

Louis Choris, Portrait of Kadu of Ulea (c. 1815–18)

Abstract

Louis Choris (1795–1828) was the official artist of the Russian expedition to the Pacific under the command of the Baltic German Russian subject Otto von Kotzebue (1787–1846). Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838) served as naturalist on that same voyage. Kadu was a South Pacific islander who joined the expedition in the Radak Islands and continued on board for several months before being dropped off there on the ship's return passage. Choris's portrait drawing of Kadu provided the basis for the engraving that became the frontispiece, reproduced here, to Chamisso's contribution to the three-volume travel report published under Kotzebue's overall authorship. Both Choris and Chamisso expressed considerable friendship and affection toward Kadu and acknowledged his contributions to the expedition. The explorers benefited from his specific knowledge of various islands and his general curiosity and willingness to help collect natural history specimens. He also provided invaluable assistance during encounters with indigenous peoples in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, as well as in the South Pacific. Here Kadu is depicted in European clothing and with his long hair drawn together in a bun at the back of his head. Both his face and posture convey great acuity and strength of character. Kadu, like Chamisso, had a migratory background, having grown up on Ulea in the Caroline Islands near Guam before being stranded on a long-distance voyage in the Radak Islands. Choris himself, like Kotzebue, could also be regarded, more or less, as representative of "Germans beyond borders" in the Russian Empire—Choris being descended from a German family living in Kharkiv/Kharkov in Ukraine.

Source



Source: *A Voyage of Discovery, into the South Sea and Beering's Straits, for the Purpose of Exploring a North-East Passage, Undertaken in the Years 1815-1818, at the Expense of his Highness the Chancellor of the Empire, Count Romanzoff, in the Ship Rurick, under the Command of the Lieutenant in the Russian*

Imperial Navy, Otto von Kotzebue. Vol. III, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821, frontispiece. University of Illinois at U-C, digitized by the IA. Available online at HathiTrust: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiuo.ark:/13960/t1sf2v98p>

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