



Cook's Secret Instructions

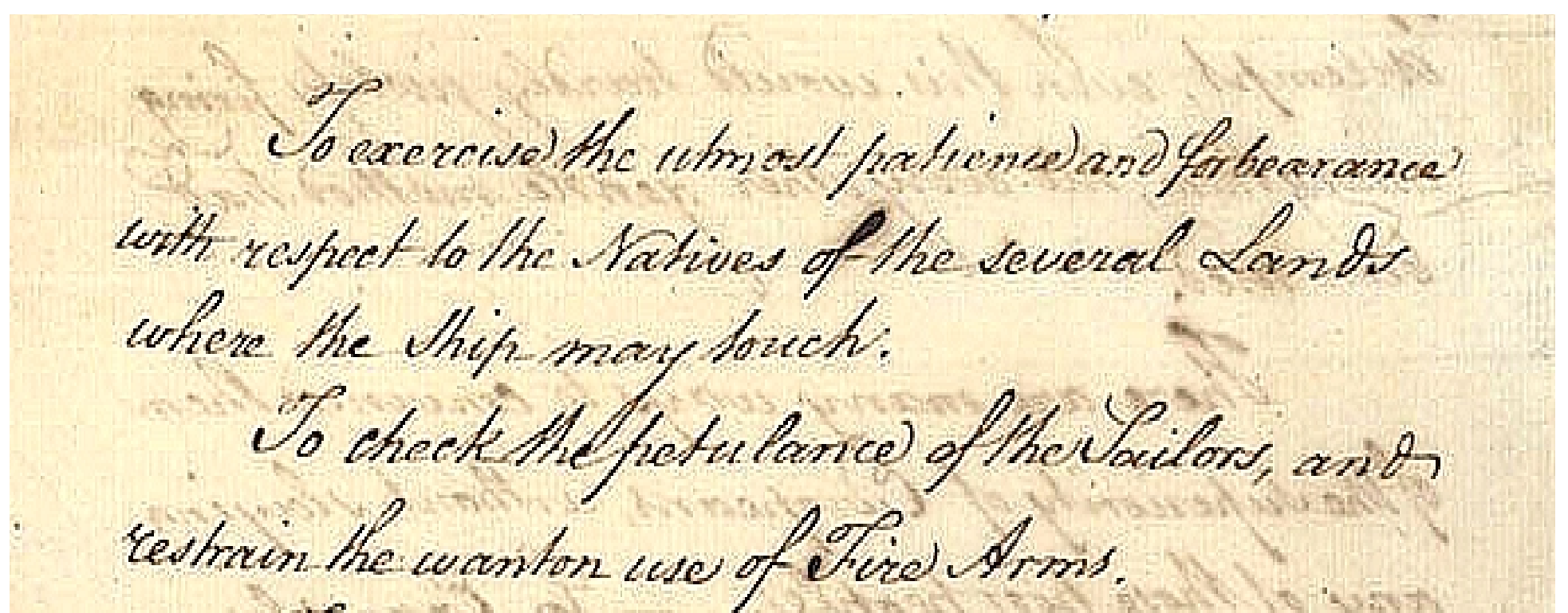
When Captain James Cook left Plymouth in 1768, bound for Tahiti, his official mission was to observe the Transit of Venus. However, he carried with him secret instructions from the Lords of the Admiralty.

When he opened them he found orders for him to search for a southern continent of 'vast extent'.

The *Secret Instructions* map out how he should document what he finds, and act, particularly in relation to interacting with local inhabitants and 'taking possession' of lands he visits. It tells him to take possession of lands encountered if they are uninhabited, or if inhabited, with the consent of the 'natives'.

Behaviour

Written soon before the *Endeavour* set sail from Plymouth, an important letter from the President of the Royal Society provided Cook and his companions with the Society's views on how they should conduct themselves. *The Hints* counselled them 'to exercise the utmost patience and forbearance' in the treatment of any inhabitants of lands visited.



James Douglas, 14th Earl of Morton (1702–1768)

Hints Offered to the Consideration of Captain Cooke, Mr Bankes, Dr Solander and the Other Gentlemen Who Go upon the Expedition on Board the Endeavour 10 August 1768

National Library of Australia, Papers of Sir Joseph Banks (Manuscripts), nla.cat-vn2049605