

HORDERN HOUSE

RARE BOOKS • MANUSCRIPTS • PAINTINGS

Album Polynésien

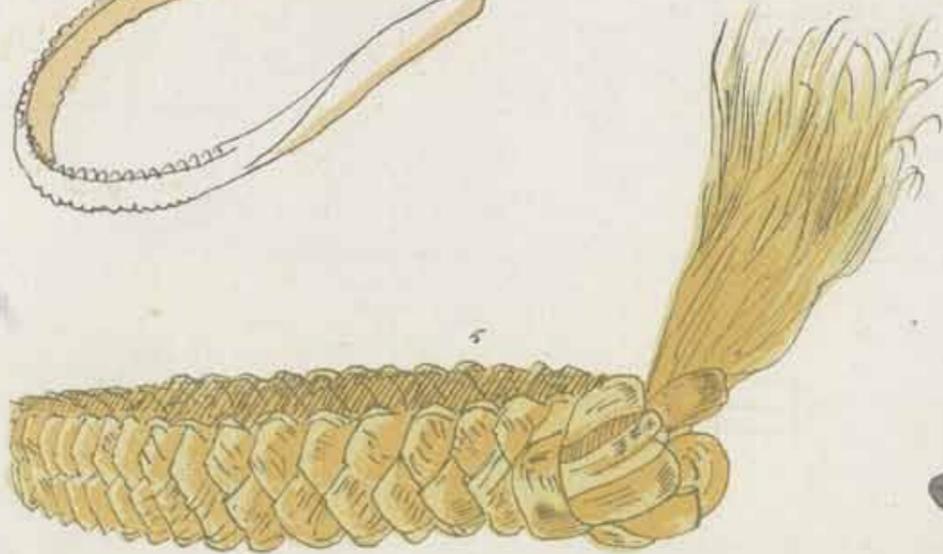
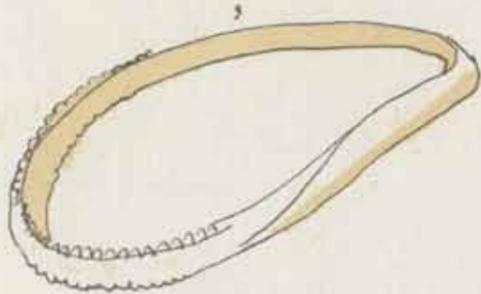
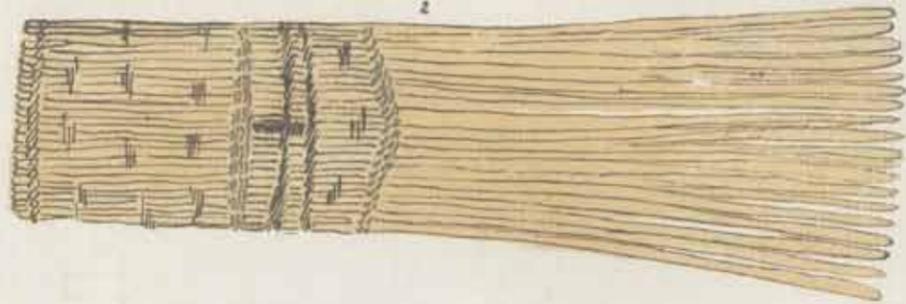
DE

M. C. NOURY,

Capitaine de vaisseau.

À NANTES

Chez E. Marescaux — 1861.



S^r de Grandet del.

del. O. Merson.

NOURY, Charles-Gaëtan.

Album Polynésien...

Folio (390 x 260 mm), 17 leaves in all, untrimmed and unbound as issued, with lithographed title-page and single sheet of description, and 15 lithographed plates, seven of which are coloured and eight in black on a tinted background, on paper watermarked either "Rives" or "D & C Blauw"; in a modern full morocco fitted case. Nantes, Olivier Merson, 1861.

RARE AND BEAUTIFUL STUDY OF TATTOOING IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Exceptionally uncommon and most beautiful work on tattooing, ethnography, and decorative carving in the Marquesas; 'd'un grand intérêt ethnographique' (O'Reilly), this is a remarkable collection of images of actual objects and original personal observation made during the early period of French influence in Nuku Hiva. The quality of the illustrated plates is outstanding, and the delicate lithography is a marvellous medium for conveying the immediacy of the original sketches; this very rare work is an important record of French Polynesia in the South Pacific, and is almost unknown on the market. Published by a tiny lithographic press in the author's hometown of Nantes on the French Atlantic coast, the signatures of three artists appear on the various lithographic plates: B. de Girardot, Bourgerel and Alfred Clericeau. Clericeau is also credited as printer of some of the plates, most of which were printed by Olivier Merson in Nantes, who is listed as publisher of the work on the title-page.

BARON GIRARDOT

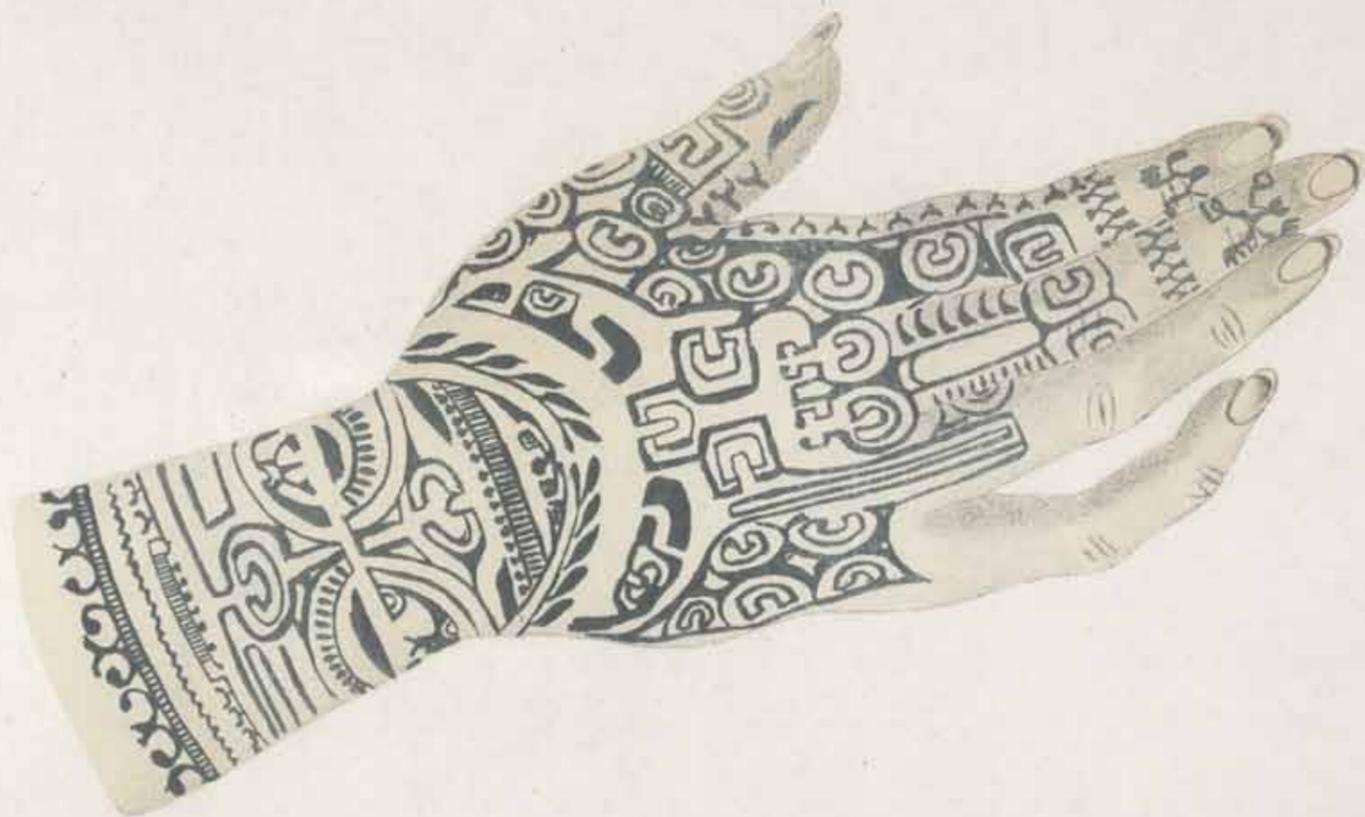
Of the three artists, Auguste Théodore, baron de Girardot (1815-1883) was responsible for plates 1-2, 5 and 7-9. He was an archaeologist and antiquary in Nantes, with prolific publications to his name, including numerous lithographs of archaeological objects in similar style to the present work. We speculate that he may have been the overall creator of the work and that the wording of the title, somewhat ambiguous, may refer to the collection of M. Noury rather than crediting the work to him. As Anna Andruszkiewicz's study of Girardot shows, several of Girardot's publications were, like the present work, produced on Olivier Merson's press. Certainly, his involvement in the publication was close: the copy of this work in the Mitchell Library, for example, has a presentation inscription from him.

CHARLES NOURY

Charles-Gaëtan Noury (1809-1869) was a French naval officer born in Nantes (he was also titled: his father Gabriel Noury was the first Baron Noury). He was promoted capitaine de corvette and second-in-command of the *Sirène* in 1846, bound for the Pacific. The ship arrived at Papeete in May 1847 where captain Lavaud took over the shore command, leaving

Pl. 1

Album Tahitien. de M. le Cap^m de V. Courcy



P. de Courcy del.

Lith. D. Meunier

Noury in command of the *Sirène*. Shortly after Noury served for a year as the commandant of Nuku Hiva, the main French settlement in the Marquesas, where he became a student of local customs, researching especially tattooing, cannibalism, and language and evidently a keen collector. An 1849 letter from him preserved in the Mitchell Library discusses his records of the ritual chants sung at human sacrifices, for example, while a collection of more than 1200 shells from Tahiti and the Marquesas was donated by his descendants to the Nantes Museum in 1904.

The *Sirène* returned to France after four years, and Noury continued to serve in the French Navy until 1864, retiring to Nantes. In his retirement he worked on Polynesian natural history and linguistics, and took stock of his collection of South Sea curiosities: given the date of publication here, and the fact that the lithographs are based on sketches by artists other than Noury, it is probably fair to assume that the illustrations depict items in his collection (where are they now?).

Noury is not a well-known figure, but there is a helpful potted biography in Father O'Reilly's *Tahitiens* (1975). Noury also left a manuscript journal illustrated with watercolours devoted to the natural history of Tahiti and the Marquesas which, rediscovered in modern times, was finally published 160 years after its creation by the Royal Academy of Belgium as *Voyage en Polynésie (1847-1850). Le bestiaire oublié du capitaine Noury*, ed. M. Jangoux (2017).

MARQUESAN ARTEFACTS, AND THE QUEEN'S TATTOOED HAND

The illustrations in the work show an extraordinary array of Marquesan artefacts, including native surgical instruments, instruments for making tapa, a coconut shell fashioned into a cover for the wound left by the practice of trepanning, designs carved into whale teeth, idols (including one meant to be suspended from canoe prows), as well as ornaments, pipes, jewellery including necklaces and bracelets, puzzles, hooks, decorative clubs, a "war conch" and other sculptures.

The most beautiful of the images is that of the tattooed hand which, particularly graceful and beautiful, has spawned a small literature of its own since it depicts the famous tattoos of Queen Vaekehu (1823-1901). In 1886 Albert Davin spoke with the queen and learned more about her tattooing: he quotes her (in *50,000 milles dans l'océan Pacifique*, 1886) as saying, through her interpreter:

"Oh I suffered cruelly. I cried much... For several days my hands stayed large as breadfruits. It was in vain that I asked my mother to put an end to my suffering. All was useless. It was necessary that the tattooing of my hands and arms to my shoulders, of the feet and the knees, of the mouth and the ears, reveal my noble origin...".



Statue de Rarohi, Viti



Statue de Rarohi, Viti

Davin noted that the tattoos were by different artists from the island of Ua Pou (home of the best tattooists in the archipelago at that time) but done so well and so similarly that they appeared the work of one. (Quoted by Carol S. Ivory, *Vaekehu, The Life of a 19th-century Marquesan Queen in Turbulent Times*, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 123(2): 113-128).

Karl von den Steinen, who met the queen when he visited the islands in 1897, used this Noury/Girardot image of her hand to illustrate his account (*Reise nach den Marquesas*, 1897).

NUKU HIVA

Nuku Hiva was first visited by the American Joseph Ingraham on the *Hope* as early as 1791, and the Marquesan group was claimed for the United States in 1813 by Commodore David Porter, a claim that was never ratified. In 1842 the French, who were capitalising on several decades of determined interest in the region, took possession of the whole Marquesan group, establishing a settlement on Nuku Hiva that was ultimately abandoned in 1859; it was this settlement that Noury served at after he had called at Tahiti in 1847. French control over the group was re-established in 1870, and it was later incorporated into the territory of French Polynesia.

Material relating to the earliest phase of French settlement in Nuku Hiva is surpassingly scarce. Only three other copies of Noury's work have been located internationally: Koninklijk Bibliotheek (Netherlands), Mitchell Library, and the Turnbull Library NZ; the Mitchell copy was acquired by David Scott Mitchell personally. We know of one other copy privately owned in Europe.

\$28,750

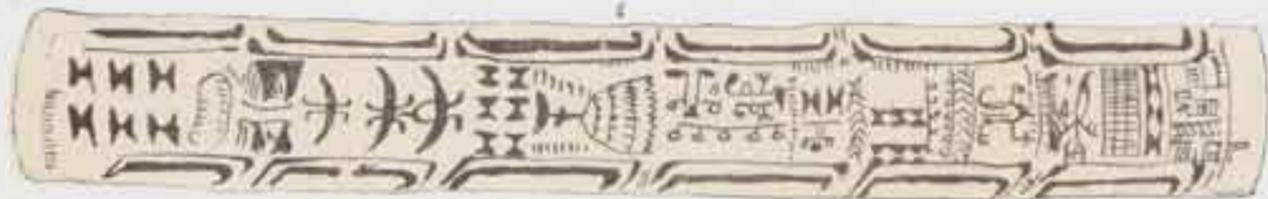
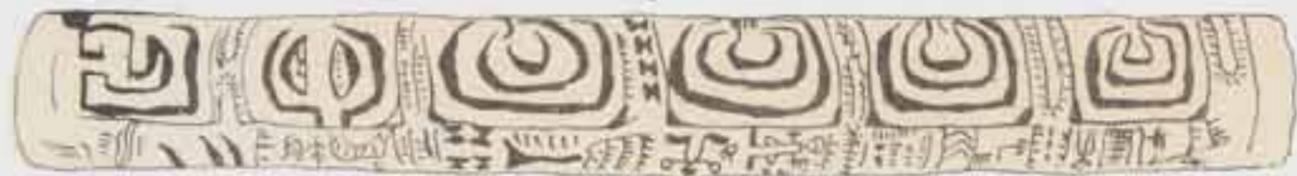
for details



O'Reilly-Reitman, 5289a; Anna Andruszkiewicz, "Auguste Théodore, baron de Girardot (1815-1883), antiquaire de province. Sa collection et ses publications", *Art et histoire de l'art*, 2014 (ffdumas-01547382).

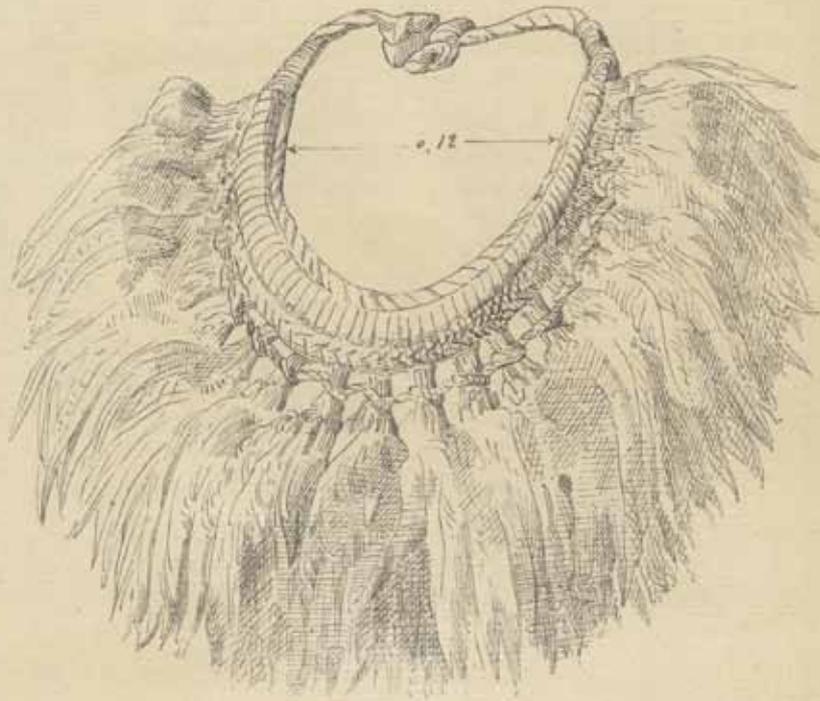
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Album Polygammum du Cap^s de V^e Noucy.



Planchette No.

112 & 113



n^o 3f



Clericus Lith.

Lith. G. H. von Hildebr.



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