

**Constructing
the
“Perfect” Voyage**

Nicolas Baudin at Port Jackson, 1802

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Abstract

In 1802, a French scientific expedition under the command of Nicolas Baudin made an unscheduled visit to the British colony at Port Jackson, New South Wales. It was a pivotal episode in the course of Baudin's Australian voyage. The commander had already fulfilled most of his instructions, though imperfectly, and only the north coast of New Holland remained unexamined. He and his men stayed at anchor in Port Jackson for over five months. When they set sail once more, they embarked on what historians agree was a new phase of the expedition. Baudin and his men did not proceed directly to the north coast, but returned to the southern and western coasts, where they perfected and augmented the work in geography and natural history that they had carried out earlier.

This thesis examines what occurred during the sojourn at Port Jackson, as well as the circumstances that led up to it, in order to determine in precise terms why and how this episode came to be a turning point in Baudin's voyage. It asks: was the second campaign just an extension of the first or was it an opportunity for Baudin to redefine the voyage? The Port Jackson sojourn thus serves as a site of interrogation regarding the nature of Nicolas Baudin's leadership and the construction, on British colonial territory, of a French scientific voyage.

However, the opportunity to gain real insight into the sojourn of the voyagers at Port Jackson has been limited by a perceived scarcity of resources. The fact that Baudin's journal falls silent here has meant that there is no one privileged source of information on the commander's role or on the day-to-day activities of the expeditioners, and that scholars examining this episode have tended to focus on the details of the larger picture rather than on the larger picture itself.

This is not to say that the presence of the Baudin expedition in Port Jackson has left no material traces. In fact, there is a diverse range of archival records – expense accounts, correspondence, inventories of specimens, journals kept by officers and savants and the logbooks of the *Géographe* – from which the day-to-day life of the commander and his men

at Port Jackson can be reconstructed. Commencing with an analysis of the events that led up to the sojourn and influenced Baudin's approach to it, this study examines the relationships that Baudin built in the colony, his manner of command aboard the *Géographe* and the scientific results of the stay. After then analysing the way in which Baudin managed the sojourn and planned the second campaign, we conclude that Baudin did not simply seek to satisfy the expectations of his superiors but in fact he seized this opportunity to create the "perfect" scientific voyage.

Thesis Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Nicole Starbuck and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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A Note on Sources

The bulk of the records pertaining to Nicolas Baudin's time in Sydney are held in French archives. For the sake of brevity, the following abbreviations for these institutions and their relevant collections have been used in references:

Archives nationales de France (ANF), série marine (SM)

Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris (MNHN)

Muséum d'Histoire naturelle, Le Havre (MHN, Le Havre), Collection Lesueur (CL).

Most of the manuscripts are held in the archives under a single reference code. In the thesis, this code is provided only in a manuscript's first citation in each chapter. Certain manuscripts – the journals of Nicolas Baudin, Emmanuel Hamelin and François-Michel Ronsard – have multiple volumes and versions, each of which is held under a separate reference code. For these documents, the relevant code is provided in each citation in the thesis.

As most of the records are in the French language, I have considered it useful to give English translations systematically throughout, while providing the original French text in the footnotes. There do exist serious and highly regarded translations of two of the key narratives of the voyage – Christine Cornell has published *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin*, a translation of Baudin's sea log, referred to as the *Journal de mer* (ANF, SM, 5JJ36-40A), and *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*, which is a translation of the second edition of François Péron's *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*. These translations have thus provided the English quotations from Baudin's and Péron's narratives. Except where otherwise indicated, I have also used the second edition of Péron's *Voyage de découvertes* for most of my French quotations derived from this narrative. Since this text was amended, augmented and published in 1824 by co-author Louis Freycinet, it can be considered the complete version of this official narrative of the Baudin expedition. There is also a transcription in French of the fair copy of Baudin's journal, published by Jacqueline Bonnemains and known as the *Journal historique* or *Journal personnel* (ANF, SM, 5JJ35 and

5JJ40B-D). Joint references are provided for this transcription and the archival copy of the *Journal historique*.

Where no published translation is available, I have provided my own. Except where changes would have significantly altered the character of the text, I have added punctuation markers lacking in the original and standardised capitalisation and spelling. For all quotations and paraphrases in English of French texts, I have provided the original French version in the footnotes.