



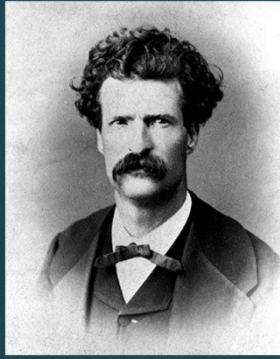
John M Freedman @DrJohnFreedman

Apr 30, 2023 · 9 tweets · [DrJohnFreedman/status/1652810645526708224](https://twitter.com/DrJohnFreedman/status/1652810645526708224)

This shot entering magnificent Opunohu Bay in Moorea is one of my favorites in my South Pacific photo archive. But Moorea, in all its beauty, always reminds me of the beginning of the end of the once-noble Captain Cook. 1/9



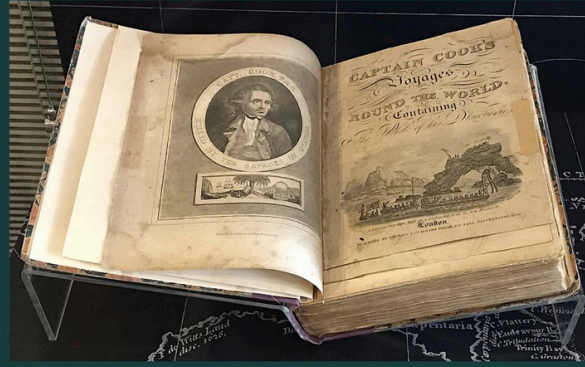
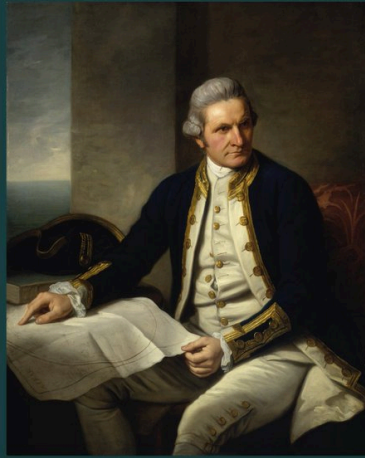
Cook died on Feb 14, 1779, on the beach at Kealahou Bay on the big island of Hawaii, which is not-so-coincidentally where we spent the day yesterday. The circumstances are oft re-told, embellished and analyzed. Young Mark Twain put it bluntly when he visited the spot in 1866:



**"Plain unvarnished history
takes the romance out of Cook's assassination
and renders a deliberate verdict:
justifiable homicide."**

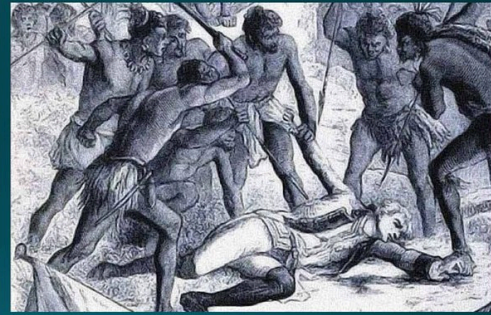


My own take after much research is that 'justifiable homicide' is far too strong a verdict, but what is clear is that there was an evolution of James Cook over his three voyages from a humane and patient man who took a measured approach to transgressions...



Capt. James Cook
1728-1779

into an increasingly petulant, harsh, unforgiving and violent martinet. And it was this man - with his less-talked-about but undeniable cruelty, his devious ruse to kidnap Hawaii's King, his disrespect for Hawaiian sacred sites and more - that brought about his own demise. 4/9



The Death of Captain Cook - Feb 14, 1779

Cook's short & fiery temper & willingness to resort to violence were foreshadowed by other events, e.g., destruction of a village on Moorea (all over 2 stolen goats), cruel floggings of Tongans who were judged to be petty thieves, and more.



Captain Cook Lays Waste to Moorea - Yale University Press London Blog


In October 1777, following the theft of two of his goats, Captain James Cook ordered his men to lay waste to the island of Moorea.

<https://yalebooksblog.co.uk/2022/01/20/captain-cook-lays-waste-to-moorea/>

The Cook of the 3rd voyage, especially in its latter phase, was not the Cook of the earlier voyages. And it was the petulant, harsh, quick-to-judge, and prone-to-violence Cook who was the man who fatefully returned to 'Owhyee' with a broken mast on February 11, 1779. 6/9


Why the adverse (and ultimately fatal) change in temperament? Theories abound, and it's fertile ground for medical forensicists. Cook had developed chronic gastrointestinal symptoms, which might have been due to roundworm infection, or abdominal TB, or both. A burden for sure.

Some have made the case that his intestinal issues could well have led to malabsorption of vitamin B12, which could certainly cause profound mental & behavioral changes. That is a part of the spectrum of major health issues associated with B12 deficiency.



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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3847746/>

Others have made the case that psychological stressors or even outright PTSD were at the root of his unhinged behavior near the end. We'll never know. But it was a sad ending indeed, and the dark side of his legacy should be acknowledged and studied for the lessons it holds.

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