

## THE ELLIS DRAWINGS: AN ETHNOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

The pictorial record of the voyages of Cook and other explorers provides ethnologists and prehistorians with extraordinarily valuable evidence of the people of the Pacific, their artefacts and customs, and the landscapes within which they lived. As more such material has been studied and published, appreciation has grown of the conventions within which the artists worked, the differences between original drawings and engravings, the differences between the work of one artist and another, or between different versions by the same artist. Thus the pictorial record has come to be more critically appreciated. Any new or previously little known collection, no matter how sketchy, is likely to add in some way to this record, supplementing existing material and perhaps giving new insights into previously known works. This is certainly true of this collection of drawings by William Ellis from Cook's third voyage.

The collection is of ethnological importance in several different respects. A group of landscapes varies from rather sketchy outlines to quite detailed pictures of islands seen from the sea; the best of these provide important views of man-modified landscapes, particularly in the vegetation patterns they depict. Although there are only two drawings of isolated items of material culture—a Hawaiian cloak and a fan, probably from the Cook Islands—there are a number of drawings of canoes, objects which obviously intrigued Ellis. These vary in quality, but add to the existing record of canoes in different areas. A third major group of drawings consists of portraits of people, named and unnamed. Like his contemporaries, Ellis was not particularly successful in capturing Polynesian features; the importance of the portraits, therefore, lies largely in details of hairstyle and beard, costume, headdress and ornament. Several portraits of named individuals are naturally of special interest. A final intriguing aspect of the collection is that several scenes and portraits are very similar to well-known illustrations by Webber and in some cases confirm or throw further light on details in the latter.

Among the most interesting of the landscapes are two views of Mangaia from the sea (ff. 4 (see plate III) and 5A). These are of historical interest since they probably come close to representing the first view of any of the Cook Islands by Europeans. To the ethnologist, the details of vegetation are important. The *makatea* or raised coral perimeter of the island is heavily wooded, whereas the interior is much more open, having been cleared and cultivated for centuries. A canoe with two men in the foreground provides ethnological detail of a different kind, and reflects both Ellis's interest in canoes and his difficulty in capturing their occupants in a natural attitude. This scene gains additional value from