The involvement of visual arts with ritual can be read as reaction to the country's colonial ethnographic past and the role which 'traditional' customs played in the cultural production of 'otherness' throughout Empire. A turn in this approach to ritual can be dated back to Welfare State International, a group of artists, engineers and performers active since 1968 (and officially up until 2006), whose overall project focused on local manufacturing of ceremonies and ritual artifacts. Based for the most part in Cumbria, WSI conceived multiple events with a view to instigating new social customs, while at the same time identifying strictly as artists and describing their rituals as performances that could tour cities. Advocating a role for art as broker between imagination and community, WSI facilitated locally embedded practices, both to champion people's ownership of special occasions and to underscore the place of artists therein. Thus, the company's artists regularly doubled as highly ranked secular celebrants, whose role would be to invent and produce rituals while ensuring their meaning. In 1983, in their hometown of Ulverston, WSI inaugurated the *Lantern Parade*, a processional rite still celebrated yearly to this day. Its first installment gathered four street bands and hundreds of participants holding the homemade candle-lit lanterns which they previously assembled in WSI-arranged workshops, to flood the streets in a river of light. Company artistic director John Fox described the participatory making of the lanterns in terms of a sculptural artistic practice, while interpreting the ritual as a whole – which he both authored and witnesses – as a reflection on the transience of life carried out through community.

Throughout the years, processions became the group's dominant 'stylistic device', as they called it. A year after the first *Lantern Parade*, a carnival was set up in the village of Tolpudde for the context of the coal strike and curtailed freedom of trade unions in Britain. This time, the invention of a ritual was the object of a commission by the Darlington Trades Council and Darlington Centre for the Unemployed. Among many acts, costumes, and symbols, WSI's event featured a carthorse carrying a sycamore tree, a massive image of Dame Justice paraded on a chassis, and a cage filled with puppet effigies of politicians including the face of Margaret

Thatcher. Producing culturally topical and often carnivalesque processions emerged as a means not only to take theatre 'beyond the proscenium', but also, it seems, to transcend the imaginary bounds of a community all while nurturing it and keeping the focus of folklore in the backyards of British towns. Enabling this even more explicitly was the company's *Rites of Passage* research program, through which secular rites and their liturgical instruments were produced in collaboration with professionals in health care, parenting organizations, and, unsurprisingly, funeral parlors. That WSI attracted the attention of anthropologists rather than art historians is especially telling considering their work emerged before the so-called crisis of representation and 'writing culture' debate (from the eponymous 1986 volume) in anthropology. This debate emphasized the inseparability of the discipline's poetics and politics, as it sought to destabilize any aphoristic authority by systematically incorporating questions about researchers' identity, fieldwork location, and the research modalities of dialogue, analysis and, in particular, representation. As a result, forms of intervention within social environments were reinvented, and the hegemony of realism (or a certain version of it) – the then major unchallenged ethnographic model for accounting and depicting – was overturned. At the dawn of such transitions, these artists' rituals must have struck as radical objects, specifically because of their capacity to both constitute and represent embodied forms of fieldwork.

The excavation of local cultures through ritual inventions as proposed by WSI further presents a powerful contrast to colonial outlooks on foreign rites, which, from exoticist fantasy to censorship, had usually been defined by a tone that cordoned off the practice in question. The sprawling nature and physical involvement of WSI's works pointed towards the exact opposite of that. Revisiting the cultural dynamics of post-empire transformation from the perspective of literature, Jed Etsy's *A Shrinking Island* proposes that the new national culture into which English authors translated the collapse of British power required mitigating some defining traits of modernism. Indeed the 'anthropological turn' – described here as the result of late modernism grappling with imperial contraction – called for revaluing local ritual and symbolic practices. Temporally stretched back to encompass Virginia Woolf's last novel (*Between the Acts*, 1941) in which the author attempted to 'invent a ritual' in the form of a village pageant that would register the characters' fraught 'investment in national community', this anthropological turn negotiates the ambivalence between modernist ideals of individual authorship and a shared, folk creative consciousness. For artists working a few decades later, well past modernism's peak, this tension was likely less acute. Yet by definition any artist-made, local production of a pageant, procession or ceremony walks a thin line between artistic invention and communal tradition, between the agency of individual authorship and that physically embedded through cultural histories, between the international circuits of contemporary culture and local relevance, and, more generally, between the success of a social practice and that of a representation.

Anthropologist Ronald Grimes wrote about WSI's processions by drawing comparisons with the ritual-studies collaborations between Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. The two scholars designed experimental workshops around the Zambian Ndembu rites studied by Turner, using theories and practice of theatre to implement understandings of culture as something that is performed. The argument here was that their attitude, just like that of WSI, corresponded neither to 'premodern naivete' nor to a 'modern secular irony'; instead, these works proved that postmodern ritual processes were occurring outside of their habitual domains, namely traditional religious institutions or sectarian movements. For Grimes, such practices are to be read as factual answers to a ritual 'deficit' in Western cultures, contrasting with Etsy's perspective on ritual as a means to both probe and depict a (British) culture that had been made anthropologically invisible. Of course, the distinction between producing and representing cultural phenomena can be somewhat artificial. Simply put, as cultural objects, representations also add to (and become) the culture which they address, including if we were to consider the contributions of literary fiction to our understanding of midcentury English village

rites. When it comes to performance and the tangible creation of rituals – and especially when the latter reach beyond the confines of the art world – direct additions to lived culture suddenly appear even more accessible: a ‘real’ social outcome at the fingertips of artistic practice.

More recently and beyond the colonial decline versus local revival binary, several artists with a base in the United Kingdom have been reclaiming the notion of ritual, in idiosyncratic and often highly localized contexts. Sometimes, what appears primarily mobilized is the idea of ritual, almost as an invocation, or declaration of alliance with a category of human culture even broader than art. In 2018, Evan Ifekoya’s first solo exhibition, *Ritual Without Belief* at Gasworks in London was a sonic and installation project that invited visitors to extend their time in the gallery by sitting on the floor, on the centrally deposited foam mats to listen to parts of a six-hour polyvocal recording. In addition to the exhibition experience thus being associated with a ritual framework, the work itself was a reflection on the relationship (or lack thereof) between the artist’s beliefs and their daily rituals. Mapping a different kind of dynamics between art and ritual, some of Jeremy Deller’s least directed interactive projects fiddle with, export, and re-make British traditions and ritual objects into art-world specific rites, as if by alchemy. *Sacrilege* (2012), a life-size inflatable model of the Stonehenge monument turned bouncy castle, toured the world with a title suggesting a cathartic act of impiety. It took on an even more singular ceremonial function when it was installed on site and jumped upon at the centennial celebration of the gift of Stonehenge to the British nation. And when Deller represented the country at the 2013 Venice Biennale, his *English Magic* pavilion included a room dedicated to the experience of being offered and poured a cup of Earl Grey or English Breakfast with a cloud of milk and the complementary accent.

Emphasizing the process of ritual production as a communal, spiritual quest in and of itself, Marcus Coates’s 2012 film *Vision Quest - A Ritual for Elephant & Castle* documents his three-year research and collaboration with residents of Heygate. The housing estate in South London was threatened (and then destroyed) by gentrifying redevelopment plans, so Coates invited residents and council planners to develop alternative visions for themselves through a shamanic journey to locate the community’s animal spirits. Throughout the film, the artist appears and performs as a spiritual guide, wearing a shiny silver suit, parading a stuffed eagle, and questioning the locals. The film further features an onstage rock-concert-cum-improvised-ritual, which he performed together with the experimental orchestra band Chrome Hoof in the neighborhood’s renowned Coronet Theatre. While the comedic is key and at hand throughout the work, Coates has insisted on the sincerity of the political and ritual intentions behind *Vision Quest*. Recognizing that his endeavor may look incongruous, he nonetheless recounts teaming up with Southwark Defend Council Housing and always emphasized the residents’ sense of loss and his intention to counter, through the ritual quest, the corporate scenario unfolding before them, stressing the importance for an artist to try and ‘come up with answers rather than [pose] questions’.

When it came to deploying *Cook’s New Clothes* in England, the artists involved in the Greenwich and Plymouth projects (whose practices are split across Britain, Europe, and the South Pacific) subordinated the formal components of the procession to Tupaia’s life and the cultural environments that had framed it from Raiatera to Batavia. Rather than formal distinctions pointing back to authorship, priority was given to producing a ritual that would exist by being practiced. It is no coincidence that this invented ritual was made for a person whose own foremost skills had arguably lain in ritual making. These skills often included a readiness to improvise or reinvent ritualistic practices. As an Arioi member and high priest of Oro, Tupaia’s life had been structured by his role in officiating ceremonies, a practice in many ways indistinguishable from the custody of knowledge, notably in his case concerning navigation and healing. Upon joining the Endeavour, his role as cultural intermediary peaked in ritual contexts, where he ensured the new arrivals’ correct observation of formal norms, which

were often at once social and religious. For instance, he guided the crew's surgeon as the latter took part in the island of Huahine's welcoming ritual; Tupaia instructed him to don the leading role of priest-healer, deeming him its closest equivalent in British society. Near Uawa in New Zealand, it is also likely that Tupaia supervised ritual gifting between Cook and a local high chief, while producing, during that same short sojourn, representations of the social practices which he was effectively staging. A watercolor survives, depicting a Māori-British exchange of a local crayfish against highly-valued Tahitian bark-cloth brought by the crew. In these contexts of cultural encounters and potential threat, ritual improvisation seems to have melded with diplomacy, the aim of which was the creation of temporary spaces focused on formal commonality, however much invented.

Thus, regardless of specific intention and context – diplomatic trade or the art world, for instance – engaging in new ritual practice implies an understanding that any full, rational comprehension of one's actions is unlikely to be reached. Instead, the meaning exists in the doing. Moreover, as suggested above, ritual is *etic*: it is not designed to be decipherable as an external object. The corollary of these points is that one can, in return, be initiated to rituals. But this particular form of instruction can never coincide with a didactics or demystification, like an outwardly turned exposé or the inductive wall texts of museums. As the initiators of Tupaia's procession reported, this did not fail to irk the hosting institution, which was in demand of exegesis, insistent on 'locking meaning into the event'. Reciprocally, participating in a mysterious yet highly formalized event just outside a cluster of royal museums is no innocent juxtaposition. The ways of knowing and classifying knowledge that were developed by the museums of European modernity stand in sharp contrast with the blind embrace of a new rite without guarantee of enlightenment or even explanation. At the same time, the absence of a carefully explained subject-matter for the procession, like that which an artwork might have received inside the museum, paradoxically made it easier to assimilate in a broader social context. During our walk back from the river, having paused for one of the ghost's slower dances, we were approached by several people, drawn by the music and profuse yellow banners that made us, as a group, tall in addition to long. A confused and perhaps mildly irritated man asked me what we were doing. I said it was a procession to commemorate a Polynesian navigator called Tupaia. At the time I worried about my ability to answer any further questions. But the man immediately accepted my answer, and mentioned that he used to be a seaman himself. Then he looked up knowingly at the sail-like banners and turned his eyes to the dancing ghost, nodded, smiled and left.

Certain approaches to ritual theory since the 1990s have focused on ritual's role as a play of forms, gestures and interactions that can reproduce and reorganize a given social environment. This type of activity affords an 'intermediate' experience fitting midway between a 'taxonomic order' (such as that offered by certain museums) and the real world of everyday experience. In fact, our deep need for typologically ambivalent experiences has been cited as the reason behind the growing appetite for ritual in all its forms and across cultures since the turn of the millennium. In this context, questions of meaning and sincerity come back to the fore. What is this serious form of play, and what does it mean to participate in these activities whose nature is apparently impossible to pinpoint? The structural functionalist notion that the true, hidden purpose of ritual is always to preserve social cohesion – a view which broadly aligns with the discourse of WSI and the attitude of Coates for instance – is no longer fully satisfactory in this context. Jettisoning other traditions in anthropological theory that construed ritual as the space where social and transcendental beliefs are condensed, religion scholar Adam Seligman insists on a very different and perhaps surprising point: rituals, he argues, temporarily set aside the questions of truth and belief; instead, they allow us to prioritize the formal aspects of our actions. In this way, during a ritual one can embrace the ambiguities of life, one can 'play' by trying out new formal arrangements, without 'undue concern with the authenticity of one's actions and beliefs'. Far from gratuitous, this seemingly detached play makes ritual a field of

experimentation for life, one that is formally distinct from, yet always interdependent with, other realities, whether natural, moral, religious, or pertaining to key practical aspects of community life. The way in which a culture will reintegrate to its history a significant figure like Tupaia, neglected until now due to lingering colonial frameworks, is a case in point of the perpetual need for ritual experimentation.

My experience of the procession echoes with Seligman's observations. I remember noticing that my slight unease – the kind anyone might feel in new and uncertain social situations engaging the body – wasn't one I could resolve as I normally would. When I attend performances in galleries, I resort to my position as an art historian and audience member: I continuously, though perhaps not quite consciously, reposition myself physically as spectator (including in performances that might require my participation) as I begin, more or less passively, to appraise and analyze what I see. Or, if I am to join, say, a political march, I take the time to consider whether I morally adhere to it enough before committing to it corporeally. As for more purely 'physical' social situations, such as the first time I queued for a bus in the United Kingdom (a custom for which the British are renowned), or the first cèilidh dance I joined (an Irish and Scottish dance, often in rounds and quadrilles), I resort to basic motor intelligence, in my case mainly the product of years spent in dance class, which taught my body the discipline of instinctive, committed mirroring. But this repertoire of attitudes was of little use during Tupaia's funerary procession. I quickly stopped worrying about my then lack of historical knowledge or solid understanding of what was at stake. As in the rituals I practice more commonly, trust that the lead celebrants and gestures themselves were the guardians of meaning felt enough. Sincerity and intent, at least as they are usually understood, gave way to playful, physical honesty as well as formal engagement.

Indeed we all, by definition, lacked the ritual skills for this new practice. As the cloaks were being carried down to the river, however, I caught myself (or rather my feet) making tiny convoluted pivoting movements. As it happens, my feet were trying to prevent me from turning my back to the two cloaks, which were moving at different paces. It was only a few days after Yom Kippur, the day of atonement in Judaism, and I had spent hours standing in temple where, whenever the Torah is carried out of its ark, it is considered disrespectful to turn one's back to it. I had somehow automatically brought this bodily rule to the table of a newly invented rite – always face the most important liturgical object. In similar ways, others among the group had no doubt contributed to the procession's formal production, through this strange method whereby the execution of gestures and symbols seems to precede their meaning. Altogether, we were also those outsiders landed amid an unfamiliar practice – this time, one that was native to none. By joining it without knowing what we would do in advance, we collectively learned something that could not have been discovered in another way. Through formal experiment as ritual invention, we learned how to give a two-and-a-half-century late funeral to an important Polynesian navigator-priest, just outside – both together with and against – the narratives and objects held in the collections of Greenwich's Royal Museums.

Further Reading

On Tupaia and Cook

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Frank McLynn, *Captain Cook, Master of the Seas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 183-201.

Anne Salmond's work on Māori-European encounters, especially her essay 'Back to the Future: First Encounters in Te Tai Rawhiti,' *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 42:2 (2012): 69-77.

Regarding the long-due research on Tupaia's map, see Lars Eckstein and Anja Schwarz, '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,' *The Journal of Pacific History* 54:1 (2018): 1-95.

On the 'participation' debates in art history

Debates about social practice in contemporary art began around 1998 with Nicolas Bourriaud's advocacy of Relational Aesthetics, and expanded a decade later through the discussion epitomized by Claire Bishop and Grant Kester's antagonistic positions on participatory art. As an introduction, see:

Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998).

Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,' *Artforum* 44:6 (2006): 178-83.

Grant Kester, 'Another Turn: A Response to Claire Bishop,' *Artforum* 44:9 (2006): 22-3.

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Jed Etsy, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

On inventing traditions and rituals

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On contemporary artists and rituals

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John Fox and Sue Gill, 'Welfare State International: Seventeen Years on the Streets,' *The Drama Review: TDR* 29:3 (1985): 117-26.

'About Welfare State International,' *Welfare State International*, <http://www.welfare-state.org/> and 'Welfare State International,' *Unfinished Histories*, <http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/history/companies/welfare-state-international/>.

On ritual theory

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